

# GAYANACHARYA PANDIT MIRASHIBUWA

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Gayanacharya Pt. Mirashibuwa's family belongs to Ichalkaranji, a petty old Jagir but historically of note under the Kolhapur State of the pre-merger days. Mirashibuwa belonged to that branch of Maharashtrian Brahmins, which is locally known as *karhadas*. 'Pandit' is the true surname of the family, but its members used to be better-known as *mirashis*, as they were the holders of a hereditary service-Inam of the *mirashi*-class.

Mirashibuwa was born at Ichalkaranji at his maternal uncle's place on Friday the 3rd of the bright-half of Kartik of the Shaka year 1805 or in 1883 A.D. On the day of his birth, the members of his maternal uncle's family were in great anxiety, as that was the very day on which the decision of an important criminal case, in which his maternal uncle was maliciously incriminated by some of his enemies in the town, was going to be declared by the Criminal Court — and according to rumour, the maternal uncle was sure to be sentenced to rigorous imprisonment and also a heavy fine. So nobody was in a mood to rejoice at the birth of the child, the first of its parents and a son, but all thought that its birth was inauspicious as they took it for granted that the maternal uncle was sure to be convicted. But within about two hours from the birth of the child, to their great joy and relief, the news came that the magistrate had declared the maternal uncle as 'not-guilty' of any offence and as such had discharged him completely.

Instantly, the scene changed from one of great anxiety, to one of boisterous jubilation and mirth and the birth of the child was hailed as very auspicious and as a precursor of great good fortune for his parents as well as his maternal uncle, in particular. To celebrate the great good

fortune, they named the child 'Yashwant' meaning the 'Victor' or 'the success - getter'.

Yashwant's father was the eldest member of his family, and he, (Yashwant) being the eldest male-member of the next generation was destined to succeed his father some day in the hereditary service. As such he was dearly loved by all the members of his family and was brought up with great care. He was familiarly called Balu, as Hindu parents, particularly the mothers, do not call their eldest son by his proper or first name directly. Balu was gifted with great personal charm. He had a clear complexion, a pair of bright eyes, and an aquiline nose and was smart in appearance. Day by day he grew in stature and developed into a fine young man. His progress at school was also quite satisfactory and his Modi as well as the Devanagari handwriting was the envy of his school-mates. He had also the gift of an effortless silver voice and could recite many Sanskrit-*Slokas* and poems from his school-books in a very tuneful manner.

After completion of the course of the lower Primary School, Balu joined the local English School, which had provision only up to the Fifth English standard of those days — the equivalent of the Ninth standard of today. Bhatebuwa and Dattubuwa Kale, though junior to him by one year, were two among his intimate school-mates who had the gift of good voices. They also had some little training in music of an elementary character. But Balu had none. So, at the time of the annual School celebrations, these two used to be invariably selected for singing the Reception-songs etc., while Mirashibuwa in spite of his silvery voice used to be passed over by his teachers.

During this very period, a small incident — ordinarily of little significance — took place, and things, though small, sometimes count in shaping the destiny of men and often take root in outwardly simple things. It was so, at least, in the case of Pt. Mirashibuwa.

The Ruler of Ichalkaranji was an ardent lover of music and had great admiration for Pt. Balkrishnabuwa, a famous musician of the Gwalior-*Gharana*, and the *guru* of such great musicians as Pt. Vishnu Digambar, Pt. Gundubuwa Ingle, Pt. Anant Manohar. So, he was pleased to appoint Balkrishnabuwa to the post of *Darbar*-musician, about the year 1898 A.D. After a short stay in some other part of the town, Balkrishnabuwa, by sheer accident, went to stay in a house just opposite to Balu's own house at Ichalkaranji.

It was a new experience for the residents of that lane and most of them felt annoyed at the non-stop music-practice that went on at Balkrishnabuwa's place. At that time Balu had no liking for music, and he, along

with the other members of his family and his neighbours, considered such practice as a veritable nuisance. Occasionally, some of the boys in the lane, Balu included, used to mock those practising within, by imitating them from the lane outside or from the door-steps of Balu's own house, just facing that of the Buwa.

