Dwelling in my Voice:
Tradition as musical judgment and aesthetic sense in North Indian classical Dhrupad

By

Sumitra Ranganathan

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

in the Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Bonnie C. Wade, Chair
Professor Benjamin E. Brinner
Professor Charles K. Hirschkind

Summer 2015

Dwelling in my Voice:
Tradition as musical judgment and aesthetic sense in North Indian classical Dhrupad

By Sumitra Ranganathan

Abstract

Dwelling in my Voice:
Tradition as musical judgment and aesthetic sense
in North Indian classical Dhrupad

By
Sumitra Ranganathan

Doctor of Philosophy in Music
University of California, Berkeley

Professor Bonnie C. Wade, Chair

In this dissertation, I examine notions of tradition and fidelity to tradition in Indian classical music by investigating the development of musical judgment, categorical knowledge and aesthetic sense in the performance of Dhrupad - a genre of Hindustani music with medieval origins. Focusing on two contemporary performers of Dhrupad with very different histories of listening and practice, I show that categorical knowledge and strong notions of fidelity to tradition arise directly from the deeply dialogic and inter-subjective processes through which individual musicians develop and stabilize coherent aesthetic response to handed-down musical materials in situated practice. Specifically, I argue that strong notions of tradition and fidelity to tradition in Indian classical music are irreducible to a discussion of the disciplinary technologies of colonialism and cultural nationalism. Rather, I propose that tradition in Indian classical music has to be understood in dialogic relationship with intelligibility and individual musical judgment.

I develop an analytical framework to investigate the interactive basis of musical judgment and categorical sense in Dhrupad performance. I understand forms of knowledge produced in performance to be acoustemic – namely, epistemologies produced through active sensing in and through sound. I investigate how formal structures of knowledge in a classical music system become available as human sensibility, affect and soma-aesthetic knowledge in the interactivity of musical environments - an intertwining engendered in part by the affordance of musico-aesthetic forms in Indian classical music. I show that musical objects develop both heterogeneity and ontological weight in the interactivity of Dhrupad vocal performance, rendering performance practice within traditional lineages systematic and heterogeneous, coherent and diverse. Based on this analysis I argue that heterogeneity and diversity are *not* antithetical to the existence of a Great Tradition of Indian classical music but *a part of its sonic logic* as a domain of creative human activity. In positing that the categories, codes, classifications and ontologies of the most hoary of genres in Indian classical music are constitutive of and constituted by situated practice of classical music in particular communities, this dissertation stakes a claim to the intellectual history of traditions in postcolonial contexts.

என் ஒரு கண்ணாகிய சந்த்ரசேகரரும்
மற்றொரு கண்ணாகிய வித்யாதீர்த்தரும்
உட்கண்ணாகிய உமேச்வரரும்
இதயகமலமான சாரதையின் மடியில் விளையாடும்
ஸ்ரீ கிருஷ்ணருக்கு
அவருடைய இச்சொற்களை
என் பக்தி நூலாகப் படித்து மகிழ்விக்கட்டும்!

Table of Contents

Notation Conventions

sargam	Scale degree	Scale degree name
S	1	tonic
r	2	flat second
R	2	second
g	3	flat third
G	3	third
M	4	fourth
m	4'	augmented fourth
P	5	fifth
d	6	flat sixth
D	6	sixth
n	7	flat seventh
N	7	seventh
Upper octave	Superscript ^{u}	
Lower octave	Subscript $_{l}$	

Acknowledgments

Most specially, I thank my supervisor Bonnie Wade. Her gift for listening and making something out of my barely formed ideas is a constant source of amazement to me. To professors Bonnie Wade, Benjamin Brinner, Jocelyne Guilbault, Charles Hirschkind, Richard Taruskin, Mary Ann Smart, and Steven Feld my thanks for the very high bar you set as thinkers and scholars, and your enormous generosity as scholars and mentors. To Melissa Hacker, Lisa Robinson, Jim Coates, and Solomon Lefler - many thanks for immense support.

My musical voice belongs to Pandit Falguni Mitra, my primary teacher. It is to him I owe whatever I have managed to understand about music. To Smt. Pratima Mitra, I owe a few decades of musical and family support – her home has been open to me any time I needed it. Since 2009, I have had the privilege of extending my musical world by learning and working with Pandit Indra Kishore Mishra. My deep thanks to him for allowing me in to what is most precious to him. To the musicians, and their students and families in Bettiah, Muzzafarpur, Patna, Benares, and Kolkata where I did my main research – especially (late) Raj Kishore Mishra, (late) Shankar Lal Mishra, and their families, Bhatuknath Sharma, and Apurbalal Manna - I extend my thanks for your generosity with expertise, time, conversation, and family support. To V. N. Muthukumar, M. V. Ramana, Divyanand Caird and N. Sivakumar I owe many musical interactions and insights.

This work would not have been possible without the support of Padmashri Gajendra Narain Singh who has been integral to sustaining the music of the Mullick families of Bettiah. He introduced me to the hereditary families and gave me access to his invaluable research on the history of these families, and has continued to advise me on my research throughout the intervening years. P. N. Narayanan, IAS, and Mihir Kumar Singh, IAS helped me in immeasurable ways by giving me the benefit of their immense experience, resources and connections. K K Pande IAS gave me a valuable recording from the previous generation of musicians in Bettiah. Aside from the Mullick families, Anil Lucas, Dr. Chaubey and Dr. Mahadev Prasad were valuable sources in Bettiah, In Benares, I deeply valued my interactions with Dr. Rai Anandkrishna and his family. A fount of knowledge, he gave me a feeling for Benares' musical history and culture that I could not have got elsewhere. Similarly, my interactions with Krishnakumar Rastogi were invaluable in bringing the past alive both in speech and material artifacts. K K Rastogi shared out-of-print books, rare photographs and a Dhrupad recording from earlier generations. My interactions with historians Kartik Lahiry and Kameswar Mishra, as well as Sunanda and Prof. Bhagatte were likewise very helpful to my research. I thank Ravi Mathur for hosting me at ITC Sangeet Research Academy during my Fulbright Hays fellowship.

To (late) Professor Harold Powers, Richard Widdess, Lisa Gold, Munis Faruqui, Katherine Schofield, and Nalini Delvoye I owe much intellectual help. I thank Lila Huettemann for teaching me Hindi, and Carmen Matiescu for teaching me Western music theory and composition, both invaluable for graduate school. I have benefited from consultation with many scholars in India during my research. Dr. N. Ramanathan and Dr. Karaikudi Subramanian have been constant sources over the years on topics musical and musicological. Dr. Pappu Venugopal Rao, Sangita Kalanidhi R Vedavalli, Dr. Suvarnalata Rao and Smt. Meena Bannerjee have likewise been very generous with their time and expertise. I also thank Dr. Ritwik Sanyal and Prof. Amlan Dasgupta for helpful interactions.

In graduate school, my friends in room 107 provided the kind of intellectual and emotional support that makes for a perfect graduate school environment. Specially, being around with Miki Kaneda and Robbie Beahrs was a fantastic introduction to graduate school in the United States. V. N. Muthukumar and Manisha Anantharaman have helped me throughout my graduate program. Both of them know this project better than I do, and the analytic I ended up with benefitted from both their insights. I thank my nephew Harsha Anantharaman for many enlightening conversations we had when both of us should have been sleeping. I disappointed him by not being able to get all the characters in the Silmarillion right in my head.

To Professor Philip Anderson and Joyce Anderson – thanks for your friendship and company at Princeton, a privilege I value deeply. My interactions with Professors T V Ramakrishnan, G. Baskaran, V. Srinivasan and (late) Rahul Basu have been a valuable part of my education. In my previous professional life, Albert Impink ,Harry Sangree, Ray Garcia, Vinita Srivastava and Diane Fama helped me in many ways. To Niranjana, Geetha, Asha, Hemashri, Ambika, Bhanu and their families, I owe much hospitality, help and company.

At home, some people supported this dissertation in ways that cannot be compensated. Most of all, my mother Shilavati Ranganathan, my other family Kameswari and (late) S. Natarajan, my sister Ambujam, brother in law Anantharaman, niece and nephew Manisha and Harsha, all of who cut me so much slack on my duties that I can't repay them in this life. Ponna Mami and Saraswati took over every job I had many times over in the last eight years to allow me to work, as did many others who have helped at home. To Arvind Sivaramakrishnan, I owe a huge debt for leaving me a house where I did most of my writing. To the 13 dogs and 4 cows I have known as close companions, and the several dogs and cats I have interacted with in my life – thank you for keeping me in a good mood.

To Sri. G. Ramasubramanian, Kum. Sharada, Sivakumar and Muthukumar I owe not only thanks but also the future. They are going to help me in many more ways than they have already done.

Prologue: choosing between milk and water

> "You are Bhagavati, you are Sarasvati, you have been brought here by her, my *mata;* your *guruji* Falguni Mitra has taught you many things even before you came to me. But after you came here, you have been hearing pure Bettiah *gharana gaurhar bani*. You can choose between milk and water".

The ability to separate milk from water is a *puranic* reference to Hamsa, the bird which has the ability to discriminate *sat* from *asat* – Truth about the Self from the delusion of the non-Self.[1] Sarasvati, the goddess of learning and knowledge, embodies Truth for seekers of Self Knowledge. In that moment, Indra Kishore Mishra's use of the reference raised the register of his statement to being not just about a sense of judgment in music, but about musical ethics and a musical Truth.

Indra Kishore, a hereditary musician from a lineage of Dhrupad singers associated with the erstwhile Princely court of Bettiah since the late 17th century, was throwing me the gauntlet, challenging me to discriminate Truth in a single song.[2] His counterpoint for comparison was the same song sung by Falguni Mitra, a non-hereditary musician from a different lineage of Dhrupad singers associated with the same Princely court since the late 18th century. I had begun to learn Dhrupad from Indra Kishore during the course of my research whereas I had already learnt music for several years from Falguni Mitra before I met Indra Kishore.

Dhrupad is a genre of north Indian classical music with medieval origins, and the oldest extant compositional form in Indian classical music. The song under debate is a Dhrupad composition attributed to Mia Tansen, a legendary musician of the late 15th century and a fountainhead for tradition in Hindustani music, the classical music of north India. Many musicians sing Tansens' songs and multiple interpretations exist amongst different traditions. Why would such a song trip Indra Kishore's ethical thermostat? How can such a song become elevated to the status of a musical Truth?

Then began a long discussion with Indra Kishore over ISD – me in my apartment in Berkeley and he in his ancestral house in Bettiah minus electricity and running water, but with cell phone in hand. I tried to convince Indra Kishore that Tansen's

---

[1] The *puranas* have yielded many aphorisms for daily life and are sacred texts of *sanatana dharma*, or Vedic religion, to be distinguished from the modern term Hinduism.

[2] While separating milk from water is often used as a colloquial reference in English to denote the ability to recognize the real goods, like most idioms it has a particularity within a shared cultural context. When Mishra used the term, he knew I would catch on to its *puranic* source, because of the many other times he had invoked such references in our conversations.

compositions are sung by many, many musicians and have been sung in various ways over six hundred odd years. That, even though Falguni Mitra was from the Bettiah *gharana*, the latter got his tradition from the hereditary lineage of the Mishras of Benares who lived in Bettiah for over a hundred years but then migrated out to Benares and Kolkata. That it is not surprising Falguni Mitra sings the song differently than Indra Kishore, with a different aesthetic vision, at a medium-slow tempo rather than very slow tempo, and even does rhythmic variations, or *layakari,* in it, all of which tripped Indra Kishore's sense of musical correctness.

Indra Kishore was having none of it. He stood his ground that the song must be sung at a very slow tempo with the precise circular movements that characterize his practice of the *gaurhar bani,* the esoteric aesthetic model to which this song is set in his tradition. Listening to Indra Kishore, I recalled how he described the song to me when I was cataloguing his repertoire in Bettiah. His father when teaching it to him would say, "every note must weigh like a stone; it should be so heavy one cannot lift it". And every note when Indra Kishore ji sings this song indeed has the weight of a precious stone. It is an extraordinary song even amongst the very many fantastic *gaurhar bani* songs in his repertoire.

But, what of Falguni Mitra and his interpretation? Could I dismiss it as water mixed with milk? The hours and hours spent with Falguni Mitra came rushing back to me, when I came to better understand the bases of the judgments he made about tempo, ornamentation, and *layakari*, in relation to this song and many other songs. Falguni's musical judgment was sourced from a different history of listening and practice than Indra Kishore's, although ancestral figures in both their lineages participated in the same early 19th century court culture and shared soundscapes for over a hundred years in 19th century Bettiah.

Falguni Mitra wouldn't budge an inch either in our discussions when I tried to debate the rationalization of his judgments. At the end of a particularly grueling session of me asking "but why, but why, but why,..", the normally patient Falguni spoke with more bite than is customary for him; "If I can't convince you with all I have told you, I can't say anything more". It took me several months more to understand the life of a song within this musician's practice and just how much work goes in to setting and then settling a single song into a "jewel in the Bettiah crown" as he described one such song in his repertoire.

Remembering all this in the instant of being told by Indra Kishore "You know how to separate milk from water", I had to plead, "No *guruji* it is not such a simple matter for me to separate milk from water – even though it is crystal clear to you".

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In this dissertation I listen in to a musician's declaration, "You know how to separate milk from water". As a researcher I was not able to separate milk from water in a way that voted clearly for a musical Truth. But that interruptive evaluative moment leads me to investigate the processes through which Indian classical musicians come to believe their versions of things musical to be the Truth and nothing but the Truth. I examine notions of tradition and fidelity to tradition in Indian classical music by investigating the development of musical judgment, categorical knowledge and aesthetic sense in the performance of Dhrupad, a genre of Hindustani music with medieval origins.

My case study involves multiple lineages of Dhrupad musicians associated with the erstwhile Princely court of Bettiah (a rural town in the contemporary state of Bihar). My project is to be distinguished both from conventional analyses of tradition in Indian classical music that investigate the transmission of a specific body of knowledge within hereditary and non-hereditary musical lineages, and from functional considerations of socio-historic context in understanding musical practices. I investigate Dhrupad vocal performance as an acoustemic environment – an environment in which forms of knowledge and ways of knowing are dialogic with sound. Using a case study of lineages associated with the erstwhile Princely court of Bettiah, I analyze the constellation of practices within which Dhrupad performance becomes configured as a domain of experience in different environments for the music of the Bettiah Dhrupad lineages.

Through an extended analysis of forms of knowledge generated in musical life in particular places, I establish that Dhrupad performance becomes intelligible as tradition through processes of emplacement that transform categorical knowledge about Dhrupad as classical music. Focusing on contemporary performers of Dhrupad with very different histories of listening and practice, I show that categorical knowledge and strong notions of fidelity to tradition arise directly from the deeply dialogic and inter-subjective processes through which individual musicians develop and stabilize coherent aesthetic response to handed-down musical materials in situated practice amongst particular communities. I investigate how the formal structures of knowledge in a classical music system become available as human sensibility, affect and soma-aesthetic knowledge in the interactivity of musical environments - an intertwining engendered in part by the affordance of musico-aesthetic forms in Indian classical music. I show that musical objects develop both heterogeneity and ontological weight in the interactivity of Dhrupad vocal performance, rendering performance practice within traditional lineages systematic and heterogeneous, coherent and diverse.

Based on this analysis, I argue that the categories, codes and ontologies of Hindustani classical music as an organized system of knowledge are sustained and

transformed in processes of emplacement through which the situated practice of Dhrupad becomes intelligible as tradition. In using the term situated practice I treat tradition in Indian classical music as a response to the sound worlds gathered by the practice of music in particular places. In using the term emplacement, I indicate that the ways in which an Indian classical musician grasps this sound world implicate the senses and the body, emotion and emotional memory, as fundamental to the development of musical knowledge and musical reason.

In positing that the categories, codes, classifications and ontologies of the most hoary of genres in Indian classical music are constitutive of and constituted by the situated practice of classical music in particular communities, this dissertation stakes a claim to the intellectual history of traditions in postcolonial contexts.

Indian Nationalism, epistemic encounters and the birth of Tradition

> "This book is about Dhrupad, one of several distinct styles of North Indian classical music… Throughout our book, the 'continuity' of the Dhrupad tradition over many generations and many centuries of cultural and political change is frequently demonstrated or asserted." [3]
>
> "The institutions of classical music in South India – not only discourse about it but the very sound and practice of the music – has been produced in and through the colonial encounter."[4]

India has been at the heart of a debate in the Humanities for a few decades now. Until the eighties, it was quite customary for dissertations to start out with the assumption that Indian systems of thought and practice had long, largely uninterrupted histories that went back a few thousand years. With Chatterjee's landmark book "The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories", it was no longer possible to describe Indian history in any field of study as a continuous trajectory of a monolithic Great Tradition (Chatterjee, 1993).

A few decades of postcolonial scholarship in the Humanities has set out to establish that the notion of India as well as the emergence of the Great Indian Tradition in diverse fields is of distinctly modern vintage - a direct result of Orientalist efforts to re-invent an ancient, Sanskritic Indian tradition with the categories, codes and organized bodies of written knowledge that measured up to colonial epistemologies of literacy and literalism. The historiographic tradition to which these recent scholarly works belong is a powerful presence in the Humanities and beyond. Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" and Partha Chatterjee's "The Nation

[3] Sanyal and Widdess (2004, xiii, xvii)
[4] Weidman (2006, 17)

and its fragments" set off a wave of scholarship wherein the logics of Colonialism and the modernizing forces of Nationalism have been argued as constitutive of the very foundations of cultures, traditions, belief systems and knowledge systems of the world's societies.[5] Chatterjee and Chakrabarty in particular have been singularly influential in the project of provincializing Europe, showing that the logics of Colonialism depended on generating universals from a bunch of heterogeneous and particular set of situated practices, and using them to frame and evaluate the rest of humanity, and Europe itself in this image (Chakrabarty 2000; Bauman and Briggs 2003, 3).

The impact of postcolonial studies on scholarship on India and its neighbors cannot be over stated. Across governance, civil society, legal codes, caste, education, morality, religion, spirituality, literature, dance, poetry, sexuality and aesthetics, there has been a relentless inquiry into the genealogy of traditions, institutions, systems of knowledge, and normative practices that have defined Indian civilization as a classical and traditional civilization with a long history to the modern Indian. Revisionist readings and revisionist histories date many foundational institutions of modern India to colonial encounter, including the very notion of a nation called India. In the domains of language, religion and culture, the argument advanced through diverse analyses has been that what was a diverse and heterogeneous set of practices prior to Colonialism were reformatted into Great Traditions by the juggernauts of Colonialism and Nationalism through the now familiar processes of codifying, classifying, and purifying. The project of classicization in the domain of cultural practices such as music - so the argument goes - led Indian cultural nationalists to classicize, codify, sacralize, cleanse, regulate and discipline a bunch of dis-articulated practices into ancient Classical Traditions that could represent an ancient and modern Nation. At the end of this exercise, India and her so-called historical civilization seem to lie bleeding and torn, a mimesis of its fragmented history.

Within scholarship on Indian music, the hermeneutics of suspicion has been slow to take hold. Until the 1980s, scholarship in North Indian music was focused on describing the organization and workings of tradition in terms of kinship structures, teacher-student relationships, transmission and analysis of style.[6] While some authors did pay explicit attention to the impact of modernization on the social organization and stylistic traditions of Indian music, music scholarship was mainly concerned with the normative conception of tradition that has been governed by the *gharana* system in the north and the trinity of composers and their canonical compositions, as well as stylistic lineages, in the south. Beginning with Jackson's revisionist history that undermined the composer-musician Thyagaraja's canonical

[5] Anderson (1983; 1991), Chatterjee (1993)
[6] Deshpande (1973; 1987), Kippen (1988), Daniel Neuman (1980), Wade (1984)

status as a Saint,[7] historians of Indian classical music began to question the assumptions of spirituality and purity that undergirded much scholarly and common public understandings of Karnatic music, the music of south India.

But it was only in the late 1990s that a whole wave of scholarship began to dig holes under the tectonic weight of the classical music traditions of India, when heterogeneity and diversity came specifically to be seen as markers of the pre-modern, antithetical to the unitarity of a Great Tradition of Classical music born in colonial modernity. The influential writings of Farrell (1997), Bakhle (2005), Subramanian (2006) and Weidman (2006) in particular date the emergence of the classical music traditions of north and south India to the early 20th century encounter with Colonial epistemologies of literacy and literalism. According to these authors, the technologies of notation, printing, radio and recording were integral to this project. Focusing on the discourse around music writing, Farrell (1997) argues that Western imperialist notions of literacy and progress came to be accepted by educated urban upper middle class Indians. Farrell observes that the colonial presence exerted a pressure by "ideas of control and representation through theories of notation, intonation and the role of Indian music in a progressive, modern India" (Farrell 1997, 48). These epistemic encounters instigated urban middle class Indians to discipline Indian classical music through institutionalization, deploying technologies of notation, standardized pedagogy, and standardized testing and grading schemes (Farrell 1997; Bakhle 2005; Subramanian 2006).

Writing on colonial South India, Subramanian describes the consolidation of tradition that began in the courts of Tanjore and in the hands of the major composers of the 18th century, and crystallized in the 20th century with the formation of the Madras Music Academy, the Madras Gayan Samaj, and the founding of several schools where the middle class could be persuaded to send their children to be educated in music (Subramanian, 2006). Like Farrell, she finds the disciplinary technologies of music notation, standardized repertoire, and circulation of notated compositions that could be used for mass musical education, especially of women, crucial in the creation of a musical public sphere. At the same time, national radio, personal copies of songbooks and gramophone records enabled the cultivation of music as a private experience of devotion for the modern listening subject. In parallel, efforts to de-stigmatize music, making it respectable for middle class people to participate in it created a middle class public musical culture that was crucial in Subramanian's estimation, to invoking music in the struggle for independence as a national classical music.

Discussing the cultural agenda of the Madras Music Academy in cultural construction intimately linked to nationalist politics, Subramanian observes that the

[7] Jackson (1994)

"jettisoning of oral traditions of instruction and their substitution by written notational primers" was integral to the project of standardizing and classicizing a previously open, largely unmarked and variable practice. "The openness and variety that characterized the system, when musicians and performers had drawn from a myriad range of sources, was jettisoned at the altar of tradition and new aesthetic sensibility" (Subramanian, 1999, 134).

Working on Hindustani music, Janaki Bakhle argues that the classical music of north India is of specifically colonial vintage, a product of late 19th century efforts by organizations and individuals intent on inventing a classical tradition that could be co-opted as an ancient one for the Hindu nationalist cause, in the process writing the Muslim maestros (Ustads) and courtesan performers out of their authorial roles in the history of Indian music (Bakhle, 2005). She credits two prime movers for completing the project of cultural Nationalism: Vishnu Narayan Bhatkande, who "tried to classify, categorize and classicize music" and Vishnu Digambar Paluskar whose principal contribution was "to clean and sacralize it" (*ibid.*, 8).

Like Subramanian, Bakhle builds a disarming picture of Hindustani music prior to classicization as an unmarked collection of poetic-compositional forms (*ibid.*, 3), practiced mostly within families, in which musical learning was handed down to "sons, nephews, grandsons and grandnephews, and, on occasion, to a talented male apprentice from outside the family (*ibid.*, 6). She describes it as "a random practice" (*ibid.*, 131) lacking a "connected history, a systematic and orderly pedagogy and respectability" (*ibid.*, 7) and credits Bhatkande's commitment that allowed for "a random practice to be disciplined by a connected history, a stern typology, and a documented musicology" (*ibid.*, 131).

However, even while re-calibrating Indian classical music's origins to colonial modernity, neither Bakhle nor Subramanian position its content as specifically colonial in origin. Rather Bakhle states several times in her book that Hindustani music's practices remained largely unaffected by the logics and rationalities of cultural nationalism and colonial modernity. In marked contrast, Amanda Weidman states, *"…*the institutions of classical music in South India – not only discourse about it but the very sound and practice of the music – has been produced in and through the colonial encounter (2006, 17)*."* Weidman's work adheres scare quotes not just around the term "classical" but around every concept and notion commonly considered definitional to Indian classical music practice by contemporary Indian society: in particular, the "composer", "composition", "*guru/*teacher*"* and "oral" "tradition".

In four bold moves Weidman ventriloquizes the voice, births the composer and composition in music notation and printing, and creates the institution of the *guru* in the threat of the gramophone. Her argument, traced chapter after chapter through myriad and varied examples, is potently simple. The notion of Indian

classical music as an oral tradition was born at the same time as literacy came along to take over its domain. The tradition of the *guru* (teacher as an institution) and a strong notion of fidelity to tradition were born at the same time the technology to replace it came along. These were not simple take-overs. The technologies threatened to completely transform the practices of pedagogy and performance. The hapless musician faced with the attractions of freely available music on gramophone records and books develops notions of fidelity through repeated listening and recourse to notation even while discourse ratchets up a notch to create and preserve an authentic oral tradition in the moment of encountering print, and to create and preserve the *guru* as an institution at the instant of spinning a disc.

Writing history between the cocoon of continuity and the rhetoric of rupture

If Hindustani music were a "random" practice, how does one understand Indra Kishore's exclamation "You know how to choose between milk and water" in the context of a single song? If the notion of a composer, composition, oral tradition, notions of correct intonation, pedagogical method, and a strong notion of tradition and fidelity to tradition are "produced in colonial encounter", the debate between a hereditary musician speaking in an ethical register about a song from his repertoire and the equally strong rebuttal from his non-hereditary counterpart belongs at best in the "dust heap of authenticity debates".[8]

In deviating from this lineage of scholarship, I do not claim Indian music's antiquity by quoting the evidence of texts or pure experience; nor do I write a subaltern account in which individual local histories are seen as resisting the formatting power of nation state and colonial domination. Rather, I re-examine and contest the claim that the transition which happened in Hindustani (and Karnatic) music in the late 19th century was that it went from being an open, unmarked, largely uncritical, heterogeneous practice localized within families and teaching lineages, to a marked practice with an organized systematic body of knowledge with codes, categories, and hierarchies - a child born of colonial encounter in which a strong sense of tradition and fidelity emerged in the encounter with technologies of notation, print culture, radio and recording.

This cumulative claim of recent scholarship on Indian classical music can be contested in at least one of two ways. The first, elaborated by Schofield, does a critical reading of the main criteria used by different post-colonial scholars to distinguish the emergence of a Classical tradition in the late 19th century, and demonstrates that every one of these markers of a Classical tradition was already

[8] Born, Georgina and David Hesmondhalgh (2000)

present at the Imperial Mughal court of Delhi in the Golden Age of Classical music from 1600 to 1857 AD (Schofield, 2010).[9]

The other way is to question the more fundamentally divisive assumption that music practiced largely within families has little or no epistemological bearing on the codes, categories and conventions of an organized Great Tradition, and that on-the-ground existence of diversity and heterogeneity is tantamount to the absence of a strong sense of tradition and fidelity to tradition. I adopt this approach to debate the coupling of strong notions of tradition and fidelity to tradition with colonial epistemologies of literacy, and literalism and the invention of music notation and recording.

I propose that the debate over song in the small world of individual musical lineages is integrally related to the mechanisms through which Indian classical music as an organized system of knowledge is configured and transformed as a domain of experience in situated practice. Using the genre of Dhrupad as a case study, I show that heterogeneity and diversity are *not* antithetical to the existence of a Great Tradition of Indian classical music but *a part of its sonic logic* as a domain of creative human activity.

I respond to the gauntlet "You know how to choose between milk and water" by listening in to the interactive processes through which individual musicians with very different histories of listening and practice develop a sense of judgment for musico-aesthetic categories that define tradition and frame intelligibility in the Dhrupad lineages of the Bettiah *gharana*. I trace the strength of musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition to the interactivity of repeated engagements with handed down musical materials in situated practice - a process that implicates heterogeneity and multiple levels of engagement that straddle the local and the non-local, individual and community, subject and object.

Through this analysis, I show that classical music in the Indian context is both an organized system of knowledge and a situated musical practice that is sustained and transformed through processes of emplacement engendered in part by the affordance of its musico-aesthetic forms. I argue that only this can explain its historical trajectory, the genealogy of its aesthetic categories, and the coherence, heterogeneity and diversity of its sounds.

---

[9] Schofield and her collaborators propose a periodization for Hindustani period as part of a grander historical narrative, one that puts the Golden age between 1600 – 1857 and the second a phase of Musical transitions after 1857. Schofield's dating of the classical age aligns with the textbook history of Hindustani music in scholarly, amateur-historical and popular accounts of Hindustani music. However, what is important to the debate over periodization is her argument, which clearly delineates her intellectual stakes.

Scholarship on tradition and performance in Hindustani music

My project seeks to establish that the debate over song in the small world of individual musical lineages is integral to the mechanisms by which Indian classical music as an organized system of knowledge is emplaced and transformed in the interactivity of musical life in particular places. To investigate and defend this claim, it becomes necessary to bridge the logics of a Great Tradition understood as a set of institutions, canons and norms with the strength and tenor of individual musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition in the small world of musical lineages. In this section I survey the considerable body of scholarship that exists on tradition and performance in Hindustani music to evaluate its critical potential for bridging this gap.

Most scholarly discussions of tradition and transmission of tradition focus primarily on the *gharana* as the primary lens for understanding the organization and workings of tradition in Hindustani music. A whole host of notions about tradition in north Indian music have been built around the nomenclature of the *gharana*. The word *gharana*, deriving from *ghar*, or home, is a term that denotes lineage. As a particular term, the *gharana* is a distinctive musical practice that becomes gathered around a genealogy and perceptions of its continuity are mediated by genealogy. Specific to north Indian music, the *gharana* system is seen as central to the continuity of tradition and an arbiter of authority and authenticity. The major works on the *gharana* are Daniel Neuman's study of social organization, and Deshpande and Wade's studies on Khayal as a genre.[10]

Scholarship has been divided on whether the *gharana* is primarily a social grouping or a musical relationship. Taken as a social grouping, in its inception it was a term used primarily by Muslim hereditary musicians. The family of the founder occupies a singularly important place in the *gharana* model and the *khāndān* - or inheritance through the male genealogical line of the founder of the *gharana* - is perceived as central to continuity of tradition. Musicians belonging to a *khandan* carry considerable authority, by virtue of inheriting the cultural property of the *gharana* through the male genealogical line of the founder. Even while the genealogical *gharana* incorporates disciples from outside the founder's family, these disciples are not perceived as inheriting the cultural property of the tradition.

Viewed as a musical relationship, the term *gharana* becomes synonymous with a

[10] Daniel Neuman (1980), Deshpande (1973; 1987), Wade (1984). Additional insights have been provided by a number of scholars, notably Kippen (1988), Silver (1976), and Owens (1987). More recently Raja has written extensively on *gharana*s and creativity in Hindustani music. (Raja 2005; 2009). Recent works that provide critical insights on social and musical dimensions of Hindustani music in relation to 20th century musical lineages include Katz (2010), Hurrie (2009), Utter (2011), Dard Neuman (2004), and Rahaim (2009).

characteristic or idiomatic musical practice, propagated through teacher-student lines. In this view, a *gharana* is a musical practice that becomes gathered around musical values, and the musical idiom associated with a particular musical household. Unsurprisingly, several multi-generational families of Hindu musicians also claim the term, as it becomes closer to a teacher-disciple (*guru-sishya)* lineage where the focus is on what is transmitted – namely, the characteristic style and values associated with a particular musical household.[11]

An immediate consequence of using the *gharana* as the primary lens for understanding tradition is the analytical bias towards long unbroken lineages, singular style and star performers as primary subjects for ethnographic research. However, as early as 1984, Wade's study of Khayal *gharana*s showed that neither unbroken lines of transmission nor uniform style were markers of Khayal *gharanas* in the late 19th and 20th centuries (Wade 1984).[12] Until the 1990s, studies of tradition continued to focus on musical lineages and analysis of performance practice in the major genres of Hindustani music. Transmission within lineages is the primary unit of analysis for investigating the dynamics of continuity, change, creativity, individuality, and ethics. While these studies provide great insight into the primary stylistic schools of Hindustani music, they attempt to explain the source of musical creativity and musical judgment entirely from within the insulated sound world of musical lineages.

The exclusive focus on lineages and style leaves us without an understanding of the very real competition between the diversity of a musical practice and its memorialization as an object of culure. It gives no framework for discussing musical influence and musical change without invoking either a discourse of loss or rupture, or a celebration of unfettered creativity that obviates a meaningful definition of tradition.

Furthermore, despite hints in the early attention to *gharana* as an adaptive framework[13] and to patronage contexts[14] that musical traditions both function as eco-systems and within eco-systems, systematic frameworks for understanding the connections between sound and environment have remained stubbornly focused on sound separate from context. More recently, Grimes's work attends to geography as

---

[11] Scholars favoring this interpretation include Deshpande (1973; 1987), Wade and Pescatello (1977), and Wade *ibid.*.

[12] Wade found that was a fair amount of cross learning even amongst hereditary musical families, and while there was usually a group style identifiable for different teaching lineages within a single *gharana*, even these group styles allowed for a whole range of individual interpretations. Sometimes singularly talented musicians even managed to completely redefine the characteristic style of their lineage (Wade, *ibid.*)

[13] Daniel Neuman *op. cit.*, Kippen *op. cit.*

[14] Erdman (1985), Wade and Pescatello *op. cit.*

a significant factor in understanding musical creativity, aesthetic preference and processes of transformation in Hindustani music in the mid twentieth century (Grimes, 2011). Focusing on regional influence on Hindustani music in Western and Eastern India, Grimes's work attends to place more as context and influence, stopping short of thinking of sound itself as environment. Thus his study doesn't provide enough of a foothold for investigating forms of knowledge generated by singing in places.

The exclusive emphasis on the *gharana* as an isolated sound world translates to lack of theoretical attention to the possible relationship between Hindustani music as an expert practice maintained within teaching lineages, and the environment in which it is sustained as a cultural practice. In particular, the forms of knowledge generated in musical practice are treated as autonomous and independent from ways of knowing in other dimensions of daily life. Even music perception and cognition studies that treat music as human communication are not culturally specific or contextually situated.[15] As a consequence, there is very little insight into what might constitute an environment for musical practice, or how musical traditions may function as systems of musical and ethical values in relation to the environment for musical practice, or how they may transform in relation to changes in this environment.

If the dominant paradigm for transmission of tradition avers that musical transmission occurs within sonic fishbowls, it gives us no foothold to query how specific musical communities transform to accommodate changes in environment, including the epistemological pressures of Colonialism and Cultural Nationalism with their disciplinary tools of notation, print culture, radio and recording. Scholars such as Bakhle, Subramanian and Weidman have positioned these epistemic colonial encounters as the birth of tradition and strong notions of fidelity to tradition, while what precedes has been set up as a collection of heterogeneous lineages - small isolated sound worlds operating autonomously in an ethical vacuum. Whatever knowledge was produced in these contexts is set aside as unmarked knowledge, lacking indexical reach and ethical tenor. Thus far, studies of Hindustani music give little theoretical or analytical foothold to develop a critical understanding of the epistemologies that undergird the practice of Indian classical music – a baseline that is necessary in order to take a position on the debate over the historicity of Indian classical music as a Great Tradition.

Scholars writing in the 21st century on Hindustani music have looked for paradigms to think about musical performance in relation to the dynamics of individual musicianship and creativity. The insights into musical thinking offered by Dard

[15] An early effort in this direction is Qureshi (1986), but her analysis again separates sound from context though her model ultimately brings both back together.

Neuman, Utter and Rahaim, and by earlier works on cognition such as Clayton and Leante, begin to give a sense for the forms of knowledge produced in musical practice.[16] Yet, they too treat music as an isolated system in which the social is context and the political a formatting of sound. Even when embodiment is integral to the analysis, these analyses do not go beyond thinking of environment as passive social context. For instance, while Dard Neuman's argues that embodied knowledge rather than enumerated knowledge forms the basis of pedagogy in the transmission of performance knowledge in Hindustani music, he does not take the step of investigating the encounter with notation or recording as phenomenal engagement that consults forms of knowledge generated in performance. Rather, embodied performance is projected as the polar opposite of engaging with technology and notions of voice and body as produced by the formatting encounter with disciplinary technologies.

Following Dard Neuman, Utter's study of creativity in the Etawah lineage of sitar musicians and Rahaim's study of gestural lineages in Khayal stay close to the *gharana* framework while investigating musical process, musical thinking and creativity. Utter's discussion of the contemporary sitar musician Ustad Vilayat Khan historicizes the sitar and the lineage, but treats creativity itself as an unbounded and seemingly autonomous process where the brilliant musical mind of Vilayat Khan comes up with a distinct mode of vocalization on the sitar. Thus one learns a great deal about Vilayat Khan's creativity but very little about what could have sourced, inspired, curtailed, bounded or catalyzed this creativity in conjunction with the universe of musical forms.[17] Working on gestural lineages in Khayal, Rahaim focuses on understanding complex musical processes as human expression yet he too treats musicianship as an autonomous system that now includes the body, with social history taking the form of cultural attitudes to gesture.[18] The strong claims made by Rahaim about gesture as a parallel channel to sound are important but over stated, as they do not take into account other models of melodic guidance that may be available to vocalists practicing Khayal, which will be investigated in this dissertation in the context of the Dhrupad genre. Even with the domain of performance, Rahaim's study does not attend to emotion or memory - both integral to musical processes and aesthetic forms in Indian classical music . While Utter's observations on the role of emotion in Vilayat Khan's music and the affective capacity of sound to invoke presence has some resonance with the musician experiences recounted here, he stops well short of theorizing them beyond observing their subjective-archetypal binary constitution (Utter 2011, 267 – 283), ignoring this dimension altogether in his analysis of Vilayat Khan's performance.

---

[16] See for instance Clayton (2000, 2005, 2007), Leante (2009)
[17] Utter *op. cit.*
[18] Rahaim *op. cit.*

Thus, while the above scholars have contributed to understanding forms of knowledge produced in performance, individual practice and transmission between teacher and student, they do not address possible relationships between sound and environment, beyond socio-political and socio-historic contexts. These studies do not give discursive reach to categorical knowledge produced in performance in relation to the categories and logics of colonialism and cultural nationalism. Rather, these are embraced as elided forms of knowledge that these scholarly projects set out to recover from the long reach of colonial epistemologies of literacy and literalism.

Stakes on the ground

Outside of intellectual history, the inadequacy of attention to forms of interactive knowledge produced in musical life in places has some very real consequences that have barely begun to be recognized. Studies of Hindustani music have assumed that since it is an expert system transmitted through oral tradition, questions of competence and expertise are largely irrelevant. Studies focused primarily on lineages and stars already established as authorities in the twentieth century and the unstated assumption of analysis is that one only needs unbroken lines of transmission for musical expertise and musical competence to be sustained, and that learning happens more or less the way a teacher communicates it. But the situation in the field contests this view. As Kippen writes evocatively in the volume on "Shadows in the field", expertise is the elephant in the room when speaking of hereditary musical families in north Indian music (Kippen, 2008). Many such families in contemporary India come from rural areas that once had thriving landed estates and princely courts, from communities that were directly affected by the cultural nationalist reform agenda. Their musical environments have suffered extreme depletion, and what were once thriving musical communities with a fair share of expert musicians have whittled down to a few struggling musicians with little equipment to tap into flows of knowledge in the modern urban musical sphere.

In this dissertation I address the question of what it means to persist in treating heredity as a synonym for authority, authenticity and competence. Projects that have been designed to study oral tradition and early learning in hereditary musical families have failed to ask this question, as have Government bodies that spend hundreds of thousands of rupees on scholarships for sustaining traditional practices often with very little success. It has been illuminating to compare the scholarship on Javanese cultural practices with Indian classical music in this regard. Brinner's study of musical competence in Javanese gamelan clearly recognizes from the start that musical communities in Java have a whole range of competencies, where he defines competence as "an integrated complex of skills and knowledge upon which a musician relies within a particular cultural context" (Brinner 1995, 1). Since Javanese music ensembles are socially organized to incorporate a whole range of expertise from highly skilled performers to novice learners, studying competence

and knowledge in Java requires Brinner to be sensitive from the start to questions of who knows what and how, and to study competence as a function of age, education and association. Similarly, when theorizing melodic guidance in Javanese gamelan, Perlman is required to be sensitive to how his three subjects have learnt their music, their tendencies towards implicit or explicit categorical thinking, and how conceptual knowledge is related to performance knowledge in different ways for different subjects (Perlman, 2004). As I show in Chapters three and four of this thesis, investigating musical competence in relation to musical environments is an urgent issue for the historic but endangered Dhrupad practices I use as a central case study in my project. Asked in the context of Javanese musical practices, Brinner's question "who knows what and how" is a singularly important question to ask, and it has to include who *knew* what and how, in order to conduct an archeology of Hindustani music as a practice in relationship with its environment.

A broader consideration of musical competence in relation to environment requires opening up the field of inquiry in Hindustani music. While Neuman, Wade and Deshpande, as well as scholars writing on Dhrupad, Tabla, Thumri, and instrumental music list only a few score musical lineages, a looser definition of *gharana* is used by Amal Das Sharma and Garg both of whom document many, many musical lineages with more than three generations of continuous practice, both Hindu and Muslim, whether or not they are associated with a widely appreciated characteristic musical style.[19] Das Sharma's catalogue runs into a few hundreds and in the landed estates of Eastern UP, Bihar and Bengal alone there are several score musical families with a continuous history of practice. Opening up the definition of the field beyond unique style, unbroken lineages and expert practice allows me to ask where all these liminal singing bodies fit in a history of Hindustani music and to re-think what they may bring to musical practice considered not as stagecraft but as environment and way of life.

"Invention", "Re-invention", "Tradition" and Tradition

In this section I consider more broadly the literature on the concept of Tradition in the Humanities and its efficacy in addressing the questions I set out to investigate. There is a great deal written on this topic, and my critical survey will only address the theories I had the occasion to think about more carefully in the course of my project because of their influence on work that followed and/or their relevance to the particular configuration of my case studies.

Hobsbawm and Ranger's concept of "invented" traditions and Benedict Anderson's work on nationalism are two of the most influential pieces of writing in the recent

[19] Das Sharma (1993), Garg (1957)

history of the Humanities (Hobsbaum and Ranger 1983; Anderson 1991, 1983). Particularly the former nurtured a hermeneutics of suspicion in academic scholarship by instigating a serious inquiry into the claims to history made by the diverse societies of the world. The notion of invented tradition has been a foundational concept in the birth of postcolonial studies, and in relation to India, for Partha Chatterjee's influential book on nationalism (Chatterjee, 1993).

Proposing that traditions that are most interesting to the historian are 'invented' traditions, Hobsbawm and Ranger define "invented" traditions thus: "'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which automatically implies continuity with the past…. They normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past… the peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it is largely factitious…" (Hobsbawm 1983, 2).

Further, they go on to make a distinction between tradition and custom, that is crucial to their analysis: "The object and characteristic of 'traditions', including invented ones, is invariance…. 'Custom' cannot afford to be invariant, because even in 'traditional' societies, life is not so… 'Custom' is what judges do; 'tradition' (in this instance invented tradition) is the wig, robe…." (Hobsbawm 1983, 2-3). In taking this stance, the authors clearly demarcate tradition as an utterance, and custom as a largely uncritical doing.

Prior to Hobsbaum and Ranger's influential essay, writings on tradition acknowledge authority, historical sense and practice as integral to definitions of tradition. Discussing historical sense, in *Tradition and the individual talent,* the poet T. S. Eliot emphasizes that tradition implicates both conformance and individuality and what connects them is a historical sense. (Eliot 1919; 1950, 38). Eliot states

> The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; .. is a sense of the timeless and the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. .. he must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past. It is judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other. (Eliot, 1919; 1950: 38-39)

Eliot's essay posits tradition as a set of norms that influence, and is influenced by practice. He speaks of tradition as a historical sense involving a "conception of poetry as a living whole of all of the poetry that has ever been written" (*ibid.,* 40).

Within musicology, Charles Seeger emphasizes that musical tradition is a dynamical concept which he describes as a

> Conspectus of principal accumulations of traditions as a *field*
> Within which tradition as a *process*
> Operates under instrinsic traditions of *control*
> In an environment of extrinsic traditions of *control*. (Seeger 1950, 827)

By clearly delineating the practice, the process, internal and external control, Seeger's definition stays close to a concept that can be used to study traditions analytically.

Scholars working on expressive culture have also defined tradition to mean a set of norms that shape practice. Hepokoski, writing on 19th century sonata form and the Beethoven tradition, views tradition as an agent of change, a conception very close to how Indian musicians speak about tradition. Hepokoski proposes a model of structural deformation whereby individual works are in dialogue with norms (in this case, Beethoven's compositional practices), even though "certain central features of the sonate-concept have been reshaped, exaggerated, marginalized or overridden altogether" (Hepokoski 2001, 447). Reviewing this, Taruskin suggests that while Hepokoski's formulation offers a useful tool for historical inquiry, Hepokoski "fudges the matter of agency" (Taruskin 2005, 201). In short, something, or someone decides where to draw the line that differentiates between inside and outside tradition, and Hepokoski fails to address this. More significantly, the discussion about change immediately begs the question of authority. As Taruskin cautions us in his essay on Tradition and Authority (Taruskin 1995), it is easy to slip from one to the other in analysis but the two concepts have to be kept distinct for meaningful interventions on tradition. Speaking of tradition, Taruskin states that

> Until recently.. conformity with oral tradition used to be what conferred authenticity on interpretation[20]… Traditions, according to any informed definition, modify what they transmit virtually by definition… Oral traditions, especially in a musical culture as variegated as the fine art of Western music, are *multiple, always contaminated, and highly suggestible, receptive to outside influence*" (Taruskin 1995, 180-182 emphasis mine).

This emphasis on multiplicity, and receptivity to outside influence is negated in the separation of tradition from custom in Hobsbaum and Ranger's definition and the substantial body of scholarly literature it has influenced. Yet, their definition and its explicit erasures have not gone unchallenged in recent scholarship on tradition. The challenges have come from several places in a few different ways. Scholars have pushed back against the opposition made explicit in this definition between Tradition and custom. Critiquing the understanding of Tradition in the above definition, Clifford observes that "Always a foil to the modern, tradition cannot be transformative or forward-looking"(Clifford 2004, 152). Clifford goes on to observe that "One post-sixties sign that peripheral 'traditions' weren't going to stay put was the moment when the widely accepted notion of 'invented' traditions began to run afoul of contemporary indigenous politics. Even as anthropologists spoke of

[20] Taruskin makes this observation in the context of early music debates on authentic performance.

invented traditions or cultures in non-judgmental ways, the taint of inauthenticity (explicit in Hobsbawm and Ranger's influential definition) clung to the term. Indigenous intellectuals rejected the implication that dynamic traditions were merely political, contrived for current purposes. There was residual imperialism in the outside expert's claim to distinguish between invented tradition and organic custom, between conscious fabrication and the constant recombination or bricolage of any society in transition. Definitions of 'traditional' authenticity became sites of struggle" (*ibid.*, 156*)*.

Writing in 1990 based on his ethnographic work in South Africa, Coplan observes that in contemporary scholarship "it is now just short of impossible to use (tradition) without quarantine between quotation marks (Coplan 1990, 35)". But, he goes on to add "Tradition is a core concept common and… has remained current and indispensable despite its inherent contradictions, doubtful empirical status and ideological entanglements (*ibid.*, 36)". While Coplan acknowledges the crucial contributions of Hobsbawm and Ranger in "identifying the reification of cultural patters as invariant group identifiers for political purposes" (*ibid.,* 37) he finds their distinction between 'tradition' and 'custom' breaks down in their attempt to use this distinction to identify exploited groups. In the context of South Africa, he observes that equating tradition with invariance has led to an alienation of urban Africans from the concept of cultural tradition, an alienation that cultural activists have worked hard to reverse, recognizing the "importance of a sense of tradition to a positive and autonomous definition of African identity and wellbeing". Thus, scholars who conceive of tradition as a dynamical concept with continued relevance as an explanatory force in different scales in society have recognized the separation between tradition and custom as deeply problematic. Often this scholarship is based in the study of small societies and indigenous societies – some of which have undergone cataclysmic ruptures in the wave of colonialism, industrialization and modernization, soon followed by globalization.

A second strong critique has come from the study of religion, particularly the study of Islam. Using Alisdair MacIntyre's conception of tradition as his point of departure, Talal Asad delinks the notion of Tradition from the unitary, homogeneous concept that is the Other of Modernity, and retrieves it as a discursive tradition that is dynamical, heterogeneous and inclusive of contradictions (Asad, 1986). While MacIntyre himself does not delink Tradition as a historical concept from Modernity, but rather sees a rupture in which society in the Western World goes from a tradition of Virtues to Virtue to After Virtue, the juxtaposition between MacIntyre and the invented tradition concept is relevant to my discussion here. In sharp contrast to Hobsbawm and Ranger, MacIntyre defines tradition as "an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition" (MacIntyre 2007, 222). MacIntyre explicitly recognizes that intelligibility is central to the functioning notion of tradition – he observes that the history of a practice is "…characteristically embedded in and made

intelligible in terms of a larger and longer history of the tradition in which the practice in the present form is conveyed to us" (*ibid.,* 222).

To this definition founded on embodied practices and intelligibility, Hirschkind brings attention to the senses and their role in crafting dispositions. Focusing on sermon audition among contemporary Muslims in Egypt , Hirschkind shows "how traditions presuppose, and provide the means to produce, the particular sensory skills on which the actions, objects, and knowledges that constitute these traditions depend. Such tradition-cultivated modes of perception and appraisal coexist within the space of the modern and are enabled in some ways by the very conditions that constitute modernity. Thus, through an analysis of a particular cultural practice geared to this task, I hope to contribute to the important and ongoing task of rethinking the decidedly stubborn opposition between tradition and modernity (Hirschkind 2001, 624). A dynamical conception of tradition as heterogeneous, embodied, dispositional, a mode of sensory discipline that can coexist with the modern has synergy with the questions I seek to ask in my dissertation.

In the next chapter, I develop an analytical framework to investigate the processes through which Dhrupad musicians come to develop senses of tradition whose strength lies not in unitarity and homogeneity but in coherence and heterogeneity. In the remaining chapters of the dissertation, I use this framework to investigate the forms of knowledge produced in the vocal practice of Dhrupad in and as environment, using a case study of multiple Dhrupad lineages of the Bettiah *gharana*. I debate the fundamental assertion that prior to the cultural nationalism of the 19th century, Hindustani music was an un-marked practice confined to small lineages, with little indexical or discursive reach to make claims to the status of an organized Great Tradition. I take the analysis of sound in and as environment well beyond pointing to "context".[21] With a sound studies commitment to theorizing the phenomenological relationship of sound and environment in sound, I argue that the categories and codes of Hindustani music are dialogic with forms of knowledge produced in emplaced performance within inter-subjective communities in particular locales.

---

[21] I take Latour's critique of sociological context analysis seriously (Latour, 2005). Beginning with pages 3-4, Latour critiques the default position of sociologists that apply their tools in domains as far ranging as science, law, economics, psychology, medicine, and the Arts, taking recourse to "social context" to explain the "social aspects of non-social phenomena" (3) as if "social context" were simply a given. An approach he characterizes as a"sociology of the social", Latour proposes instead a move towards a "sociology of associations" that he calls "critical sociology" (8-9). Although I did not use Actor Network Theory (ANT) as a theoretical framework for my analysis and I don't focus on the formation of social groups in this dissertation, the attention I give to matters of concern, to tracing the procedures that stabilize contradictions, to the interaction of local and global, the resistance to premature unification (117) and to insisting that "multiplicity is not reduced to interpretive flexibility" (120), I found inspiration in Latour's critique.

Dissertation chapters

The dissertation contains six chapters including the Introduction and Conclusion.

In Chapter two, I develop an analytical framework where I introduce place and emplacement as theorized by Edward Casey, Steven Feld and Keith Basso as a integral part of my analytical framework. I then introduce and inflect the term acoustic communities from the World Soundscape project to define communities within which Dhrupad practices become emplaced, and define grids of intelligibility as forms of knowledge produced and sustained in processes of emplacement. I then go on to complete my analysis of individual musical practice by introducing the concept of thick sound to index personal histories of practice and interactivity, and define the term acoustemic anchor to denote sites of cognitive intertwining where musical memory and emotional memory become co-located in the interactivity of musical life. I use the term affordance to investigate the potentiality of musico-aesthetic forms in Indian classical music for experience of emotion and memory in performance – processes essential to emplacement. I conclude the chapter with a consideration of scale in which I argue that being local in a place like Bettiah requires attending to histories of migration and circulation of bodies, materials, practices and forms of knowledge. I use this to argue that the categories of Hindustani music are integrally connected to the exercise of judgment in individual family lineages emplaced within local communities that are connected to circulatory flows.

In Chapters three and four, I juxtapose case studies of two expert Dhrupad performers to investigate how repeated practice of Dhrupad songs in particular places generates specific forms of acoustemic knowledge in interaction. In chapter 3, I introduce my first case study: Indra Kishore Mishra, a contemporary musician from the hereditary Mullick families of Bettiah. I analyze the interactive basis of musical judgment and strong notion of fidelity to tradition by investigating the interactive processes through which Indra Kishore develops a sense for his musical inheritance as thick sound. I specifically consider three kinds of anchors in my analysis – material anchors such as paper, possessions, and geographies, sentient anchors such as the embodied, sensory and cognitive capacities of individuals and groups of people, and auditory anchors – the special cognitive status of musical objects such as music notation, musical terms, musical concepts, musical forms and musical instruments in a musician's life. In Indra Kishore's case, my analysis of acoustemic anchors includes family lineage, repertoire, personal possessions, music notation, trauma memory, patronage relationships, auditory connections to places and events. I focus on both habitual and catalytic interactions in which grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad practice have been sustained in Bettiah and the changing acoustic communities for Dhrupad practice in the twentieth century. I complete the

chapter with a discussion of the interactive basis of Indra Kishore's musical judgments and ethical sense as a hereditary musician living in Place. I show through my analysis that self-reflexivity about right practice and debates about tradition in Indian classical music are tethered by the interactivity of classical music practice as an acoustemic environment.

