

"HINDUSTANI RHYTHM (II): DRUM SOLOS"

DRUM SOLOS: TABLA & PAKHAWAJ INDIAN MUSIC STUDY GROUP

Tape Program:

1. ALLAH RAKHA RUPAK TALA

Allah Rakha is one of the most important figures in world music — a great musician and for years the inseparable companion of sitar maestro Ravi Shankar. Here he plays a driving, funky solo in the 7-beat Rupak tala, with a number of rhythmic sequences that recall the exuberant, syncopated style of playing called *laggi*.



2. RASHID MUSTAFA (W/AMJAD ALI KHAN): DEMONSTRATION OF STROKES AND PATTERNS



When Amjad Ali Khan came to the United States in 1984, he brought the young tabla player Rashid Mustafa as his accompanist. In this interview with WGBH's Robert J. Lurtsema, the two musicians demonstrate the different strokes and a few short rhythmic compositions. Mustafa is a talented young player, the grand-nephew of...

3. AHMED JAN THIRAKWA: TINTAL

Perhaps the most famous tabla player of his day, the great Ahmed Jan Thirakwa maintained an active performing career until he was in his nineties. This record was the first lp ever released of tabla solo music in India; it remains a steady seller today. Thirakwa's strokes are vigorous, his repertoire of rhythmic patterns immense; the cumulative effect is of tremendous power and a massive dignity.

A rough structural breakdown of Thirakwa's solo appears on the following page

AHMED JAN THIRAKWA: TINTAL

CYCLE	STYLE OF PLAYING
1.	THEKA VARIATIONS & MUKHRA
2.	THEKA VARIATIONS
3.	PESHKAR
4.	PESHKAR VARIATIONS
5.	THEKA, ACCELERATION
6.	GAT
7.	GAT AT DOUBLE-SPEED
8.	RELA
9.	THEKA, ACCELERATION
10.	KAIDA THEME
11.	KAIDA DOUBLE-SPEED
12.	KAIDA VARIATIONS AT DOUBLE SPEED, SHIFTING TO ORIGINAL TEMPO AT "KHALI."
13.	KAIDA VARIATIONS AT DOUBLE SPEED
14.	KAIDA VARIATIONS AT QUADRUPLE SPEED
15.	KAIDA VARIATIONS—(LENGTHENING/ SHORTENING RHYTHMIC FRAGMENTS) TO TIHAI
16.	THEKA & MUKHRA
17.	KAIDA IN TRIPLET RHYTHM
18.	KAIDA VARIATIONS IN SEXTUPLETS
19.	KAIDA VARIATIONS TO TIHAI
20.	THEKA
21.	PESHKAR-LIKE COMPOSITION, DECELERATION
22.	KAIDA
23.	KAIDA VARIATION IN 6S
24.	KAIDA VARIATION IN 8S
25.	KAIDA TURNS INTO RELA
26.	THEKA, ACCELERATION
27.	PARAN COMPOSITION
28.	THEKA
29.	PARAN
30.	THEKA
31.	GAT IN RELA STYLE
32.	GAT IN RELA STYLE
33.	THEKA
34.	KAIDA THEME & VARIATIONS
35.	KAIDA VARIATIONS
36.	THEKA
37.	PARAN
38.	THEKA
39.	KAIDA THEME TO CLOSE.

Analysis by Jerry Leake



Ustad Ahmed Jan Thirakwa

4. **RAJA CHHATRAPATI SINGH: DHAMAR TALA
(PAKHAWAJ)**



Born in 1919, Raja Chhatrapati Singh is a member of the royal family of the former Bijna State in Central India. A disciple of the drummer Ramdasji, he is one of the major performers on the two-headed drum Pakhawaj, used primarily with dhrupad vocal music. Consequently, pakhawaj solos use dhrupad cycles like Chautal and Dhamar, not tabla cycles

like Teental or Ektal. Here Singh presents a series of compositions, known as gats, developing steadily increasing complexity. Because there is no lehra the performance shifts tempo, making it harder to count.