Though Balu was drawn into the game, first as a matter of mere fun, in course of time, he developed a capacity to imitate the music heard and reproduce it fairly faithfully with most of the melodic nuances without much effort. During the hours when Balkrishnabuwa used to go out of the house, like most neighbours, Balu began to drop into the former's house occasionally and in course of time formed a friendship with Annabuwa, the Buwa's only son and the other pupils. A pair of *tablas* used to lie there in a corner, and out of sheer curiosity Balu would try his hand at playing in any manner he liked. It was almost a nuisance and a wanton waste of time and so Annabuwa and the other pupils advised Balu to learn playing a few *thekas* in the regular manner, and under their guidance and with some practice for a few months further, he was able to play some of them fairly well.

By and by he began to test his ability of playing the *tabla* by accompanying the pupils when they used to practise singing. Thus Balu had the opportunity of knowing the wording of the *chijs* and their melodic and rhythmic structure in greater detail and could remember them easily as the pupils used to revise singing the same *chijs* over again for many days in succession. Although, on the surface of it all, he happened to be only a casual listener, he had the benefit of knowing all the *chijs* in their repertoire, first-hand. Like all amateurs, Balu used to hum these *chijs* in his own house; but took special care to see that nobody from among the Buwa's pupils overheard him. But one day, the cat was out of the bag. On that day, Wamanbuwa Chafekar, one of the most distinguished disciples of Balkrishnabuwa chanced to hear Balu's music and after careful listening came to realise the potential merit of his remarkable power of imitation. He continued listening to Balu's music-practice for some more days and feeling assured that Balu was able to imitate the original in all its beauty and form, reported the matter to his *guru*, Pt. Balkrishnabuwa. As a result, Balkrishnabuwa sent Chafekar and others to fetch Balu to his place and after great reluctance on his part, Balu was somehow persuaded to sing some of the *chijs* he used to imitate at home. Pt Balkrishnabuwa was greatly pleased with his remarkable power of imitation and the great potentiality his voice possessed and allowed Balu to remain present while the pupils used to be trained.

Just about this time, Balu had completed his English-education at Ichalkaranji and to continue it had to go to Kolhapur, as there was no High School then at Ichalkaranji. At Kolhapur, Balu showed good

progress, but the living there was rather costly and his father soon came to realise that it was beyond his means to support Balu at a place like Kolhapur any further. So he asked Balu to discontinue his education at Kolhapur and return to Ichalkaranji, with a view to qualify himself for the hereditary service. But as Balu had not completed either the Primary or High School courses, he was asked to appear for either the P.S.C. or the S.S.C. examination and produce a certificate of having passed either of them. Thus Balu had no other alternative but to join the Higher-Primary School again, and appear for the P.S.C. Examination. It took him some good time to take such a decision, but he was fed up with this period of forced idleness and monotony.

His love of music however soon came to his help. His attitude towards music had by then changed from one of passing interest or indifference, and his respect, for Pt. Balkrishnabuwa and his great art, had transformed itself into almost personal devotion. Fortunately for him, Balkrishnabuwa had by then shifted his lodgings to another part of the town and so, there was no fear of his being observed by any member of his family, if he were to visit the Buwa's house for taking music lessons. Accordingly, he used to go to the Buwa, and like the other pupils volunteered to do any household work at his place. In those days, water had to be fetched from far-away public cisterns in jugs, mounted on a hand-cart which was pushed through the public streets all the way to one's house. Balu too used to participate in fetching water for his *guru's* house, in like manner. When Balu's mother came to know of it, she was full of rage and in a fit of fury, went straight to the Buwa's place, and asked him for an explanation with a demand for an apology for such an act, which according to her had outraged the honour of a highly respected family of *Inamdars*, like hers.

Balkrishnabuwa somehow managed not to lose his temper and coolly replied to her that tradition allowed the *guru* to take any kind of personal service from his pupils and even Sri Krishna used to do such service while he was studying under his *guru* Sandipani. According to this tradition, all work at the *guru's* place is considered as quite dignified and honourable. He himself had followed that tradition quite rigorously, during his period of training under his *gurus*. So he strongly protested against Balu's mother, saying that he was not to blame for taking service from her son Balu, and it was up to her to take him back and not send him to his place on any account in future. From that day the door of Balkrishnabuwa's house was closed to Balu and his relatives. Balkrishnabuwa had high hopes about Balu's future music-career, but they were shattered by this untoward incident. The matter touched him deeply but the Buwa did not say a word about it to anybody.