In Chapter four, I introduce my second case study: Falguni Mitra, an expert non-hereditary musician whose performing career began at age nine. Through an extended analysis of musical environments, acoustemic anchors and acoustic communities I establish that Mitra's musical knowledge is sustained by an interactive nexus of associations that intertwine body memory, sense memory, musical associations and cognitive capacity in the interactive work of churning musical materials as thick sound. Through an extended analysis of catalytic moments in engagement with musical materials, I demonstrate the interactive basis of Mitra's musicianship and creativity. By considering both the catalytic and the habitual interactivity of Mitra's musical life, I demonstrate conclusively that musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition are sustained by thick sound - heterogeneous domains of acoustemic interactivity that are irreducible to literacy, literalism and the technological determinism of authenticity understood solely as a response to recorded sound.

In Chapter five, I shift my focus to Dhrupad performance as musical action, to show that musical objects develop both heterogeneity and ontological weight in the interactivity of Dhrupad vocal performance. Using phenomenological analysis of generative events in Dhrupad performance, I show that musical forms in north Indian classical music have affordance for emotional memory and associative memory, and exhibit many of the topographic qualities of Place as defined by Edward Casey. I analyze a variety of musical acts to demonstrate that repeated engagements with musical forms interweave and co-locate emotion, memory, structure and form through processes of emplacement in ways that render heterogeneous pathways available to musical action. I use specific case studies of raga *alap* and the *banis* of Dhrupad - esoteric and poorly understood aesthetic concepts in Dhrupad practice - to show that categories of soma-aesthetic and verbalized knowledge about Dhrupad as classical music are dialogically transformed by the forms of knowledge generated in repeated acoustemic engagement with musical materials. I demonstrate that the categories and codes of a formal system of knowledge become available as human sensibility and soma-aesthetic experience in performance through interactive musical processes that inter weave structure with affect and form with feeling. Through this extended analysis, I investigate how the two musicians in my case studies develop coherent, stable, strong and diverse interpretations of Truth in song to argue that the categories, codes and musical forms of a Great Tradition both pluralize and develop ontological weight in interaction. A brief conclusion is presented in Chapter six.

Chapter 2 - Tradition, intelligibility and musical judgment in Dhrupad

In this chapter I develop a framework to establish that the categories, codes and ontologies of Hindustani classical music are transformed in the interactive processes through which the practice of music becomes intelligible as tradition within emplaced communities. These processes also tether individual musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition. I integrate theorizations of performance, place and community to bridge the logics of a Great Tradition understood as a set of institutions, canons and norms, with the strength and tenor of individual musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition in the small world of musical lineages.

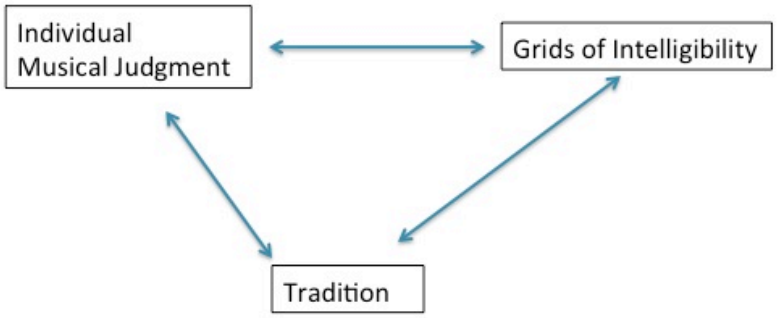

FIGURE 2-1

To distinguish forms of knowledge produced in the emplacement of musical practices within inter-subjective communities, I introduce the term "grids of intelligibility". These grids of intelligibility are influenced by - but not reducible to - norms or individual musical judgment. Therefore relationship between tradition as a set of norms, intelligibility, and individual musical judgment is not teleological but dialogic. In systems language they are connected not in a waterfall model but by an interactive network. The connection may be visualized in the simple diagram shown in Fig. 2.1

To investigate the contours of the dialogic engagement (indicated by double-pointed arrows in the above figure), I use and inflect two critical concepts – emplacement and acoustic communities - and introduce the term *thick sound* all of which help me scale my argument from an analysis of individuals and small lineages to arguments about colonial forms of knowledge, modernity and technology.

Acoustemic environments, emplacement and place

A musician is a person whose very way of being in the world is shaped by and in sound. It stands to reason that for someone who spends the better part of a musical life dealing with songs, ragas, talas, and categories of aesthetic experience, the practice of classical music is a way of being. But what is less obvious perhaps is how being a musician prepares a person to respond to her environment in some tangible and very particular ways.

The central question that I seek to investigate is this: how might the practice of classical music construct a sense of place for the musicians in my project, and how might place in turn transform musical judgment and aesthetic sense? When used this way, the term "place" is not simply a geographical location on a satellite map, a location where things happen, or a mute container for culture. Rather, perception of place is co-produced by the emplacement of cultural practices. Setting out to ask how the perceptual engagements we call sensing are critical to conceptual constructions of place, Steven Feld most effectively captures this reciprocity of senses of place – the co-production of senses of place and the emplacement of the senses - "as place is sensed, senses are placed; as places make sense, senses make place" (Feld 1996, 91).

I am specifically indebted to the anthropologists and philosophers of the senses for the understanding of Place I use here. Each of the scholars I draw on discusses constructions of Place in relation to the senses, memory, emotion, community and practices, and my use of the term Place implicates all these entanglements. Processes of emplacement work to connect individual judgments produced in the so-called privacy of music rooms with both the inter-subjective forms of knowledge sustained by communities in places and the categories, codes and norms of an organized Great Tradition.

But, before I dive completely into an analysis of how Dhrupad vocal practice co-produces senses of place for the musicians and communities in my project, I have to attend not only to place, but also to the tendencies of sensory dominance that my particular project implicates. According to Feld, processes of emplacement implicate the intertwining of sensual bodily presence and perceptual engagement, and an analysis of tendencies for sensory dominance must take into account the contexts of bodily emplacement. The main subjects in my project are musicians that spend much of their waking (and maybe sleeping) hours making sound, listening to sound, thinking about sound, visualizing sound, reading sound, shutting their ears to sound, and responding through sound. Hence, from the outset, the constructions of place I attend to in my case studies come animated by and intertwined with sound – not just any sound, but vocalizations of Dhrupad, arguably the oldest and most authoritative genre of Hindustani music.

Feld introduces the term acoustemology to "argue for the potential of acoustic knowing, of sounding as a condition of and for knowing, of sonic presence and awareness as potent shaping forces in how people make sense of experiences". My analysis of Dhrupad vocal practice as acoustemic environment will attend to the forms of knowledge produced in the emplacement of Dhrupad vocal practice, and the inter-subjective shaping of categorical knowledge and notions of fidelity to tradition in the process.

With Feld's definition of acoustemology in hand, I turn to philosopher Edward Casey, for a critical understanding of place as a conceptual category. In an opening essay in the volume "Senses of Place", Casey brings together his many decades of phenomenological attention to place in an essay that is densely packed with insights.[22] According to Casey, place is never pre-cultural, much as culture is never without place.[23] Observing that "the abiding emplacement of cultural practices has often gone unacknowledged" (33), Casey goes on to enumerate the qualities of Place that are dialectic with enculturation - a dialectic he describes as "unending and profound (19).

Casey identifies the living-moving body as essential to processes of emplacement – bodies and places inter-animate each other (24). But he points to an essential distinction between the individual human subject and place – and that is the power

---

[22] Casey (1996). I simply list Casey's observations here that are most important to my investigation of Dhrupad vocal practice as an emplaced cultural practice. The chapters that follow will provide a detailed consideration of how each of these qualities of place makes sense in my project.

[23] According to Casey, "cultural categories permeate the most primordial level of perception… Culture pervades the way places are perceived (Casey 1996, 35)".

of gathering that he ascribes to place itself. Minimally, places gather (animate and inanimate) things. More extensively, they hold together configurations of things and associations; they keep un-body like things like thoughts and memory; they gather together lives and things into an area of common engagement. And because of this complex capacity to gather and hold, places are generative (25 – 26).

Feld reflects and amplifies Casey's words, this time in relation to creative flow in emplacement. Summing up the relationship of place, experience and expression, Feld states "..places make sense in good part because of how they are made sensual and how they are sensually voiced. Poetic and performative practices centralize the place of sense in making a local sense of place. This is how poetics flows from everyday experience…" (Feld 1996, 134).

Casey goes onto qualify that a Place is an event; places not only *are,* they happen (Casey 1996, 27). The gathering quality he ascribes to place makes emotion and memory primary to the eventfulness of places. This gathering depends on the lived body but is not circumscribed by it. Thus, to be located, culture has to be embodied and knowledge of place by means of the body is basic to local knowledge (*ibid.,* 34). But, place cannot be completely subsumed into known categories. It forces us to keep inventing new understandings. Casey terms this quality of place as eventfulness.

Finally, Casey observes that place is deconstructive of oppositions…. "these oppositions include binary pairs of terms that have enjoyed hegemonic power in Western epistemology… such dichotomies as subject and object, self and other, formal and substantive, mind and body, inner and outer, perception and imagination (or memory), and nature and culture. To be emplaced is to know the hollowness of any strict distinctions between what is inside one's mind or body and what is outside… Most importantly, space and time come together in place – we experience space and time *together* in place"(*ibid.,* 37).

In summary, Casey's characterization of places tells us that the emplacement of cultural practices produces forms of knowledge that are reflective of the gathering quality of particular places. They can neither be put down simply to individual subjects or to a generic universal category of place. Since a place takes on the qualities of its occupants, forms of knowledge generated in emplacement are understandings that rightfully belong at the level of the emplaced collective, that transform understandings of public and private, universal category and individual judgment.

Picking up similar themes as Feld and Casey, Basso attends to the individual, communal, catalytic and generative dimensions of a sense of place. Basso coins the term inter-animation to index the dialogic between place and lived bodies that sense them. Building on Heidegger's concept of dwelling as forms of consciousness with

which individuals perceive and apprehend geographical space (Basso 1996, 54), he observes that attention to place is fleeting, unselfconscious, and spontaneous but the sensing of place catalyzes subjects to dwell on dwelling. This catalytic action described by Casey as generativity and eventfulness and Feld as poesis and thought, is referred to by Basso as "roundly reciprocal and incorrigibly dynamic… (simultaneously) inwards towards facets of the self and outwards towards aspects of the external world… (the dynamics of which) cannot be known in advance" (*ibid.,* 55*)*.

Many, many times in my fieldwork with Dhrupad musicians, I found activities that entangled the sonic catalyzed moments of reflection and poesis, emotion and musical action. As Casey and Feld recognize, these catalytic moments are engendered by habitus, but as Casey and Basso note, they are not predictable or repeatable, nor can their outcomes be forecast. My analytical turn to Place was sourced by these moments of catalysis on the field that transformed the experience of sound and place into a dwelling in the voice.

In turning to place as defined by Casey, and attending to senses of place as defined by Feld and Basso, I have the apparatus to investigate how the vocal performance of Dhrupad in particular places amongst emplaced communities is generative of grids of intelligibility –forms of knowledge that constitute an acoustemology, produced in processes of emplacement amongst communities. I now discuss how to analyze emplacement in the context of individual musical practice in community, accounting for both heterogeneity and musical effort.

Acoustic communities

Basso describes the communal sensing of place by observing that lived experience of place does not happen in social isolation. Rather, it occurs in the company of other people – a shared sensing of place. Both Basso and Feld in their respective ethnographic projects attend to emplacement as a differentiated act in community that brings with it a morality. Wisdom sits in places for Basso's Apache, who have a differentiated idea of what it means to be wise and have both a private and public aspect for cultivating the three qualities of mind that denote perfect wisdom - a state every Apache can aspire to, but not all are set up to achieve. Basso goes so far as to say "Senses of place are not possessed by everyone in a similar manner" (84).

My contention is that in order to understand the aesthetic categories in contemporary Dhrupad performance of the Bettiah *gharana*, it is necessary to attend to emplacement of the Bettiah *gharana*'s Dhrupad practices within heterogeneous communities at different periods of history in its different places of gathering. Mapping community is a part of mapping place and mapping sound, and of mapping emplaced sound. This emplaced community dimension of a classical practice has been all but erased in the current rhetoric about Dhrupad as pure

unmarked universally available ancient sound.[24] Thus, theorizing inter-subjective communities as heterogeneous entities with particular auditory histories is the mandatory next step in my analysis.

In a review paper on the term community as used in the field of ethnomusicology, Shelemay makes a call for the comeback of community as a unit of analysis in ethnomusicological studies (Shelemay 2011). She observes that community went from center to periphery in different disciplines in the Humanities but was now making its way back as an important unit of analysis. According to Shelemay, within ethnomusicology, the word became diffuse through non-discriminate use and was de-emphasized for other terms such as subculture, scene, collective, and art worlds as alternatives. Shelemay offers a redefinition for musical communities and identifies three processes of community formation – descent, dissent and affinity – that accommodate both change and heterogeneity into the term community, to bring it back into the analytical fold as a powerful concept.

In line with Shelemay's historiographic critique, I avoid thinking of community as a homogeneous, already formed, static entity and retain the dynamism of histories and forms of knowledge produced in a group of people connected by heterogeneous practices. But, rather than follow her framework for analysis, I analyze communities for Dhrupad performance at the nexus of a whole set of dynamic relations in which practices are dialogically connected to categories and forms of knowledge. In a practice such as music, the senses are centrally implicated in this analysis. Art music is also music that is grasped by the senses, music that affects and disciplines the senses in specific ways in different historical conditions.

To investigate the dynamics of emplacement and the forms of knowledge generated within communities, I specifically attend to Dhrupad practice as soundscape and a musical community as a community that shares soundscapes. I use and inflect Barry Truax's notion of acoustic community, which he defines as "any soundscape in which acoustic information plays a pervasive role in the life of inhabitants, (*no matter how the commonality of such people is understood*)" [emphasis his] (Truax 2001, 66). Truax's original definition comes from the discipline of environmental engineering. However, like Schafer's notion of soundscape, this powerful term from the World Soundscapes Project has the potential to morph into a concept applicable outside its source domain. The first inflection I make is to turn acoustic community from a soundscape to a community in which acoustic information is configured in

[24] For instance, in a recent interview contemporary Dhrupad musicians Gundecha Brothers reply to the question "What is the essence of Dhrupad for you?" thus: "To us Dhrupad symbolises the real meaning of the earth, of existence. As long ago as 2000 years ago, people have described this music. Wherever we have travelled — Australia, China, the Gulf region and Africa — people respond to this music. It has universal appeal." (Tehelka magazine, January 2008).

specific ways *through practices*. Unlike Truax's soundscape, objective measurements of data or objective description of grids of intelligibility determined by sonic environment do not circumscribe acoustic communities in my project. Rather, I am inspired by Steven Feld's term acoustemology that takes soundscapes from acoustic environments to acoustemic environments, by centering ways of knowing in and through sound. Consequently, I use and inflect Truax's term acoustic community to denote *communities that are gathered around particular auditory practices and ways of knowing in and through sound*.

Specifically in the context of the Dhrupad practice of the Bettiah tradition, acoustic communities are communities gathered by the practice of Dhrupad in places – in which forms of knowledge about Dhrupad are generated in the interactive processes through which the practice of music becomes emplaced, and in turn emplacing. These communities are not necessarily expert listeners or performers. Rather they engage in a constellation of practices within which Dhrupad's sound has the potentiality to become acousteme, dialogically transforming grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad as ways of knowing in and through sound. It is important to emphasize that I do not conceive of acoustic communities as static, homogeneous, emplaced entities. They implicate heterogeneity, contradictions, contestation and the porousness of different forms of engagement that a collection of individuals might bring to audition and performance.[25]

With these definitions as frames for analysis, I investigate the transformation of acoustic communities for Dhrupad in the different locations in which Bettiah *gharana* lineages practiced Dhrupad at particular historical moments. I attend to the specific constellation of practices, competencies, and inter-subjective forms of knowledge within which grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad performance were shaped in these communities, and Dhrupad as tradition was transmitted and transformed in acts of creativity, developing coherence and heterogeneity in the interactivity of musical practice. Investigating emplacement, I attend not only to interactions within communities of practice, but also to the conditions of possibility determined by larger scale forces of princely patronage networks, colonial institutions, and cultural nationalist networks, and the availability of technologies of music notation and music printing.

---

[25] In a definition that spans two full paragraphs, Shelemay describes a musical community as "a social entity that is an outcome of social and musical processes" (Shelemay, 2011:365). Her definition does not consider social and musical as interacting dimensions. On the other hand, sound is ontologically integral to the very definition of acoustic community in the World Soundscape Project definition and in my inflexion here.

Grids of intelligibility, thick sound and musical judgment

While grids of intelligibility are sustained in the emplacement of Dhrupad performance among acoustic communities that participate in sustaining a soundscape, these collectively sustained modes of dialogic listening do not index the hard work of acquiring, transforming, and transmitting musical tradition that is the primary work effort of a small group of individuals in community – namely, the tradition bearers. The primary focus of my research is the production of musical judgment in expert musicians who spend hours and hours immersed in the hard work of churning, polishing, repeating and ruminating on musical materials. These musicians spend substantial amounts of time singing and practicing on their own, or with their students at home. Hence I have to develop analytical tools to investigate the phenomenological interactivity between musical subject and musical object – an interaction that is in dynamic relation with, but not reducible to, the emplacement of Dhrupad performance within heterogeneous inter-subjective acoustic communities.

Thus, emplacement in my analytical framework functions not only at the level of community, but also significantly at the level of the individual. But, my next stop is not the fishbowl of performance and transmission studies that focus on pure sound as environment. Rather, I turn once more to the anthropologists of the senses, and to works on distributed cognition to set up my investigation. As Casey, Feld and Basso conclusively demonstrate in their analytical essays, even in the relative social isolation of a musician alone in a music room for hours on end, an emplaced cultural practice is gathering and has the potentiality for eventfulness. But, we do not have to just take their word for it, for I will show this to be the situation repeatedly in my case studies of individual musicians and their musical lives.

I recognize place as singularly important to my analysis because it both functions as and gathers anchors that engender perceptual connections to musical forms in the interactivity of musical life. Specifically, I will show that the interactivity of musical lives results in the inter-animation of musical forms with the qualities of place – but this doesn't happen without musical effort and musical action. The analytical model needs to be expanded to allow me to investigate the specific dynamics of cognitive intertwining in the context of individual musical lives.

Drawing from Edwin Hutchins' work on distributed cognition I define the term acoustemic anchor to denote anchors of cognitive intertwining, where emotional and acoustic memories become co-located in the activities of musical life.[26]

[26] Hutchins (2005). Although I use Hutchins as my inspiration, I have to distinguish the fact that Hutchins's distributed network has a multiplicity of human agents and material anchors whereas most of my anchors are non-human.

Acoustemic anchors hold the potentiality of histories of interactivity and forms of knowledge produced in the dialogic of sound and environment.

To investigate the contours of perceptual connections, I draw from Seremetakis who defines the term perceptual completion as referring to the potentiality of objects to engender connections through sedimented histories of sensory engagements[27]. While Seremetakis uses the word sedimentation, I prefer to investigate the potentiality of musical forms in terms of a more dynamic concept that indexes the dialogic of an individual musician's repeated engagement with musical forms in situated practice. I term this concept thick sound.

Thick sound

I define thick sound as sound that is cognitively intertwined with, and inter-animated by the interactions of musical life in places.[28] Thick sound is acoustemic sound; it is heard within a nexus of associations that engender ways of knowing in and through sound. It indexes the dialogic of an individual musician's repeated engagement with musical forms and musical inheritances in situated practice. At the same time, thick sound is marked by the gathering quality of emplaced cultural practice, intertwined with memory and emotion. It is marked sound that become available to performance as potentiality and eventfulness.

Thick sound in my definition is not necessarily available to thick description; it is not sound that can be read transparently for culture.[29] Rather, it is sound made eventful by the potentialities of practice. Engaging with thick sound may be habitual, automatic, and performative, or generative, catalytic and eventful. Thick sound invites sensuous scholarship and phenomenal engagement with histories of practice, rather than the stable codes and formats of hermeneutic analysis.[30]

The most significant quality of thick sound as defined here is its heterogeneity - its

---

[27] Seremetakis (1994).

[28] I borrow the concept of cognitive intertwining from Basso (1996). The term thick sound is inspired by Feld's conception of acousteme, and David Novak's phrase "listening in and feeding back" that was coined as a conference title for a sound studies seminar in the early history of this discipline.

[29] I am clearly inspired by Geertz's seminally influential notion of thick description (Geertz, 1973). In using the term thick sound, I am both acknowledging the necessity for engaging with interpretation as well as insisting that eventfulness and dynamism make it impossible to describe culture using an input – output model. Some aspects of culture remain outside hermeneutic interpretation and the repeatability of predictable phenomenal engagement.

[30] For representative discussion of sensuous scholarship see Stoller (1997) and Seremetakis(1994); to juxtapose the methods of sensuous phenomenology and interpretation of thick descriptions, see the leading and concluding essays by Casey and Geertz respectively in the volume Senses of Place.(Edited by Basso and Feld, 1996).

potentiality to gather, associate, correlate and emplace. The antonym of thick sound is not thin sound, but pure sound, sound that is homogeneous. I show in my analysis that thick sound is primary to musical judgment and categorical knowledge in Hindustani music. Musical judgment is tethered, nurtured and entangled in thick sound, not pure sound. I will demonstrate that aesthetic categories are not just cognitive grids that organize pure sound; they are soma-aesthetic experiences felt and sensed through thick sound.

Hence my framework for analyzing thick sound in Dhrupad vocal practice has two complementary dimensions. In one section using two case studies, I will investigate how musical judgments about Dhrupad as a classical genre are tethered, reinforced, and transformed through processes of cognitive intertwining that sustain and catalyze acoustemic anchors for thick sound. One of the outcomes of cognitive intertwining is that both human and non-human elements can be agentive in transforming pure sound to thick sound. They can both function as potential catalysts for the experience of thick sound, even if only sentient beings can willfully exercise agency. I specifically consider three kinds of anchors in my analysis – material anchors such as paper, possessions, and geographies, sentient anchors such as the embodied, sensory and cognitive capacities of individuals and groups of people, and auditory anchors – the special cognitive status of musical objects such as music notation, musical terms, musical concepts, musical forms and musical instruments in a musician's life.

In a complementary section, I will focus on how thick sound functions as an acoustemic guide in musical acts. To do this, I need to use one more concept – that of musical affordance. While the framework for analysis is general, specificity has come in at the level of detailed attention to the particularities of communities, places, acoustemic anchors and processes of emplacement. But now, I have to pay special attention to how Indian classical music, and specifically Dhrupad vocal performances, and even more specially, Dhrupad performance in the traditions I investigate, have affordance for thick sound in performance. This said affordance is central to the efficacy and meaningfulness of my proposal that Dhrupad vocal practice functions as an emplaced acoustemic environment. In my analysis, I will show how musico-aesthetic forms such as raga, and Dhrupad *bani* – an esoteric aesthetic category in Dhrupad performance – have affordance for emotion and memory, and exhibit many of the topographic qualities of Place detailed by Casey. This affordance for place-ness makes Indian classical music a special kind of classical music in which the categories and codes of a formal system of knowledge become available as human sensibility and soma-aesthetic experience in performance.

In summary, through a consideration of the different scales implicated in an analysis of the production of individual musical judgment and notions of fidelity to tradition in emplaced Dhrupad vocal performance, my analytical model has expanded beyond

the simple interactive diagram I started out with. I capture this expanded framework in Figure 2.2 below which shows the key concepts I need for my working model.

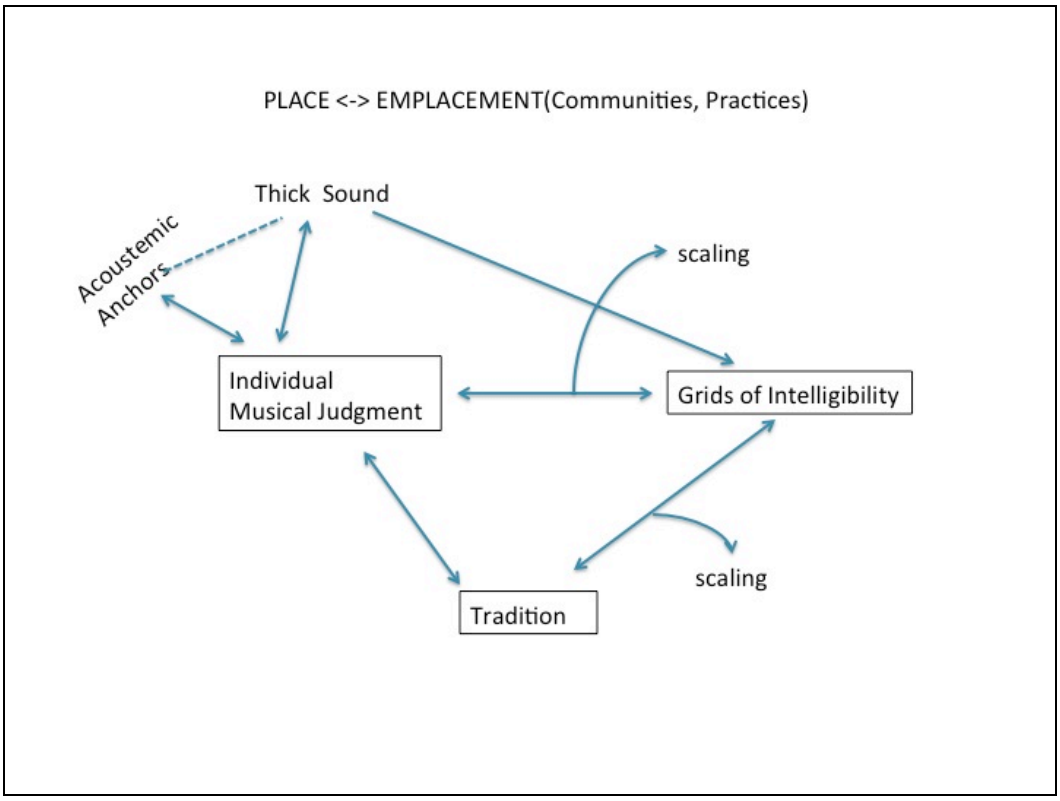

FIGURE 2-2

Mapping the field: Places, musical communities and musicians

The Bettiah court, an erstwhile princely court in the West Champaran district of the modern state of Bihar, is unique in the history of Dhrupad for the intense compositional activity that took place in the early 19th century during the reigns of Maharaja Anand Kishore Singh and Naval Kishore Singh. The kings of Bettiah themselves were very prolific composers and poets, and they attracted many talented Dhrupad musicians to their courts from the late 17th century onwards. The Bettiah court witnessed intense compositional activity in the 19th century and the Dhrupad form itself underwent a period of flowering in the hands of these very talented composers. As a result, the repertoire of the Bettiah *gharana* assumed a conceptual complexity and sophistication that is its distinguishing feature. Over a thousand compositions are still extant from the repertoires of two important lineages associated with the 19th century Bettiah court, and the centrality of this repertoire to the musical expression of the Bettiah performers is extremely important to the musical lineages whose notions of tradition are foregrounded in

this dissertation. A unique feature of Bettiah Dhrupads is that many of them are set to specific *banis*, or aesthetic models.

This dissertation focuses on investigating musical judgment and aesthetic sense in two individual expert musicians in relation to the places, practices, communities, repertoires and constellation of competencies that are gathered by the performance of Dhrupad in their musical lives, and in the near history of their musical traditions. The two musicians I focus on in this dissertation come from two different Dhrupad lineages associated with the Bettiah court. Indra Kishore Mishra is a hereditary musician whose tradition was received in place where his ancestors have lived and sung since the late 17th century though under very different circumstances. Falguni Mitra is a non-hereditary musician whose tradition was received through a history of double displacement - beginning with migration into Bettiah in the late 18th century, and migration to Benares and Kolkata in the late 19th century, before he acquired this tradition in the teeming musical culture of 1950s Kolkata. Juxtaposing these musicians allows me to constructively study the emplacement of musical practices and their relationship to categorical knowledge, musical judgment, and notions of fidelity to tradition.

Since emplacement as theorized by Edward Casey, Steven Feld and Keith Basso is the central frame I chose for analysis, I have approached the study of individual musicianship as a fundamentally interactive process that gathers and holds people, places, memories, emotion and things. I focus on grids of intelligibility for Dhruapd performance in the near past and in contemporary times by analyzing the emplacement of Dhrupad vocal performance in particular places and particular communities gathered by the practice of Dhrupad in the Bettiah *gharana*. The places and communities I analyze include the originary source of tradition – the town of Bettiah – and its surrounding villages, places and communities associated with the practice of Dhrupad, the places and communities in Benares that became a center for the migratory lineage of Dhrupad musicians from the Bettiah court, and the music rooms, musical households, concert stages, listening circles and communities that constitute place for a contemporary urban non-hereditary musician.

Mapping sound: Dhrupad vocal performance

Dhrupad has a documented history of composing since at least the fifteenth century. Historians are in general agreement that the modern Dhrupad compositional form was consolidated during the course of the 15th and 16th centuries by musicians in the courts of Gwalior, Delhi, Bijapur and Rewa, and in the devotional communities of Braj (Brindavan), although the earliest composers such as Gopal Nayak are said to

have been in the court of Allauddin Khilji (1296-1316).[31] In its etymological basis, Dhrupad derives from *dhruva* + *pada*, usually translated as fixed + text. In its structure and form, Dhrupad is said to have continuities with the Prabandha, song forms that go back to the first millennium[32]. The credit for establishing Dhrupad as a distinctive genre of court / art music and standardizing its form is ascribed to Raja Man Singh Tomar of Gwalior (1486 – 1516).[33] He, together with the famous composer-musicians of his court such as Nayak Bakshu and Nayak Dhondhu, are said to have established Dhrupad in its contemporary structural form of four parts, *sthayi*, *antara*, *sancari* and *abhog*, each with distinctive musical structure and function.[34]

The historicity and significance of Dhrupad as a musical form is most evident through the compositions that have survived in oral tradition and in song text compilations that were produced in major courts from the 17th century onwards.[35] Musicians were rated not only by their ability to sing Dhrupad, but also by their ability to compose Dhrupad. The Sahasras - a 17th century compilation of 1000 Dhrupads by the 15th century composer Nayak Bakshu, recognizes that compositions (*pada)* sounded best when sung with a knowledge of the style of the composer. Thus, from earliest times, Dhrupad has been distinguished as a song form

---

[31] Several authors have discussed Dhrupad from historical, biographical and analytical perspectives. The recent work by Sanyal and Widdess (2004) contains a comprehensive bibliography and detailed discussion of the genre. See also Widdess (2010). The temple vs. court origins of the genre has generated some polarizing debate amongst scholars, for example see discussions by Delvoye (1996, 322 -324), Thielemann (2001, 20 – 23), Ho (2006, especially Chapter 9). Rather than adopt a polarized position in this debate, I adopt a view that acknowledges both courts and devotional communities as important places in the early history of Dhrupad. The crystallization of the modern compositional form and genre occurred through intense compositional activity and musical performance over a few centuries, under the patronage of the princely courts.

[32] A number of scholars have shown the continuity of the most important structural aspects of Dhrupad compositional form to the Prabandha, particularly the salaga suda Prabandha (Singh1983, 29-35; Srivastava1980, Chapter 2).

[33] The dates in brackets refer to the Dates of reign

[34] While two and three part Dhrupads continued to be composed in the next several centuries, the dominance of four part compositions stands out in all traditional repertoires extant in contemporary oral traditions, as well as song text compilations produced from the 17th century onwards and the many notated music compilations produced in the early 20th century based on oral tradition

[35] Examples of early song text compilations are the Kitab-i-nauras of Ibrahim Adil Shah II, Sultan of Bijapur (Edited by Ahmed 1956), the Sahasras, a compilation of 1004 Dhrupads ascribed to Nayak Bakshu produced at the court of Shah Jahan (Edited by Sharma 1972), Dhrupads contained in Bhavabhatta's 17thc works produced in the Jaipur court, the Sangita Rag Kalpadrum of Krishnanand Vyas (1842). See Delvoye (2010) and references therein for a discussion of these early compilations of lyrics. Collections of Dhrupads in Persian and Urdu texts from *kalawants* of different lineages connected with the Delhi court and other regional courts of North India and Nepal are still being identified as part of ongoing research. An example of the latter is Khushhal Khan *kalawant*'s massive compendium of the repertoire of the Delhi *kalawants* (c. 1800 – 30). (Schofield, 2013:3, footnote 14).

and its composers, who were *vaggeyakaras*, were recognized as the carriers of distinctive stylistic idiom.[36]

Intelligibility in Dhrupad - pure raga, pure song, or pure sound?

Dhrupad is generally considered the bedrock of classicism in the Hindustani tradition as it was the primary compositional medium in which the modal, formal, temporal, rhythmic and musico-aesthetic dimensions of Hindustani music were worked out. For over four hundred years, musicians in the royal courts and devotional communities of North India gave lasting definition and form to the major ragas of Hindustani music by composing and performing Dhrupad.[37] The encapsulation of fundamental aspects of aesthetics and grammar in the compositions of Dhrupad make it a reference point for a raga and its characteristics (*lakshana)*. Ratanjankar and Prem Lata Sharma both emphasize that Dhrupad as a compositional form perfectly balances the three dimensions of melody, rhythm and text (Ratanjankar 1948, 81, Sharma 1990, 6). Even until recently, traditionally trained musicians in both vocal and instrumental lineages learnt a number of Dhrupad compositions to acquire a thorough grounding in raga, tala, *laya* (tempo) and *pada* as praxis.

Thus, as Indian classical music's oldest extant genre in which composers, composition, lineage and style have been recognized as overlapping dimensions of tradition, Dhrupad is a very suitable genre for a dissertation that investigates the interactive basis of categories, ontologies and notions of tradition in Indian classical music. The second reason that makes Dhrupad a particularly good choice of case study for my project concerns a much less acknowledged dimension of its history. While Dhrupad is the quintessentially classical genre of modern Hindustani music, Dhrupad has also had a persistent connection to song forms in community. Musicologist Ashok Ranade takes the position that Dhrupad crystallizes the tendency towards *nibaddha sangita*, while Khayal tends towards *anibaddha sangita* (Ranade 1999, 16). Interpreting *nibaddha* as pre-composed, he observes that Dhrupad as Art music has traditionally been bound closely to different facets of human life, an intersection in the territory of poetic form. This interactive nexus relies on Dhrupad's strong *nibaddha* character that admits the possibility of all elements being pre-composed (*ibid.*, 20). Ranade's observation speaks to the persistent intersection of classical Dhrupad with its closest parallel, the Haveli Dhrupad, as well as other related forms of musical composition such as Vishnupad,

[36] See Delvoye (2010) and Schofield (2013, 3) for discussions of the qualities that characterize expert composers in these centuries, metrics that draw on the authoritative medieval text *Sangita Ratnakara*.

[37] Raga is the fundamental modal melodic form in Indian classical music. For historicized introductions see Rowell (1992), Ramanathan (1999), Powers and Richard Widdess (2001).

Bengali Kirtan (*ibid.*, 18) and Shabad Kirtan.[38] It surfaces in Dhrupad's companion form - the Dhamar - a song-form associated with celebration of Holi in the Braj region (*ibid*., 18). It reflects in the use of Dhrupad as the chosen song form for celebrating life cycle events such as birth, marriage and thread ceremonies, practice that continued till the early 20th century in some places.[39] It also manifests in the adoption of Dhrupad as the song form of choice by the Brahmo-Samaj, and its influence on the compositions of two very influential figures of the 19th century, Swami Vivekananda and Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.[40]

While these profoundly emplaced histories shaped the intelligibility of Dhrupad in listening circles right up to the mid twentieth century in some parts of north India - notably its Eastern states - since the 1960s these grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad performance have been largely erased in public and scholarly consciousness of the genre. The so-called Dhrupad revival has accomplished this in the hegemonic formatting of Dhrupad's sounds by the normative practice of a single influential Dhrupad tradition – the Dagar tradition. Today Dhrupad is celebrated not for its nearness to song but for its nearness to sound.

The Dagar family is often credited with saving Dhrupad from extinction in the 20th century. This revival consolidated a new episteme for Dhrupad as "a journey into the realm of pure sound",[41] redefining its sounds to align with a rhetoric of ancientness and purity claiming roots in the Veda*s* – the sacred texts of *sanatana dharma*. In the decades since the celebrated UNESCO-sponsored tour of Europe by the senior Dagar brothers in 1964, Dhrupad has shifted from the duality of pure song and pure raga, to a duality of pure raga and pure sound, in the process rendering musical lineages that value song as integral to tradition largely

---

[38] Dhrupad's early history as court music has been closely allied with the early history of devotional *dhruvapada*, a literary form and song form that is widespread in devotional communities of Krishna worship, especially the music of the Vallabha Sampradaya tradition of the 16th century saint Swami Haridas in Brindavan. While some scholars rightly stress the fine distinctions between classical Dhrupad and devotional Dhrupad in metrical structure, metaphorical import and aesthetic goal (Delvoye 2010), careful and detailed comparative analysis of the repertoires of the classical Dhrupad traditions and the Vaishnavite traditions of Braj show plenty of evidence of cross-over and cross-fertilization in terms of lyrical themes, stock metaphors, tunes, composers and songs (Thielemann 2001; Ho 2006; Sanford 2008).

[39] Dhrupads composed for such occasions can be found in some 19th century song text compilations. A few examples are found in Qanun-i-sitar (Khan, Mohammad Safdar Husain. 1st ed. 1871). Songs composed for life cycle ceremonies, ritual goat sacrifice and tantric worship also form a part of the repertoire of the Mullicks of Bettiah, ancestors of Indra Kishore Mishra of the Bettiah *gharānā*.

[40] Several authors have written on Dhrupad's influence in Bengal, and specifically on Rabindranath Tagore. See for instance Mukhopadhyaya, Dhurjati Prasad (1944). Also Chatterjee (1996).

[41] Raja (1999, 13)

unintelligible to modern ears.[42] Thus Dhrupad as a genre manifests the complex dynamics of a Great Tradition of Hindustani music, a normative regime of intelligibility that consolidated post 1960 and multiple competing grids of intelligibility whose histories have to be excavated through historical analysis that is attends to the complex relationship between aesthetic categories, intelligibility and musical environments.

Using an analysis of grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad performance in the Bettiah *gharana*, I will show that this narrative of the extinction of Dhrupad and its revival as pure sound is predicated on erasing its historically complex existence as an expressive form. I will argue Dhrupad was firmly established in the categories of a largely expert-oriented classical music even while it engendered ritual, devotional and lyrical expression amongst communities that had very different goals and measures of competence for the musical genre. By attending to processes of emplacement in the performance of Dhrupad, I will show that the categories that mark the classical in a genre such as Dhrupad are indelibly marked and transformed by interactions of musical life in places amongst people. This places matters of grammar and aesthetics within the grasp of human sensibility.[43]

Categories of the classical in Dhrupad performance

In this section, I introduce the categories that define Dhrupad as a genre of classical music, focusing specially on the melodic category of raga and the aesthetic category of *bani*. In contemporary Hindustani music parlance, the word Dhrupad is used to refer to the compositional form, as well as the genre of Dhrupad. The genre itself has a complex definition that could include several or all of the following: a performance ideology that includes performance format, choices of characteristic tempi, avoidance or inclusion of certain instrumentation, aesthetic ideologies, philosophical or spiritual associations, and more specifically, the emphasis on certain ornamentations (*alankars*) and the avoidance of others.[44] Rather than undertake an extensive assessment of Dhrupad as a genre, I will only introduce the terms that help me investigate the central questions in my dissertation in relation to musical judgment, categorical knowledge and ontological status, and explain their

---

[42] Analysis of post-1960s redefinition of Dhrupad's regimes of intelligibility was presented in conference papers delivered at Stanford (2011), Berkeley (2011) and Mumbai (2013), and will be the subject of a forthcoming publication.

[43] This dialogic analysis can be easily extended to the dominant normative regime of contemporary Dhrupad as pure sound, but I leave this for future work.

[44] It is worth emphasizing that the genre of Dhrupad operates within a range of choices very much as the genre of Khayal functions as "one genre performed in distinctive group ways while comprehending incredible diversity.. as cultivated by individual musicians" (Wade 1984, 275). Musicians from different lineages often differ from one another on what constitutes correct practice in Dhrupad, but competent performers usually develop a self-consistent and coherent worldview based on a variety of factors that they defend with great conviction.

function in a typical performance of Dhrupad as a classical genre on the contemporary stage. Specifically the terms are: (i) the raga – the fundamental melodic category in Indian classical music, (ii) *pada* - the Dhrupad composition, (iii) Dhrupad *bani* – an aesthetic category in Dhrupad performance (iv) raga *alap* – the melodic-rhythmic development of raga form and emotion in performance and (v) *layakari* – the melodic-rhythmic development of composition in performance.

(i) Raga: A performance of Dhrupad usually focuses on one or more ragas in presentation. Raga is the fundamental melodic concept in Indian music and one of the most important aspects of Indian classical music performance. It has scalar, modal and aesthetic dimensions that are equally important. As is often the case in Hindustani music, a performance or piece of composition is judged by how well it captures and communicates the musico-aesthetic features of the raga chosen.[45] Hence raga is one of the central categories I explore in this dissertation.

The epistemological status of raga as enumerated knowledge in practice was a source of anxiety in the early 20th century, and a source for scrutiny in recent postcolonial scholarship on Indian music. Scholars ranging from Bhakle, Subramanian, Farrell and Allen, to Rahaim, and Dard Neuman in different ways and to different extents have suggested that enumerated knowledge of musical systems was a decidedly colonial episteme. Of these, Rahaim acknowledges that enumerated knowledge has been a part of musicians consciousness for about as long as non-enumerated knowledge, yet he too makes the strong claim that musician-grammarians such as Bhatkande did not recognize the "phrase" as a unit of musical knowledge, whereas musicians routinely could and do transition between "phrase land" and "note land", and he uses gesture as a way of demonstrating that ragas use phrases as fundamental units for melodic action.

On the other hand, I resist the move of equating cultural nationalism with the beginnings of musicology in India and take the position that aestheticians of Indian classical music right from medieval times have recognized the expressive qualities of raga to be integral to its formal definition as a musico-aesthetic form.[46] Since at least the 9th century, theoreticians have recognized that a description of raga requires discussion of both grammar and aesthetics. Secondly, while raga may

---

[45] While raga development is improvisation centric in some traditions, in traditions such as the Bettiah *gharana*, all three dimensions of performance integrate the experience of raga in different ways – while *alap* is experience of melody and rhythm, *pada* and *layakari* integrate experience of melody, rhythm, and text, with musical meaning and lyrical meaning enhancing each other in the expressive dimension.

[46] The first use of the term raga by Matanga and its very etymology show this to be the case. See Rowell (1992), and Satyanarayana (2004) for detailed and nuanced assessments of aesthetics in Indian thought in relation to music and Ramanathan (2004) for a very perceptive essay on the concept of swara in Indian music, using examples from composed music through many centuries. See also Powers and Widdess (2001) for discussions of raga spanning both structural and aesthetic dimensions.

admittedly be invoked and discussed as an abstract concept, musicians would rarely conceive of ragas as abstract. Aestheticians have recognized this in the past, as ragas have been defined not only by scales and note combinations but also by many anthropomorphic and emotive qualities. Raga iconification and personification date from the 16th c., and the humanization / anthropomorphization of swara, or the musical note, was theorized as early as the second century. I understand these efforts as creative responses by grammarians to encode the relationship of modal entities to consciousness. In keeping with this line of thinking, this dissertation will explore ragas as ontologies that are inhabited through processes of emplacement engendered by the topographical, memorial and affective qualities of raga as a musico-aesthetic form.[47] I will show through extended analysis of habitual and catalytic moments in Dhrupad performance that ragas have affordance for emotion and associative memory which brings to them the qualities of place as discussed by philosopher Edward Casey. I trace both ontological status and the existent of diverse interpretations of raga to processes of emplacement that tether and transform categorical knowledge of raga in performance.

(ii) *pada,* or Dhrupad: is the compositional form that gives Dhrupad its name and identity as a genre and its etymology reflects its basis in *pada*, which is a poetic verse set to tune. But, not every song qualifies as *pada.* A *pada* must be set to raga and tala and conform to certain rules of structure and form that have been explicated by grammarians since the second century. These structures developed and morphed over time into a whole suite of songs, the Prabandhas, that have been discussed in depth in the treatises of the middle ages. Scholars have argued that the Salaga Suda Prabhanda suite is the direct ancestor of the Dhrupad compositional form that came into practice around the 14th century and stabilized in its contemporary form by the late 15th/early 16th century (Srivastava 1980, Thakur Jaidev Singh 1983, Tailanga 1995). The oldest extant compositions in Hindustani music are Dhrupads. This was the main mode of raga-based composition in the royal courts, temples and communities of North India since the 14th century until the 18th century, and in some places, it remained the dominant mode of musical composition until the 20th century.

Juxtaposed against this account that emphasizes continuity is recent work in post-colonial studies, particularly by Weidman.[48] Postcolonial scholars have argued that "composers" and "compositions" are colonial epistemes, while historically and textually oriented ethnomusicologists conceive of Indian music compositions as oral archetypes and procedures, rather than works. Add to that the fact that some

[47] Rahaim (2009) explores raga as objects in gestural and melodic space, and I will reference some of his key observations. However, our approaches, though related, are quite different in their theoretical moorings and hence scope. I will discuss the similartities and differences in some depth in a subsequent chapter.
[48] Weidman (*op. cit.)*

dominant Dhrupad traditions in contemporary times have de-emphasized the *pada* in performance in ways that have re-invented the genre in its instrumental image, clearly Dhrupad has plenty of grist to provide the ontology, epistemology, politics of aesthetics mill in the realm of composition.

Perhaps most significant to this work, the musicians in my project hold the *pada* intrinsic to Dhrupad performance, both in the pre-composed and developmental sections. I began this dissertation with Indra Kishore Mishra invoking Hamsa the bird in relation to a debate over interpretation of a *pada* – suggesting that songs are not just archetypes or models for improvisation – rather they approach the ontological status of works stabilized by the interactive nexus of associations that tether judgments about right practice. Hence *pada* is the heartbeat of this dissertation and musical concepts and musical judgments that relate to the *pada* will be centered, especially to get at the question of ontologies. The discussion of *pada* will be approached here from two related standpoints – the contemporary status of Dhrupad as *nibaddha sangita,* namely, pre-composed music bounded by metric cycles, and the ontological status of composition as a musical work.

(iii) Dhrupad *bani:* Style is an integral aspect of aesthetics, and I address it in this dissertation through the concept of *bani,* which is directly concerned with the aesthetics of compositional forms in the Dhrupad traditions I study here.[49] The distinction of Dhrupad as a genre has been closely associated with stylistic concepts. Sanyal and Widdess identify *ang* (overarching Dhrupad style), *gayaki* (composite style of a tradition or individual) and *bani* as three concepts in the domain of style that are relevant to Dhrupad.[50] The Dhrupad *banis* probably require a dissertation in their own right as they are the proverbial musical unicorn. Sanyal and Widdess (2006, Chapter4) provide an excellent analysis of what is known from the different traditions, recordings and written sources they had access to, but that did not include the primary sources that are the core of this project. The Bettiah *gharana*'s performance practice in the banis of Dhrupad is a source that is quite unique in the history of North Indian music. The *banis* of Dhrupad as understood and practiced in the different schools of the Bettiah *gharana* are hence extremely important to my project. While I have to leave a full treatment to future publications, I will discuss

---

[49] Rowell and Sathyanarayana both observe that studies of style "are in their infancy in Indian musicology" (Rowell (1992), Sathyanarayana (2004, 74)). Style in Dhrupad is a complex constellation of concepts and requires exclusive discussion. Here, I have addressed it to the extent necessary for a discussion of aesthetic categories.

[50] Lath argues that it is only with the emergence of Khayal that the notion of Dhrupad as an overarching style, or *ang,* came into being. (Lath 1987). Building on earlier work with Sanyal, Widdess has argued that the notion of a personal performance style, and of singing in the style of a founder/composer began to be important in the 17th century itself (Widdess 2010, 134). I investigate the interactive basis of musical judgment and fidelity to tradition, and notions of composer and work in chapters 3, 4, and 5.

how knowledge of particular *banis* as aesthetic categories is stabilized and catalyzed for the musicians in my project.

I draw on literature in music cognition, music theory, the anthropology of the senses and Indian music to build out my theorization of the *banis* as aesthetic categories. The claim made here is that understanding this musical unicorn requires a complex approach that recognizes the demands made by a classical system as a formal system of organization of aesthetics in which systematic approaches to composition and creative development of musical ideas shape and are shaped by categories. At the same time these cultivated aesthetic categories are enmeshed in the sensorial and the local, in the shaping of aesthetic judgment as human sensibility. Thus my investigation of the aesthetic concept of *bani* is an exciting foray into bridging musicology with music cognition and the anthropology of the senses. Working with the musicians of the Bettiah *gharana*, we also come very close to understanding how compositional activity and the closed structure of compositions helped transform the *banis* from what may have been fuzzy, loose stylistic concepts into aesthetic categories with very well defined characteristics.

(iv) Raga *alap*, or the unmetered development of a raga's modal possibilities, is an integral aspect of Indian classical music performance. Theorized at least since the 12th century, *alap* has its South Indian counterpart in raga *alapana* (called *alati* in medieval Tamil texts). A Dhrupad performance normally begins with raga *alap* in which the raga is explored in different melodic registers, at different tempi. The duration, structure and depth of the *alap* depend on the tradition and the individual performer. In modern times, long *alap* has become the signature of Dhrupad, so much so that some people equate Dhrupad with *alap* and creativity and imagination with the ability to sing lengthy *alap*. In my project this is explicitly not the case, as *alap* never stands alone as a representation of Dhrupad performance. Hence *alap*, and its place in Dhrupad performance is one of the areas in which individual musical judgment will be explored in depth, from the perspective of Dhrupad's contemporary ideologies and norms. At the same time, musicians and audiences would agree that raga *alap*'s reason for being is to develop a raga's form and affect in performance. It is hence a good medium to consider how musicians develop consciousness of raga, and what actually tethers and feeds the development of raga in performance. I will examine the relationship between musical creativity, and the interactions of musical life, the factors that may lead to an ethics of improvisation (a *dharma* of *manodharma),* and the importance of the body, emotion and the senses in making heterogeneous maps available to guide performance in flow.

(v) A discussion of approaches to *layakari,* the melodic-rhythmic development of *pada* in performance, is embedded in discussions of musical judgment about song. The musicians in my project take deep cognizance of the integrity of the *pada* as a musical work and as song. I will argue that the musical judgment applied to creative exploration of *pada* in performance is shaped by an ethics of improvisation. Drawing

contrasts to other traditions of Dhrupad I will argue that while the *pada* may function as an archetype and as fodder for improvisation in some traditions, in the Bettiah *gharana* it constitutes ontology, approaching a musical work. Much of my discussion of *pada* focuses on the ways in which this central ontology is stabilized in the dialogic interaction of musical practice and musical life.

Sources and methodology

My methodology comprised a lot of ethnographic work beating the footpaths, and hours and hours spent in music rooms, with some forays into the archives that turned up little in terms of sources but gave me a feeling for the history of the Bettiah Estate. The primary sources for my project are the musicians and musical communities associated with Dhrupad performance in the Bettiah *gharana*, and the musical expertise and materials available with them. After brief visits in previous summers, I spent extended time during my year of fieldwork in 2010 – 2011 in Bettiah, living amidst the hereditary musical families of the village of Bhanu Chapra. I learnt Dhrupad from Indra Kishore Mishra while living in Bettiah, and also interacted with him during several visits to Kolkata, Chennai, Benares, and Patna. We spent extended time on music, cataloguing, structured and unstructured interviews, visiting sites, spending time with the family and people in the community. I also travelled to other villages and to Muzzafarpur to meet two older musicians from the Mullick families, both of whom have since passed away. I interviewed many octagenarians in Bettiah, especially from the important hereditary families associated with the Bettiah Estate, who had witnessed some of the community practices in which Dhrupad was an integral part. Community members I interviewed in depth included family members, students, mentors, close musical friends, patrons, community elders and historians and archivists of the tradition – especially Padmashri Gajendra Narain Simha who has done invaluable work in documenting and sustaining the Mullick families of Bettiah as carriers of heritage, and Kartik Lahiry who documented both the local Bettiah and migrant Kolkata lineages of the Betitah *gharana.*[51]

In marked contrast, my process of research into Falguni Mitra's music required stepping back before stepping in. I started regular lessons from Falguni Mitra in 1989 and despite extended time away since 1995, I kept up my lessons whenever we had occasion to meet. So, by the time I began the preliminary research into this project in 2006, I was familiar with his music as a student and listener. Yet, the process of research has opened up my ears in ways that are comparable to my experience with Indra Kishore. I have learnt to listen to him and think about his music and musicianship in entirely different ways through the process of many,

[51] Simha (1990), Lahiry (1977)

many hours spent in music rooms in going over notation, music analysis, setting compositions, preparing for recordings, structured and unstructured interviews and the many hours spent going over his notebooks, books, recordings and collections. In addition to extended work with him, I spent time with his musical family, students, accompanists, musical friends and long term associates. To understand the source of his tradition, I made multiple visits to Benares, where I interviewed two senior musicians from the musical community of the Bettiah *gharana* in Benares, and visited the important sites for Dhrupad of the Bettiah *gharana* in Benares. I specially benefitted from multiple interactions with Dr. Rai Anand Krishna from an old and famous Benares family, whose father Padma Bhushan Dr. Rai Krishna Dasa was at the helm of the cultural Nationalist movement in Benares. Dr. Rai Krishna Dasa commissioned the important Dhrupad compilation Sangit Samucchai (Basu 1924), the earliest written source on the history and notated music of Falguni Mitra's Bettiah lineage. I benefited from multiple site visits and interactions with Krishna Kumar Rastogi whose family has been associated with the Kashi Sangit Samaj for more than a hundred years, as well as historian Kameshwar Mishra who has documented the musical traditions of Benares.[52] Through these intensely participatory modes of engagement I developed a sense for the emplacement of the musical practices of the Bettiah tradition in its different contexts. I did not try to follow the lineage of the Mishras of Benares that migrated to Kolkata in the late 19th century, because there are no active teaching lines remaining in that migratory lineage.

