

Mp3 Nikhil Banerjee - Afternoon Ragas

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Live sitar concert with tabla; North Indian classical music 8 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: New Age, WORLD: Asian Details: My approach to music is very deep. I do not compromise with anybody or anything else in the world. I do not care. I want to really go beyond this materialistic world...not for the sake of enjoyment, entertainment, no. A musician must lift up the souls of the listeners, and take them towards Space.

--Nikhil Banerjee Padmabhushan Nikhil Banerjee (1931-1986) was undoubtedly one of the finest sitarists of his time. His music earned deep respect among India's classical music connoisseurs as well as gaining him a devoted international following. He was the disciple of the two greatest forces in 20th Century Indian classical instrumental music, Padmavibhushan Allauddin Khan and his son Ustad Ali Akbar Khan. Though he recorded a number of LPs, few were of live concerts, in which his leisurely, majestic raga development was unsurpassed. Mr. Banerjee disliked being recorded, feeling that the process distracted and somewhat compromised the inner meditative quality of his music, so high-fidelity live recordings are rare. Raga Records is releasing a series of concert recordings to help preserve Mr. Banerjee's legacy.

Legendary tabla player Kanai Dutta began to study as a child under Satish Das. Later he was a student of the noted Calcutta teacher Jnan Ghosh for over ten years. He first travelled to the West with Ravi Shankar in 1955. He recorded a number of LPs with Mr. Banerjee for EMI India. Bhimpalāsri: Late afternoon; mood of devotion, pathos, joy. You can make the animals cry with this rag... Multani: Late afternoon. Take out pathos effect of morning and put in devotion and heroic... ...as sun is going down and down, komal ri and tivra ma start coming out... (Quotes from Ali Akbar Khan classes.) MY MAESTRO AS I SAW HIM by Nikhil Banerjee Gurukul method of training is perhaps the most unique feature of our music and its heritage. It may appear rather old fashioned if not primitive to those students who sit around modern electronic wonder gadgets like tape or video recorders and pick up their lessons. But truth is what it is. Gurukul system presupposes that the students have to be in constant company and guidance of their master whom they serve in every way. As in the case of religion, it is only when the master is satisfied with the earnestness and sincerity of the student, then he imparts his power and the wealth of all the feelings and realizations of his own Sadhana or practice. Between the teacher and the taught the

principle of give and take is only this. The student can only offer his devotion and service, and the teacher can let him have knowledge and truth. We can find easily how a system as such can effect the total development of a student both physical and mental under the strict vigilance of the teacher who knows how to let the flower blossom. Sad to say, for many many years this principle used to operate in a limited sense and the great Ustads kept up a very secretive approach. They would not let the student see the truth unless there was any blood relation between them. Baba Allauddin Khan Sahib was great in going against this current, and courageously proving that our music is not a hidden magic but essentially a matter of practice aiming at self-realization. He was not a musician by family tradition. His life is quite a classic story of endless tests and trials through which he found his way towards knowledge and enlightenment. It is probably this background which bred such a strong antipathy towards anything mean and narrow in the sphere of teaching. He was a teacher incarnate with the purest vibration. Any student, if really deserving, had from him the shower of his blessings and by the sheer touch of his genius felt quite transformed. Our much respected Sri Timirbaran, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, our most revered Annapurnadidi, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Sri Pannalal Ghosh are some of the brightest luminaries that Baba produced, and who else but he could do it. Many people raised one common question that how we could learn sitar from an Ustad whose medium of expression was sarod. His biography records many interesting accounts of his training in veena, sursringar, rabab, surbahar and several other instruments. This opened up endless possibilities of those instruments and enabled him to assimilate and introduce a style of playing much bigger in scope and dimension compared to which the old recordings or other sitar playing sound limited. In course of teaching he said to me one day, I have decided to teach you sitar after the style of Nawab Kutubudaulla Bahadur of Lucknow. He had such an exhaustive idea about the baj or style of playing of every instrument that he could neatly distinguish between them and combine them as well for the best conceivable effect. A man is, in point of fact, inseparable from his ideals. To my mind Baba Allauddin Khan Sahib was more of an institution than only a musician. While staying at Maihar Baba gave as a life-style very much like that of an Ashram or hermitage. As a person he was simple, unassuming and completely devoid of egoism. He lived a life with the minimum of necessities and always helped himself to the best of his physical abilities. He washed his own clothes every day. He had a strong aversion towards any kind of luxury which, he believed, could only make a man materialistic and pleasure-loving and not idealistic and sensitive. Maihar, as we all know, is a place of extreme climate and it becomes unbearably