Balu felt very miserable on account of this unexpected incident and having nothing else to do decided to join the Higher Primary School imme-

diately and appear for the P.S.C. examination. In due course, he passed that examination and after a small period of apprenticeship was allowed to join the hereditary service as a qualified incumbent. In this manner he happened to serve there in his routine capacity as a clerk and would have continued to serve in that capacity for an indefinite period further. He was now of about twenty years of age and was already married. But as luck would have it there was a sudden turn in his fortune.

At this time a touring phrenologist from Mangalore happened to pay a visit to Ichalkaranji. To test his powers of prediction, the Ruler of Ichalkaranji presented before him different persons belonging to different walks of life and among them Balu was one. The phrenologist correctly narrated the major incidents in the past life of Balu and also predicted great good luck in his future, saying that he was destined to be ranked as one of the greatest musicians. The Ruler was surprised to know of this curious prediction in Balu's case as till then he was not in the know of any facts showing his special aptitude or even inclination for learning music. So he treated the prediction as a professional stunt while Balu's friends used to jeer at him by calling him a "a great Buwa!"

The Ruler of Ichalkaranji was an enlightened person and used to encourage young men of promise to exert themselves to their best to acquire new knowledge or master some useful art. Towards that end he had founded an 'Endowment Trust' and it is not unusual to meet many high officials and public servants who in their student-days had availed themselves of it. The Ruler however earnestly desired that more persons from amongst his subjects, proper, took advantage of it. As for music, he knew that there was such a great musician as Pt. Balkrishnabuwa in his service and that he had trained such pupils as Pt. Vishnu Digambar, who later on became very famous. But he very much deprecated (the fact) that none from among his subjects showed his keenness to learn.

Just about this time Pt. Paluskar happened to visit Ichalkaranji to pay his respects to his *guru*, Balkrishnabuwa after an absence of twelve long years, since he left Maharashtra. This visit was the immediate cause which added to the keenness of the Ruler's desire that some one from his own subjects learn music under Balkrishnabuwa and win laurels likewise. With such a thought uppermost in his mind, he opened his heart to Balkrishnabuwa and exhorted him to train some pupils in music from Ichalkaranji proper, but at the same time deplored the fact that till then it had not happened. So he asked the Buwa to recommend some names of promising young persons belonging to Ichalkaranji to learn music under him. Among other names Balakrishnabuwa mentioned that of Balu Mirashi, but then pleaded that as he belonged to a family of some status, his parents might not allow him to learn music, and that if they did, Balu must get ample time to practise in which case he must be relieved from his

regular service. As expected, Balu's parents took strong objection to this as he was the only support and earning member of the family.

The Ruler was however keen on diverting Balu to learn music and towards that end was pleased to grant him leave with full pay for three years, with the additional benefit of having his meals at the palace. Balu's parents could take no objection to this plan and had to bow to the wishes of the Ruler.

Beyond these facilities, Balu wished that the Ruler should not make any special recommendation about him to Balkrishnabhuwa or ask for exemption from doing household work at his place. On the other hand, he said that he would do all such work with devotion and due care, and try to endear himself to his *guru* and learn as much of his music as possible. The Ruler was highly pleased with the humility of Balu's attitude and blessed him with his *ashirvad*.

Accordingly, Balu's music-training started from that day in right earnest in the company of the brilliant and gifted Annabuwa, the Buwa's only son. A proverb runs that 'there is nothing better to wish for, than to be invited to dine in the company of a person's son-in-law, to get an opportunity to learn an art in the company of the *guru's* own son'. Mirashibuwa was fortunate to secure both. Further, Annabuwa was generous by nature and immune to jealousy or malice. He was also very studious in his habits and unsparing in his daily practice. So Mirashibuwa felt he was fortunate in learning music in the company of Annabuwa.

The training thus continued rigorously for over three years, during which Balu and Annabuwa among other pupils, used to accompany Balkrishnabhuwa in his annual visits to surrounding places and take part as accompanists in his concerts at the various *utsava*-celebrations held in the different States. Their training took place in the old *gurukul* style. No writing or the use of a pencil and note-book was allowed. All work had to be memorised completely and to do so needed repetition and constant revision. Thus, in due course, Balu Mirashi became a full-fledged musician. The Ruler of Ichalkaranji, his patron, however wished to give a finishing touch to his music-training by sending him out on a professional tour, all by himself, to develop self-confidence so as to be equal to any occasion in the future.

