

# D.T. Joshi's Unfinished Memoirs

TRANSLATED BY D.P. SEN

## Editor's note:

While his health was fast deteriorating, D.T. Joshi's ardent admirer and friend Dr Kalyan Bhattacharya of Burdwan requested Joshiji (as he was known) to write about the music and musicians he came across during his lifetime. Professor Joshi tried to avoid this request saying "Who seriously understands classical music or cares for the artistes of bygone days?". He added that the recent publications of memoirs on eminent artistes included denigrating attacks on other musicians. "What has personal character to do with music?", he wondered! This tendency on the part of authors and critics had pained him and discouraged him from writing anything. However at the insistence of Dr Bhattacharya he started to write down his memoirs. Unfortunately he died on September 28, 1993, shortly after starting them. Below is a translation by D.P Sen from the original manuscript which was published in Bengali in the journal *Nothun Chithi* (Autumn 1993:181-7) under the title "Sangeet o Sangeet Guni: Ekti Smrittikatha-Dhruva Tara Joshi, Smritir Kayek Pata" [A few pages from D.T. Joshi's Unfinished Memoirs].

I fell in love with music after listening to Ustad Enayat Khan's *sitar* recital for the first time in Lucknow. I decided then and there that I would learn from this legendary musician. I came to Calcutta from Lucknow and got admitted in a college there in 1930. The *ustad* [maestro] bestowed all his affection on me and I began to stay at his place at night. This happened not very long ago and many people know it. It was due to the *ustad's* affection and kindness that I was able to learn music along with my academic studies. Right from the start he gave me lessons in *sitar* as well as in vocal music: in our *gharana* [family-based musical tradition], *talim* [instruction, knowledge] in *sitar* should also have adequate training in vocal music. My *ustad* used to say "Patile me jabtak kuch hoga hi nahi to chamche se niklega kya?" [as long as the pot is empty, what's the use of dipping the ladle in it for soup?]. In fact, there has all along been a great importance attached to vocal music also in our system of *sitar* playing – that is why it was imperative to have training in vocal music also. I was then living with my cousin in Calcutta.

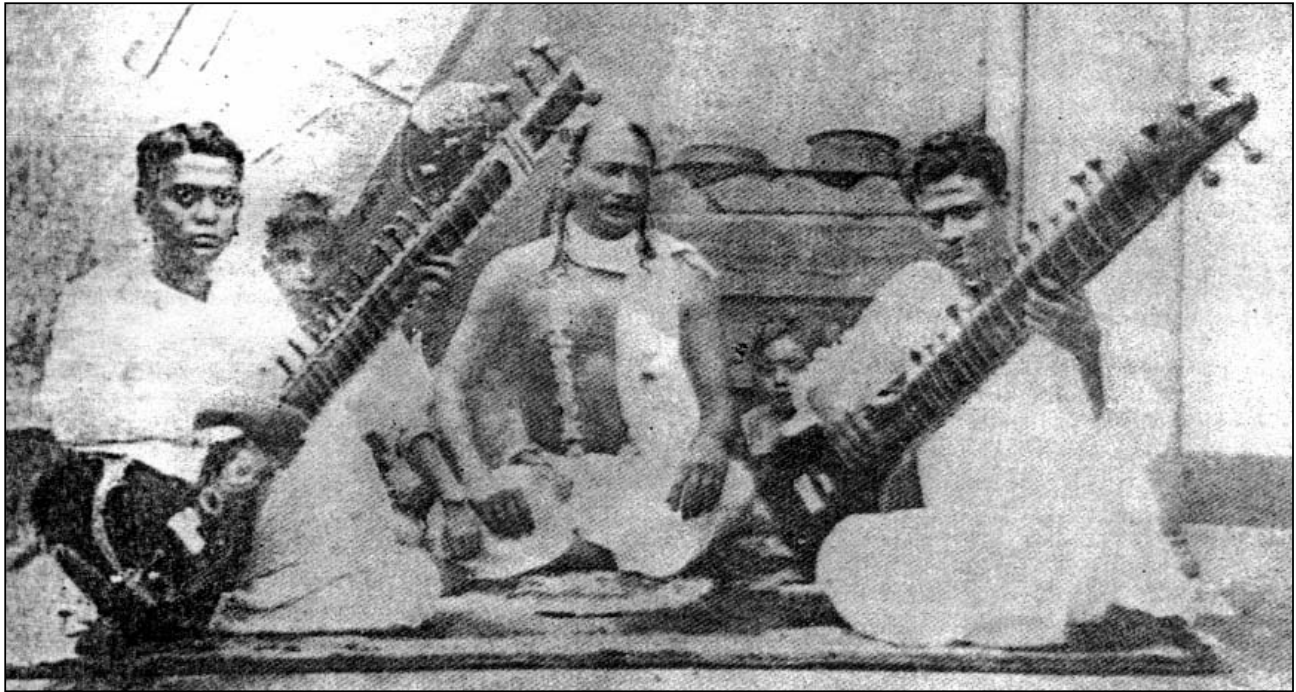
The All India Music Conference was held in Calcutta in which Ustad Faiyaz Khan came from Baroda to participate. Enayat Khan invited him to a dinner where I was introduced to Faiyaz Khan. Faiyaz Khan Sahib was a very serious minded person. He and my *ustad* were great friends. He wanted to listen to my *sitar* recital and approved of my performance. My *ustad* informed him that I could also sing. He listened to my song: as far as I can remember, it was Rag Bhupali. He then told me to sing Rag Jaitkalyan, which I did not know. Thereafter Khan Sahib asked me to sing Rag Shudh Kalyan and I started singing the composition "Alla hi bada sain" in *vilambit ektal* [slow, twelve-beat cycle]. He very much appreciated my

