

**Appreciating Hindustani Music**  
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**Lecture - 55**  
**Bhatkhande and Paluskar**  
**The 20<sup>th</sup> Century Reformers of Hindustani Music**

Hello and welcome. Today we are going to take a quick look at the contributions of two giants, two men whose life work was so influential and so important, that it could be said to have shaped the very landscape of Hindustani Khayal music as we know it today; Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande and Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar.

The contributions of these two men are so immense that all the wonderful music we have been talking about in this course, even this course itself probably would not have existed in the manner and the extent to which it does today without these two men.

Now, Bhatkhandeji and Paluskarji were contemporaries, they were both born and they carried out their major work in pre-independence undivided India and both men worked all their lives to rectify what they saw as major problems in the theory, practice, pedagogy and social environment of Hindustani music in those times. But, the two Vishnus as they came to be known were not really collaborators.

In fact, they were almost rivals because they each had a very different vision for this music, but they were respectful rivals. And the rich densely populated musical atmosphere that we enjoy today has come about because their work ended up being complementary to one another's.

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So, let us begin with Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande. Now, Bhatkhande was a lawyer by profession and a Sanskrit scholar and a musician by passion and he had studied Dhrupad and Khayal with master musicians.

But, Bhatkhande at heart was a nationalist theoretician - the Indian subcontinent at the time was in the throes of the anticolonial, nationalist movement and Bhatkhande wanted to show the colonists as well as his own people that Hindustani music had a solid, coherent, unified and ancient theory upon which its practice was based.

But, there was a problem here, this theory did not exist. Now, Bhatkhande went to great lengths to find and study every ancient text and relatively recent text of music that he could find. You have to remember that this in itself was a monumental effort, this was in the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century. So, doing this kind of research meant apart from studying Urdu, Farsi and Sanskrit as well as music.

Of course, this meant travelling across the lengths and breadths of the country using whatever transport was available at the time in search of these rare manuscripts, begging their custodians to let them see them. There were not too many easily accessible public libraries at the time and the ones that did exist did not always have the kind of material Bhatkhande wanted.

So, Bhatkhande's work involved locating these rare texts, copying them down by hand, studying and understanding them, meeting various musicians and scholars to discuss and debate the grammar of the ragas, that were currently in practice with them and comparing this with what he found in the texts, it is a lot of work. Bhatkhande did all of this and he did it at his own personal expense and at very hard labour.

And, after doing this, after studying virtually all the important and less important ancient texts on music and meeting so many musicians, he came to the conclusion that the wonderful music that he had learned that was being practised all around him was completely different from the music that was described in the ancient texts. The ragas were different, the talas were different, often sometimes the raga names were the same, but the notes of the ragas and the grammar that was described there was completely different from what was there in practice.

And so, Bhatkhande for the first time established the vastly important fact that the ancient Sanskrit texts including the most famous ones such as the Natyashastra and the Sangeet Ratnakar, were not relevant to Hindustani music as it was being practiced in contemporaneous times around him. Of course, one has to remember that there certainly are links between these texts and current practice that scholars have continued to show, but these are historical links, the evolutionary links.

What Bhatkhande was saying in his books and in his talks was that the actual music that was in practice was nothing like the music that was described in these treatises. Now, this might seem like an easy enough conclusion to come to you read some books and you come to this conclusion, but it took years and years for Bhatkhande to do it for two reasons.

One of course, the logistical difficulties of actually accessing and studying these texts, that I have described earlier and of convincing master musicians to reveal their inherited knowledge to him.

And, the other number two: the fact that most scholars and practitioners of the time simply assumed that they were singing in ancient music without bothering to verify this. But, to Bhatkhande all this had resulted in a situation where there was no consensus between scholars and practitioners on the theory of music. So, that often the same raga was sung very differently by different musicians from different gharanas. Add to this the fact that it was so

difficult to get access to bandishes and to raga knowledge because both of these were guarded jealously. You know by the Pandits and Ustads of that time.