My engagement with documentary sources was most productive in relation to musical materials available with Falguni Mitra, Indra Kishore Mishra – including handwritten *bhojpatra* (birch-leaf) manuscripts from the 19th century containing Dhrupads of the Bettiah Maharajas - and some of the corroborative material I obtained at the Kashi Sangit Samaj in Benares and from musical circles in Kolkata. I also looked at land records of the Mullick families and verified their family trees until the mid 19th century through these records. I spent three weeks at the India Office Archives in the British Library researching the political, social and economic history of the Bettiah Estate and managed to find a few stray references to the culture of the times. I visited the Bettiah palace and their records rooms several times but the main thing I got from the visits was fuel for my historical imagination. I had been forewarned by Michael's ethnographic report of the rigors of doing archive research on the Bettiah Estate.[53] Even so, I was disappointed at not making much headway there. I tried repeatedly to get old recordings. I was sorely disappointed to learn that a valuable interview of Indra Kishore's grandfather Shyama Prasad Mullick done in 1961 by All India Radio, Patna in Bettiah had been

[52] Mishra (1997)
[53] Michael, Bernardo (1999) at http://www.hawaii.edu/csas/SAnewsfall99.html; last accessed August 13, 2015

lost in a flood. The few older recordings I managed to get were obtained from an officer of the Indian Administrative Service who had recorded some of the Bettiah Dhrupad musicians while posted in Bettiah as the District Magistrate and Collector sometime in the nineteen eighties. I also obtained some older recordings from Krishna Kumar Rastogi of the Kashi Sangit Samaj. I consulted a number of secondary sources on political, social, economic and cultural history of the places and regions in my project, and on Dhrupad in the early 20th century. I even did a survey of 18th and 19th century migrations to the Caribbean from the Bhojpuri region in the hope of finding links between the Chautal traditions in the Caribbean and the Dhrupad traditions of Bettiah and Benares. I did find a reference to a girl named Bettiah in a collection of folk songs of Guyana ,[54] but I left that tantalizing trail for another day.

[54] Brathwaite, Percy A., and Serena U. Brathwaite. 1970. *Folk songs of Guyana: chanties, ragtime, ballads, queh-queh, traditional plantation themes*. S.l: s.n. The song is titled "Bettiah from Berbice" and is about an East Indian girl named Bettiah.

Chapter 3 - Thick sound on an ancestral street

> *"That is not my voice. This is my body but that is not my voice; it is my father's voice – he is sitting in my throat…"*[55]

It happened twice under strikingly similar vocal conditions. The first time, still somewhat new to the village of Bhanu Chapra and its sole contemporary expert Dhrupad musician Indra Kishore Mishra, I brushed the incident off as fanciful. The second time I realized that a very particular vocalization catalyzed Mishra into remembering his father and experiencing memory not as thought but aurally and physically, as a vocal inhabiting lodged in the throat.

A long vocal movement that traverses a cluster of adjacent notes in a series of slow loops, the vocal gesture that catalyzed remembering as vocal inhabiting is a central mode of expression in Indra Kishore Mishra's Dhrupad practice. Sung with vocal chords barely engaged, the voice is moved by the breath circulating through the body, stomach muscles pulling in slowly, the breath pushed up into a slowly expanding chest while the series of loops are executed by the voice. Excruciating for a learner, the gesture has as its basis a series of *meends*, a vocal technique that is at the heart of Dhrupad in the *gaurhar bani*, the aesthetic style that constitutes the acoustic world as a way of being for Indra Kishore Mishra. Carrying sound marks of affective associations to family, patron and place, the characteristic vocalization of Indra Kishore's *gaurhar bani* is thick sound that interrupts consciousness in an intense remembering that is critical to vocal epistemology in Indra Kishore's musical world.

In this chapter, I investigate the interactive basis of musical judgment for the first of my two case studies. Indra Kishore Mishra is a hereditary musician from the Mullick families of Bettiah – multi-generational families of Dhrupad musicians who migrated into Bettiah at the end of the 17th century in the service of the Bhumihar kings of the Bettiah Estate, and have remained there since. Fighting conditions of poverty and cultural isolation since the end of princely patronage, the musical families that remained in Bettiah have largely abandoned the practice of Dhrupad. Today Indra Kishore Mishra is the sole expert performer of Dhrupad on a street that had dozens

[55] Indra Kishore Mishra, Bettiah, October 2010. All quotations of Indra Kishore have been translated from Hindi unless otherwise indicated.

of Dhrupad musicians composing and singing from the late 17th century until the twilight years of *zamindari* patronage in the early 20th century.

Despite the erosion in musical environment and the lack of local patrons, listeners or peers, Indra Kishore still lives and sings in Place in his ancestral village of Bhanu Chapra just across the railway tracks from the central Chowk area of Bettiah. Staying in place and staying singing are deeply connected conditions in Indra Kishore Mishra's musical life as a contemporary performer of Dhrupad. Indra Kishore's auditory consciousness is deeply entangled in the memorial associations of family, patron and place, which include the pain of trauma memory. Even when Mishra is traveling on the music circuit, he carries Place in myriad ways that are intertwined with the sonic.

In the sections that follow I demonstrate conclusively that Indra Kishore's music and his voice have been shaped in dialogic with the changing soundscapes of Bettiah town, inflected by inter-subjective pressures of performing on the national Dhrupad circuit in contemporary times. I show that the strength and tenor of Indra Kishore's judgment about Dhrupad as classical music can only be understood by attending to the dialogic practices through which the sounds of Indra Kishore's Dhrupad are transformed to thick sound cognitively entangled with family, patron and place in daily musical life. I trace the strength of Indra Kishore's musical judgment and the ethical register of his aesthetic choices to the interactive forms of knowledge produced singing in Place while dwelling in the Voice.

I begin with a description of Indra Kishore's Dhrupad lineage and his rich and historic repertoire of compositions. I quickly exit the fishbowl of transmission studies by analyzing the interactive nexus of habitual practices through which Indra Kishore sustains a sense for his *khazana* as thick sound, invoking soundscapes long gone through processes of inter-animation in which interactions anchor sound and sound in turn is marked by interactions.

I investigate the grids of intelligibility that constitute a habitual epistemology for Indra Kishore's music by conducting an archeology of thick sound in Bettiah town in near history. I show that epistemologies of Dhrupad in Bettiah have been dialogically shaped within a constellation of practices in which Dhrupad practice came to be emplaced in the centuries of Princely patronage.

To analyze musical life as an acoustemic environment, I consider the inter-animation of Dhrupad vocal practice with heredity, geographies of practice, patronage circuits, cultural practices associated with singing Dhrupad in community and the expert practice of Dhrupad as a genre of Classical music amongst the musical families of Bettiah. I consider the acoustic communities and inter-subjective interactions in which Indra Kishore and his immediate forefathers shaped their sense of judgment and right practice in Dhrupad. I investigate the forms of

knowledge produced in the development of musicianship and expertise through repeated engagements with a historic *khazana* that has been put through a few centuries of churning by generation after generation of Dhrupad musicians composing music for singing in Places. Through this layered analysis I establish the interactive epistemological basis of musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition in Indra Kishore's life as a contemporary performer of Dhrupad.

Lineage: the fertile grounds of family musical practice

Indra Kishore comes from a family of composers and tunesmiths. The version of his family tree drawn up by his father Mahant Mishra begins in the early 17th century with two originary Dhrupad musicians - one a vocalist and the other a *been* player. These musicians are said to have migrated from Kurukshetra via Shah Jahan's Imperial court to Bettiah in the late 17th century. As oral history has it, the Mughal Emperor himself gifted them to Raja Gaj Singh - the second king in the Bettiah Raj lineage - during one of the latter's periodic visits to the Emperor's Court. After recording this early origin, a continuous family tree with multiple branches of composer-musicians begins in the late 18th century and continues till today.

Indra Kishore's family is one of three main lineages of Mullicks that claim presence in Bettiah from the late 17th century. The three families have different origin stories and distinct lineages, and all of them were awarded land and farmland by the Maharajas of Bettiah. While under the patronage of the Maharajas of Bettiah and the Bettiah Estate until the early 20th century, and until the mid 20th century while there was still a network of dwindling patronage in neighboring estates, these families sang only Dhrupad. With waning patronage, in the last two generations family members have moved away from Dhrupad to specialize in *pakhawaj* for Kirtan accompaniment, Kirtan singing, *tabla*, and Khayal, and some have left music altogether to find other occupations.[56]

In the early 20th century, the number of active Dhrupad musicians in just Indra Kishore's lineage numbered more than ten, and they all lived in the village of Bhanu Chapra on one half of a street about 500 meters long. Indra Kishore still lives on this street, on ancestral property gifted by the Maharajas of Bettiah to his forefathers. Today he is the only practicing Dhrupad musician on his street. The other half of the

[56] Indra Kishore observed that it would be interesting to document the kinds of professions erstwhile Dhrupad families have taken up. He lists porters, brick layers, cement workers, clerks, shoe smiths, traders, teachers, Kirtan singers, pundits and priests as occupations of people that used to sing Dhrupad in Bettiah. He himself inherited his father's job as a *chowkidar* (office assistant) of the Bihar Government, a position most educated middle class people would view as a servile position with no authority or dignity. This job is what keeps him hovering above poverty, as being a full time Dhrupad performer in a rural town does not feed the stomach.

same street is occupied by a different extended family of Mullicks, unrelated to Indra Kishore's family. This family too had half a dozen or more active Dhrupad musicians in the early 20th century but after the 1960s there have been no regular performers of Dhrupad in this lineage. Knowledge of Dhrupad has become attenuated in the subsequent generations though many still sing Khayal, Bhajan and other genres.

The third large extended family of Mullicks lives some miles away in Bettiah town in the area known as Raj Deori, right outside the Bettiah Palace grounds. This extended family had half a dozen active Dhrupad and *sitar* musicians in the early twentieth century but by the mid twentieth century, a single Dhrupad musician - Raj Kishore Mishra - carried this lineage's repertoire and practice. By the 21st century, this octogenarian too has moved on. With him, a distinctive branch of the Bettiah *gharana* ended, leaving only attenuated traces in his son and grandchildren, none of whom have put in much work into receiving tradition.

The varied strands of transmission within an extended family results in an incredibly strong connection to shared historical soundscapes for Dhrupad practice and a communal memory for the aesthetics of Dhrupad. Often, knowledge of Dhrupad arises from listening to a song learnt by members of the family; at other times, it is engendered by hearing more focused learners practice, and sometimes through targeted training, discipleship and practice. The intelligibility of Dhrupad in Bettiah is strongly tethered in these shared auditory histories.

In Indra Kishore's lineage, the figure of his grandfather Shyama Prasad Mullick, also called Shyama Mulick (1881 – 1961) stands out both in oral history and in the repertoire. A prolific composer and outstanding musician by all accounts, Indra Kishore told me that Shyama Mullick has been a key musical voice in consolidating and transmitting the signature aesthetics of the *gaurhar* and *khandar banis*, the two aesthetic styles associated with Dhrupad performance and composition in Indra Kishore's lineage. The generations prior to Shyama Mullick record the names of Mahavir Mullick and his brother Ramprasad Mullick, both of whom composed actively, and their father Digambar Mullick, also an active composer. Their ancestors in turn figure in the repertoire as active composers, taking us right to the times of Anand Kishore Singh and Naval Kishore Singh, the Maharajas of Bettiah who were famous as composer-patrons of Dhrupad in the 19th century.[57]

In the early 20th century, Shyama Mullick had a performing partner in Bhagawat Mullick, his brother and next door neighbor who died in the nineteen forties. The

[57] Different Mullick families in Bettiah contest each other's family trees and claims to musical prowess. I have reported what was provided by members of each lineage, verified as far back as possible using property documents. For family trees see Lahiry (1977) and Simha (1990).

brochure of the All India Music Conference in Muzzafarpur in 1936, which is in the possession of Indra Kishore, lists jugalbandi Dhrupad performances by them as well as their rivals down the street, Kunj Behari and his nephew Anant Behari Mullick. Shyama Mullick's stature as a musician and inheritor of a valuable musical tradition attracted the well known Gwalior *gharana* Khayal musician Narayan Rao Vyas, then director of AIR Patna to Bettiah in 1960, with a team that recorded him. AIR also interviewed Shyama Mullick and many others living on the same street, some of whom I met. The recording cannot be traced though the contract signed by AIR with the artist is in the possession of Indra Kishore.

In the next generation, Bhagawat Mullick's family moved away from Dhrupad as its primary genre. Only his son Shankar Lal Mishra retaining a level of engagement with Dhrupad to imbibe and transmit some of his father's repertoire, in addition to playing *tabla*, his primary instrument.[58] In contrast, much of Shyama Mullick's heritage was passed in close transmission mainly to his eldest son, Mahant Mishra, Indra Kishore's father, whose life force was keeping his family tradition going. Mahant Mishra spent over forty years with his father, often traveling with him to neighboring estates to perform and teach, and acquiring and polishing the repertoire throughout this time. Local lore has it that Shyama Mullick knew thousands of songs, some portion of which he taught his son Mahant Mishra, who took the step of notating the music in the two decades after his father's death, while teaching his son Indra Kishore as many songs as he could.

The musical inheritance - Indra Kishore's *khazana*

The *khazana* Indra Kishore inherited is one that has been transformed by the polishing and creative work of several generations of musicians, most recently put through the individual musical mill of his grandfather Shyama Mullick and sustained by his father Mahant Mishra. Indra Kishore's corpus is truly unique and an objective description suffices to demonstrate this. I catalogued over 600 songs that were notated by his father. Aside from this, there are texts of many songs without notation on scraps of paper, diaries, manuscripts and books. My discussion here is restricted just to the notated repertoire.

While the heart of the corpus are four-part Dhrupads and four-part Dhamars, the repertoire has many songs in less-heard forms such as Chaturang, Swaramalika,

[58] Even within a single extended family, each patrilineal branch has some compositions they consider their own, not sharing even with close cousins. Indra Kishore told me Shankar Lal Mishra has some very interesting compositions he has taught his sons but not Indra Kishore. The sons of Shankar Lal Mishra have learnt Dhrupad from their father but have not pursued it as a primary expertise. Their transmission line for Dhrupad has two generations that did not sing Dhrupad as a primary genre. Yet, their aesthetic sense for song is strikingly coherent.

Trivat and Tarana, many of which were composed by his forefathers. The four-part Dhamars also stand out in the corpus against the two-part varieties more commonly found in other repertoires.

The repertoire's range of ragas contains the common ragas of Hindustani music but also some unusual varieties of common ragas[59]. It also has some ragas such as Salankh, Salankhi, Mallari that are not listed in contemporary raga compilations. Indra Kishore's understanding of these ragas is entirely based on the few songs in his repertoire. The range of talas include Chautal, Adi tal, Sadra all sung in very slow and slow tempo, Dhamar sung in medium slow tempo, Adi tal, Sulfakta and Teovra in fast and very fast tempo as well a few songs in now rare talas such as Brahma tala of 28 beats. The *bani* to tempo map is almost automated. Very slow to medium slow tempo is automatically sung with *gaurhar bani* cognition, whereas *khandar bani* songs start at medium fast and then increase tempo up to very fast. For forms such as Chaturang, Swaramalika and Trivat,[60] where rhythmicity and sonority of syllables is part of the effect, Indra Kishore begins at fast and speeds up to very fast singing as fast he can enunciate, with faster *gamak* adding to the increase in intensity.

The range of composers in this repertoire begins with the figure of Vyas Das, all of whose compositions are in the now rare raga Nat Narayan.[61] A number of Dhrupads of Swami Haridas, Tansen, and Baiju form a bulk of the early corpus, before going onto the composers of the 17th and 18th centuries such as Buddhiprakash, and Sadarang, Adarang and their brother Nur Rang who seems to have been the lesser known brother of the more famous duo. Less common forms such as Chaturang and Swaramalika begin to appear even with the middle centuries composers. Nur Rang's composition is a Swaramalika, whereas a Chaturang of Buddhiprakash is in the repertoire.

The 19th century composers in his repertoire include a substantial number of

---

[59] Examples include Sampoorna Hindol, Shuddh Dhaivat Adana, Shuddh Dhaivat Lalit, a Megh with *komal gandhar* and two *nishads* that is more a Malhar than a pentatonic variety of Megh, Jaaj Bilawal, Sindhoora Malhar, Pancham with 4 notes (which doesn't include the note *pancham*), 3 types of Malashri with 3, 4 and 5 notes respectively.

[60] See Bharali (2008) for a discussion of these musical forms.

[61] I have not come across a Vyas Das in my review of repertoires. Indra Kishore says he has heard that Vyas Das was Swami Haridas's guru. Swami Haridas is a patron saint and founder of the Vallabha Sampradaya sect of Krishna devotion and known in Hindustani music lore as the teacher of Mia Tansen. His Dhrupad songs are extant in classical repertoires and while Delvoye (2010) insists these are metrical and unlike Dhrupads, Rosenstein has analyzed the entire Vallabha Sampradaya repertoire and finds them comparable to Dhrupads (Rosenstein, 1997). Falguni Mitra based on his experience of singing hundreds of Dhrupads composed through the ages, says that Swami Haridas's compositions are definitely written for singing even though some of his songs are long, more like Prabandhas and some are unusual in their structure. Still they fit very well within the structural varieties of Dhrupads from different composers.

Dhrupads of the Maharajas of Bettiah, Anand Kishore Singh and Naval Kishore Singh. Fighting for place with the Maharaja's compositions are a number of songs composed by at least 10 different composers from Indra Kishore's lineage over 150 years. The composers include Gopal Mullick, Dina Mullick from the early 19th century, Digambar Mullick and Mahavir Mullick from later in the 19th century, prolific composing by Shyama Prasad Mullick in the 20th century and songs tuned as well as composed by Indra Kishore who continues his family tradition as a *vaggeyakara*.[62] A few songs from other Mullick lineages also find a place in the repertoire.

The *khazana* as thick sound

Indra Kishore's sense of family is anchored in more than a family tree drawn on a piece of paper. It is anchored in and feeds sound. Consequently, the temporality of song is not simply loosely anchored nostalgia or narrativity in Indra Kishore's musical life - it has audible sonic footprint and is entrenched in the sonic. Several times during my fieldwork with Indra Kishore, he would experience moments of intense remembering in connection with Dhrupad practice. Triggered by activity that was not always aural, but almost always centered in his *khazana* and its connection to family, patron and place, it happened when singing, cataloguing, even simply handling the notebooks and documents with songs in them, sifting through trunks, walking on the street near places marked by music, walking by his family's graves, or talking of family, music, places and events. One minute we would be doing something, the next an intense remembering would be triggered in which Indra Kishore would be catalyzed to listen in to sound within a nexus of associations that would feed right back into sound, thickening it further with potentiality and eventfulness.

In the following, I investigate the habitual and catalytic interactions through which the vocal practice of Dhrupad functions as thick sound - an acoustemic environment which transforms individual musical judgment in Indra Kishore's life as a hereditary musician, and its relation to individual musical judgment and aesthetic sense. I organize my investigation of thick sound in four related sections. The first two sections demonstrate how soundscapes long gone become inter-animated in the practices through which singing Dhrupad becomes emplacing for Indra Kishore as a hereditary musician living and singing on an ancestral street in contemporary Bettiah. First I discuss acoustemic anchors and their agentive role in transforming the vocal practice of Dhrupad into an acoustemic environment where vocal

[62] A *vaggeyakara* refers to a musician who composes the lyrics and sets it to music.

knowledge is inter-animated with epistemologies of family, patron and place.[63] Some of the acoustemic anchors I study in Indra Kishore's case include the hereditary musical family, trauma memory, paper and notation, material possessions and sense of Place In the next sub-section I focus on the vocal epistemologies produced in the cognitive intertwining of Dhrupad vocal practice with places and events that gathered community in Bettiah town.

In the third section I investigate the transformations in the heterogeneous acoustic communities that sustained the practice of Dhrupad in Bettiah as an acoustemic environment, and the consequent impact on grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad performance in Bettiah and outside. I focus on Indra Kishore Mishra's family practice in relation to this environment to argue that the categories of Dhrupad as an expert practice are dependent on the inter-subjectivity of acoustic communities that engage in dialogic modes of listening in performance. I focus on the erosion of acoustic communities for Dhrupad in Bettiah and Indra Kishore Mishra's attempts to straddle the worlds of being a hereditary musician in a denuded rural environment for music and a musician occasionally at large on the national Dhrupad circuit. In the fourth and final section, I discuss the tethering of Indra Kishore's musical judgment and notions of fidelity to tradition in relation to processes of emplacement.

Emplacing sound: Acoustemic anchors for the catalytic *khazana*

When a musician recognize songs by the relationship he has to the composer, the composer-patrons that sustained musical community, and the places where songs were written and performed, the aural becomes marked with a sense of family, patron and place, and vocal practice becomes an acoustemic environment that transforms both the voice within and the world without.

But, it is critical to emphasize that it is not in sound alone that these connections are sustained. Connections to the aural are materialized in different objects and kept alive through the memorial practices of everyday life as a hereditary musician engaged in the work of churning his family *khazana* in intense musical practice. Living and singing in the midst of these anchors for acoustemic memory transforms Indra Kishore's *khazana* to thick sound in catalytic and habitual ways.

Family as acoustemic anchor

Music, family, and consciousness are synonymous to Indra Kishore. This is a man that knows his own self and the world primarily through sound and the associations that mark and anchor sound. His life story soon reveals that sound has played a

[63] I have defined acoustemic anchors as distributed anchors for thick sound – often they anchor acoustic memory entwined with emotional memory, body memory, associative memory, correlative memory and so on – bringing Hutchins (2005) and Basso (1996) together, they are distributed anchors or sites of cognitive intertwining.

great part in compensating a childhood rendered lonely by circumstance.

A mother who died in childbirth brought Indra Kishore into the world as the only child of a poverty stricken and grieving father whose impetus to survive was sourced and sustained in sound. According to family and a few close friends, Indra Kishore's father Mahant Mishra became a recluse after losing both his wife and his father within a few years of each other. Rarely given to speech, Mahant Mishra put whatever fire he had into learning, singing, transmitting and notating his family Dhrupad repertoire, letting his family lands run wild, his mud house crumble and his stomach go hungry. To feed his son and put him through school, he was forced to earn a meager living cracking betel nuts in the bazaar, teaching a few students in town and doing a job as a low salary employee in the local government office. The rest of the time he would teach his son, making him practice song after song, trying to impart not just the music but the intense feeling for family and inheritance that kept him going through years of struggling to survive. Indra Kishore imbibed complex musical knowledge in relation to ragas, talas, song forms and aesthetics, at the same time he internalized stories of patrons, events, community and family feats of composing.

Trauma memory and triumph as anchors

While singing Dhrupad generated soundscapes with feeling for family, patron and place, the actual details of Indra Kishore's life in childhood suggest that this vocal knowledge compensated the loneliness he had to deal with early in life. As Indra Kishore recalls it, his father would not spend much time at home. Rather, he would wake his son early, get him to start singing, teach him songs and then leave, coming back in the afternoons before going out again in the evening. But Indra Kishore was expected to practice as much as he could when home from school, and was banned from listening to other music. Failure to practice and waywardness in listening would bring his father's wrath down on him hard.

A lonely childhood seems to have left deep marks on Indra Kishore. He recalls with pain and anger the doors that were shut in the face of their poverty by many families on their street and in the town when his father went knocking for school fees or medical help, the musical events to which his father would no longer be welcome because of poverty and depression, and the pain of watching his father slowly go more and more into isolation barring a few friends who kept him going musically.

Special songs mark incidents in his struggle to keep connected with his father through difficult years. Sitting with a broken reed harmonium in his schoolhouse, Indra Kishore told me how his father once broke the harmonium cover by hitting him with it. The occasion was finding his son singing a film song by the playback singer Mukesh. Indra Kishore says he was soon cured of the tendency to sing film music, but when I listen to his sweet and clear voice today, I am led to imagine that he was drawn to Mukesh because of a resonance in his own vocal chords.

Many of Indra Kishore's stories are marked by heroic personal effort in relation to family inheritance. One day in the midst of a grueling 3-hour cataloguing session, he called in his wife to describe how his father tore up notebooks filled with precious notations. The notebooks we were cataloguing were salvaged from his father's frustration at not being able to teach Indra Kishore as much of the family repertoire as he could. A song in raga Bageshri broke the six-month tundra of silence his father subjected him to when he found his son wasn't practicing regularly. Indra Kishore cannot sing the song in Bageshri without remembering this association, and he often chooses to sing this song precisely so that he can relive feeling in sound.

Relief for Indra Kishore finally came in the form of a young wife, and then the children followed. But Indra Kishore's music would not have survived but for an incident that was to change his life. In 1980 when a team of revivalists came looking for the lost Dhrupad tradition of Bettiah, they were taken to the house of many families that had since given up singing Dhrupad but were not even give a hint that the village of Bhanu Chapra had a living, breathing tradition in Indra Kishore's father Mahant Mishra. Through a local benefactor, Indra Kishore managed to force his way into the presence of two men who were to play a decisive role in his musical career for the next three decades – Ustad Fariduddin Dagar arguably the 20th century's most influential Dhrupad musician, and Gajendra Narain Singh, then Secretary of the Bihar Sangit Natak Akademi.

Dead; they thought Bettiah gharana was dead. Dead…

Almost always said in English, Indra Kishore's tone would show panic and amazement every time he recounted the story of how a Dhrupad tradition that was almost dead was brought back to life, and his own rise as the person to bring life back to it. Recognizing heritage and talent in Indra Kishore despite his bare feet and torn clothes, Fariduddin Dagar and Gajendra Narain Singh fought many battles to give Indra Kishore a break on the Dhrupad concert circuit. Today Indra Kishore is a regular in all state musical events and on the national Dhrupad circuit. He is well recognized as a carrier of heritage in contemporary Dhrupad where heredity and long lineage has a great deal of authority. Reliving the past serves little political or practical purpose. Yet, the shock of almost fading into oblivion remains strongly with Indra Kishore. He cannot go through an important concert or crucial meeting without telling at least some part of this story.

Intermixed with trauma, some songs mark happier events. A song in raga Todi that he had to partially re-compose due to his father's loss of memory causes him to hear his father's words as thick sound in feedback

"Somehow you recovered the tune of your ancestors…"

This acknowledgment from his father not only proclaimed him a true carrier of tradition, it gave him the ethical basis to "complete the work of (my) ancestors" with his own musical efforts – work he strongly opposes labeling as "new".

But, nothing came easy - it had to be worked for, and the effort put in was both musical and personal intertwining acoustic memory with emotional memory, marking sound with trauma, and struggle. The hours and hours of reiterative effort are integral to the processes through which Indra Kishore connects to his *khazana* as thick sound that constitutes both habitual epistemology and interruptive consciousness.

Trauma memory, place memory and acoustic memory

Indra Kishore's acoustemic memory is shot through with anchors that often surface in musical action to interrupt consciousness while waking or sleeping, walking or talking, singing or surveying his musical inheritance. Trauma memory kicks in often in daily life, intertwined with sound and place. Right after Indra Kishore was extended a musical lifeline by his two benefactors, he was dealt two blows in quick succession that have marked him deeply. Walking through the village, past the graves of his grandfather, father and eldest daughter with me, Indra Kishore recounted his extreme pain at losing his eldest child Deepmala when she was barely 15, the one with the sweetest voice, already learning Dhrupad from him and his father. The next year was even worse with his father ill and no money to buy medicines. What is miscible in the mud is also memorialized in other ways. Indra Kishore keeps photographs locked away from those times. A photograph with his eldest daughter in it, another of his father stick thin with eyes shining from a sunken and hollowed out face, a third one of himself looking distraught and thin in ragged clothes. Those were very difficult days for the young man and his family.

The night Indra Kishore's father died, he had a dream in which his father taught him a raga he had not yet learnt - Devshak. Indra Kishore insists that he heard this raga first in a dream and only then learnt it from songs in his repertoire. The point to take away for me is that Indra Kishore is sensitized to feeling in and through sound. Material anchors are created through repeated recounting and memorial practices and Indra Kishore's habit of walking through the village remembering ancestral voices, fame and pain retains these memories. Such memories are available to the senses at a later time when musical memory is triggered by any activity that anchors acoustemic memory such as working with paper, possessions or music.[64]

Why relive trauma? I came to the conclusion that Indra Kishore's memories serve a purpose that is beyond nostalgia. They are an essential condition to keep Indra

[64] For a discussion of trauma memory see Casey (1987; 2000)

Kishore singing in a denuded environment for music at home, and to re-energize structures of feeling in sound when on the circuit. They serve to remind Indra Kishore that he has survived to tell the tale when the danger of being silenced was very real. They serve to keep him positive in the face of great odds today when he struggles to re-create a supportive environment in modern day Bettiah to transmit his heritage to his children and students. They serve to keep him singing in a place where he has no listeners through most of the year - for, unlike his grandfather's time or even his father's, a listening community for Dhrupad in his village and town has dwindled to vanishing.

Trauma memory, musical memory and place memory that became co-located in the sound marks of Indra Kishore's early musical practice with his father urging him repeatedly not to let their heritage die feedback in musical action today when his stomach is relatively full. Reiterated through re-telling and remembrance that is catalyzed both by the sounds of his family music and by the many anchors for this sound in his daily life as a hereditary musician living in place, the dialogic of marked sound and sound marks makes consciousness in sound both habitual and eventful.

Anchoring sound and emotion in paper and notation

With depleted soundscapes for Dhrupad in his current situation, Indra Kishore guards his material musical possessions as he guards his children. No one including his family knows where he keeps the collection of notebooks that contain the family repertoire carefully notated by his father. If I wanted to catalogue, I had to tell him the previous day. He would then bring a few notebooks into the schoolroom. Once we were done for the day, he would take them away.

On many days while I was living in Indra Kishore's village, we would finish singing in the morning and then settle into a few hours of working with paper and things, taking a break before sitting down for music again in the evening. Cataloguing Indra Kishore's repertoire and going through the trunks in his attic was a surprisingly generative activity. I expected it to be a chore, something to be got through. But, going through the notebooks catalyzed bodily, emotional and musical memory during the activity and even several hours after handling the materials.

Physically turning the pages crammed with his father's writing was invariably both musically and emotionally overwhelming. Many songs Indra Kishore had pushed to the back of his memory had a phenomenal effect on him. They would cause him to dream of his father at night, to dream of singing. They caused him to remember incidents associated with particular songs and activities. He would come into the music room charged to respond to sound. When singing a demanding *gaurhar bani* Dhrupad after one such affective exercise of working with paper and notation, he was catalyzed into remembering his father as a vocal inhabiting. Since it was the second time this happened, it dawned on me that singing Dhrupad was a deeply

temporalizing experience for Indra Kishore. It took a few more months for me to understand that the temporalization went beyond a generalized embodied experience. It was dialogically tethered in the specifics of sound, place, patron and family, and these intersected most significantly in the family *khazana* that was central to Dhrupad epistemology in Indra Kishore's practice.

Having to crane our heads over several notebooks where Mahant Mishra had filled even the margins on all three sides with notation, Indra Kishore was moved into remembering the circumstances under which his father worked on the collection. Hungry, scrounging for money to buy notebooks and fuel for his kerosene lamp, Mahant Mishra would spend hours by the pond at the entrance of the village, notating songs at night. One evening after an intense few hours cataloguing, walking alone by the pond in the pitch dark on his way to the busy Chowk area, Indra Kishore experienced a visceral recall of the acute poverty that was a constant companion in those years, causing him to break out in fear and sweat before he was jerked back into the present by a passer by greeting him.[65] The next day he told me,

> "I was quiet till you came; now you have woken the sleeping tiger in me. I had forgotten about these things – put them away with the pain because after my father there is nobody to make me remember all these songs. For concerts, I sing some things but many, many more songs – their time hasn't come. It has to come soon… I may not have much time - life here is so hard".

In addition to the notebooks, Indra Kishore's most precious possession is a set of tattered pages from a 19th century *bhojpatra* (birch-leaf) manuscript. Said to be in the writing of the kings themselves, these pages are a part of the Durga Anand Sagar, the collection of Dhrupads composed by Maharajas Anand Kishore Singh and Naval Kishore Singh. Indra Kishore keeps the torn pages carefully wrapped in sheets of newspaper, rolled up and put away in a faded old cloth bag. According to him, the pages were dispatched on horseback to his ancestors, so they could be set to tune and sung in the court the following day. He was filled with pride the days we went over the pages, poking with one finger at each composition to point out the composer's name where it occurred, point out songs he had already taught me, songs we had catalogued in his father's notebooks, songs in rare ragas and songs with unusual lyrical structure. Every such exercise was charged not with nostalgia or narrativity but with the dialogic connection to sound that had been built by hours of repeated practice in learning, churning, polishing and perfecting some of these very songs, and many other songs such as these, both alone and in the company of his father. The manuscript is not a museum of works but a dynamic archive. Indra

[65] His description of the experience was akin to the slippage of consciousness that can be caused by dreams that activate physical and sensory memory of experiences from the far past that have been pushed out of active memory.

Kishore turns to them as sources, as his father and grandfather did before him. One of Indra Kishore's dreams is to set tune to the songs he hasn't received through oral tradition – an activity that marks sound with the recognition that he is a true inheritor of ancestral prowess in setting tune to the song-texts written by the Kings of Bettiah.

These heterogeneous modes of connecting with musical inheritance demonstrate that Indra Kishore is not a man alone with his music. The interactivity of thick sound is ontologically integral to the musical objects in Indra Kishore's treasure chest. It opens up pathways in performance by feeding back as habitual acoustemic guidance and generative eventfulness in Indra Kishore's vocal practice, tethering musical judgment and notions of fidelity to tradition in thick sound that entangles an acoustemology of place.

Possessions and a sense of Place

Indra Kishore keeps his other musical possessions locked away in tin trunks kept on attic shelves in his house. A small bundle of things capture his father's life. A few photographs of a thin, hollowed out face with bright eyes, one with a *tanpura*, a few newspaper clippings, a betel nut cracker and some stones – the tools of Mahant Mishra's trade during the day. To earn a few *annas* a day, this musician would sit and crack betel nut for people that would buy *pan* in the Chowk, the busy market area across the railway tracks from Bhanu Chapra village. Indra Kishore keeps these reminders of gut pinching poverty around because his environment gives him very little feedback for continuing his music. Keeping his father's few material possessions around gives Indra Kishore the impetus to keep singing because it reminds him that a life was given to save their family heritage. It also reminds him not to be like his father and give in to hardship and isolation. He often told me that had he not revived their farm lands, built a concrete house, put seven children through school and taken steps to get himself concerts and financial support by knocking down doors, his tradition would have ended without anyone noticing. Since the battle is far from over, he keeps these material objects around to remind himself to keep trying.

Other papers and photographs in the iron trunks of papers in Indra Kishore's possession point to the knowledge flows and patronage networks in which the Bettiah musicians participated. Lists of ragas written by hand fill the back pages of the *bhojpatra* manuscript. Probably compiled sometime in the late 19th century, the list includes many exotic varieties no longer heard today in performance. Lists sent from Varanasi (Benares) indicate that Indra Kishore's grandfather was in the loop with Dhrupad musicians in Varanasi, a connection that lapsed in his son's time. Indra Kishore says his grandfather did not agree with his counterparts in Varanasi on matters of raga classification as he went strictly by the family repertoire.

A few photographs of patrons from Sheohar, Ramnagar and other landed estates, and a few old books remind Indra Kishore that many patrons sought his family out as musicians of great prowess. In addition to composing songs and setting tunes to the kings's song texts, just occasionally songs were also taken from other compilations and set to tune by Indra Kishore's forefathers. The texts of a very few songs in Indra Kishore's repertoire are also found in the 19th century compilation, Qanoon Sitar, a copy of which I found in Indra Kishore's house. A few other songs in Indra Kishore's repertoire appear to be part of a compilation called Din Vinay whose front pages are missing.[66] Both these 19th century compilations contain only song texts.

These few signs of connections in the past mean a great deal to Indra Kishore. They enliven a past where his forefathers were feted musicians in contrast to the isolation he faced as a child growing up with a struggling father. But the boxes are not mere containers of memory. They also anchor the present. Taking these boxes down and going through them, I found that Indra Kishore has kept almost every brochure from every Dhrupad festival he has performed in, with a few newspaper reviews and letters. The list begins in 1980 and continues well into the 21st century. The act of going through the trunk revealed Indra Kishore as a musician that has been plugged into the national Dhrupad circuit for almost thirty years. Ill fitting and unintelligible sometimes but present nevertheless. It also revealed a complex personal ethics. "My ancestors were great musicians but nobody knew them. From that perspective I can say I am the one who brought them fame by making their name known". Looking forward and looking back, Indra Kishore was acknowledging both a musical and practical need to be Janus-faced as a Tradition bearer.

It is critical to emphasize that Indra Kishore represents himself as a tradition bearer of valuable heritage in Hindustani music, not just a local family practice. This consciousness has not emerged in the 20th century - his ancestors too saw themselves in relation to a great tradition of Hindustani music. The conscious quotation and extension of older canonical models in the repertoire shows that his ancestors composed in inter-subjective spaces with historical consciousness.[67] When one takes into account the circulatory flows implicated in the constitution of Bettiah as a place at different periods of its history, in varying domains such as religion, architecture, music, scripture, polity, kingship, market practices, fairs and sporting events, Bettiah's musical history seriously tests Bakhle's contention that Hindustani music was an unmarked practice within the little local worlds of

[66] A Google search recently yielded some information about this mystery volume. Apparently it is a volume printed and circulated from the Press of a nearby *zamindari* estate and Din refers to the Bhumihar poet-monarch of the estate.

[67] See discussion of repertoire pp. 50-51.

scattered hereditary families prior to the late 19th century.[68]

At the same time, the local is extremely important to the constitution of categorical knowledge and notions of tradition in Indra Kishore's practice. It is strongly marked in the repertoire in three distinct ways – first, the dozens of compositions from about ten composers in Indra Kishore's own family, secondly, scores of compositions whose verses were written by the Maharajas of Bettiah but whose tunes were set by Indra Kishore's forefathers, and finally, many songs written for singing at particular events and sites in Bettiah.[69]

All these associations make repertoire itself a strong anchor for processes of emplacement in the performance of Dhrupad as an expert practice by the Mullick families. This is evident in how daily musical practice becomes emplacing today for Indra Kishore as the sole expert musician living still in Bettiah, reinforced by the material reminders of paper, land, houses, musically eventful locations, lineage, and the intense work of churning a family musical inheritance in vocal practice.

An acoustemology of Bettiah's musical places

One of the most significant anchors of acoustemic memory in Bettiah is physical geography. Geography is not an inert site or a mute container for the Bettiah *gharana*'s Dhrupad. It is a Place that is historically inter-animated with the practice of Dhrupad at the nexus of court and community in ritual, religious and cultural life.

The connections animated in the sounds of Dhrupad are physically and cognitively distributed, anchored in other associations intertwined with landscape all within a few kilometers of where Indra Kishore was born. They are reinforced by physical geographies of ancestral land, ancestral graves, ancestral house, ancestral street, and ancestral repertoire all of which materialize the connection between sound, place, patron and patrilineage.

When Indra Kishore stands outside the schoolhouse that carries his father's name, if he looks back he looks at his father's house and the street in which the two different families of Mullick hereditary Dhrupad musicians have lived for a few centuries. If he looks ahead he can see the road leading to the fields gifted by the kings of Bettiah to his forefathers. Walking down the street, the inter-vocality of rival families and stories of overhearing are animated as soundscapes. Take a left turn and half a mile

[68] See Introduction for a discussion of Bakhle's arguments.
[69] While the compositions by the Bettiah composers are clearly placed within the classical corpus in terms of compositional models, ragas, talas, and musical forms, the presence of lesser-known varieties of ragas, and songs written for specific purposes mark these musical objects with the interactivity of community life, even though they may align formally and structurally with the rest of the classical repertoire.

away, the Shiva Temple in the village echoes with communal and individual memory of Dhrupads sung during Holi – the Spring festival - and on Monday evening walks. On the other side of the temple pond, grandfather, father and eldest daughter's cremation sites sound connections to lineage. Turn to go to the railway tracks at the head of the village, the homes of multiple families of Jhas remind him of the near history of his ancestors composing for the socially well-placed families in the village. Cross the tracks, sites in Bettiah town assume the dynamism and emotionality of Place through their links to the histories of family Dhrupad practice under the patronage of the Maharajas at ritual sites, temples, and in the sprawling grounds and buildings of the Bettiah Estate.

The epistemology of Dhrupad as a vocal practice in Bettiah is hence deeply entangled with Place. Most importantly, for Indra Kishore as the lone expert musician living in his ancestral village, the acoustemic potentiality held by places in part aurally compensates the erosion in contemporary soundscapes for Dhrupad in Bettiah. It provides grids of intelligibility not only for him, but for the hereditary families of litterateurs, scribes, priests, pundits, spiritual gurus, rich patrons and musicians that were historically associated with the practice of music as part of court and community life in Bettiah, many of whom still live in Bettiah or at least retain strong local connections through land ownership and kinship. It is hence important to critically investigate the forms of knowledge and grids of intelligibility generated by place for Indra Kishore's contemporary practice as a musician living in Bettiah and performing on the national Dhrupad circuit.

In the analysis that follows, I confine myself to the practices that have persisted in communal memory and in transmission of expert practice. Even such an analysis immediately reveals the different scales involved in an acoustemology of Place as it requires attending to the historical networks of communities, practices, events and sites in which Dhrupad has come to be emplaced and their valence to different groups of actors in contemporary times. It also requires attending to the inter-subjectivity of circulatory forms of knowledge both in the past and in contemporary times, and their bearing on categorical knowledge in Dhrupad performance.

The musical history of the Mullicks of Bettiah demonstrates that in the case of Bettiah, substantial portions of a classical music repertoire were emplaced in a constellation of community practices that cannot be reductively dubbed "court music". For one thing, a court at any historical moment is a specific kind place that affords a distinctive environment for the practice of music. Secondly, a court such as Bettiah that had composer kings and a very active musical culture for Dhrupad performance is a soundscape of a particular kind, where epistemologies are acoustemologies. Thirdly, the court was only one amongst several sites at which musicians from the hereditary Mullick families sang Dhrupad. Fourthly, and perhaps most significantly, the practice of music whether in the court or in community occurred within a whole constellation of other situated practices, a fact that has

direct bearing on the forms of knowledge produced in the emplacement of Dhrupad as classical music in Bettiah.

While there are no living witnesses to the court culture that persisted until the early 20th century, musical families as well as older residents of the town shared personal memories of practices from the near past, and handed down narratives of practices from earlier in the 19th century in which musicians from the hereditary families of Mullicks participated even until the mid 20th century.[70] The dialogic of place with dhrupad vocal practice embeds interactivity at many different levels. First, and in Indra Kishore's case the most significant, is the nexus of patron, patrilineage and place that intersects in his family repertoire, a soundscape shared by many hereditary families in Bettiah. In the section that follows, I attempt to investigate the constellation of practices within which Dhrupad performance came to be emplaced in Bettiah and the dialogic constitution of the classical in the process.

Dhrupad as expert practice on an ancestral street

The expert practice of Dhrupad in Bettiah didn't just happen in court – it happened in musicians' homes, where the work of composing, singing, churning and polishing occurred amidst the interactions of community life in villages and towns, while meeting the many demands made on musicians in the service of a princely court. The musicians' street in the village of Bhanu Chapra has had a few centuries of such activity in the dozen houses that line the street – activity that peaked in the 19th century, to slowly attenuate after the mid-twentieth century leaving intense soundscapes for Dhrupad in just one family home. Indra Kishore's earliest memories (as a child of five) are of hearing his grandfather and father singing at home, and his granduncle and the latter's sons singing next door. He learnt his first few songs from his grandfather while still a toddler, a period when his street was still known for housing great musicians. Many older residents of Bhanu Chapra village recalled the previous two generations of musicians in Bhanu Chapra and their status amongst landed patrons as sought after teachers and performers. Even as late as 1950, Bhanu

[70] I cannot state with certainty that it was only the Mullick families that were closely integrated into the cultural life of the Bettiah Estate and its surrounding communities in the19th century, but this seems highly probable. It does appear that the Ustads of Kalpi and the Mishras of Benares, two of the important non-Mullick Dhrupad ineages associated with the Bettiah court, were primarily court musicians from Seniya *gharana* preceptor lines. Although the Ustads settled in Bettiah, the available data suggests that they sang mostly in the court, and in small musical soirees held in patrons houses and in societies that sprang up after the end of princely patronage. Their repertoire was a mix of Dhrupad, Khayal, Ghazal, and Thumri, and later descendants became well known composers of classical-based popular music for films and radio. The Mishras of Benares have a very rich repertoire of Dhrupad and Dhamar that is a middle of the line classical repertoire. This lineage was present in Bettiah throughout the 19th century but there are no physical traces of their historical emplacement in community cultural practices in Bettiah, barring the songs in their repertoire composed in the 19th century in Bettiah, that are thematically, aesthetically and structurally reflective of the Bettiah composers, and strongly marked by the culture of Devi and Mahadev worship in Bettiah as a place.

Chapra village was a musically vibrant place, as were several other locations in Bettiah town.

Indra Kishore's connection to repertoire from the early centuries of Dhrupad composing emphasizes its antiquity and historical depth. His repertoire contains a significant number of dhrupads that are from the canonical classical repertoire in Hindustani music, with composers from the 15th to the 19th centuries, all sung in the characteristic aesthetics of his family practice in the *gaurhar* and *khandar banis*. Indra Kishore often quotes his old compositions as a way of asserting the authenticity and antiquity of his tradition, and of the heritage the Mullicks brought with them to Bettiah in the late 17th century.

Authenticity is reinforced in family lore as a distant kinship relationship to the legendary musician Mia Tansen, who was a Gaud Brahmin by caste and an expert in *gaurhar bani* much like Indra Kishore's forefathers. Indra Kishore reminds himself daily of this connection in his early morning practice ritual, and also every time he sings a song of Tansen, Swami Haridas or Vyas Das, as the lineage of preceptors his family points to as the fountainhead of tradition.

By the early 19th century, the songs in the repertoire become intensely local while following and extending the models established by the canonical composers of the previous centuries. Songs attributed to the two composer-kings of Bettiah Anand and Naval Kishore Singh in *gaurhar* and *khandar bani* are plentiful as the Mullicks say that their ancestors set tunes to the Maharajas verses. Fighting for place with the Maharaja's compositions are a number of songs composed by at least ten different composers from Indra Kishore's lineage over 150 years. The crucial difference between Indra Kishore and other musicians on his street today is that his connection to place, and heritage has been dialogically produced in the hours and hours of churning he has done in the company of his teacher and in his own practice. His connection to ancestry, patron and place is inter-animated by the sounds of Dhrupad and place itself is transformed in the process. Such is the dialogic pull of cumulative *khazana* even I began to feel a connection to Indra Kishore's father, grandfather, great grandfather, great great grandfather and a few more generations before that, in learning the songs they composed over a few centuries right where they were handed down, set to tune, composed and sung. For someone from the family and living in Place, it is no wonder that singing the songs of patrons and ancestors catalyzes intense temporality and affect.

Not surprisingly, any activity that Indra Kishore and I took on related to repertoire was invariably generative. While cataloguing the repertoire or singing certain songs with Indra Kishore, the activity would cause a flood of remembrance about sound and its associations. The very existence of a large repertoire anchors feeling for family inheritance that is strongly associated with anecdotes of ancestral feats of composing. Handed down stories would begin to flow when I sat down with Indra

Kishore to catalogue yet another notebook crammed with notation, of how messengers would arrive on horseback from the Palace carrying *bhojpatra* leaves on which poems composed by the Maharajas would be brought to the musician's homes, setting off a frenzy of composing and tune setting before the musicians would set forth to the Palace in the evening and sing the songs in front of their patron. While some of the stories have the tenor of tropes, others would mention specific people, events and places in connection with a particular song. Many songs are strongly marked by hearing them in his father's voice, and of learning them from his father, and learning with the voice to connect to *khazana* as thick sound through sound, story and sentiment.

Gathering acoustic communities - temples

Older family members as well as Indra Kishore told me that his ancestors were not only court musicians, they were *vaggeyakaras* for the Bettiah Estate. In this function, they would be called upon to sing in temples for daily worship and special rituals, and they would often compose songs for these occasions. They were not "temple musicians" but rather Dhrupad musicians who would be called upon to sing for many occasions in court and community. Many of these songs are available in Indra Kishore's corpus today, and they are indistinguishable from court repertoire except that their lyrical themes and chosen aesthetics would be resonant with the place and event at which they were being sung. Exquisite compositions, the setting of words, tune and tala work together to create the aesthetics of the *gaurhar* and *khandar banis*, the two aesthetic styles in which Indra Kishore's family specializes. A few songs however are markedly different than the court repertoire. Indra Kishore told me that two songs on the goddess in *khandar bani* were written for singing during *tantric* worship to induce trance-like states – the rhythmicity of reciting Kali's names with increasingly dense *gamak* has a palpable sensory effect even outside such a context. When the song is acquired as thick sound in Place the sensory effect is enhanced by singing them in Bettiah - in the place where the songs were composed more than 150 years ago.[71]

Other songs are anchored by place memory that is cognitively intertwined with musical activity. Thus, Indra Kishore sings a striking *khandar bani* song in raga Adana with *shuddh dhaivat* that describes the god Rama going to war with king Ravana in Lanka. I had assumed he sang it as taught to him by his father, but one day I learnt that in fact Indra Kishore had recomposed a part of the song and even found a clever way to include his name in the song. The re-composition was occasioned by

[71] It is a sobering thought that such a truly unique, historic and rich repertoire may well end with Indra Kishore. Until today the tradition has failed to attract committed students that have the musicianship needed to learn these songs in Indra Kishore's very demanding style. His older children have not put in the work Indra Kishore did in his youth. Without intervention and support, their promise as tradition bearers may become shadows in their own ancestral fields (Kippen, 2008).

a specific event which was catalyzed by habitual acoustemic activity. The incident demonstrated that acoustemic remembering is dependent both on the affective nexus of associations that anchor and catalyze recall, and on the work done to build and sustain the potentiality of musical objects in performance.

Until the 1980s Avadesh Mullick and Indra Kishore would walk together to the Shiv Mandir at the end of their village on Monday evenings - the day of the week special to the god Shiva. These neighborhood walks had a memorial function as well. They would occasion recollection and some rivalry, as the men would walk, talk and sing songs they remembered from their respective family *khazanas*. While Avadesh Mullick's knowledge of songs came from assimilation and acculturated hearing Indra Kishore had acquired his repertoire from the hard work of transmission. Yet, Avadesh Mullick played the critical role of catalyzing Indra Kishore's memory of songs he hadn't sung in many years – many of which would be recalled in the affective experience of walking along to the temple while chatting and singing. These habitual walks could even occasion forays in creative recall. Thus Indra Kishore's prized Dhrupad in raga Adana was recomposed during one such walk with Avadesh Mullick, who remembered a few lines of the song which he sang repeatedly with Indra Kishore until the latter suddenly pulled it out from his memory in an act of re-composition that may well have changed the song. But as Indra Kishore was quick to point out, the re-composition was made possible because of the amount of work he had done on his inherited *khazana*. The unstated implication being that Avadesh Mullick may have been useful in jiggering his memory and remembering pieces of the song, but the task of reconstructing the song correctly required the churning, polishing and dwelling that transforms memory to knowledge, giving inherited repertoire an interpretive potentiality that only individual effort can bring.

Dhrupad for community ritual – the *khatka*

Some of the most special songs in Indra Kishore's repertoire relate to ritual and community. The *khatka* is a song that can be sung only during goat sacrifice (*balicaran).* The ceremonial sacrifice of goats in the Maharaja's presence during annual Durga Puja festivities is recorded in Maharaja Harendra Kishore Singh's personal diaries. The Maharaja would attend sacrifice at the Bhavani Mandap in the Bettiah Estate grounds and under a holy tree at the Sagar Pokhara, a 19th century Shiva temple and temple tank built by his first wife, Maharani Sheoratna Kaur. Aside from the ritual sacrifice in the presence of the king, affluent and powerful families would conduct sacrifices in their temples at home, and several sacrifices would be conducted in the towns' many temples. A few of these sacrifices would be accompanied by the singing of a special Dhrupad called "*khatka*" (*khatna lit.* to cut).