performance. After this came tea and sherbet, and Enayat Khan Sahib remarked, looking askance at me, “Gana sikhna ho to kisi gawaiye se sikhna” [If you want to learn to sing, then learn from a real vocalist]. Faiyaz Khan Sahib retorted that it was easier for an instrumentalist – be he a *sitarist* or a *sarodist* – to perform at the same level of a vocalist if he had adequate voice training. My *ustad* then requested him kindly to teach me a few *asthais* and *antaras* [first and second sections of a composition] since he had heard me, adding that I would not fail to satisfy him. He also requested him to make me a fully-fledged *shagird* [disciple] by tying *ganda* [thread, i.e., *ganda bandhan*] and for that my *ustad* would have no objection. The matter ended there. But mentally I was not prepared to be tied a *ganda* by a person other than my own *ustad*. However after my *ustad's* death, I became a disciple of Faiyaz Khan.

Faiyaz Khan was very much impressed at my devotion for my *ustad*. After tying *ganda* the first *bandish* [composition] Faiyaz Khan taught me was “Solna re balam mora” set in *tilwara tal* [sixteen beat rhythmic cycle], and after that “Pirawa tohari nek nazar par” – he taught me this *bandish* with great affection. After *talim* in five or six *rags* Khan Sahib told me that if I could take leave from *sitar* just for a couple of months and concentrate solely on vocal music I would do very well as a singer, but he thought whatever and however much I had so far learnt as a vocalist would be sufficient for *sitar* playing. Moreover, one should work hard on *sitar*, he said, adding that he had no special motive for saying so; he was very much satisfied with me and had his blessings and good wishes for me all the time. His relation with me continued to be everlasting, by the mercy of God.

I now realize there was much logic behind Khan Sahib's comments. *Sitar* was my priority, not vocal music. I came to realize that I was practicing more of vocal music than *sitar*. Therefore, I started *riaz* [practice] vigorously on the *sitar* again and came back to my form. When Khan Sahib came I would have vocal *talim*. Sometimes I would go to Baroda to learn from him. I was very fortunate to have had these two as my *ustads*; they were like heavenly angels to me. I wish many other aspirants have such luck!

Between the two *ustads*, Enayat Khan was first to tie me a *ganda*. This *ganda* tying was not a very easy affair. After my arrival in Calcutta I started to learn *sitar* from Bhola Babu, a *shagird* of *sarod nawaz* [master] Ustad Asadullah Khan. When I went to Enayat Khan Sahib for initiation by being tied *ganda* by him, I found him in a very disturbed mood. I came to know that Bhola Babu came to him and pitifully complained that he, the *ustad*, had snatched away the student he (Bhola Babu) had taught. At this the *ustad* refused to take me as his student saying “Mujhe kisika *shagird* chhinne ki adat nahi hai [I don't have the habit of snatching students away from others]; you better learn from him”. I was very disturbed and appealed to him saying “I shall continue to pay Bhola Babu his fees, but must learn



Private collector: D.T. Joshi

*Ustad Enayat Khan with D.T. Joshi (left) and an unnamed disciple in a photograph taken shortly before the ustad's death in 1938. It is even more notable for the presence of the young Vilayat and Imrat Khan.*

from you rather than from him. I have taken you as my sole *guru* with all my heart and soul, and if you still refuse I should rather discard my *sitar*". I also entreated *ustad's* mother to make the *ustad* agree. At last the *ustad* agreed, and at the close of Mohurrum Sharif [a period of mourning during which music is not played] my *talim* started.