Because it was their inherited knowledge and you had a situation because of all of this that appeared to Bhatkhande at least to be too chaotic to be acceptable. Now, Bhatkhande was a nationalist theoretician at heart and his vision, he envisioned a grand unified national classical music - music that was uniform across the length and breadth of the newly emerging Indian nation and that was freely accessible to everybody in a central national academy of music.

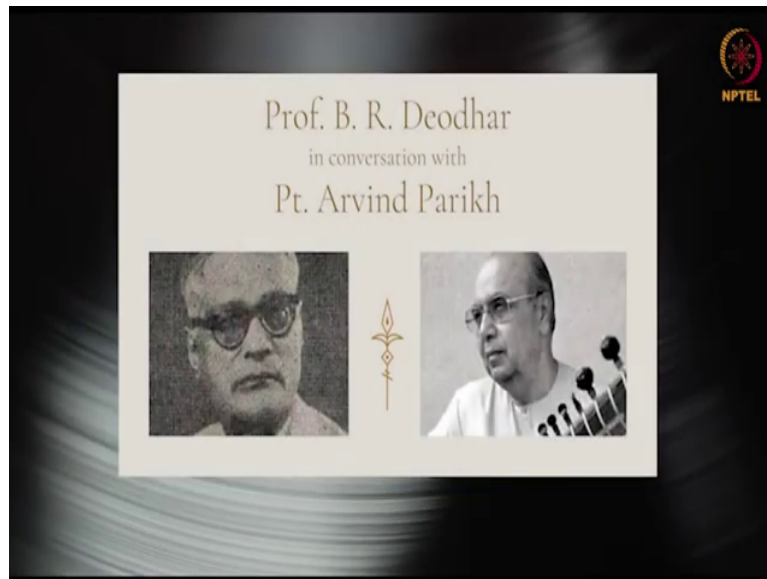
So, it was to this end that Bhatkhande began his monumental task of singlehandedly developing a new theory for Hindustani music. So, over a period of 25 years, Bhatkhande toured the entire geography of this music to collect raga grammars and bandishes from whoever was willing to part with them in whatever way. You know sometimes musicians gave bandishes generously, wholeheartedly, sometimes he had to pay them something per bandish you know.

Sometimes he had to trick them into revealing their hereditary knowledge and some musicians refused to cooperate, they refused to give him anything at all. Now, apart from bandishes Bhatkhande also wanted to standardize the grammar, the rules of the rags, but there was a major question here. Now, although Bhatkhande had himself worked very hard to compare and analyze the various versions of the same raga that was being sung around him. And, he had tried to come up with a standard common set of rules for each raga.

How was he going to get the master musicians, the traditional hereditary Pandits and Ustads, who were proud of their inherited knowledge, how is he going to get them to accept the rules created by him by this non-performer, this theoretician, this lawyer? But, Bhatkhande had some tricks up his sleeve.

Let us listen to a short excerpt of the scholar musician Pandit B R Deodhar describing one of Bhatkhande's visits to the Rampur Court, to discuss the rules of the Raga Adana Kanada Adana with the court musicians there and how he got them to accept the rules that he had decided upon.

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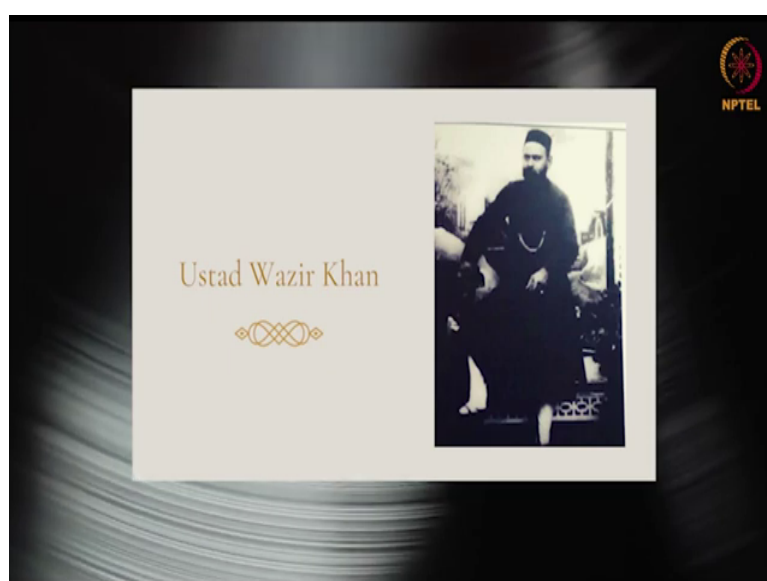
and when he told me the reality about research, how he undertook his research article that was worth listen.

