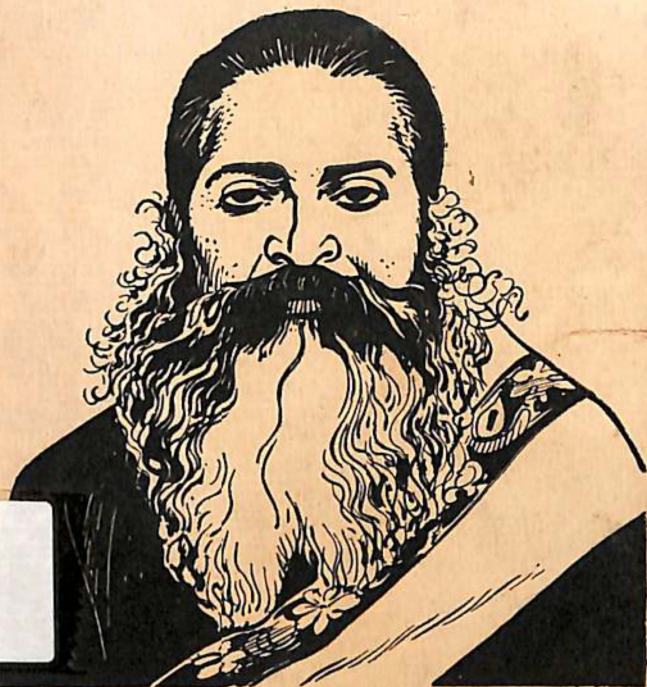


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V. R. ATHAVALE



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V. R. ATHAVALE
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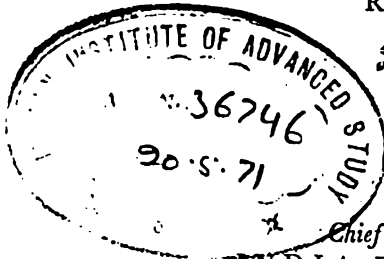
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INTRODUCTION

THE LATTER HALF of the 19th Century could be considered as one of the most remarkable periods in the history of India. It was during this period of the 19th Century, *i.e.* between 1850 and 1900 that a number of outstanding personalities appeared on the horizon of India and tried to revitalize the Indian nation in all walks of life. For instance, Lokmanya Tilak in Maharashtra, Swami Vivekananda and Shri Aurobindo Ghosh in Bengal, Lala Lajpat Rai and Ram Teertha in the Punjab, Sir M. Visvesvaraya, and Shri Kastoori Ranga Iyengar in the South, are some of the persons who were torch bearers of this new awakening.

This was, in fact, the period of the Indian renaissance. British rule was being stabilised and the Indian intelligentsia, through its educational system was coming in contact with the western ideas. New thoughts, new ideologies, and the new scientific outlook were creating a new consciousness in the minds of the educated class. The thinkers and the leaders of the country were trying to revive the ancient glory of India and at the same time were introducing new revolutionary trends of thoughts in the society. Nationalism, consciousness of the ancient Indian heritage and the spirit of democracy were the direct outcome of this process of thought.

In Maharashtra, a new generation of selfless workers, dedicated to the cause of the nation was coming up. The

teachings of Mahadev Govind Ranade and Vishnushastri Chiplunkar had inspired the younger generation to spread knowledge to the masses, to make people socially and politically conscious and to reorganise society on democratic principles. This new urge necessitated the use of all the possible cultural media such as education, literature, stage, and other arts. This idealism also resulted in a strong puritanic outlook of life.

In the field of music also, efforts were being made to recognise it as an essential part of our national culture and to revive its past glory. Music had, till then, fallen into the hands of an unimaginative and illiterate class of artistes and had become a matter of privilege and enjoyment for the limited number of rich people. The spirit of revival and reform sought to change this state of affairs. The pioneers of this movement were two inspired youths—Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (better known as Pandit Bhatkhande) and Vishnu Digambar Paluskar known better as Pandit Vishnu Digambar, two Vishnus, who dedicated their lives to the cause of the uplift of music.

It is for this reason that a student of Musicology cannot make his beginning without studying their lives and the immense work they have done in the field. Though both were contemporaries, the work that each undertook, in the field of music, was rather different in nature. Whereas Bhatkhande dedicated his whole life to research in ancient and contemporary Indian music and endeavoured to give a systematic shape to it, Paluskar endeavoured to spread music practically and to gain for it a respectable place in society. Till that time the musicians were considered as of a lower strata of the society and respectable persons,

though they appreciated their art, looked down upon them. The modern generation would perhaps find it difficult to conceive the plight of the Indian musicians and the art of music in those days. These two stalwarts worked for the uplift of the art of music and of musicians and with undaunted courage and tenacity they worked throughout their lives to attain this goal. It is a tribute to them that they nearly realized that goal in their life time.

This biography of Pandit Vishnu Digambar has been written by Shri V. R. Athavale, Music Producer, All India Radio, Bombay.

NEW DELHI
May 15, 1967

B. V. KESKAR

IN THE BRITISH DAYS there were many tiny princely states in South Maharashtra. Kurundwad was one of such states, situated about 150 miles south of Poona, and was ruled by Prince Dajisaheb Patwardhan. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar was born in Kurundwad on 18th August 1872 on the auspicious day of "Narali Purnima." Digambar Gopal was his father's name. According to the family tradition, the original name of this Paluskar family was "Gadgil". But it is said that one of the Gadgils living in the village "Palus" got a spiritual vision and from that time onward these Gadgils and their descendants were known among the people as "Paluskars" of the village "Palus". It is difficult to say whether the legend is true. Later on the original name Gadgil was forgotten and the the name Paluskar came to stay.

Vishnu's father was, by profession, a "Kirtanakar" and had fairly established his name in the profession. Young Vishnu and his brother Gopal used to accompany their father in the "Kirtan". "Kirtan" is a typical Marathi form of religious discourse in which a theme, generally of a puranic nature, is first expounded and is then illustrated by supporting stories from Indian mythology. It is abundantly interspersed with music. In order to be a good Kirtankar, one has to acquire adequate knowledge, of, and command over, music. Thus in accompanying his father in the kirtan, Vishnu had received his first

lessons in music. He had a natural gift of a very sweet voice, which was sonorous and high-pitched at the same time. Whenever, therefore, he used to sing in the kirtan, he invariably impressed his audience. Thus, even as a child, his natural talent for music was being nicely groomed; side by side, his usual school education was also going on. Undoubtedly the credit for this goes to Shri Dajisaheb Patwardhan, the Chief of Kurundwad. The keen interest that the Chief was evincing in this boy may be partly due to the fact that his own son Prince Nanasaheb was Vishnu's classmate and they both used to study together. Vishnu studied upto the sixth English standard and got married quite early in his life as was customary in those days. The only big problem that might have, at times, been bothering him was whether to step into his father's shoes and become a Kirtankar or to join the state service and become a clerk, subsequently rising to the level of a petty officer.

2

While the young Vishnu, at this small age, might perhaps have been considering these two alternatives, he met with an accident and almost lost his eyes. Kurundwad which is situated on one side of the Krishna is near the famous centre of pilgrimage called "Narsobachiwadi", situated on the other side of the river. Thousands of devotees of the God Dattatreya, gathered at this Wadi at the time of Dattajayanti. Residents of Kurundwad also used to

celebrate the Dattajayanti, with great enthusiasm and fanfare. Lots of fireworks used to be displayed in the streets during the celebrations. Young Vishnu used to take part in these celebrations. On one such occasion, a spark from a firework struck him squarely on his face, causing burns and damaging his eyes seriously. Medical help was given immediately. The burns got healed up, but the damaged eyesight could not be restored. Many doctors tried to help him but without success. Shri Dajisaheb, the Chief, got convinced that no local doctors could do anything and decided to send Vishnu to Miraj—another princely state, situated a few miles away. Miraj was, then, considered a fairly advanced place and was certainly better equipped to render necessary medical help. Besides, the Chief of Miraj, Balasaheb Patwardhan happened to be a near relation of the chief of Kurundwad. Shri Dajisaheb Patwardhan also requested him to take personal interest in young Vishnu and do everything necessary to improve his eyesight. Thus Vishnu came from Kurundwad to Miraj.

In Miraj, Dr. Bhadbhade used to treat him. Everything possible was done to improve the eyes, but with little or no success. Hopes of cure began to recede and with that, worries for his future started. Impairing eyesight forbade reading, which is very essential for a Kirtankar. So, the career of a Kirtankar had to be abandoned and also that of a clerk. The question of Vishnu's future loomed large before all those who were interested in him, including the two rulers.

It so happened that in Miraj the young boy very often used to render devotional songs at the place of Dr. Bhadbhade, where he used to go for his medical treatment.

His musical training as an associate in Kirtan made him sing the devotional songs with such emotion and fervour that the meaning of the song would vividly come to the fore, and that meaning, pictured in the round high-pitched voice of Vishnu, went to the heart of the audience. This remarkable quality of his music was noticed by Dr. Bhadbhade and he began to appreciate him immensely. The doctor very often thought that Vishnu was cut out to be a musician, and a musician of no mean stature. Therefore, when, discussions about his future were going on, the doctor once suggested to the father that Vishnu might take up the career of a musician. The father agreed to this. But how? His poverty was the main obstacle; there was also the difficulty of finding out the right type of musician who would readily undertake the training of the young boy. However, the doctor, with his father's consent, continued his efforts in this direction. The doctor ventured to suggest his own ideas to the Chief of Miraj who was also interested in Vishnu's future. The doctor's position as personal physician of the Chief made this easily possible.

Venture it was indeed, because a musician had no respectable position in society and there was an element of risk as it might invite displeasure of the Chief. But it seems that Destiny had already decided to carve out this career for him because all the seeming difficulties disappeared. The Chief of Miraj agreed to the suggestion of Dr. Bhadbhade and arranged for Vishnu to get training from his Durbar musician. Vishnu bade farewell to the High School and at the age of 15, in the year 1887, settled down in Miraj to try his luck in his new career.