The Ruler gave some letters of introduction to Balu—now Balubuwa—before he sent him out on the tour. Accordingly, Mirashibuwa first went to Satara, giving a performance or two at some minor places on the way. At Satara, he gave a few public performances and also one at the Court of the Chhatrapati Maharaj of Satara who, pleased with his performance, rewarded him handsomely and at the same time wished him to accept service

at his Court at Satara. Mirashibuwa agreed to the proposal provided the Maharaja was pleased to wait and allow him to complete the tour as previously planned by his patron, the Ruler of Ichalkaranji. To this the Maharaja gave his consent.

Mirashibuwa then went to Baroda. There he saw the *Darbar-Bakshi* and requested him to see if the Maharaja of Baroda would be pleased to grant him audition. But the *Darbar-Bakshi* told him that unless he was first tested by the *Darbar's* Committee of musicians and was certified as a duly qualified musician, his name could not be recommended for the purpose. So Mirashibuwa appeared before the Committee of musicians, who on putting him to all rigorous tests, found his knowledge sound and his performance quite pleasing. As such, on recommendation of his name, he was handsomely rewarded by the Baroda-*Darbar*. There Mirashibuwa had to go through another ordeal which was more difficult and also rather queer.

At Baroda, Appa Kolhatkar the elder brother of the once very famous and unparalleled actor and singer 'Bhaurao Kolhatkar' of the Marathi-Stage was supposed to be a great connoisseur of music. He also passed as an expert *tabla*-player and had earned for himself the privilege of acting as the *Bada Dada* (big brother) in the appraisal of the art of visiting musicians. If Appa Kolhatkar were to recommend a musician's name, then alone was there some chance of his being heard by the local music-fans who used to be generally unsympathetic to outsiders. Mirashibuwa was therefore sent first to Appa Kolhatkar by his well-wishers, to perform for Appa Kolhatkar and his circle of friends. Appa however insisted that he himself would accompany the Buwa on the *tabla* and in the performance proper, put all possible hurdles in the way of Mirashibuwa. Mirashibuwa was however more than a match for Appa, who though satisfied by the excellence of his performance charged him saying that his performance was more like that of Bhaskarbuwa than that of Balkrishnabuwa whose pupil he claimed to be! Mirashibuwa pleaded his innocence saying that upto that time he had not seen Bhaskarbuwa even once, and that what he had sung was strictly according to his *guru's* style. Still Appa Kolhatkar did not believe it and challenged the Buwa to give another performance in proof of his style. Accordingly, Mirashibuwa sang again on the second day but sang only such *chis* as were the pride of Balkrishnabuwa's style but were not in the repertoire of any other musician. Appa was now appeased and expressed his admiration for Mirashibuwa's performance and also granted that his music was fully after Balkrishnabuwa's style.

Thus Mirashibuwa's way at Baroda was happily rid of all obstacles and he could establish his reputation as a musician of a high order by his very first visit to the place. Next he went to Ahmedabad and many other places in Kathiawad and returned to Baroda, but on an urgent call from

the Chhatrapati Maharaj, he had to go back to Satara to report himself for service in time. While the conditions of service were being explained to Mirashibuwa by the Secretary of the Maharaja, Mirashibuwa received an urgent telegram from his patron, the Ruler of Ichalkaranji, calling him back to Ichalkaranji by the earliest possible train. So he had no other alternative but to go back to Ichalkaranji immediately.

The Ruler of Ichalkaranji was a person of great foresight and culture and had earlier visited England and other European countries. He honestly believed that unless and until our educated men were prepared to take an active part in the advancement of our arts like music, drama, dance or paintings, there would be no progress worth the name or comparable with that of similar arts in Europe and other civilised countries. So he had decided to send Mirashibuwa to join-as a male actor-cum-singer — a famous dramatic company, 'The Natya Kala Pravartak Mandali'. Mirashibuwa's parents who earlier had protested against Balkrishnabuwa taking service from their son, had to swallow this bitter pill administered by the Ruler as they were, in duty-bound, his hereditary servants. Pt. Balkrishnabuwa furiously protested against this decision of the Ruler and felt much dejected. In a fit of remorse he is said to have remarked to his friends that his profession was like that of a potter — when one pitcher was sold or found broken, he had to manufacture another in succession. In like manner there was no other alternative left for him but to train fresh pupils right from the beginning without losing heart or hope.