hot during the summer because of the limestone factories that surround it. Once, his son Ustad Ali Akbar Khan Sahib bought an air-cooler and took it to Maihar with the expectation that it might give him some relief. But after a few days it was rejected with scorn. Till the day he was unable to move, he would go to the market to buy daily necessities and not let the students go there and waste their valuable moments of practice. He was great in practicing austerity in his own life and had therefore the right to impose it on us. He was a disciplinarian and would never allow the slightest deviation from his ideals of simple living, strict observance of Bramhacharya during our stay at Maihar, a total withdrawal of the mind from all kinds of superficialities, directing all the energy to practice of music and concentration. In going to enforce all this he had to keep up a certain hardness which was, in reality, a show. Stories of Babas severe scoldings, beating with the bow of violin and throwing of tabla hammer are so common that people are sometimes terribly mistaken to assume that he was a kind of an old village schoolmaster lacking in any sophistication, with only the ability to be rather ridiculously stern. But this image of himself he deliberately projected in order not to allow any liberty to the disciple. He always had the tension that soft treatment on his part would only spoil them. One day I heard him speaking out rather candidly, Don't you see that I am a grandsire? Don't I feel like taking them (meaning his grandsons) in my arms patting and loving them. But I am afraid it may spoil them. Here was the inner voice which could be heard seldom or never. Beneath the veil of toughness was the soft and tender soul bubbling with humanity. We used to watch with wonder how in different corners of his premises he arranged to set up wooden pieces of shelter-racks to let the birds build up their nests. At the time of his meals these birds would gather around him and he enjoyed their innocent company. Whenever any Sadhu or saint was around, Baba would give him God-like treatment, offering food and clothing. He used to clean with his own hand the left-overs of their food and never let us touch them. I cannot resist the temptation to narrate a couple of episodes which reveal Babas humanity. There was one woman who was mentally deranged and stayed near Babas house. In the evening she would frequently visit Baba while he was engaged either in playing or teaching us. We even noticed that various herbal medicines were externally applied on her head to cool down her nervous system. This lady would keep her head on Babas lap and while listening to music fell asleep. The stern teacher never felt disturbed but rather compassionately said Ah, what a pity that she suffers so much! Let her have some rest at least! Other than those who witnessed this scene, how can anybody recognize what he actually was! Once in the market at Maihar he watched a person sitting out rather dejected in a

corner with a number of dholaks to sell but not heeded by anyone. He was touched so much so that he took up one dholak and started playing. The result was obviously a crowd around him. Many of them were throwing coins and a few dholaks (folk drums) were sold out within a short time. Baba saw that some money were collected. He gave it all to the dholak-seller and went home happy. About religion Baba was very broad-minded. When he used to have his daily prayer or Namaz he would ask me to go into my room and have my Gayatri Yapa. Some of the habits and practices he suggested got so firmly riveted into my mind as mantras or sermons. He would say, Whenever you are giving a performance, meditate on your Guru first and then you will see that he takes you over and carries you through. Whenever you play a Raga, begin with worshipping and welcoming it. Imagine it to be deity. Bow down and pray that it should have mercy on you and it should become alive through your medium. Never approach a raga with a feeling of pride or vanity in your heart. Music grows out of the purest feelings of your soul and hence the mind of the musician, if only purified, can produce the vibration. Babas behavior on the stage sometimes became rather erratic. But this was only the result of a certain tension and apprehension that he might fail to establish the raga. I saw him many times uttering Namaz and even crying out Ma, Ma to Goddess Saraswati. This appeared strange to people. But I had the most glorious experience to hear the same person playing sursringar to himself in Maihar with all the serenity and calm of mind. I still remember that after a couple of minutes it seemed too much for me. The emotional appeal was so tremendous that my entire being was gone to pieces, senses suspended and it was a trance all over. Anyone who heard him there could realize how great a Naad (Sound) Yogi he was. There was a very old temple on top of a hill at Maihar known as the temple of Saradamai. Pilgrims came there from far and near and surprisingly enough they would come to see Baba straight from the temple. To the poor common people of Madhya Pradesh who knew nothing about music, Baba Allauddin Khan Sahib was sort of a Sadhua noble soul and they used to call him Baba in that sense. People of Maihar loved and honored him like anything excepting the Muslim community, who did not quite approve of his liberal views on religion. After his death they at first refused to carry him for burial. There was a storm of controversy. But at the end we saw that the burial procession was being attended by the Hindus and Muslims alike and even the chief priest of the temple of Saradamai joined. It was a marvelous spectacle! Baba can be compared to Sant Kabir whom both the Hindus and Muslims claimed to have belonged to their community. I would rather say that like Sant Kabir he was far above these social distinctions. He was a

great Naad Yogi.

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