Even after the end of the Princely Era, the Managers of the Bettiah Estate kept up the practice of ceremonial goat sacrifice at a few specific locations in town. Indra Kishore's uncle clearly recalls the horse-driven carriages coming to the village to pick up his father Shyama Mullick and brother Mahant Mishra during Durga Puja to

sing the *khatka* for the goat sacrifice in the Durga Bagh Mandir. As late as the 1970s Indra Kishore's father sang during goat sacrifice in the houses of the ancestral priests of the Bettiah Raj, the Raj Guru family. The day I visited the Raj Guru household in their ancestral home in the Raj Deori during Durga Puja. Anup Yagnik, the contemporary descendent in the long line of *tantric* priests had smeared goat blood on his forehead as an auspicious mark. He told me he had requested Indra Kishore many times to come and sing for the sacrifice but the latter consistently refused. Indra Kishore does not approve of animal sacrifice and he confessed to me he was also scared. The decision not to sing the song occasionally weighs on his mind, as he consciously broke with a family tradition of participating in a significant community ritual event. At those times too, Indra Kishore finds his ethical answers in his family repertoire. While teaching a fellow student a *gaurhar bani* composition of Maharaja Anand Kishore Singh in the Bettiah variant of raga Hindol, Indra Kishore pointed to the beginning words of the song "*sab bida bani aave"* which urges a devotee to come to the Goddess using any means of worship. Indra Kishore heard these words as a justification for his decision not to participate in the ritual sacrifice.

It is interesting that the *khatka* is sung in a specific raga not used for other songs in the repertoire – the raga Salankh. I have as yet not found information about this raga from sources outside the songs in Indra Kishore's repertoire. Being a musician, Indra Kishore says he used to feel tempted to sing the special songs for himself, at home. But the only time he tried to sing the song as a song apart from ritual, he says the goddess Bhagavati came and drew a huge sword on him in his dreams which probably explains his fear about singing the song. So he decided never to sing these songs though his father has notated them in his collection. We too looked at the words and notation together, but I blocked the automatic response of auralizing in my head – I don't know what he did.

Dhrupad in community – family worship, lifecycle events and festivals

Aside from the temples of the Bettiah Estate and songs written for ritual, Dhrupad acquired function as song in community, in both Bhanu Chapra village and within the Mullick families. While some of these songs have come down in tradition, others have been set to tune or composed in the near past.[72]

There are songs written in a single raga for the worship of Hanuman, the family deity. Even today Indra Kishore conducts Hanuman *puja* at home. I don't know whether he still sings these songs at the *pujas* but this was the family practice at least till his father was alive. His great grandfather Mahavir Mullick also assumed

[72] The word "compose" indicates that the musician composes the entire song (melody, rhythm and text). When the musician sets the music for a pre-existing lyric, I call it "set to tune".

the penname "Hanuman",[73] and some wonderful Dhrupads in both *gaurhar* and *khandar bani* have the penname in the *abhog*, the fourth part of the Dhrupad composition.

Such small actions indicate that musicians did not compartmentalize court and home in their musical lives - using their prowess as classical musicians to compose and sing songs in community, and bringing their private and community practices into their musical work as court musicians composing and performing for patrons. When Indra Kishore sings his great-grandfather Mahavir Mullick's songs, he is sometimes catalyzed into remembering his forefathers and the family connection to the deity, a feeding back caused by listening in to song as thick sound. The interactivity of musical performance tunnels through to domains usually held separate and this feeds right back into the music, bringing heterogeneity, potentiality and eventfulness to musical performance.

Aside from family worship, there are wedding songs in different languages, and songs for birth and thread ceremonies. Octogenarian S Jha, from an affluent and influential family of Jhas settled in Bhanu Chapra village told me his family would request Indra Kishore's grandfather and other Dhrupad musicians on the street to compose Dhrupads for family special occasions and life cycle ceremonies. This practice continued until the 1950, while the two Mullick families on the street still had their leading voices in Kunj Behari Mullick and Shyama Mullick - Indra Kishore's grandfather. As poverty threatened, members of both families moved away from singing Dhrupad as a common part of life. Many of these songs vanished along with the community role of Dhrupad, barring the songs notated by Indra Kishore's father in the notebooks retained with Indra Kishore.

Indra Kishore does not sing Dhrupad in community any longer because the contexts for such performance have disappeared, with hardly any local acoustic community for Dhrupad performance at home. Today, the Bhojpuri light music industry pervades most private and public functions,[74] and even people that sing or patronize classical music have taken to Khayal, Bhajan, Thumri and Ghazal as familiar family sounds.

But for Indra Kishore, these songs are an aural and material reminder of a recent past when expert Dhrupad practice was integral to soundscapes in Bhanu Chapra village. In October 2010, while cataloguing the notebook containing a particular song, Indra Kishore recalled that song in his father's voice. These recollections are sourced by the effort memory of Indra Kishore's own practice, attempting to capture the perfect nuance in his father's vocal delivery. Set in a less common raga –kukubh

[73] The god Hanuman is often referred to Indian *itihasa* as Mahavir *lit.* great warrior
[74] Bhojpuri is the language spoken in the western part of Bihar where Bettiah is located.

bilawal - the appealing aural simplicity of the thread ceremony song masks the enormous effort it takes to sustain a clean *gaurhar bani* aesthetic produced entirely by controlling the breath. The song also demonstrates that an aesthetic intelligible as song in community may well require an expert musician to conceive of it and sustain it in sound. As Wade's study of music making in the Mughal miniature paintings shows,[75] the function of musicians writing songs for special events in court and community has a long history in Hindustani music. The function of Dhrupad as song in community in the recent history of Bettiah guides both aesthetics and ethics in Indra Kishore's practice today, as he takes care to sing these songs with precise vocal delivery, every time. Neither variation nor improvisation is sought after or expected to creep in.

Places, events and sound: Dhrupad, Dhamar at the Shiv Mandir

The Shiv Mandir (Shiva temple) in Bhanu Chapra village anchors catalytic acoustemic memory in a nexus of associations that has interrupted Indra Kishore's consciousness at many times in our association. Probably no other site in the village is as thick with sonic association as this one, barring perhaps Indra Kishore's family house. The very soil traps sound as the cremation sites of Indra Kishore's grandfather, father and eldest daughter lie at the side of the temple pond. Through the decades of intense hardship trying to survive and keep singing, Indra Kishore developed the habit of walking to this spot for connecting with himself, his feeling for family, and feeling for family music. These habitual practices were necessary for him to keep at singing when all around him family and neighbors quit singing Dhrupad for other means of survival.

The Shiva temple holds personal and communal memory of song. It is a center for community festivals, especially Holi, and Chat. The temple pond was vibrant with the celebrations of Chat in October 2010, when I was there. At other times when I have walked there with Indra Kishore's family, the temple was peaceful and quiet, with many mature trees and the large temple pond close by. I heard from the older residents of Bhanu Chapra about the celebration of Holi at the Shiv Mandir that would include Dhrupad, Dhamar, Hori, Thumri and Jat until even a few decades earlier.[76] The traditional breaking of caste barriers associated with Holi was observed with Indra Kishore's grandfather singing, his granduncle playing the *pakhawaj* and local musicians of particular castes playing *dapki*, j*aanj* and other instruments. Much *bhang,* the intoxicating drink of Holi, is said to have flowed at these events, along with the music. Songs sung in the village temple included a Shiv ki Holi repertoire – Holi songs composed on Lord Shiva - in addition to the more common repertoire of songs depicting the god Krishna, Radha and color play at

[75] See Wade (1998)

[76] Jat is a fourteen beat tala (here used as an identifier for the song itself) and was commonly sung during Holi (Indra Kishore Mishra, interview Bettiah October 2010).

Brindavan in Hori Dhamar, Hori and Thumri. Avadesh Mullick, Raman Mishra and even Indra Kishore have strong memories of community celebrations that used to take place with singing of such Dhrupad, Dhamar, and Hori in their younger days.

These knowledge-sustaining community practices have now lapsed, with Indra Kishore forced into becoming a solo stage performer in a community that no longer values Dhrupad as part of life. The soundscapes of Bhanu Chapra village have changed a great deal in Indra Kishore's own lifetime with loudspeakers blaring Bhojpuri light music at weddings and festivals. Many a time during our working sessions, Indra Kishore would stop and wait till a band procession crossed, stating once that his grandfather would do the same when British marching bands passed by on their way to the village funeral ground. Reiterating connections to a vibrant past hence becomes a matter of sonic survival for Indra Kishore. Song is entangled with temporalizing associations and these memories are held in tangible objects, bodies and things. Catalyzed by these associations, the singing voice of a hereditary musician becomes the nexus of memory, animating repertoire with the eventfulness and emotionality of a Place.

Acoustic communities

The forms of knowledge produced by the emplacement of Dhrupad in Bettiah were sustained within acoustic communities that were integral to shaping its intelligibility as a genre of classical music and as music in community. These communities were not necessarily uniform in their musical understanding or even listening habits. Rather, these inter-subjective communities helped sustain modes of listening that were dialogic to Place. Perhaps of equal significance, when princely patronage declined, they kept the struggling musical community of Bettiah alive and singing.

In this section, I focus specifically on the transformation of acoustic community in Bettiah, starting from the period of declining princely patronage. As discussed above, the community memory of being a musical place played a significant role in compensating the denuded soundscapes for Dhrupad practice in Bettiah. First of all, Bettiah as a musical place has tried to sustain its struggling and dwindling community of expert Dhrupad musicians throughout the 20th century, until serendipity and individual heroic effort put Indra Kishore Mishra back into the national Dhrupad circuit.

Secondly, tracking the transformation of acoustic communities in Bettiah is critical to understanding the environmental challenges faced by Indra Kishore Mishra. As a hereditary musician holding valuable, endangered cultural heritage, Indra Kishore is facing the very real possibility of being Bettiah's last expert Dhrupad musician. While he has received some assistance in the form of scholarships for his children from government bodies, no attention has been paid to his musical environment.

This has two consequences. Both he and his children have faced negative evaluations because their musical ethics are no longer intelligible to modern audiences. An archeology of grids of intelligibility is a first step towards re-circulating these elided histories amongst stakeholders and culture workers, if not audiences. Secondly, no amount of money thrown at Indra Kishore can compensate for the lack of a musical environment in contemporary Bettiah where his children live. Tracking the transformation of acoustic communities in Bettiah is critical to bringing awareness and the recognition that any attempt to revive the Dhrupad heritage of the Mullicks of Bettiah requires re-vitalizing the environments for musical practice.[77] Funding transmission inside the fishbowl does not suffice by itself. Soundscapes are about as important as lineage, and critical to sustaining endangered cultural practices as environments.

The transition from princely patronage

In the last decades of the Bettiah Raj, severe debt, famine and the turmoil of land reform caused a decided shift in the patronage for cultural practices and the hereditary specialists in the employ of the Bettiah Estate. After the death of the last Maharaja, both his wives were known for their continued patronage and munificence to cultural institutions and cultural practices. However, the pressures of legal contestation, administrative take-over under the British Court of Wards, and personal ill-health put a stop to Princely patronage.[78] The sharp dip in the fortunes of hereditary musicians in Bettiah, perhaps caused the Mishras of Benares to leave Bettiah for Benares and Kolkata, where they managed to establish migrant lineages, within different environments and communities for Dhrupad performance.

In Bettiah meanwhile, the hereditary Mullick families and the Ustads of Kalpi had to fend for themselves in a situation of decreasing patronage. From oral and documentary histories it is evident that a secondary network of local patrons tried to keep the culture of Bettiah and specifically its musical culture going. Administrators of the Bettiah Estate, especially those from local families, tried to keep some form of patronage alive by continuing to have musicians sing in local festivals, events and rituals, and recommending them to patrons in nearby estates.[79] They also had strong kinship relations in Benares, Gaya and other nearby places. Shyama Mullick was consulted in raga documentation efforts undertaken in Benares. The few remaining books in Indra Kishore's house such as the Qanoon Sitar

[77] Re-vitalizing doesn't mean reproducing, and technology could be used to supplement erosion in physical environment, by building archives for thick sound rather than pure sound.

[78] Court of Wards was a legal body created by the East India Company to administer landed estates that were heirless or where the heir was deemed to be minor.

[79] Indra Kishore has in his possession letters written by the assistant manager of the Bettiah Estate in support of his grandfather emphasizing that his forefathers had been musicians of the Bettiah Estate. He also has letters written by his father asking for support to start a music school in Bhanu Chapra village, to keep their musical inheritance from dying.

and the Sangit Sudarshan show that Shyama Mullick was well aware of contemporary efforts in music publication. Secondly, like the Maharajas of Bettiah, Indra Kishore's family composers consciously composed in older models and older ragas, and also in variants of extant ragas and newer ragas – showing consciousness of flows in Hindustani music across time and space. According to Indra Kishore Shyama Mullick would speak from a position of authority firmly rooted in the hundreds of compositions in his repertoire– for which he was respected and feted in his time.

The Raj Guru priestly family likewise kept up a level of patronage. Neighboring Estates such as Sheohar, Madhubani, Ramnagar, Baneilly, Hathwa, Muzzafarpur and Padrauna provided some patronage for musicians. Ustad Kale Khan known for his prowess in all four *banis* of Dhrupad lived for some time in the house of Uma Shankar (Baccha) Babu, the famous patron of Muzzafarpur who had also hosted Ustad Alladiya Khan Saheb – the founder of the Jaipur Atrauli Khayal *gharana*. According to their descendants, musicians from all three families of Mullicks used to travel to many of these estates where they were welcomed as musicians of the Bettiah court. Thus Gopal Mullick and Kunj Behari Mullick would go to Padrauna, and other estates in eastern Uttar Pradesh, and Gopal Mullick taught such as Dhiraj who became widely known for their Dhrupad compositions, and musicians from places such as Benares would come to learn from Gopal Mullick through their family kinship ties. Shyama Mullick on the other hand was sought out by Sheohar, Madhuban, and Baneilly estates among others, and in later years his son Mahant Mishra would go with him to these places.[80]

But, the leading musicians of the families, Gopal Mullick, Kunj Behari Mullick and Shyama Prasad Mullick did not transition well from being feted musicians with assured livelihoods singing in place to travelling the circuit looking for patrons in neighboring estates, so they became increasingly reluctant to leave Bettiah.[81] At the same time, they were no longer connected to patronage circuits outside their region – a sharp contrast to the earlier centuries when the Bettiah court was in the thick of multiple networks of circulation. The former circulatory history brought Dhrupad to Bettiah, but by the 20th century, the redefined networks of patronage left musicians in Bettiah without support.

Struggle and survival - 1950s to 1980s

Today the different local and migratory musical lineages in Bettiah are in mutual denial of each other's claim to tradition, especially since networks of connectivity

[80] Recently when Indra Kishore performed at Kumar Shyamand Singh's family estate in Baneilly, he met elderly residents who had heard both his father and his grandfather – a meeting that caused a great welling of emotion in Indra Kishore that transformed that evening's concert.

[81] Interviews, Raj Kishore Mishra, Raman Mishra, Indra Kishore Mishra 2010

have been absent for almost 100 years. So quick has been the erasure of these histories that even locally, the Mullicks are no longer conscious of the connection of the Ustads of Kalpi to music in Bettiah, though the families of the Ustads still live in the Naya Tola neighborhood in Bettiah.

Evidence that this isolation of the Mullicks of Bettiah, Mishras of Benares and Ustads of Kalpi is relatively recent shows up in ethnographic interviews with locals who had witnessed the musical events of the 1950s and 1960s.[82] Even at that time Bettiah must have had more of a multi-lineage musical culture than the one in which Indra Kishore was reared. Some descendants of the Mullicks told me that musicians from the three different Mullick families would occasionally get together to sing, and aside from this they met in public spaces and on the street. These inter-subjective encounters surface in stories of overhearing and competition, with the lead role depending on who was doing the telling. The two extant repertoires I studied closely have less than 5% overlap with each other, but in that 5% there are compositions that show evidence of circulation between the lineages. Evidence of interchange also shows up in the presence of a few compositions of composers from the other lineages whose repertoires are no longer extant.

With local patronage dead and the patronage circuit dying out amongst the neighboring Estates, a few groups of people came together to form music societies in Bettiah to keep musical activity going at a time when musicians were struggling for listeners and sustenance.[83] These organizations regularly brought together musicians in Bettiah for evening music sessions at a few different locations in Bettiah. The family of Mukund Bhat, generational priests to the Bettiah Raj, formed one such organization that would hold concerts regularly. They still publish the occasional booklet with articles on music and culture. Raman Mishra recounted concerts where Mahant Mishra of the Mullicks of Bhanu Chapra, Raj Kishore Mishra from Gopal Mullick's lineage from Raj Deovri, Lal Khan and Nathan Khan, of the Ustad families from Naya Tola Bettiah, and other musicians would sing Dhrupad, Khyal, Ghazal, and other genres. A few IAS and IPS officers posted on duty in Bettiah also occasionally held small musical gatherings of classical music at home.

But for these small islands of musical activity, the culture for Dhrupad and Hindustani music performance in Bettiah was definitely on the wane. Over time, the family of Kunj Behari Mullick and the families of the Ustads of Kalpi gave up singing Dhrupad, and a few of them took up other professions in music with varying degrees

[82] Interviews, Raman Mishra, Mahavir Prasad, families of Ustads of Kalpi 2010

[83] I got an idea of musical circles in Bettiah in the 1960s mostly from Raman Mishra and a few other older residents in Bettiah. Rivalries between the three Mullick families is high leading to conflicting accounts.

of success.[84] The number of musicians singing Dhrupad came down drastically with just a few representatives per line after the 1980s. In Bhanu Chapra village, almost every family switched to singing other genres and took to other professions. Only in Indra Kishore's house, that choice was not made, as the family music was his solitary -minded father's condition for being.

No wonder that Indra Kishore recalls his early musical life as one marked by loneliness, hunger and musical effort. Through the stories of personal effort, struggle and survival related by Indra Kishore, I learnt of the importance of a small if attenuated acoustic community that played a vital role in keeping father and son alive and singing. During this dark period, the only sources of musical friendship and musical mentoring outside their immediate family of two were his uncle Shankar Lal Mishra, and his father's two close friends Bimal Srivastava and Baidyanath Singh who played a significant role in sustaining the musicians both by giving them a little food every day and providing a place in which Mahant Mishra could spend his evenings recollecting songs and smoking *ganja* (cannabis) to kill hunger. Everyone else on the street closed their doors on Mahant Mishra's plight, according to Indra Kishore. He recalls a few students that used to come and learn from Mahant Mishra, but he himself only remembers rejection, isolation and hunger as his main companions.

Into this narrative of loneliness, a few other voices occasionally intrude. Manorama Jha, daughter of a well-to-do family of Jhas that patronized music in Bhanu Chapra village actively till the 1960s appears to have learnt form Mahant Mishra and been present occasionally during the early years of Indra Kishore's lessons from his father.[85] Raman Mishra, Kunj Behari Mullick's son-in-law and an active spokesperson for Bettiah *gharana* Mullick family oral history also used to stop by at the shop of Bimal Srivastava in the busy Lal Bazaar area of the town to listen to Mahant Mishra's Dhrupads. Both Manorama Jha and Raman Mishra told me how Mahant Mishra's voice was perfectly tuned, but extremely soft. It could barely be heard above the *tanpura* but aligned so perfectly with the timbre of the instrument his singing would linger in the ear for hours.

Thus, if one considers acoustic community in Bettiah during Indra Kishore's father's time and then his, it becomes clear that there were listening circles for Dhrupad that

---

[84] Perhaps the best known of them was Ustad Zakir Hussain of the Kalpi family who became a well-known music director and composer in Patna, AIR, but he too lived in strained circumstances through most of his life. My colleague in graduate school Inderjit Kaur had learnt music from Zakir Hussain Saheb while living in Patna during her school going years in the seventies. She described him as an inveterate composer and a good teacher, but says it was not widely known that he came from a family of Kalpi Ustads from Bettiah.

[85] Prof. Manorama Jha joined a few of my discussions and music sessions with Indra Kishore and she knew many of the songs at least by ear. She learnt some music out of interest but her primary focus was on acquiring an education and a career as a professor of music in Muzzafarpur. She passed away in 2012.

sustained musicians right up to the 1950s. Thereafter, the environment for Dhrupad became much depleted, but still the close circle of friends and a few members of the musical families were critical to keeping at least two of three Mullick family Dhrupad heritages going. The intelligibility of Dhrupad in these circles was predicated on the importance given to the rendition of song, rather than the long *alap* that became the signature of a Dhrupad performance after the 1960s. The intense musical commitment of a couple of musicians sustained by small communities of listeners and patrons is what has given Indra Kishore access to *khazana* today but it took the additional step of individual work to transform this musical inheritance into thick sound.[86] The circumstances under which Indra Kishore did this work transformed both individual voice and the cumulative *khazana* in tangible ways.

1980 and after

In 1980 Indra Kishore became a part of the national Dhrupad circuit, networking one lineage of the Bettiah *gharana* into modern listening communities for Dhrupad. Indra Kishore has kept himself going through two decades in which he was deprived of his father and teacher, his main musical source. In Bettiah, his musical life is mostly contained within the home and a few close disciples. His energy comes from continuing some form of practice, teaching his children, and reliving his connections to family and *khazana* in daily life in the village. He gets energy from the outside world in the form of his long-term benefactors Padmashri Gajendra Narain Singh and the Bihar government, and the brief but regular contacts with the Dagars and the Darbhanga performers on the national performance circuit.

The juxtaposition could not be sharper. His forefathers' musicianship was sustained in the hub of explosive musical activity in the 19th century court. In the early 20th century, his grandfather still had access to a musical community locally and on the Estate circuit in Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. Even his father had the benefit (howsoever meager) of the attenuated communities of an older order. Indra Kishore's life is now split between long months of relative musical isolation as a lone Dhrupad musician in Bettiah and being on the national circuit as a performer amongst other Dhrupad musicians.

But the barriers to being understood and sustained by the new musical community to which he now belongs have been very high. What the generations of Mullicks have in common is the musical weight of cumulative *khazana* and generation after generation of individual musical effort, but the communities that sustained

[86] In 2010, with Raj Kishore Mishra's death, one more lineage of Dhrupad musicians in Bettiah ended. Raj Kishore's son too was given access to a very rich and distinct khazana but his son did not put in the work needed to inherit the *khazana* as tradition. In contrast, Indra Kishore put all he had into acquiring family Dhrupad tradition and making it his own.

musicianship and intelligibility have drastically changed in the intervening centuries. The historical grids of intelligibility within which Dhrupad was practiced, heard and understood in Bettiah have not survived in the global circulation of Dhrupad as an *alap*-oriented genre. The musical community that sustained his forefather's musicianship has also not survived, but Indra Kishore has in contrast got access to a whole new cross-cultural community for Dhrupad on the modern stage – an acoustic community where Dhrupad is heard and understood as a journey into the realm of pure sound. It remains to be seen if Indra Kishore can get people to listen in to his music as sound made thick by the histories of interactivity I have attempted to describe here.

Thick sound, intelligibility and musical judgment

I have often wondered how Indra Kishore keeps singing in the wasteland that Bettiah appears to be for a modern day Dhrupad musician. He told me he would never leave Bettiah though the cost of staying there has been very high. He also refuses to yield to the pressures of normative performance although he has made some accommodations to perform on the modern concert circuit. I kept coming back to thick sound as the answer. Indra Kishore's sense of tradition and his reason to be are cognitively intertwined with making music in Bhanu Chapra village and Bettiah town. His fear of leaving is equally his fear that his music would lose life force and musical reason if he left, and so he stays on and continues to sing Dhrupad, long after his neighbors left physically and aurally.

From the extended analysis in this chapter, I have demonstrated that the performance of Dhrupad in Bettiah is emplaced within a constellation of practices dialogic with sound – entanglements that render sound thick with histories of interactivity and potentialities of practice. Thick sound serves an emotional and memorial function that is fundamentally musical. Most crucially, it anchors Indra Kishore's musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition in both habitual and catalytic ways.

The case study of Indra Kishore as a representative of the hereditary musicians of Bettiah demonstrates that Hindustani musicians who are expert practitioners of classical music were/are embedded in the culture of places, and participated and wrote music for different purposes in community. This has a direct bearing on the categories of the classical since both creativity and judgments about Dhrupad as a classical genre are transformed in the dialogic of emplacement. A number of concrete examples exist in Indra Kishore's musical choices, some of which are handed down and the rest of which are newer, but all of which are responses resulting from engagement with thick sound.

Completing the work of my ancestors

Indra Kishore lives tradition through his music and his music circumscribes his existential situation. It also powers his creativity. Is this just an empty statement? No, I say this in empirical terms. Connections to place, patron and family interleaved with the rigor and particularities of a classical music practice become embedded in the singing body and the sonic gesture. Woven into the sonic through body, breath and habit, breathing in and breathing out becomes a means of relating nascent note to world without. The emergence of musical judgment in these interactions has audible effects in an ethics of performance and poesis. It both structures and feeds Indra Kishore's creative response to musical situations. The tethering of song in the particularity of embodied, sensory, material, sonic, temporal and affective practices of Dhrupad in a hereditary family attached to patron and place transforms aesthetics as ethics and turns feeling into fidelity.

A consequence of this dialogic connection between sound, family, patron and place is that Indra Kishore's voice is rarely his alone by choice and circumstance. Early in our interactions, I asked him one day what he had done new, what he had added to the tradition. This invoked a tirade that went on for half an hour. The bottom line was that Indra Kishore denies doing anything new and challenges the idea that being a Hindustani musician requires doing something new. He viewed his efforts as completing the work of his ancestors.

When I tried to get behind the wall that such a stance puts in front of a researcher, I got several insights into Indra Kishore's attitudes on tradition, creativity and innovation. The insight most relevant to the issue of song and its ontological status relates to the notion of *khazana* and how it relates to creativity as well as ethics.

It is important to understand that Indra Kishore treats composing and setting tunes as tradition, not as creativity explicitly defined as doing something new. He comes from a long lineage of people who composed songs and set tunes to other people's verses. Indra Kishore is under a lot of pressure because he conceives of Dhrupad as an almost exclusively pre-composed form. When one considers the inter-subjective pressures he has to face, it becomes clear that this is an ethical stance, as much as a stance on creativity in Indian music. He sees this to be in keeping with his family tradition and their position as composer-musicians who composed and performed Dhrupad in the various sites for music in Bettiah. The extent, depth and complexity of the repertoire show that the composer-musicians of Bettiah were highly skilled *vaggeyakaras* whose musical creativity has been distilled in song. "*khayal usme dikhao*" ("Show your creativity here"), "*sab usi par hai*" ("Everything is in this") were statements that expressed Indra Kishore's view that songs contain not only the essence but also the universe of possibilities for musical imagination. For one who inherits such a repertoire, the test of musical imagination lies in the churning through which the repertoire is put through the individual musical mill to develop skills in composing and improvisation.

These statements are borne out in Indra Kishore's practice to different degrees inflected by his situation as a modern performing artist on the national Dhrupad circuit. While in his way of thinking his performance provides a complete musical experience, in format, process and content, his performance is borderline unintelligible as listening experience to modern audiences for Hindustani music that rate excellence by the ability to improvise, and have little or no sense for Dhrupad beyond long *alap*, two-part compositions and extended *layakari* in which words become a stream of consonants for rhythmic variations with increasing intensity.

Indra Kishore has not remained impervious to these inter-subjective pressures. Instead he has tried to make a set of creative choices that package his traditional repertoire for the modern concert platform. Much of his own innovation has come mainly in the realm of trying to develop a process for *alap*, and perhaps making the *khandar bani* style more vigorous than his father sang it. But as far as his emphasis and presentation of composition goes, he continues to sing the way he has learnt, unwilling and perhaps unable to readjust to normative audience expectations. He has stood his ground against great odds.

Songs define the cosmos of possibilities in the Mullick's musical universe. Indra Kishore's *khazana* serves as both musical source and ethical compass in all dimensions of his Dhrupad performance. Indra Kishore pointed again and again to the depth and weight of the corpus as his dictionary, stating emphatically "all my thinking is there". This sentence was said in Hindi, but he used the English word "thinking". The structures of knowledge generated from repeated practice transforms both musical object and musical mind intertwining sound and sense. The musician begins to see new colors in the musical object the same time he develops his thinking by working with handed down materials. His sense of rightness about musical practice develops at the same time.

The emphasis on song is a reflection of the centuries of composing for particular contexts in Bettiah. But the songs are composed classical pieces with complex melodic-rhythmic-lyrical forms – these are fixed works and they are not negotiable. When Indra Kishore challenged me to choose between milk and water over the Dhrupad in the raga Darbari Kanada, the register of his challenge was sourced by the amount of work put into churning his *khazana* as thick sound while stabilizing the composition as an aesthetic form. The insistence that songs have to be sung exactly as taught with no variation is ethics strongly rooted in Indra Kishore's family history as composers and performers of song, intertwined with the affective anchors for emotion that cause him to remember his father when he draws a breath to sing an extra-long *meend*, or listens in to re-produce a beautiful inflection in his father's voice. The affective nexus of aesthetics and ethics is most evident in the *gaurhar*

bani songs in Indra Kishore's repertoire that are stabilized in thick sound in the many ways that I analyze in detail later.[87]

The presence of many complex and varied Dhrupads in a single raga influence and shape Indra Kishore's sense for raga. This has direct musical consequences. Indra Kishore is able to maintain distinctions between ragas that are very close to each other because he stays close to the composition. At the same time, he has had to develop his own techniques to extend short *alap* for the modern stage. In doing this, he has relied on his *khazana* for musical ideas and ethical sense. Indra Kishore states that his ancestors did not sing long *alap.* This doesn't mean they never sang *alap*; rather, they did not emphasize it in performance and it was not their primary way of maintaining categorical knowledge.[88] Rather, songs - complex edifices - were their primary way of maintaining complex and fine distinctions between melodic varieties in Hindustani music. Thus composing is the activity through which the Bettiah composers developed and sustained explicit categorical knowledge about ragas.[89] This is also evident from the fact that they did compose in new ragas, and also resurrected older, archaic models for which they may have had a few examples in their repertoire.

Thick sound not only shapes the sounds of his *alap*, it impacts his musical life. For instance, he will sing Raga Malkauns only in the morning, as his family tradition considers Malkauns to be a morning raga. He sings Raga Adana with *shuddh dhaivat*, and uses both *nishads* and *komal gandhar* in Raga Megh. While these choices are based on his historic repertoire, and are not without historical precedent outside Bettiah, normative listening practices that are not exposed or not well disposed towards diverse sonic histories render these uncommon variants unintelligible and sometimes unwelcome. Indra Kishore's refusal to budge in terms of raga formal character has cost him radio grades and his children difficulty on testing committees and scholarship evaluation boards that use standardized raga definitions and normative dhrupad performance as metrics for evaluation. But, he continues to present these items because he sees this as a stake in the ground for his family tradition.

The second domain stabilized by thick sound is improvisation.[90] Indra Kishore has a definite ethics of *layakari* that points right back to his repertoire. According to him,

---

[87] I analyze the phenomenological dimensions of thick sound in Chapter 5.

[88] Falguni Mitra's father was told the same thing about the Bettiah *gharana* lineage of the Mishras of Benares.

[89] This statement is commensurate with the history of both North and South indian classical music. In fact, in the South, until today, compositions are recognized as the primary vehicle to maintain finely differentiated musical character of ragas. Some ragas are known today only through a single composition by the canonical composers of the 19th century.

[90] Here I focus on judgments about rhythmic development (*layakari*). I discuss *alap* in Chapter 5.

many songs in the Bettiah *gharana* have embedded *layakari*, ranging from twice to five times the speed , to *tihais* and *chakradars*.[91] He also insists that *tihais* have to be completed before the *sam* is reached – an assertion based on the embedded *layakari* in his repertoire, but which runs contrary to the approach used by most contemporary performers. Thirdly, he insists that only four types of *layakari* are permitted and then only in faster paced *khandar bani* Dhrupads, Chaturangs, Trivat and Swaramalika. Those four types are *atit*, *anaghat*, *sam* and *visam* – respectively anticipation, retardation, landing on the first beat and landing on the halfway point in the tala cycle[92]. Indra Kishore's challenge over Falguni Mitra's interpretation of the slow tempo dhrupad of Tansen in raga Darbari Kanhada was caused by shock at Mitra's tempo choice and Mitra's *layakari* – both of which were commensurate choices given Mitra's musical lineage but which deeply went against Indra Kishore's musical grain. At the same time, Indra Kishore and other musicians from the Mullick families themselves occasionally indulge in *laya bant* that may disrupt the melodic line of the song momentarily – they do this in the rush of public performance, but only with a few songs in fast tempo that do not have very complex musical settings that must be preserved in performance.

The choice of tempo (*laya*) is one in which the metrics for performance are intertwined with common aesthetic consciousness. Bettiah Mullick musicians sing *gaurhar bani* songs at a very slow tempo. This knowledge is stabilized with embodied metaphor, action metaphors, and stories of competition and challenge. Vanquishing accompanists with their dhrupads was a definite metric of expertise in Bettiah. Indra Kishore showed me newspaper reviews of his concert in Bhopal where a senior *pakhawaj* artiste was called out for not being able to keep *laya* for the very complex rhythmic setting of a fast-paced *khandar bani* song. I caught on video the repeated attempts by a seasoned *pakhawaj* player to find the *laya* for a *gaurhar bani* song sung at a very slow tempo with which Indra Kishore began his concert in the Dhrupad Mela at Varanasi.[93] Hearing the pace at which a student sang *gaurhar bani* was a measure by which people in Bettiah decided whether he or she belonged there. On the lighter side, when a student playing *tabla* with me couldn't keep beat at the very slow tempo I chose for a song, I was instantly declared part of Bettiah, even though I had made several mistakes that no one noticed.

---

[91] *tihai* – cadential figure comprising a phrase repeated thrice; *chakradar* – extended *tihai*. each of whose phrases itself includes a *tihai*. Clayton (2000: 212 – 214)

[92] See Clayton (2000) for a definition and discussion of these concepts.

[93] Similar incidents have occurred when Falguni Mitra performs but being a very senior musician, he usually shows his accompanists the way early on in the concert. The Bettiah songs hide tala structure through compositional strategies. These strategies can be perplexing in a first encounter. An experienced accompanist, Apurbalal Manna acknowledged that playing for Falguni Mitra as well as Indra Kishore presents challenges because the songs have complex melodic rhythmic settings and choice of tempo; also they - especially Falguni Mitra- do *layakari* that requires a lot of interactive attention from the accompanist.

At the same time, approaches to songs are sometimes dictated by categorical knowledge. Thus, despite the joyousness of a Dhamar's lyrical theme and the merrymaking that occurs at Holi, Indra Kishore sings it at medium slow pace. When asked, he says that his family styles are *gaurhar* and *khandar banis*, so the choice of pace is dictated here by classical category rather than lyrical theme or context.

Thirdly, expert Dhrupad musicians in Bettiah sang Dhrupads at community festivals, and they also sang other genres specific to spring, monsoon etc., including *lok git*, or local folk songs. In these contexts they would sing with others in community. Indra Kishore explained that as a Dhrupad musician, his voice could grasps songs of different kinds of aesthetics, but the aesthetics of Dhrupad in turn inflected his rendering of these other genres. The aesthetics of *gaurhar bani* as a complex category crosses court and community, practice and ritual in the history of the Mullicks of Bettiah. Several decades after these interactions have lapsed, Indra Kishore still connects to *gaurhar bani* as thick sound that sustains affective associations.

In matters of performance format and conduct on stage too, Indra Kishore's choices are tethered in thick sound. The Bettiah *gharana* performance tradition is to sing songs in sets.[94] They sing a single raga for almost the entire length of performance, beginning with a short *alap*, followed by a very slow tempo *gaurhar bani* composition, a slow tempo *gaurhar bani* composition or a medium slow tempo Dhamar, followed by multiple fast-tempo *khandar bani* compositions that would include Dhrupad, and one or more of Chaturang, Trivat, Swaramalika or Tarana. The repertoire feeds and reflects this performance format by listing at least 10 songs in most ragas, with some having up to 20. One could take a guess about the historicity of the performance format by noting that a disproportionate number of Swaramalikas, Chaturangs and Taranas have been composed only from the latter half of the 19th century onward, especially by Indra Kishore's grandfather Shyama Mullick in the early 20th century. Thus, what other musicians do with *alap*, the Bettiah musicians have attempted to do with song – namely, explore musico-aesthetic form in performance while managing affect and intensity.

When Indra Kishore performs, he always has at least one child with him, sometimes more. They may or may not sing along, or they may sing well before they are ready for stage performance – but their presence on stage is a requirement for Indra Kishore to sing comfortably, so deep is the connection between consciousness, family and sound. He also often speaks midway during a performance, usually catalyzed to speak by affective associations with the repertoire presented, or by

[94] The Darbhanga Mullicks also often sing in sets. For a discussion of Dhrupad performance formats and their implications for the transformation of aesthetics in performance, see Ranganathan (2012).

people present in the audience. He brings family, place and trauma up often in concert, but by the end the sheer exuberance of performance chases the shadows away. These ritual acts re-affirm to him that his tradition survives through his efforts. What happens after he is gone is a question that remains unanswered till today.

Thus, be it raga grammar or aesthetics, the aesthetics of the *dhrupad banis*, decisions on tempo, decisions about *layakari* (rhythmic improvisation), creative work to extend the brief raga *alap* of his forefathers to a more elaborate one to suit modern performance mores, and performance format used for radio recordings, CD recordings and live concerts – Indra Kishore draws on the dialogic of sound and environment that intersects in his repertoire to make his musical moves. These choices have not been made in a vacuum or even in isolation in his ancestral home. They have been made in dialogue with the inter-subjective interactions of modern performance environments that have been part of his life since he was twenty, and they have had tangible impact on his relative success on the concert circuit with audiences and organizers, and with patrons, culture workers, state and central government bodies, and non-government organizations vested in culture and heritage. The challenge to Hamsa the bird, cited at the beginning of this dissertation, comes from a musical judgment and ethical sense produced and tethered by thick sound.

The Bettiah *gharana*'s music and musical expertise has survived very hard times. I am not claiming here that they have remained unchanged. But the sheer strength of multiple generations of musical effort takes the notion of fidelity to tradition to a completely different register than one born of spinning a disc on a recording machine. Musicality tethered by the interactive histories, materialities and temporalities that have transformed musical life for a hereditary musician living in Place bring acoustemic strength and categorical knowledge that are irreducible to colonial forms of knowledge and encounter with its disciplinary technologies. The remaking of Classical music's forms of knowledge by notation and recording cannot be told without taking into account the very complex tethering of musical judgment in the messy histories I have recounted here.

Conclusion

Through an extended analysis of musical life in Bettiah town, I have argued that emplacement of Dhrupad practice in Bettiah occurred within a constellation of practices dialogic with sound. The history of hereditary families implicates scales that go beyond the fishbowl of transmission within self-contained family lineages. Bakhle's claim is that prior to the late 19th century efforts of cultural nationalists,

Hindustani music was an unmarked practice confined within families, with no umbrella tradition or connected history that had epistemological or ontological weight.[95] In marked contrast, I have shown that the intelligibility of Hindustani music as an organized tradition is integrally shaped by emplacement within a nexus of interactions amongst heterogeneous communities. It is important to emphasize again that Indra Kishore's connections to these practice histories is not simply nostalgia felt for times gone by, nor is it the narrativity of musical forms that arises from their historicity as musical objects. Rather, Indra Kishore's sense of place comes from dialogic listening produced in the intense churning of inherited musical materials that carry sound marks of interactivity, amidst the many anchors of acoustemic knowledge in his local musical environment. It depends on his individual work with handed down musical materials, in an environment inter-animated with the sounds of Dhrupad within a constellation of practices dialogic to sound.

Singing Dhrupad while in Place in Bettiah is an activity that emplaces in habitual and eventful ways. These connections transfer over to his on-stage experience when away from Bettiah, where the interactivity of thick sound feeds back into musical performance to transform vocal practice into a dwelling in the voice. I trace the strength of Indra Kishore's musical judgment and strong notions of tradition to the dialogic production of voice and ethical sense in churning his *khazana* as thick sound through processes of emplacement. The complexity and depth of a musician's engagement with musical forms challenges the kind of arguments built by Weidman in her chapters on a "Writing Lesson" and "The Guru and the Gramaphone".[96] Musicians spend hours and hours generating soundscapes in their practice rooms when they engage in musical activity.[97] When they repeatedly practice a song to make it their own, compose new songs, re-tune songs, set tune to existing texts, incorporate songs into their *khazana* that they acquired in loose transmission or as notation, they bring the cumulative *khazana* to this engagement. Thick sound tethers musical judgment and acts as an acoustemic guide in performance, while musicians navigate the creative encounters of musical life by sensing structure and feeling form.

---

[95] See Introduction for a discussion of Bakhle's arguments.

[96] See Introduction for a discussion of Weidman's arguments.

[97] This isn't just a modern urban legend – skilled musicians born in musical families would have also practiced, if not in isolation in a city apartment, in relative isolation from the musical community around them. A performing musician goes through phases of intense practice that marks them out from others who learn largely through acculturation and assimilation.

Chapter 4 - Thick sound in a Bengali home

In this chapter I investigate the interactive basis of musical judgment for the second of my two case studies. Falguni Mitra is a non-hereditary expert practitioner of Dhrupad whose musical life began at the age of four and a half. He inherited two of Dhrupad's oldest and richest traditions – the Bettiah *gharana* lineage of the Mishras of Benares, and the *alap* tradition of Ustad Nasiruddin Khan Saheb - through his teacher and father, Shibkumar Mitra.[98] Obtaining an All India Radio A-grade before he was out of his teens, Falguni Mitra's trajectory from competence to expertise was meteoric, and prominence and eminence came soon thereafter. Today an acknowledged *vidwan* (savant) of Hindustani classical music, his musicianship is deeply inward directed as decades of performance have taken him to the point where he rarely needs to look outside for his musical answers. He is a musician who is equally at home in the music room, recording studio or on stage, Mitra brings a highly prepared cognition to every musical encounter - be it texts, technology, pedagogy, peer interactions or performance.

I begin my analysis by describing the historical chain of transmission and the musical materials that constituted Mitra's musical inheritance, when he first began lessons from his father.[99] I quickly exit the fishbowl of transmission studies by investigating how Mitra's Dhrupad vocal practice functions as heterogeneous, inter-subjective acoustemic environment in which sound is experienced in dialogic with the environment for musical practice – a condition I term thick sound. The kinds of dialogic interactions I focus on in this chapter include the cognitive intertwining of acoustic and non-acoustic domains in musical activity, and the inter-subjective interactions of acoustic communities.

Rather than do a blow-by-blow account of Mitra's musical life, I use the catalytic and the interruptive as a window into investigating the interactive basis of Mitra's musical judgment, categorical sense and sense of fidelity to tradition. Using the metaphor of listening in and feeding back, I study the interruptive mechanisms

---

[98] While Indra Kishore Mishra's ancestors migrated into Bettiah in the late 17th century and have lived there since, Falguni Mitra's musical ancestors migrated into Bettiah in the late 18th century and lived there for over a hundred years, before they migrated to Benares and Kolkata at the end of the Princely line in Bettiah. Thus juxtaposing the production of musical judgment for these musicians is productive in understanding how musical tradition relates to Place, patronage, migration and movement – all common themes in recent music history.

[99] An objective description of Falguni Mitra's inheritance itself is an important task as the repertoire is unique for its historicity, depth and range of musical forms that include Dhrupads in all the four *banis*. The *banis* are esoteric aesthetic categories of Dhrupad that are endangered knowledge in contemporary times and Mitra is the only living expert musician who has received demonstrable knowledge of all these *banis* in performance, with a repertoire to back it.

through which Dhrupad vocal practice functions as an acoustemic environment in Mitra's daily life as a musician. I organize my discussion around acoustemic anchors and their agentive capacity to act as sites for tripping the senses during habitual activity, causing a musician to listen in.[100] Some of the acoustemic anchors I study in Mitra's case include material anchors in the music room such as instruments and photographs, note books and notation books, places, the extended musical family, the inter-subjectivity of acoustic communities, body memory and effort memory, and most importantly, musical objects (ragas, compositions) themselves as sites of interactivity.

Using a multitude of examples, I investigate moments of listening in to understand the nexus of interactions that stabilize particular musical experiences. I show that specific aesthetics, musical knowledge, models for musical action and metrics for right practice, are stabilized by histories of interactivity that entangle acoustic and non-acoustic domains. I demonstrate that the result of heightened hearing is usually verbal or musical response that feeds back to strengthen the interactive mix through reiteration and transformation. I use this to establish the interactive basis of musical judgment, and strong notions of fidelity to tradition in thick sound, rather than pure sound.[101]

By considering both the catalytic and the habitual interactivity of individual musical lives, I demonstrate conclusively that musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition are sustained by thick sound - heterogeneous domains of acoustemic interactivity that are irreducible to literacy, literalism and the technological determinism of authenticity understood solely as a response to recorded sound.

I show through my analysis that self-reflexivity about right practice and debates about tradition in Indian classical music are tethered by the interactivity of classical music practice as an acoustemic environment. This should be contrasted with the approach taken by Amanda Weidman who argues that strong notions of fidelity to tradition in South Indian classical music emerged at the same time as recording – the *guru* was invented at the instant of spinning a disc. Weidman also suggests that ontologies of composer and composition emerged in response to colonial epistemologies of literacy and literalism, a theme she picks up from earlier work by

---

[100] I have defined acoustemic anchors as distributed anchors for thick sound – often they anchor acoustic memory entwined with emotional memory, body memory, associative memory, correlative memory and so on – bringing Hutchins (2005) and Basso (1996) together, they are distributed anchors or sites of cognitive intertwining.

[101] Here I cite a few examples of musical action in relation to the interactive basis of musical judgment. In the next chapter I focus much more on musical actions themselves, especially the phenomenology of thick sound in performance and the heterogeneity it makes available to musical actions in flow.

Farrell, Bhakle and Subramanian.[102] The argument advanced by each of these authors is that oral tradition allows for (un-reflexive) flexibility and variability, and that heated debates about right practice and singular authentic versions are a result of colonial epistemologies and disciplinary technologies. In contrast, I demonstrate that musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition are sustained in the inter-animation of Dhrupad performance with epistemologies generated in the processes through which musicians engage with their musical inheritances as thick sound. Investigating these epistemologies is the goal of the rest of this chapter.

Musical lineage: a serendipitous discipleship in Benares

Falguni Mitra's musical inheritance comes directly from his father and teacher Shibkumar Mitra who began a life long engagement with Dhrupad and Hindustani music in the nineteen twenties. An engineer by profession, Shibkumar Mitra was posted in Chapra in Bihar. A desire to learn Dhrupad fructified when a family member sent him to the house of Bholanath Pathak in Benares. Pathak himself was not a hereditary musician. He had learnt *pakhawaj* and Dhrupad from two famous lineages - the Khudau Singh lineage of Parvat Singh, and the Bettiah *gharana* lineage of the Mishras of Benares. His Dhrupad training was received through several decades of learning from Jaikaran Mishra, the hereditary musician who migrated out of Bettiah in the late 19th century.

The Bettiah *gharana* lineage of the Mishras of Benares is traced to Jaikaran Mishra's great grandfather Shivdayal Mishra, who migrated to Bettiah from the Nepal court around 1780. Shivdayal Mishra carried the Seniya *gharana* lineage of Ustad Karim Sen, a musician of the Royal Court of Nepal. More than one hundred and fifty years later in early 20th century Benares, disciples of the Bettiah *gharana* self-identified as "from the tradition (*parampara)* of Karim Sen".

Yet, the figure of Karim Sen has remained shrouded in mystery, as there is no unambiguous mention in the better-documented lineages of the Seniya *gharana* – namely, those of Tansen's son Bilas Khan and his daughter/son-in-law Saraswati Devi/Misri Singh. Recent research by Schofield however suggests that Karim Sen was a notable musical figure in the lineage of the Delhi *kalawants*.[103] Putting together Schofield's research on the Delhi *kalawant* lineage with the late 18th century history of the Bettiah *gharana* from early 20th century sources and oral history, it appears that the Bettiah *gharana* lineage of the Mishras of Benares can be traced right back to Tansen through multiple channels.

---

[102] See discussion in Chapter 1.

[103] While more work is needed to establish beyond doubt that the Karim Sen mentioned by Schofield is the Karim Sen of Bettiah *gharana* oral and written history, the resonance of oral and written histories in terms of times, names and places is evidence enough to take the relationship seriously while discussing the Mishra lineage's musical inheritance.

According to Schofield (2013), Karim Sen carried the bloodline of Tansen's son Surat Sen; preceptorially his musical links were to the lineages of Tansen's son Bilas Khan and Tansen's daughter Sarasvati through his teacher Anja Baras Khan. Anja Baras Khan was the primary disciple and son-in-law of Nia'amat Khan ('Sadarang'), the most famous musician of the 18th century from Sarasvati's line. Anja Baras Khan's link to Bilas Khan is through the latter's daughter whose descendants include many famous composers of the Baras Khan line. Thus, the lineages of three of Tansen's progeny intersect in Anja Baras Khan and his primary disciple Karim Sen. This marks the Bettiah *gharana* lineage of the Mishras of Benares as an extraordinary carrier of tradition in a genre in which musical descent from even one of Tansen's progeny has long been a seal of authority.

Yet, the compelling magnet of lineal continuity has to be understood in relation to place. The transmission of tradition in the last two hundred years within the lineage of the Mishras of Benares implicates three distinct episodes of displacement and re-emplacement, each of which is audible in its cumulative *khazana.* Shivdayal Mishra himself migrated from Nepal to Bettiah in the late 18th century, where he is said to have trained his descendants as well as the Maharajas of Bettiah in Dhrupad. His descendants and disciples lived in Bettiah for over a hundred years, a period of intense creative activity in Bettiah with hundreds of Dhrupads composed by the composer kings and the musicians of their court. In the twilight years of the Bettiah Raj in the late 19th century, the lineage of the Mishras of Benares migrated to Benares and Kolkata where their music was sustained within acoustic communities gathered by the practice of Dhrupad in these very different environments.

Transmission in Benares occurred within a vibrant community of musicians in the Kashi Sangeet Samaj and the Gopal Mandir that included some expert *pakhawaj* players. The repertoire-centric tradition of the Bettiah *gharana* was extended to include *layakari*.[104] Falguni Mitra's father Shibkumar Mitra learnt the Dhrupad of the Bettiah *gharana* for over a decade from Bholanath Pathak in the midst of this community of musicians in Benares. An educated Bengali, Shib Mitra brought his education and background to bear on the arduous musical task of receiving tradition in Benares. Some years into his training, with Bholanath Pathak's active participation, Shibkumar Mitra also started to learn the art of *alap* from Ustad Nasiruddin Khan Saheb, the scion of the Dagar tradition. The *alap* lessons began in Bholanath Pathak's house in Benares, in his presence, during the Ustad's regular visits to Benares. In later years, Shibkumar Mitra would go to Indore periodically to learn from the Ustad.

[104] This musical community thrived right up till the mid-twentieth century whereas in Kolkata transmission became more diffuse after the first generation of disciples.

From Shib Mitra's lesson notebooks from 1927 it is evident that Bholanath Pathak taught his young student some of the most prized compositions of the tradition. Hardly twenty years later, some of the same songs begin to appear in Falguni Mitra's early lesson notebook. Only, this time the lessons were happening in a private residence in the Lake Avenue area of South Kolkata, father to son, face to face, sustained within the teeming musical culture of 1950s Kolkata in which the Mitras participated actively.

Thus, a Seniya repertoire that made its home in Bettiah for a hundred years during a period of intense composing and performance, thrived in Benares for the next sixty years amongst a community of *pakhawaj* exponents and Dhrupad musicians where it was embellished with *layakari*. It then slowly shifted base to Kolkata where it continues to transform the soundscapes of an upper middle class Bengali household in the 21st century, augmented by *alap.* This transformation did not occur in a sonic fishbowl but within changing acoustemic environments in which tradition has been sustained and transmitted in the last two hundred years.

The musical inheritance: Falguni Mitra's *khazana*

Jaikaran Mishra's repertoire and prodigious memory assumed legendary status in early 20th-century sources on Benares's musical traditions that describe him as a *guni* (savant) who had committed more than 2000 Dhrupads to memory. A cumulative *khazana* transmitted within Seniya lineages over several centuries, and augmented in Bettiah during the intense years of composing in the 19th century was transmitted within a group of musicians at the Kashi Sangeet Samaj in the early 20th century.

Falguni Mitra's repertoire is substantially derived from this cumulative *khazana* augmented by Dhrupads composed as well as acquired by the Mitras during the course of their musical lives in Kolkata. The repertoire has not remained static over time – rather it reflects the musical work done by the Mitras in several decades of churning, polishing, rumination, collection and composing that has both expanded and consolidated the repertoire – all processes that render sound thick.