5. **SHANKARRAO SHINDE: CHAUTAL (PAKHAWAJ)**

Shankarrao Shinde is one of the older generation of pakhawajiyas in Maharashtra. He lives near Bombay. He has a vigorous and powerful style which expresses his humorous and vital personality. Later in this concert, he played so vigorously that his turban fell over his face; the crowd dissolved into giggles. He never lost his composure, but cracked a joke in Marathi and knocked everybody over with some thundering drumming.



6. **SURESH TALWALKAR (TABLA) &
VASANTRAO GHORPADKAR (PAKHAWAJ)
CHAUTAL**

This tabla/pakhawaj duet relies heavily on the repertoire of the older drum, starting with a "Ganesh Paran," a composition that mixes names of the God Ganesh with drum syllables. They follow it with further development in a pakhawaj-based style; the second excerpt comes from later in the performance, after the complexity has escalated. Ghorpadkar learned from his father, Pt. Shankarbhayya, who played in the style of the famous drummer, Nanasaheb Panse. His partner in this duet is...

7. **SURESH TALWALKAR: JHAPTAL**



Suresh Talwalkar is a gifted soloist whose study has included South Indian (Carnatic) systems. The husband of singer Padma Talwalkar, he excels in vocal accompaniment and is always in demand. One of his major inspirations was the playing of Ram Narayan's brother, Chatur Lal. Here he presents a

short solo in the ten-beat Jhaptal (accompanied by Narayan on sarangi).

8. CHATUR LAL: JAI TALA

One of Ravi Shankar's early accompanists, Chatur Lal was known for his phenomenal speed and rhythmic intelligence. The brother of sarangi maestro Ram Narayan, Chatur Lal died early in his career. In this excerpt he is accompanied by his brother in a rendition of the rare 13-beat cycle, Jai Tala.

9. ANOKHEY LAL: TINTAL

A legendary performer, Anokhey Lal was known for his speed and for the brilliant use of his index finger. Tabla players all over India remember him as a master of "one finger theka;" the ability to play all of tintal's strokes with one finger, even at impossible speeds. We hear him demonstrating his virtuoso chops and lovely tone in this excerpt from a rare concert recording.



10. KERAMATULLAH KHAN: DEMONSTRATION OF COMPOSITION FORMS

This set of excerpts comes from Robert Gottlieb's book and tape compilation of tabla styles. The great artist Keramatullah Khan demonstrates some of the different structures used in tabla solo compositions, including: Chakradhar, Mohra, Tukra, Chalan, Relu, Utthan & Peshkar.

11. KANTHE MAHARAJ: TINTAL

Kanthe Maharaj was one of the truly great tabla players of his time. In this brief excerpt from Robert Gottlieb's compilation of tabla styles, he demonstrates his virtuosity and advanced rhythmic concept.



Kanthe Maharaj with Allahrakha, Kishan Maharaj, Ravi Shankar and V. C. Jog—(Photo courtesy: Pandit Kishan Maharaj)

12. KISHAN MAHARAJ: TINTAL

The son of Kanthe Maharaj, Kishan Maharaj has accompanied virtually every major soloist in the country in a long and productive career. His performance style is that of Benaras, his skills here shine briefly in a solo interlude in his performance with sarangi great Gopal Misra.

13. SHAMTA PRASAD: BRAHMA TALA



One of the major players in the Banares tradition of tabla, Shamta Prasad is known for his powerful strokes and vigorous approach. This excerpt from a commercial recording presents an unusual cycle, the 28 (or 14) beat Brahma Tala.

14. SHARDA SAHAI: RUPAK TALA

A brilliant performer, Sharda Sahai spent a number of years at Wesleyan University in the US, where he transmitted the art of tabla to many Americans. Here he recites and plays compositions in the 7-beat rupak tala.

