

**"Dr. Aban Mistry, A Renowned Tabla Maestro of Farukhabad Gharana: A
Comprehensive Study"**

Summary

For thousands of years, India is recognized as a traditional country with strong cultural values. It has spread its fragrance of values all across the world. With the rise of India's cultural tradition, the reverence to the females was evident to the world. In the Indian tradition, the 'Rigveda' is considered as the most important cultural as well as social manuscript. In various volumes of 'Rigveda', there is a special mention of woman power. The other four Vedas and 18 'Puranas' are all written based on 'Rigveda'. In all these treatises, the significance of females can be seen in different branches of studies, rituals, social and cultural traditions. India acquired freedom after several years of enslavement. The idea of accomplished freedom is still under a prorogued condition. In Indian culture, for thousand years the females have given tremendous contribution which remained unrecognized. It has been observed that the females are victimized, exploited and dishonored in our society.

In present times the females have achieved milestones and gained respect in various fields through rigorous hardships, aptitude, efficiency as well as focus. In the field of music too, tremendous contribution by female artists is obviously noticed. Females have primacy in several fields of performing arts such as gayan, vadan, nrutya and natya. The researcher considered whether fifty years ago, the females had any position in the field of Tabla. He comprehended that half a century ago, what difficulties a female named Dr. Aban Mistry had to go through to prove her identity in the male dominated field. After profound study, the researcher has decided to put forward the contribution of Dr. Aban Mistry in the field of Tabla.

Moving towards the conclusion of this research work, the researcher felt that Abanji was truly a guiding light and a woman of substance. She was a force to reckon with and an ocean of knowledge made immortal through her work and research towards Indian music and arts. In this thesis, the researcher has decided to compile and highlight Dr. Aban Mistry's contributions in the field of music and keep alive her life occurrences.

The researcher has presented his research work in 4 chapters according to the present research methodology, the 5th chapter being the conclusion. Along with that adequate book references; interviews of journalists, renowned artists, academicians and information related to the thesis is also presented by the researcher.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, under the topic of origin of instruments, 4 types of instruments and research done on novel and innovative instruments is discussed. Then, under the topic of origin of percussion instruments, along with discussing the origin of percussion instruments, the researcher has also presented the origin and development of Tabla based on the references of various books and ancient treatises. He has talked about the different theories and views on the origin on Tabla in the 20th century and new research done in the field along with suitable arguments. Then the researcher speaks about the origin and development of different Gharanas of Tabla; a detailed discussion on Farukhabad Gharana and the disciple lineage of Tabla players of Farukhabad Gharana from the beginning till date is presented in a historical manner with accurate information based on the interviews taken of different musicologists, books and field work done by the researcher himself.

Chapter 2: The Life Journey of Dr. Aban Mistry

In this chapter, the researcher talks about Abanji's family background, other members of her family and her community based on various books, printed interviews of Abanji, interviews of family members and people who are associated with Swar Sadhna Samiti. Then, based on available information, a discussion on her education and the difficulties she faced in the field of music is done. How she entered in the field of music at a tender age and the difficulties faced by both her parents on this account is also presented. Detailed information regarding the contribution of her Guru Pt. Keki S. Jijina in her life from the beginning till the time she became an established Tabla player is also given.

Abanji's training and introduction to the Doyen of Farukhabad Gharana Ut. Amir Hussain Khan and her dedication, training and establishment in the field of Tabla, her respect and dedication towards her Gurus is explained in detail by the researcher based on different interviews and book references. The researcher has tried to present all the relevant information without missing out any important detail.

Chapter 3: Contribution in the Field of Music

This chapter is divided in 6 parts.