An objective description of the repertoire illustrates its historicity, depth and musical complexity. The majority is four-part Dhrupads and both four-part and two-part Dhamars. There are some examples of Chaturang, Trivat and Tillana but it appears that Falguni Mitra's father emphasized mainly Dhrupad and Dhamar in

transmission.[105] The repertoire's range of ragas contains the common ragas of Hindustani music and some unusual varieties of common ragas.

The range of composers captures the entire history of Dhrupad from its nascence as a genre. Beginning with the Nayaks of the Delhi Sultanate, the consolidation of the genre is well represented by Swami Haridas the originary poet-saint of the Vallabhacarya sect in Brindavan, and the composers of the 15th and 16th century courts of Man Singh Tomar of Gwalior, and the Imperial Mughal court in Delhi - such as Nayak Baiju, Nayak Bakshu, Nayak Dhondu, Mia Tansen and his sons Surat Sen and Bilas Khan. The historical trail continues with composers such as Lal Khan Gunasamudra, Buddhiprakash, Jagannath Kaviraya, Gulab Khan, Sadarang and Adarang and Icchavaras, from the 17th and 18th centuries. Intermittently we find Dhrupads of the devotional poets such as Jugraj Das, Shyam Das, Ramdas, and Surdas.

In comparison with Indra Kishore's repertoire that has range and depth of classical composers and musical forms, as well as distinct strains of locality in modal varieties and functionality of musical forms, Falguni Mitra's repertoire is better described as a middle-of-the-line classical repertoire that shows the markings of place and practice. Until the 19th century, the corpus is very much the kind of cumulative *khazana* you would expect from a traditional *kalawant* family. The heavy presence of composers from the *kalawant* lineages suggests that this corpus is definitely a classical corpus, where for the moment I define classical by the kinds of cumulative corpuses characteristic of the courts of North India in which the major ragas and musical forms of Hindustani music were crystallized through compositions and musical performance. One can well imagine the *kalawants* of North India carrying about a repertoire such as this one with them as they circulated between the major courts of North India and other regional centers as far up as Nepal and as far down as Hyderabad.

In the early 19th century, the composer names in the songs begin to mark sound with a specific history local to Bettiah. We get the very special Dhrupads of the Maharajas of Bettiah, Anand Kishore Singh and Naval Kishore Singh. The lyrics of many of these Dhrupads show that the composers were worshippers of Devi. The words, lyrical themes and setting of the songs have a resonance with the songs in Indra Kishore's corpus, though the number of shared songs is relatively small. There are also a few composers of the lineages of the Mishras of Benares, such as Balram, the brother of Shiv Dayal Mishra, as well as a composer by name Someswar Mishra,

[105] In contrast, the Dhrupad compilations of Gopeswar Bandhopadhyay have quite a few examples of Chaturang, Trivat, Tarana and Swaramalika (for a definintion of these see Bharali 2008). I heard from at least one source that Vishnupur *gharana* musicians with links to Bettiah used to sing many Swarmalikas, as well as some Chaturang and Trivat, like Indra Kishore.

whose compositions are significant in the corpus though it is not clear whether he was related to the founding family.[106] Dhrupads by Maharaja Vishwananth Singh of Rewa mark the musical circulation that occurred between the early 19th century courts of Rewa and Bettiah, while compositions by Dev Swami mark late 19th century Benares in the repertoire. This cumulative inheritance has been extended since the nineteen fifties by the active composing done by both Shibkumar Mitra and Falguni Mitra, as well as the compositions they have set as well as acquired from close musical friends with whom they had musical exchange.

The variety of compositional models within the archetypal Dhrupad compositional form marks out Falguni Mitra's repertoire as a truly unique *khazana*. Beginning even with compositions by the Nayaks of the Delhi Sultanate, we start to see a very interesting variety in the setting of compositions. Some of these are visible in structure, the others in interpretation. This variety is fundamental to the aesthetics of the *banis* of Dhrupad in this lineage.

Much of this *khazana* is available in handwritten notations in about 30 exercise notebooks containing over 500 Dhrupads. The historical record for the entire corpus has been maintained by Falguni Mitra's father who meticulously noted the source of oral tradition in every composition he included in his collection, as his teacher Bholanath Pathak had done for the Sangeet Samucchai.[107] Shibkumar Mitra was preparing this collection for publication, intending to document and use the Bettiah Benares *khazana* as the basis of a cumulative notated corpus. The final handwritten versions were produced by Shibkumar Mitra in the nineteen eighties, but work on this project was underway over the course of three or more decades when Shibkumar Mitra and Falguni Mitra were co-located in the same house in Lake Avenue, Kolkata, sharing a musical life. Aside from this set of notebooks, other sources for Falguni Mitra's core repertoire includes his own performance notebooks, his lesson notebooks from the 1950s and 1960s, his father's lesson notebooks from the 1920s, and the Dhrupads of the Bettiah *gharana* in the Sangeet Samucchai and the Sangit Chandrika most of which are already documented in Shib Mitra's collection along with variants from other sources.

---

[106] On the whole much less is known about the Mishras of Benares as an extended family because the musical lineage became non-hereditary more than a hundred years ago. I could not trace direct descendants of the Mishras though I found intermarriage with one of the Mullick families in Bettiah. In contrast the Mullicks of Bettiah, and the Ustads of Kalpi, even though four of five families no longer sing Dhrupad, the descendants still live in Bettiah on ancestral land and could provide me with detailed family trees as well as property documents that verify family lines back until the mid 19th century. The claims of the Mishras of Benares to Dhrupad tradition in Bettiah are primarily through intangible musical heritage, through notated compilations, written and oral histories, analytical writing and oral tradition carried by non-hereditary lines. For the Mullicks and the Ustads, their links to Bettiah are tangible in paper, physical presence and property, with one lineage also having intangible musical heritage in active circulation today.

[107] (Basu, 1924)

A significant feature of Shib Mitra's handwritten compilation is that he not only noted the composer name, lineage and preceptor name, he also categorized the compositions by *bani.* About forty percent of songs have been categorized by *bani* while the rest do not have a specific *bani* listed. One of the special parts of the unpublished collection is a self-contained set of notated Dhrupads in eleven ragas, each with compositions in all of the four *bani*s, *gaurhar*, *dagur*, *nauhar* and *khandar*, as well as Dhamar. The set was being prepared for publication along with a lead article on the four *bani*s written by Shibkumar Mitra that reviews different historical references and prevalent views on the *bani*s before presenting his own interpretation deriving from the Bettiah Benares repertoire.[108] But like the larger collection of Dhrupads, this compilation remained unpublished and also needed more work before the songs could be published. To put something into circulation, Shibkumar Mitra published articles on the Bettiah *gharana*'s history, some analysis of the *gayaki* of the Bettiah *gharana* and an analytical discussion of representative repertoire in the four *bani*s in Sangeet, the journal for music published from Hathras.[109]

The cumulative *khazana*

The tradition Falguni Mitra received from his father and teacher Shibkumar Mitra was already a composite Dhrupad tradition.[110] True to this particular history, Falguni Mitra's musical practice integrates the emphasis on composition and *layakari* characteristic of the Bettiah Benares lineage with an enhanced role for *alap* in Dhrupad performance.

But, Mitra's musicianship is not simply additive, combining compositions learnt from one tradition with *alap* training from another, both channeled through his father. Falguni Mitra inherited this entire corpus of musical material and analytical material in transmission together with the most important inheritance of all – the performance knowledge, interpretive sense and aesthetic sense that distinguish a

---

[108] This very special work on preparing the manuscript for the four *bani* compilation was done in the nineteen eighties with the scribal assistance of Sunanda Bagate, who had carefully kept a copy of the entire manuscript with her all these years. The daughter of Agra *gharana* musician and musicologist Dr. Sumati Mutatkar, she learnt Dhrupad with Shibkumar Mitra in the final decade of his life and I was able to interview her and her husband about their close musical relationship with Shib Mitra.

[109] It is interesting that Shib Mitra makes no mention of the Mullick families of Bettiah though he has mentioned the Ustads of Kalpi. By the time he came to learn the Bettiah tradition in Benares from the lineage of Jaikaran Mishra, it appears that whatever connections there may have been between the lineages of the Mullicks of Bettiah and the Mishras of Benares must have become attenuated.

[110] Falguni Mitra always acknowledges his source of teacher tradition from both *gharanas* but he rarely calls himself a Dagar tradition musician nor do the Dagars include him as one of their own. Both his performance practice and ethics of performance are much more aligned with the history of the Bettiah *gharana* in Benares inflected by his personal history as a Bengali brought up in Kolkata, than the Dagar traditions performance ideologies.

cumulative *khazana* from both a formulaic oral tradition and an imaginary museum of musical works.

Musical knowledge in oral tradition is not simply handed down as pure music, like water through a plastic pipe. It is marked by particular histories of interactivity. Mitra's musicianship emerges from a deep engagement with his cumulative *khazana* in the work of transmission and individual musical effort, interactive processes that produce musical judgment tethered by thick sound. Mitra's judgment has been dialogically produced in the work of engaging with inherited musical materials within acoustic communities gathered by the practice of Dhrupad at a particular historical moment.

In comparison with the transmission of the *khazana* in the Dhrupad school at the Kashi Sangeet Samaj a few decades prior, both home and world had transformed by the time Falguni Mitra inherited tradition as a young child in Kolkata. With access to a treasure chest of outstanding compositions augmented in Benares with *layakari*, and the approach to *alap* from the Dagar tradition, the Mitras' home held an embarrassment of riches. Meanwhile, the sound world without had also transformed.

In 1880, when the Mishras of Benares migrated out of Bettiah, Kolkata was entrenched in a culture of song, celebrated as a virtue of a uniquely Bengali temperament. In the 1940s, when Falguni Mitra started to learn music from his father at the age of four and a half, Kolkata was poised at the edge of a period of transformation in listening circles.[111] In a milieu where compositions had long held pride of place in *baithaks* (chamber concerts) of Hindustani music, the appearance of very talented instrumentalists in mid twentieth century Kolkata caused a growing love for *alap* as a central aspect of Hindustani music performance.[112]

Thus, the focused work of transmitting a historic *khazana* in the Mitra household began in an environment of changing musical tastes with their attendant forms of knowledge. When Falguni Mitra's young voice opened up to sing his first Dhrupad song, the sound world he got access to was already primed for new histories of

---

[111] See the many descriptions of *baithaks* in Amiyanath Sanyal's memoirs that showcase songs as a central aspect of performance, also the critique of overlong *alaps* by Shyamlal quoted by Amiyanath Sanyal (1953). Musicians and listening circles in Kolkata, Benares, Patna, Vishnupur, and many other eastern centers of Hindustani music clearly emphasized a bandish orientation in their performances, whether it was Dhrupad, Khayal, Thumri, Tappa or instrumental music.

[112] The weak hold of Khayal over early 20th century listening public in Kolkata is often attributed to the love for song in Bengali and *purabi* culture. It took the likes of Amir Khan, Faiyyaz Khan and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan to establish Khayal as a preferred genre over Dhrupad in the latter half of the 20th century in Kolkata. The outstanding instrumentalists that gave Kolkata a taste for improvisation through their *alap* helped prepare the ground for this transformation.

interactivity waiting to be created in the churning, dwelling and polishing that he and his father would put into receiving the Bettiah Benares *gharana*'s Dhrupad *khazana* as tradition.

To understand the dialogic processes through which Falguni Mitra made sense of the *khazanas* he received in transmission from his father, I investigate the practices through which the Bettiah Benares *gharana*'s *khazana* was transformed to thick sound in an upper middle class Bengali home, in the midst of particular acoustic communities for Dhrupad and Hindustani music in 1950s Kolkata.

Dwelling in my voice – the *khazana* as thick sound

For a musician who has sung since the time he could walk and talk, and performed since before he went to middle school, it stands to reason that opening the voice makes a place home, especially when he has done all this against a backdrop of displacement and resettling. Falguni Mitra's musical life has had only one constant place, the dwelling he finds when he opens his voice to sing. He has found place with his voice in music rooms, recording studios, green rooms, on stages and in classrooms, meeting rooms, audition rooms and podiums. This experience is not peculiar to him, or to Indian classical music. The strangest of circumstances and still a musician is able to strum her *tanpura*, banjo, or guitar and settle into her voice, sometimes with effort or discomfort but marked by familiarity born of habitual dwelling. But being a Dhrupadiya that inherits a historical *khazana* in 20th century Bengal makes for certain kinds of dwelling made in certain kinds of sounds.

Music is Falguni Mitra's way of getting back into Place. Through my more focused year of ethnographic research in 2010, I realized how much this is phenomenologically true in Mitra's case. Individual practice and individual musicianship has been a big factor in keeping this enormously gifted musician's equanimity and creativity going in the face of the very rough deal he has got in the professional Dhrupad circuit. So it is a matter of some significance to understand how music may constitute such a Place to go for Mitra. To understand this, there is no better place to go than follow him into the soundscapes of a place called home.

Soundscapes of a Kolkata home

At the time of writing this dissertation, Falguni Mitra lives in an apartment building in Ganguly Bagan, a bustling area of Kolkata. Many neighbors listen for him and his musician wife by their aural routine. They know when the Mitras are away or unwell, because some of the sounds they have come to expect are missing. They also know when Falguni Mitra has a concert, because invariably, the accompanists will come and he will be "sitting for practice" at odd hours. Many decades into a performing career, he is still a musician who wants to practice before a concert as it helps him settle his voice and his mind.

Musicians themselves are soundscape generators. Ask anyone who lives in a modern building in India where a practicing musician lives. Some landlords won't rent to musicians whereas others love the incipient disruption of having someone singing in the building. More significant perhaps to this dissertation, musicians make sense of place through the soundscapes they help generate. This is as much the case for the daily practice of classical music as it is for music more evidently connected to the practices of the everyday.

Through musical practice, an Indian classical musician learns to attend to the environment in ways that emphasize the sonic as a primary way of knowing. This simple assertion has in it the kernel of an answer to debates about "pure" music's representational character, at least from the point of view of performers and their acoustic communities of interactive listeners. Whether it is Indra Kishore singing where once there were many ancestral voices, or Falguni Mitra whose musical world is centered in his Kolkata apartment, when a classical musician opens her voice and says "Sa", "aa", "hmmm" or "Om", the various ways in which Indian classical musicians start their *riyaz* or *sadhana* - the practice routine that tunes the sensorium and sets the mind - they grasp the world with their voice. Even after the days of regular, intensive practice are over, a period of intense engagement with music marks a musician's body and mind in ways that make for a special epistemological relationship to the sonic. Thick sound is fundamentally representational, not because it can be decoded as stable meanings or deciphered through thick description, but because it entangles histories of interactivity and potentialities of practice.

As a practicing Hindustani musician, keeping singing is integral to Falguni Mitra's way of knowing music and knowing the world. If this seems obvious for a hereditary musician living in place, it is equally true for a non-hereditary musician who received tradition through migration and movement, and whose personal life involved multiple moves between major cities to accommodate his father's career and his. Mitra's is a story of being in place, moving and getting back into place, but his sense of fidelity to tradition also emerges from processes of emplacement.

Although their lives seem such a study in contrast, both Indra Kishore Mishra and Falguni Mitra sense tradition through processes of emplacement that are sometimes habitual and at other times catalytic. If walking with Indra Kishore Mishra in the village of Bhanu Chapra is a study of how places hold sonic memory, sitting with Falguni Mitra in music rooms in different cities is a study of how a musician finds place time and again in sound. Both are processes of emplacement - a cognitive intertwining of the sonic with the everyday practices of musical lives in ways that mark and transform both voice and musical object.

The cumulative *khazana* of the Mishras of Benares has transformed concrete rooms to soundscapes for over six decades in the many homes they have occupied since the 1940s, across the cities of Kolkata and Chennai. To understand Mitra's musicianship there is no better place to begin than the music room - the room in which voices become placed and place is made with voice, time and time again.

Soundscapes – the music room

The music room in a musician's house is a special place. It is the room in which musicians spend the most time alone with their music. But, music rooms are not isolated sound worlds. They gather and hold. They are places made in sound and by sound. Eventful, affective and memorable, they have the qualities of Places described by Edward Casey and these qualities are deeply dialogic to sound. A Dhrupad musician's music is entangled with Place in very special ways afforded by the musical forms of the genre[113].

hummm….

The lips are lightly closed. Air is moved up the windpipe with a slight push from the region below the navel. Activating the vocal chords, and filling the chest and throat with vibration, the trapped air emerges - causing the lips to vibrate slightly in response and a disturbance of the air outside.

A resonant, full-bodied and strong "*humkar*" - so characteristic of a Dhrupad vocalist - is often developed using specific techniques. "*bhramari yoga*" is a special practice that Falguni Mitra teaches his students, to develop a rounded and strong voice throughout the middle and lower registers. The practice is an embodied emulation of the vibrating sound of a buzzing bee, from which it takes its name.

With the lips held loosely closed, controlling the release of air under pressure from the stomach increases the volume of sound. As the lips buzz, a tickling feeling develops around the mouth. The sound makes its physical presence felt inside and on the periphery of the vibrating and vocalizing body. As the sound is sustained in intensity and volume, the musician develops a feeling for the sound in the body and the physical effort it takes to sustain it, while the ear learns to listen to the entire complex of sensations as sound. For a moment the musical body becomes a resonating whole, a universe vibrating with sound.

At the same time the heavy vibrations of "*hummm*" fills the room falling on bodies and eardrums, objects and artifacts, physically gathering the room into sound. When Falguni Mitra utters the sound "*hummm*", sometimes you can feel the vibration in your own body a few feet away. Carried by the concrete floor, it is un-muffled and even assisted by the carpet that shapes musical space by causing students,

[113] See Chapter 2 for a discussion of Casey's formulation of Place.

accompanists and visitors to huddle closer into the sound. The sound *hummm…* slowly fills body and air, causing the people in the room to entrain to the sound.

Contemporary genres of listening in Dhrupad are mediated by a politics of aesthetics that promote this experience as a "journey into the realm of pure sound"[114]. In contrast, I show here that when Falguni Mitra articulates the first "*hummm*…." what is produced is not pure sound, but sound thickened by potentialities of practice and histories of interactivity.

The music room in everyday life

After breakfast or evening tea, Mitra and those students who were around would migrate to the music room and initiate a series of routine activities to settle in sonically and physically. We'd straighten out the carpet and the cushions, remove the *tanpura* covers, and dust the instrument with a special soft yellow cloth. Meanwhile, Mitra would take out his musician's toolkit of personal music notebooks containing song texts for repertoire he has sung through the years, a plastic ruler, a couple of pencils, and eraser all meant for writing and correcting words and notation, a small hand towel he uses to wipe his mouth when singing very fast *nom tom alap*, and a fresh bottle of water. He'd wipe his glasses, and start tuning the *tanpura* to the chosen pitch. The students in the room would also take out their notebooks, switch off cell phones (or not), start intoning "*Sa*…", sometimes sneakily humming snatches of raga they were already mulling over to try and flood his sonic consciousness before he tuned in to something else.

Mitra may have either asked students what they wanted to sing or picked something if the evening was for his own practice. If he was going to sing himself or work on something with us, or even teach us something new, he'd be vocalizing internally, re-activating aural, bodily and vocal memory of the music that was to follow, often moving his hands, and soundlessly moving his lips. Mitra would be subconsciously tuned in to the sounds even while talking or turning the pages of his notebooks, noticing instantly if the *tanpura* strayed off pitch. We students would also be getting tuned in, sometimes talking to him or amongst us, tuning in consciously to *tanpura*, or becoming entrained by its sounds as it began to take control of the room's soundscapes. About ten minutes later, the *tanpura* would have been nicely tuned, sounding its *Pa Sa Sa Sa*, *Ma Sa Sa Sa* or *Ni Sa Sa Sa* transforming the room. When the sounds have just settled into consciousness, the pump right below the music room would start its electronic whine, causing Falguni Mitra to wince, re-adjust his ears to shut the sound out, and get back into place by listening in to the *tanpura* or opening his own voice to activate collective consciousness to the experience of dwelling in sound. Intoning Hummm, Om, Aaaa or Sa, he would establish the vocal dwelling for the day.

---

[114] (Raja 1999, 13)

Home and the world: the acoustemology of music rooms

The music room is the interactive hub in any musician's house, where a musician's life becomes centered. It is the place where a musician spends most time with his music on his own. It is also the room where a musician spends time in the company of students, accompanists, musical friends, and visitors. Most important of all, through repeated vocal inhabiting in music rooms, a musician's vocal chords begin to develop the feeling of home and the potentiality of place. A lot of the churning, polishing and dwelling in which Falguni Mitra has developed both voice and a sense for song and raga has been done in his own music room in different homes in different cities.

Over twenty-five years of association and a few years of fieldwork, most of my own interactions with Mitra have taken place in music rooms in different homes, both his and mine. From Karpagam Gardens to Besant Nagar in Chennai, then Green Park to Ganguly Bagan in Kolkata, I have followed Mitra through the intense soundscapes of a place called home in which he has opened his voice to sing on countless days. At other times he has sat in apartments in Long Island, Princeton and Montclair in the US, and recreated that sense of place by launching into a song or raga sung many times with him.

As Namhita Devidayal's wonderful book evocatively shows, the music room is where a musician gets to know voice as world and where the insiders in his life meet him on a musical plane.[115] It is a Place where through hours of practice, teaching, talking and tea, relationships get forged with the musical phrase. As a student and as a researcher, I have come to know this musician most in this room where he is most at home even within his home, most at ease, and where he finds himself, every time, by opening his voice, clearing his throat and singing "Hmmm…".

I show here that even when sitting alone in intense personal practice, Falguni Mitra's music room is not an isolated sound world in which he experiences interiority in pure sound. It is an acoustemic environment in which sound becomes thick in the interactivity of an individual musician's repeated engagement with musical forms. But, it is not that a music room becomes a place by containing musical activity, or that concrete rooms are magically transformed to soundscapes in the act of producing sound. Rather, I demonstrate that Mitra's voice and the sounds of his Dhrupad emerge already emplaced by the interactions that make his music room a particular kind of place.

---

[115] Devidayal (2009)

Material anchors of a musical life

Before I first met him in 1989, Mitra had spent almost forty years in different music rooms. Through the years of intense practice, becoming a performer, composer, teacher, writer and a *vidwan,* he had already moved twice between Kolkata and Chennai, returning in 1999 to settle permanently in Kolkata where he has lived since then.

The same collection of objects would accompany him on his moves. His collection of tanpuras, one or two harmoniums, *pakhawaj*, *tabla*, tuning instruments, spare strings, and in the later years electronic *tanpuras* and a *talmala* would be configured slightly differently in each room to fit its structure. Then came the pictures, with the Goddess of Learning - Sarasvati, musician saint - Meera bai and his teacher and father Shibkumar Mitra's photographs singled out. Facing them, some special photographs in a glass bookcase - a picture of his father and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Saheb posing together in a genial mood, and a picture of Amir Khan Saheb.[116]

A cardboard box holds some special pictures. The two primary teachers of his father - a dignified Bholanath Pathak seated tall with white beard and serious demeanor, and a beautifully attired Nasiruddin Khan. Two photographs of Falguni Mitra at age eight or so, dressed in a suit sporting more medals than could fit on his little boy chest, embodying the successful beginning of a child prodigy's musical career. A few years on, looking much more casual in half sleeve shirt, Falguni Mitra standing arms crossed beside a well dressed Dabir Khan Saheb sporting a decorative cane.[117] Then a picture of Dabir Khan Saheb on his own.

Right there, some of the strongest musical relationships in the lives of the two Mitras come together. Taken out only on occasion, the musical relationships captured in the photograph anchor sound, holding histories of musical activity. These were people he came to be familiar with not just as towering musical personalities but as personal friends of his father who would have him around when they sang, and listened to him and encouraged him when he sang in front of them, and from whom he picked up some special musical material.

Trophies and mementos from different organizations line the walls and the top of built-in shelves. Only a few have been kept over the years, capturing an extra special event or musical relationship. Books occupy the shelves below the instruments, spilling over into the cupboards in the living room. Many out of print, some

[116] Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Amir Khan were two of the most famous Khyal musicians of the mid twentieth century.

[117] Dabir Khan was said to be the last descendent of Mia Tansen and was a noted musical figure in early 20th century Kolkata.

reprinted editions, most of them were collected by Falguni Mitra's father and used by both father and son, as well as the musicians that regularly visited their house. Then come the notebooks, several plastic bags full of them. These constitute Mitra's most prized possessions – where he turns whenever he wants to dig up something, pull out a song he hasn't sung for a long time, consult a song to explain something or illustrate something to a visitor or student, the myriad active uses of musical material in the daily life of a musician. The rest of the time, the notebooks are just there, like the other objects in the music room.

Listening in and feeding back - thick sound in the music room

The material objects in Mitra's music room are not acoustically inert; they anchor interaction in and through sound. Repeated vocal inhabiting transforms a collection of things into acoustemic anchors that become agentive in transforming sonic activity into habitual dwelling.

One day, Mitra was in the music room with three of us - his students - getting ready for a recording the next day. Preparing for a recording or concert involves a number of familiar physical activities. Picking the instruments to take along, flipping over music notebooks to decide on the repertoire, tearing out a sheet from a notepad to write the song list and the words of each song, and then beginning to dwell in the music to prepare the voice and the mind.

Mitra was trying to decide which of his concert *tanpuras* to take to the studio. This involved a familiar routine of taking off the cloth cover, cleaning the instrument with a yellow lint cloth, and then sitting with it to tune it to the pitch he would use to sing the next day. Adjusting the pegs, tuning the *jawari* and listening closely to the sound, he suddenly remarked-

> "Tansen Pande has played this *tanpura*; also Rahimuddin Khan Saheb, Mohinuddin Dagar; Dabir Khan, Ramesh Babu (Rameshchandra Bannerjee), Ramchatur ji, Maniram, Jasraj, of course Chote (Sahiduddin Dagar) – many stalwarts have used this *tanpura* while sitting for music in our house".

At such moments, it becomes apparent this is not a man alone with his voice in a music room. Like Bachelard's closet, a music room is a place; but it is a special kind of place because it is marked by sound and animated by bodies engaging in activities that entangle sound.[118] It is a place where relationships are made in and through sound, and where, in its turn, sound becomes emplaced. At unexpected moments, catalyzed by sound, or even activity related to sound, a musician listens in, and what is habitual becomes dynamical and eventful.

---

[118] Bachelard (1964)

But, not only musical instruments hold the potentiality of musical interactions. Photographs can become agentive to acoustemic memory too. One evening, Mitra was teaching *alap* in raga Kedar to two students. Teacher and students were taking turns in developing the raga with phrases. The mood, form and sounds of Kedar filled the room. Exploring the upper tetrachord of the middle octave with ascending, looping and descending movements, Mitra's glance fell on the photographs in the glass case. Leaning forward furtively and dropping his voice, he remarked

> "Amir Khan Saheb, Bade Ghulam Saheb – even they used *komal nishad* in Kedar. I won't do it. You can sing Kedar beautifully preserving its notes. Why use *komal nishad*?"

Until then just benign objects on the wall, the photographs in that room were transformed in that instant to presence. Auditory memory catalyzed by song caused Mitra to drop his voice as if he were right in front of senior musicians that were personal forces in his life, even though they were long dead and safely in a book case.

Moments such as this are interruptive. They transform consciousness. But, it would be a mistake to assume that nothing is happening when there is no conscious act of audition. Auditory background is rarely inert. Ihde demonstrates through close phenomenological analysis that auditory phenomena have the potentiality for catalytic and interruptive background to foreground moves that disrupt and interrupt (Ihde, 1976; 2007). Like a breathing body, the ear is out there quietly pulsing, a duplex listening channel called auditory consciousness that becomes an act of audition when something happens to cause it to listen in.

Each catalytic instance is non-repeatable but it is not isolated. Moments such as this occur often in the course of musical activity. But what is analytically meaningful is that these background to foreground moves have the potential to transform musical action, engendering moments of musical reasoning and the exercise of musical judgment. Cognitively integral to thick sound - instruments, books, personal music notebooks, mementos, trophies, awards, pictures and photographs - a music room is configured by objects that entangle sound and world in habitual and catalytic ways. Catalyzed by musical activity, acoustemic anchors become agentive to moments of intense musical reflection that are interactive in the moment. These self-reflexive and often inter-subjective moments happen in the now and often feed right back into sound transforming sonic activity in the now. Sometimes the cogitation reinforces by reiterating previous knowledge, at other times it causes change. But in either case, it acts to reinforce the interactive basis of musical judgment.

What such moments point to is that musical relationships, musical activity and individual musical effort are not mere biographical detail. They are integral to thick sound, and constitutive of musical judgment. To understand Mitra's sense of fidelity

to tradition is to unravel these histories of interactivity. Secondly, acoustemic memory is both acoustic and affective, making emotion and memory integral to thick sound and the production of musical judgment. To understand the sounds of Mitra's Dhrupad and his sense of fidelity to tradition requires me to investigate the specific ways in which emotion and memory are implicated in Mitra's musical life as a performer of Dhrupad.

At home in sound – family as acoustemic anchor

The practice of Dhrupad as classical music is also the practice of music in and as daily life. A musician's household often actively works to make sound home. This is as much the case for a non-hereditary practitioner such as Falguni Mitra as it is for a hereditary musician such as Indra Kishore.

Late in my ethnography, Falguni Mitra, his wife Pratima Mitra and I visited the house where the Mitras lived in their early decades of marriage. Living with his parents, two brothers, two sisters and young wife in the first floor of a two-story house, Falguni Mitra's musical life was at its most intense in those years.

He pointed at an isolated room on the terrace of the two-floor bungalow

> "Look up; see that concrete room on the terrace? This is where I used to practice, both mornings and evenings. It was away from the household. My father wouldn't let anyone bother me".

The Mitra household would revolve around the aural routine of father and son, for the mother, and later, for the first daughter in law of the house. Falguni Mitra's wife Pratima Mitra is musician in her own right. Tt is from Pratima Mitra I got insights into Falguni Mitra's musical life in the years they lived with his parents in a joint family – an important period where Mitra transformed into an expert performer with growing presence on the concert circuit.

But not all this time was spent on repetitive individual practice, even in his early years. A lot of musical life happened in the music room with his father, a few close friends he used to practice with occasionally, and a number of others dropping in to sing and talk music with father and son.

> "His father had a bell. One ring was meant for *guruji* (Falguni ji). Two rings, wife, three me, like that. Mostly only one ring will keep ringing – always your *guruji* would be called to discuss music or sing".

An aural routine punctuated by a calling bell is a sound mark of musical relationships and musical work.

> "I used to wait till 11, 12 at night - I had no idea when he will come down or

who he will bring with him to eat".

He would vanish into his practice room and not appear for hours on end until the young wife was dropping from fatigue wanting to go to sleep. Often she didn't know who would come to dinner when he came down the stairs, as some close musical friend would have come and stayed on for practice, simply hanging around when Mitra sang, sometimes sharing something they know, sometimes playing the harmonium, always drinking tea around musical talk and music. "The-person-who-comes-to-dinner" phenomenon continued for several decades in the Mitras' lives. I've been that person myself many, many times when we would simply lose track of time singing, working, talking, until it was of course too late to leave without eating. If this happened at night, it meant Mitra getting into his car and driving us home too, a car ride of several miles in which the music talk would continue.

Being part of a musical household often includes musical sociality, not only acoustic activity. And when a partner is also a musician, sociality and music become inseparable. Pratima Mitra's life has been entangled with her husband's vocal practice in many ways. As one of his main accompanist at concerts, he depends on her anticipation of his musical mind to relax and sing, freeing himself up to respond to the potentiality of performing for specific audiences. At home, her roles are varied and demanding. While her individual performance career took a back seat to provide both family and musical support to her husband, she co-teaches students that are not focused solely on Dhrupad and has her own students for Khayal, Bengali Raga Sangeet and Bhajan. She would be called in from her household chores to play the harmonium for concert practice and for students, prompt words that were temporarily elusive, sing special songs from the Delhi *Gharana* repertoire that her own family imbibed from Ustad Chand Khan and Ustad Nasir Ahmed Khan, both close friends of her father. If the people in the music room were so tuned, she would be called in to sing the Bengali Rag Sangit and Bhajans she specializes in. Here she would be the lead singer with Falguni Mitra chipping in to accompany her, singing many of the songs he himself has composed in these genres. Falguni Mitra's musical life is indeed incomplete without his wife.

Acoustic communities, thick sound and musical judgment

Acoustic communities sustain particular listening practices that in turn feedback into performance. A non-hereditary musician performing Dhrupad in Benares and Kolkata in the first half of the 20th century had recourse to a musical world that would be described today as a lost world of Hindustani music. It is a lost world not because there are no talented performers but because the post-1960s transformation of Dhrupad into a journey into the realm of pure sound has caused large-scale elision of grids of intelligibility and genres of listening.

In an age when Dhrupad has been re-cast as a neo-spiritual genre with Vedic roots

that transcends both linguistic and musical meaning, it is crucial and urgent to investigate the forms of knowledge that tether musical judgment in Dhrupad traditions where the genre has remained much closer to song and raga than pure sound. Contemporary musicians such as Falguni Mitra and Indra Kishore Mishra have suffered from the erasure of grids of intelligibility within which their performance tradition has been understood for a few centuries and from which their own sense of tradition has been shaped. Their aesthetic sense and ethical sense are actively threatened by the politics of contemporary Dhrupad aesthetics.

Under these conditions, investigating musical judgment necessarily becomes an archeology of historical grids of intelligibility and the acoustic communities in which they were sustained. In the 1920s, a young man with fire for music in his heart went in search of a teacher to Benares. In a time and place in which Dhrupad's regimes of intelligibility were shaped by epistemologies of song and compositional form, Shibkumar Mitra not only acquired tradition but also gained entrance into an acoustic community for Dhrupad practice with its attendant forms of knowledge. Learning for more than a decade from the senior Bettiah *gharana* musician Bholanath Pathak, he was inducted into an epistemology of Dhrupad in which song is construed as a primary vehicle of musical knowledge and to very specialist categorical knowledge about Dhrupad aesthetics, codified in the *banis* of Dhrupad. Nurtured in a community of *pakhawaj* experts, the Bettiah *gharana* school in early 20th century Benares was characterized by an emphasis on *laya* and *layakari* that also influenced Mitra's conception of Dhrupad as a genre.

Senior musicians of the tradition were also involved in the institutional and intellectual activities that marked the early 20th century musical city. Contemporary sources refer to Pathak's great value as a savant who understood the intricacies of raga grammar and aesthetics in Hindustani music, a role somewhat larger and grander than being a niche performer of Dhrupad or *pakhawaj*. Thus Mitra became a part of a community of musicians who were engaged in heterogeneous knowledge-making practices in relation to their tradition, some of which were distinctly non-local.[119]

Yet, the strong basis that the Bettiah *gharana* musicians of Benares had in the local may not have transferred over as seamlessly to the student from Kolkata.[120] Rather,

---

[119] Pathak himself was deeply involved in the documentation, archival and transmission efforts of the Bharat Kala Parishad, and the Kashi Sangeet Samaj, both institutions founded in a climate of cultural nationalism. Others in their community also too engaged in analytical and written work. Pathak's student Mannuji Mridangacharya wrote a treatise on tala and was employed as a professor in the Benares Hindu University, as was Shivprasad Gayanacarya, yet another respected musician of Benares who also learned from the Bettiah *gharana* musicians, and wrote a valuable book on Dhrupad with notated songs

[120] Mannuji had a deep association with the Pushti Marg Sampradaya at the Gopal Mandir through out his life - a practice his family continues; whereas Beni Madhav served as priest in one of the temples in

Mitra's aural home was the teeming musical culture of pre-1950s Kolkata.

Mitra's entry point into musical circles in Kolkata came through multiple sources. Being a musician of the Bettiah *gharana* connected him with musicians of the Vishnupur *gharana*, who also had a strong Bettiah connection. In the early 20th century, the Mishras of Benares and their students had established sister communities in Benares and Kolkata. While tradition consolidated strongly in Benares, in Kolkata transmission occurred amongst a larger and more diffuse circle of musicians, many of whom also had links to the musical traditions of Vishnupur. This community opened up for Shib Mitra when he returned permanently to Kolkata after his decade of training.

The second link to Hindustani musical circles came from his other preceptorial source, Ustad Nasiruddin Khan, the patriarch of the Dagar tradition and a close friend of Pathak's. Nasiruddin Khan was known not only for his musical prowess and lineage, he was part of the close circle that gave the All India Music Conferences their musical authority. Musical circles in Kolkata would have viewed a musical protégé of his favorably. When both his teachers passed away in 1936, Mitra found ways to sustain and deepen his engagement with both traditions. He made regular visits back to Benares to keep musically connected with the senior musicians of the Bettiah *gharana*. Meanwhile, Shib Mitra continued his immersion in the Dagar tradition through Tansen Pande, younger brother of Nasiruddin Khan, who served as a lifelong mentor and musical friend. Shib Mitra also became close to many members of the extended Dagar family.

Dhrupad in mid-twentieth century in Kolkata

Within a decades of his teachers' passing, well entrenched in musical circles in Kolkata, Shibkumar began to transmit tradition with intensity and focus to a musically precocious son. The forms of knowledge generated in the Mitras' music room depended not only on the intense work of individual practice, and their collective engagement with inheritance, but also on the acoustic communities in which they regularly engaged in musical interaction. Having a child prodigy at home made for a musically charged existence at home and outside. Before he was 8, Falguni Mitra had put in enough work to sing in competitions, small performances and *baithaks*. While father and son would work for long hours together in intense practice, many musicians dropping in for musical sessions also enriched the soundscapes of a musical household. Falguni Mitra would also accompany his father to *baithaks* and musical sessions in many musicians' houses, as well as some performing stages and music societies in Kolkata noted for offering outstanding music. In musical gatherings and private visits, often he would be asked to

---

Benares, primarily as a way to earn a living. Several of their students too came from the community of priests in Benares - Bhatuknath Sharma is one such still living.

demonstrate in practice nuances that his father would want to discuss with his friends. Thus the intense work of learning to sing and acquiring voice was done in private and in public, in dialogic with musical inheritance and musical friendships.

Throughout Falguni Mitra's childhood, his early years of intense practice and into the years when he had become a mature concert artist in the 1970s, the Mitras participated in a close community of musical friendships that were integral to the production of thick sound and had a lasting effect on them musically. Listening to Falguni Mitra talk about his musical life in childhood and as a young adult not only evokes a post world for Hindustani music, it reads like a Who's Who of Hindustani music.

Mitra recalls being asked to demonstrate the Dhrupads of the Bettiah *gharana* for Birendra Kishore Ray Chaudhury in all the four *bani*s of Dhrupad.[121] The latter's appreciative response and words of advice remain audible to Mitra many decades later, sometimes kicking in when he has to make himself heard to peers whose ears have lost those grids of intelligibility. A frequent visitor and close musical mentor was Dabir Khan Saheb, the last descendent of Mia Tansen on the latter's daughter's lineage. The latter would drop by twirling his silver topped cane and find the Mitras in their music room. Dabir Khan would bring out choice Dhrupads from his Rampur *khazana*, and Shib Mitra would sing Bettiah *gharana* Dhrupads, and both music and discussion would revolve around songs, composers, ragas, personalities and stories. Dabir Khan Saheb considered the Bettiah *gharana* lineage of the Mishras of Benares to be a Seniya *gharana* lineage and the relationship he maintained with the Mitras was one of avuncular musical kinship. He would often sing compositions and ragas special to his lineage, and the Mitras assimilated a few of these into their repertoire as well. Dabir Khan had a great fondness for Falguni Mitra and would give him advice on his music and share some nuances of special songs and ragas from his redoubtable Seniya *gharana khazana*.[122]

Very soon the Mitras' closest musical associations became multi-generational. Mannuji Mridangacarya was a great source for musical get-togethers (*sangat)*, continuing to acquire repertoire and to discuss matters musical in relation to their tradition, a practice that continued after his death with a reversal of roles. Mannuji's

---

[121] Birendra Kishore Ray Chaudhuri was an authoritative Dhrupad musician and historian in early 20th century Kolkata.

[122] During later years, Shibkumar Mitra undertook a detailed comparison of compositions in different related traditions of the Bettiah, Vishnupur and Seniya *gharana*s, and examined variants in ragas, lyrics, composition structure and authorship, always meticulously noting the oral tradition and teacher tradition from which he acquired the version. At that point he may have come to question the dating and authorship of some of the Seniya gharara compositions amongst others, but this does not compromise their ontological status as cumulative *khazana* handed down as thick sound in continuous oral transmission, and churned time and time again in individual practice and inter-subjective musical interaction.

sons and students would seek Shib Mitra and Falguni Mitra out in Kolkata to practice their vocal repertoire and keep up their *pakhawaj* accompaniment practice. For a few years, Mannuji's student Rama Vallabh Mishra became Shib Mitra's musical partner for knowledge dissemination about the Bettiah tradition in seminars, symposia and journal papers. The musical friendships with the Dagar family also quickly became multi-generational when Shib Mitra's son Falguni Mitra and Tansen Pande's son Sayeeduddin Dagar became close musical friends. The latter continue to retain strong affective ties even today, though their regular musical interactions have long ceased.

In addition to a close relationship with Tansen Pande, his son Sayeeduddin and daughter Munni (who became the mother of Wasifuddin Dagar), many senior members of the Dagar family would visit the Mitra house when they came to Kolkata. Rahimuddin Khan, Moinuddin, and Aminuddin, would come to the house during Shib Mitra's lifetime, as would Ramchatur Mullick, the master musician of the Darbhanga *gharana*. These visits often had tangible affective and musical outcomes.

Aside from Dabir Khan Saheb, and the musicians of the Bettiah and Dagar traditions, the Mitras continued close relationships with the Vishnupur *gharana* stalwarts. Gopeswar Bandhopadhyay and his son Rameshchandra Bandhopdhyay would visit the Mitra house, exchanging songs from their stock that had a common source in the Bettiah *gharana* lineage of the Mishras. Yet shared stock did not mean a conflation of aesthetics or vocal styles - rather, it allowed connection and musical interchange.[123]

If many of these musical relationships were made and marked in sound, other acoustemic relationships marked sound in paper, ink, and language. Two like minded musician friends, Bimal Roy and Bimala Kanta Ray Chaudhury, proved to be valuable resources to Shib Mitra in the work of notating and analyzing his Dhrupad collection.[124] Like Shib Mitra, these musicians represented a section of educated middle class Bengalis that connected to tradition in ways idiosyncratic of their time and place. Best described as traditional English-educated intellectuals, they found role models in pioneering Indian musicologists of the modern era such as Thakur Jaidev Singh, Swami Prajnananda and Acarya Kailash Chandra Brhaspati. The impact of modern intellectualism on these men was deeply dialogic with tradition. Their work was sourced from their personal engagement with particular traditions that

[123] Falguni Mitra has observed that the Dhrupad style of these musicians was more influenced by the song-like style of their home tradition in Vishnupur, whereas his father and he sang in the tradition of the Benares school of the Kashi Sangit Samaj that was more formal and more richly differentiated in its aesthetics and vocal delivery.

[124] Mitra has often marked his notebooks with the initials BR and BKRC to note which compositions and musical matters he had discussed with these senior musicians who like him had a consuming interest in Dhrupad, raga *lakshanas* and aesthetics.

they learnt in traditional ways from teachers who were the primary sources of their categorical knowledge and performance practice. But they connected to tradition through heterogeneous practices of analysis, reading, writing and musical discourse that actively incorporated and inflected modernity's disciplinary technologies.

Shib Mitra was a regular participant in the music analysis sessions and music seminars at ITC Sangeet Research Academy and other institutions in Kolkata.[125] He also wrote regularly in both Bengali and English for periodicals related to music such as Sangeet and Anand Bazaar Patrika. He would travel to places such as Mathura and Benares to present at conferences on Dhrupad. Aside from this, he spent an enormous amount of time, effort, and attention on notating, analyzing and documenting his own corpus of musical materials in relation to the prevalent epistemologies of Hindustani music as an organized system of knowledge. Women musician-researchers who were acknowledged intellectuals in their field such as Dr. Sumati Mutatkar and Dipali Nag were close friends of the Mitras, relationships that continued in Falguni Mitra's later life.[126] From his early thirties, Falguni Mitra also began to maintain a strong presence on the lecture-demonstration and seminar circuit, writing for journals and music periodicals whenever he had the time. At home, his role in tradition building was even more important. He provided the practical competence necessary for Shibkumar Mitra to properly consolidate the four-*bani* Bettiah Dhrupad tradition of the Mishras of Benares with the elaborate *alap* tradition he acquired via Nasiruddin Khan.

Both Mitras developed lifelong relationships with the three musical maestros of the Maihar *gharana* - Ali Akbar Khan, Ravishankar and Nikhil Bannerjee. Shib Mitra also enjoyed a close musical friendship with Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Saheb over several years, and the two of them spent musical time together on many occasions. Falguni Mitra recalls sitting on Khan Saheb's lap at a very early age, and having Khan Saheb at home for extended hours singing, eating and talking with the family. These visits occurred not only in Kolkata but also in Chennai where Shib Mitra was posted for some years, when on occasion Khan Saheb would visit Chennai for a performance. Mitra remembers singing in Khan Saheb's presence many times, when his father and Khan Saheb would sit down for music, taking turns to sing, and encouraging the young boy to sing in between. Ustad Amir Khan too was a musical friend, and the musicians would meet in Mitra's house and in musical soirees held in city residences amongst a close circle of musical friends. In addition to interactions at home and in private musical gatherings, Shib Mitra would take Falguni Mitra to many halls in the

[125] See www.itcsra.org for a brief history of the institution

[126] Dr. Sumati Mutatkar's daughter learnt Dhrupad from Shib Mitra and also assisted him in the last decade of his life to prepare his Dhrupad collection for publication. She handed me a full Xerox copy of his leader article and collection of Dhrupads in the four *bani*s when I met her in 2011, thirty years after Shib Mitra's passing, material I had got in original from Falguni Mitra.

city where these Ustads would sing regularly. In his developing musical years, Falguni Mitra listened to these maestros, both live and on All India Radio and interacted with them musically. He holds them both as two of the most influential figures in his life, along with Faiyyaz Khan Saheb who had a towering presence in the world of Hindustani music in Mitra's youth.

Aside from Amir Khan and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, the Mitras had many close friends amongst the Khayal fraternity, including musical families of Bengal who had until recently sung Dhrupad, such as the Vishnupur Khayal musicians, the family of Manas Chakraborty and others like them who were deeply influenced by the two Ustads. The musicians of the Delhi *gharana*, Chand Khan Saheb and Iqbal Ahmed Khan were very close to Mitra's father-in-law, with Iqbal Ahmed Khan living in the latter's house for weeks on end. For some years Mani Ram and his now very famous brother Jasraj lived a few houses away, and Shib Mitra in particular would often drop in on them as he walked by their house. Srikant Bhakre, an admirer of Amir Khan, was Falguni Mitra's close friend and musical companion, the two often practicing together late into the night. In later years, a string of students became house regulars. Thus the Mitra household was never too far away from the next musical visitor. And inevitably, these meetings happened in the music room with musical sessions and music talk. and when close friends dropped in with family talk and food. But increasingly, as Falguni Mitra matured into an expert performer of Dhrupad, he began to spend more and more time alone with his music, not out of choice but because of a change in the acoustic communities for Hindustani music.

Changing acoustic communities and transforming intelligibility

By the time Falguni Mitra became an established performer and began to acquire a reputation as an expert Hindustani musician, the close community of listeners for Dhrupad had begun to disperse. Rather, Mitra was surrounded by peers who had developed a much stronger taste for Khayal, and instrumental music, and who did not have a strong involvement in Dhrupad. Mitra was entrenched in the world of Hindustani music, and was a regular performer in major music conferences in North India, a regular expert performer on National radio and later TV, presenting at seminars, writing in journals, serving on expert committees, panels and audition boards. At the same time, Mitra continued to work very hard with his Dhrupad practice at home, deeply engaged in learning, teaching, documenting, polishing the repertoire he shared with his father.

When Mitra moved to Chennai in the late 1980s where he lived for more than a decade, his creative musicianship earned him collaborations with the greatest performing legends of Chennai.[127] Yet, in contrast to his earlier interactions with G N

[127] Mitra collaborated with Rukmini Devi Arundale for whom he composed music for a new dance production Meera, M S Subbulakshmi who sang songs of the musician Saint Meera Bai set to tune by

Balasubramanian and Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar who had an abiding respect for Dhrupad as a compositional form, Chennai's artistic community in the nineties did not really know or appreciate his special heritage as a Dhrupad musician; rather they connected to him as a creative artist and a savant of Hindustani music.

Mitra returned permanently to Kolkata in 1999, at the invitation of Vijay Kichlu, then Director of ITC Sangeet Research Academy. For the next ten years, Mitra served as Prefect and Guru for Dhrupad in ITC Sangeet Research Academy, a position that was double-edged in its impact on his musical life. By the late 20th century, the acoustic communities within which Mitra now functioned had changed drastically. Their understanding of Dhrupad as a genre was strongly influenced by the hegemonic reformatting of Dhrupad into an ideology of pure sound. Mitra was put in a position of having to explain his musical choices to his peers and colleagues, who in spite of their eminence as Hindustani musicians had little interest in, or awareness of, the historical grids of intelligibility that undergird Mitra's conception of correct Dhrupad practice.

The years away from Kolkata cost Mitra most dearly in terms of a drastic change in grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad. By the time he returned to Kolkata, the soundscapes for Dhrupad in Kolkata had been seriously eroded and its grids of intelligibility ruptured. He began to once again perform regularly in the historically important stages and locations for Dhrupad, and at the same time, he taught Dhrupad to the highly talented young Khayal and instrumental musicians in ITC SRA - historically a Dhrupad musician's role in Hindustani music right up till the mid 20th century. Music critics and artists with a stake in Bengal's musico-lyrical history claimed him as a crusader for Dhrupad, who could bring about a renaissance of Dhrupad performance modes that emphasize the richness of the compositional form. But such voices were few.

In spite of carrying two historical lineages and his own redoubtable musicianship, Mitra's acoustic communities have turned hostile towards him. Stonewalled by funding bodies and government agencies, overlooked for major awards, and ignored by researchers and foreign scholars, Mitra has been culturally isolated by his community, remaining intelligible as a Dhrupad musician mainly to the small group of individuals still vested in the elided histories of Dhrupad in the eastern centers.

Yet, this musician has refused to change his musical choices to fit the fashions. At the risk of losing his audience and losing potential students, he has stood firm by the musical ideals that he acquired from his father and then worked on for the next several decades in the company of some of Hindustani music's giants. His

---

him, and was musically very close to two very famous musicians M Balamuralkrishna and Lalgudi Jayaraman

conception of Dhrupad is a broad and rich one, failing signally to align with the minimalist aesthetic of the ideology of pure sound but perfectly commensurate with the recovered aesthetic regimes that an archeology of grids of intelligibility for the genre throw up.

When I found time and again that Mitra was able to convincingly back his own musical choices against newly normative regimes of sound, I became convinced of the strength of musical judgment that is tethered by thick sound. Mitra's musical reason and musical will points both inward and outward. They are self-referential in pointing back to the bedrock of his intense musical work that started when he was not even a teenager, and refer outward by consulting the affective musical interactions that serve as the acoustemic outposts of musical reason.

The catalytic khazana - Paper and ink as acoustemic anchors

> "I couldn't write very easily, so they used to write for me. See – this my father's writing."

A summer evening in June 2009, we were in Falguni Mitra's music room in his apartment in Ganguly Bagan Kolkata, going over his first music notebook from early childhood music lessons with his father.

> "See this is my mother's handwriting. "*sai tu na aave aaj*". My father taught me this during the first few years. It is a simple song, easy for a child to learn, as you know. I taught you this song when you first came to me to learn".[1]

Flipping a few more pages,

> "My father's writing – you can recognize it, you know it well from the other books; here, my mother again, many songs here are in her writing. This is my notebook from early days when I was only five or six years old. I used it for quite some years."

He couldn't write easily, but evidently he could sing quite easily, judging by the number, variety and increasing complexity of four-part Dhrupads in the notebook.

Flipping to the end of the exercise book,

> "This one is my younger sister's writing – you know her, the older one; there, that is my second younger sister's writing – you won't find much of hers, too young".

Just flipping through the first exercise book of Dhrupads taught to Falguni Mitra by

his father, it appears that the entire family had to be pressed into service to keep one young boy fed with songs.

But it's not memory of family, teachers and musical friends alone that render sound thick in performance. Before I met him, Falguni Mitra had already spent over four decades in different music rooms. Well before he became an adult he had developed the bodily, emotional and mental discipline that rigorous practice brings. He had also developed a keen sensitivity and feeling for his musical inheritance. The collection of notebooks and books that materialize a portion of this inheritance play a significant part in physically anchoring Mitra's sense of place and his musicianship because they carry sound marks of musical effort and repeated musical action that are integral to thick sound.

Mitra's notebook isn't a static record of one-time action captured the day a song was written down during a lesson. It shows the evidence of repeated visits. The index on the first page lists the songs, and refers to the page numbers also written by hand. The index was created when Mitra was in his teens, polishing up repertoire for concerts and competitions. At that time he needed a way to find a song quickly on demand. Other notebooks show even more evidence of repeated work. The exercise notebooks prepared by his father use different colors of ink for words and notation. A third color appears whenever a notation was corrected in subsequent musical discussion. These corrections occur in the writing of both father and son, and were done when father and son sang the songs together sometimes for the explicit purpose of verifying the notation done by the father, and at other times in the context of musical work done on the repertoire when the song was put through the churning of repeated singing and polishing that transforms it into performance-ready repertoire. A fourth color, now a pencil mark, shows where Falguni Mitra himself has adjusted the notation when he has revisited songs later in his musical life, perhaps to prepare for a concert, to teach a student, or because someone dropped in causing him to pull out songs he hadn't sung in a while. The pencil marks in notebooks are sound marks of both musical activity and musical thinking, of the musical judgments formed in repeated engagement with musical material in practice..