3

Vishnu received his training in music from Pandit Balkrishna Buwa Ichalkaranjkar, the state musician of Miraj, from 1887 to 1896, *i.e.* for about 9 years. Balkrishna Buwa was considered to be a great master. He originally belonged to Maharashtra but had to go to Gwalior to learn music. In those days Gwalior was famous as the 'Citadel of Music'. For many centuries, it was closely associated with great masters of music like Raja Maan, the great Tansen, Bade Mohamedkhan and others. It had become the holy Banaras of the musicians. One who wanted to learn music usually went to Gwalior. Balkrishna Buwa also went to Gwalior, and with great difficulties and hard work had mastered the art. After completing his training in Gwalior, he had just come to Miraj as a Durbar musician. In fact, it was simply an accident that he settled in Miraj. He intended to settle in Bombay but the Bombay climate did not suit him and he developed asthma. The Chief of Miraj suggested some medicine to him against asthma and it proved effective. Moreover the dry and wholesome climate of Miraj suited him very well. So at the instance of the Chief he had settled there as a court musician and again at his instance he now started giving training to young Vishnu Paluskar who was very lucky in getting such a renowned master as his guide. Vishnu took his first lessons in 1887. He was then hardly 15 years old.

In those days, to learn music was an ordeal. An aspiring student would be required to do all sorts of service (even menial work) in his teacher's house. There were no regular classes. No text-books containing the traditional

compositions with their notations were available. There were also no books which would describe the peculiarities of Ragas. Such books were not composed as yet. Very often the student got a few lessons from his Guru (teacher) only after he performed the household duties and even then only if the mood of the teacher coincided with the spare time of the student. The student would then practise their lessons during further spare time. The musicians in those days were usually whimsical and hot tempered and the student dared not ask for any solution of his difficulties. Any questions could be mistaken for disrespect and would invite expulsion. The only way, to learn music as it existed then, was to imitate the teacher in toto. This blind imitation very often resulted in the reproduction of the musician's own distortions and idiosyncrasies in his presentation. But there was no way out for the student, if he wanted to learn music.

When Vishnu began his lessons in music, the first problem before him was that of training his voice. Usually at the age of 15 or 16 the voice of a boy undergoes a complete change. It becomes bass and, if no care is taken in this transitional period, it can become useless for musical performance. Vishnu's voice also was undergoing such a change and therefore it was imperative for him to devote much of his time to cultivate his voice thoroughly. He was conscious of this and was taking great pains in voice training. Another difficulty before him was the peculiar style of musical expression of the 'Gharana' or the school of music to which his teacher belonged. It was the Gwalior 'Gharana' of music and the peculiarity of this 'Gharana' lay in the swiftness and clarity of its straight and circular 'Tans'. His original voice was sonorous and full. Such a

voice is usually not quite suitable for the quicker tempo of the Gwalior 'Tans'. In order to develop this elasticity, he had to make immense efforts. He started practising the 'Alankars' and 'Paltas' (series of rapid musical notes) which gradually increased swiftness in his 'Tans'. He had also to take care to retain the volume and sweetness of his voice. He would daily devote two to three hours to memorizing the compositions and doing 'riaz' or practice; two to three hours to cultivating his voice, and for about two to three hours he would take actual training in music from his Guru. Besides this, some of his time was spent in doing the household duties at his Guruji's house. Later on, he increased these hours of practice. One can, therefore, very well imagine the tremendous exertion that he was making to learn music, and how little time must have been left for his own personal needs. It was creditable that he could, tenaciously and steadfastly, take such exacting training from Balkrishna Buwa for nine long years.

While he was taking lessons in music, he was already thinking about his future. He had a natural gift of keen observation and it did not escape his notice that the status of a musician was quite low in society. The social elite did not treat the musician as one of them. For example, he could notice that whenever there was a social function in the city the gentry was naturally invited; but his Guru Balkrishna Buwa would not be necessarily one of them. The only reason was that he was a musician.

Vishnu very much felt this social disparity. He always thought that the musician was in no way less than any other respectable person. This discrimination hurt him intensely. Another aspect of the life of a musician also

could not have escaped his observation. He could see that the musicians had to depend for their livelihood on the patronage of the rich people, who used to invite them at their places for private concerts and paid them paltry remuneration. One other means of employment was to become court musicians. Naturally they were completely dependant upon these two classes. The whimsical moods and tempers of these two were proverbial.

Vishnu felt very much about the miserable condition of the musicians. As far as he himself was concerned, being almost one of the family members of the Chief of Miraj, he was treated in a totally different way. But this caused him further uneasiness. He had chosen the career of a musician. Normally, therefore, he would have been treated in a similar way as other musicians, but, for the reason stated above, all hospitality was extended to him. He could observe this disparity in treatment often. Being a devout disciple of Balkrishna Buwa, he disliked intensely this discrimination in the case of his Guru.

Vishnu soon became aware of the hardships a student of music had to undergo. The art of music had virtually fallen into the hands of an uncultured and uneducated class, and a student of music, in the absence of any books on the subject, had to depend entirely on them for learning music. These musicians used to treat the students as their unpaid menial servants. They used to think that the training given was a great favour bestowed on the students and that in return it was the bounden duty of the students to serve them as they liked. Vishnu felt equally sorry for both, the musicians and the students. A definite plan was taking shape in his mind for trying to remove these miseries of the musicians as well as of the students.

Seeds of the work that he did in this sphere in his later life were sown during this period.

Vishnu soon made good progress in music. He started accompanying his Guru in musical concerts. Gradually he gained confidence. Sitting behind his Guru, he started singing in support. But in doing so, unintentionally he would sometimes surpass his Guru. It is natural for the young to be ambitious, and he was no exception to it. This sort of competition could not be tolerated by some of the other disciples of Balkrishna Buwa. They were becoming jealous of Vishnu because of his rapid progress in music. They tried to poison the ears of the Guru and their constant insinuation had its effect. He gradually got prejudiced against Vishnu. On noticing this, Vishnu became very unhappy and started thinking in terms of becoming independent by leaving Miraj. Balkrishna Buwa's prejudice went on increasing and he tried to ignore Vishnu's company.

At about this time one incident occurred which expedited Vishnu's departure from Miraj. Once it so happened that he was going for a walk with his Guru. The Chief of Miraj who was passing by in his carriage stopped the vehicle and asked Vishnu, whom he considered like a son, to accompany him in the carriage. It did not occur to him to ask Balkrishna Buwa who was his employee to come along with them in the same carriage. Vishnu was helpless and had to go along with the Chief. But the incident made a deep wound in Buwa's heart. One more incident of this kind almost proved to be the last straw on the camel's back. In the inaugural function of a small factory in Miraj, most of the court dignitaries and other respectable persons from the town were invited. The only person to

be omitted from this was Balkrishna Buwa. Vishnu was feeling greatly pained by the discrimination against his Guru. The only way out was to quit Miraj and stand on his own legs. He was, by this time, a young-man of twenty-four, bubbling with enthusiasm and full of confidence. He had got good training from Balkrishna Buwa. He wanted to do some outstanding work in the field of music. He knew that if any more incidents of this kind took place, his Guru's prejudice against him would reach a breaking point, and he did not want this to happen.

The decision to leave Miraj was taken, but it was not easy to implement it. The foremost difficulty was financial. Till then, such worries never bothered him.

Vishnu knew that the Chief, if told of his decision to leave Miraj, would never give his consent to such a plan. He also felt that his Guru too would not approve of this idea. Therefore he had to conceal his plan from both. He discussed it with some of his closest associates and friends. They wholly supported the idea. One of his well-wishers, Shri Keshavrao Patwardhan managed to get some money from his father and gave it to Vishnu. Two of his other colleagues, Shrikrishnaji Herlekar and Shri Balwantrao Kane decided to join him. The trio left Miraj for good on the full moon day of the month of Shravan in 1896. Fired with an ambition to do some outstanding work in the field of music, they decided to show by their example how musicians can live like other respected citizens with dignity.

After leaving Miraj they first came to Aundh and then went to Satara. Satara, once the seat of the Maratha dynasty, is seventy miles away from Poona. There, for the first time, Vishnu Digambar gave his independent performance. The remuneration he got was very meagre; but this was his first self-earned income and he took great pride in receiving it. Later on Panditji often related this fact to his disciples, with great pride and used to say: "Now I am earning thousands of rupees; but the first remuneration which I used to get in the beginning of my career was of immense value to me". After this he went to Baroda. He knew nobody in Baroda. But he decided to go there because, like Gwalior, Baroda too was considered a centre of music and many musicians went there to try their luck. The Royal family of this state was interested in music and liberally helped the artistes. There were great musicians of repute at the court of the Baroda ruler. Vishnu Digambar went to Baroda with his two disciples. They decided to stay in a temple of Rama. He did not know anybody in the city, and yet he avoided to follow the usual pattern of introducing himself to the outstanding musicians of the city or to the Royal family or to other patrons of music. He felt that if he had really any sterling qualities in him, people themselves would come to him and invite him to give his performances. He started his daily practice of music in the temple itself in the early hours of morning from four to eight O'clock. The time selected by him to do "riaz" (daily practice), viz., the early hours of morning when peace and quiet prevailed everywhere, was so aptly

chosen that his music could be heard in the neighbourhood very clearly and distinctly and made favourable impression in the surrounding locality. People gradually started talking about how a good musician had come to the city and was staying at the Rama temple and did his practice in the early hours of morning. Music lovers started gathering in the temple to listen to him. Soon he became the talk of the musical society of the town and came into contact with many connoisseurs and also some good musicians. They very much appreciated his music.