15. ALLAH RAKHA & ZAKIR HUSSEIN: TINTAL



As Allah Rakha has grown older, he's had the chance to see how important his influence has been in Hindustani music. When asked "of what accomplishment are you proudest?" his response is "Zakir Hussein." His eldest son began as a child prodigy and today is an adult prodigy who combines a technique lightyears beyond that of other players with a marvelous ear and a superb grasp of structure. His audience manner has won him fans everywhere around the world.

But of all the musicians to whom he expresses respect, the most revered is his father, who's taught him everything. Here father and son trade ideas in a concert recorded in Pune; the two share an enormous repertoire and perform it vividly and brilliantly. Their sense of humor is also evident in this excerpt, which demonstrates the current state of the art in Hindustani rhythmic improvisation.

Recording Information:

- 1.) World-Pacific lp WP-1431: Ravi Shankar — "Ragas and Talas"
- 2.) WGBH Radio, April 9, 1984
- 3.) EMI lp: S-MOAE 182
- 4.) Barenreiter Musicaphon lp 30L 2018
- 5.) Concert, Pune 1985
- 6.) Magnasound Cassette C4HIO279
- 7.) Nonesuch lp, H-72062: Ram Narayan — "Master of the Sarangi"
- 8.) World Pacific lp WP-1403: Chatur Lal — "Drums of India"
- 9.) Private Concert
- 10.) From Robert S. Gottlieb: "The Major Traditions of North Indian Tabla Drumming" — Musich Verlag Emil Katzwichler, Munich 1977
- 11.) Gottlieb Compilation
- 12.) Private Concert
- 13.) Concord Cassette 05-015
- 14.) Private Concert
- 15.) Concert, Pune, December 23, 1985

Pandit Anokhey Lal (Misra)

(1914-1958)

(A soloist par excellence and a mood-building accompanist)

Varanasi has produced a large number of unforgettable tabla maestros over the last few centuries or so, and they have won acclaim not only throughout this country but also abroad. Anokhey Lal was one of them, and he won also the affection of his admirers through his humility and sheer simplicity of character.

In the history of our classical music, one often comes across artistes who grew into outstanding artistic stature early in life, but whose purposeful lives were meaninglessly cut short by "Fate's abhorred shears", leaving a lasting ache in the world of music. Even though time may be a great healer, the feeling of loss can never be erased from the minds of contemporaries. If these artistes lived and died at a time when there were no means of preserving their art for posterity, only the stories and reports of their wonderful performances linger on

orally for a generation or so, and then these too fade away from popular memories. Anokhey Lal's art could have been preserved on tapes and LP discs, but sadly, this has not been done. This is the reason that has prompted me to write a chapter on this fine artiste, while there are still among us numerous admirers who got many opportunities to watch and hear his performances in All India Music Conferences, Akashvani concerts and private sittings.

Anokhey Lal was born in the Nayabasti mohalla of Varanasi in the year 1914. His father, Buddha Prasad Misra, was a skilled sārangi artiste and his grandfather, Patarāoo, an accomplished tabla artiste. Their forefathers also had been good tabaliyās. Therefore, the love and talent for tabla ran in the family for many generations, and these were in the blood of Anokhey Lal right from his childhood. When he unfortunately lost his father at the age of two, he had his dotting mother to struggle and care for him. But the Fates were unduly harsh to him, and they snatched away his mother too when he was just six years old. His boyhood must have been full of sorrow and hardship until he found refuge in the loving protection of his paternal grandmother, Janaki Devi. The old lady worked hard to provide her unfortunate little grandson with all the necessities of life. Perhaps the atmosphere in this ancestral home was not congenial for a boy with artistic talents; therefore, she took him with her and shifted into the house of Sri Kaseru Maharaj in Ramapura and stayed there for two years.