For twenty years, i.e. from 1912 to 1932 Mirashibuwa served with the Natya Kala Pravartak Mandali and acquired great fame as an actor and greater still as a singer in a class by himself.

In those days there was no rivalry among the languages of the different regions. So his Company used to stage plays written in three different languages, Marathi, Hindi and Urdu, and the actors used to perform them with equal facility in each language. The Company had therefore a much wider circle of admirers outside Maharashtra and used to visit such places as Belgaum, Dharwar, Hubli and Bijapur in Karnatak, and as the Kannadigas are by nature music-minded, they used to go to the plays primarily for the music of Mirashibuwa and Bhatebuwa. The Company had an exceptional reputation for staging Urdu plays which were very popular at places like Nagpur and Hyderabad Dn., in particular, and were a box-office success. It used to stage plays for five out of the seven days of the week, leaving hardly any time for Mirashibuwa for his private practice. Yet the Buwa did not allow his form to suffer even by a bit. He could not take any outside tuitions as the company had to keep on moving from place to place. So the benefit of the Buwa's tuition was limited to some few among the actors who were in the service of the company. Apart from these, he taught music to Kashitai Marathe, the daughter of one of



the four joint-owners of the company. According to Mirashibuwa, she was by far the best of all the pupils he had taught till now. But unfortunately she died a premature death while yet in her teens. Among those whom the Buwa taught music while serving with the company may be mentioned the names of Shri Ranade of Akola, Shri Dattopant Sane of Jubblepore, and Shri Khire of Poona.

After his retirement from the Company's service, the Buwa wished to go back to Ichalkaranji, but as a temporary measure first stayed at Poona. As there were no good prospects at Ichalkaranji, the Buwa prolonged his stay at Poona. But though known to the senior musicians of his age as a great musician he had remained unknown to the younger generation and to the public in general. So at Poona, only a select few used to take advantage of his tuition in classical music. Yet in spite of this his stay at Poona proved to be fruitful in training many young men who are now high-class musicians and scholars of music. Among them may be mentioned the names of Utturkar, Yashwantbuwa Joshi, Prof. Powar, Malini Joshi, Kanebuwa and Dayanand Kamat. Shri Utturkar is a successful teacher of music and is serving as a music teacher in a High School at Belgaum. He has an effortless voice and his music is a prototype of his *guru's* music. He also performs over All India Radio. Yashwantbuwa Joshi is known as one of the leading musicians of Bombay and is an efficient teacher of classical music. Prof. Powar is a teacher of music in the Government Training College for Men at Poona and though reticent by nature his repertoire excels that of any other pupil of Mirashibuwa. He specialises in singing any unknown composition in all its beauty from notation as printed by Mirashibuwa in his *Raga-Vistar* volumes. Malini Joshi (now Mrs. Phatak) is the sister of Yashwantbuwa Joshi and possesses a very fine natural voice and like Prof. Powar can sing any unknown composition at sight of the printed notation. Dayanand Kamat is a graduate and now owns a printing establishment at Poona. He was once the craze of the Poona audiences and while under training by Mirashibuwa used to carry away the first prizes in many open music competitions. Prof. Paradkarbuwa, a famous musician of Bombay, had his music-training under Mirashibuwa for some time.

Among the amateur pupils may be mentioned the names of Sau. Sanjivani Marathe a well-known and gifted poetess of Maharashtra and Sau. Kalindi Gokhale, daughter of the late Prof. S. G. Sathe of Poona.

Prof. Mirashibuwa's association with me began while I was at the Willingdon College of Sangli. It ripened into intimate friendship after my transfer to the Fergusson College of Poona, in 1940 and resulted in giving a dramatic turn to the former's life after the age of sixty. The Buwa was then suffering from blood-pressure and it was long before he was cured of it. Along with his other admirers I wished to felicitate the Buwa on his

recovery, particularly as he had just then completed sixty years; A ceremony was held accordingly and it was followed by many similar ceremonies at Poona and Bombay, and the series was crowned by the one held at the Tilak Smarak Mandir at Poona on behalf of all the Music Institutions of Poona and was presided over by the late Dr. R. C. Bhadakamkar, a well-known physician, a great philanthropist and a patron of Arts. In appreciation of Mirashibuwa's great service in the cause of music and music-education, in his speech as president of the meeting, Dr. Bhadakamkar made a great announcement, all on his own and much to the surprise of everyone present. He declared that he would give scholarships to deserving young pupils willing to learn music under Mirashibuwa on the condition that they maintained training till they finished their music-education to the Buwa's satisfaction and the Buwa himself would receive a handsome monthly honorarium for training them. With my help the Poona Bharat Gayan Samaj was entrusted with the work of assessing the pupils monthly progress and of holding a performance at Dr. Bhadakamkar's place for testing their knowledge, once every three months. It was out of this generous provision that many of the Buwa's disciples could continue their music-education and attain proficiency in it.