There are some difficulties faced when one takes *talim* from an eminent *ustad*. But luckily, I never faced any such problem seriously; every problem was gradually solved. *Talim* went on. I learnt Rag Jaunpuri. He also taught me a *dhamar* [composition in a fourteen-beat cycle], "Khelata hori mohe kanha barjori", in the same *rag*. My *ustad* was a godfearing, well-behaved person – "Allah jita rakhe", "Khuda bahut kuchch de" [May Allah keep you; may God give generously] – these were his frequent utterances. He used to bow in folded hands whenever he encountered a *masjid*, *mandir* or a *gurdwara* [Muslim, Hindu and Sikh places of worship], even a big river, muttering something on his way to attend any function. Before playing he used to touch his forehead to his *sitar* and kiss it. He used to wear *dhoti* and a full sleeved shirt and put on a *chaddar* [shawl] around his neck whenever he went out. He was very much respected.

Local musicians used to frequent his house. There were musical sittings held in his house. Novice but talented students were encouraged by him and once a month they were allowed

to perform in such a sitting. Without anybody's knowledge he used to work very hard himself to prepare one such student to perform in such an excellent manner that even we felt humbled. This truly identifies a real *ustad* – what a *guru*!

Enayat Khan had two sons, Vilayat Khan and Imrat Khan. Vilayat was very impish, full of fun and frolics. When I first visited my *ustad* and knocked at his door Vilayat opened the door and told me that his father was not at home, although the *ustad*'s voice was heard from inside. Then he said that his father was in but asked me what had I brought for him. I very much liked this childish prank of Vilayat. The voice of my *ustad* came from inside: "Mian kiske sath bat karta tha? Kaun aya hai?" [Mian, with whom were you speaking? Who's there? (Mian Khan was Vilayat's pet name)]. At this, Vilayat became nervous and requested me not to tell anything of this to his father. I assured him and promised to bring his "thing" next time. ("Thing" meant chocolate, peanuts, etc.) *Ustad* came out scolding, "Phir shaitani kar raha tha?" [Again you were being naughty?]. "You don't study! Will Enayat's son pull a rickshaw ultimately?". In order to ease the situation I said, "I just asked him whether you were in, nothing more". I entered the house following the *ustad*, by that time Chote Khan Sahib ["Little" Khan, i.e. Vilayat] had vanished.