At this stage, Sri Bansikar Misra (father of the famous musician Sri Dauji Misra) took pity on the orphaned boy and his struggling grandmother and invited them to shift into his own residence in Ramapura. Although Anokhey Lal could get no schooling, his serious tabla training was started under the famous tabla maestro of the Benaras *gharāna*, Pandit Bhairav Prasad, who had been groomed under Pandit Bhagatji. Bhairav Prasad was an adept in *dhrupad*, *dhamār*, *khayāl hori*, etc. and was also a scholar in music. This training continued for full fifteen years, and Anokhey Lal did his own rigorous *riyāz* daily. No wonder he mastered the *Pīrabāng* tabla to perfection. Although subsequently he received some advanced training under Pandit Bhagavatji, Anokhey Lal always considered Pandit Bhairav Prasad as his real guru for whom his devotion was unbounded.

When the guru died, Anokhey Lal participated in all the last rites like a devoted son. He continued his relentless practice of ten hours a day. It is said that his early morning *riyāz* used to be on an extra large tabla which was his preparation for solo recitals. This session used to last till 8 a.m. After an hour's break for bath and breakfast, he would resume his practice and the next three hours were devoted to polishing the art of accompaniment. This he did by providing tabla accompaniment for the vocal music of Pandit Dauji Misra. In the afternoons he used to accompany Mohanlal Kathak or the famed Shivkunwarbai on the

tabla, while Pandit Bansi Maharaj provided sārangi accompaniment and Pandit Navaratna Misra gave harmonium accompaniment. (These details have been given by Sri Radhe Shyam Jaiswal in the *Sangit Kalā Vihar* of March 1975).

After these long music sessions in Pandit Dauji Misra's house, Anokhey Lal used to go for his evening walks. He had no other interests in life except the art of tabla. After his constitutional walk, he used to practice complicated tabla *bols* "on a wooden stool so as not to disturb his neighbours". Before going to bed, he had to apply thick layers of wax on all his fingers to prevent them from cracking under all that strain. Even after achieving fame, he is said to have continued this rigorous routine unrelentingly!

Anokhey Lal was of a highly devotional temperament. He used to worship in the temple of Goddess Lakṣmī (Lakṣmīkand) daily. Although he never got a chance to go to schools like other boys of his age, he developed a fine character perhaps through the purifying fire of suffering. His self-effacing humility, his lack of pride, envy or malice, and his disarming childlike simplicity of nature won for him as much affection as the admiration he achieved for his excellent art. Among his contemporaries was a galaxy of reputed tabla experts like Habeebuddin of Meerut, Karamatullah of Calcutta, Allahrakha of Bombay and Munir Khan of Lucknow. Sometimes Anokhey Lal was scheduled to play *jugalbandis* with one or other of these formidable rivals but these challenges never perturbed him because he respected all of them, and bore malice towards none. Free from the tensions of jealousy and confident about his own hard-earned art, he always came out of such challenging *jugalbandis* with flying colours.

Many of today's performing artistes pay a lot of attention to sartorial elegance. But Anokhey Lal always wore the simplest of clothes—a white dhoti-kurta set with an ordinary red upper cloth ("gamcha"), a black *lopt* on his head, and a small stick in his hand completed his outfit. However, he was very fastidious about taking a special diet of nourishing food. The simplicity of his dress sometimes landed him in awkward situations. In 1943 he was booked to perform in the prestigious Vikram Sangit Parishad in Bombay. His simple clothes failed to impress the usher who refused him entry into the hall where he was scheduled to perform! Very modestly and calmly, Anokhey Lal told them. "I am booked to play on the tabla in this Conference. My name is Anokhey Lal." Now it was the turn of the organisers to feel embarrassed and to apologise.

On another occasion, Anokhey Lal was booked in the famed Haridas Sangit Sammelan in 1943 in the Cowasji Jahangir Hall in Bombay to accompany aīr *nawāz* Vilayat Khan Saheb. It was an awkward moment when the Ustād arrived along with Ustād Karamatullah Khan. The audience insisted that Pandit Anokhey Lal should accompany him as per schedule. The organisers saved the

situation by seating Karamatullah and Anokhey Lal with their tablas on either side of the Ustād. Those who witnessed this trio, declared that both tabla-accompanists excelled themselves.