Training on these lines required a definite syllabus, and as a first step towards it I exhorted Mirashibuwa to put each one of his *chijs* into correct music-notation with the help of an expert if necessary — as till then the Buwa was a stranger to the art of music-notation. The Buwa however flatly refused to part with the *chijs* in his repertoire as that would have meant a permanent loss to his own disciples and free booty for unworthy strangers. I earnestly appealed to the Buwa saying that his *guru* the great Pt. Bal-krishnabuwa, though remembered by the older generation was hardly known to the present generation and even his name was sure to be forgotten by generations to come as he had not left behind any material or objective testimony of his great art. If however Mirashibuwa meant to do such work he could do it and in that case his name would be remembered with gratitude by future generations and would be writ large in the history of our music and music-traditions.

The appeal went home and the Buwa felt convinced of the greatness of the cause and promised to take up the work in hand with all possible zeal. After his lunch the Buwa used to pass his time in playing a game of patience for an hour or two. After this incident, he stopped that practice and devoted his entire leisure to revising his *chijs* and putting them into notation, one by one. For some months, it was a trying experience even for the Buwa, as till then he had never interested himself in the mechanical aspect of putting *chijs* into notation. Prof. Vinayakbuwa Patwardhan was kind enough to help him in the initial stage. But once Mirashibuwa developed a facility for putting *chijs* into notation, he became a master and did the work with great determination and success. That he could do it

after the age of sixty is a matter worthy of emulation by those much younger than himself.

It was an ardent desire of the late Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar to publish in music-notation all the *chijs* in his own repertoire as well as that of his *guru*, Balkrishnabuwa, and accordingly he had published many of them; but a major part even of his own repertoire has still remained unpublished. Regarding Balkrishnabuwa's repertoire, there were only a few of his direct disciples who knew it thoroughly and fewer still who had mastered it. Pt. Mirashibuwa was one such fortunate disciple, and M. M. Potdar, the President of the Bharateeya Sangeet Prasarak Mandal of Poona and Pt. Vinayakbuwa Patwardhan, one of the Mandal's founders and also an accomplished disciple of Pt. Paluskar, attached great importance to the work done by Mirashibuwa. But for the timely resolution (of the Mandal) to publish all these *chijs* in notation in three successive volumes, they would not have seen the light of day and would have remained unknown to the younger generation. In appreciation of his notable work, the Mandal honoured Mirashibuwa publicly, and also gave him an honorarium. Mirashibuwa, on his own part, was generous enough to give a donation of Rs. 1,000 to the Mandal on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of its Gandharva Maha Vidyalaya, at Poona. From the interest accruing on that sum, prizes are awarded annually in Memory of the Buwa's *guru*, Pt. Balkrishnabuwa, to competitors who show proficiency in singing the *chijs* back at sight of the printed notation.

Pt. Vishnu Digambar further published the *Raga Vistars* of some 19 *ragas*. I made a written analysis of these *Vistars* for my own use, and during one of his periodic visits to my house, Pt. Mirashibuwa by chance happened to see it. On closer examination, and with some explanation on my part Mirashibuwa was convinced that the *Vistar*-procedure agreed perfectly with that of Balkrishnabuwa, only that it was rather brief and simple. He said he too could do similar work but with more depth and in detail and for many more *ragas* not known to the other disciples of his *guru*. Accordingly, he wrote the *Raga-Vistars* for five major *ragas* of the Gwalior *Gharana* to begin with, and trained some of his pupils to sing them from the printed notation, in all their detail. When Mirashibuwa assured himself of the accuracy of the notation and also of the infallible capacity of his pupils to sing correctly at sight, he held a demonstration to prove its efficiency before Sardar Mujumdar, Shri Bhole and myself, who granted that it was a complete success.