These books and notebooks have a special status as acoustemic anchors. They are a dialogic extension of Mitra's musical mind and musicianship. While they materialize a significant portion of his *khazana,* he has the aesthetic sense, musical memory and musical knowledge to transform them into musical objects. What lies in between are histories of interactivity and practice that imbue both musical object and voice with potentiality.

The catalytic khazana - musical objects as acoustemic anchors

While paper and ink materialize memory of musical work and musical effort, musical objects anchor acoustemic memory in and as sound. It follows that each

song cannot just be treated as a handed-down object. Musical forms such as ragas and compositions anchor auditory memory intertwined with emotional memory and body memory; they carry the sound marks of individual practice and the imprint of musical exchange. In short, they anchor thick sound, not pure sound.

Catalyzed by sound or activities related to sound, sometimes these memories move from habitual background to foreground, interrupting consciousness and transforming the experience of raga as place. At such moments, the interactive basis of musical judgment is strengthened through listening in and feeding back, and sound becomes even thicker as a result of dialogic action. Through the interactivity of reiterative musical practice, a musical object hence becomes an object of acoustemic knowledge, not just acoustic knowledge.

Repertoire itself embeds histories of musical associations and personal practice that can be catalyzed by activity that entangles the sonic. Such associations often stabilize specific musical memory and musical judgment and they do this not only as acoustic memory but also as acoustemic memory that actively transforms the experience of music. This transformation manifests as affect, intelligibility, the exercise of judgment and as narrativity that influences ontological status. I give examples of all these complex effects below.

While singing particular songs or ragas, Mitra would suddenly be moved to remember associations. Sometimes these recollections were even deliberately invoked towards authentication and affect, such as when Falguni Mitra would take the time to remind his listeners of the circumstances in which he received a particular piece of music. June 2009 in Bangalore, Mitra was preparing to sing in front of a new audience for the Sangeet Natak Akademi Sangeet Sangam festival - a regular series held in different cities bi-annually. I had travelled up from Chennai and we met the morning of the concert in a private residence, together with his regular accompanist Apurbalal Manna and a harmonium artist who would play with Mitra for the first time. Being highly attuned to response, Mitra likes to socialise his music as a way of inducting new accompanists into a zone of comfort that is both affective and musical. He had chosen to sing Maru Kalyan, a raga that is not commonly heard even in North India. This raga was special not only because it is less heard on stage, but also because it reminded Mitra both of Dabir Khan from whom he had first acquired it, and of Amir Khan, who used to sing this raga on occasion. Mitra had worked on the raga himself in later years, giving it an interpretive shade that is his own. So, singing Maru Kalyan was a treat that Falguni Mitra would sometimes share with his audiences. By way of building his own mood, Mitra told the harmonium artist about Dabir Khan Saheb and his lineage, and the interactions the Mitras had with him. Having got the accompanist to tune in to his mood, many hours later he sat on the stage in front of a strange audience preparing to present a relatively strange raga. He began to tell the story once again, and this time his accompanist was nodding his head in appreciation. Mood built very quickly

in the auditorium and Mitra could launch into an unfamiliar raga without worrying about his audience, because he had found a way to bring their ears in to connect to thick sound, transforming the intelligibility of his music for that evening for himself, his accompanists and his audience.

Acoustemic memory attached to repertoire has played a very significant role in the Bettiah *gharana* in recent times, for both Indra Kishore and Falguni Mitra. Memories entangled in song have helped these musicians keep alive music that they have never sung in public, but have sung a great deal in times past. For both musicians, this represents more than sixty percent of their active repertoire. While loss of intelligibility and lack of opportunity for public performance both impact circulation of songs, Falguni Mitra pointed to the erosion of acoustic communities for Dhrupad of the Bettiah *gharana* stripe as a major factor in both loss of intelligibility and loss of opportunity.

Triggering acoustemic memory works both ways. Falguni Mitra would often bring rarely heard songs out when he was reminded of associations. Or, if an occasion caused him to remember some song he hadn't sung in a long while, a whole string of memories would be catalyzed with it in dialogic response. The rush that this kinds of remembering brings with it thickens sound, reinforcing the interactive basis of musical judgment and musical knowledge through listening in and feeding back.

While preparing for the Malhar festival of ITC SRA in August 2011, Mitra was mulling over choice of raga and repertoire. Pulling out Malhar after Malhar from his sizeable collection of songs in all four *bani*s, he rejected a number of them including Purani Malhar and Shuddh Malhar as too esoteric for a main piece in the concert. Browsing through the collection, he paused suddenly and started to sing a song that was not in the book – a Dhamar in raga Gondh Malhar.

The raga Gondh Malhar is an esoteric variety of Malhar where the komal gandhar is used instead of the more commonly heard *shuddh gandhar* of Gaud Malhar. Mitra rarely sings this raga in public, so no one, including his wife, had any clue he knew it. He then told me about this special raga in relation to his own musical life. His father had taught him Dhrupad in Gondh Malhar from the Bettiah *khazana.* When Mitra was about 14, musicians all over North India were perturbed by All India Radio's sudden decision to re-grade all artists as part of an effort to more authoritatively impose the standardized classification of ragas in North Indian classical music. The musician who headed the re-grading committee was Srikrishna Ratanjhankar, V N Bhatkande's closest student and collaborator, and a key figure in music Nationalism. Many gifted musicians fell out with AIR on this re-grading decision, giving up their AIR grades and refusing to record for radio again in their careers. Since Mitra was relatively young though already a graded artist of AIR, his father prepared him to take the re-grading tests based on a pre-circulated list of a few dozen ragas a few of which would be chosen by examiners on the grading day while administering the

test.

Comes grading day, and Mitra presented a Dhrupad in a raga chosen by his examiners from the pre-circulated list. The next item he was required to present was a Dhamar. Sri Krishna Ratanjhankar chose to examine him in Raga Gaud Malhar. Mitra still recalls his mental decision making at that high stress moment. He knew that the standardized form of Gaud Malhar had *shuddh gandhar*. On the other hand, his tradition used only the older variety which is Gondh with *komal gandhar*. To make things worse, he only knew a Dhrupad in this raga, not a Dhamar. Faced with the choice of asking for another raga, which might be a black mark, and singing a non-standard variety, which might also be a black mark as it would fail the normativity test, Mitra chose the latter course. At that instant, he recomposed a Dhamar in another raga into Gondh Malhar and sang it for the committee. He recalls Ratanjhankar as being very pleased with hearing the rarer variety.

This incident is a highly textured incident as it points to some complex and significant things. First, a young boy of 14 decided to stick with his tradition's version of a raga despite the risks of tripping over new norms for classical music. Secondly, he used the intensity of his musical work to take something he knew and create something in the moment to fulfill a musical and professional need. This nexus shows that both poesis and the exercise of musical judgment have the same source. Creativity and ethics become co-located in the response of a traditional musician to the professional demands made in inter-subjective musical encounters.

In 2011, while preparing for the Malhar festival concert, the auditory activity of going through different Malhars catalyzed Mitra into remembering the Dhrupad in Gondh Malhar, and with it came this string of very special memories. It is of no small significance that one of the richest and most historic repertoires of Hindustani music languishes today because there are no takers for songs such as the one Mitra was catalyzed into remembering that evening. The memory is significant not only because he sang that song once again, but also because it reminded Mitra of grids of intelligibility for his music at the highest musical levels – grids that have been elided from collective memory of Dhrupad's past by the genre's re-invention as a journey into the realm pure sound. A protest in sound, Mitra's recollection fed right back into sound, tethering the judgments that stabilized that Gondh Malhar song a little more firmly and rendering the song and the raga itself a little thicker for having churned it once again with the voice.

Inter-subjectivity is a common theme in acoustemic memory that stabilizes strong notions of tradition. Most of these memories were not recounted to me during structured ethnographic interviews. Rather, they were catalysed by song, in the context of singing particular musical phrases, in explanation of particular musical choices. Practicing raga Komal Rishabh Asavari one day in the music room before a radio recording, Falguni Mitra commented:

> "Tansen Pande would say you should always sing *dha Ma ga re Sa* in Komal Rishabh Asavari. It takes it away from Bilaskhani Todi and gives it a particular character. My father followed him in this and I also maintain it, especially when teaching the raga or establishing the raga".

And then again, while working with setting songs in raga Bhairav from his father's collection, with pen, pencil, ruler and sharpener at hand

> "My father and I don't like to sing *Ni Sa Ga Ma* in Bhairav. That is Ramkali territory. We preserve a very definite character for Bhairav. Pande ji and the Dagars sing *Ni Sa Ga Ma* but we don't follow that. I don't sing anything I am not convinced about, doesn't matter who says what".

Parsing this statement, it would be facile to conclude that Falguni Mitra is an individualist, rather than a musician who respects tradition. Rather, it shows that the exercise of judgment in a traditional musician is a complex, layered process that points inward and points outward. It results from the work of putting traditional materials through the mill of rigorous individual practice, collective discussion and inter-subjective interrogation. This intense and interactive process is also what gives a musician the strength to invoke Hamsa the bird in arguing for a particular musical Truth.

Often acoustemic memory stabilizes specific musical knowledge and tethers specific musical judgments through body and effort memory. This was illustrated to me in many instances while working with Falguni Mitra. Teaching a *gaurhar bani* song in raga Chayanat by Maharaja Anand Kishore Singh, Falguni Mitra emphasized the amount of work it takes to achieve an evenly balanced vocal delivery in upward and downward *meend,* to create the characteristic aesthetic of *gaurhar bani* in that song.

> "It would get very hot in summer so my practice room on the terrace had a small table fan. My father would make me switch off this fan, or turn it away when I practiced this song. He would say that the same amount of pressure has to be kept up throughout the sweep that goes up and then down – that takes repeated practice and concentration. I must have practiced that one movement fifty times, hundred times to get it correctly. Once I knew how it should be done, it was easier".

Heat, effort, a father's active instruction, and the embodied memory of perfect balance achieved through controlled release of breath, all associated with being physically located in a particular place in the past – the interactive complex of Falguni Mitra's sonic memory of perfecting a *gaurhar bani* song was catalyzed by sonic action. This complex resonates with Indra Kishore's recollection of learning *gaurhar bani* from his father some years later, miles away in a rural town under

very different circumstances. While Indra Kishore uses many different embodied metaphors to hold the memory of *gaurhar bani*, for Mitra specific musical phrases and specific songs practiced repeatedly in specific places hold keys to memory by stabilizing aesthetic models as metrics for perfect practice.

Musical effort and effort memory came up again in the context of teaching a *gaurhar bani* song, again a composition of Maharaja Anand Kishore Singh, but this time in raga Bahar. Two years after I began my research project, Falguni Mitra was teaching a fellow student and me a Dhrupad in raga Bahar composed by Maharaja Anand Kishore Singh. Usually quite phlegmatic, this was one occasion when the normally urbane Falguni Mitra showed visible signs of emotion.

> "You won't hear such a song from any one in this country. Not Indra Kishore, not anyone. This is a jewel in the Bettiah crown".

After five long years, while writing this chapter I have to acknowledge that Falguni Mitra was right. Although there are other very bright jewels in the Bettiah crown, many, many with Indra Kishore, I have not come across quite such a Dhrupad in the many Dhrupads I have surveyed across the two corpuses. It truly is a jewel in the Bettiah crown, even amongst other jewels. A *gaurhar bani* Dhrupad, one of the most distinctive features of the song are the vast expanses of empty space without words. It is extremely melismatic, with even bi-syllabic words (example: *beli*) stretched over all 12 beats of a slow tempo Chautal cycle. Without a knowledge of the sensory and embodied transformative effect of the *banis,* a musician will not be able to sing this song from notation to produce the *gaurhar bani* aesthetic.

Singing the first stanza twice over for our benefit, Falguni Mitra paused to warn us with an undercurrent of laughter "Don't try to sing slower than this. You will be rolling on the floor".

Here, Mitra was pointing to some significant metrics for right practice in inter-subjective allusion. Unlike many other artists that simply sing all slow tempo Dhrupads at very slow tempo, Mitra decides tempo based on many other factors, most importantly the aesthetic effect he wants to achieve. In telling us not to slow it down, he was communicating to us that every song has an optimal tempo that can only be arrived at by repeated practice towards stabilizing its aesthetic.

Secondly, he was also communicating a key characteristic of *gaurhar bani* songs, which is the perception of stretched time and increased space. Songs in this *bani* often give the impression of being slower than they actually are. So, in Mitra's estimation, there was no need to choose a very slow tempo to achieve the feeling of stretched time and expanded space, as the composition itself is designed to have that perceptual effect.

Whether rolling on the floor, drinking pots of ghee to quench the fire in the stomach, or tightening the guts so much a knife couldn't be driven into it, both Falguni Mitra and Indra Kishore Mishra communicated certain important metrics for right practice through embodied metaphors that anchored very esoteric performance knowledge about Dhrupad aesthetics. This acoustemic memory kicks in unexpectedly when practising many months later, in an apartment in Berkeley, catalyzed by the effort of singing a different *gaurhar bani* song, this time in raga Bhairav. It causes my musician friend and me to listen in, feeding back to render sound thick and tether judgment as acoustemic experience.

Strong notions of tradition and the strength of musical judgment are tethered by such interactive complexes of thick sound. Sometimes acoustic memory, body memory and affective memory of musical relationships intersect to stabilize musical knowledge. Falguni Mitra is possibly the only living musician to have demonstrable working knowledge of all four *bani*s of Dhrupad with repertoire to match.[128] While Mitra has many songs in the other three *bani*s, *Nauhar bani* songs in his repertoire are relatively few in number, and hence represent very precious musical material. One of the very good examples of this *bani* is a song in raga Mian Malhar attributed to Mia Tansen, the legendary musician who spent his last decades in the court of Mughal Emperor Akbar. While Falguni Mitra's father Shibkumar Mitra first acquired it from his teacher Bholanath Pathak, this song accrued other experiences on its journey through the Mitras' musical life that render it thick in performance. Unlike some of my other examples though, the thickness of this song has persisted as a tiny unresolved musical conflict that keeps it fresh in Falguni Mitra's musical memory.

Falguni Mitra remembers the slight difference of opinion his father had over this song with Ustad Dabir Khan who also used to sing the same song. The musicians used to sing the song together, but apparently Shib Mitra didn't entirely come to terms with Dabir Khan's version. Shibkumar Mitra had acquired a version from his teacher Pathak, which differed somewhat from the version Dabir Khan sang in just one line of the song. Shibkumar Mitra valued Dabir Khan Saheb's interpretation very highly both for its musicianship and for being polished and handed down by generations of outstanding musicians in one of the most important lineages of Hindustani music. But yet, he would push back from his own musical standpoint, sometimes after Khan Saheb had left for the day. It is very likely that Dabir Khan and Shib Mitra were the only two musicians singing *Nauhar Bani* songs by that time in the 20th century, so this was extremely esoteric knowledge being aired and discussed.

---

[128] Both Falguni Mitra and Indra Kishore Mishra sing *gaurhar* and *khandar banis.* Dhrupads in the other two banis, *dagur* and *nauhar* are unique to the Bettiah *gharana* lineage of the Mishras of Benares, the lineage to which Falguni Mitra belongs

Many years later when Falguni Mitra revisited the song in my presence to churn and polish it for private recording, he kept getting stuck at the *sanchari* - the third part of the Dhrupad. A few years later, this happened again. Curious now, I asked him why he was troubled. He told me that although his father had tweaked the song a particular way, he himself had been drawn to some aspects of Dabir Khan Saheb's version. The difference between the two occurs in the way stresses in the syllables interact with the melodic movement and the underlying tala stresses in one line of the two-line s*anchari*. But since this interactivity holds the kernel of *nauhar bani* aesthetics, it would disrupt Mitra's consciousness as embodied discomfort. Since Mitra had sung the song many times with his father, and has the notation for his father's version, he starts out with that memory. But when he hits the troublesome line, since aesthetic sense for *nauhar bani* has become embodied sense for Mitra, it surfaces and interrupts his flow. Mitra winces when he gets to that part even today and has to repeat it till he forgets one and retrieves the other. The day has to come when Mitra puts in enough work on that one line to get it aligned with his own personal sense of how the line should flow, pushing the debate between Dabir Khan Saheb and his father to quiet background in the process. But until then, every time he sings this song, Falguni Mitra is physically catalysed into experiencing the song as thick sound where these histories of interaction are foregrounded, forcing him to exercise his musical judgment in the moment all over again, one more time.

The *nauhar bani* song which causes Falguni Mitra trouble until today demonstrates that musicians stabilize songs as ontologies through repeated practice. Such practice intertwines acoustic and non-acoustic domains which intersect in the body and the voice. Musical judgment about an esoteric dimension of Dhrupad aesthetics in this case was tethered in an embodied memory of thick sound - a memory of sound that carries the marks of interactions that occurred in and through sound.

"An Amir Khan-like thought" – mental models and affective associations

Even intensely focused private practice triggers associations. Mitra related a treasured memory one day while practicing for a concert. He had been singing Komal Rishabh Asavari, a raga that Mitra has always emphasized that one has to treat very carefully, avoiding vigorous or jerky movements that may destroy the quality of yearning he felt best characterized its affect. Well into the slow tempo *alap*, he had started to move around with variations of phrases, building out form. Suddenly pausing, he commented

> "This is an Amir Khan-like thought".

He then went back to singing, but now he was repeatedly making the unexpected leaps that build out form in ways that a linear development cannot find. When such movements work well, they take a particular piece of raga *alap* beyond the usual into the memorable.

The Amir Khan like thought had clearly fed back as thick sound to inspire his musical creativity in that moment. But later he explained to me that this is not a one off occurrence. He had consciously emulated the Ustad as a creative model, and had put a lot of practice into internalizing the penchant for the unexpected move that characterizes Amir Khan Saheb's raga development approach. While Mitra had listened to the Ustad many, many times in private residences including his own, as well as chamber concerts and public concerts, one particular incident left sound marks in Mitra's mind as a tangible lesson in musical creativity.

On his occasional visits to Mumbai Falguni Mitra would go to see Amir Khan Saheb in the latter's Peddar Road residence. Mitra remembers one such visit especially for its affective and musical impact. The great Ustad was alone that day, and he was practising when Mitra arrived at his house. Usually, Khan Saheb would practise only in front of his own students or very close musical friends, but since Mitra was a protege of sorts, instead of stopping his practice he let the young musician sit with him while he continued singing. The raga that evening was Purvi - a raga that the Ustad did not sing very often in his concerts.

Falguni Mitra remembers this incident vividly for two reasons. First, being allowed to sit in while the Ustad did his *riyaz* (practice) carries the sound marks of a cherished and privileged position. A second important reason keeps this memory fresh in Mitra's mind. That day Mitra got an insider understanding of how a master musician approaches creative work in a raga he is setting out to discover more of for himself. Mitra still recalls the kinds of things the Ustad tried out in raga Poorvi while alone with his music – movements that he would not attempt in front of visitors or audiences, even in a close *baithak* (chamber) setting. Mitra recalls that Amir Khan tried many phrases in his typical style - building idea after idea. But the ideas were not built by staying close to the known phrases of the raga. Rather, Amir Khan would try repeatedly for the unexpected. Many phrases wouldn't click. But when he did something unexpected that seemed to click, he would repeat it a few times, check it out for size, reject it if it didn't work, adjust it to make it right, then sing it a few more times.

Amir Khan Saheb's music set both an affective role model and a mental musical model for Mitra, who counts this as one of the most intense experiences of his musical life as a growing musician. But equally, it is apparent that Mitra was able to hear the logic of Khan Saheb's experiments and take something away from the experience because of the immense work he had done already on his own musicianship. Had it been someone with less developed musical capacity, they may have neither heard, nor managed to successfully emulate the Ustad at work by taking away the essence of a music lesson into their private music rooms after a single opportune meeting in sound.

That day when he sat in Kolkata some decades later, trying out all kinds of movements in a raga such as Komal Rishabh Asavari that made extra demands on his musicianship, the Ustad's inspiration surfaced in his ears interrupting consciousness and causing him to speak, self-reflection that fed right back into creativity in sound.

Conclusion: Thick sound, intelligibility and musical judgment

I have drawn from a whole range of examples in my discussion of thick sound and its relationship to musical judgment, to argue that strong notions of tradition and fidelity to tradition emerge from thick sound that holds histories of interactivity and potentialities of practice. In the next chapter I examine specific instances of creativity in action to demonstrate the phenomenology of thick sound in performance. Through this exercise, I will demonstrate that the exercise of musical judgment and the ethics of creativity become co-located in the performance of Dhrupad through the heterogeneous interactions that render sound thick in performance.

Chapter 5 - Sound objects: sensing structure and feeling form in Dhrupad performance

In chapters three and four I focused on the production of individual musical judgment and notions of fidelity to tradition in processes of emplacement through which the practice of Dhrupad becomes intelligible as tradition in the interactivity of musical life in places. In this chapter I investigate ontological status in Indian classical music as a product of interaction between musician and musical object, triangulated by thick sound. I focus on musical affordance and the forms of knowledge produced in repeated engagement with musical forms in Dhrupad performance to show that musical forms in Dhrupad vocal practice have affordance for the experience of emotion, memory and eventfulness. Repeated engagement with musical forms engenders processes of emplacement through which the formal musico-aesthetic categories of an organized tradition become transformed as soma-aesthetic experience. I trace both ontological weight and diversity to the affordance of musical forms for engendering heterogeneity in performance and processes of emplacement.

I analyze thick sound through its correlative, associative and generative function in musical decisions and musical action by focusing on a range of musical actions such as singing *alap* in a known raga, discovering a raga not sung previously by singing *alap* and composing, churning known repertoire to consolidate particular aesthetic experience, and setting songs from notation to (recover) discover potential for particular aesthetic experience. I investigate thick sound through emergent cognitive maps that become habitually available to guide performance in flow and that are transformed in flow by eventfulness understood as feedback in action. These heterogeneous musico-aesthetic maps are cognized in repetitive engagement with musical materials in situated practice. Designed to interweave structure and emotion, feeling and form, they act as acoustemic guides in the flow of performance, transforming categorical knowledge as soma-aesthetic experience. Thick sound triangulates the relationship between the knower and the known, and the doer and the done, in acts of sensing and making sense. Operating between musical subject and musical object it rightfully belongs in the domain of interpretation and action

Using phenomenological analysis of varied musical acts, I will show that the repetitive churning in which musicians build interpretive sense for musical forms produces acoustemic structures that are heterogeneous in constitution. I demonstrate that the affordance of musical forms such as raga and composition (*pada)* in Hindustani music engender heterogeneity through processes of inter-animation in which acoustemic cross-domain mapping actively transforms categorical knowledge. I show through detailed analysis that the development of musico-aesthetic forms in Dhrupad performance is guided by such structures that

enumerate thick sound, rather than pure sound. These acoustemic structures arise from sensing musical forms as thick sound through processes of emplacement and are integral to ontological status in Indian classical music.

A concert on the river Ganga

A perfect fieldwork moment that is generative of an entire analytical adventure occurred on March 3, 2011. A moment of catalysis when a performer responds in and through sound to a gathering of listeners in a small place feeds right back into sound as creative exploration of musical form. This field moment demonstrates both the affordance of musical forms in Indian classical music for engendering the experience of Place and the transformation of musical forms by the generativity and gathering potential of emplaced musical performance: as form is sensed, the senses are placed. It makes audible the gamut of theoretical ideas brought together in the analytical framework in Fig 2-2.

The concert took place on March 3, 2011 in a Ganesh temple on the banks of the river Ganga (Ganges) in Varanasi, one of India's oldest and most sacred cities. The artist for the evening was Falguni Mitra who has come to Varanasi to sing in the annual Dhrupad mela. That evening, Mitra chose to sing Jaijaiwanti as his main raga after a brief *ganesha vandana* – a small song in praise of the resident deity and one of his own compositions. Half an hour into the concert, he has completed his exploration of the raga in slow tempo *alap*, and has begun the middle tempo and is developing phrases around the important notes of the raga.[129] Having finished with phrases around the *rishabh*, he starts out with the first phrase that establishes the *gandhar* as his next focus of attention (0:09).

He begins to speak in Hindi. He says: "raga *ka ek prakriti hotha hai*", or "the raga has an inner character" (0:12).[130] He is experiencing the potentiality of the raga while moving through it and wants to communicate this to his audience. He then says "*alap ka ek gati hotha hai*" thrice (changing only the first word each time to variously refer to music, song and improvisation), and makes a gesture with both hands showing movement along a path (0:23). The word "*gati*" means direction and also how one walks along the path, the movement; it is also used to indicate gait or

[129] *alap* refers to the exploration of a raga's melodic form and aesthetic character in performance See page Chapter 2:12 for a discussion. I use the *svara* names here – see page xx for map to scale degrees. In terms of scale degrees, *shadaj* is the tonic - the fundamental note for the definition of the raga, *rishabh* is the second degree and *gandhar* the third degree, and *pancham* the fifth. Raga Jaijaiwanti uses two versions of the *gandhar* in a signature movement characteristic of the raga – but the normal third is used most often in building out the raga's form in ascending and descending phrases.

[130] *prakriti* literally translates to "nature". In this case, the musician is referring to the raga's intrinsic character.

tempo – all words that relate to movement. He elaborates: "I am drawing on my experience *(anubhav)* to show you something of this. Our duty as musicians is to show you this" (0:30).

Falguni Mitra's words thus far suggest that the raga as potential is already cognitively present as landscape. It has a plethora of potential pathways that beckon the musician, that make for a beautiful experience of the landscape. The musician senses the landscape through the act of singing, which is movement and he goes to his *anubhav* - his own experience of that landscape over a musical lifetime - to find inspiration for this walk. Thus potentiality is present in both body and raga, in the raga that holds the explorations of countless performances, compositions, books, notations, texts, paintings and poems as well as the disposition that has experienced the raga many times over, that holds the experience of walks in the body and produces the landscape anew this time in the act of moving through it.

Rahaim captures the topographical features of raga in his analysis of gesture in Khayal vocal performance (Rahaim 2009, Chapter 3). But whereas Rahaim focuses exclusively on melodic space and gestural space as complementary spaces for melodic action, I attend to musical forms as emplaced sound, and singing bodies as sensing bodies. Thus the body that holds the experience of walks in melody land walks not alone but actively sensing land thickened with expressivity and acoustemic memory. In perfect complementarity, the raga as a musical form has affordance for variegated topography, gathering potential, and expressivity – three of the qualities that characterize Place in Casey's theoretical treatment.[131]

What happened next in the performance demonstrates this claim very well. In the next set of phrases, Falguni Mitra begins to develop phrases around the *gandhar,* one of the *nyasa svara* of the raga - important notes around *which* the raga is developed. One gloss for the word *nyasa* is "to place", and it is one of many Place metaphors in raga grammar. And then suddenly something sparks. The musician is building feeling and form by developing phrases around the *gandhar*. Wanting to share his experience, he first signals to the audience that he has a new focus of attention – the *gandhar*. He says: "Look, I have come to the note *gandhar*. I have roamed here and there and having done that I have arrived now in Varanasi" (1:03). The audience perks up. He launches into his next phrase that is developed around the *gandhar*. When he lands on the *gandhar*, he sings the note as "Varanasi", the city in which they were all gathered that evening.

Music becomes Place in that moment (1:20). While it is an exceptional event that a musician points to place in raga as city, the interactivity of the event is what is most significant to this discussion. I theorize the auditory feedback as dynamism and

[131] See discussion of Place in Chapter 2. I will discuss these formal properties of raga in the next section.

generativity that results from the gathering potential and eventfulness of sensing raga as Place, but this eventfulness requires both the affordance of musical form and the preparedness of the body experiencing form. This is a musician who is acutely sensitive to his environment. He finds his audience to be receptive that day. Although he is from a different city, Kolkata, he has a deep connection to Varanasi. Great musicians of his tradition held sway in Varanasi hundred years ago and many people gathered there were descendants of musicians that had actively participated in the musical culture within which the migrant Bettiah *gharana* Dhrupad tradition of the Mishras of Benares came to be emplaced in early 20th century Benares.[132] They had inherited a communal memory of the tradition's rich musical history. In that moment he refers to the note on which his vocal phrase ends as Varanasi, and his audience inhabits the shared landscape of raga through the Place Varanasi, the city that is the holding place of the communal memory they all share.

For its part, the raga has affordance for this experience. A recent book on *nyasa* in Hindustani music (Dey, 2008) discusses different interpretations of this word in both the Sanskrit theoretical tradition and in performance practice – all connected with topography and movement. Thus, *nyasa* may be used to indicate a dwelling place or to indicate the act of leaving a place after a brief pause. It is a term that describes modal qualities of a raga in terms of the function of its constituent notes and, like many other terms in Sanskrit musicology, very clearly shows that a raga was understood both in terms of its phrases and it notes, and the functionality of notes was ascribed in terms of their modal function in phrase space.[133] Thus *nyasa* is a place where a musician would dwell for a while before leaving for another such dwelling spot – it is a locus of attention for phrases and has to be distinguished from other notes that terminate phrases or start phrases. Dwelling on these notes build out both form and feeling. The book title "*Nyasa:* the pleasant pause in Hindustani music" very nicely captures this aesthetic quality of *nyasa*.

Inhabiting the emotional landscape of raga with his voice by building form and feeling around *nyasa*, Falguni Mitra was drawn to sensing raga as Place in that catalytic moment which feeds right back into his music. He comes up with two more phrases that find even more beautiful, winding routes back to the same Place, the note *gandhar* that has become Varanasi for those five minutes of the performance (1:42). The interaction draws on musical potential and memory that is gathered in

---

[132] The historical emplacement of Dhrupad practices within acoustic communities in early 20th century Benares at the height of Indian Cultural Nationalism will be discussed in forthcoming work, using the analytical framework in Chapter 2, fig 2.2.

[133] While colonial epistemologies of literacy and literalism may have caused Bhatkande to sideline these aesthetic qualities in favor of classifying ragas by their scalar constituents, his contemporary Omkarnath Thakur stuck to phrases as the kernel of raga character in his classification of ragas. See Powers (1992) for a very balanced discussion of the debate between Bhatkande and Thakur. This issue and debate alone goes to show that neither grammarians nor musicians followed Bhatkande wholesale.

the landscape of raga as shared experience, and it feeds directly back into the music as poesis, shading the color of *gandhar* picked out by the place Varanasi and shading Varanasi with the sounds of the note *gandhar*.

Falguni Mitra's experience of raga as Place affects his ongoing explorations of the raga, illustrating the dialogic of sensing place in raga and placing sense while singing raga. The affordance of musical forms in Dhrupad performance is integral to this experience of raga as Place. Falguni Mitra's experience of raga that day resonates with Edward Casey's characterization that movement is central to the experience of place, and that Places gather – they hold memory, emotion, things, and associations. Pedagogy and practice build a disposition that is cognitively intertwined with the emotional potential of the raga as Place. The affordance of musical forms for gathering leads to both codified and improvised forms of multi-modal expression. As Casey observes, Place is not as much a container, but an event in itself. The interactivity of musical performance leads to generative events that feed back as poesis that flows from sound and back into sound. The interactivity and generativity engendered by cognitive intertwining is most characteristic of Place as explored by Casey, Feld and Basso. At that moment when the note *gandhar* became the city Varanasi, the musician experienced a moment of poesis emergent from and feeding back into thick sound.

But the dialogic sonic response to place did not stop there. In the next few phrases that followed the dwelling on the *gandhar* that is Varanasi, the indexicality of raga with Place persists and feeds the music directly in the next set of phrases that have taken a new tonal center, the *pancham* (the 5th). A few minutes into the region of the *pancham* Falguni Mitra lands on the *pancham* (1;48), executes a few winding phrases that make their way up from the Sa to the *pancham* in small steps and speaks again (02:00). This time he refers to his music as the river Ganges, or Ganga and says "*Ganga ka pravah hai*" (the Ganga is flowing, and equally, the music is flowing). This metaphor too gets tossed back into the music, and he "swims" with his body and his musical phrases in the river that the raga now represents to him.

In the clip one can see and experience how his hands, body and music swim in the river of sonic experience. The moment is one of sheer poesis, created by the potentiality of gathering and the affective interaction of bodies, sounds, and things. Coming by boat on the river Ganges to the concert held in a temple on the banks of the sacred river, Ramuji (the event's patron), Falguni Mitra, and I stood by the riverbank talking quietly for a few minutes before the concert began. Falguni Mitra told me later that it meant a great deal to him to sing on the banks of the Ganga. The few days preceding the concert had also been spent on the Ganga, and by the Ganga, in the temples and streets of Varanasi. Thus the body that sat down to sing that day carried these recent experiences of the river that marks place in Varanasi intensely.

A disposition highly sensitive to the emotional potential of the raga, the potentiality of shared communal memory, the perceptual experiences of the recent past, and the sonic terrain of the raga produced and experienced through singing cause the musician to respond to this collection of things, sounds and people in the act of making music and the response feeds directly back in to music as poesis. This phenomenal moment most directly points to the affordance of musical forms in Indian music for certain kinds of temporalizing and affective experience that have the characteristics of places. This understanding of singing raga as sensing place integrates Rahaim's discussion of melodic topographies, but goes well beyond to consider some very particular acoustemic properties of singing raga. Specific to the phenomenal moment analyzed here are these:

- Potential, built through past dwelling, phenomenal experiences leading up to the event and the ingredients in this scene are agentive in the interaction.
- Embodied experience is cognitively distributed and temporally heterogeneous: cumulative past, near past, present are available to the interaction.
- Feedback between the already experienced raga landscape and the interactions that constitute this particular instance of it leads to a non-repeatable experience that feeds back into the music and is often communicated as multi-modal expression.

This leads me back to my definition of thick sound as sound that leads to catalytic moments that are not singular, even if they are not repeatable. Falguni Mitra may not experience the *shuddh gandhar* in raga *jaijaiwanti* as the city of Varanasi ever again, but moments such as this one will occur time and time again, catalyzed by the gathering potential of raga for holding and expressing emotion, and the interactivity and eventfulness of performance that causes a background-to-foreground shift in consciousness, causing musicians to listen in and respond in and through sound.

But the unexpected and the non-repeatable do not constitute thick sound all by themselves. They rely on habitual practices, tuned sensoria and the affordance that musico-aesthetic forms in Indian classical music have for interweaving structure and affect in ways that make heterogeneous maps available in the flow of performance. While a catalytic moment transforms knowing in the moment, the case studies that follow explore how the interaction between musician and musical object in Indian classical music is formally and habitually reliant on heterogeneous acoustemic maps that are produced and sustained in the intense interactive work of churning musical materials in transmission, practice and performance.

Sensing and crafting new places from old

Special occasions sometimes challenge musicians to make creative leaps. In the creative response, many resources come in handy to the musician. Like cosmic matter drawn to a coalescing star, the creative effort has a centripetal force that

catalyzes things into action pulling things into becoming active fodder to the creative act. The dynamics of musical discovery through action and interaction became available to inquiry when I trotted after a creative effort in the works, alongside Falguni Mitra as he found his way around a raga he had never sung before.

In the ethnographic analysis that follows, I investigate how an expert Hindustani musician draws upon different types of correlative knowledge in the process of developing familiarity with a raga as a musical object. I explore how Falguni Mitra draws on his own past experience to sense the potentiality of an unfamiliar raga as thick sound through the conscious integration of emotion in raga *alap* as an acoustemic guide for sensing structure and feeling form. I suggest that the processes through which a musician develops sense for raga as thick sound make heterogeneous pathways available for musical action that implicate an integral role for emotion in cognizing musical forms in Hindustani music. I investigate the relationship between structure and affect in Hindustani music performance by investigating both musical affordance and musical response in raga *alap*. I show that raga has affordance for the experience of emotion and investigate how a musician develops response to musical forms as thick sound through repeated engagement.

The month was August, the year 2011. Kolkata was still in the throes of monsoon rain that had come late and stayed on to inspire the artists and their audiences in the ITC Sangeet Research Academy's Megh Malhar music festival. The Malhar group of ragas are monsoon ragas, traditionally associated with the rainy season. Three days of programming had been planned with day one devoted to the genre of Dhrupad, and the subsequent days to Khayal and instrumental music of the non-Dhrupad variety. Audiences attending a Malhar festival have a high sense of anticipation in hearing the commonly sung major ragas of the Malhar group as well as some less heard, more esoteric Malhars.

The artists slotted for the evening of Dhrupad were Uday Bhawalkar, Bahu'uddin Dagar and Falguni Mitra. Preparation for the concert carried additional pressures for Mitra and these pressures surfaced regularly in the days before the concert. Despite asking for the first slot, Mitra was not given a choice by the organizers but scheduled to sing last, citing his status as a senior musician on home ground.[134] Mitra had to be prepared for the first two artists opting to sing two major ragas in the Malhar group – Mia ki Malhar and Megh - his own preferred choices for expansive *alap* at the beginning of a recital. Resigning himself to singing last, he soon started to mull over which main raga to pick for the elaborate and complete (*sampoorna) alap* with which he likes to begin his concerts.

[134] When Indian musicians are described as "senior", this could mark age, experience, or status and often all of these.

With these inter-subjective pressures in the mix, roiling over main raga choices Mitra considered and rejected many monsoon ragas on different grounds--some as being likely choices for other performers over the three day festival, others as being too limited in scope for a methodical note by note development of a raga's main tonal areas, his preferred approach to raga delineation reflective of his father's training in *alap* from Nassiruddin Khan Saheb, patriarch of the Dagar tradition. Then, late one afternoon after working on setting many compositions in the four *banis* in raga Mia Malhar, the idea of singing Jayant Malhar came upon him.

Discovering raga Jayant Malhar

Jayant Malhar or Jaijaiwanti Malhar is a *jod* raga - a raga born of combining two other ragas - in this case two major ragas Jaijaiwanti and Mia ki Malhar. While Jaijaiwanti is sung all year around as an evening raga, and has also found its way to south India through the pre-eminent early 19th century composer Muthuswamy Dikshitar, Mia Malhar is a monsoon raga, meant for the rainy season and its creation is attributed to the legendary 16th century musician Mia Tansen. It has not been adopted in the South, and no raga in the southern system has the bold aesthetics of the characteristic phrases of the Malhar group of ragas. Notably, Vinayak Rao Patwardhan and musicians with connections to the Gwalior *gharana* have sung Jayant Malhar but it counts amongst the less widely sung Malhars. The significant thing to note is that for Mitra, it was not a handed-down raga. There are no compositions in this raga in any of the Bettiah lineages and he himself had never sung this raga previously.

Mitra is by no means the first Hindustani musician to begin singing a raga that is not handed down in oral tradition. Nor is he a representative of an anomalous class or age that departs from oral tradition in looking outside for new material. The history of Indian classical music is replete with creativity that regularly and routinely creates new things from known places. However this creative process has only now begun to be studied from a cognitive and anthropological perspective. Mitra's positionality as a contemporary musician living in Kolkata with a particular history of listening and practice makes his creative process fascinating both as a window into the creative processes of a Hindustani musician and as a particular aesthetic response of a contemporary musician to an inter-subjective musical situation in which he found himself.

Preparing to discover the raga for himself, perhaps because of his deep immersion in the parent ragas, Mitra had both an advantage and a challenge to overcome. Although a raga Mitra had never sung before, Jayant Malhar was already nascent in his aural imagination as a beckoning, an adumbration of color and emotion he could discover for himself by taking his first step into its sonic terrain. Primed by his experience of singing the parent ragas, he already had recourse to musical phrases that could be used to explore, discover and develop the character of Jayant Malhar as a musico-aesthetic form. However, he had to develop new features distinctly in

the *jod* raga territory that went beyond mere additive movement between its parent ragas. When singing *jod* ragas, evoking an aesthetics that is not directly mapped to its constituent parts is a measure of high musicianship that even expert musicians do not routinely meet. In this process, the intertwining of aesthetics and affect with structure and form becomes indispensable to the creative act.

The creative musicians' toolkit

Following the different ways in which Mitra found his way into Jayant Malhar was an intensely educative phase of my ethnography. He pulled in many different materials while embarking on the exploration, but the process soon condensed into one of repeated engagement with the developing form he discovered by doing. Having decided on Jayant Malhar, Mitra first pulled out his books and started to flip through them to see who had dealt with this raga. He found Rag Vigyan, Vinayak Rao Patwardhan's compendium of ragas and compositions. Produced in the mold of other compilations such as the Kramika Pustaka Malika, Patwardhan describes the characteristics (raga *lakshanas)* of each raga, gives characteristic phrases in notation, and then presents several compositions in each raga.[135]

Mitra started to hum the phrases from the book, spending about 3 minutes on them. Then he flipped through the sole composition – another 2 minutes – occasionally humming a phrase here and there. In less than 10 minutes he was done with the book. He told me to look on the internet for clips. In 2011, I could find only two clips of Jayant Malhar on Youtube: one was from a semi-classical song by an artist neither of us had heard of, and the second was a short clip of Vinayak Rao Patwardhan himself singing a Khayal.[136] We listened to the short clip only a couple of times as it was very scratchy and barely audible. Mitra did not listen very intently or try to follow the phrases carefully. It was a reality check to see if the sketch of the raga from an acknowledged master musician had something else to offer, or if it fell within the domain of what Mitra had already gleaned from the book. Since the said master was the author of the book, the three-minute clip was a cameo of the raga *lakshana* documented by the author.

That was all the preparation Mitra did. Setting aside the books, he turned his electronic tanpura on. With his musical schemata activated by spending time with the book, and armed with the sketch of raga *lakshana* that he had discovered in the

---

[135] "Knowing" a raga was well recognized to be a correlative and cumulative exercise as illustrated by the layout and organization of musical material in these collections. Taking Bhatkande's cumulative works into account, to dismiss him as reducing a raga to its scale is a mis-statement and gross injustice. No doubt he stressed raga's grammar but he clearly recognized the importance of phrases as the RNA of raga music. Why else would he devote thousands of lines in his books to raga *chalan* (characteristic movements) and compositions?

[136] A search on youtube for Jayant Malhar yields many more clips today that the two short clips that were available in 2011.

five minutes he spent with Rag Vigyan, he turned to his musicianship to discover Jayant Malhar for himself, a raga he had never sung before. From that moment on, Mitra proceeded to draw on both his considerable musical acumen and his own emotional response to the possibilities of the raga to develop it as a musico-aesthetic form. In what ensued, affect and structure interactively and alternately guided Mitra's creative discovery of Jayant Malhar's characteristic aesthetics and form in the process of singing raga *alap*.

The nascent form: grids of *svara*, maps of melody and eddies of emotion[137]

To go from musical phrase to raga, Mitra began to sing phrases, developing the phrases and emotional color of first Jaijaiwanti and then Malhar. Now using *alap* syllables, and now using *sargam*, he began to develop phrases in the region of lower pancham to middle pancham. Responding to the building feeling, he commented to me "see, Jaijaiwanti is *stree*, Mia Malhar is *purusha*; the sentiment in Jaijaiwanti is a beautiful female sentiment; alternate this with the boldness of Malhar – what emerges is the duality of male and female".[138]

A little later he commented again "See how I am combining the movements. It's not Jaijaiwanti for five minutes and then Mia Malhar for two minutes. The transitions have to be made to create the duality with its integral character and keep it alive". What Mitra discovered in singing was that Jayant Malhar could be given a very strong definitive character by juxtaposing the contrasting and complementary characters of Jaijaiwanti and Mia Malhar in the phrases that developed the raga around its important *svara*. If Jaijaiwanti used delicately held *anusvaras* (touch notes) on the R and *meend*-laden connected arcs to generate the phrase R G M P, Mia Malhar came in right behind with a boldly held R and a bold movement to P in the characteristic Malhar phrase g M R, R P. The notion of *stree* and *purusha* that actively fed Mitra's artistic development of the *jod* raga was itself an emergent response; a process of discovering the potentiality of nascent form based on embodied emotional response to already traversed paths.

A hypothesis for musical process in raga *alap*

What is striking about Mitra's process, not just in this raga but also any time he sings *alap*, is how he switches between different ways of connecting to raga. These switches are not necessarily premeditated, but they are not entirely unprecedented either. They happen in the flow, but they take him some particular place in performance, often a place he has been before.

---

[137] In this sub-section I will be using *sargam* (solfege) notation. See page iii for a map to scale degrees and *svara* names

[138] *stree (*feminine) and *purusha* (masculine)

Most significantly, how Mitra found his way into the raga shows that both the stability of musical schemata and remembered emotional states as well as the dynamics of affect and flow contribute to developing the musico-aesthetic form of raga in performance. Sensing structure and structuring sense are not antithetic to each other but part of the same transformative musical process. How to move and find one's way in a raga by singing a few phrases is knowledge that is generalizable beyond specific ragas – the very schematicity of raga *alap* makes a musician capable of exploring a raga that she has never sung before. But what makes the process work is that consciousness of the raga's musical form develops *at the same time* as its structure is explored, and this building sense helps build out the raga's structure. The dynamics of sense and sensation is evident in the background-to-foreground moves that cause musicians in flow to switch from structure to sensing and back again when developing melodic forms in Indian classical music.

Musical thinking and affective response

What is also striking is how aware Mitra is of his own musical cognition: he is responding to his own musical actions and looking ahead at the same time. Mitra can repeat phrases he has sung verbatim, and is often able to look ahead and see the next phrase coming, and appreciate what it does in context of the building *alap*. I call this meta or supra-cognitive awareness. Is this perhaps fully memorized? Widdess in his work has observed how an *alap* performance by a *sarod* performer matched a previous recording phrase for phrase. Mitra's *alap* may have some degree of predictability but they are not phrase for phrase repeatable. Yet, a detailed analysis of *alap* may well show high degree of overlap between one performance and the other.

What then is created new in singing *alap*? I suggest that the new is brought in as listening and response. It is discovering new places from known places, and responding anew to a situated musical context in each moment of performance. This response may come as flow, as striving towards a remembered emotional goal state, as an affective response, and as meta-cognitive awareness. It is in the moment of response that musicians open up to catalytic moments in performance. The eventfulness of oral performance emerges in the productive gap between the automaticity of musical performance learnt by imitation and memorized as schemata and deliberate cognitive activity in performance. Both the creation of schemata and the catalysis of events in performance are fundamentally interactive, making acts of deliberate cognition heterogeneous and eventful. If the composer wielding a writing instrument epitomizes deliberate cognitive activity, much of Indian classical music's performance occurs right in this productive gap.

In the midst of building phrases the first day Falguni Mitra sang Jayant Malhar, he suddenly commented, "I hadn't thought of that phrase, it came to me unexpectedly". This appearance of an unexpected phrase in-between two phrases is articulated by

vocalist T M Krishna while describing the creative process of raga *alapana* (Krishna, 2013). Krishna's description matches what Mitra paused to comment on almost word for word.

While singing *alap*, building phrases that generally seem to be moving in some particular direction, sometimes Mitra is inspired to make a completely unprecedented movement. After one such movement while singing *alap* in the raga Komal Rishabh Asavari one day he suddenly commented, "That is an Amir Khan-like thought – the thought is mine, but the thought process is like Amir Khan's".[139] And so it was. Ustad Amir Khan had the uncanny ability to find paths that are out of the expected; the raga would be proceeding along some predictable aesthetic path when suddenly Amir Khan would make a movement that would open up a different pathway for exploration. Mitra, like Amir Khan is a master at unexpected movements that take the developing musical path suddenly into some other terrain. This is the *nauhar ang* in Mitra's *alap*, one with unexpected turns and twists that come unprecedented into a gentle predictable flow to hijack and re-craft the predictable flow of the oncoming phrase both the audience and the musician can see coming. This capability we find again in a musician such as Sanjay Subramanian, a Carnatic musician whose cognition is also very well developed. Sanjay is always aware of what note he is singing and far from chaining his creativity, this awareness liberates him to making some fantastic moves within the terrain of the raga.

Congitive redundancy– *svara gyan, jagah gyan, sharir gyan, rasa gyan*[140]

I soon came to realize that as a musician, Mitra is highly aware of his own musical cognition; that is, he is able to hear himself as he sings and respond at a meta-level. His short-term recall is excellent and he can reproduce phrases he sings, even complex ones, in either *sargam* (solfege) or using the *nom tom* syllables of Dhrupad *alap*. This ability leads me to posit that musical objects have a high degree of redundancy in Mitra's performance practice and he actively moves between these different modes in order to develop the performance; redundant ways, as visualized shape, as musical phrase, as a string of *svara*, as a body that moves in its entirety with hands, arms, neck, head and torso, and, significantly, as affective gesture.

The modes that Mitra switches between in singing raga *alap* are both acoustic and acoustemic. The plane of melodic phrases, the visualization of musical form, the anthropomorphism of raga with emotion and character, gestural and kinesic interactivity with melodic materials, meta awareness of the paths traversed in

---

[139] *cf.* pp. 129-130

[140] *svara gyan* (knowledge of *svara), jagah gyan* (knowledge of space), *sharir gyan* (body knowledge), *rasa gyan* (affective knowledge) – I used the last two words to indicate the other kinds of knowledge invoked in singing raga. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but just to go beyond the *svara – jagah* dichotomy.

relation to the production of melodic topography, the vocal inhabiting of *svara* by dwelling, coloring and shading them with manipulation of vocal dynamics, vocal timbre, and melodic movement for the build up of emotion and transformation of affect – all these conceptual maps become dynamically available to the musician during performance. How they switch from background-to-foreground is the domain of phenomenology. Sensory, perceptual, embodied, emotional, and meta-cognitive responses trigger the background to foreground moves of different kinds of maps in flow.

One of the most significant implications of the cognitive redundancy I point to above is in the domain of music literacy and literalism. When a musician is singing raga *alap*, is she always aware of the *svara*? Does she need to know what *svara* she is singing in order to sing a raga *alap* correctly from a formal, aesthetic and affective standpoint? Does knowing the *svara* hamper creativity in any way? Does it aid creativity in any way? If she doesn't know it at the moment of performance would she have needed to know it anytime earlier in order to generate musical improvisation on demand?

My work with both Indra Kishore Mishra and Falguni Mitra suggests that melodic concepts and conceptualizations of melodic materials are highly redundant processes that rely on correlativity, associativity and generativity, and they are intensely embodied and affective in their functioning. This is evident in the analysis of raga *alap* presented here and in the next section. In subsequent sections I will show this to be the case in my analysis of *pada* – the Dhrupad composition – and *bani* – the characteristic aesthetics of compositions in performance, beginning with an analysis of Indra Kishore's *gaurhar bani* practice.

The two musicians I work with have very different approaches to developing basic musicianship and that has greatly aided my ability to examine these complex issues. These are not only analytical questions on music, they are relevant to debates in the Humanities on assessments of musical competence and the relative importance of enumerated knowledge versus embodied knowledge in knowing music. Most recently, Dard Neuman has asserted that ragas are known more directly by developing *jagah gyan* (knowledge of space) than *svara gyan* (knowledge of *svara)* - a theme picked up by Rahaim, who explores their possible relationship through the duality of melodic and gestural space in raga *alap*, the central idea being that ragas are learnt as melodic topographies - you learn a raga as landscape by learning to move in it (Dard Neuman 2004; Rahaim 2009). Both Neuman and Rahaim are pushing back against the Descartian separation of body from mind and writing against the 20th century cultural nationalists who reduced ragas to a string of notes, the argument being that it was colonial epistemologies that brought literalism to Indian music. Rahaim goes so far as to say that music analysts for the last two thousand years have focused on melody as a sequence of notes, rarely paying

attention to what even amateur musicians instinctively know – seeing melody as motion in space. (Rahaim 2009, 67-68).

I take a very different perspective here. First, The number of position and movement metaphors in musicological texts alone belie Rahaims statement. From the earliest treatises, words such as *sthayi, sancari, nyasa, graha* that characterize melodic forms to name just a few indicate both location and movement. If one also takes into account descriptions of aesthetics, movement metaphors are rife. Secondly, even while colonial epistemologies definitely elided other forms of knowledge in favor of enumerated knowledge, the importance of *svara gyan* is not a colonial episteme. Rather I contend that Indian classical music's uniqueness as a musico-aesthetic system arises from integrating multiple ways of knowing into the tapestry of musical forms. In my ethnographic work I have found that musicians are able to consult multiple maps in performance, switching from auditory awareness of individual *svara* in phrases to treating the musical phrase as a primary conceptual unit in itself. Having the musical grid in place frees the musician to develop phrases that travel widely in the melodic plane, increasing a musician's capacity to imagine new phrases and places that fall within the raga's form and formal structure. The ability to know which *svara* a musical phrase contains greatly expands the ability to develop and vary sequential patterns – called "*thaya*" in the texts - that are generative in function. There are multiple kinds of processes often simultaneously at work in creating sequential patterns, one that is imitative and sequential, a second that is variational, and a third related variety that can be variational and cumulative, growing and reducing the phrase as you vary it. Musicians develop these abilities by incessantly practicing the notes in sequence.

Often they can go beyond what can be easily articulated as notes (*sargam*) by using the melodic phrase itself as a generative unit. In this process, the body comes into its own as a participant in the act of creating sound. The syllables of *alap* themselves aid this generativity as they provide articulated rhythmic patterns as fodder for generativity. Since these patterns involve the mouth and vocal apparatus in different ways, the tongue, teeth, lips, and other parts of the vocal apparatus become engaged in the generativity of patterns. You discover it because you have articulated it, not necessarily because you thought the pattern out before singing it. Your lips lead your mind. The question that begs to be asked is what is thinking – the lips or the musical mind? Similarly, when generating phrases, shapes and contours, gestural interaction becomes a parallel, redundant mode for engaging with melodic material (Rahaim, 2009).