The Royal family of the state of Baroda was very fond of music and would give a chance to any good musician who came to Baroda to show his talent in the court. Soon the reputation of Vishnu Digambar spread throughout the city. Maharani Jamnabai came to hear about his merits as a musician and extended an official invitation to him to give a performance at the Durbar. He was waiting for such an opportunity and readily accepted the invitation. According to the prevailing tradition, when a guest musician came, the court musicians would sing first and then the guest would perform. But partly on account of the young age of Vishnu Digambar and also partly due to some jealousy, the court musicians requested humbly that he should sing first and after that they were prepared to show their talents. Vishnu Digambar knew that it was a challenge to him. He accepted it and took up the Tanpura with confidence and sang with a will. His voice was sweet and sonorous with a high-pitched range. He decided to utilise these qualities fully. He adjusted the Tanpuras at a slightly higher pitch than usual. His Gwalior style of music and his intuition had its effect on the listeners. Pandit Vishnu Digambar sang

for two to three hours and deeply impressed the court audience. Thereafter the court musicians were summoned to give their performances. One after another they came forward, and were not able to match him. At last the most famous musician of Baroda, Khansaheb Faiz Mohammadkhan took the seat. He realised that the young boy had already created an atmosphere favourable to himself mainly due to the high pitch of his voice. He, therefore, did not change the pitch of the tanpuras, already tuned by Vishnu Digambar and started singing in the same key-note. Khansaheb's voice was broad and bass. May be for this or for some other reason he could not make an impression over the audience that day. The concert was a distinct victory for Vishnu Digambar. He answered the challenge of the musicians who had contemptuously referred to him as the "poor Brahmin boy".

The Maharani was extremely pleased by Vishnu Digambar's performance and she rewarded him by giving Rs. 700 in cash, over and above the shawl, which is traditionally given as a token of appreciation. But while giving a send-off to the young musician, she gave him a tip, indicating that it would be better for him to leave Baroda soon, as the local musicians had already become jealous of him and that the performance on that day would increase that jealousy to such an extent that they might create serious difficulties for him. Vishnu Digambar took the hint and after a short stay of 15 to 20 days, left Baroda.

The concert in Baroda established his reputation as one of the leading musicians. He proceeded afterwards to Saurashtra then known as Kathiawad. In Saurashtra

there were various big and small states and many of them happened to be good patrons of music. In states like Junagadh, Rajkot and Jamnagar, the musicians were offered good patronage and were treated well. Vishnu Digambar first went to Rajkot. This was in the year 1897, when an epidemic of plague was devastating Maharashtra. At the Rajkot Railway station, when the doctors came to know that he had come from Maharashtra, they quarantined him along with his companions in a sarai. In the sarai, Vishnu Digambar as usual started his "riaz". The doctor in attendance heard him, and mentioned that he had recently learnt that some young and promising musician from Maharashtra had made name in Baroda in the field of music. He asked Vishnu Digambar if he knew him. When the doctor came to know that Vishnu Digambar was that musician, he at once released him and his companions from quarantine, and respectfully allowed them to enter the city.

Vishnu Digambar was obsessed with the desire of making the art of music respectable and the position of the musician honoured and dignified. He saw that the common man, fond of music, could not get an opportunity to hear good musicians, because only a small and selected audience would be admitted to the Royal Court or to the places of rich persons, where these concerts were generally held. He, therefore, launched a novel and revolutionary idea in the field of music. He decided to give his musical performances in public, charging fees for the admission. This has now become common, but in those days it was a revolutionary idea. This innovation enabled anyone who wanted, to attend these concerts. He used to say that

he had democratized the art of music. This experiment of public performances proved a great success. A new way was found for the musicians to earn their livelihood and not be dependant on rich patrons. Vishnu Digambar thus started popularising music. He repeated this experiment at other places in Saurashtra and established his reputation. However, as experience shows, a new idea is always opposed by the traditionalists. The court musicians and their supporters stoutly opposed these public performances. Even Vishnu Digambar's Guru joined hands with them and disapproved of this idea of public performances. The main point of criticism was the belief that by such public performance, the art of music would be cheapened and commercialised. But Vishnu Digambar remained undaunted and ignored this criticism. He continued giving public performances.

In this tour of Saurashtra a strange event is said to have taken place. This is related by one of his disciples who got it from Pandit Vishnu Digambar in his last days.

Vishnu Digambar was travelling to various places not only with a view to earn money and reputation, but also for finding a place where he could settle down and start his work in the field of music. He visited the holy mountain of Girnar near Junagarh where the 'devata' was believed to bless the devotees. Vishnu Digambar and his disciples started climbing the Girnar mountain, when it suddenly began to rain. They sought shelter nearby and when the rains stopped Vishnu Digambar asked his disciples to proceed further, as he wanted to take rest there for some time and to enjoy the scenery. The disciples went ahead leaving him alone. He looked around and the beautiful surroundings inspired him. A keen

urge to sing seized him and involuntarily music burst forth. He sang like a possessed man. Suddenly he became aware of someone surreptitiously listening to his singing and responding to its nuances. He looked up and saw an ascetic standing and listening to his music in rapt attention. He did not like this intrusion by the ascetic. He ironically inquired of the ascetic if he possessed any knowledge of music. The ascetic replied, "Yes, quite a little". Vishnu Digambar did not believe him, and asked him insolently, "What is your opinion about my music?". The ascetic replied, "On the whole it was all right. But it suffered from one serious drawback". He never expected such a forthright criticism from a sanyasi. He challenged the ascetic to sing along with him and to point out the defects. The ascetic replied, "You were not singing at my behest. Why should I, therefore, sing at yours? I will sing at my sweet will, and if you are fortunate enough you may get a chance to hear it". Saying this, the ascetic disappeared in the forest. After his departure, Vishnu Digambar started thinking about his conversation with the sanyasi. Tired and exhausted, he started walking. When he went a little further, he suddenly heard some sweet notes coming across the valley in the forest. He followed the direction of the notes and came to an old dilapidated temple. In the temple there was an image of the Goddess and in front of that image the same sanyasi sat singing completely absorbed in himself. He stood there listening. Gradually the music took complete possession of him. He thought that the sanyasi possessed some miraculous power. Repenting for his rude behaviour, he went forward and fell at the feet of the sanyasi.

The sanyasi stopping his music asked him why he had come there. Vishnu Digambar shorn of his pride apologised and beseeched the sanyasi to tell him how he had got that miraculous power of music. He begged of him to show him the way to achieve such power. The sanyasi replied in scorn that a person dressed in luxurious clothes and trying to parade his art in an arrogant manner cannot attain this power. It could be obtained only by abandoning everything and dedicating oneself to God. Vishnu Digambar threw away his rich costume and requested the ascetic to accept him as his disciple. The sanyasi without giving any reply got up, and walked off. By nature Vishnu Digambar was an obstinate person. He tried to follow the sanyasi. The sanyasi tried to dissuade him. The sanyasi told him that he was not meant to be a sanyasi. He asked Vishnu Digambar to remember the vow he had taken, and asked him to proceed to the north towards the Punjab, and settle down there. There he would prosper. The sanyasi advised him, "You have got to be humble and modest, and then only people will gather around you and you will be able to fulfil your vow." He promised to meet him again and then disappeared into the forest. This advice, as Panditji told his disciples later, moulded his future career and guided him throughout his life.

Getting inspiration from his talk with the sanyasi, Vishnu Digambar started on the next lap of his journey to Gwalior. Gwalior held a special attraction for him. It was a seat of music, and moreover it was the birth place of the so-called Gwalior School of Music to which he himself belonged. He had a legitimate ambition to display his musical talent in this great city and to win over

the people. He had already earned sufficient reputation to gain self-confidence. In the beginning he stayed with Shri Chintamanrao Vaidya, a noted scholar, who happened to be a good friend of his Guru, Balkrishna Buwa. Vishnu Digambar later shifted to another place, where he remained for about four months. He gave several music performances in Gwalior. That a musician coming from south could sing in the style of Gwalior School of Music with such purity and mastery, was a new experience for the Gwaliorians. The sonorous voice of Vishnu Digambar reminded them of the famous musician Baba Dikshit, who had expired about ten to twelve years back. Baba Dikshit was a disciple of the great brother musicians, Haddu Khan and Hassu Khan. There was unanimity in appreciating his performances. Famous musicians of Gwalior of those days, like Apte Guruji, Bala Guruji, Shankar Pandit, Amir Khan etc. praised him for his excellent performance. His reputation spread and many Sardars invited him to their houses for concerts. Maharaja Madhavrao Scindia too once invited him, and was greatly pleased with his performance and gave him presents in token of appreciation following the custom of those days. The Maharaja also gave him introductory letters to leading personalities in Mathura, Bharatpur, and other places which facilitated his stay in those places to a great extent.

From Gwalior he went to Mathura. He stayed there for about seven to eight months. During his long stay in Mathura he not only gave musical performances but also studied the 'Braja' dialect in which most of the classical songs are composed. Vishnu Digambar realised that if he were to spread the art of music, he had to study the

Braja dialect. He learnt Hindi well of which Braja was a dilect. In Mathura, he also looked into old Sanskrit literature, relating to music. Pandit Chandan Choubey, a noted singer, who excelled in the Dhrupad style of music, was residing in Mathura. Vishnu Digambar came in contact with him and had many discussions with him, particularly relating to the latter's specialised subject, the Dhrupad. He not only learnt the style but also set some new compositions in it. He looked into ancient books not with a view to have more feathers in his cap, but to reconcile the old principles with the new ones. He was neither a fanatic follower of the old, nor was he a zealot of the new. It may be said that in his long stay in Mathura he laid the foundation of his reputation as a great pundit of music.

From Mathura, he came to Bharatpur. Here also he made a very good impression on the people. But his stay in Bharatpur is of special importance because it was here that he spoke in the public for the first time. Mr. Mayashanker Jani, a School Inspector, was one of the great admirers of Pandit Vishnu Digambar. It was Jani who encouraged him to speak in public, first by way of reply and subsequently as an independent speaker delivering lectures on music. He realized that oratory would be very necessary for him if he were to be a missionary in the field of music. He, therefore, deliberately cultivated the art of speech with the help of Mr. Jani. In the beginning, he would first write down his speeches and then read out the same in the public meeting. But as he progressed, he got over his initial nervousness, and started speaking extempore. Soon he earned a reputation as a good speaker. The success he got in propagating the art

of music, was partly due to the effective speaker in him. In his hurricane campaigns which he undertook later, this greatly helped him. He always expressed his gratitude to Mr. Jani for initiating him in public speaking.