On one occasion, Pt. Anantbuwa, Mirashibuwa's elder *guru-bandhu*, happened to be his guest and while saying his prayers in the inner sanctuary was listening to the practice of his pupils outside and was surprised at the graded and orderly elaboration of the *raga* in all its details, which easily lasted for half-an-hour. He then congratulated Mirashibuwa on training

his pupils so perfectly and casually saw a note-book with notations, lying in front. He asked the purpose it was intended to serve, upon which Mirashibuwa said that what was sung by the pupils was sung at sight even though they had not studied the *chijs* before. Pt. Anantbuwa was greatly surprised at the statement and to assure himself of its truth, took the note-book away and asked them to sing again. They could not however do it in the same graded and orderly manner, but could do it perfectly well on reference to the note-book again.

Later, Mirashibuwa prepared and published five volumes of such *Raga-Vistars*, in succession, with five *ragas* in each volume. The series was intended to cover the volumes in all and has also received the patronage of the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

*Ustads* like the late Vilayatkhan, the Sawai Gandharva, Pt. Ratanjankar and the late Govindrao Tembe, listened to such demonstrations later on and highly complimented Mirashibuwa on his originality and patience. In recognition of his accomplishments as a great *khyal*-singer of the Gwalior *Gharana* and also of the meritorious work he had done in the field of music-education, he was honoured with the Rashtrapati's Award for the best vocalist of the Northern School for the year 1961, indeed a rare and coveted distinction, instituted by the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

The specialities of his individual art may be mentioned here. His style was in complete agreement with that of his *guru*, Pt. Balkrishnabuwa, whose style, as vouchsafed by the connoisseurs of the last generation or two, was in perfect conformity with that of his *guru*, Pt. Vasudevabuwa Joshi, the most distinguished of all the disciples of Miya Hassukhan of Haddu-Hassu fame. Some of his recordings, made while he was young, are a standing testimony to the rare brilliance and beauty of his voice. He was an expert in negotiating the *alapa* and *bol-alapa* over the full range of three successive octaves in all their variety and was a master of *tanās* and *bol-tanās* of various patterns. The Gwalior *Gharana* is famous particularly for its skill in negotiating the *dhal-tana* which goes with a sudden leap to the highest note in the *tara* or the third octave and negotiates the complete *tana* with swiftly descending notes with the brilliance and speed of lightning, with *akars* as well as *bols*. Still the *Gharana* is reticent in its performance and makes a judiciously balanced use of all the three *angas* of *gayaki* viz. *swar*, *tala* and *raga*. Its *swar-anga* is always bright and pleasing and shines with great lustre when it stays on, the *shadja* and *pancham*. All the great musicians of the Gwalior *Gharana* were able to reach the *ati-tara shadja* or the third *Sa* with complete ease and confidence without the least change in their voice-quality. Pt. Mirashibuwa like his *guru* was one such illustrious artist.

The *laya* and *tala anga* of the Gwalior *Gharana* is of the *gayaki*-type,

and is governed by the rules of musical composition, the melodic form of the *raga*, and the poetic substance of the *chij* and not by the mechanical portioning of the *matras* or time-units according to the *Kayada*-rules of the *tabla*-experts. So, only such *tabla*-players, as know the rules of musical composition and who also have experience of accompanying expert musicians, can correctly accompany the music of the Gwalior *Gharana* without allowing its charm to suffer. On the surface the *laya-anga* of the Gwalior-*gayaki* seems simple but is bedecked with the *atit* and *anagat* varieties everywhere, with all the three species of *laya* freely interspersed over the different parts of the composition or the *chij*. The free use of the *gamakas* also requires an accompaniment which must accentuate their effect but without obtruding.

About the *raga-anga*, it is a mistake to suppose that there are but about fifty-five *ragas* in vogue in the Gwalior-*gayaki*. It is true that the more common *ragas* have been a speciality of the Gwalior School, but in no way does it mean an exclusion of the uncommon or rare *ragas*. There were not less than one-hundred *ragas* even in the repertoire of Pt. Mirashibuwa and many of them are not current in other *Gharanas*. Evidently there must have been many more in the repertoire of his *guru*. Gwalior *Gharana* has the reputation of making an exceptionally artistic use of the *varjya* or the very notes a *raga* must omit conventionally. It is easy to verify the truth of such a statement from the notations already published by Pt. Mirashibuwa.

