Spring 2014

My Forays into the World of the Tablā

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SIT Study Abroad

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Spring 2014

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the historical and social aspects of the Indian tablā, as well as the

practical aspects involved in actually playing one. In order to acquaint the reader with this topic,

a description of the parts of a tablā, as well as the basic knowledge of how to play the tablā, is

given. The paper then discusses the history of Varanasi and its significance to tablā playing

through the Banaras Gharana. The disputed history of the tablā and its surrounding theories are

then addressed, followed by the social context within which tablā players function. In this paper I

also chronicle my own personal experience in the *guru-shishya parampara*, or guru-to-student

lineage, and how it affected my perspective of Indian culture and helped me draw many other

conclusions about my journey.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude and thanks goes out to the many people who aided me in this

project. To my Academic Director, Dr. Mary Storm, for preparing me for this experience. To Mr.

Arjun Chauhun and Mr. Sachin Kumar for helping with the innumerable logistical details. To

Mr. Guy McIntyre for the much-needed medical advice. To my project advisor, Ms. Maria

Stallone, for your guidance and support. And finally, thank you to my dearly respected Guruji,

Govind Shukla.

DEDICATION

To my family, who has supported me in my academic and musical endeavors throughout

my life, thank you for working so hard to give me this amazing opportunity. And thank you to

my musical and academic influences for fostering my curiosity and love of all music.

INTRODUCTION

Hindustani *shastrya sangeet*, which literally means 'scientific music' although we generally call it 'classical music,' is an integral part of India's culture.[1] Within this ancient, sophisticated and varied musical culture, the tablā holds a very prominent place and many of its top musicians are world-renowned and honored for their skill. The historical and social context surrounding the tablā tradition is complex, with musicians' roles evolving throughout history.

I spent a month in Varanasi in order to learn how to play the tablā, as well as learn about the history of the drum and the intricate social aspects surrounding it first-hand. Through my *guru-shishya parampara*, the guru-to-student lineage,[2] I gained a unique perspective of the Banaras *Gharana*. My standing as a female foreigner also colored my analysis of this experience and how I fit into this ancient tradition.

The aim of this project was to create a comprehensive, though rudimentary, history of the tablā, as well as to relate the intimate experience of a *guru-shishya parampara* to an audience who might appreciate Hindustani music, but not understand one of its major components. These objectives were obtained through research as well as my active membership in the tablā

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[1] Beronja, Srdjan. *The Art of the Indian Tabla* (New Delhi: Rupa Co., 2008), 31.

[2] Beronja, *The Art of the Indian Tabla*, 60.

community. Active participation played a fundamental role in actualizing this project, as it was necessary to situate my research within the current musical and social context of Varanasi.

WHAT MAKES A TABLĀ

The tablā is a popular drum in classical Hindustani and folk music. It is made up of two drums that are played simultaneously to achieve a homogeneous sound. Though the two drums are totally dissimilar, they compliment each other beautifully.[3] The *bayan*, which is played with the left hand, is the larger of the two drums and provides the bass sound. It has a more spherical shape and can be made of either clay or metal, although metal is most common for performance. The d*ayan*, played with the right hand, provides the higher melodic pitch and must be tuned precisely to achieve the desired overtones.[4] It is made of heavy wood, oftentimes *sheesham* (teak), and is only ¾ hollow, allowing for a weightier, more effective echo.[5]

Each drum has a goatskin membrane stretched across the top, called *puri*. The *puri* of the *bayan* is thicker with a more sober tone than that of the *dayan*, which is thin and tuned higher. This helps demarcate the sound of the *bayan* as the male sound and the *dayan* as the female

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[3] Wade, Bonnie C. *Music in India: The Classical Traditions.* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1987), 135.
[4] Beronja, *The Art of the Indian Tabla*, 69.
[5] Misra, Pt. Chhote Lal. *Playing Techniques of Tabla: Banaras Gharana* (New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2007), 12.

sound. [6] The *puri* is composed of several different parts, including the *syahi, lav, chanti,* and

gajara.[7]

The *syahi* is perhaps the most critical part of the *puri* and is located centrally on the

dayan and eccentrically on the *bayan*.[8] It is made up of iron powder, glue, wheat, and charcoal to

make a black paste that is applied layer by layer in order to achieve the desired thickness and

sound. During the application process it is rubbed with a special stone, giving it the needed

flexibility and smoothness to vibrate freely.

The *lav* can also be called the *maidan*, which means 'middle,' and is the base membrane

of the *puri*. It is located between the *chanti* and the *syahi*.

The *chanti* forms an edge of thicker goatskin around the *puri* and is used to moderate

harmonic overtones. Some *varnas* are also produced using the *dayan's chanti*.