From Bharatpur he went to Delhi. He had a keen desire to find out a place where he could settle down, earn his livelihood, and spread music. Wherever he went, he looked at the place with this idea. He would meet leading personalities during his stay and develop contacts with persons who could prove helpful in the attainment of his goal. During his stay in Delhi he came in touch with the eminent musicologist, Shri Pannalal Goswami. He held several discussions with the latter. His study in Mathura stood him in good stead in these discussions. Panditji gained more knowledge from these Delhi discussions. In Delhi he got acquainted with the famous sitar player Barkatullakhan.

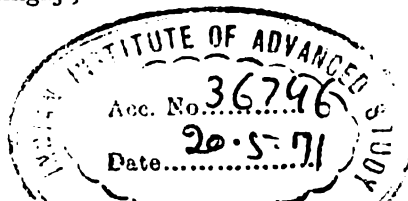
While he was in Delhi, he got an opportunity of visiting Punjab. In Jullundur, the death anniversary of Harivallabh Swami, a noted saint and singer, was celebrated on a very large scale every year. Swamiji was a resident of Jullundur. This festival was considered to be the biggest of its kind in Punjab. Many vocalists and instrumentalists, coming from far and near, attended it. To be invited to sing in this festival was considered to be a great honour. Whosoever established his reputation in the festival was sure to become well-known throughout the Punjab. Pandit Tolaram was manager of this festival and on hearing about Pandit Vishnu Digambar, he himself came to Delhi to extend an invitation. Pandit Vishnu Digambar accepted it. The words of the ascetic of Junagadh, "Go to the north and there you will prosper",

were still ringing in his ears. He went to Jullundur to attend the festival, at the end of the year 1898. In the festival, he impressed the audience very much with his sonorous and imposing voice; coupled with the pure Gwalior style of exposition he outshone the other musicians. Moreover, his impressive personality and innate modesty made a deep impression. His success brought him in touch with big merchants and the elite of the Society, and soon invitations from all parts of the Punjab poured in. He travelled almost throughout the length and breadth of the province in the year 1899. The prophecy of the sanyasi of Girnar came true !

During this extensive tour he found the province suitable for his activities, and decided to settle down in Amritsar. He consulted one of his closest friends and admirers, Lala Ramratan Lal. Lalaji had good influence in the city and he could make very good arrangements for him to stay in the city and start his activities. This was the beginning of his future career, though on a modest scale.

5

He had hardly settled down in Amritsar and started his activities when he received an invitation from a very wealthy person of the Punjab, Sir Baba Khemsingh Bedi, who pressed him to come down to his place in Okara, in Montgomery district, to coach his children in music. A pressing invitation from such a person of high status as Sir Baba Khemsinghji, could not be turned down. One



more point which inclined him to accept the invitation was that he would have solitude, where he could contemplate over his future plans. He also wanted to think over ways and means for overcoming difficulties that confronted students of music. From his own experience he had sufficient knowledge of such difficulties. He went to Okara and stayed there for about eight months. During this period he made a deep study of various problems concerning music. One of the most common problems for a beginner in music was that there were no set lessons which a student could repeat, because everything was taught orally. The teacher also could not always remember what he had taught on the previous occasion. Another defect that he found from his own experience, lay in the traditional method of oral teaching. A student was compelled to imitate the Guru. Very often the Guru would be extremely meticulous, expecting that his disciple should be a carbon copy of himself. This curbed the independent thinking of the student.

He thought that the western notation system, adapted to the Indian Music with suitable modifications, would prove a great boon to the student of music. He started some efforts in this direction. He invented a number of signs denoting various notes peculiar to Indian music. He also tried to write down in notation many compositions that he had learnt from his Guru. He had learnt the compositions in the traditional method. Therefore he found it extremely difficult to transcribe those compositions by the notation system. But later on, by constant practice it became comparatively easier for him to write down the compositions in the notation system.

At Okara he also did a lot of thinking to find out a

way to propagate and teach music to students on a big scale. He decided to establish a teaching institution exclusively dedicated to the study of music. He, therefore, found it necessary to prescribe a syllabus incorporating a definite course in music. He chalked out a complete plan to make this practicable. He felt that unless music was propagated on a large scale, it would not be possible to raise the status of music.

As these ideas were assuming a definite shape, he decided to leave Okara and ultimately chose to settle down at Lahore. Lahore was a very important centre of culture. It was the capital city of the Punjab. He put forward these ideas before Sir Baba Khem Singh Bedi and took his permission to leave Okara. In Lahore, he consulted his friends and finally decided to start his music school. He was confronted with the problem of finding out a suitable name for such an institution. Deliberations about the choice of the name for the school started. Different friends suggested different names but ultimately the name Gandharva Mahavidyalaya as suggested by a leading worker of Sanatan Dharm Samaj, Pandit Deendayal Sharma, was unanimously accepted.

That the name was very apt is borne out by the fact, that though sixty-five years have passed, no need is still felt to change it. Thus Pandit Vishnu Digambar founded his music school on 5th May 1901 at Lahore. The opening ceremony of the school was performed by Sir P. C. Chatterji, a senior Judge of the Punjab Chief Court.

The foundation of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya was an event of great importance in the annals of Indian musical renaissance. It was the first of its kind in India. There were undoubtedly a few music schools in India even

before this, but all of them were being run under the patronage of Maharajas. They were being conducted in a haphazard fashion, and the teaching there depended much on the caprice of the musicians, employed by the State. The Gandharva Mahavidyalaya was the first public institution to be run on public patronage. It was then the only school imparting education of music in a systematic way.

Though Panditji was carrying on the activities of this institution on his own, he had associated with it many educated and influential persons from various walks of life, by appointing them on the board of advisers. The idea was to make the institution broadbased. For finances, the institution practically depended on public support. It was literally a school of the public, a novel experiment of democratising music. The art of music, which then belonged to the classes, was being made available to the masses. The institution also helped in realising Panditji's other ambition, that of raising the status of the musicians. As far as Pandit Vishnu Digambar's personal life was concerned, the institution was of great importance in giving freeplay to his qualities. His competence in running a public institution, his sagacious public relations, his shrewd methods in popularising music, all enhanced his reputation. The foundation of this institution in May 1901 at Lahore was an epoch-making event.

The Gandharva Mahavidyalaya was located in Hira-
mandi in a big building. In the beginning, there were only fifteen or sixteen students and the fees collected from those students were not enough either to run the institution or to maintain Panditji and his associates. Pandit Vishnu Digambar was thus compelled to give music programmes

to subsidise the institution. In these concerts and performances he always appealed to the public to give him liberal donations to carry on his activities. He got good response to these appeals. The income derived from the tuition fees, the public concerts, and the donations from the public was all utilised to finance the institution.

Once the Maharaja of Kashmir, listening to his music, was so pleased that he straightaway offered an employment to him in his court on a handsome salary. Pandit Vishnu Digambar politely declined the offer, but at the same time promised the Maharaja that whenever the latter desired to hear his music he would always make himself available. In return the Maharaja made a grant of Rs. 150 per month to the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya. He also expressed the desire that a branch of Gandharva Mahavidyalaya be opened in his state. This was readily accepted and Pandit Vishnu Digambar sent Shri Shri-krishna Herlekar, a close associate of his to start the branch and look after it.

While conducting the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya at Lahore, he realised that it was very difficult to get a suitable teaching staff who would teach music according to his concept. It was futile to expect outside artistes to follow his views and ideas. He, therefore, hit upon a novel idea of training persons who would dedicate their lives, like missionaries, to the teaching of music, according to his ideas and direction. He evolved a regular scheme of producing such missionaries. He kept with him some chosen students who were serious in learning music and who were also inspired with the ideal to serve its cause. The entire expenses of such students would be borne by him and when they would become full-fledged artistes

capable of imparting knowledge to others, he would allocate different duties to them. Some would be retained as teachers, some would be sent away as artistes and some would be assigned the duties of starting and conducting new branches of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya in different parts of India.

Possibly he got this idea from the worldwide network of Christian Missions. Such selected students were supposed to stay with him for nine years, during which period, he would not only teach music to them and make them artistes, but also hoped to make them missionaries, who, with an unswerving loyalty to the ideal which Pandit Vishnu Digambar set before them, would carry on the task of propagating music in different parts of India.

As a result of this plan, there was always a group of about fifty to sixty disciples with him, who were being trained as "Missionaries of Music". In order, therefore, to meet such a large expenditure Panditji was compelled to undertake extensive tours. The residential students used to do all kinds of jobs in the institution. They were kept under a strict discipline. He was very particular that no stigma should ever be attached to the character and behaviour of these disciples. The disciples, therefore, were always afraid of incurring his displeasure in this respect. Panditji would come down upon them very harshly if they misbehaved or did something contrary to the discipline of the institution.

Once a group of young students were enjoying a joke by slightly changing 'bols' (sound words) of Tabala so as to render a different and funny meaning. Pandit Vishnu Digambar by chance came in and became furious at this behaviour. He caught hold of their leader and told the

students that they should be ashamed of such behaviour. It is said that on another occasion Pandit Vishnu Digambar even whipped a student for serious misbehaviour and expelled him. He thus tried to maintain the character and reputation of the institution and the students of music who were formerly not held in esteem by the public.

6

In his tours to raise finances for his institution, he was often accompanied by many students. On such occasions he purposely used to travel by first class and sometimes reserved an entire first class compartment for his entourage. He did so, not for the sake of pomp but with the idea of impressing others with the fact that a musician was no less important than others. His costly attire, impressive personality, and his high class travelling made people think that he must be a member of some high family and used to pay respects to him. Once Panditji went to Amritsar, by first class, as usual. At the station many prominent citizens had come to receive him. A police officer, struck by the personality of Panditji with the pomp around him, mistook him for a prince and smartly saluted him. Later on, the police officer, to his great dismay came to know that the man with the imposing personality was not a prince of any state but only an eminent musician.