Rahaim states that both gesture and melody point to "something else" but he does not bring the something else into his analysis. My claim is that "the something else" is the communication of affect through structured aesthetic experience. Hindustani classical music's aesthetic forms have integrated affect and structure as two halves of the process of discovering and remembering musical forms as aesthetic

experience. Singing raga is engaging in thick sound because it engenders emotion and temporalization - processes fundamental to the tethering of musical judgment in Hindustani music. Repeated singing triggers musical memory and prepares habit schema. This memory is not simply acoustic memory but acoustemic memory - memory of sound thickened by affective experience.

While the emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes at work in musical performance are not always available to inquiry, Mitra's habitual musical expressions, facial expressions, gestures, and commentary provide a window into the processes at work. Even more productive are the interruptive moments catalyzed by the interactivity of performance. The sheer interactivity of the moment of performance sparks many different kinds of associations that often feed right back into performance. What these processes show is that ragas are more complex than being spaces for melodic action. Musical processes are multi-dimensional and highly redundant; they are often cognized spatially, temporally, somatically, and affectively but emergent *svara* and the grid of notes are also important as markers on the aural landscape.

Emotion, affect, and meta-cognitive awareness are fundamental to developing the musico-aesthetic form of a raga in performance. To drive this point home, I pose the following rhetorical question. If categorical knowledge of raga is readily available to expert musicians at all times, why can't they just use this to sing? The technical answer is probably that they can. As my ethnographic interviews and participant observation demonstrates, Falguni Mitra's musical cognition and basic musicianship are highly developed. Yet, Falguni Mitra regularly and routinely listens to his emotional responses as a primary guide while interpreting and developing musical forms such as raga and pada in performance.

This is supported by the fact that Mitra is very aware of the emotional demands made by choosing to sing particular ragas. Mitra was preparing for an AIR recording one morning. Despite recording for over six decades, every recording necessitated some churning over what to sing, and some days of "sitting down" to open the voice and to bring the raga into consciousness by dwelling in raga in and with the voice. Komal Rishabh Asavari is a raga that requires great sensitivity and skill from a musician. The *shrutis* (microtonal shades) with which particular *svara* are held make the raga and they are not easy to attain in performance. Mitra states that ragas such as Puriya and Komal Rishabh Asavari require a musician to be in a particular frame of mind, one conducive to being led by the sensibilities evoked in singing the raga. This statement most clearly illustrates that singing raga is response, even while it is production. Mitra's voice produces the notes most perfectly when he is able to develop this mood as he sings. The morning the mood goes missing, he will not sing Komal Rishabh Asavari. In other ragas he finds he can coast, but not with this one.

Singing Komal Rishabh Asavari to get prepared for the recording, anthropomorphism came into the conversation. After singing the scale and opening the voice, Mitra started to sing *alap*. The raga Komal Rishabh Asavari is the older form of Asavari. Mitra told me that to sing Asavari is to find the right mood, otherwise its *shrutis* won't set correctly. Alternately, if he hits the note right the mood begins to get set. That morning he got into the mood pretty quickly, and it triggered him into verbalizing some of his feelings. Catalyzed by the emotion that pulled his *alap* and pushed his notes, Mitra remarked, "Komal Rishabh Asavari has the character of a woman who is yearning. Not a young woman's restless pining but a mature one's quiet yearning". I asked him if he came up with this imagination in the moment, or if he was taught to think of Asavari as having such a character. He said that no one told him what Asavari was supposed to have as a *rasa* explicitly, but one day while singing this image came to him and since then it comes back "now and then" when he sings and helps him keep the mood intact while improvising, and keeping the mood intact meant the *shrutis* would emerge right.

For Mitra, the raga's mood and the raga's character is sacrosanct. It is rare to find him singing a serious Bhairav one day and a quixotic one another. Indra Kishore Mishra on the other hand does sometimes develop different character in a raga, even within a single *alap*. But he too anthropomorphizes, catalyzed by the processes of singing. Teaching Khamaj *alap* one day, sketching very delicate and nuanced movements by varying a key phrase of Khamaj, he remarked "*khada hokar dekh rahe hain*"; "they are standing and looking"; when you sing Khamaj, Kedar, Malhar, Bihag they are all standing and looking at you. Don't look back". Often he speaks of singing raga *alap* as having a blank page in front of you and beginning to sketch Ma Sharada's face. Her picture is on the wall and often Indra Kishore's eyes move to her while singing. Closing his eyes, he produces *svara* through moving breath in the circular coiling loops of *gaurhar bani* as he sings raga phrases inspired by the compositions in his repertoire. He says that the *svara* emerges cradled by Sarasvati in her lap. This dual metaphoric process of sketching the mother in phrases as she births the child- the emergent note- most perfectly captures Indra Kishore's father and teacher's epistemology of raga as melody in which notes emerge.

My work with both Falguni Mitra and Indra Kishore establishes that *tonal landscapes are both colored and calibrated by affect.* Both temporal and melodic grids are actively produced in the process of recreating certain remembered, and discovered emotional states. At the same time, affect and emotion are guided by cognitive memory of melodic and temporal grids. Pushed by structure and pulled by emotion, the act of pulling, grasping and stretching that Rahaim describes are impelled by responses to both structure and affect, both of which work to advance form. Structure and emotion are warp and woof of aesthetic forms. How a musician uses one or the other to develop aesthetic forms is a function of competence, expertise, tradition and individual choice. Keeping within the grids of intelligibility

delineated by these aspects of practice is recognized as evidence of musicianship though there is room for some artistic license.

For Mitra, these grids are very important. But it would be incorrect to come to the conclusion that Mitra has only developed *svar gyan* through mechanical sargam practice. The points on the grid are not frequencies that are attained by mechanically producing the voice; they are acoustemic goal states in which finding the right *sruti* is contingent on an affective transformation. The *shrutis* that are must be precise, and the *svara* must be found on the grid of allowed *svara* for the raga, but emotion is very much implicated in maintaining this precision. My analysis of Indra Kishore Mishra's *gaurhar bani* practice below will demonstrate that Indra Kishore attains knowledge of *svara* through a different process than Falguni Mitra – a process that draws on the correlated domains of *bani* and *pada* in his tradition in learning how to birth notes in movement. Thus, knowing the right place for a note is a complex process that implicates enumerated and felt knowledge. It is accessed directly and through correlated knowledge about songs, *bani*, raga character, anthropomorphism, visual and embodied imagery.

The literal, structural and mechanical are integrated into this process rather than disruptive of this process. Enunciating phrases in *sargam* is not resorting to mere grammar as Rahaim and Neuman seem to imply – rather *svara* are cognitive capsules and perceptual pellets, loaded with affect, emotion and melodic potentiality.[141] When uttered they play multiple roles; they signify both raga and notes. Their resonance has a particular sonic contribution to make. Ni has a different sound and is produced from a different part of the mouth than Pa. Musicians are very aware of this and use it consciously when singing, much as they exploit the resonant qualities of syllables in text.

Mitra focused on developing *svara gyan* not because he wanted to write books, teach or even to preserve music. It was a way to deepen his own hold on musical materials to give him the freedom to move around freely without straying, and discover more dimensions of depth, color and form in the process. It was to give him the ability to produce more patterns in improvisation - the ability to appreciate the musico-aesthetic characteristics (*lakshana)* of ragas in the songs that encased them and revealed them. When Indra Kishore's father insisted that he memorize the *svara* fully for each Dhrupad, and also learn the song with words, he was urging his son to imprint the melodic coordinates as an acoustemic grid animated by redundant maps, not simply acoustic memory or simply affective memory or simply a memory for text.

---

[141] See Ramanathan (2004) for a very perceptive conceptual discussion of *sargam* and *svara* in Karnatic music.

The relationship and distinction between affect and emotion, individual aesthetic experience and codified aesthetics, has been interrogated and theorized extensively in recent scholarship in the Humanities. Ranging from historical studies of painting in 18th century Italy (Baxandall, 1988) and the grooming of passions in actors in the 18th century (Roach, 1993) to the distinctly contemporary work of Stewart (2007) and Terada (2001), authors have debated these issues in relation to understanding the processes through which categories of knowledge that structure aesthetic response emerge. Affect has been understood as directly related to the response of the senses, feeling before thought, whereas emotion is understood more as a culturally codified or structured response more easily available to linguistic categorization.

Musico-aesthetic forms in Indian classical music operate right in that space between codified emotion and affect. Structure and aesthetics are enlivened and entangled by performance. Pushed by structure and pulled by emotion, incorporating new materials brings in new possibilities and places to go. But the creation is neither willfully indiscriminate nor willy-nilly. It is sensed by habit and habitus and led by emotion. Tradition and emotion function as sixth sense that shows the way from the known to the unknown.

When Falguni Mitra decided to find his way in a raga he hadn't sung before, the raga revealed itself to him as he worked to develop its form. Repeatedly going back to known places is a way to find new places to go. This process of discovering by doing was a repeated phenomenon in my ethnographic work with these musicians and it constitutes the kernel of a musician's engagement with musical forms. The potentiality of musical forms in Indian classical music is both situated and emergent. It carries both the habitus of history and the emergent potentiality of hitherto unvisited places that come to be in acoustemic acts of sensing structure and feeling form while dwelling in the voice.

In conclusion, I have shown here that ragas are much more than spaces for melodic motion; ragas are eventful anthropomorphic places mapped by correlative, associative and generative musical knowledge - a complex musical terrain of characteristic musical phrases, emergent notes, shapes, and gestalts, and an acoustemic sensory terrain mapped by emotion, affect, temporality and memory. The creative process in raga *alap* is more than following and creating melodic shapes and trajectories through movement and kinesis in melodic and gestural spaces. The sensing of melodic form in Indian classical music emerges in the complex interactions of pre-learnt melodic material, generative melodic structure and guided sensory aesthetic response that brings with it both the guidance of disposition and the possibility of new creative modes of discipline.

A film and its preview

In this section I investigate how thick sound functions as an acoustemic guide for Indra Kishore Mishra in the creative work of developing a musical approach to raga *alap*. Dhrupad compositions are cognitively intertwined with Indra Kishore's existential universe and together with knowledge of Dhrupad *bani* they function as sonic source, logic and compass. This becomes sharply evident when investigating the channels through which Indra Kishore has acquired knowledge of raga *alap*, and the ethics of creativity that guides his approach to the development of a raga's form and feeling in the performance of *alap*.

While acknowledging that musicianship is a cluster of competencies, many contemporary Indian classical musicians I spoke with, both north and south, rate a musician's creativity in raga development as the highest measure of musicianship. For instance, Sangita Kalanidhi R Vedavalli, a musician steeped in the performance practice and repertoire of a musical lineage directly descendent from the composer saint Tyagaraja, uttered what has now become a cliché,"Karnatic music is *manodharma sangita* (improvisational music)". In Hindustani music, historically Dhrupad is a *pada*-centric genre - while sharing creative space with raga *alap*, the presentation of compositions with developmental *layakari* is the distinguishing feature of the genre. In contrast, the dominant performance genres of Khayal and instrumental music are heavily oriented towards developmental processes, rather than singing pre-composed forms with little variability in performance. However, today the word Dhrupad has become equated with *alap* - the development of musical form using *nom tom* syllables to explore raga, although this is not the genre's primary historical provenance.[142]

In the contemporary Indian classical music world so heavily oriented towards improvisation as a primary mark of musicianship, Indra Kishore declared to me one day "*alap* film *ka trailer hai*; it shows the *chaya* of the film" (*trans*. *alap* is the film's preview (trailer); it adumbrates the film (*lit.*it shows the shadow, color, or tinge, of the film)). What is noteworthy is that Indra Kishore views composition as the main story - the film. Indra Kishore's stance on compositional form gives us a glimpse of other aesthetic possibilities in performance practice than the emphasis on elaborate *alap* that has become the norm for Hindustani music. An aesthetic experience largely based on song after song after song is no longer intelligible to modern audiences for Hindustani music who have come to expect long *alap* as the primary identifier of a Dhrupad performance. But judging from what we know about contexts for Dhrupad performance, a song-based aesthetic experience would have been historically intelligible to acoustic communities for Dhrupad gathered around

[142] For more details on this see Ranganathan (2013)

court, ritual, devotional and community events - the places for music of the Bettiah *gharana* in Bettiah, Benares and Kolkata right until the early 20th century.[143]

Thus, Indra Kishore's view of compositional form as the universe of creative possibilities in Dhrupad has its base not only in his hereditary membership in a long line of composers, but also in grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad performance in the acoustic communities that gathered around the practice of Dhrupad in Bettiah over a few centuries. Most significantly, it is tethered in the hours and hours of vocal engagement with Dhrupad songs in the intense work of receiving tradition from his father – a process that marked sound indelibly with links to family, patron, and place, making sound and body with acoustemic memory of trauma and triumph.

Historicizing *alap* as a trailer

The notion that an *alap* could function as the trailer of a film is not an entirely new one though it has shock value against the more commonly heard adage that *alap* is the true test of musicianship. An *alap* that defines the kernel of a raga through melodic movement has been around since at least the 12th century, and is termed *alapti*. Its function is to present the main melodic phrases of a raga. The very first formal definition of raga clearly delineates *svara*, *alankara* and movement as fundamental to the characterization of raga.[144] The pedagogical and performance function of *alapti* is to present the basic contours of a raga's form by sketching the raga's main phrases to traverse the tetrachords in which a raga is typically defined, from the middle of the lower octave to the middle of the higher octave. It is closer to pre-composed material than improvised material yet it already has the seed of schematicity and generativity as it embodies knowledge about movement.[145]

The closest analogue to *alapti* in contemporary performance practice is the *aochar alap* in classical music commonly presented before a musician gets to the main item of performance that could be a slow tempo Khayal (*vilambit bandish)* or compositions in a particular raga that he does not choose to elaborate upon through *alap*. The function of the *alapti* has been likened to the function of the *doha* in some regional traditions of folk and devotional music. The *doha* is sung to introduce the

---

[143] The creative energy poured into composing Dhrupad at the Bettiah court, the large cumulative repertoires of different lineages of the Bettiah *gharana*, the oral history of multiple sites for performing Dhrupad in the *gharana*'s three locations, the program lists of the Kashi Sangit Samaj, the first person accounts of *baithaks* (chamber concerts) by Amiyanath Sanyal (1953) which includes Shyamlalji's critique of the famous Allabande Khan for singing a very long *alap*-- all support my claim that *pada* singing defined Dhrupad till the early 20th century in the Eastern regional courts, communities and urban centers.

[144] See Satyanarayana (2004, 54 – 58) for a discussion of the first definition of the concept of raga in Matanga's Brihaddesi.

[145] See Ramanathan (1999) for a discussion of raga in the context of musical forms in the Sangita Ratnakara. Also see Widdess (2010) for a discussion of Dhrupad performance practice and its possible continuities to the textual tradition.

theme of the song or story and could be sung in a raga quite different than the rest of the song or tale but its function is to adumbrate, sketch, and arouse interest before the main musical task of improvising the song or story is begun. The *alapti* likewise perhaps exists to color the consciousness of both performers and listeners with the *chaya* (shades) of the raga, and activate musical schemata in preparation for the listening experience that is to follow. It is interesting to note that even in medieval times it was recognized that *alapti* was not the whole story. The Sangita Ratnakara presents *alapti* as the precursor of the four-tier raga *alap*, the very structured development of a raga's primary melodic areas.[146] Singing *alapti*, one is expected to get a sense for how to develop the form of a raga through movement using phrases as the primary building blocks.

To develop a raga's form further in *alap*, however generative processes of some kind have to be evoked. These are described in texts such as Chaturdandi Prakashika under the discussion on *alap* and *thaya*. While the *alap* section lays out the multi-stage process for *alap* that provides schematicity, in perhaps one of the most elaborate cases of codifying generative procedures the *thaya* section codifies a few score ways of moving around in the local, providing generativity.

What I was hearing from Indra Kishore is that *aochar alap* is the primary melodic guide for *alap* in the Bettiah *gharana*, and that it derived its musical material directly from song. Outside Indra Kishore's direct lineage but within the families of Mullicks in Bettiah, the sole recording I have from the 1970s of Raj Kishore Mishra singing a short *aochar alap* in raga Mia Malhar indeed seems to fit this description. In six minutes Raj Kishore repeats the same set of eight to ten phrases two or three times, each time recombining them slightly differently. The six minutes provides a textbook sketch of an *aochar alap* in raga Mia Malhar that could have easily been memorized.[147] Compared to the Dhrupad composition that followed, the *alap* was a shadow, a sketch, a cameo of some of the key phrases that unequivocally established the raga as Mia Malhar. The song on the other hand presented a complex architecture that crystallized some beautiful phrases in raga Mia Malhar by weaving text and tone together in the framework of tala. While the *aochar alap* came through as a very well presented stereotype, the song comes across as a work.

Indra Kishore told me that he did not learn *alap* in too many ragas from his father nor did his father sing *alap* with him for hours on end in the imitative transmission process of singing and repeating. Instead his father pointed to the rich corpus of compositions and told him that as long as he used these as his primary melodic

---

[146] See Widdess (1995) and Ramanathan (1999) for detailed discussion of raga *alap* from medieval Sanskrit treatises.

[147] Interestingly, it included a few movements that have fallen out of common practice *alap* in raga Mia Malhar but familiar to me from a song in Falguni Mitra's repertoire.

guides, he would not go astray. Indra Kishore does not recognize or feel the need for defining the step-by-step development of a raga's modal features using phrases that have a standalone meaning outside compositions. Instead he uses his compositions to guide both form and content in *alap*. A well-structured *gaurhar bani* Dhrupad by virtue of having all four parts can supply a substantial number of melodic phrases for *alap*, including ones that demonstrate how to use multiple variations of a basic phrase around the main notes of the raga to develop tonal color. But it requires a lot of musical work to assimilate these phrases in a way that they become available to raga *alap*. Secondly, even given Indra Kishore's sizeable repertoire, compositions are crystallized cameos of ragas; they do not present the musician with a vast canvas to paint a raga's complex contours and develop its form (*rupa*) in a leisurely multi-part *alap* - the staple experience of Dhrupad on the modern performance stage. The puzzle that immediately presents itself is to ask how Indra Kishore manages to sing *alap* for 20 minutes or more as modern performance practice demands, primarily using the phrases available in the compositions.

Rather than go outside to acquire training in *alap* or follow the schematic of the normative *alap* that floods the modern listening experience, Indra Kishore has devised his own strategies to confront this musical challenge, a demand of a changing musical ecosystem. I show below that both his process and the results make audible the ethical dimensions of thick sound in musical actions.

"khayal isme dikhao" **(Show your creativity here.)**

In observing the many sessions of active learning, sitting with his children while they learnt, and listening to him sing *alap* in ragas such as Bhairav, Bhairavi, Khamaj and Bhimpalasi, I came to appreciate how Indra Kishore had transformed material available in song to phrases available for *alap*. Comparing his approach with commonly heard approaches to *alap* within and outside Dhrupad lineages inside and outside Bettiah, I came to a conclusion very different than Deepak Raja, who saw in Indra Kishore the microcosm of a long gone ancient *alap*.[148] I concluded that Indra Kishore's *alap* is neither an archaic fossil rediscovered nor a mechanical remapping of song but a creative process in which a number of materials have been pulled in and put through the mill of individual practice guided sonically and ethically by his inherited wealth - the *khazana* of *gaurhar* and *khandar bani* compositions.

Indra Kishore's raga *alap* conforms to a two-part structure – a slow paced elaboration characterized by the *meends* of *gaurhar bani* and a medium and fast

[148] Raja (2004); CD liner notes.

tempo elaboration characterized by the *gamaks* of *khandar bani*.[149] Within these two parts, the *alap* is further segmented. But the important thing to note here is that Indra Kishore has pulled in knowledge from a correlated concept in the domain of aesthetics - the *bani* - to structure and guide his creativity. In the slow *alap*, Indra Kishore always begins with a phrase from his "dictionary" as he refers to his repertoire. He then builds other phrases in, guided by the beautiful melodic ideas present in his stock of *gaurhar bani* compositions.

Since he acknowledges only two *banis* and further asserts, "if sung at all it will be sung this way", his senses are taught to grasp musical potentiality in only one of two ways – *meend*-laden *gaurhar* or *gamak*-laden *khandar*. Not for him the rhythmic patterns generated by use of syllables in medium tempo *alap* that derives its inspiration from the instrumental *jod* section of *alap*, or the short connected flourishes and jagged movements that make the melodic architecture floral and jagged, busy and eventful.

I would assert that compositions are the primary source both for the phrases Indra Kishore uses in raga *alap* and the way he evokes the svara in phrases. The assertion is supported by a few different observations. He himself sometimes cannot recognize and will not accept raga *alap* if it doesn't have recognizable movements from compositions.[150] Notes have to be approached in a particular way using particular phrases. "If it is sung at all it is sung like this". Possibly the underlying reason for this is that the coloring of *svara* is produced by how phrases are taken in *gaurhar bani* style and these carry a raga's emotional signature. Both phrase and emotional content of phrase identify raga; triggering raga memory relies on both phrase memory and emotional memory. This conclusion is also supported by my arguments about the active role of emotion in developing musical form in Falguni Mitra's *alap*.[151]

Reinforcement also comes from pedagogy. When I played Devil's advocate and suggested to Indra Kishore that few musicians can have success at using a composition as fodder for raga *alap*, he promptly sang a phrase with nom tom syllables in raga *shuddh dhaivat* Adana and looked at his daughter, raising his eyebrows. Like a flash 12-year-old Appi sang the next phrase not as *alap* but from the song, with words. She knew without being told that she was expected to

---

[149] Musicians in Bettiah define *gaurhar bani* as *meend pradhan* (dominant *lakshana* or aesthetic characteristic is meend) and *khandar bani* as *gamak pradhan* (dominant characteristic is gamak) (eg. Raj Kishore interview, Muzzafarpur, June 2007)

[150] In a specific incident, one day Indra Kishore was outside the music room listening to my practice. He came in after a few minutes and asked me what raga I was singing. I had begun singing Bhimpalasi alap using phrases inspired by one of Kishori Amonkar's recording of Bhimpalasi, which did not conform to the phrases in his compositions. He refused to let me go on, but had me start over.

[151] *cf.* pp. 131-139

complete the phrase and she got it from the next phrase of the song he had cued in his wordless *alap* phrase.[152]

Being a mature musician, Indra Kishore is able to move from singing songs to developing ragas by taking a song apart and putting it back together. "*khayal isme dikhao*" (lit. trans. Show your imagination here) he said, taking a dig at musicians that prize the Khayal genre for its improvisatory and creative demands. According to him, it is a true test of musicianship to be able to present raga *alap* with integrity to the raga form (*rupa)* given by the set of compositions.

To expand the development of form, Indra Kishore develops variations of the basic melodic phrases by applying *gaurhar bani* dynamics to approach the notes in different ways. In this he actively uses visualization to imagine the contours of the raga, a process he referred to as "sketching Sarasvati's face in loving detail". "*alap* is a plain paper" he told me, "you can draw whatever you want so long as you keep within the phrases and form given to you by the songs".

Songs are not just sonic source and logic of practice, they also are the ethical compass for poesis in *alap*. The idea that "*alap* is a plain paper" seems strangely at odds with Falguni Mitra's statement "When I sing the first few notes, the consciousness of the raga fills my mind" but in essence Indra Kishore's paper can afford to be blank because his musico-aesthetic guide is readily available to guide his *alap*. He doesn't need to look to notes to build consciousness of raga through activating schemata and building emotional response. The reliance on song and the acoustemic connection to song does this work for him.

Dwelling in his voice is Indra Kishore's connection to an audible past, a past he experienced intensely in and through music as a poverty-stricken young man taught by a starving father who was half-crazed at the prospect of his ancestral heritage attenuating and finally dying out in Bettiah's soundscapes. Inflecting the n P g M P g in Bhimpalasi *alap* sourced by the phrases of the *gaurhar bani* song "*paschim pahad*", the vocalization produces intense remembering of his father singing the phrase. This acoustemic memory is entangled in the musician's body and the musical phrase, intersecting in the singing voice that produces the sound. The sensory eventfulness of musical performance feeds back to cause intense

[152] The question comes up whether students could progress beyond the stereotypical with this kind of exercise and how young minds become prepared by song-oriented teaching to take on other musical tasks. The efficacy of teaching *alap* based on compositions to young minds that have not yet developed the capacity to abstract, reorganize and mull over musical materials raises many questions about learning models in Hindustani music. Given his seven children at different stages of musical growth, Indra Kishore's family presents a wonderful opportunity to study how young acculturated learners from a musical family negotiate between pre-composed taught material and improvised musical tasks. These questions are outside the scope of my dissertation project.,

remembering, a phenomenal move from background to foreground. “Habit memory is performative remembering” (Casey 2000, 181).

Performative remembering functions as both musical and ethical compass when Indra Kishore begins with the plain paper that is his *alap*. Ethically speaking, Indra Kishore’s approach to *alap* is tethered in his connection to family and place in sound. “I am not creating anything new. I am continuing the work of my ancestors”. “My thinking, my ancestors’ thinking - same”. He commented once “It’s not that I don’t know how to learn to sing *alap* for 1 hour like other people. I won’t”. The rhetoric has a performative effect. It keeps him cognitively primed to remember in and through sound.

But the problem of singing at least a 20-minute *alap* persists. Since he has performed for over 20 years on the national Dhrupad performance circuit, he has had to devise ways to expand beyond what life as a hereditary musician in Bettiah of the 1970s prepared him for. To bridge this requirement, Indra Kishore developed a schematic template for his *alap*. This schema rarely varies from raga to raga. . He uses techniques dominant in each *bani* to traverse the scale and explore melodic areas to build out musical form. In the slower *alap* that aligns with *gaurhar bani*, he invokes many techniques of traversing the main notes of the ragas using *meend* of different speed and curvature. He uses generic movements to traverse the scale by building a largely circular ascent with nested arcs keeping the lower tonic fixed and a sequence of nested descending arcs keeping the upper tonic fixed, followed by octave leaping loops of progressively increasing speed and dynamics. He then transitions to *gamak*-laden *khandar bani alap* using *gamak* of increasing intensity to create an out of body effect. The latter tends to become extreme in intensity and it becomes hard to distinguish the *svara* even though he insists he doesn’t obscure *svaras*.

Thus Indra Kishore’s creativity is both sonically and ethically shaped by the sounds that inhabit his body, permeate his consciousness and define his sonic world, the songs and aesthetics of *gaurhar* and *khandar bani*. Yet, there is a curious disjuncture between the sections of *alap* that are profoundly nuanced developments of musical form based on compositions, and the bi-sectional templatized *alap* in the two distinct *banis* that follows the nuanced phrases. Did listening to other musicians inspire the two broad divisions in his *alap* structure? Indra Kishore never told me this but the thought came to me that musicians look for models all the time. If one is not available inside tradition, they look outside, and when they find something they put it through the mill of their own creativity honed on traditional material. What emerges is often both old and new, and sometimes it retains the fissures that sound the gap between old and new. That I think is the story behind Indra Kishore Mishra’s *alap*.

Indra Kishore confirmed some of my conclusions but his rationalization of his creativity presented ethical arguments in addition to musical ones. The grids of intelligibility within which *alap* is sustained in Indra Kishore's practice are sourced and sustained by ancestral voices in content, method and rhetoric. Ancestral thought captured in song sources both the substance and the intelligibility of *alap* as creative activity and poesis. His *alap* is tethered by the musical and extra-musical interactions that both source and guide it. Yet, even in this tight creative space, there has been the inter-subjective pressure to experiment and change and this musician, like others before and after him, has responded to this creative push and pull by finding new paths from known places.

The correlativity of musical knowledge allows Indra Kishore to extract the core melodic contours of a raga from songs in his repertoire and reconstitute it into phrases for raga *alap*. His affective and temporalizing connections to song teach him how to do this in ways that heighten the dialogic experience of sound and sentiment. Taken these elements together, poesis becomes guided ethical action.

Dhrupad songs as musico-aesthetic forms: the aesthetic category of *bani*

In the next two sections I shift my attention from the musico-aesthetic form of raga discovered through *alap* to the musico-aesthetic form *pada* and the aesthetic category of *bani.* The term *bani* in Dhrupad is a stylistic term that operates as an aesthetic category; it categorizes Dhrupad performance in terms of aesthetic effect. At the same time, it has genealogical connections. Families of musicians in the past usually specialized in a *bani* and they labeled themselves by their characteristic *bani*. One of the unique features of the Bettiah *gharana* is that they sing compositions in different *banis*. Their Dhrupad compositions have distinctive musico-aesthetic features that produce discernible and categorizable aesthetics in performance. These features are dependent on both structure, the domain of composition and stylistic interpretation, the domain of tradition.

In the following sections, I investigate the many ways in which the aesthetic category of *bani* is stabilized in repetitive engagement with cumulative *khazana* as thick sound for the two musicians of the Bettiah *gharana* with whom I studied. I first investigate the forms of knowledge that stabilize knowledge of *gaurhar bani* in Indra Kishore Mishra's practice.[153] In the next section I look at how Falguni Mitra

[153] The Bettiah Mullick families specialize in two *banis*, *gaurhar* and *khandar*. The Maharajas of Bettiah as well as Indra Kishore's ancestors have composed many Dhrupads in these two *banis*. In Indra Kishore's practice, all songs in the repertoire, even the ones by composers from the 15th and 16th centuries are

and Indra Kishore Mishra consult many different conceptual maps in developing a sense for songs in the *khandar bani*. Through this analysis I show that the potentiality of the musical object and the sensitivity of the musician to this potentiality are both produced through repeated practice that builds in heterogeneity and interactivity into engagement with musical forms.

It is important to note here that there is a significant point of difference between Falguni Mitra and Indra Kishore in relation to *bani*. Mitra uses many kinds of correlated knowledge to determine *bani*, whereas for Indra Kishore, *bani* shapes musical cognition more centrally. It determines how he approaches the song in its entirety.[154] But what is extremely significant to note is that knowledge of any one musical concept – raga*, pada bani, svara, laya* – does not exist in isolation in either musician's case. It emerges and is sustained within an interactive network of correlative and associative, acoustic and non-acoustic knowledge. The juxtaposition of the two musicians is very productive in understanding how the heterogeneity and interactivity of musical performance tethers strong notions of tradition and imbues musical forms with the gravitation pull of ontology while engendering diverse interpretations in response to the particularity of processes of emplacement.

The phenomenology of *gaurhar bani* songs

The main characteristic *lakshana* of the *gaurhar bani* is *meend* and the *bani* is summarized succintly as being "*meend pradhan*". In the *gaurhar bani* song, the slow tempo and circularity of musical gestures causes the musician to tune in to the breath as a vital link between voice and ear. The entire upper torso is engaged in the production of sound because the sound is managed by controlling the air pressure in the release of breath. To produce the slow coiling loops and controlled glides that transform melodic space in the *gaurhar bani* requires the slow coiling of stomach muscles pulled inwards to cause the breath to push sound out in a series of loops. The sound felt as indrawn muscle, circulating breath and reverberation in the chest and throat, strikes the ear and causes it to listen in. The hearing ear feeds back to

---

interpreted in one or the other of these two *banis*. There are no songs that do not carry characteristic aesthetics.

[154] Since his father has written the *bani* down for each song in his collection, Indra Kishore does not need to make decisions on this himself. Yet, it is not all interpretation alone. There is sensitivity to how structure aids aesthetics. During the course of conversations, except for a few songs that he tuned himself, he told me he used many factors to decide the *bani* of the song. Firstly, tala, next setting of words, whether there are many *ghana* syllables (heavy consonants) or softer words with more vowels, whether stresses in text and tala were out of alignment, whether strong beats in tala were masked, whether lyrics and setting of the song are similar to other songs in his "dictionary" as he liked to call his collection of songs and so on.

control the sound through the body, breath and vocal chords.[155] In this circularity, the musician begins to respond to the embodied experience of engaging in sound. The tuning in on sound causes a focusing by which vocalization becomes audition and audition causes feedback.

Singing *gaurhar bani* has the effect of engaging the senses that is quite comparable to the way raga *alap* pulls in the attention to tonal centers at slow tempo except that *gaurhar bani* brings in the additional dimension of circularity. Coming back to the same place repeatedly has perceptible effects on transforming embodied senses of space and time. The musicians of the Bettiah *gharana* often describe the aesthetics of *gaurhar bani* in terms of perception effects related to a stretching of tonal space and a slowing down of time. "It gives me a feeling of space" is a phrase that Falguni Mitra uses to define the *bani*. Octogenarian Raj Kishore Mishra of Bettiah used a variation of the same phrase. The two musicians have never met each other. A second perception is one of hovering. While Mitra verbalized this feeling, Indra Kishore Mishra mapped this perception as mimetic action and metaphor. A third perception is of stretched time. This showed up in three unrelated occasions as entrainment and misunderstandings with the *pakhawaj* accompanist.[156] A fourth perception is that of effort. It takes a great deal of effort to sustain the aesthetics of the *bani* through breath, sound and vocal dynamics and references to effort came up many times in different ways. All these perceptions could be explained in terms of the sparseness of discrete events in this *bani* but more importantly, the aesthetics of the *bani* has been internalized by each musician using very different strategies. I what follows I discuss *gaurhar bani* in Indra Kishore Mishra's performance practice.

"Glide like an eagle" – the aesthetics of *gaurhar bani*

Of the many kinds of knowledge that are produced in the dialogic of engaging with his musical inheritance as thick sound (viz., in emplacement), the acoustemology most closely entangled in Indra Kishore's vocal chords, body and consciousness is knowledge of songs in the *gaurhar bani*. The aesthetics of *gaurhar bani* Dhrupad is stabilized by a number of interactive associations, many of them deeply temporalizing and embodied. In the following, I show how knowledge of *gaurhar bani* as an aesthetic category in Indra Kishore's musical practice is stabilized

---

[155] When Indian classical musicians cover their ear while holding long notes, which they often do, some version of this process of listening in is at work, though the vocalization may not involve the use of breath as integrally as singing *gaurhar bani* does.

[156] The way in which the perception effects and the aesthetics are achieved in individual lineages differs quite a bit and hence the sound of *gaurhar bani* in different lineages of the Bettiah *gharana* also differs. But the commonality of aesthetics as a category of perception gives both coherence and internal consistency to the concept of *bani* within each lineage as a typology of songs that can be categorized based on their perceptual effects in performance. This perception is available to the listener as well as the performer but in different ways implicated by the involvement of the body and breath in production and response.

through sonic, kinesthetic and affective maps that function both as habit schema and habitus for musical performance, building heterogeneity and redundancy in ways of knowing through sound. I then show that knowledge of *gaurhar bani* doesn't stand on its own - rather, it determines knowledge about other things fundamental to musicianship such as the correct tempo to sing a song, how to sing a raga, how to approach a note in a phrase, even what a *svara* is. I show how these heterogeneous maps become catalyzed in the interactivity of musical performance, causing listening in that transforms consciousness and generates acoustemic feedback. I argue that the ontological status of songs in Indra Kishore's practice emerge within the interactive nexus of associative, correlative and generative relationships within which knowledge of *bani* as an aesthetic category is stabilized and sustained in the habitual flow and catalytic eventfulness of performance.

Characterizing *gaurhar bani* songs in Indra Kishore's practice

Dhrupad compositions in *gaurhar bani* comprise about half of Indra Kishore Mishra's notated repertoire, representing every period of composing history. They are all sung in slow tempi – ranging from very slow to medium slow. The very slow tempo songs are typically sung in Chautal of 12 beats. Slow songs are sung in Chautal, Adi tal (16 beats) and Sadra (10 beats). Dhamars (14 beats) are also sung at medium-slow tempo with *gaurhar bani* dynamics, and they count among the *gaurhar bani* songs in the repertoire.

The aesthetics of *gaurhar bani* is correlated with perception of sparsity of musical events, stretching of space and slowing down of time. In Indra Kishore's tradition, these effects are achieved through particular interpretive strategies. Some very stable schemata and musical choices are evident in the way Indra Kishore approaches *gaurhar bani* songs – while teaching, interpreting songs from notation, or testing students' musicianship and cognition by handing them notation to sing from - and they are acknowledged in both musical practice and rhetoric. It has to be noted that Indra Kishore does not view these operational schemata as techniques or musical choices. He views the integrity of the *bani* as determining voice and everything it produces. "Automatic" is a favorite word of his to describe his approach. "If it is sung at all it is sung this way" is a phrase he repeats often. He does not recognize other ways of approaching *gaurhar bani* songs. If they fit his conception they are authentic, otherwise not.

It is also significant that none of these musical schemata are made audible by the skeletal notation system employed typically in Indian classical music to notate songs. They belong in the domain of oral tradition and interpretive sense. Reading the notation from notebooks in Indra Kishore's possession cannot lead to a stable interpretation of *gaurhar bani* unless a musician already has the cognitive apparatus to read the notation with the aesthetics of the *bani* as a synesthetic guide. I provide an example below from Indra Kishore's repertoire.

EXAMPLE 1

gaurhar bani Dhrupad
raga: Bhairav; tala: Chau

Composer: Maharaja Anand Kishore Singh of Bettiah
Tradition: Mullicks Ancestral
Teacher: Indra Kishore Mishra

STHĀYI											
X	**-**	**0**	**-**	**II**	**-**	**0**	**-**	**III**	**-**	**IV**	**-**
(7)6	(7)6	-5	5	4	5	(5 4)3	3	(3 5)4	(4 3)2	2	1
(N)d	(N)d	-P	P	M	P	(P M)G	G	(G P)M	(M G)r	r	S
na	mo	-	brah	-	ma⊠	pa	ra	ma	ee	-	sha
1	(2)7	1	(2)3	4	(4)5	(5)4	(5)3	(3)4	(3)2	-	1
S	(r)Ni	S	(r) G	M	(M)P	(P)M	(P)G	(G)M	(G)r	-	S
ni	khi	la	vi	-	shva⊠	ka	-	ri	ne	-	-
(1)4	-	4	4	(5)4	(5)3	4	(7)6	6	61ᵘ	71ᵘ	1ᵘ
(S)M	-	M	M	(P)M	(P)G	M	(N)d	d	dŚa	NŚa	Śa
man	-	ga	la⊠	ma	ya⊠	sa	ka	la	ku	sha	la
7	6	7	1ᵘ	76	65	65	(7)6	(7)6	54	53	4-34
N	d	N	Ṡ	Nd	dP	dP	(N)d	(N)d	PM	PG	M-GM
kā	-	rī	-⊠	bha	va⊠	tā	-	rī	ni	--	--
						NO BREATH before returning to sthayi beginning (Namo brahma)					
(6	6	-5	5	4	5	Etc.)					
(d	d	-P	P	M	P	Etc.)					
(na	mo	-	brah	-	ma⊠	Etc.)					
Key											
	=	*meend*									
X	=	*sam*									
II etc	=	*tali*									
0	=	*khali*									
⊠	=	brath									
Each cycle shows scale degrees, Sargam and text											

Figure 5 -1

The first musical choice is tempo. Indra Kishore sings *gaurhar bani* songs at very slow and slow tempi. But he can also produce a *gaurhar* effect at medium slow tempo, and this is done only for Dhamars in his lineage. The second musical

approach is in the application of certain stylistic schemata that are vital to *gaurhar bani* interpretation in his lineage. The use of loops, falling arcs, glides and wedges of sound as the primary way to approach and attain notes in a phrase are examples of important schemata. This has the effect of transforming the basic structure of the composition in aesthetic response.[157] Even when the structure of the song is highly syllabic with a ratio of one syllable per note per beat (one *akshara* per *svara* per *matra*) of tala, or when the song is set such that consonants align with strong beats, if space is created by slowing the tempo and using geometries that increase curvature and tonal area, the effect of *gaurhar bani* is still achieved.[158]

However, a musician with the cognitive disposition to respond to the musical affordance of compositional structure will sense potentiality for *gaurhar bani* in other more subtle ways. For instance, ascending phrases with sequential notes will be approached with a series of loops that often alternate upward and downward looping – this has the effect of increasing tonal space through small clusters of loops rather than one long glide or slide. Downward descent with sequential notes will be approached with a much longer curvilinear descent that stretches tonal space. Notes that are further apart may be taken with long slow glides or shorter faster glides, depending on the words, setting of the underlying tala and the general knitting together of the aesthetics of the song. Thus, while schemata undoubtedly exist, the way these come together to create a song as a perfect aesthetic form requires repeated polishing in which an individual musician senses the potentiality of musical form and transforms it into a stable aesthetic structure that holds a lot of musical work. I included just one example of a *gaurhar bani* song from Indra Kishore's corpus above to show that it looks like any other song if one just looks at the skeletal notation. It is only when one begins to analyze the nested looping structures, and the way notes are attained through rounding, that the picture of the song as an aesthetic form emerges.

Thick sound in *gaurhar bani* performance

My brief sketch above of *gaurhar bani*'s primary features in Indra Kishore's practice cuts through aesthetic interpretation that has been stabilized as performance

---

[157] By basic structure of the composition I mean the setting of words to melody and tala that manipulates tonal space and rhythmicity through interaction of syllable, *svara* and tala structure.

[158] It is important to emphasize that *bani* as an aesthetic cannot be reduced to ornamentation and stylistic figures. Just a liberal splattering or *meend* or *gamak* doesn't add up to *gaurhar* and *khandar bani*. In a reductive stylistic analysis of the song I present later in this section, it can be argued that the *meend* is the primary ornamentation used to create the characteristic aesthetic of the *gaurhar bani* but the arrangement, setting and dynamics with which *meend* are used are integral to creating the effect. Rather *bani* is a large-scale effect that relies on spatio-temporal perception effects and gestalt effects. A detailed analysis of all four *bani*s will be published separately, based on work done in the context of this dissertation with the Dhrupad lineages of the Bettiah *gharana*.

knowledge through decades if not centuries of musicianship.[159] While it may not be possible to make claims about historical performance practice before the early 20th century, the stability of the *gaurhar bani* aesthetic in Indra Kishore's performance practice points both to the cumulative work of his forefathers and to his own individual effort in developing soma-aesthetic sense for *gaurhar bani* in performance. Hundreds of hours of polishing individual songs in different ragas must have enabled Indra Kishore's forefathers to arrive at a conscious design that is available to cognition as an automatic response to structure. It is through the hard work of repeated engagement with musical forms in practice that this potentiality becomes available as a response in individual musicianship - work that brings with it all the interactivity of situated musical practice.

Stabilizing these musical schemata and building interpretive sense is hence a key emphasis when developing musical sense in transmission and practice. I show below that the intense work done to stabilize, communicate and sustain these musical schemata prepares the cognition to engage with musical forms as thick sound, not pure sound. I trace ontological status and strength of fidelity to tradition to the histories of interactivity that make musical forms available to cognition as thick sound. I show that these schemata are dialogically stabilized by many different kinds of interactions.[160] The stability and coherence of the aesthetics of *gaurhar bani* as performance knowledge emerges from a strong network of interactions, some more general to musical life and some very specifically intertwined with this aesthetic category that stabilize the schemata in transmission and performance. I stress once again that bare notation is all that is used in practice to notate songs. However, if one notates the *meend*s and their dynamics with particular attention to the starting points of each *meend* in relation to the ending point of the previous one, a very different picture of the song emerges. If one pays attention to the composer, the import of the song changes further as thick sound and one can then begin to imagine what else may constitute performance knowledge of this song for Indra Kishore.

---

[159] In future work I will address the historical sources on performance practice of the Bettiah *gharana* in the early 20th century and relate them to contemporary performance. I only mention here that Indra Kishore's *gaurhar bani* practice resonates with a brief description of Kale Khan Saheb's *gaurhar Bani* practice by Bharat Vyas (Vyas, 1980). Kale Khan lived in Bettiah from the late 19th to the mid 20th century; he was a hereditary musician from the families of the Ustads of Kalpi who settled in Bettiah in the early 19th century.

[160] It is useful here to point to Gjerdingen's historical analysis of stylistic schemata that defined the Classical style at a particular historical moment in Vienna (Gjerdingen, 1988). While Gjerdingen relies on very different sources than I do, I am definitely inspired to find synergy in his work. Where he is able to refer to style manuals and documentary evidence from the archive, I use the concepts of thick sound, acoustemic anchors, acoustic communities and interactivity to think about how stylistic schematas may be stabilized in musical life.

The embodied, sensory, associative and cognitive maps available to Indra Kishore in the performance of *gaurhar bani* are distributed in bodies, pieces of paper, sticks, stones, graves, metaphor, breath, stomach muscles, vocal chords, temporality including trauma memory, emotion, and consciousness. While some of these maps are more generally dialogic to musical life, some particularly define *gaurhar bani* as an aesthetic category, tether musical judgment about *gaurhar bani* songs and are catalyzed by *gaurhar bani* performance. I discussed acoustemic anchors for thick sound in relation to musical judgment in Chapter 3. Here I focus on the schemata that specifically stabilize the *gaurhar bani* aesthetic in Indra Kishore's practice. These acoustemic maps produce both the aesthetics of *gaurhar bani* as well as the ethics that keeps it stable as an aesthetic concept in Indra Kishore's practice.

Glide like an eagle, don't flap your wings like a crow

While Falguni Mitra and Raj Kishore Mishra described in words the feeling of hovering and suspension created by *gaurhar bani* vocal gestures, Indra Kishore Mishra sketched the effect in sound, movement and words during a recording session in August 2009. As he hovered in sound, he spread his hands out like a hovering bird, and said "You don't flap your wings and fly around like a crow when you sing *gaurhar bani*, you glide like an eagle".

Crucially, the communication that was triggered in the moment of singing is the communication of a feeling, of being in, inhabiting and transforming space. The voice is taught to move through the embodied experience of movement; gesture and simile help the voice to configure melodic space in particular ways through movement. Hover like an eagle, glide, don't flap your wings; these instructions often come to me when I practice, checking the incipient wobble in my voice and making me control the slow release of breath to produce that perfect glide, the signature falling arc of *gaurhar bani* songs in Indra Kishore's *gayak*i. The lesson about correct execution could also be externalized. Indra Kishore's father also used an aeroplane analogy – that of a plane landing smoothly and taking off smoothly, not a helicopter with its whirring blades and wobble. But here too, the idea that a body moving through space configures it in particular ways is used to teach the voice how to produce a melodic gesture (Rahaim, 2009).

"In my end is my beginning"

This philosophical statement perhaps most succinctly captures the temporality of *gaurhar bani* songs. The statement is also a perfect mnemonic for the conception of movement in *gaurhar bani* Dhrupad that Mahant Mishra dinned into his son Indra Kishore Mishra 's young musical brain in Bettiah in the 1960s. A philosophy that taught a musical lesson, it helped Indra Kishore develop an intuition and habitual sense for negotiating the nested levels of cyclicity in a *gaurhar bani* song, the loop-within-the-loop-within-the-loop, a perfect example of a schema stabilized by metaphor. Not for him the staccato of breaking between notes or showing each beat of the metric cycle, or even the breaks between phrases that are more typical of a

song-like vocal delivery – rather, every phrase will consciously begin where the previous one left off, slowing down the pulse rate and slowing breathing down in the conscious attention to connected breath and vocalization.

The vital connection: *banis* and breath

The aesthetics of both *gaurhar* and *khandar banis* in Indra Kishore's tradition depends vitally on breath for technique. Many of the embodied metaphors that anchor habitual cognition capture the rhythmicity and temporality of this connection. A *gaurhar bani* song can have different kinds and levels of circularity and dynamics and in Indra Kishore's practice almost all of this is managed by managing the breath. Indra Kishore's father would require him to sing a whole cycle of 10, 12 or 16 beats in a single breath at this very slow tempo, which required Indra Kishore to be very attentive to the connection between *bani* and breath

Air pressure is used to negotiate the loops that are characteristic of the *gaurhar bani*, as well as to control dynamics. This couples breathing and vocalizing as a single embodied action. To produce a wedge between two closely separated notes, a siren like increase and decrease of dynamics is required but it has to be done slowly and with great control. A neighboring note is attained by increasing the volume as the pitch is increased, creating a wedge of sound that opens out from the starting note and increases till it attains the upper note, then returning by shrinking the wedge by reducing volume and pitch together.

To execute a very slow straight glide down requires a controlled release of air pressure with extra pressure applied to show the notes that are in the raga. Increasing the pace of the glide requires more push at start but less stop-and-go control. Executing an upward glide requires a push at the start and then sustained release to keep the dynamics smooth. Executing a series of ascending loops or a series of descending loops requires extended slow release of breath that builds pressure on the lungs to negotiate the looping movement and sustain the dynamics while showing the notes. Circularity that slows the pulse rate and the breathing down puts enormous pressure on the lungs to sustain. Thus, creating the aesthetics of *gaurhar bani* in Indra Kishore's practice deeply engages body and breath in producing sound.

The big bang in sound

The aesthetic of *gaurhar bani* compositions often requires coming back to the beginning of the song in a circular movement, which means not taking a breath at the end of a whole section of song. To manage this, composers have devised endings that help sustain and build air pressure. Often *gaurhar bani* songs build up pressure at the end of a whole section by using loops before launching the first note of the song with a push. This looping-the-loop effect requires extreme control of breath. Before launching into this extended phrase, usually a quick breath has to be taken and then the loops at the end must be negotiated by tightening the muscles of the

stomach very, very slowly to push the air out with smooth and controlled clear sound, without any wobble. By the time the beginning of the song is approached, the pressure is built up enough to negotiate the loops over the next several beats, if possible all 12 beats of the 12 beat cycle or at least till beat 9. By the end of the long phrase, the stomach will be drawn in tight, the lungs empty of air and burning, and the voice momentarily quiet to allow the lungs to take in sufficient air very quickly for the next sustained release.

One of many such examples is the *gaurhar bani* song, "*namo brahma parama isha…",* whose skeletal notation I provided earlier (Fig 5.1). In that song the concluding phrase of the first section is designed in such a way that the coiling musical figure helps to build air pressure before launching the first note at the start of the song. This first note - the *komal dhaivat*- is attained in a leaping figure that begins where the loop ends and carried by the pressure generated in the loop, it emerges with force.

On a hot day in June 2007, 114 degrees in the shade in Bettiah, Indra Kishore was repeatedly demonstrating this melodic figure in the song. Performing the first three notes, leaping six scale degrees from the Sa (fundamental note) to the *komal dhaivat* of raga Bhairav with a push exerted by sharp contraction of abdominal muscles, sound emerges with force through breath. Catalyzed by this act causes a transition from song to speech and Indra Kishore describes musical effort with metaphor: "The whole phrase must be sung in a single breath. The first notes must emerge from deep in the stomach like the birth of the cosmos". Indra Kishore refers here to one version of cosmic birth in Hindu philosophy – that the god Brahma created the universe by uttering the sound 'Om'. Indra Kishore's description is an uncanny description of the big bang in sound. If in one song the note had to be cradled into being on Goddess Sarasvati's lap, in another it had to burst into being like the big bang.

Connections to cosmos, to philosophy, and the daily experience of spiritual and religious life are deeply connected to senses of self, reinforced through performance of epics, song lyrics and sound. These connections are not always felt and articulated, but performance sometimes acts as a catalyst to bring them into the foreground.

Pots of ghee and a sword in the stomach

Back to music; the same song, the same phrase, only this time the entire line has been sung several times. Indra Kishore speaks again: "Your stomach must burn. My grandfather Shyama Mullick used to drink pots of ghee after singing like this". Then again another day, a different song but one that tightens the stomach as much… "My father, Mahant Mishra would tell me - practice like you are polishing a sword. When the time comes you can take this prize knife out and drive it into your opponents stomach so that it burns, like yours does now from practice".

Metrics for right practice are burnt into the guts. When I would join a fellow student for a long stint of practice in Berkeley thousands of miles away from his teacher, the story would surface to remind him to be conscious of whether or not the quality of his practice measured up to his experience when learning the song from Indra Kishore. Sometimes, out of breath at the end of a long, slow line, he would gesture as if he is driving a dagger into his opponents' stomach. This has become a student house joke, but at the same time, it has an embodied, sonic, subjective component.

The chain of continuity being forged here is built on breath and sound; sometimes, when singing, it surfaces and reminds you that you haven't sung the phrase slowly enough - your stomach didn't burn enough, or you sang it just right. Through the channels of body, breath and vocalized note, you feel connected through your body to your teacher, his father and his grandfather whom you never saw, but hear and feel through making music. Metaphors such as these ones are acoustemic anchors that hold thick sound. Whether they function as silent background or catalytic foreground, they work to place the sensing voice at the same time they stabilize aesthetics in sound.

Correlative knowledge: *svara* that emerge like silk moths from cocoons

At least three of the lessons I learnt from Indra Kishore on *gaurhar bani* are not about the complex domains of song or *bani* but about the more fundamental domain of *svara*, or musical note.

"No! wrong!"

Imagine my consternation that quickly turned to embarrassment, doubt and even a tinge of skepticism, when this was the emphatically shouted response the very first day of formal instruction from Indra Kishore. He had asked me to sing the scale of raga Bhairav, a raga I had been taught in depth and detail by Falguni Mitra in the many intermittent opportunities I had to learn from him over seventeen years of discipleship.

What could this musician mean by telling me I couldn't sing a scale?