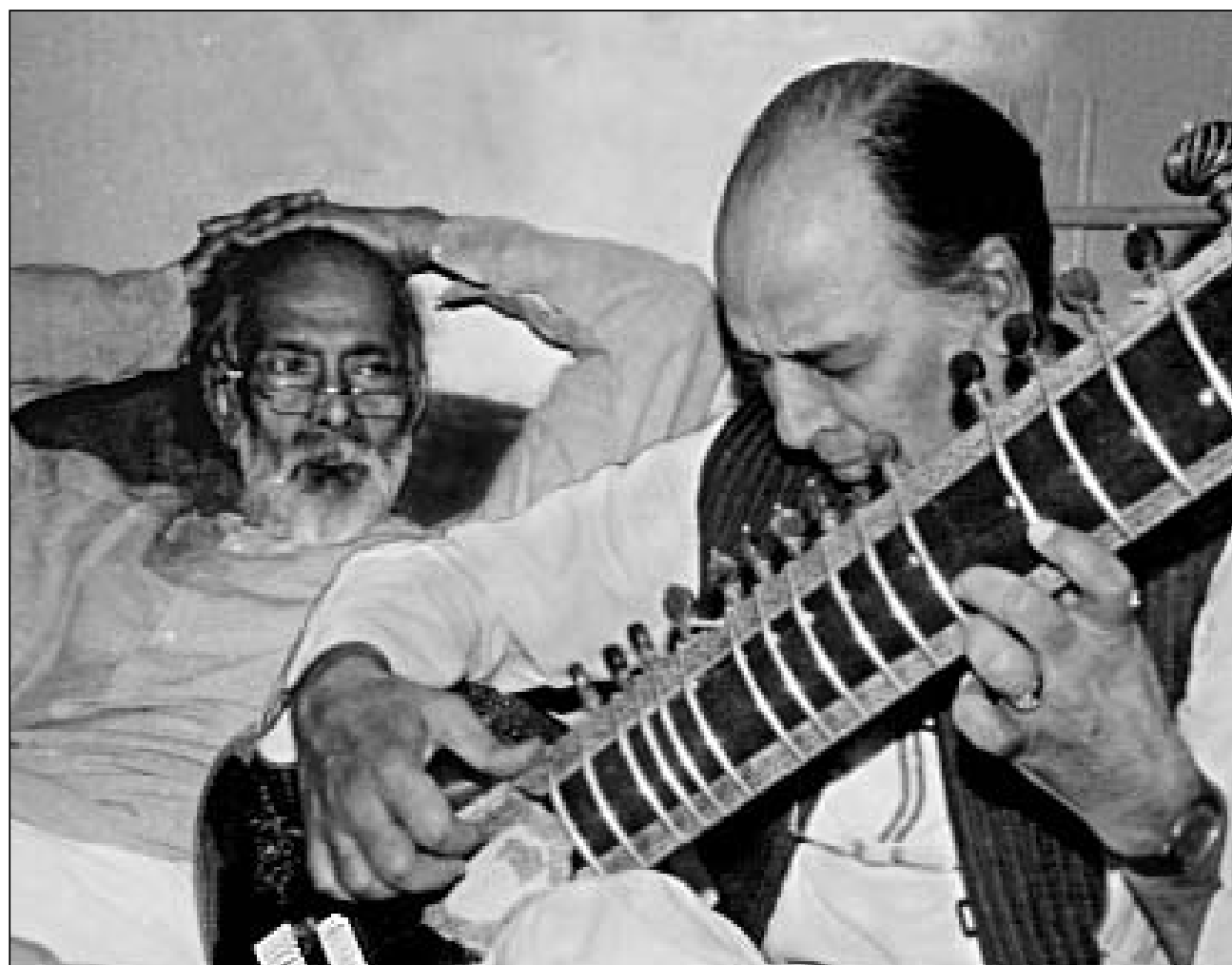
Before being tied *ganda* Vilayat Khan used to practice in his own peculiar way. Sometimes he used to hold a stick or a piece of wood like a *sitar* and used to utter *sitar bol*, *vani*, and *gat* [strokes, style and compositions]. Such was my Chote Khan's *riaz*.

Many people including students came to attend Vilayat Khan's *ganda*-tying ceremony at Ratu Sarkar Lane in Calcutta. There was quite a crowd there. There is a rule for *ganda*-tying that when *nazrana* [offering] is to be given to the *ustad*, it should be earned by the disciple. Sometimes it is borrowed from others. The students including me contributed according to our capabilities. Vilayat had now become a full-fledged *shagird* of the *ustad*: so far he had been merely a son of Enayat Khan. The barrier now removed, we came to the same level. This is the specialty of the *ganda*-tying business. After this Vilayat stopped his childish pranks with *sitar*; and thus began his *gharana talim*.

Vilayat's brother Imrat was very young at that time. He virtually grew up on our lap. The days passed very happily for us three brothers – Vilayat and Imrat and me – immersed in music. The *ustad*'s younger brother Wahid Khan Sahib and his two sons Hafiz Khan and Aziz Khan (Gunne) were occasional visitors. We three used to practice together, but Vilayat and I were more intimate. A lot of responsibility rested on me for Vilayat's education and *riaz*. Some nights our *ustad* would order us to play a *tan* [rapid sequence of notes] in some *rag*, take for instance:

d n S - g m d n S- m g R S - n d P m g R S n

At first we used to play singly. Afterwards, when Vilayat grew up a little more, we two used to play together. During some of these nocturnal practices Vilayat would fall asleep after some time, resting his head on my lap. The *ustad* could sense it and would say, “Mian so gaya kya?” [Has he fallen asleep?]. I used to lie and say, “Nahi Abba, voh peshab karne gaya hai” [No Father, he has gone to the bathroom] while trying to wake him up, furtively. We used to practice from seven or eight in the evening until four or five in the morning. After such *riaz*, Ammaji [Enayat’s wife] would ask me to wash while Vilayat remained deeply asleep. I would hurry up and get ready, then Ammaji would give me some custard or something to eat. After breakfast, I would come to my cousin’s place and study till 11:00 or 11:30 am. Then to college. Coming back home, I used to play with *tabla* accompaniment for two or three more hours. After that I took some light refreshment and went to my *ustad*’s place. In this way, and very happily, my days in Calcutta were spent.



Private collection: D.T. Joshi

*D.T. Joshi relaxing while listening to Vilayat Khan.*

Vilayat Khan was my *khalifa*, and with growing up he started feeling so. This mental make-up is also a factor which made Vilayat so famous and eminent. But to me he is the same Mian Khan of Raja Bazaar, even today. Even now, whenever we meet, he says “Where is my thing?”. May he live long!