Another oft repeated story to prove Anokhey Lal's devotion to the art is that of a Music Conference in Gaya where he provided superb tabla accompaniment for Ustād Vilayat Khan. The place echoed with exclamations of praise for the young tabla maestro's masterful accompaniment until Ustād Vilayat Khan suddenly noticed drops of blood on the tabla! Anokhey Lal had to confess that there was a very painful boil on his finger which he had ignored in the ecstasy of playing.

During his brief but highly successful career, Anokhey Lal gave a number of solo recitals, and accompanied a large number of vocal and instrumental maestros of various *gharānas*. He had developed his own unique and sonorous style of playing just the basic *bols* (*na, dhin, dhin, na*) which had a haunting sweetness. He was booked in most of the major music conferences of those times, and many people can still recall his memorable accompaniment of great masters like Ustāds Faiyaz Khan and Vilayat Khan, Pandit Onkarnath Thakur, Pandit Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Pandit Krishnarao Pandit, Ustād Abdul Halim Jaffar Khan, Pandit V.G. Jog and Kathak Gurus Aochan Maharaj, Shambhu Maharaj, and Smt Damayanti Joshi and so many others. Years later, when his gifted son, Rasmji Misra, accompanied some of these stalwarts on stage, we were strongly reminded of his father's art.

One of the earliest conferences in which Anokhey Lal shot into fame was the All Bengal Music Conference in Calcutta in 1938 in which his brilliant accompaniment for Guru Shambhu Maharaj's Kathak dance won unanimous praise. A distinguished panel of judges adjudged him the best tabla artiste and honoured him accordingly. In 1942, he again won high acclaim when he provided tabla accompaniment for Ustād Faiyaz Khan in a vast music conference in Allahabad.

In 1945, a grand All India Music Conference was organised in Patna on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Patna University. No less a musical "sun" than "Aftab-e-Mausiqi" Ustād Faiyaz Khan was the vocalist of the day. He was imposingly seated on the dais with two sārangi experts (one was Pandit Gopal Misra of Varanasi) and two tabla maestros (Pandit Anokhey Lal and Ustād Habeebuddin) on either side of him. Anokhey Lal won many bursts of appreciative applause from the audience, but what thrilled him even more was the fact that the great Ustād, at the end of his recital, patted him on the back saying: "Your accompaniment specially inspired and delighted me today" ("*Tumhārī wājah se śī mazā ā gayā*").

Anokhey Lal was booked every year for Lalababu's famous Music Conference in Calcutta and became a favourite of the audiences as well as of the great vocalists and instrumentalists whom he accompanied, because of his good nature and humility, and also because of his steady sonorous and mood-building tabla accompaniment. His *bols* were open and distinct ("*khule hāth kā bāj*") so typical of the Benaras style, and he produced sweet modulations on the *bayan*. Of course, he could play complicated *qaydas* and *parans*, and also handle rare and difficult *īdārs* with ease and a sense of enjoyment that established instant rapport with his audiences. There were no gimmicks; it was pure *Banaras bāj* in all its sonorousness and clarity.

Anokhey Lal pleased Pandit Onkarnath Thakur so much with his melodious accompaniment that the great vocalist affectionately gave him the title "*Nokhela Lal*" or "*Anokhey Lal*"—*Anokhey* meaning "unique", and "*lāl*" meaning "the dear one". This was in an All India Music Conference organised by Sri Damodardas Khanna in Calcutta.

In 1952, Anokhey Lal received an invitation to perform in the court of Maharaja Mahendra of Nepal. The royal patron praised him highly and rewarded him amply. In 1954 he was honoured with the title of "Sangita Ratna" by the Sur Singar Samsad in Bombay. In 1955 the prestigious Madras Music Academy invited him to perform before a formidable array of Mridangam virtuosos, and Anokhey Lal specially cherished their words of praise.