Pandith Bhatkhandeji.

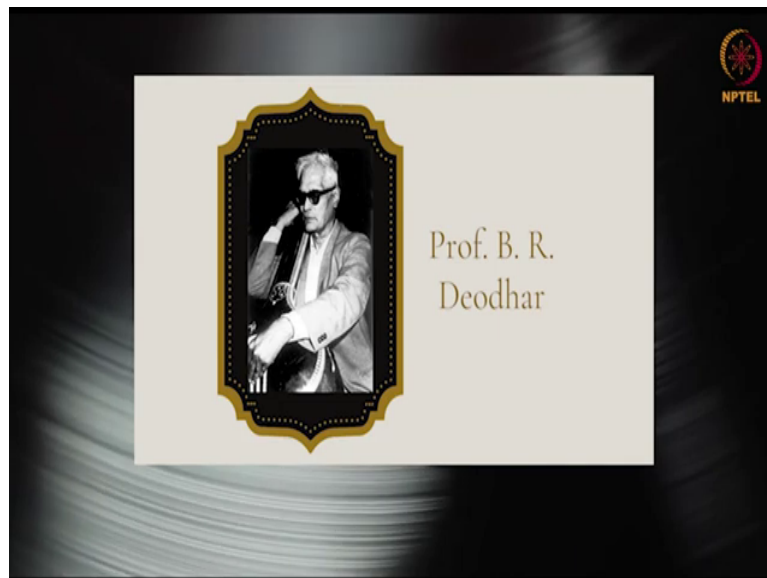
Pandith Bhatkhandeji. Panditiji tried assimilating compositions from various musicians

but not everyone was willing to share freely. So he went to Rampur to meet Nawab .Wazir Khan who was a descendant of Tansen 's son. and was a beenkar.

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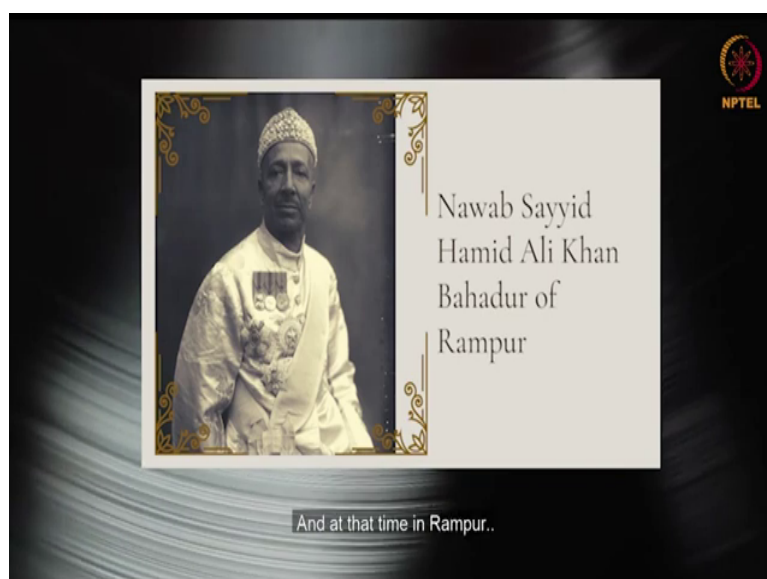


And descendants of Tansen's daughter were rabab players. There were the two branches. And Wazir Khan...Commanded such respect in the state of Rampur...that police officers would be on guard at his door. So Bhatkhande sahab went to Rampur. and informed the nawab, who himself was....



...a singer who knew many dhrupads and dhamars...and a respected musician among musicians. So Bhatkhande requested him to share some of his knowledge with him. The Nawab said “ why you don't you become a formal disciple (ganda- bandh) of wazir Khan”?