1) Abanji as a Performing Artist:

In this chapter, the researcher talks of Abanji's Tabla tradition and her live performances. The researcher has listened and seen the audio-video recordings of her

programs and felt her respect for Farukhabad as well as other Gharanas of Tabla. Apart from Teentaal, Abanji has given her solo performances in odd taals like Ektaal, Pancham Savari, Badi Savari, Savari, Triput Bhavni, Shankar etc. her style of padant, layakari in different taals and presentation of bandishes of different jatis and yatis were her speciality. In Tritaal, she would always insist on playing traditional bandishes. She would always presents differen stuti parans like Bhavani Vandana, Maha Laxmi Vandana, Radha Krishna Vandana, Ganesh Vandana, Guru Vandana etc. at the end of the program. Her performances were at least 1- 1.5 hours in duration. This shows her devotion towards Tabla. She has performed in various music festivals and in different parts of the country. Information and description of all her performances is mentioned in this sub-chapter, which the researcher has done with the help of different newspaper, magazines and interviews of prominent artists of India.

2) Research and Publication:

This sub chapter talks in detail about all the books published and unpublished articles written by Abanji. One of Abanji's greatest contribution to the music fraternity is her research and discovery about the origin of Tabla, which concludes that Tabla is of Indian origin and has been played in India since many years. Abanji transformed her this research in a book as well. The researcher has presented a detailed information about her research and publication on the basis of her books, newspapers, journals, interviews of journalists and musicologists, along with references. There is no doubt that her work is unprecedented and unparalleled.

3) As a Guru:

Through the interviews of Abanji's disciples, the researcher learnt about her disciple lineage, her riyaz of Tabla and how to stay connected with one's ancient heritage and imbibe the same in one's disciples. Along with being a good disciple herself, she was also a great Guru. She did not have many students of her own, but through her lecture demonstrations, interviews, performances etc. many students were inspired and believed her to be their guiding Guru. The researcher has mentioned about all this in detail in this chapter.

4) As an Academician:

Abanji was a very thorough person. Through various interviews and literature collected by the researcher, it has come to his knowledge that Abanji has given performance cum lecture demonstrations and workshops in all the music institutes, universities and affiliated colleges of India. She has also gone as a resource person to many refresher and orientation programs for teachers. She has also provided service in many music institutes and universities as a board member, and also in music advisory bodies. She has also examined Ph.D. thesis of many universities. A detailed account of Abanji as an academician is given in this chapter.

5) Swar Sadhna Samiti:

One of the biggest examples of Abanji's social service towards music is the establishment of Swar Sadhna Samiti. In spite of the death of Abanji and her Guru Pt. Keki Jijina, the Swar Sadhna Samiti is still functioning till date without stopping. On 8th November 2020, the Swar Sadhna Samiti held its 41st Bal sammelan and 706th monthly program. The Swar Sadhna Samiti is continuously working since 1961, for almost 60 years now it has been contributing to the field of music. Every year the Samiti organizes a 3 day annual music festival, giving the Swar Sadhna Ratna award; a national completion in gayan, vadan and nrutya at the end of January every year; Bal Sangeet conferences; youth music conferences and monthly programs continuously without fail. Through the interviews of various artists, the researcher has gathered information that many artists have risen as artists only after performing at the Swar Sadhna Samiti. All the artists of India, whether prominent or otherwise have performed on the stage of Swar Sadhna Samiti on invitation by Abanji for programs. Even after being occupied with her work she always kept in touch with artists all over India through letter correspondence. Through various interviews and newspaper articles, the researcher had gathered that Abanji had a big family because she considered everyone associated with the Swar Sadhna Samiti her family and she was always ready to serve the music fraternity in any way she could. Her contribution to the music fraternity is truly inspirational. All the above information is mentioned in this sub chapter.

6) Innovation And Creation (As A Composer)

Abanji has given her solo performance at many places in odd matra taals like 15 matra, 17 matra, 18 matra, 20 matra, 22 matra etc. the peshkar, kaida, rela, gat paran, uthan, tukda, farmaishi chakradaar etc played in the aboved mentioned taals are all her creations and compositions. She has also composed many stuti parans. The essence of all these compositions is presented in this sub chapter. The compositions are retrieved from the audio-video recording of her live performances. In this sub chapter, the traditional bandishes played by Abanji along with references are also mentioned.

