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## DHRUPAD PEDAGOGY OF USTAD ZIA FARIDUDDIN DAGAR

Surashree Chatterjee

PhD Research Scholar

Department of Hindustani Classical Music,  
Visva Bharati, Sangit Bhavan,  
Bolpur, Santiniketan.

### Abstract

*Zia Fariduddin Dagar (1932-2013) was a senior exponent of Dagar Gharana. His gayaki was based on deep introspection on 'swara-shruti-bhed' concept to the very ethos of Dhrupad vocalism and an interpretation of his taleem. He kept his imprint as one of the senior pedagogues of the Dagers belonging to the 19th generation; and provided a dynamic contribution to the revival of Dhrupad by producing a constellation of renowned Dhrupad practitioners through his teaching-methodology. Dhrupad is the oldest surviving genre of North Indian Classical Music which traces its origin from Sama Veda. This article is an exploration about the discourse of his innovative teaching-methodology which he adopted through his self-contemplation after imbibing his family's traditional pedagogy, to promote professional Dhrupad musicians through an institutional set up within a very short time. The analysis is done on the basis of an Indian institutional set up namely Dhrupad Kendra in Bhopal where he used to teach Dhrupad based on the mode of guru-shishya parampara, nevertheless condensing his family's long years of orthodox pedagogy into just four years. Commencing with an introduction about Dhrupad and its characteristics, following a methodology, study area with literature survey, a discussion account on his musical tutelage and short biography and finally with results and conclusions; this paper will focus on the methodical analysis about the teaching-methodology of his four elementary voice culture systems along with their effect on learners vocal-perceptibility.*

**Keywords:** Dhrupad, Teaching-Methodology, Pedagogy, Analysis, Voice-culture.

### I INTRODUCTION

Dhrupad is the oldest genre of North Indian Classical Music that traces its origin to the Vedas and has surpassed a long voyage of musical journey to its present concert platform. The word dhrupad is an etymological expression of two words 'dhruva' means 'immutable or constant'+ 'pada' refers to 'verse or panegyric'. The distinctiveness of Dhrupad lies in maintaining the elegance in which it explores the microtonal perfection of the raga delving into the long sustaining 'single tonic transition' where no mixing of the other raga is permitted.<sup>1</sup> Dhrupad being the predecessor of Khayal is considered as the majestic art music of India as it has predominant the royal courts during the medieval era. Today, while Khayal is the

<sup>1</sup> 'Hindustani Music, A Tradition in Transition' (2005) by Deepak.S.Raja. Pg-185,193.

predominant form of Hindustani Music, dhrupad has been revived from the mid-20th century onwards and has emerged as a pre-eminent genre of contemporary Hindustani Music. Dagar Brothers, who were grandsons of the legendary duos Ustad Allabande and Zakiruddin Khan, have contributed towards the revival by nurturing and propagating Dhrupad not only in the Indian subcontinent but also overseas through their traditional teaching-methodology. One such lineage is that of Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar affectionately known as Chote Ustad who has created a wonderful legacy of contemporary top ranking Dhrupad practitioners like Ritwik Sanyal<sup>2</sup>, Uday Bhawalkar, Nirmalya Dey, The Gundecha Brothers, Rudraveena maestro Mohi Bahauddin Dagar and Pelva Naik by his pedagogy.

This article focuses on studying the essential features of the teaching-methodology adopted by Zia Fariduddin Dagar. It also describes his engagement with Dhrupad pedagogy in an institutional set up as the director of the Dhrupad Kendra.

## II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The teaching-methodology of Zia Fariduddin Dagar has been studied through a methodical analysis of his elementary pedagogy on long grounding voice culture methods as the essential parameter of this paper. He used to impart this training in the initial six-months in prior providing his advanced taleem in four-fold alapa and compositions in Dhrupad Kendra. Hence research with critical analysis is the primary methodology which has been adopted to elaborate the systematic methods of practicing this voice cultures and to rummage their impact on learner's vocal perception. The results and conclusions are analyzed based on the recordings of two interview sessions conferred by his two contemporary disciples namely Uday Bhawalkar and Nirmalya Dey as primary sources collected by the researcher and thus an objective viewpoint is followed. Additional information about the nuances of his elementary training methodology has been analyzed from the words given by Nirmalya Dey about his empirical learning which he commemorate to the Sangit Sambad- Society for Indian Music and Arts (SIMA) retrieved from internet. Secondary sources are used from Two reliable books namely Antarnada: Sur Aur Saanj by Vijay Shankar Mishra and Hindustani Music: a Tradition in Transition by Deepak.S.Raja along with two e-articles namely 'Deepak Raja's world of Hindustani music, exploration in the realm of Hindustani music' uploaded on 5th March 2011 and 'A Tribute to Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar' documented by Ashish Sankrityayan retrieved from Dhrupad Achieve are used here as crucial secondary sources. The parameter for analysis of all this interview recordings and textual documentation will feature the elementary teaching-methodology of Chote Ustad on four major voice culture methods which are Kharaj Sadhana (early morning practice of lower register), Sticcato (intuition to move from one tone to other to sing it in its accurate position), Alankars (oscillated paltas), and Raga ki dagar (the pathway of the raga) along with their impact on learners vocal perceptibility.