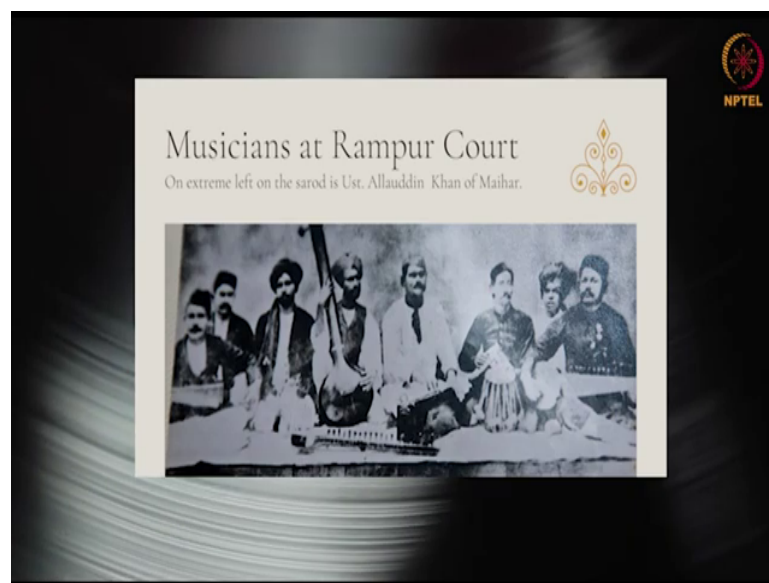
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So Bhatkhande tried to win him over by praising him as foremost among singers.

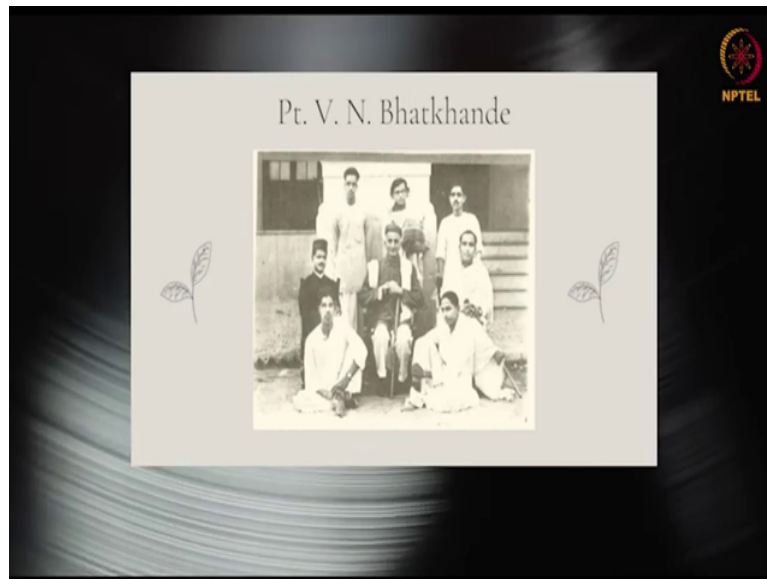
...and said “ why don't you only tie me a ganda (scared thread to formalise the mentor - disciple bond).The nawab was honored at this offer from such an accomplished man as Bhatkhande...and agreed to tie him a ganda. Now ,Bhatkhande was very shrewd and after all, he was a lawyer. And at that time in Rampur. Singers from various gharanas.

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...were part of the state band and drama company. Reputed sarod players, sitar players and all kinds of instrumentalists congregated in Rampur. Bhatkhande requested the Nawab to call upon on all these musicians... and said we'll determine the rules of various Ragan in their presence. He decided to discuss Raag Adana. Now, one musician played it on way while another said his father taught it to him differently..a third said his father taught him a completely different form of the Raag. Bhatkhande patiently heard each one's point of view and finally told the Nawab.." My lord, after listening to all of them I have finally come to a conclusion..Let me share it with you and there is a chance you may agree as well.

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...Let me share it with you and there is a chance you may agree as well....So hear me out.”