The crowning glory of Anokhey Lal's career and a rich experience that he was keenly looking forward to would have been the extensive performing tour of Europe and the USA as an accompanist of Ustād Vilayat Khan (aīr). They were scheduled to fly abroad but tragically, Anokhey Lal was snatched away from this world a few days earlier, at the peak of his career. Gangrene had been troubling him since 1956 or so. He had been receiving excellent treatment in Benaras, Patna and Calcutta and getting temporary relief. Therefore, he had been bravely carrying on with his busy routine. Even one week prior to his death, he performed in Music Conferences in Chhapra and Muzaffarpur, after which he became so ill that he had to be hospitalised in Benaras where he died on 15th March 1958.

Pandit Kanthe Maharaj

(1880-1969)

(Veteran of Banaras Gharānā of Tablā)

We are a fortunate generation to have had many musical giants as our contemporaries. Reminiscences of some concerts in which "Bābā" Ustad Allaiddin Khan of Maihar (sarod and rabāb) was accompanied on the tablā by Pandit Kanthe Maharaj of Varanasi, always revive nostalgic memories of an era of genuine *sangita-sādhaks* (music devotees) whose magnificent obsession was the pursuit of music throughout their lives. One of the earliest concerts of these two ageing veterans was the one arranged before an invited audience in Studio Number One of Akashvani, Lucknow, in the nineteen-fifties. This studio was the venue of many exclusive and memorable music concerts by great maestros. The studio was small compared to today's big auditoria, but it used to be jam-packed with almost two hundred genuine *rasikas*, and the concerts had an intimate *mehfil* atmosphere.

This particular concert in which Bābā played on the rabāb briefly and then on the sarod with Kanthe Maharaj's tablā accompaniment, was being broadcast live, but that did not inhibit the two veterans from pulling each other's legs through amusing mutual comments! Ustad Allaiddin Khan was producing some complicated *swara* combinations in an intricate rhythmic pattern, and Pandit Kanthe Maharaj was zestfully providing matching tablā accompaniment. With his resonant and typical modulations on the *bāyan*, he almost rose a few inches from his seat each time they reached the *sam* (the emphatic starting point) simultaneously. Suddenly, Bābā took us by surprise by speaking into the microphone: "Panditji! you are the bull (*sand*) of Kāśī; I am only the donkey (*gadha*) of Maihar. But let us meet each other's musical challenge." Both burst into guffaws and the audience into loud peals of laughter. What a pity that the era of tape-recordings and Door-darshan had not arrived at that time! Recordings used to be done on delicate discs which had a very limited life. However, many subsequent concerts of these two great artistes have been recorded by many AIR stations, especially Delhi.

The Kabirchaurā mohallā (locality) of Varanasi is like a small musical township because here are located the residences of many celebrated musicians who have kept up the musical sanctity and traditions of this ancient and sacred "eternal" city. Musical and magical notes from assiduously trained male and female voices, from *sāhanāis* and *sārangis*, and sonorous *bols* and *parans* from tablā *bāyans* have kept the very air of this mohallā musically surcharged.

Kanthe Maharaj was born in a very musical family in Kabirchaurā in the month of Āswin in the year 1880. His father, Pandit Dilip Misra, was a good tablā player and his mother, Shyamkumari Devi, was a very simple and pious lady. Their house was surrounded by streets filled with musical sounds throughout the day and late into the night. Kanthe Maharaj's elder brother, Madhav Prasad Misra, showed extraordinary aptitude for the tablā even as a child. Their father started giving him training very early, and pinned all his future hopes on him. Madhav Prasad's tragic and sudden death in boyhood was a great shock that nearly shattered his dotting parents. Kanthe Maharaj was only seven at that time and his younger brother was a mere infant. Deeply worried and moved by his parents' grief, he consoled them with a precocity beyond his seven years: "Father, please teach me to play on the tablā. I shall try my utmost to fulfill all the hopes you had pinned on my *Dada*."