In 1905 he went to Ajmer on a concert tour. Those were the days of the Ganpati festival, which is very popular in Maharashtra. The many Maharashtrians that were

living in Ajmer used to celebrate the festival on a large scale and with great enthusiasm. When the organisers came to know about his presence in the city, they approached him and requested him to give a music programme. He accepted the invitation without any hesitation, because he wanted to establish himself in Ajmer. On the appointed day, Pandit Vishnu Digambar punctually went to the place of festival, contrary to the usual practice of musicians. He had brought the necessary musical instruments with him. They were, as was his practice, well tuned in advance. At the moment, the item of a lady artiste, a professional singer, was in progress. The hall was packed to capacity as she was very popular. There was great curiosity to see and hear him also. At the appointed time, he went to the platform with his disciples and the boxes containing instruments. On looking at the boxes, the singing girl sarcastically enquired what these 'coffins' were meant for? He, however, ignored her and immediately started his performance. He never liked the general habit of musicians who before starting their performance would complain about something or other. As soon as Panditji looked at the audience, he knew the high calibre of the people present and gave them his best for about three hours. He created a profound impression and it established his reputation in Rajasthan.

On another occasion he gave music performance again in Ajmer, this time under the auspices of the Arya Samaj. When he looked at the people, majority of whom belonged to the educated middle class, he knew their interest and taste. He, therefore, decided to sing, on that occasion, only patriotic songs in a simple style. This shift in the usual programme proved a great success. Similarly, at

Bikaner in Rajasthan, on one occasion, he rendered compositions only in raga 'Mand' because he knew that it was the most popular melody there. Later on, at Pandharpur, a place of pilgrimage in Maharashtra, he sang devotional compositions, Bhajans, Abhangas and Padas of great saints of Maharashtra like Namdev and Tukaram and kept the whole audience spell-bound. Thus he would display his mastery over different varieties of music which made him very popular among all classes, young and old.

A public worker has got to be tactful because he has to exact work from different types of persons with different mentality. Pandit Vishnu Digambar amply possessed it. From Ajmer, he went to Udaipur. Udaipur was then considered as one of the leading states of Rajasthan. If a musician established his fame there, he confirmed his reputation throughout Rajasthan. He learnt there that the Maharaja of Udaipur was not very fond of classical music, but liked only Bhajans (devotional songs) and that his favourite saint was Surdas. His request to sing at the court was accepted by the Maharaja on condition that he would listen to his music only for fifteen minutes. Pandit Vishnu Digambar accepted this condition and decided to sing the most favourite bhajan of the Maharaja. As soon as he started that song the Maharaja started listening to it in rapt attention. Pandit Vishnu Digambar was watching the clock and as soon as the allotted time was over he abruptly stopped. The Maharaja was a bit annoyed. Pandit Vishnu Digambar replied that the time was up. The Maharaja thereupon told him to continue his singing for fifteen minutes more. Again he stopped after fifteen minutes. Seeing this the Maharaja asked him to go on singing without any restriction of time. After

the concert was over the Maharaja, quite pleased with the performance, gave Pandit Vishnu Digambar very good remuneration and honoured him. This incident raised his status immensely.

As usually happens, his rise made some people jealous of him. One day, when he was moving about in the bazar, a small boy, a paid hoodlum of the conspirators, attacked him with scissors and tried to cut off his moustache. Panditji forestalled this and, before the boy could do anything, stopped him and beat him severely. The boy started shouting for help and taking up the cue, his accomplices—two Goondas—attacked Pandit Vishnu Digambar. Fortunately Panditji was accompanied by two of his stout disciples, who foiled their attempt. This touched off great commotion in the bazar and a big crowd assembled. There were a few admirers of Panditji who intervened and escorted him safely to his residence.

7

Pandit Vishnu Digambar always endeavoured to make Gandharva Mahavidyalaya an ideal institution. In the Lahore Vidyalaya, at that time, many persons were staying as its inmates. Not only Panditji and his family, but a few members of the teaching staff and many disciples belonging to the missionary category also were staying in the Vidyalaya. Pandit Vishnu Digambar was assisted in the management by his associate, Sri Gurudev Patwardhan as Vice-Principal. He was proficient in playing on the

Mridanga. Pandit Vishnu Digambar treated Pandit Gurudev with respect so that the disciples also would maintain a proper decorum. The living in the Vidyalaya was simple. The junior inmates used to do the work of cooking, cleansing utensils, and other household duties. As they became senior and achieved a higher standard, they were entrusted with other suitable work.

Physical exercise was compulsory for all the students. One special teacher was appointed for this purpose. There was no facility in the premises of the Vidyalaya for field games. So, very frequently, all of them used to go to a place called 'Ashram', on the outskirts of the city. This was donated to Pandit Vishnu Digambar by an admirer, on condition that it should be used only for the purpose of the Vidyalaya activities. So long as he lived in Lahore he very often took his disciples to the Ashram. Later on when he shifted to Bombay, the Lahore Gandharva Mahavidyalaya at Hiramandi was also shifted to this place in compliance with the wishes of the donor.

Besides teaching music, the institution was also running a printing press to print and publish the prescribed text books of music for the curriculum of the institution. The management of the press was looked after by the students of the Vidyalaya. The Vidyalaya was also publishing a monthly magazine in Hindi, called "Sangitamrit Pravah". Along with articles on music the magazine also used to publish some popular patriotic songs with their notations.

Pandit Vishnu Digambar was very meticulous regarding the daily 'riaz' by his more advanced disciples. He laid great emphasis on the cultivation of voice by constant practice. He himself used to do the 'riaz' regularly, and especially so when he went on his tours. Thus the

Gandharva Mahavidyalaya of Lahore became an ideal residential music academy. Discipline and tidiness were the outstanding features of the life at the institution, and an under-current of idealism ran throughout the activities of Gandharva Mahavidyalaya.

At night Pandit Vishnu Digambar often used to chat with his disciples on the terrace of the building. The main theme of his conversation, on such occasions, would be how to get world recognition for Indian music. He also discussed with them other problems relating to music. He always thought that scientific research should be made in the field of music, in order to find out whether there was any scientific basis for the prevailing notion that the Raga 'Deepak' causes light, or the Raga 'Megh Malhar' causes rains or whether there was any truth in the time theory of the ragas, that is, whether a particular raga should necessarily be sung at a particular time. He also thought it necessary to ascertain the truth of the statements in the ancient books on music, that assigned different colours to different notes or ascribed definite 'swaras' to beasts and birds, *e.g.*, the statement about the cuckoo singing in the 'Pancham' swara. He was not personally able to devote much of his time to such scientific study; all the same he was very keen on such study being undertaken.

He was also interested in collecting folksongs of different regions, and his frequent tours facilitated such collections.

In 1906 when the Prince of Wales, who later became George V, was touring India, a royal reception was arranged in his honour at Lahore. On that occasion Pandit Vishnu Digambar could give a fifteen minutes item of Indian music in a programme which was otherwise full of western cultural items. He felt gratified on that day, because his life-long

mission of giving Indian music a place of honour in the Royal court was realised. On the same occasion, a big garden party was also arranged which was attended by princely rulers, big zamindars and other notables. Pandit Vishnu Digambar was also invited on this occasion. This was in contrast to the days when the musicians waited in servility, for the favour of the high dignitaries. His freely mixing with high aristocrats on an equal footing was a new landmark.

He was a great propagandist. He frequently invited outstanding personalities visiting Lahore, to pay a visit to his institution. In the year 1907 he invited the Honourable Shri Gopal Krishna Gokhale and showed him the activities of the Vidyalaya. Shri Gokhale expressed satisfaction with his activities and in particular appreciated the fact that a person from distant Maharashtra should have settled down in the Punjab and have carried on his activities there, thus stressing the power of classical music as a unifying force. A number of other national leaders likewise visited this institution.

From his childhood Panditji was reared up in the atmosphere of devotion to God 'Dattatreya', and had become a devotee of Dattatreya. At Lahore he used to retreat once in the year in seclusion to devote all his time to meditation and the worship of 'Dattatreya'. Later on his devotion changed into the worship of Lord Rama. This was due to Lala Niranjandas, an old veteran and an admirer of his, who presented to him a copy of *Tulsi Ramayana* wrapped in a piece of silken cloth. Lalaji earnestly appealed to him that now the prime of his youth is approaching its end and he should think of the approaching old age. He, therefore, gave him the *Ramayana* of Tulsidas which will

always remind him of this everlasting truth. Pandit Vishnu Digambar was deeply moved by his touching appeal. He accepted the *Ramayana* and took a vow to be a staunch devotee of Rama. This vow guided him in his later years.

During the period of eight years from 1901 to 1908, under his personal guidance and supervision, the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya was firmly established and gained considerable reputation. There were a number of achievements to the credit of this institution. A regular syllabus was evolved for teaching of music, and suitable text-books were published. Regular examinations were being held on behalf of the Vidyalaya. A regular cadre of 'Missionaries of Music' was gradually being formed. The general public had also started taking interest in the music activities and there was a great demand for capable music teachers, trained in the Vidyalaya. He readily agreed to send his students to different institutions as teachers. Thus he sent at the request of Dr. Annie Beasant, Shri Shrikrishna Herlekar to the Hindu College at Banaras.

8

As the years passed and as the activities of his institution increased, he felt it necessary to widen the field of his activities beyond the Punjab. After considerable thinking, he selected Bombay to start the second branch of his Vidyalaya. There were many reasons for this choice; Bombay was the most important cultural centre, being the

veritable 'Gateway of India'. It was also the capital of Bombay Presidency to which he belonged and many of his students hailed from that province. So, in September 1908, he migrated from Lahore to Bombay with some of his selected disciples.