I very much wish he maintains his forefathers’ reputation. I have great expectations of him. I am proud that I belong to this *gharana*. Now Vilayat and Imrat do not need to rest their heads on my lap. Both of them have grown very big and eminent. May God make me keep a special place for them in my heart forever!

Ustad went to Allahabad to participate in the Music Conference there. But since he fell ill, we brought him back to Calcutta. His condition became worse and he died. Thus ended an era both of a musician and of *sitar* music. Vilayat was very young then and could never realize the intensity of the seriousness of his father’s condition. He was flying a kite outside. After repeated requests he came to his father’s bed.

After Baba’s [Enayet’s] death Ammaji went to her father at Saharanpur. I took Vilayat to Lucknow where he started *riaz* rigorously. Occasionally he would also perform in lesser-known functions and thus kept up his musical activities. Sometimes he would stay in Delhi. Gradually, his reputation was built up. By that time Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Sahib came from Pakistan to settle here permanently. The All India Music Congress invited Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Sahib and Vilayat Khan to Bombay to participate in the Congress. There Vilayat Khan played tremendously well and in no time he had a lot of students, and as such, stayed back in Bombay. Name, fame and prosperity came and Vilayat became the most popular *sitarist* in India.

He took responsibility for his younger brother Imrat’s *talim* after his father’s death. Gradually Imrat also started building up a reputation. Though help came from both the parental families, Vilayat taught him with utmost care; and Imrat learnt with great care *sitar* and also *surbahar* [bass sitar]. When prosperity came they started living in Calcutta. Now both Vilayat and Imrat are established artistes, and by the grace of God their reputation has spread from India to the whole world. They have three sisters, Nasiran, Sharifan, and Raisa. All the three are well established and live happily. The children of my two *khalifas* are also in music and are doing very well.

My second *ustad*, Aftab-e-Mausiqi [“The Sun of Music”] Faiyaz Khan Sahib, is also no more. He gave me *talim* till his last days. He was very much accomplished though merry. He had students all over the country. He had a special virtue: whenever he put his hand on the head of a person the latter became a renowned *ustad*. He had connections with royal courts and received many awards and honors. He died of lung disease some years ago.

Pandit Ratanjankar, Pandit Dilip Chandra VEDI, Latafat Husain, Sunil Bose and many other renowned artistes were his students. He was a versatile vocalist: *dhrupad, dhamar, hori, khayal, asthai, thumri, dadra, tappa, tarana, kajri, sawan*, even *ghazal* [vocal genres] – whatever he sang listeners would be overwhelmed. He never knew how to dine all by himself alone. When at Lucknow, he would stay at Empire Hotel in the Kaiserbagh area. The hotel's proprietor, Narayan Das, was my classmate. My friend Nawab Asgar Husain, a good *tabla* player, my classmates S.K. Chaubey, Sunil Bose and the city's many other musicians like Khurshid Ali Khan, Hamid Husain Khan, Sakhawat Khan, Yusuf Ali Khan, Asadji of Music College and many others including students would congregate in his room. Many among them would dine with Khan Sahib. When in the mood, Khan Sahib would sometimes teach an *asthai*, sometime *khayal* or *taranas*. What joyful days those were! No more are such *gurus* and their disciples.

Once I fell ill while participating in the Rae-Bareilly Sangeet Sammelan. Khan Sahib came to see me in the small hours of the morning, 2:30 a.m. He left his stick which I still possess as a very rare memento. It is rare to find such a noble person like him now. After the *ustad's* death, Gopeshwar Bandopadhyaya of the Bishnupur *gharana* of Bengal commented that it was not the *ustad's* death, it was the death of Hindustani Music. How nicely put! Truly, when a great musician dies, he takes away with him the tradition of the music. It has verily happened in the case of Faiyaz Khan.

Ustad Faiyaz Khan had a very wide range of knowledge and experience. Though he belonged to the Agra *gharana* and had connections with Baroda state he also had connections with Ramzan Khan Rangile of Sikandrabad. I listened to some pieces of Rangileji's composition from Khan Sahib. The *ustad* told me that after Sadarang, Adarang, and Monarang there was hardly any composition heard like Mian Rangile's which was so aesthetically blended with tuneful *sur* [intonation, melody] and beautiful poem. Ustad Faiyaz Khan himself excelled in composition, his many compositions bearing the pen-name of "Prem Piya" are being sung even these days by many artistes.



Faiyaz Khan (1886-1950)