Then Bharkhande would go on to explain the framework of the raag.....talking in detail about the notes used.At the end the would turn to the Nawab for his approval..

...who gave his consent readily (not wanting to disagree with such a learned man).

The Nawab would then ask for the consent of all the musicians in attendance.The musicians had no choice but to acquiesce. In this manner, Bharkhande determined and finalised the rules for many raags.

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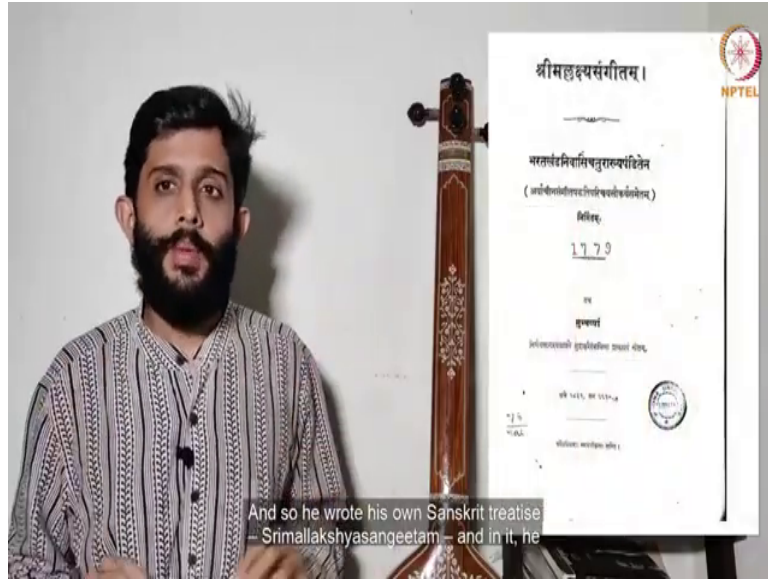




He had shared his research methodology with me back then.

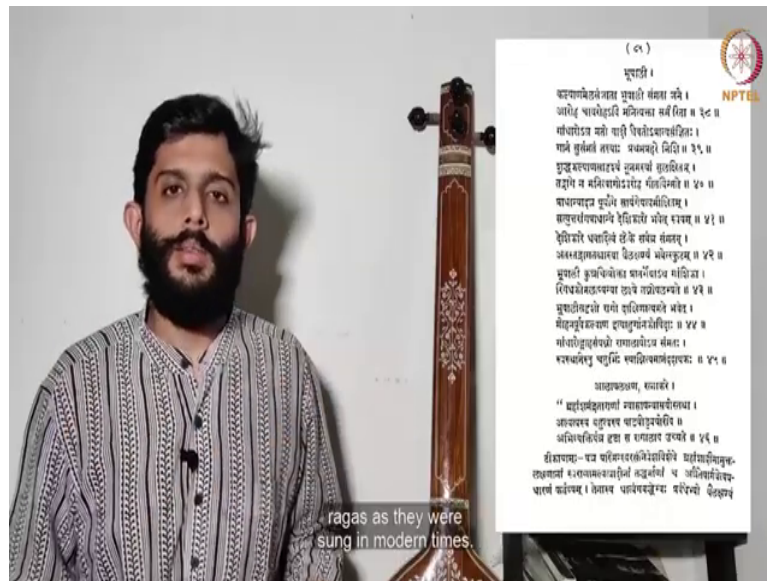
But, perhaps the most ingenious and controversial trick Bhatkhande used to get his raga rules accepted was in his books, in his publications. Bhatkhande was canny enough, smart enough to know that people tended to accept anything that was written in Sanskrit as ancient and authentic.

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And so, he wrote his own Sanskrit treatise Srimallakshyasangeetam in Sanskrit. And, in it he did not use his own name, he used a pseudonym, a pen name. The author of Srimallakshyasangeetam was the mysterious ‘chatur – pandit’ and it was years before anybody figured out that this author was in fact, Bhatkhande himself.

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In this book Bhatkhande laid out in Sanskrit standardized rules of modern ragas as they were sung in modern times. And, then in traditional style, he wrote a commentary on this book explaining in common Marathi for common people, these raga rules.