## III STUDY AREA

Literature survey on available sources reveals that a number of personal interviews given by Fariduddin Dagar himself are transcribed and documented by different authors in their respective works. One such transcription is done by Pandit Vijay Shankar Mishra in his book- 'Antarnada: Sur Aur Saanj' along with the assimilation of other musicians' interviews, where Chote Ustad has provided his valuable opinion about the inherent characteristics of Dhrupad, five geetis, implementation of Sadharani geeti to Dagarvani, utility and drawbacks of institutional education and about the current scenario of Dhrupad. Deepak.S.Raja in his e-article 'Deepak Raja's world of Hindustani music, exploration in the realm of Hindustani music' uploaded on 5th March 2011, gave insightful account of another interview transcription given by Chote Ustad to him on October 6, 1998 in Dhrupad Kendra, where he spoke about the reasons behind the establishment of Dhrupad Kendra in Bhopal, his experience as the Guru-cum-directorship, selection criteria and other infrastructural activities of the Kendra. A supplementary work is found to be done by Ashish Sankrityayan, namely-'Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar Ki Sikhsan Shailee Aur Dhrupad Key Vartaman Prasna' published in the Hindi literary magazine 'Samas' (volume 9) on the edition of February 2014 where he documented the resolute thinking of Zia Fariduddin Dagar by

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<sup>2</sup> In this entire paper names of the contemporary artists have not been pre-fixed with any title like Pandit, Ustad, Mr. or Ms. This is the norm adopted for writing research papers and in no way means disrespect to the artists mentioned in this work.

which he condensed down the gharana's long years of orthodox pedagogy into just four years through his innovative pedagogy. This work is uploaded as e-article in Dhrupad| Archive namely-'A Tribute to Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar' and is used as crucial secondary source of this paper.

The above sources have been used here as reference material, nevertheless the current work relies more on the methodical analysis of the long grounding voice-culture system imparted by Zia Fariduddin Dagar through his systematic teaching-methodology. The rationale is to grasp the basics while to enhance the learning ability to sing and learn four-fold alapa, compositions and its improvisational techniques in Dhrupad. The study will further prepare a critical analysis about the inevitability and impact of these voice cultures on learner's perception and vocal cord to produce accurate voice-throwing system specifically for Dhrupad.

#### IV DISCUSSION

Zia Fariduddin Dagar, commonly known as Chote Ustad is the second son of the illustrious Rudra Veena maestro Ziauddin Khan and belongs to the lineage of his grandfather Zakiruddin Khan of Dagar dynasty. He inherited his family's strong musical tutelage both in Dhrupad vocalism and Veena initially from his father and after his father's death he continued his taleem under his elder brother Zia Mohiuddin Dagar and from his cousin Nasir Aminuddin Dagar with great perseverance<sup>3</sup>. Fariduddin Dagar reawakened Dhrupad from its suspected brink through his authentic teaching-methodology and laid a great emphasis on maintaining the delicacy of rasa-perfection in rendition. Being one of the first-ranking Dhrupad-pedagogue of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Zia Fariduddin Dagar has earned critical acclaim and has performed extensively in many countries like Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, Norway, Europe, Canada and America. Concurrently he was a very generous and meticulous teacher in Dhrupad who trained a large number of non-Indian students in Austria (1972-1978) and in Holland<sup>4</sup>. He was appointed as the founder Guru-cum-director in a government supported Dhrupad School in Bhopal namely Dhrupad Kendra. He set up the Dhrupad Kendra in Bhopal in collaboration with the Ustad Allauddin Khan Music Academy. The Dhrupad Kendra was established in 1981 with an aim to create young Dhrupad performers.<sup>5</sup>

A committee with first rank musicians like Dr Premlata Sharma, Pandit Kumar Gandharva, Mani Kaul, Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar with Zia Fariduddin Dagar was formed to supervise the activities of the Kendra. The duration of the training period was decided for four years by the committee members. Though the committee members were skeptical to frame such a short time span to provide taleem in a discipline like Dhrupad of the Dagar style enriched with a long traditional pedagogy for about thirty years, but Chote Ustad had a more accommodating viewpoint. He remarked 'What is needed most for effective and strong incessant music pedagogy is an Ustad wanting to teach, and disciples keen to learn. These are the factors which enable a performing art tradition to perpetuate itself'<sup>6</sup>. With a pledge of producing competent Dhrupad musicians within this shortage time span, Chote Ustad had to improvise the traditional teaching-methodology of his gharana in a manner that none of his family elders had attempted before. In order to implement these developmental thoughts he had to maintain symmetry in transmitting the knowledge beyond the confines of the gharana, while still retaining the mainstream of the traditional taleem as much as possible<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> 'Antarnada: Sur Aur Saanj' by Vijay Shankar Mishra. Pg-135