Bombay being a cosmopolitan city, the main problem before Panditji was of attracting people, speaking different languages, towards his activities. He, therefore, decided to give public performances by issuing tickets in order to introduce himself to the people. His public performances brought him in touch with the leading people of the city and succeeded in creating interest in his activities. In 1908, on Dassera Day, he formally started the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya of Bombay as a branch of the Lahore institution, under the auspices of His Holiness Jagadguru Shri Shankaracharya. The institution was located in the building of Shri Dixit on the Girgaon Back Road (now known as the Vitthalbhai Patel Road). Pandit Vishnu Digambar's experience and his systematic method of working established the institution in a short time and soon, the premises became inadequate for his increasing activities.

Many educated persons drawn from different communities were regularly attending the classes in the Vidyalaya. The timings of the music classes were from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the morning and from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. in the evening. There was special arrangement for ladies from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the morning and from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the afternoon. Panditji had specially trained his two nieces and his wife to teach them. Both vocal and instrumental music was taught in the institution. He was the Principal and he was assisted, as in Lahore, by Gurudev

Patwardhan as the Vice-Principal. The latter used to teach Mridanga and Tabla. Shri Vatwe, a close associate of his from his early days and who had specialised himself under Shri Ashtekar of Ujjain, was giving lessons in Sitar. The other members on the teaching staff included Shri Narayanrao Khare and Shri Govindrao Apte, who were trained by him. His two nephews, Shri Baburao Gokhale and Shri Dhundiraj Paluskar, Shri V. N. Patwardhan, Shri Raghunathrao Patwardhan, Shri Shankarrao Pathak were then being trained as 'missionaries of music'. Later on Shri Shankarrao Vyas, Shri Narayanrao Vyas, Shri Wamanrao Padhye and Shri Onkarnath Thakur joined this group. All these persons eventually earned very good reputation in the field of music, as good musicians or musicologists.

Within two or three years, the strength of the students rose to five hundred in number.

Because of the increasing activities in printing and publishing text-books of music, and other ancillary literature, it became necessary to shift the printing press from Lahore to Bombay. Pandit Vishnu Digambar started a small shop also, for repairs of musical instruments. This shop later on developed into a "Musical Instruments Supplying Company". On the lines of the Hindi magazine "Sangitamrit Pravah", he started a monthly magazine in Marathi called 'Gandharva Mahavidyalaya' at Bombay. After he came to Bombay, the list of the books he published went up to about 60. One of these publications was a collection of the compositions of various saints, adapted to the classical melodies along with notations.

In those days, on the occasion of weddings and other similar ceremonies, people generally arranged music

concerts of old professional musicians, and especially of lady artistes from the class of singing girls. Pandit Vishnu Digambar tried to break this tradition. He trained a special group of his students to give performances on such occasions. The intention was two-fold; firstly, to introduce artistes of social standing for such functions and secondly, to collect funds for his institution.

The Mahavidyalaya's nine years course in music was split into two stages. The first stage was of four years and was called "Sangit Praveshika". The other stage was of five years. After completing this the student was called 'Sangit Pravin'. Examinations in these courses had been started even at Lahore, but in Bombay these became more systematised. Within a short span of time, the activities developed to such an extent that the institution came to be recognised as a leading and ideal institution in the field of music. In the beginning, the Bombay Vidyalyaya was started as a branch of the Lahore institution, but it was soon transformed into the Central Institution and the Vidyalyaya at Lahore became a branch.

The Gandharva Mahavidyalaya used to hold examinations in music every year; as yet, it had not started formally conferring degrees on its students. Pandit Vishnu Digambar now initiated the idea of regularly conferring degrees in music and for that purpose, holding a convocation ceremony on the line of other academic institutions. Many friends and admirers tried to discourage him but he decided to go ahead with his idea. He managed to get the consent of the then Governor of Bombay to grace the occasion of conferring the degrees in music. The first convocation was held in 1911, and the then Governor of Bombay, Lord Sydenham, conferred the degrees on the

successful graduates. The impressive ceremony raised the status of the institution and of Pandit Vishnu Digambar.

After this first convocation, four more such convocations were held during the life time of Panditji. The second convocation in the year 1915 was presided over by Lord Willingdon the then Governor of Bombay. In 1919, Sir Mohammad Yusuf Saudagar, a leading dignitary and connoisseur of music, conferred the degree on the graduates. The fourth convocation of 1921 and the last to be held in his life time, was presided over by Sir George Lloyd, the then Governor of Bombay.

Because of the enhanced reputation of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, leading public workers began to consult Pandit Vishnu Digambar in matters relating to music. There was a constant demand for trained teachers of music from various educational institutions. Pandit Shrikrishnaji Herlekar had already been sent to the Hindu College at Banaras. In 1915, Shri V. A. Kashalkar, a senior disciple, was sent to Allahabad. Mahatma Gandhi was not slow in recognising the place of music in the cultural life of the Nation, and he asked for a good musician for his own Ashram at Sabarmati, near Ahmedabad. Pandit Vishnu Digambar readily agreed and deputed Shri Narayanarao Khare, a trusted disciple and a man of character suited to the atmosphere of the Ashram.

Because of his pleasing personality, and his artistic attainments, Pandit Vishnu Digambar had gathered around him many friends and admirers, like Sir Bhalchandra Bhatawadekar, Sir Narayan Chandavarkar, Doctor Bhajekar, Doctor G. V. Deshmukh, Shri Annasaheb Nene, Sir Mohammad Yusuf Saudagar, Shri S. P. Kapadia, Shri Babasaheb Biwalkar, and Shri Vimlatal. Shri Babasaheb

Biwalkar, the son-in-law of the Chief of Miraj, took particular interest in the activities of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya.

As the activities of the institution and also the number of the students increased, the building on the Girgaon Back Road became inadequate. Panditji therefore opened a new branch of the institution on the Princess Street. But the total rent spent on both these buildings had become a drain on the institution's economy. Shri Biwalkar, therefore, suggested that it was time for the institution to have its own building. He was the owner of a big estate called 'Angrewadi' in the Girgaon area of Bombay, and offered a plot on his estate facing the Sandhurst Road for the purpose. As regards finances, he suggested that Pandit Vishnu Digambar should try to collect as much funds as possible, and assured him that he would make up the deficit by advancing a loan. After finalising this arrangement the foundation stone was laid by Sir Bhalchandra Krishna Bhatawadekar in 1913. Shri Biwalkar himself looked after the progress of the building and it was completed by 1915. A grand opening ceremony was held in the presence of Lord Willingdon, the then Governor of Bombay. Pandit Vishnu Digambar felt immensely gratified at the fulfilment of one of his long cherished ambitions. The newspapers of Bombay paid him handsome compliments for his remarkable achievements.

Pandit Vishnu Digambar was very much worried about the repayment of the huge debts he had incurred for constructing the building. He tried to collect funds for this purpose. In all his musical concerts, he used to make an appeal to the wealthy citizens to give liberal donations, but he could not raise sufficient money for his requirements.

Moreover, at about that time, the first World War had broken out, and had an adverse effect on his efforts. He undertook a tour for the collection of funds, but monetarily it did not prove to be a success. Though the activities of the institution were increasing, the income and expenditure could not be balanced. Hence it became impossible to repay the debt of Shri Biwalkar. He found it extremely embarrassing to meet Shri Biwalkar and explain the matter to him. Unfortunately, Shri Biwalkar construed matters in a wrong perspective, and issued a legal notice through his lawyer. This shocked Pandit Vishnu Digambar and he immediately saw Shri Biwalkar and assured him that his amount would be repaid within two months. He at once raised a loan to the extent of sixty thousand rupees by mortgaging the building. Shri Sukthankar, a close friend and admirer, advanced him ten thousand rupees, and he himself managed to get the remaining twenty thousand, and within the stipulated period repaid the entire amount to Shri Biwalkar.

In 1916 during the 'Chaturmasa' the four months of the monsoon, Pandit Vishnu Digambar gave discourses on the *Ramayana*. They proved a success and fetched a big amount which he utilised for the repayment of the major portion of his debts. Encouraged by this success, he undertook another venture, that of building a hostel for the students of the Vidyalaya. Many of his friends tried to dissuade him and advised him to wait till all his debts were repaid. But he was so much under the spell of his plan of building the hostel, that he ignored it. Very soon, the building was completed, and its opening ceremony was performed by the Chief of Ichalkaranji. The activities of the Vidyalaya were at its zenith by this

time, but owing to the increasing cost of living and the increasing expenditure, the financial position was gradually becoming worse.

At this time, that is in 1921, there was a sudden boom in the market and building prices shot up. Many well-wishers advised him to dispose of the building, which could have fetched a handsome price of about five lakh rupees. He could have repaid all his debts, and still a comfortable balance would have remained. But the idea hurt his pride, because the buildings were associated with many sweet personal memories. He therefore did not take any action. In the next few years there was a sudden fall in prices, and there was no possibility left of making a bargain transaction. In the meanwhile it became impossible for him to repay even the interest on the capital, and gradually he became enmeshed in the quagmire of debts. He decided to go on tour to collect necessary funds. In 1924, when he was away on such a tour, the creditors, without waiting for his return, brought an attachment order on his two buildings, and auctioned them off outright. They could realise about two lakhs and sixteen thousand rupees from the auction of the buildings, but this gave a tremendous setback to Pandit Vishnu Digambar and still more so to his valuable work! The activities of the Vidyalaya in Bombay came to a standstill as a result of this unexpected event. It was, indeed, a great blow to him in his declining years.