The next day an interaction between Indra Kishore and Karaikudi Subramanian, a ninth-generation hereditary Veena artist of South India, gave me a clue. Subramanian described Indra Kishore's *alap* with the words "He doesn't sing the notes obviously; his notes have to be caught. They emerge like silk moths from cocoons when he is doing his *alap*. He is birthing the notes of the raga - not singing them".

Peculiarly enough, Subramanian had caught the resonance of one of the metaphors Indra Kishore himself used when singing a song in a different raga. Cradling the

svara in Sarasvati's lap is how he described a *meend* that cradled the *komal gandhar* oscillating from the *madhyam* in the song "*paschim pahad…"* in raga Bhimpalasi. I had approached the note as M g, whereas he took it as M (g) M (g) g. The first two adumbrations of the *komal gandhar* came from oscillation, suggesting the note to the aural imagination before stating its presence strongly.

The idea that notes were produced like silk moths emerging from cocoons resonates with musical wisdom that Indra Kishore holds as a tenet of *gaurhar bani* practice. His father and teacher Mahant Mishra would tell him "All notes are in all ragas. It is like being in a crowded room. Suddenly a man will stand up and look at you straight and you will notice him. A *svara* in a raga is like that. If you sing with the right feeling for the raga in *gaurhar bani*, the next *svara* will appear in front of you without your going looking for it.

The notion that a *svara* will appear maps to breathing technique in a very precise way. Indra Kishore showed me how to execute a glide in such a way that one shows the *svara* by a slight increase in air pressure. A stream of continuous sound is not so much broken up by discrete notes as the notes emerge from the stream of sound. This consciousness was made explicit to me in yet another way in a lesson.

"Draw seven points in your notebook with your pencil". OK. I did it. "Now join them without taking your pencil off the page till they are all connected". I did it. "Now do the same thing again but without taking your pencil off the page – start drawing the line and press the pencil point wherever you want to make a dot but without breaking the movement". I did it. "See, this is how you have to sing. You have to move from start to finish through all the notes that belong to the raga when you sing that long *meend*. You do it by controlling air pressure. Where there is a *svara*, you show it by stressing the air pressure a little, but don't break the movement. Remember, never take your pencil off the page when you draw the line".

This technique requires a lot of control, practice and mindfulness. It also treads dangerous territory sometimes in smudging the separation between notes. Trained by Falguni Mitra to be really conscious of holding notes correctly, I had physical sense of discomfort several times when I felt I was traversing notes that didn't belong in a raga. This is not only due to my less expert handling. Even when Indra Kishore sings sometimes the suggestion of notes extraneous to the raga appears when he executes long glides with high-pressure controlled breath. This technique cannot be conceived as a flaw though some musicians won't agree with my assessment. It is a conscious way of conceiving notes that uses gliding movement to adumbrate the grid.

It is not that the grid of discrete pitches is unimportant, it is very important. Indra Kishore told me that his father would make him memorize each song in *sargam* (solfege) without words. He would have to perfect that as well as sing with words.

The practice Indra Kishore was asked to do is aimed at making sure the grid kicks in automatically, allowing him to roam freely like the eagle hovering in space over ground. My work with Falguni Mitra and Indra Kishore Mishra suggests that musicians not only understand the relationship between *svar gyan* and *jagah gyan:* they consciously gear their practice towards automaticity that allows them to switch from one mode to the other in flow.[161]

"That is not my voice": Aesthetics and Ethics as embodied transformation

The many affective associations deeply intertwined with the phenomenology of *gaurhar bani* vocalization in Indra Kishore's practice often caused background to foreground shifts. Indra Kishore would be moved to experience his intense connections to his teacher and father as a vocal inhabiting, a dwelling in the throat. In this dialogic process, technique becomes temporality and aesthetics is stabilized by ethics.

Listening in to musical forms as thick sound engenders the catalytic eventfulness of performance. Perhaps it is the intensity of the embodied engagement bringing together heat, breath and sound that catalyzed in Indra Kishore a remembering that is a vocal inhabiting, a transformation of the singing body that is a possession in sound.

> "That is not my voice. This is my body but that is not my voice; it is my father's voice – he is seated in my throat".

A long vocal movement that traverses a cluster of adjacent notes in a series of slow loops, the vocal gesture that catalyzed Indra Kishore into remembering his father through vocal inhabiting is a central mode of expression in his *gaurhar bani* practice. Excruciating for a learner, the gesture has as its basis a series of *meends*, the vocal technique that is at the heart of Dhrupad and that is integral to the aesthetics of the *gaurhar bani*. In Indra Kishore's practice, the production of mids requires very specific voice production that engages the body, breath and voice in such close connection that vocalizing becomes breathing. Sung with vocal chords barely engaged, the voice is moved by the breath circulating through the body, stomach muscles pulling in slowly, the breath pushed up into a slowly expanding chest while the series of loops are executed by the voice. Catalyzed by sound history

---

[161] *cf*. pp. 131-137. The relationship to Zbikowski's discussion of cognition in Western art music has been discussed by Rahaim in the context of conceptual knowledge of spatial direction such as "up" and "down". What I would add to this discussion is the observation that maps at different levels become more easily available to developing musical form only through practicing the different levels explicitly. Unlike Rahaim and Dard Neuman I hold that musicological treatises not only recognize both note and phrase but they also go very far in telling you how to practice to develop cognition in each of these realms. They also recognize that vocal dynamics and ornamentation are fundamental dimensions of phrases. This explicitly puts style, aesthetics and emotion in the interstices between note and musical phrase.

acts as interference and brings affective and auditory memory from background to foreground, feeding right back in to transform the sonic as lived experience.

Back to music; the same song, the same movement, only this time the entire line has been sung several times. In a 20-minute lesson, the gesture must have been sung at least a dozen times. The gesture, characterized by a series of loops, occurs many times in the same song, and in many other songs of *gaurhar bani* in Indra Kishore's repertoire. But the vocal inhabiting happens unpredictably and generatively, not habitually and performatively.

The second time Indra Kishore experienced a vocal inhabiting, we were singing a different song, invoking very similar vocalization and bodily practice. It was one of many days we spent cataloguing the torn notebooks crammed with his father's notations of the tradition's repertoire. The body that came into the music room that day had been through an affective experience, working with paper and notation, materials that scholarship in the Humanities has tended to view as a hegemonic formatting of musical capacity, not affective potential for musical experience.

When listening to the recording of the lesson later I was struck by how much our voices have synchronized. For a male voice his voice is exceptionally clear and sweet. With the requisite practice to sustain long breath, his *gaurhar bani* aesthetic is remarkably accessible to a female voice. The vocal gesture relied so much on synchronous breathing that it seemed as if I could hear only one voice breathing in the recording. Perhaps it was this synchronicity that made him feel his father's voice had occupied his body, with the slow emptying of air from the lungs.

The intensity of identifying with his father's voice is matched only by Indra Kishore's intensity of connection to Bhagavati, the goddess he speaks of as his mother and his savior, referring to her by her other name – Ma Sharada. He related two incidents of Ma Sharada's presence materialized by his singing, once in the form of a beautifully dressed girl child and the second time as double voice. He even called his wife in to attest to hearing a female voice singing with him when he was practicing all alone in a room. These were some of the darkest days of his life with a daughter just dead from cancer, a father critically ill and no money to spend on food, medicine or clothing for his family, and he says he would incessantly appeal to the goddess to save their family musical treasure every time he sat down to practice.

Such experiences of vocal inhabiting and out-of-body experiences are not limited to *gaurhar bani*. Some of the out-of-body experiences he related while singing *khandar bani* took the form of materializing a fearsome dog that he understood to be Bhairava, and waking up to find Ma Kali standing over him dagger drawn the night

after he attempted to sing a ritual song in a practice room[162]. He told me that his forefathers would sing for *tantric* ritual in the Kali temple and showed me songs in his corpus that were supposed to be sung during those rituals. The words of the songs are full of heavy resonant consonants and when sung in *khandar bani* with heavy *gamak* one can imagine their having a transforming effect on the senses and the breath.

Rather than try to validate his experiences as objective events, I find them important to understanding the phenomenology of performing Dhrupad songs as a hereditary musician living in a still feudal rural town where Dhrupad as cultural practice has been historically emplaced in a court and community with a strong tradition of *tantra* and Kali devotion. This gives a window into musical affordance and processes of emplacement and their intersection in the singing body that inhabits musical forms as Place. The affordance of musical forms in Dhrupad performance makes it possible for Indra Kishore to sense performance as thick sound by engendering the experience of emotion, memory and eventfulness. When memory of songs is sedimented in graves, land, house, street, paper and parchment, embodied in inter-subjective relationships with family, community and patron, attached to events, sites, ritual places and temple ground, the sonic has many acoustemic anchors potentially available to musical performance, rendering musical performance both heterogeneous and catalytic. Singing Dhrupad then becomes a dwelling in the voice.

In addition, this analysis tells us something about the Dhrupad *banis* as aesthetic concepts. Each aesthetic category engenders characteristic forms of embodied experience suggesting a correlation between aesthetic forms and soma-aesthetic experience. In Indra Kishore's case, my analysis above coupled with the analysis in Chapter 3 shows that categorical knowledge about aesthetics in Dhrupad emerges in interaction with musical forms as thick sound – an acoustemic environment within which Dhrupad performance becomes both emplacing and emplaced. To inquire further into the constitution of these categories I survey questions of musical affordance for the *khandar bani*, followed by a discussion of how Falguni Mitra senses the aesthetic categories of a composition he hasn't sung before, and how this affects his interaction with structure while working with notation.[163]

---

[162] Bhairava is a fierce manifestation of the god Shiva and is often portrayed accompanied by a dog.

[163] My analysis of the Dhrupad *banis* here is oriented only towards investigating the relationship between categorical knowledge and processes of emplacement afforded by musical forms in Dhrupad performance. It draws from extensive research done with written materials and with the musicians of the Bettiah *gharana*. A partial discussion is available in Ranganathan (2013) but a more complete analysis of the *Dhrupad banis* as aesthetic concepts is left to forthcoming publications.

Musical affordance, thick sound and the *khandar bani*

The *khandar bani* has been characterized in musicological texts and musician experience as a *bani* that has *vira rasa* – the aesthetics of valor. It is a medium to fast-tempo aesthetic that uses the *gamak* as its characteristic ornamentation.[164] At the same time, just a smattering of *gamak* does not constitute *khandar bani*, nor is this *bani* presented with loudness and force all the time – especially in the Bettiah *gharana*. Many conceptual maps go into determining how to realize the aesthetics of this *bani* in performance. Some of these lie in the domain of structure and others in the domain of interpretation.[165]

While expert musicians often sing compositions as fully designed pieces the opportunity to inquire into processes of interpretation arises when musicians are teaching, communicating verbally with listeners to get them to follow along in performance, or working with songs from their handed-down repertoires that they have either not sung for many years, or which they are singing for the first time based on available notations, texts and aural memory of earlier performances, particularly of their teachers. These periods of encounter between musician and the forming musical object are fascinating windows into musical thinking, musical action and their intersection in thick sound.[166]

Many types of correlative knowledge go into stabilizing interpretation of *khandar bani* in practice. While this *bani* is typically associated with *vira rasa* and has often been described as *gamak pradhan* because it employs a lot of *gamak* to create its characteristic aesthetic effect, it is important to emphasize that the aesthetics of *khandar bani* cannot just be equated to the use of heavy *gamak*, much as *gaurhar bani* cannot be achieved just by indiscriminate use of *meend.*[167] *A*n analysis of the Bettiah *gharana*'s repertoire and performance practice shows that within this

---

[164] The *gamak* is a characteristic oscillation that can be produced in light, medium heavy and heavy varieties from the throat, chest and stomach respectively. See itcsra.org/alankars.html for a very accessible description of *gamak* as a characteristic ornament, with several demonstrations. Also see Sanyal and Widdess for a description of *gamak* in relation to Dhrupad performance of the Dagar Dhrupad tradition.

[165] Zbikowski's work on conceptual models and cross-domain mapping in Western art music has resonance with my analysis here (Zbikowski 2002). However, I have drawn on the anthropology of the senses and distributed cognition to open up the kinds of conceptual maps I consider in my analysis. Also, I have adopted neither the language of schema theory nor cross-domain analysis completely, preferring to use acoustemic anchors and thick sound as analytical tools to investigate how musicians develop categorical knowledge and sense structure and feel form in Dhrupad performance. I will pursue this analysis in more detail in forthcoming work focused exclusively on the *banis*.

[166] I spent a substantial amount of time on the field engaged in such activity, which gave me a great deal of insight into how both expert musicians in my project develop, sustain and communicate a sense for the aesthetics of compositions in performance.

[167] A number of authors have referred back to Roy Choudhury for a description of the aesthetics of the *baṇis* (Ray Choudhury 1938; 1996). See Sanyal and Widdess (2004, Chapter 3) for a survery of literature on the *bāṇis*.

general category of *bani*, compositions can manifest a whole range of nuances in aesthetics and a number of factors work together to create the effect of a *bani* and they work their effect through heterogeneous maps that actively feedback to influence perception and feeling in performance. Such maps constitute thick sound as they work to inter-animate sound with emotion, expressivity, body memory and associative memory while at the same time bridging mind, body and the senses in musical response.

The first important checkpoint is the musico-aesthetic character of the raga in which a composition is set. Since *khandar bani* has to be sung at medium fast tempo with wavy, rolling and heavy *gamak*, it is ideally suited for ragas such as Bhupali and Adana that are typically not sung at slow pace. However, *khandar bani* songs are also found in many ragas of a more lyrical and melodic character. In these cases, Falguni Mitra avoids the use of very heavy *gamak*. For instance, while singing Bilaskhani Todi, Komal Rishabh Asavari or even the more lilting Bihag, the aesthetics of the raga deeply influences how he applies *gamak* in a *khandar bani* song.

A second conceptual map that strongly influences aesthetics of the *bani* in practice is the setting of the text in relation to the melodic and rhythmic structure. Composers use some recognizable strategies for *khandar bani* songs that a tuned cognition can immediately sense. Typically, the songs will be set such that one can't repeat lines easily, beyond the first line. In direct contrast to the *gaurhar bani* that stresses circularity and a feeling of space, *khandar bani* song structures engender continuous progressive flow and a feeling of being rushed, often with no opportunity to stop and take a breath. The effort of producing a series of *gamak* implicates a deep connection between body, breath and sound and both musicians undertake practices of different kinds to prepare mind, body and voice to respond to this aesthetic impulse. For instance, musicians in early 20th century Benares from Falguni Mitra's lineage have written about using drum sounds and exercises on the *pakhawaj* for developing *gamak* articulation.[168] Falguni Mitra himself uses both scale practice and medium tempo *alap* syllables for practicing *gamak* articulation. Both Falguni Mitra and Indra Kishore Mishra use practices derived from the discipline of *yoga asana* to develop the long breath for *gaurhar bani* and to develop techniques for pushing breath with force at rapid frequency from the navel for the *khandar bani* – a technique referred to as *kapal bhati* in the practice of *yoga asana*. Additionally, in Indra Kishore Mishra's practice, since he mainly uses *gamak*s from the region of the navel in *khandar bani*, producing a series of high pressure *gamak*s from the navel sometimes causes the out-of-body experiences in Indra Kishore's case that I discussed earlier in the section on *gaurhar bani.*

[168] Some of these musicians were expert at playing *pakhawaj* as well as singing Dhrupad, so they must have been inspired to transfer techniques for developing expertise from one domain onto another.

Third, the setting of many songs in *khandar bani* provide hooks for scalar ascent and scalar descent, which a tuned cognition would hear as an opportunity to employ a series of rolling or wavy *gamak*.[169] In Falguni Mitra's case, he uses gesture as a parallel channel for mapping the stylization of melodic space. In many sessions of notation setting, he would only be singing internally, but his hands would be moving in response to the notation he was interacting with, stylizing and punctuating melodic space with his hands while internally auralizing the wavy *gamak*, rolling *gamak*, and heavy *gamak* of the *khandar bani*.[170]

Fourth, lyrical content plays a very significant role in determining the aesthetics of *bani* in a composition Especially in Falguni Mitra's practice, he employs a greater range of vocal dynamics in all the *banis* towards expressive ends to meet the aesthetic response elicited by the lyrical text and the character of the raga. This response to the affordance of musical forms is based on intense repetitive work with musical forms in which affordance is recognized as potentiality for expressive action.

Visualization and stock imagery provides another form of acoustemic input. For example, a *khandar bani* song which is a description of god Shiva employs compositional techniques such as alliteration and assonance, the use of heavy aspirated consonants together with the placement of *gamak,* off-beat syncopated movement, and the effective use of silence and quieter melodic lines for contrast to create a distinctive impact.[171] Even for a person who doesn't understand the entire import of the words, these devices effect sensory and embodied transformation with both text and tone to create an impact. A description of the celebration of *Sri Krishna*'s birth in Brindavan on the other hand, also in *khandar bani*, paints a much more joyful and floral picture, with softer sibilants, softer, wavy *gamaks* and few jerky movements. The sensory and perceptual impact of such a song is very different than the previous one, although they may both be sung in the *khandar bani*. A third song may depict Sri Ramachandra raining arrows on Lanka. Such a song may

---

[169] A Khayal musician when given this notation would automatically employ tans in response to these structural hints, whereas a Dhrupad musician with knowledge of the *banis* would employ gamak. Perhaps this perceptual parallelism has led Dhrupad musicians to state that there are *tans* in Dhrupad (Vedi 1949), Shibkumar Mitra (Seminar talk delivered at ITC Sangeet Research Academy, Kolkata; source: audio recording from the personal collection of Falguni Mitra)

[170] I have not conducted a systematic analysis of gesture in relation to style and aesthetics. But all my interactions with Falguni Mitra suggest that aesthetic concepts and stylistic concepts use gesture as a strong conceptual map. Beyond conceptual maps that relate gesture to melodic topography (Rahaim 2009), my fieldwork suggests that gesture studies could yield insight on aesthetic and style in relation to expressive response to musical structure.

[171] The god Shiva is pictured in this song in the "*bhayankara rupa*" (fearsome form) – carrying a trident, with a snake around his neck, a crescent moon on his forehead, the Ganga flowing from his hair which is coiled in matted snake like locks and wearing a garland of skulls.

have volleys of pounding *gamak* interspersed by swooping *meend* to simulate the arrows, and quieter sections, for a lull in the action.[172]

The nuances of creating the characteristic aesthetic effect of a *bani* hence rely on both compositional devices and the interpretive sensibilities of musicians trained to respond to the aesthetic potential of a composition by oral tradition and individual practice. The interpretive sensibilities of musicians are also very important to creating variety in compositions. Due to their historical sensitivity to *bani*, musicians of the Bettiah *gharana* acquire this as a core competency and distinction, and they use it very effectively to transform aesthetics in performance and as a strong guide for musical judgments in performance.

Esoteric aesthetic concepts such as raga and *bani* have strong human dimensions in the Bettiah *gharana*, both in terms of availability to common perception as an aesthetic of song, and for engendering the experience of emotion, memory and eventfulness integral to transforming Dhrupad vocal practice in processes of emplacement. I hence end this chapter where I began – with a musician's response to the inter-animation of musical forms with affect, and memory that transforms Dhrupad vocal performance into a dwelling in the voice.

Sound marks on a singing body

After Indra Kishore's father died, the only other senior musician in Indra Kishore's extended family was his father's cousin, Shankar Lal Mishra. Shanklar Lal passed away in 2013, but in 2010 he was living with his sons in a village hundred miles from their ancestral home in Bhanu Chapra village. I took a day trip by van with Indra Kishore's family to visit this elderly musician. His sons learnt Dhrupad and *tabla* from their father but turned to teaching *pakhawaj* and singing Kirtan for a living. They had begun to build a concrete house when I visited, but my interaction with this octagenarian and his sons took place in a well-constructed hut opposite their half-built house. Shankar Lal Mishra could not walk or talk any more. His sons carried him out to the hut where he tried talking to me and to Indra Kishore, but could only produce sounds I could not decipher.

But in this condition he still responded to song. One of my most moving moments on the field came when after about seven minutes of listening to his sons sing a

[172] All these examples are from the repertoires of Falguni Mitra and Indra Kishore Mishra. These musicians are very sensitive to the interaction between lyric and musical figure, which goes beyond simple word painting. Rather, as both musicians emphasize, the two channels heighten each other's expressivity. This feature of their interpretation of compositions is integral to the aesthetics of the *banis* in each of their practices. Here, I have presented a sampling of effects rather than an analysis of each composition, in order to make my point about compositional models, interpretive strategies and their relationship to aesthetics.

khandar bani Dhrupad song set to music by Mahant Mishra, his cousin and Indra Kishore's father, he slowly began to feebly tap out the tala. Until then he had remained slumped while sitting, barely lifting his head, mouth drooling when he tried to speak. No strength even to chase away the fly that buzzed around and sat on his forehead, he responded to the sounds of song as his sons sang seated beside him.

This was an intensely generative field moment for me. A wonderfully tuned song in raga Shankara that describes Sri Ramachandra going to Lanka with an army of monkeys, the setting of this *khandar bani* song illustrates the expertise of the Bettiah musician in composing and singing song, a sense one can get from analyzing musical performance. It was the moment in the field that brought home to me the complex and deep cognitive, perceptual and sensory epistemologies produced among families that have made music day in and day out for generations in Place. It caused me to conclude that only half of sound production is guided by technique, the other by aesthetic memory, the bodily, sensory and emotional memory of aesthetic response that causes even an expert musician such as Falguni Mitra to say "I feel it this way" when I tried to question how he perceives the aesthetics of the different *bani*s. This theme recurs repeatedly in my work on the Dhrupad *bani*s and on raga, too often to be ignored as a vital piece of data.

It also was the field work that later led me to consider communal aesthetic memory seriously in arriving at a better understanding of the Dhrupad *banis* as perception effects that transform both the singer and the listener. When I played the clip of Shankar Lal Mishra's sons many months later to three different sets of people in Kolkata who had never heard musicians from Bettiah but had heard Falguni Mitra's father Shibkumar Mitra sing *khandar bani* Dhrupad in Kolkata, they immediately recognized the aesthetic of the song as a *khandar bani* song, even though it was not an expert rendition[173]. We could all sense that the Bettiah interpretation was quite close to what the Mitras would have come up with because in our very different ways we had engaged with the structures of perception that transform these musical forms into soma aesthetic experience. The series of events was important in showing me how sensitivity to structure is closely integrated with the cultivation of aesthetic memory, and their triangular relationship with grids of intelligibility. Thick sound allows a musician to pick up a piece of notation he hasn't seen before and develop a sense for how to sing it in ways that are cognitively intertwined with historical grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad as song in emplaced communities. The

[173] One of them, Kartik Lahiry, wrote the first article that connected the local Bettiah traditions with the traditions outside Bettiah (Lahiry, 1977). A native of Bettiah who lived in Kolkata, he had only casually heard *khandar bani* Dhrupad from Mitra's father. The second was vocalist and musicologist Sumati Mutatkar's daughter who had learnt Dhrupad from Falguni Mitra's father and had worked with Mitra's father on his collection of songs in different banis. She was Shib Mitra's scribe and still had a full copy of the song collection with her, which she gave me. The third was Falguni Mitra himself.

circulation of Dhrupad as aesthetic memory in community makes Dhrupad intelligible as song. To stabilize it as a formal aesthetic category however needs the work of polishing, churning and dwelling that expert musicians put into their musical practice.

The musicians in my project cultivate a conscious relationship between structure and aesthetics in their practice of Dhrupad. In this hard work of polishing and churning, many correlations and associations are crafted into a musician's relationship with the musical object, making sensory, material and human anchors of aesthetic perception and sonic capability potentially available to musical performance. A classical practice in an esoteric and complex genre such as Dhrupad is also a practice of music in daily life that can keep musicians alive when singing and singing when alive, and this I claim has a direct relationship to the sonic.

Conclusion

Every example I have worked through in this chapter analysis contests the claims of post-colonial scholars such as Weidman, Bakhle, Subramanian and Farrell who attribute ontological status and strong notions of tradition in Indian classical music to colonial epistemologies of literacy and literalism and the disciplinary technologies of notation and recording. The amount of work done to stabilize a single song implicates epistemologies produced in the inter-animation of musical forms with both the stock in trade of codified emotion and the affective interactions of musical life. Sustained in processes of emplacement that render sound thick, these acoustemic anchors guide a musician's engagement with musical objects as he senses structure and feels form in musical action and creative response.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion: Of birds and debates over musical Truths

"Although he may be well-versed in all branches of knowledge, one who does not know tradition should be ignored as a fool" – Shankara Bhagavatpada, ca. 7th c.

In this dissertation I set out to re-examine the notion of tradition in Indian classical music. I argued that scholarship on tradition has remained largely polarized between the rhetoric of rupture and the cocoon of continuity. While the former dates the emergence of Indian classical music as an organized Great Tradition to colonial encounter and the cultural nationalism of the late 19th century, the latter views Indian classical music as a more or less continuous performance tradition since medieval times, with continuity to the textual traditions of the first millennium. While the former emphasizes institutions and systems of authority as the primary definition of tradition, the latter has struggled with reconciling the diversity on the ground with the existence of a Great Tradition. The former uses the existence of heterogeneity and diversity to debate the very existence of a Great Tradition prior to the classification, standardization and institutionalization wrought by colonialism and cultural nationalism. The latter treats heterogeneity as something to be explained away with recourse to arguments about centralized authority and vernacular traditions, coming up with variants of Milton Singer's Great Tradition - little tradition model to explain away the embarrassing heterogeneity of the local.

Most scholars working in the 21st century have had to walk the tightrope between these two poles - which they have done by recovering diverse subaltern practices, bodies and histories from the cleansing and straightjacketing forces of nationalists fuelled by the disciplinary technologies of colonialism – namely, literacy, literalism, and Victorian morality. These archeological scholarly projects reinforce the polarization created between the Institution and the subaltern, the Great and the little, the Epistemology of colonialism and the unorganized forms of knowledge of the precolonial. In differing from this lineage of scholarship, I do not claim Indian music's antiquity by quoting the evidence of texts or pure experience; nor do I write a subaltern account in which individual local histories are seen as resisting the formatting power of Nation State and Colonial domination. Rather, I set out to re-examine the fundamentally divisive assumption that on-the-ground existence of diversity and heterogeneity is tantamount to the absence of a strong sense of tradition and fidelity to tradition. I question the assumption that music practiced within localized families has little or no epistemological bearing on the codes, categories and conventions of an organized Great Tradition. Specifically, in this dissertation I have argued that strong notions of tradition and fidelity to tradition in Indian classical music are irreducible to a discussion of the disciplinary technologies

of colonialism, and its close relative cultural nationalism. Using two case studies from the genre of Dhrupad, I showed through repeated analysis of contemporary practice that the forms of knowledge that tether musical sense, categorical sense and strong notions of tradition in the performance of Dhrupad are produced in the interactivity of musical life. I have understood the forms of knowledge produced in performance to be acoustemic – namely, epistemologies produced through active sensing in and through sound. My project sought to establish that the debate over song in the small world of individual musical lineages is integral to the mechanisms by which Indian classical music as an organized system of knowledge is emplaced and transformed in the interactivity of musical life in particular places.

To investigate and defend this claim, it becomes necessary to bridge the logics of a Great Tradition understood as a set of institutions, canons and norms with the strength and tenor of individual musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition in the small world of musical lineages. Senses of tradition are shaped not only by norms, and by the particularity of individual musical practice, they are integrally transformed by the nexus of associations within which Dhrupad becomes intelligible in situated practice amongst particular communities. Thus strong notions of tradition and fidelity to tradition in Indian classical music have to be understood in dialogic relationship with intelligibility and individual musical judgment. Intelligibility has both collective and inter-personal dimensions represented in my dissertation by two concepts – grids of intelligibility and thick sound both of which are integrally related to emplacement.

I demonstrated using two case studies that processes of emplacement are critical to bridging the small world of individual musical lineages with the categories and codes of an organized system of knowledge. This happens in two ways, both of which implicate dynamics that straddle subject and object, local and global, individual and institution. The first is the interactive forms of knowledge produced within acoustic communities that I defined as communities emplaced by shared but not necessarily homogenous listening practices. The second is through processes of emplacement in the repeated engagement with musical forms in individual musical practice. Collective intelligibility includes but goes beyond individual lineages or even musical communities, as Dhrupad is rendered intelligible within a whole nexus of heterogeneous practices that constitute Place at a given historical moment. At the same time, the cumulative dimensions of intelligibility for an expert tradition bearer who engages with his inheritance in intense musical work have to be given weight in an analysis of tradition. These dimensions are contained in the dynamic concept of thick sound. While I investigate grids of intelligibility through forms of knowledge produced in emplaced acoustic communities for Dhrupad in the context of my case studies, I investigate thick sound by attending to histories of interactivity and potentialities of practice that are animated in personal engagements with sound. I used the concepts of cognitive intertwining and interanimation to investigate how musical performance creates and sustains acoustemic anchors that co-locate

emotional and acoustic memory in both habitual and catalytic ways. Through particular memorial practices and repeated engagement with musical forms in the interactivity of singing in place, the sounds of Dhrupad become interanimated with the associations of relationships lived in and through sound.

Thus, for the first of my two case studies set in contemporary Bettiah, the memorial practices of the hereditary communities that have lived in place for several centuries in this rural town make it possible for me to conduct an archeology of the grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad performance in the transition from princely patronage. Even as late as the mid-twentieth century, the grids of intelligibility for Dhrupad in Bettiah included a culture of Devi and Mahadev worship, tantric practices, community life cycle events and festivals such as Holi and Durga Puja held in locations on the Bettiah estate and its surrounding town and villages. These histories have been transmitted to Indra Kishore in the intense work of acquiring, churning and polishing ancestral repertoire while living on ancestral land where his ancestors and the other musical families of Bettiah lived and sung for a few hundred years. The histories of interactivity animated by thick sound include the sonic geographies of the Bettiah Estate and its performance spaces, the musicians' street where hereditary musical families composed and practiced music at home, and the many temples of the Bettiah Estate that retained musicians in their service. Most importantly, they also include the particularities of Indra Kishore's musical life that marked sound, guts and vocal chords with the memory of learning to sing while hungry, being brought up in conditions of extreme penury and hardship by a father whose will to live was fuelled primarily by the desire to pass his precious family musical inheritance on to his only son as intensely as possible.

In my second case study set in contemporary Kolkata, I investigated the interactive practices through which non-hereditary expert musician Falguni Mitra sustains musical judgment and categorical knowledge. I considered both the daily work of transmission and individual practice, and the inter-subjectivity of performance and musical life amongst the changing acoustic communities for Dhrupad in the course of Falguni Mitra's musical life, both with his father and later on his own. Using the metaphor of listening in and feeding back, I studied the interruptive mechanisms through which the contemporary practice of Dhrupad functions as an acoustemic environment in Mitra's daily life as a musician. I analyzed a number of interruptive moments that cause Mitra to listen in to sound as thick sound, and to respond verbally and/or musically, in order to understand the nexus of interactions that stabilize particular musical experiences. This analysis highlights the dynamics between individual musical judgment, grids of intelligibility and the norms of Hindustani music as a Great Tradition. I showed that specific aesthetics, musical knowledge, models for musical action and metrics for right practice are stabilized by histories of interactivity that entangle acoustic and non-acoustic domains. I demonstrated that the result of heightened hearing is usually verbal or musical response that feeds back to strengthen the interactive mix through reiteration and

transformation. By considering both the catalytic and the habitual interactivity of individual musical lives, I demonstrated conclusively in these two case studies that musical judgment and strong notions of fidelity to tradition in Dhrupad performance are sustained by thick sound - heterogeneous domains of acoustemic interactivity that are irreducible to literacy, literalism and technological determinism.

My project is situated in post-colonial India a hundred years after the debates that constitute my point of departure, when technology and print culture is a fact of everyday existence. Yet, it is a historical project because first of all, the questions I ask are about the writing of histories. Secondly, I focus on an archeology of grids of intelligibility in relation to changing environments for the practice of Dhrupad in two juxtaposed case histories. My project is also historical because it attends to the histories of interactivity that are cognitively intertwined with the practice of Dhrupad in places – histories that animate the engagement with musical inheritance as thick sound even after the contexts themselves have changed or vanished. These cognitive entanglements are kept alive both by habitual memorial practices and by the catalytic eventfulness of musical life in places – processes of listening and feeding back that sustain thick sound[174]. Finally it is historical because of the historicity of the traditions carried by the two expert musicians I focus on in my case studies.

In chapter five, I turned my focus to musical performance and questions of tradition and ontology. Whereas in Chapters three and four I focused on the associative dimensions of interanimation, in Chapter five, I focused more closely on the processes through which musicians sense and cognize musical forms and aesthetic categories in a variety of musical situations. Using a close analysis of raga *alap* and the Dhrupad *banis* - esoteric aesthetic categories in Dhrupad performance - I showed that musical forms such as raga and *pada* (song) engender processes of emplacement through the interweaving of structure and affect, and form and feeling – thereby opening up heterogeneous pathways to the flow of performance. While some scholars writing on Hindustani music have tended to polarize enumerated knowledge and felt knowledge, I demonstrated repeatedly in my analysis that musical performance in Dhrupad is guided by heterogeneous acoustemic maps that interweave enumerated knowledge, embodied knowledge, and affective knowledge that render sound thick in performance. This systemic affordance for interweaving emotion and memory with structure engenders the inter-animation of a classical

[174] To extend my claims in history, I need to extend the analysis to the crucial period of the early 20th century where I will focus on three different locations in which the Dhrupad traditions of the Bettiah court were transmitted and transformed – in its place of origin in Bettiah and in the migrant homes of Benares and Kolkata. This work was initiated in the context of my dissertation project, but will be completed and published separately.

music practice with forms of knowledge produced in the associations of musical life. These processes of emplacement form fertile interactive grounds for the transformation of musical judgment, categorical sense and ontological status in Indian classical music performance. I trace strong notions of tradition and fidelity to tradition in Indian classical music to these processes of emplacement. Through this extended analysis, I established that the categories, codes and musical forms of a Great Tradition both pluralize and develop ontological weight in interaction.

Significantly, my analyses in Chapter five demonstrate that even while the formal categories of Indian classical music differentiate the aesthetic character of musical forms according to codified emotion, the aesthetic categories that organize thick sound are cognized in the interactivity of repeated performance as soma-aesthetic and felt knowledge that operates between unstructured affect and codified emotion. In this interanimation of structure and affect, the categories and codes of Hindustani music as an organized system of knowledge become available to transformation in performance.

The consequence of this interanimation is profound. Musico-aesthetic forms in Indian classical music have affordance for emotion and memory that is interwoven with their very topography as musical objects sensed in performance. Repeated engagements with musical forms in situated practice hence gives them the gathering potential and eventfulness of places in performance, putting the categories and codes of a formal system within the grasp of human sensibility and human emotion through processes of emplacement. In this process the formal structures of knowledge of Dhrupad - the high priestess of purity in Hindustani classical music - begin to interweave humanly organized sound and soundly organized humanity (Blacking, 1973). The same interactive ground that sustains the heterogeneity of the local is also the acoustemological basis for ontological status and strong notions of fidelity to tradition.

What of Hamsa the bird? In their recent book on the Dhrupad genre, Sanyal and Widdess propose that compositions in Dhrupad performance function more like oral archetypes than as cultural objects with tangible ontological status[175]. Their argument is founded on an analytical exercise of comparing different versions of the same song sung by musicians of different traditions. They find themselves unable to reconcile a musician having a strong conception of a composition as a Work with the existence of multiple versions across traditions. Rather, they suggest that a pan-Indian tradition results in a widespread formal archetype. Ironically, the song they choose for analysis is a Dhrupad by Maharaja Naval Kishore Singh, the composer king of Bettiah. The Dhrupad musicians of the Bettiah gharana would strongly contest Sanyal and Widdess's conclusions that a song's objective status in Dhrupad

[175] (Sanyal and Widdess 2004, chapters seven and eight)

is reducible to an oral archetype. For these musicians songs are ontologies produced in hours of churning, polishing, ruminating and dwelling that are interanimated by the interactivity of situated musical practice.

Between Amanda Weidman who insists that the notion of fidelity in an Oral tradition is a postcolonial conception and Sanyal and Widdess who reduce tradition in composition to the existence of a formal archetype, the musician who defines tradition by a strong sense of fidelity about how to sing a song is stuck between a rock and a hard place. The Bettiah lineages that value songs as ontology have little resonance with either the literalism of Works or the notion of compositions as archetypes. When Indra Kishore Mishra threw the gauntlet at me and asked me to choose between milk and water like Hamsa the bird, he was pointing at finding Truth in a line of song. When Falguni Mitra refused to budge with respect to the integrity of his interpretation of the same song, he was pointing at the same song but a different Truth. The obvious next question is whether anything goes. The answer is no and the reason why not is to be found in the many examples of musical action I have investigated in the three chapters that constitute the bulk of my analysis.

There *is* only one way to sing the Darbari Kanada Dhrupad that caused Indra Kishore Mishra to throw the gauntlet at me to distinguish milk from water. Just because the two musicians differed in exactly what this right way was does not mean that the only thing that makes sense is an "oral archetype" in a discussion of persisting objects in Dhrupad performance. Debate over the right way to sing the song in no way negates the fact that there is a strong notion of what "the song" *is* to each of these musicians, and that each of them can explicate this in categorical terms that reveal a logic of practice stabilized by thick sound.

The right way itself depends on the processes of churning and polishing through which an individual musician arrives at the notion of right practice for a piece of music transmitted in oral tradition – processes that create thick sound. The inter-animation of Dhrupad practice with the affective interactions of musical life in places works to raise the tenor of musical judgments to an ethics of practice. At the same time, the phenomenological interweaving of affect with structure and feeling with form in Dhrupad performance puts aesthetic categories within the grasp of human sensibility and soma-aesthetic experience. In this interactive mix, the kernel of a relationship between aesthetics and ethics in an oral tradition such as Indian classical music is to be found.

The processes through which the two musicians in my case study develop coherent, stable, strong and diverse interpretations of Truth in song suggests that ontological status in Indian classical music is sustained by a tradition which allows for co-existing unitary interpretations. Musical forms such as the raga and the composition come to acquire the weight of ontology in the interactive processes through which

musicians develop musical judgment and categorical sense – processes that are tethered by thick sound. At the same time, the affordances of musical forms in North Indian classical music performance engender diverse ways of being in the world while dwelling in the voice. To use an architectural metaphor, musical forms in Dhrupad practice are tethered like tents on an open field, not set in stone on a cement floor. Inhabiting a tent, one can be outside and inside at the same time, a means of staying alive by staying singing.

Bibliography

Ahmed, Nadir. Trans. & Ed. 1956. *Kitab-i-nauras* (by Ibrahim Adil Shah II Sultan of Bijapur). New Delhi: Bharatiya Kala Kendra.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991, 1983. *Imagined communities:Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism.* London, New York: Verso.

Asad, Talal. 1986. "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam." Occasional Papers. Washington, D.C.: Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.

Bachelard, Gaston. 1964. *The poetics of Space.* New York: Orion.

Basso, Keith H. 1996. "Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape" in *Senses of Place,* Ed. Basso, Keith H. and Steven Feld. Sante Fe: School of American Research Press.

Basu, Shivendranath.1924. *Sangit Samuchchai*, Vol I. Varanasi: Bharat Kala Parishad.

Bauman, Richard and Charles L. Briggs. 2003. *Voices of modernity: language ideologies and the politics of inequality.* Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Baxandall, William. 1988. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bakhle, Janaki. 2005. *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the making of an Indian Classical Tradition*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, India.

Bharali, Ravindra. 2008. *The forgotten forms of Hindustani Music.* New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.

Born, Georgina and Hesmondhalgh, David (2000). *Western Music and Its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*. University of California Press

Blum, S., Bohlman, P. V., Neuman, D. ed. 1991. *Ethnomusicology and modern music history.* Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Brihaspati, Kailashchandradev. 1976. *Dhrupad aur uska vikas*. Patna: Rashtrabhasha Parishad.

Brinner, Benjamin. 1995. *Knowing Music, Making Music: Javanese Gamelan and the Theory of Musical Competence and Interaction*. University of Chicago Series in Ethnomusicology. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Casey, Edward. 1987, 2000. *Remembering: A phenomenological study.* Indiana University Press.
_____.1996. "How to get from Space to Place in a fairly short stretch of Time" in *Senses of Place,* Ed. Basso, Keith H. and Steven Feld. Sante Fe: School of American Research Press.
_____. 2000. *Imagining: A phenomenological study.* Indiana University Press.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2000. *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Chatterjee, Chhaya.1996. *Sastriya sangita and music culture of Bengal through the ages*. New Delhi: Sharada Publishing House.

Chatterjee, Partha. 1993. *The nation and its fragments: colonial and postcolonial histories.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Clayton, Martin. 2000. *Time in Indian Music: Rhythm, Metre, and Form in North Indian Rāg Performance.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
_____2005. "Communication in Indian raga performance". In Dorothy Miell, David Hargreaves, and Raymond MacDonald, eds. *Musical Communication*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.361-381
_____2007. "Time, gesture and attention in a khyal performance", *Asian Music* 38 (2):71-96.

Clifford, James. 2004. "Traditional Futures". in *Questions of Tradition*. Editors Phillips, Mark and Gordon Schochet. Toronto:University of Toronto Press:152-168.

Coplan, David. 1990. "Ethnomusicology and the meaning of tradition" in *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History.* Ed. Blum, Bohlman, Neuman. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Das Sharma, Amal. 1993. *Musicians of India: past and present gharanas of Hindustani music and genealogies.* Kolkata: Naya Prokash.

Delvoye, Francoise 'Nalini'. 1996. "Revitalization of Dhrupad in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century" Musicological Literature and Patronage" in *Cultural Reorientation in Modern India.* Ed. Jaidev, Indu Banga. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
_____.2010. "Collection of lyrics in Hindustani Music: The case of Dhrupad" in *Hindustani Music: Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries.* New Delhi: Manohar.

Deshpande, Vamanrao H. 1973; 1987. *Indian Musical Traditions: An Aesthetic Sutdy of the Gharanas in Hindustani Music.* Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

Devidayal, Namita. 2009. *The Music Room: A Memoir.* New York: Thomas Dunne Books.

Dey, Ananya Kumar. 2008. *Nyasa in raga: the pleasant pause in Hindustani Music.* New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers

Eliot, T. S. 1919. "Tradition and the individual talent" in *Selected Essays.* New York: Harcourt, Brace, ed. 1950.

Erdman, Joan. 1985. *Patrons and performers in Rajasthan: The subtle tradition.* Delhi: Chanakya Publications.

Farrell, Gerry. 1997. *Indian Music and the West.* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Feld, Steven. 1996. "Waterfalls of Song – An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea" in *Senses of Place,* Ed. Basso, Keith H. and Steven Feld. Sante Fe: School of American Research Press.

Garg, Lakshminarayan. 1957. *Hamare sangita ratna.* Hathras: Sangit Karyalaya.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays.* New York: Basic Books.

Gjerdingen, Robert. 1988. *A classical turn of phrase: Music and the Psychology of Convention.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Grimes, Jeffrey. *The Geography of Hindustani Music: The Influence of Region and Regionalism on The North Indian Classical Tradition.* PhD Diss., University of Texas, Austin.

Hepokoski, James. 2001. "Beethoven Reception: The Symphonic Tradition" in *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*. Ed. Jim Samson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hirschkind, Charles. 2001. "The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt" in *American Ethnologist*. 28 (3):623-649.

Ho, Meilu. 2006. *The Liturgical Music of the Pushti Marg of India: an Embryonic Form of the Classical Tradition.* PhD Diss., University of California, Los Angeles.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1983. “Introduction: Inventing traditions” in *The Invention of Tradition.* Ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hurrie, Harriotte R. 2009. *Taking it to the 3rd level: a model for identifying aspects of personal style in the Khayal genre.* PhD Diss., Wesleyan University.

Hutchins, Edwin. 2005. “Material anchors for conceptual blends in *Journal of Pragmatics* 37:1555-1577.
_____ 2000. “Distributed Cognition” in *IESBS Cognition.*
_____ 1995. “Distributed Cognition in an Airline Cockpit” in *Cognitive Science* 19:265-288

Ihde, Donald. 1976, 2007. *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Jackson, William. 1994. *Tyagaraja and the renewal of tradition: translations and reflections.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass

Katz, Max. 2010. *Hindustani Music and the Politics of Theory.* Phd Diss. University of California, Santa Barbara.

Khan, Alladiya. 2000. *Khansahab Alladiya Khan: My Life*, translated by Amlan Das Gupta and Urmila Bhirdikar, Calcutta: Thema

Kippen, James. 1988. *The Tabla of Lucknow.* New York: Cambridge University Press.
_____2008. “Working with the Masters.” In *Shadows in the field: New Perspectives on Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology* Ed. Barz, Gregory F. and Timothy J. Cooley. New York: Oxford University Press

Krishna, T M. 2013. *A Southern Music:The Karnatik Story.* New Delhi: Harper Collins

Lahiry, Kartik.1977. “Bettiah Gharana: A school of Dhrupad.” In *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society* 8(3):29 – 47.

Lath, Mukund. 1987. “History of dhrupad: a plea for a new approach.” In *Dhrupad Annual* 2:16 – 32

Latour, Bruno. 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Leante, Laura. 2009. “The Lotus and the King: Gesture, Imagery and Meaning in a Hindustani Rāg.” In *Ethnomusicology Forum* 18(2): 185-206.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. 2007. (3rd ed.). *After Virtue: A study in Moral Theory.* Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press

Michael, Bernardo. 1999. '*Ethnographic encounters on the road to the archives: accessing the world of the Bettiah Raj Mahfizkhana*', http://www.hawaii.edu/csas/SAnewsfall99.html.

Misra, Kameswaranatha. 1997. *Kasi ki sangita parampara: sangita jagat ko Kasi ka yoga dana*. Lucknow: Bharat Book Center.

Mukhopadhyay, Durjhati Prasad. 1944. *Tagore -- a study.* Mumbai: Padma Publications.

Neuman, Daniel M. 1980. *The Life of Music in North India*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press

Neuman, Dard. 2004. *A house of music: the Hindustani musician and the crafting of traditions*. Phd Diss., Columbia University.

Owens, Naomi. 1987. "Dagar Gharana: A case study of Performing Artists." In *Performing Arts in India: Music, Dance and Drama.* Edited by Bonnie C. Wade.

Perlman, Marc. 2004. *Unplayed Melodies: Javanese Gamelan and the Genesis of Music Theory.* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Powers, Harold S. 1992. "Reinterpretations of tradition in Hindustani music: Omkarnath Thakur contra Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande". In *The Traditional Indian theory and practice of music and dance*. Edited by Jonathan Katz. Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill.

Powers, Harold and Richard Widdess, 2001. 'India, sub-continent of: III. Theory and practice of classical music, 2. Raga'. In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music.* Edited by Stanley Sadie. London.

Qureshi, Regula. 1986. *Sufi music of India and Pakistan: sound, context, and meaning in qawwali*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Rahaim, Matthew 2009. "Gesture, melody and the paramparic Body in Hindustani vocal music". Phd Diss., University of California, Berkeley.
_____ 2008. "Gesture and melody in Indian vocal music." *Gesture* 8(3): 325-347.

Raja, Deepak. 1999. "Dhrupad: an introduction" in *Perspectives on Dhrupad: A Collection of Essays.* Ed. Raja, Deepak and Suvarnalata Rao. Mumbai: Indian Musicological Society.

_____.2004. *Inder Kishore Misra* perf. Liner Notes from *IAM CD 1079*. New York: India Archive Music Ltd.
_____. 2005. *Hindustani Music: A Tradition in Transition, New Vistas in Indian Performing Arts*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld.
_____. 2009. *Khayal Vocalism: Continuity with Change, New Vistas in Indian Performing Arts*. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld.

Ramanathan, N. 1999. *Musical forms in the Sangitaratnakara.* Chennai: Sampradaya.
_____. 2004. "Sargam and Musical Conception in Karnataka System". Paper presented at the Seminar on *Sargam as Musical Material* organized by the Prabha Atre Foundation, Mumbai, 11-12 September 2004.

Ranade, Ashok. 1999. "Perspectives on Dhrupad" in *Perspectives on Dhrupad: A Collection of Essays.* Ed. Raja, Deepak and Suvarnalata Rao. Mumbai: Indian Musicological Society.

Ranganathan, Sumitra. 2013. "Compositional models and aesthetic experience in Dhruvapada" in *The Journal of the Music Academy.* 84:119-141

Ratanjankar. S. 1948. "The Closed Forms of Hindusthani Music" In *The Journal of the Music Academy.* XX:78-88

Roach, Joseph R. 1993. *The Players Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Rosenstein, Ludmila. 1997. The devotional poetry of Svāmī Haridās : a study of early Braj Bhāṣā verse.Groningen : Egbert Forsten

Rowell, Lewis. 1992. *Music and musical thought in Early India.* Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Roy Choudhury, Birendra Kishore.1938;1996. *Hindustani sangit me Tansen ka sthan*. Translated by Madanlal Vyas. New Delhi: Vani Prakasan.

Sanford, Whitney. 2008. *Singing Krishna: sound becomes sight in Paramanand's poetry.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Sanyal, Amiyanath. 1953. *Smritir atale.* Kolkata: Calcutta Mitralaya

Sanyal, Ritwik and Widdess, D. R. 2004. *Dhrupad: Tradition and performance in Indian music*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Sathyanarayana. R. 1994. "Raga Iconification in Indian music" In *Sumati Sangitabharanam: Gems of Indian Music and Musicology*:73-93. Delhi: Pratibha Prakashan.
_____.2004. *Karnataka Music As Aesthetic Form.* New Delhi: Center for Studies in Civilizations

Schofield, Katherine Butler. 2010. "Reviving the Golden Age again: 'Classicization', Hindustani Music, and the Mughals". In *Ethnomusicology* 54: 484-517
_____2013. "Chief musicians to the Mughal emperor: The Delhi *kalawant biraderi,* 17th to 19th centuries*"* In *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society*. Mumbai.

Seeger, Charles. 1950. "Oral tradition in music" in *Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary of Folklore.* New York

Seremetakis, Nadia. 1994. *The Senses Still*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sharma, Prem Lata. 1990. "The Treatment of Musical Composition in the Indian Textual Tradition" in *The Journal of the Indian Musicological Society.*21 (1,2):1-6.

Shelemay, Kay. 2011. "Musical Communities: Rethinking the Collective in Music". In *Journal of the Americal Musicological Society,* 64(2):349 – 390.

Silver, Brian.1976. "On Becoming an Ustad: Six Life Sketches in the Evolution of Gharana." *Asian Music*. 7(2): 27-58

Simha, Gajendra Narain.1990. *Bihar ki sangita parampara*. Patna: Sarada Prakasana.

Singh, Thakur Jaidev. 1983. "Prabandha and Dhruvapada" in *Studies in Musicology.* Edited by R. C. Mehta. Mumbai: Indian Musicological Society.

Srivastava, Indurama.1980. *Dhrupada: a study of its origin, historical development, structure and present state.* New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Stewart, Kathleen. 2007. *Ordinary Affects.* Raleigh: Duke University Press.

Stoller, Paul. 1997. *Sensuous scholarship.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Subramanian, Lakshmi. 1999. "The reinvention of a Tradition: Nationalism, Carnatic Music and the Madras Music Academy" in *Indian Economic and Social History Review.* XXXVI (2):131-63
_____2006. *From the Tanjore court to the Madras Music Academy.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press. India

Tailang, Madhu Bhatt.1995. *Dhrupada gayana parampara*. Jaipur: Jawahar Kala Kendra

Taruskin, Richard. 1995. *Text and Act: Essays on Performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
_____2005. "Speed bumps" Review of *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Music*. Ed. by Jim Samson, in *19th-Century Music*. 29 (2):185-207.

Thielemann, Selina.1997. *The Darbhanga tradition: Dhrupad in the school of Pandit Vidur Mallik.* Varanasi: Indica Books.

_____2001. *Musical traditions of Vaisnava temples in Vraja: a comparative study of samaja and the dhrupad tradition of north Indian classical music.* New Delhi: Sagar

Truax, Barry. 2001, 2nd Edition. *Acoustic communication.* Westport: Alblex Publishing

Utter, Hans. 2011. *Networks of Music and History: Vilayat Khan and the Emerging Sitar.* PhD Diss., Ohio State University.

Vedi, D C. 1949. "Compositions and the six fundamental ragas of Hindusthani music". In *The Journal of the Music Academy.* XX (Parts I to IV):104-109

Vyas, Bharat. 1980. *Dhrupad samiksha.* Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akadami

Wade, Bonnie. 1984. *Khyal: Creativity within North India's music tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wade, Bonnie. 1998. *Imaging Sound: An Ethnomusicological Study of Music, Art, and Culture in Mughal India*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Wade, Bonnie C, Ann M. Pescatello.1977. "Music patronage in Indic culture". In *Essays for a Humanist: an offering to Klaus Wachsmann*. New York: Town House Press.

Weidman, Amanda. 2006. *Singing the classical, Voicing the Modern: the postcolonial politics of voice in South India.* Duke University Press.

Widdess, Richard. 1995. *The rāgas of early Indian music : modes, melodies and musical notations from the Gupta period to c.1250.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Widdess, Richard. 2010. “The Emergence of Dhrupad” in *Hindustani Music: Thirteenth to Twentieth Centuries.* New Delhi: Manohar

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature.* Oxford University Press: Oxford.

Zbikowski, Lawrence M. 2002 *Conceptualizing Music: Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.