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This commentary, the ‘Hindustani Sangeet Paddhati’ was a massive work in four voluminous parts which ran to almost 2500 pages. In the paddhati, an imaginary guru explains the srimallakshyasangeetam, the shlokas in it to an imaginary student; thereby creating a consistent theory for Hindustani music that was accessible to everybody.

In addition, Bhatkhande also reprinted a number of other older theoretical works on music and made them available because they were not easily available at the time. He brought them back into circulation. But, Bhatkhande did not stop with just creating theory, you know he worked hard to propagate his theoretical work too in schools and colleges and in the many institutions he founded.

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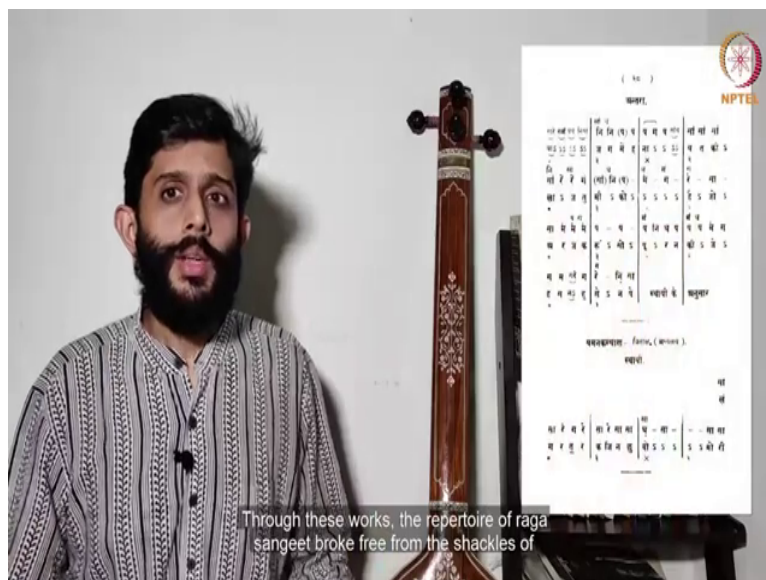
Including, the Marris College in Lucknow which is called the Bhatkhande Sangeet Sansthan today. He groomed and appointed teachers to teach in these colleges, he obtained the support of the Maharajas of various princely states like Lucknow and Baroda and Gwalior. And, then he said about creating textbooks that could be used to teach his theory in these institutions.

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Now so, Bhatkhande also published a 6 volume set of books that contained some 1900 almost 2000 bandishes, bandishes that he had painstakingly collected over many years from many great musicians.

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Now, through these works, the repertoire of raga sangeet broke free from the shackles of the guru shishya tradition in which Bhatkhande saw it as tied up. All of these works that Bhatkhande published have remained in print for a whole century now, they remain

dependable resources for students and practicing musicians even today for bandishes, for raga rules, for grammar.

Right from young first timer students to legendary musicians like Pandit Kumar Gandharva, Bhatkhande's work has remained a major source for the Hindustani music community for 100 years and counting, no mean feat. Of course, Bhatkhande's work and his methods were controversial at the time and they remain controversial today.

But as musicologist GH Ranade has said, even the musical knowledge based upon which scholars sometimes criticize Bhatkhande, this musical knowledge was itself made accessible to them by Bhatkhande's efforts.

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So, the other looming giant in the history of modern Hindustani music is of course, the other Vishnu, Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. Paluskar had received training in the lineage of the old Gwalior Gharana and was a very talented musician, a wonderful singer who as a young man had already begun to achieve a lot of fame and even princely patronage for his abilities.

But, as he went about performing, he was troubled by a different aspect of music's situation in pre-independence India - very different from the theoretical concerns that Bhatkhande had had. What bothered Paluskar was the fact that music was not seen as a respectable profession at the time, music was not something that people from good families did.

It was associated either with illiteracy or with tawaiif culture and the rich and beautiful tawaiif tradition of musicianship had already become associated with prostitution and debauchery, because of Victorian understandings of morality that were prevalent at the time. Paluskar proceeded at the age of 25 to give up a promising career as a performer and set himself to the task of bringing about a social transformation in the field of Hindustani music.