<sup>4</sup> Ibid: Pg 136

<sup>5</sup> Retrieved from 'Deepak Raja's World of Hindustani Music, Zia Fariduddin Dagar'. Here Fariduddin Dagar spoke about the establishment of Dhrupad Kendra in Bhopal with collaboration of Ashoke Vajpayee who was the cultural secretary of Madhya on that time.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> The fidelity of Chote Ustad to his gharana has been documented by Ashish Sankrityayan in his e-article titled as 'A Tribute To Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar' retrieved from Dhrupad Archive which is an English translation of his Hindi article- 'Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar Ki Sikhsan Shaile Aur Dhrupad Key Vartaman Prasna'. Presently he is the director of Dhrupad Kendra and a disciple of the Dagers.

## V RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The selection process of students in Dhrupad Kendra is quite unorthodox. Pupils belonging to both good grounds of musical training or from ordinary background with talent both are accepted by Chote Ustad. According to him dedication and spark of creativity are plentiful to shape them into competent dhrupad musicians. All the students resided in the hostel and had to report for taleem at 4:30 am everyday and return back at 11:00 pm at night after imbibing their daily training in Dhrupad Kendra<sup>8</sup>.

The traditional method of training in the Dagar family starts when the child remains an adolescent. The elementary taleem is focused on voice training by different vocal exercises which had to be repeated for eleven hundred times using a chain of eleven hundred beads of mala known as 'tezbi' to count each repetition. After many years of this strong grounding; comes the systematic taleem of NadaYoga for about fourteen years of painstaking practice with drone of tanpura and finally the whole conceptual framework of teaching four-fold alapa, composition, grammar, the shastra and other subtleties of Dhrupad were imparted. Zia Fariduddin Dagar foremost turned up the period of initial voice-culture to six months after which his taleem straight entered into alapa, composition and its improvisation<sup>9</sup>. Right from the first aakar, delivery of the sound, phrases, intonation, treatment of the ragas are the important features in his pedagogy. His first education was to stand on one tone for a long time as according to him this helps observe the spectrum of the tone that the tone is movable with corrugation<sup>10</sup>. Another significant feature in his pedagogy was he always encouraged his students to improvise and sing on their own without imitating the same phrase sung by the Ustad every time. This built enough confidence in most of his students which led them to today's successful performers in Dhrupad<sup>11</sup>.

### 5.1 Kharaj Sadhana

His first vocal training course was doing kharaj that is establishing the lower register as much as possible either in raga Bilawal or in Bhairav. The practice had to be started before sunrise and had to be finished right at the sunrise<sup>12</sup>. Kharaj sadhana is to hold one tone for a long-long time by individual breathing capacity to produce effortless 'Sound' or 'Nada' emerging from the navel point by the drone of tanpura in 'aakar'. The practice starts from Madhya Sadaj and stays for about 40-45 minutes until the profound Nada of Madhya Sadaj is completely established in its appropriate microtone. The sound then traverses to suddha nishad (Bilawal) or to Komal Dhaivat (Bhairav) then resting for a long time in lower pancham, then to madhyam or gandhara as much as possible and finally returning back to Madhya sadaja with compliance of Chote Ustad<sup>13</sup>. Besides aakar he also instructed how to pronounce a single swara with different articulations like ekar, omkar, ukar, and num by nasika. The duration of kharaj sadhana lasted for about 2 hours to complete the whole process. Then the practice finally ends with sticcato<sup>14</sup>.

### 5.2 Sticcato Practice

This is such kind of voice-culture imparted by Chote Ustad which comes after Kharaj Sadhana. The method by which, while shifting from one swara to another, how to pronounce that swara in its accurate shruti is known as sticcato. This method of practice makes the voice durable and at the same time prepares intuition to explore the prominent shruti of the swara to be sung. In sticcato practice there is application of both false tone and real tone. The false tone is just to bring the learner's intuition to the accurate point of the next tone and when he pronounces it in a right way that is the real tone. So in this way sticcato exercise could be started from mandra

<sup>8</sup> From 'Deepak Raja's World of Hindustani Music, Zia Fariduddin Dagar'

<sup>9</sup> Retrieved from 'A Tribute to Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar' by Ashish Sankrityan from Dhrupad Achieve.