Dilip Misra was moved by the boy's mature assurance and began to give him systematic training in tablā. Noticing his eagerness and extraordinary talent for the art, he took him to the house of "Vādya-rasa-rāj". Pt Baldev Sahai Misra, the noted exponent of the Benares *gharānā* of tablā. They were actually related to him because Baldev Sahai was the son of Kanthe Maharaj's paternal aunt and he was thus his first cousin. Kanthe Maharaj addressed him as "Bhaiyaji".

His initial training under Baldev Sahai continued uninterruptedly for three years until the latter was invited to join the Nepal royal court as a *darbari* artiste. Separation from his loving guru nearly broke young Kanthe's heart because of his deep attachment to him. He felt so miserable that barely a year had passed before he began to pester his father to permit him to join his guru in Nepal. During those times, a trip to Nepal took five or even more days, and the journey was fraught with many discomforts and perils. But the young pupil was so adamant that at last his father had to agree to send him with Pt Ramdasji (father of Pandit Sukhdev Maharaj) who was going to join the Nepal *darbar*. The journey was completed in five long days. Meanwhile, Pandit Baldev Sahai had grown a beard and looked more like a venerable *sādhu*! Kanthe took some time to recognise his guru, and when he did, he clung to him, shedding tears of joy. Pandit Sahai who had always loved his devoted and hard-working young disciple, groomed him into such an accomplished tablā player that Kanthe was now ready to be launched into the world of performing artistes as a fine representative of the popular "Banaras tablā *gharānā*" of Pandit Ram Sahai Misra, the creator of this style.

Young Kanthe Maharaj gave his debut in the Nepal royal court before an audience of connoisseurs and created an excellent impression. His fame spread along with his renowned guru's. Meanwhile, Kanthe Maharaj's parents chose a girl from Varanasi as their future daughter-in-law. The news was conveyed to the guru who sent Kanthe back to Varanasi with his blessings to start his life as a householder and as a performing artiste. The tragic death of his young wife a couple of years later made Kanthe Maharaj decide to devote his entire life to the art of tablā. He never remarried. As his younger brother, Hariji, died prematurely leaving his young family helpless, Kanthe Maharaj adopted Hari's brilliant son Kishan, lavished all his love on him and brought him up like his own son. The master passed on his entire art to Kishan who proved a brilliant and deserving legatee of his musical wealth.

Kanthe Maharaj began to get plenty of bookings in All-India Music Conferences, AIR concerts, etc., and his fame spread. For years together he continued his daily practice on the tablā—nearly fourteen to sixteen hours a day! For him the act of tablā playing was his medium of worship and through the eloquent language of his tablā *bols*, he used to experience a rare feeling of joy and bliss. Often he used to practise on his tablā for hours in front of the idol of Hanuman in the "Sankar-Mocan Temple" in Varanasi. A rapt crowd of music lovers and devotees used to sit and enjoy the session for many hours. One hears reports of his marathon recitals with which Pandit Kanthe Maharaj astounded his audiences. One such session was on the occasion of a celebration in Pandit Samta Prasad's (Gudai Maharaj's) house when his elder son Kumari was born. According to eye-witness accounts, Kanthe Maharaj played from midnight till the early hours

of the morning! These endurance tests gave ample proofs of his robust constitution and his sustained *riyāz* of several decades. Another memorable tablā solo of his was in an All-India Music Conference in Calcutta in 1954 where, it was reported, he played continuously for two hours and twenty minutes!

Besides his impressive art, another reason for his popularity was his good and magnanimous temperament. He held his rivals in the field in the highest esteem and was respected for his high character and warm nature. Among his great contemporaries in the field of tablā were Khalifa Abid Hussain Khan of the Lucknow *gharānā*, Ustad Nathu Khan of the "Dilli" (Delhi) style, and the peerless Ustad Ahmad Jan Thirakwa. On one occasion, a unique tablā *jugalbandi* of Thirakwa and Kanthe Maharaj had been arranged in an All-India Music Conference in Bombay. After the exciting percussion duet (or duel?) by the two veterans, they embraced each other in front of the vast applauding audience. While Thirakwa spent the major part of his career as a court musician in the Rampur *darbar*, and subsequently many years as Professor on the staff of the Bhatkhande College of Lucknow, Kanthe Maharaj remained an independent performing artiste and guru and he groomed several fine disciples.