In order to acquire respectability both for the music and for the musicians who practiced it and to remove the taboos associated with it and to make it accessible to the emerging bourgeoisie middle classes. Now, to do this Paluskar began his lifelong work of establishing a network of music schools. He began with his first school the original Gandharva Mahavidyalay which he founded in Lahore in 1901. This was probably the very first school that was run on public support and donations from private contributors and of course, Paluskar's own personal savings, but not on princely patronage.

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Now, through monumental struggle Paluskar acquired land, he built the school, he identified and trained teachers, even founded a printing press in which to print his own textbooks and magazines on music. He then established a branch of the school in Mumbai in 1908 and moved his operations including his printing press and everything there his instrument factory.

In these schools, students often from poor families were housed, they were clothed and fed and taught music in a regular, disciplined and systematic fashion. Parents had to sign a bond which committed students to the school, thus relieving them of the financial and educational

responsibilities of the children. Obviously, two schools were not going to be enough to bring about a large scale social revolution and so, Paluskar started training teachers.

He started a special batch of students called his 'upadeshak varga' or instructors, teacher's class, in which he explicitly trained his students in order to be good teachers, not performers. And, as soon as they were ready, he sent them off to various parts of the country to found their own schools and to train more teachers who would go on to do the same.

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Some examples of Paluskar students who did this Pandit Vinayakrao Patwardhan who started a branch of the Gandharva Mahavidyalay in Pune or Pandit Vinaychandra Maudgalya who did the same in Delhi or Pandit Vishnu Annaji Kashalkar, who started the Prayag Sangeet Samiti in Allahabad.

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Or of course, Professor B R Deodhar who started his Deodhar School of Indian music in Mumbai and all of these institutes together with many many more are still around today, they still function today. So, this gradually led to the creation of a vast network of music schools that exists even today in the form of the Akhil Bharatiya Gandharva Mahavidyalay Mandal - a central body that governs the functioning and the syllabus and the examinations of these schools.

Many of you attending this course may even have taken a few classes at your local Gandharva Vidyalay affiliated music class or given one of their examinations. The foundations for all this were laid back a century ago by Vishnu Digambar Paluskar. It is worth remembering that Paluskar did most of this work at his own expense. He invested in his mission to such an extent that it even took him into debt and he eventually had to auction off the building of his Mumbai school.

But the troops of students that he had groomed carried his vision forward and its results are there for all to see today. Now, the atmosphere in Paluskar schools was largely disciplined and devotional. In fact, Paluskar used the tool of Bhakti nationalism of which he himself was a sincere adherent. He used it to give Hindustani music and aura of sacred purity. It was through this that he achieved his great success, the association of Hindustani music with a nationalist, religious, 'sacred' past made it possible for more and more people to imagine themselves as musicians.



It lifted the taboos that had afflicted the profession and made it acceptable to society at large. Now, one serious allegation that was made on Paluskar's schools was that his methods of training did not really produce any top ranking performing musicians. But, Paluskar's own reply to this allegation was fitting. I may not have created many Tansens' he said, but I have given birth to thousands of Kansens, listeners, rasikas who are knowledgeable enough to appreciate the intricacies of the music that the performers create.

Now, it is impossible to fully cover the span of Bhatkhande and Paluskar's contributions in one short lecture. They did so much more than what I have outlined, sketched here. They both organized for example, massive all India conferences of music, where the greatest masters from across the subcontinent got together and performed and debated the finer points of the music. They both invented their own systems of notation with which to capture bandishes and rag grammar and they did so much more.

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But, the over the overbearing, overarching fact about these two great men of Indian music remains the vast, rich, varied and globally loved culture of music making in the Hindustani tradition that we cherish today. And, this culture owes itself to the monumental efforts that they put in. And, it was in the creation of this culture that their work complemented each other.

Bhatkhande's theorization, his collection and publication and democratization of bandishes and grammar. And, Paluskar's network of schools with which to teach and disseminate this

grammar and to create massive audiences, that were capable of understanding and appreciating the music that the masters were creating and for this we owe them.