<sup>10</sup> This viewpoint of Chote Ustad has been retrieved from the words of Nirmalya Dey given to SIMA based on his empirical learning. (timing 10:40)

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from 'A Tribute to Ustad Zia Fariduddin Dagar' by Ashish Sankrityan from Dhrupad Achieve.

<sup>12</sup> Spoken by Nirmalya Dey to SIMA. (timing 16:04)

<sup>13</sup> This method has been explained by Pandit Uday Bhawalkar through a personal interview conducted by the researcher on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020 in ITC SRA, Kolkata. I pay my veneration and gratitude to him.

<sup>14</sup> This feature has been recorded through a personal interview given by Pandit Nirmalya Dey to the researcher conducted on February 16, 2021 on Skype. I pay my homage to him for commemorating and sharing his learning experience.

pancham to mandra nishad or from Madhya sadaj to any other tone in a fixed rhythm either in ascending or in descending order.<sup>15</sup>

### 5.3 Alankars

Then comes the practice of different paltas or alankars. Dagers advocated alankars in simple form followed by complex paltas to create oscillated sound. He also commented that initially those oscillations should not be very profound. It should be emphasized only on the accuracy of the tone first.<sup>16</sup>

### 5.4 Raga ki Dagar

Dagar is the pathway of the raga taught by Chote Ustad in the morning practice starting from 9:00 to 10:00 am for another two to three hours. His way of teaching dagar was just one phrase of a raga in a day. The students then were supposed to repeat that particular phrase until they mastered it and then proceeded to teach the next phrase. This reiteration was done initially by sargam and then using 'nomtom' syllables. A particular phrase was sung repeatedly because according to him each and every melodic sentence unfolds nuances of the raga. To him alap is not the raga-vistar rather it is swara-vistar which focuses on embellishing the tone. So to percept the right intonation and to establish the raga one should foremost learn the dagar in the right way. Chote Ustad used to teach dagar in four parts-sthayi-antara-sanchari-abhoga. The phrases of sthayi are between sa to ma, then antara could exceed ma and go till pa, sanchari till nishad but not really touching upper sa but would detect that next swara will be upper sa and finally abhoga is when you could go for higher octave. So one's dagar is fixed then a student is able to learn alap, composition, improvisation as well as singing the raga with full emancipation.<sup>17</sup>

The inevitability of practicing this four major voice culture was obligatory to every disciple of Chote Ustad. Surpassing only through this method the musical cornerstone develops between each and every learner which enhances their voice-production system specifically for Dhrupad. A critical analysis about the consequences of this voice culture is now provided on the basis of a paradigm given by Nirmalya Dey based on his empirical learning. In accordance with his given words to Sangit Sambad- Society for Indian Music and Arts (SIMA) - "After the incessant and industrious practice of this elementary voice culture my first taleem on alap started with raga Bhimpalashi. Then the next six months the way through which he used to impart his taleem on this raga is only till 'Ma' but not exceeding 'Ma'. You can go down or you can go to the lower register but in the middle after you are not supposed to exceed 'Ma'<sup>18</sup>. This is the benefit which comes from these kind of voice culture systems

In conclusion, it is observed that the detailed analysis of the four facets in the elementary teaching-methodology of Zia Fariduddin Dagar, has thrown up greater influences in developing voice-throwing power simultaneously in enhancing learning ability for advanced training in Dhrupad. Kharaj teaches concentration, theherav, increases breathing capacity and provides accuracy to 'aakar'. Consequently the development of a solemn sound system emerged through kharaj sadhana and this is one of the crucial requirements to learn Dhrupad. Sticcato helps to bring intuition about how to move from one note to another and pronounce it in its accurate shruti. Methodical practice of alankars increases vocal range and articulation of notes with oscillation. 'Raga ki dagar' embellishes the tone of the raga to unfold it with right intonation. A repetitive practice of a particular phrase builds potentiality amidst all the learners to delve into the temperament of the raga and to sing it with full emancipation. The influence of this teaching-methodology later spread equally amidst all the contemporary disciples of the Dagar Gharana as all the eight grandsons of Allabande and Zakiruddin Khan alias as 'The Dagar brothers' received their taleem from their forefathers in unison. Hence this study gives a new and analytical perspective of the musician who gave a personalized dimension as one of the

<sup>15</sup> Please See an illustration of sticcato sung by Nirmalya Dey to SIMA. (16:58 to 18:40).

<sup>16</sup> Please see an excerpt of oscillated palta shown by Nirmalya Dey to SIMA. (19:25 to 20:00)

<sup>17</sup> Interview transcription of Nirmalya Dey conducted by the researcher.

<sup>18</sup> Commemorate by Nirmalya Dey to SIMA. (11:10 to 11:22).

perfect cum representative of his gharana and in wider context as an inspiration to the new generation who want to engage in the field of Dhrupad and enrich Hindustani Classical Music for its cumulative propagation.

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