Chapter 4: Dr. Aban Mistry as a National Figure

This chapter talks about the appreciation received by Abanji on a national level for her work done in the field of music. There are 3 sub chapters in this chapter.

1) Achievements and Awards:

In this sub chapter, the researcher has collected the photographs of all the awards/achievements that Abanji has received during her lifetime. She has received awards from many social and music institutes which include ITC research award, Pt. Omkarnath Thakur award, Charma Vadhya Tabla Bhushan given by Shankaracharya, Taal Shringar and in 2018 she was awarded by the Govt. of India with the title of 'First Lady Award' (Tabla). All these awards were given to Abanji during her musical journey of which the researcher has gathered pictures and has given the description of each picture in this sub chapter.

2) Response of Media:

After meeting with musicologists and journalists from different parts of the country, the researcher has gathered interviews, articles etc. of Abanji which were published in different newspapers, magazines and other print media. The researcher has provided detailed information regarding the newspaper/magazines in which article was printed, on what date along with the name of the journalist. The researcher believes that her interviews have been published in all the newspapers, in different languages in all regions of India, which is quit unique and much appreciated. Some of the newspaper cuttings are also presented in the thesis.

3) Response of Artists Community:

The researcher has conducted personal interviews with prominent artists, academicians, journalists and critics of India. Through their interviews and based on their relation with Abanji, they have spoken about different qualities of Abanji in terms of her talent, spiritual nature, her service to music fraternity etc. the researcher has learned very interesting things about Abanji and her personality. All the above mentioned things are very inspirational in one way or the other which the researcher has presented and described in all the sub chapters according to the topic. Abanji's popularity can be seen through the interviews that have been taken.

Conclusion:

Lastly, the researcher believes that there were many facets to Abanji's work. Along with being a great academician, researcher, social worker of music, performer and writer, she was also a kind, complaisant and religious person who dedicated and devoted her whole life to Tabla and music. Struggle had become her friend and it had become her nature to solve all problems and move forward in life. In spite of facing a lot of problems in her entire journey of her life, because she was a lady, she led a very successful social and musical life. In this entire thesis, the researcher has spoken about different aspects of Abanji and her life. The researcher has tried to gather all the relevant information from all the places where information was available and documented the life journey of Dr. Aban Mistry. Below are the few things that the researcher has learned from Abanji's life and work:-

- 1) Devotion is life
- 2) To serve is religion
- 3) Devotion is the truth
- 4) Spectators are god
- 5) Guru is a way to attain ultimate God
- 6) Music is everything, lesson of life, mirror of truth
- 7) Music is Shiva

All these lessons were gathered by the researcher through Abanji's journey of music and life. No amount of words can be enough to appreciate the work that she has done. Such a devoted lady, in the form of Maa Bhagvati, arrives once in a millennia. Abanji has dedicated all her

work in the feet of Maa Bhagvati. Being a Parsi lady, she travelled all around India and took Tabla to its peak with such passion that her work should be written in golden words. There are many reasons why the above mentioned should be done, for example, today, many universities, on the basis of her research work, have become quite rich; many researchers have found a way to do research and the most important thing is that for an eternity the Gurus of Tabla and Pakhawaj will be known and the disciple lineage including the originator of tradition and all those under them, of both Tabla and Pakhawaj will be known and live forever through the book written by Abanji, and more avenues for research will open for future generations. Today one doesn't even remember their own ancestors, so the future generation will get to learn about traditional artists because of Abanji's work. It means that, in future, if a student wants to know about the origin of his guru and tradition he will not have any trouble in obtaining that information. It had become Abanji's goal and duty to carry on many such works.

(Solanki Chirag Ratanlal)