After the building was sold off in auction, he shifted to Nasik in 1924 and stayed in an Ashram called "Shri Ram Nam Adhar Ashram" which he had started even when he was living in Bombay. By this time the activities of the Vidyalaya had spread all over India with the establishment

of its branches at a number of places. He had also published quite a number of books and many of them were prescribed as text-books in many institutions of music. Some of his publications like "Vyayam Ke Sath Sangeet," (physical culture through music) and "Bangali Gayan" (Bengali music) showed the novelty of his approach to music. During this period many of his 'music missionaries' had settled at different places and continued their work. Some of his disciples had earned all India reputation as artistes of outstanding merit. He felt gratified to see the mission of life being realised. He spent much of his time in devotion to Lord Rama. In his tours, he gave prominence to his discourses on *Ramayana* and to Kirtanas, rather than to classical music performances. In 1926 he made an attempt to celebrate the silver jubilee of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya in Bombay but he could not succeed in arranging it in Bombay. So the celebrations took place in Karachi. He regretted the loss of the building of his institution. Talking with his disciples he observed that he had already fulfilled his mission through hundreds of students who were the living monuments of his work. Such disciples were institutions in themselves. Lord Rama wanted him to extricate himself from the attachment of such mundane wealth like buildings. His will prevailed.

During the last few years of his life, he undertook extensive tours in the country giving discourses of *Ramayana* and performing Kirtanas. His frequent tours as well as his approaching old age told upon his health. The last tour in 1930, to Nepal, shattered his health completely. Those were not the days of comfortable travelling, much less so in Nepal. On his return journey from Nepal he

got fever; yet he continued his tour of Calcutta and Banaras. His fever continued unabated. In spite of his failing health, he continued reading *Ramayana*, and would not suffer any break in it. Ultimately he could not stand this physical strain any more and, had to be brought back to Nasik. In Nasik also, there was no marked improvement in his health. His disciples, hearing the news of his indisposition, started pouring in Nasik from all over the country. Hearing that Panditji's condition was worsening, the Chief of Miraj decided to take him to Miraj for medical treatment under his personal care. Accordingly, at the end of June 1931, he removed Pandit Vishnu Digambar to Miraj. In spite of the best medical help, his health went on deteriorating. He frequently was in coma. He knew that death was approaching. He, therefore, expressed the desire to hear the chanting of Rama Nama, round the clock. His disciples, accordingly kept on the chanting of Rama Nama set to the tunes of Tanpura for twenty-four hours of the day. He always used to say that he was so much soaked in music that if one were to tap his bones, they would produce musical notes. Even in the semi-unconscious state, so long as the notes of Tanpura continued and the chanting of Rama Nama went on, he would lie down quietly, but the moment they stopped, he became restless. In this way he was struggling with death. On the morning of 21st August 1931, his condition became grave and at about 1.30 p.m., in the midst of continuous chanting of Rama Dhun, he breathed his last. It was a strange coincidence that his career started at Miraj and ended also in the same town. The Chief of Miraj exclaimed with acute grief, "He came to me to build up his career for music and having

built it up he came to my place to end it !". On hearing the news of his sad demise, his innumerable admirers and disciples expressed their grief all over the country.

Pandit Vishnu Digambar's own family was small, but he supported hundreds of disciples, and thus widened the sphere of his family responsibilities. He had only one brother and three sisters. His brother Gopalrao carried on his father's profession of a 'Kirtankar'. Out of his three sisters, one was a widow, who stayed with him along with her children. Pandit Vishnu Digambar taught music to all her children. He taught music to the children of his brother too. He himself had twelve children in all, but all, except the last, were shortlived. The last one, 'Dattatreya' was only eleven years old when Panditji died. Dattatreya later on became a well-known musician and thus proved to be a chip of the old block. He earned reputation not only in India, but subsequently became known outside the country also. This promising musician known as Pandit D.V. Paluskar died prematurely in 1955 and left a void in the field of music. To use the words of Pandit Vishnu Digambar, "Thus willed Lord Rama".

Pandit Vishnu Digambar was endowed with imagination and ingenuity. He introduced many new ideas in the field of music for popularising it in the general public. Already in 1897, he had introduced the public concert

with sale of tickets. He always tried to make such concerts interesting and attractive. His punctuality in starting and closing a concert well in time, his neat and well planned presentation, added to the attraction of the concerts.

He used to present variety programmes on behalf of the Vidyalaya and introduced new ideas in such programmes. He introduced 'Tabla Tarang', in which various tablas, tuned to various notes of the musical scale, were played like 'Jaltarang'. He made a daring experiment of introducing lady artistes from respectable families in public performances. This became possible, because many ladies of good social status had joined his classes, and he always encouraged their appearance on such occasions. This was indeed a salutary social reform which illustrates his progressive outlook. His rendering of devotional songs of famous saints set to classical melodies, not only added to the attractiveness of the concerts, but also served to popularise classical music in the masses.

Panditji frequently made extensive tours throughout India and gave a number of public concerts. But he also accepted invitations from the rulers of the princely states, and from the rich patrons of music to give private music performances. On such occasions he was very particular in maintaining his status.

Once he was invited by the ruler of a certain Indian state to give a performance in his palace. Though it was a private concert, his reputation had attracted a big audience. As usual Pandit Vishnu Digambar went a little ahead of time to get an idea about the arrangements. He saw a number of chairs neatly arranged for the selected invitees, but there was no dias for him and his party. He, therefore,

asked the person in charge of the management to put some chairs for him and his party. The manager was surprised and asked the reason. Pandit Vishnu Digambar firmly replied that when the invited guests are to be seated on chairs, the musicians should also have raised seats. He said he would not sit at the feet of the audience while giving a performance. The manager reported this matter to the ruler, who was greatly amused and agreed to the arrangement. After the performance, the ruler, while expressing his satisfaction, said that it was for the first time that he saw a musician giving his performance by sitting on a chair. Pandit Vishnu Digambar immediately replied that if the audience is to sit on chairs, will it not be below the dignity of the musician to sit at their feet? Is this not a disrespect to the artistes and eventually an insult to the great art of music? The ruler appreciated his attitude.

Panditji made a substantial contribution to the field of music conferences. In the year 1916 his illustrious contemporary Pandit Bhatkhande had convened the first All-India Music Conference at Baroda, under the patronage of Sir Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda.

The conference was attended by representatives of different schools of music, by eminent musicologists and a number of other musicians of repute. Panditji attended this conference and read his thesis on the Notation System. In this conference an interesting battle of wits took place between him and a learned lady-music critic. She tried to embarrass Panditji by asking him, "How many 'Tansens' has your institution produced so far?" The attack was clearly aimed at his mission of music education on a mass scale. Panditji quickly retorted, "Even the great Tansen himself could not produce another Tansen, but I have

done what even Tansen could not do. I have produced thousands of Tansen's good appreciative listeners with musical ears, through my institution, and through my extensive tours."

In this conference Panditji noted that although many live problems of music were discussed, the musicians were given secondary importance, and the conference was dominated by the princely rulers and other big dignitaries. He did not like this. He decided to arrange his own conference.

He made preliminary arrangements for the proposed music conference, right from the beginning of 1918. There was a big 'Chowk', a central open space, in the compound of the building. It was named 'Shri Ram Chowk', and it was decided to hold the conference in this chowk, by erecting a big pandal. The advertisements and propaganda of this conference were done in a novel way. A large paper Tanpura, was put on a handcart, and was taken around and displayed in all the important areas, and localities of Bombay. This advertisement was done by the students of the institution. The first conference held in March, 1918, was presided over by Mr. M. R. Jayakar, Bar-at-Law. Amongst the artistes who attended the conference were Balkrishna Buwa Ichalkaranjkar (his Guru), Rahimat Khan, Vilayat Hussin Khan, Govindbua Shaligram, Ismail Khan (Sitarist) and some others. A big music concert was arranged in this conference and many leading musicians participated in it. Four more conferences of this type were arranged by him. One of these conferences was presided over by his Guru, Balkrishna Buwa Ichalkaranjkar. Along with the conferences, exhibitions of the Indian musical instruments were arranged. One of

these exhibitions was inaugurated by the famous musician Bhaskar Buwa. These conferences also encouraged mutual discussions among the students of the Vidyalaya on various problems of music, and also enabled music artistes to get together and bridge over their differences.

With advancing age his devotion to Lord Rama also increased. He made a special study of the *Ramayana* and adapted many 'Chaupayis', 'Dohas', 'Chhandas' and such other patterns of composition used in *Ramayana*, to classical melodies. Equipped with these compositions he gave his first public discourse on the *Tulsi Ramayana* at Madhav Bagh in Bombay. His superb music, his mastery over Hindi, his impressive personality and his fervent zeal, at once made the discourses popular and attracted big gatherings. In his discourses, Panditji used to render a number of devotional compositions of different saints, set to classical ragas. Some of these compositions have still retained their popularity, because of their setting in classical tunes. '*Jaba Janakimath Sahay Kare*' composed by Sant Tulsidas, '*Sumiran Karle Mere Mana*' and '*Sadho manka man tyago*' composed by Guru Nanak, '*Abaki Tek Hamari*' and '*Snneji maine Nirbalke Bal Ram*' of Sant Surdas are some of these compositions, whose musical tunes still haunt the listeners.

He also popularised the famous Bhajan Dhun '*Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram*' in his discourses. He wanted to raise this Dhun to the status of a National anthem. Later on, this desire almost came true. In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi led his famous Dandi March, and at his instance Narayana-rao Khare (Vishnu Digambar's disciple) sang this 'Ram Dhun', at the head of the marching procession. When he learnt this, he was extremely popular with all people,

irrespective of caste, creed or religion. On one occasion, at Hyderabad, a disciple of Panditji heard some Muslim boys chanting this *Ramayana*. His interest was aroused and he asked them, "Who has taught you this Dhun?". Thereupon one of them said, "One Hindu Saint gave discourses on 'Ramayana' and during the discourses he often repeated this Ram Dhun. His voice was so sweet and he rendered it with such an emotion, that we could not help committing it to our memory." This sufficiently indicates the immense popularity of this 'Ram Dhun'.