Even after winning countrywide fame, Kanthe Maharaj retained his humility and disarming simplicity. He remained a true devotee of the art. When his fingers touched the tablā *bāyan*, he did so in the spirit of a devotee using his rosary to say his prayers. He used to say: "I shall never commercialise my art. The tablā is the medium through which I seek *mokṣa*."

Producing sonorous modulations on the *bāyan* by varying pressures was one of the special features of his style that his listeners admired and enjoyed. Some of his admirers used to quip: "How fondly Panditji massages and caresses his *bāyan*!" The *uthāns* with which he got off with a flying and impressive start during his solo recitals, immediately captured the full attention of his listeners. He was perfectly at ease even when playing rare and complicated *tālas* like the *Brahmatāl*, *Pāncam-sawāri*, *Lakṣmītal*, etc. Kanthe Maharaj had a rich stock of *gais chhānds*, *parans*, etc. Luckily for us, our contemporary Pandit Kishan Maharaj, who is Pandit Kanthe Maharaj's most brilliant *sisya*, besides being his adopted son, has imbibed the entire art and repertoire of the late maestro.

Only real connoisseurs could fully comprehend and appreciate Kanthe Maharaj's amazing virtuosity in even the most complicated and rare *tālas*. While he was a popular soloist, he was equally popular as an accompanist of great musicians like Ustad Allaiddin Khan, Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Ustad Bismillah Khan, Pandit Omkarnath Thakur, Ustad Vilayat Khan, (sitār), Sri Pannalal Ghosh (flute), Smt Sharan Rani (sarod), and many others.

Music being his chosen path for salvation, he considered it his duty to pass on as much of his musical wealth to his numerous disciples as they could imbibe. Pandit Kishan Maharaj, Pandit Badri Maharaj, Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Sharada Sahai, Natu Babu, and the father of today's popular Kumar Bose are among his prominent disciples. Among them, Kishan Maharaj occupies the most eminent position.

Kanthe Maharaj won many prestigious honours like the Presidential Award in 1961, a special Plaque from the Sangita Parishad (Varanasi), another award from the Benares Hindu University in 1966-67, the title of "Vādya Siromani" and so on. Even after he became bedridden towards the last years of his life, Kanthe Maharaj always kept his tablā *bāyan* next to his bed. It is a wonder that even in his ripe old age, the vitality of his firm fingers remained unimpaired, and that due to excessive *riyāz*, his index finger had to undergo surgery many times during his career. Right up to his seventies, he continued to be a popular performing artiste.

On the night of the first of August, 1969, Kanthe Maharaj's long life ended, at the ripe old age of eighty-nine. A stream of tributes flowed from all over north India and these were broadcast over the Akashvani network.

One of the most unforgettable AIR programmes was in the National Programme series in which both Pandit Kanthe Maharaj and Pt Kishan Maharaj performed in the "Guru *Sisya Paramparā*" series.

Kanthe Maharaj lived long enough to see his favourite disciple and adopted son growing into an international celebrity both as a soloist and as an accompanist of topost most artistes like Ustads Ali Akbar Khan (sarod), Vilayat Khan (sitār), Pandit Ravi Shankar (sitār), Nikhil Banerji (Sitār) and Birju Maharaj (the celebrated exponent of Lucknow *Kathak*). A top-ranking artiste of AIR and Door-darshan, and a most widely travelled artiste, Kishan Maharaj has won international fame. He is also a good scholar in his subject and a delightful artiste to interview. Overwhelmed with his love and reverence for his father-guru, he says about Kanthe Maharaj whom he addressed as "Tauji": "Each pore of my being is permeated by his great art." Born in Kabirchaurā on 3rd September 1923 on "Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭami Day", he was aptly named "Kishan". He has been included in numerous official delegations sent by the Government to propagate the art of India abroad, and he has been honoured with many awards.