Thus the Gwalior *gayaki* makes use of all the three *angas* in a perfectly judicious and balanced manner. The Kirana -*Gharana* lays stress on the *swar-anga* only, the Agra-*Gharana* revels in the *laya* and *bol-angas*, while that of Alladiyakhan deals more with the uncommon *ragas* and shows its mastery over *tanas* of the *vakra*-type.

As regards the *talas* it is now-a-days a fashion with almost all *Gharanas* to use the *Ekatala* alone for its *vilambit* part, almost to the exclusion of the other *talas* of the *vilambit* category. Again this *Ekatala* is of a hybrid nature in that whereas the ordinary *Ekatala*-measure consists of twelve *matras* or units of time, this new *Ekatala* employs twenty-four or occasionally even forty-eight *matras* or units of time — with the result that the words of the *chij* get stretched and distorted in a very unfortunate manner. The followers of Alladiyakhan use only the *vilambit tina-tala* almost to the exclusion of other *talas*, and this makes their music monotonous after some time. On the other hand Pt. Mirashibuwa handled all the *talas* such as the *Tilwada*, *Zumra*, *Adachautala*, *Tina-tala*, *Eka-tala*, *Addha* and even *Sawari-a* very trying and rare *Tala* indeed, but with equal facility. Pt. Mirashibuwa was thus a master of all the three *angas* previously mentioned.

In his private life, Pt. Mirashibuwa was most unassuming in his

manners, and simple in his tastes and habits. In the matter of his religious beliefs and observances, he belonged to the old orthodox school and even while he was in the service of the dramatic company, he used to stick to them strictly. He was intelligent by nature and also possessed of a strong memory. During what little leisure he could snatch in-between his duty-hours, while in the service of the company, he used to exert his best to maintain his original form. After a few years of his service with the Company, he happened to visit Ichalkaranji for a holiday. Balkrishnabuwa, his *guru*, was sceptical about his form and thought it must have suffered a lot on account of the changed circumstances. When, however, Mirashibuwa sang at his *guru's* bidding he was happy to know that his form had not suffered.

Once the Company had gone to Sangli where Raja-Vaidya Abasaheb Sambare, a great physician and an intimate friend of his *guru* used to live. As usual Mirashibuwa went to his place to pay his respects to Abasaheb and at his express desire, the Buwa sang at his place. The music continued for well over two hours. Mirashibuwa had however no knowledge that the great Alladiyakhan was staying at Sambare's place as his guest for some days past. When the music stopped the Khansaheb at once entered the inner room and without reserve highly complimented Mirashibuwa on the excellence of his performance and the depth of his knowledge. The Khansaheb used to narrate his impressions about the performance of Mirashibuwa to his pupils so that he should serve as an incentive for them during their own training.

Paradoxically enough, Mirashibuwa's life was interwoven with many dramatic turns of both fate and facts, and has a moral and also a message for educationists as well as students of music. The problem it has posed for the educationist is 'at what age should one take one's first lessons in music so that its study becomes less taxing but more fruitful?' Another question it has raised is 'has heredity anything to do with an inherent aptitude for music?' Mirashibuwa's life answers both these questions in a singular way. None of his ancestors was a musician, nor did Mirashibuwa commence taking his first lessons in music till after his teens. So 'environment', rather than heredity, seems to create an aptitude for music and advanced age makes its study less taxing yet more fruitful would appear to be the right answers to the two questions. Again, if music is learnt at a later stage, there is no fear of the voice cracking later, though if learnt at a tender age there is this possibility. When older one's understanding and analytical powers are developed so what might take three or four years to learn at a tender age, can be learnt in a year's time at a later stage.

Fifty years ago, music was taboo to the educated and cultured sections of the society, and their attitude towards music was one of patronising the art rather than of learning it, themselves. This was but quite natural in

a society which followed the different professions in a hereditary manner. So only the children of the professional used to learn music. The problem of deciding the most suitable age for learning music had not arisen then, as the children of professionals acquired the art through the force of habit rather than by taking actual lessons. Today, music, at least in its elementary form, is considered as a necessary part of the general education of every citizen. So the problem of deciding the most suitable age for taking first lessons in music, has assumed a magnitude of more than cursory notice by our educationists. Pt. Mirashibuwa's life—was an inspiration and a pointer in such research.