Pandit Vishnu Digambar was very strict in observing discipline and decorum during his discourses on *Ramayana* and would not tolerate any behaviour implying disrespect towards Lord Rama. On such occasions he would not spare anybody, rich or poor. He was of the opinion that these discourses were not meant to be treated as entertainment, but they had a deep moral significance. Once, while on a tour to Ajmer, he stayed in a sarai. In the open compound of the sarai, he started giving his usual discourses on the *Ramayana*. The discourses became popular and attracted a big crowd. One day, a millionaire of Ajmer wanted to attend the discourse. As per his usual practice, he sent in advance his luxurious cushioned seat and other paraphernalia to the place, and he himself went there a little late. After some time, the millionaire stretched his legs reclined in his seat and began to doze. Pandit Vishnu Digambar, annoyed at this objectionable behaviour, lost his temper and shouted at the millionaire, rebuking him that this is not the place for relaxing and dozing during the discourses. Such behaviour is not only an insult to the speaker, but also towards Lord Rama. The millionaire became embarrassed and begged his pardon.

As days passed, his devotion to Rama went on increasing. In weal and woe, he thought that Rama was testing his devotion. In the Vidyalaya, he had started the practice of incessant chanting of the Dhun "*Shri Ram Jai Ram, Jai Jai Ram*". During certain fixed periods, such as the occasion of the Rama Jayanti, celebration of the birthday of Rama or during the 'Chaturmasa', the four months of monsoon, there was a chain performance, some would chant the Dhun for a fixed period and would be relieved by the next batch. This went on continuously night and day. He usually preferred the period of morning hours for such chanting. One morning, while he was engaged in his relay, one messenger from the prince of a state came and asked him to go with him to the prince's residence, as he wanted to hear Pandit Vishnu Digambar's music. Panditji replied that he would certainly like to come if he was prepared to wait till he had finished his 'Ram Dhun'. The messenger was, however, not prepared to wait any longer. Disregarding the advice of a disciple, he told the messenger that as he was already engaged in the service of Lord Rama, he would not be able to leave it incomplete. He rebuked his disciple and told him that Lord Rama was testing the integrity of his devotion. The preference of wealth would have pushed him away from Rama.

Pandit Vishnu Digambar had the background of a Kirtankar since his childhood. He had all the qualities necessary for a successful Kirtankar. In 1915 he started giving Kirtans, in addition to his discourses on the Ramayana. Soon he acquired great reputation as a Kirtankar.

Once the Chief of Miraj jocularly challenged him that he will consider him to be the best Kirtankar only if he

succeeds in getting the clothes put on the image of Lord Dattatreya at Narsobachiwadi Temple. To get such clothes was considered to be a unique honour. Pandit Vishnu Digambar went to Narsobachiwadi. He won the heart of the people by his Kirtans and discourses. The trustees of the temple, being extremely pleased with him asked him, in what form does he desired to have the blessings of Lord Dattatreya. He immediately asked for the clothes of the Lord. The trustees held long deliberations and finally decided unanimously to confer this unique honour on Pandit Vishnu Digambar. He returned to Miraj with these clothes and the Chief of Miraj gave him a rousing reception. Later, on many occasions, Panditji used to perform his kirtans and discourses with these clothes on.

Pandit Vishnu Digambar felt that an artist should not live in his own ivory tower, but he should also be alive to his surroundings and that he should participate in the national upheavals through the medium of his art. He had many friends amongst the nationalists and moderates, but personally he was an admirer of Lokmanya Tilak. He contributed his mite to the national cause in his own way. It will not be an exaggeration to say that no other musician ever took a direct part in the national movement to the extent that he did. In 1905, the agitation against the partition of Bengal, which rocked the entire nation, made a deep impression on him and he, from his Vidyalaya at Lahore, helped to spread the national sentiments through the medium of music. He was then editing the Hindi Magazine 'Sangitamrit Pravah' in which he published many patriotic songs with notations. Songs like "*Bharat Hamara Desh Hai*", "*Ghara Ki Phoot Buri*"

or the Hindi version of '*Vande Mataram*' (*Pani Ki Kuchha Kami Nahi Hai*) were set by him to such attractive tunes that they became immensely popular. He set the tradition of singing a patriotic song at the beginning of public functions whenever he was invited there. Similarly it was he who started at Lahore the tradition of singing '*Vande Mataram*' at public functions. In 1907 when Lala Lajpat Rai and Ajit Singh were arrested in Lahore two patriotic songs '*Pagari Samhal O Jatta*' and '*Sare Jahan Se Achha*' were set to tune by Panditji which became very popular and got very wide circulation. On account of his patriotic activities of this type his institution at Lahore was once searched by the police.

The national leaders knew about his patriotic activities, and they respected him very much. After he settled in Bombay he was invited every year from 1915 onwards to sing "*Vande Mataram*" in all the sessions of the Indian National Congress. Panditji made use of this opportunity to convene small music conferences at these sessions. His patriotic fervour and his undaunted courage were particularly witnessed in the Congress Session at Kakinada in 1923. As usual he attended the session on invitation and rose to sing "*Vande Mataram*". Mohammad Ali (one of the two famous Ali Brothers) was the President of the session. As soon as Panditji started singing "*Vande Mataram*" the President objected to its singing on the grounds of secularism. All the leaders seated on the dias were dismayed at this unexpected objection. But Panditji faced him and fearlessly questioned his authority. He said, "The Indian National Congress is not the monopoly of any one religious sect, nor is this place a mosque, where singing could be prohibited. You have therefore no

authority to prevent me from singing '*Vande Mataram*'. Moreover, if singing in this place is against the particular religion, how is it that you could tolerate music in your presidential procession?" Saying so, without waiting for the President's consent, he completed the singing of "*Vande Mataram*". This incident spread his reputation all over India.

As on this occasion, his fearlessness saved the prestige of "*Vande Mataram*", it also saved the prestige of his famous Bhajan Dhun, '*Raghupati Raghava Raja Ram*' on another occasion. In Ahmedabad, in 1925, he was giving discourses on the *Ramayana*. After the completion of the series, he decided to take out a procession of the *Holy Ramayana*. Communal tension prevailed at that time in Ahmedabad and the local muslim population decided to obstruct the procession. There was an imminent danger of the outbreak of communal riots. Many local leaders, therefore, tried to dissuade him from this idea. But he remained very firm, and with an attitude of "come what may", he led the procession successfully without any disturbance.

He was particular to see that nothing inconsistent with national sentiments was done in his music performances. In 1930, the civil disobedience movement was in its full swing and one of the aspects of the movement was the propaganda for the prohibition of drinking. Women volunteers were picketing liquor booths all over the country. During that period Pandit Vishnu Digambar had organised a music conference in Bombay. In this conference one of his disciples began his performance with a Khayal in "Raga Darbari". After finishing the Khayal in vilam-bit (slow tempo) he started a composition in 'drut' (fast-

tempo). The words of the composition were 'O bring me a glass of wine'. This was a traditional composition and was popular with the musicians. As soon as Panditji heard the first line of the composition he shouted loudly "*Band Karo*" (stop it). He had an argument with his disciple who was not prepared to stop. But Pandit Vishnu Digambar ruled that only if he changed over to another suitable '*cheej*' (composition) he will be permitted to continue. Otherwise he will have to leave the platform immediately. He ultimately agreed and continued his performance with another composition. After the performance Pandit Vishnu Digambar told him that when the whole country is in the grip of an agitation, and when women volunteers are suffering from repression for picketing liquor booths, it would be inopportune and improper to sing a composition containing references to the excellence of drinking. He observed that an artiste should not sing something that violates the national sentiments, and if artistes behave responsibly, then alone their status will rise in society.

When one makes an overall review of the life and work of Pandit Vishnu Digambar, one gets astonished by his multifarious activities. His was a unique personality in the world of Indian music. His constant efforts contributed in no small way to the status a musician enjoys on an equal footing with other professions in society. He tried to rescue with success the art of music from the close preserves of a few privileged persons, and made it accessible to the prince and the pauper alike and popularised it in all classes of society. In India, particularly in Maharashtra during recent years, music has now been accepted as a respectable profession and as an essential

part of our cultural education. Women from respectable families are learning the art more and more without any prejudices and restrictions. Much of the credit for this change in the outlook of the middle class is due to his efforts. He democratised the art through various means. He systematised and popularised the teaching of music by regular courses and examinations with textbooks prepared by himself and with compositions in notation. With his progressive outlook, he encouraged the students of music to study its problems with an open and scientific mind.

Through the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, he introduced many new ideas in the field of music and gave to society good musicians and music teachers who carried on his mission throughout the country. The Gandharva Mahavidyalaya conducted its multifarious activities mainly with public support which is a creditable achievement in the field of music. It is a matter of great pride for a musician that one belonging to that class, should have so many outstanding achievements to his credit. Rightly the famous historian, V. K. Rajwade, included his name amongst the first ten outstanding personalities of modern India. Even today, the initiatives taken by him have played a considerable role in moulding musical traditions. He has carved a permanent name for himself in the history of music in India.

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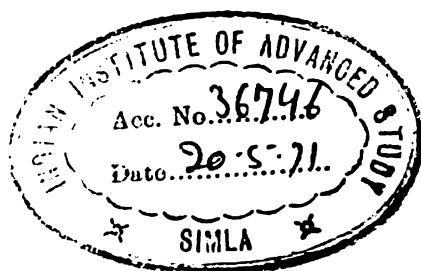
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AFTER graduating in Science from the Gujarat College, Ahmedabad, Shri V. R. Athavale decided to take up music as his career. He took his training under the able guidance of Pandit Vinayak Rao Patwardhan of Poona, the foremost disciple of Pandit Vishnu Digambar. Later, Shri Athavale became the disciple of late Ustad Vilayat Husain Khan. Shri V. R. Athavale is at present Music Producer in All India Radio at Bombay.

Shri Athavale is an accomplished Vocalist and a Musicologist. He has contributed several papers on music in various journals.

In the present Biography, Shri Athavale has narrated the circumstances under which Pandit Vishnu Digambar had to work to foster the cause of music and the remarkable success achieved by him in this respect.



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