The *gajara* is a thick belt made of strong water buffalo hide weaved to form the rim of

the *puri*. It holds all the sections of the *puri* together and provides stability as well as adjusts the

tightness of the membrane, which sets the pitch of the drum.

Baddhi are the braces that stretch from the *gajara* to the *gudri* at the bottom of the drum,

ensuring the tightness and stability of the *puri*. Also made of water buffalo hide, it is imperative

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[6] Misra, *Playing Techniques of Tabla*, 13.

[7] See Appendix A for a diagram of the tablā.

[8] Kasliwal, Dr. Suneera. *Classical Musical Instruments* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co., 2001), 42.

that *baddhi* be strong enough to pull the membrane tight, especially on the *dayan*. On the *bayan*,

the *puri* is not pulled as tight, and ropes are often used instead of leather *baddhi*.[9]

The *gudri* is a small wheel of water buffalo hide that attaches the *baddhi* to the bottom of

the shell of the drums.

Wedged between the *baddhi* on the *dayan* are eight *gattas* which control the pitch of the

drum by tightening the *puri*. Using a hammer, a tablā player can adjust the pitch drastically by

hitting the *gattas* or more finely by tapping on the *gajara*. The *bayan* generally has *kari*, or rings,

instead of *gatta* that are used for the same purpose.

HOW TO PLAY THE TABLĀ

The tablā has a wide variety of *bols*, literally 'words,' that make up its repertoire. Each

bol is made up of individual *varnas* that symbolize the different strokes you make with your

hands. *Varnas* fall into three categories: ones you make with only your left hand, ones you make

only with your right hand, and those that you make with both hands. Depending on your

gharana, the number of *varnas* differs; however, ten is a fairly agreeable number. The ten *varnas*

are as follows: *Ta, Tin, Tun, Tu, Ti, Te* (right hand only), *Ge, Ki* (left hand only), and *Dha, Din*

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[9] Beronja, *The Art of the Indian Tabla,* 71-72.

(both hands).[10] In order to play the tablā, one must also know how to speak this language made up of *varnas* and their combinations that form *bols*. As my Guruji said to me, "you must speak before you can play."

Each *varna* corresponds to the precise position of your hand, as well as the specific spot it comes into contact with the drum. The technique of tablā playing is crucial and differs from *gharana* to *gharana*. In order to learn new *varnas* and *bols*, a player is given compositions or exercises, called *kayadas*. Each *kayada* is accompanied with several *kisms*, or variations, that are played in conjunction with a *theka* beforehand and a *tihai* afterwards to complete a full *avritti*, or cycle.[11]

In practice, a tablā player always begins by playing a composition in *thah*, the slowest speed where one *matra*, or beat, takes place in the timing of that one *matra* (1, 2, 3, 4). After playing the *theka* and original *kayada* in *thah*, the player will then repeat the basic *kayada* in *dugun*, where two *matras* fit into the space of one *matra* (1,2 3,4). Then the player repeats the *kayada* once again in *chogun*, where four *matras* fit into the space of one (1,2,3,4), and continues on to play the *kisms* and *tihai* in *chogun* as well.

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10 Misra, *Playing Techniques of Tabla,* 14.

11 See Appendix B for an example of a simple *avritti* shown in eastern notation.

ONE CITY, THREE NAMES

Varanasi is a city so ancient that it is called by several different names: Kashi, Banaras, and Varanasi. While these different names are somewhat interchangeable and all refer to this holy city, they each have their own nuanced geographical differences.

Kashi is the oldest name of the city, dating back to the most ancient of available texts. While many people today refer to the city as Kashi, it refers geographically to the area that is bound by the Panchakoshi Road and the Ganga. The Kashi Darpana is a sacred area with a radius of about five *koshas*, about ten miles that devotees circumnavigate along the Panchakoshi Yatra. This trail takes about five days to complete on foot and has over 108 sacred temples and shrines at which to stop and pray.

Banaras comes into use in later texts around the 15th century. Kabir refers to a mythical magnate Raja Banar and later a British archaeologist also states that a Raja Banar ruled Banaras. It is now known that this information has no factual basis and is probably just a corrupted form of the name 'Varanasi.'

The name Varanasi is found in the more ancient Mahabharat and Jataka Tales. As the name suggests, it refers to the area between the Varuna River in the north and the Assi River in the south, with Delhi Vinayaka in the west and the Ganga on the east.[12]

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[12] See Appendix C for a map of Varanasi.

The names of these cities and their distinctions are more superphysical and spiritual than material and physical. Throughout the millennia of Varanasi's existence the religious leaders, regents, scholars, and residents have mapped the city by belief.[13] Today, you will find all three names in use, a symbol of how the people of Varanasi embrace its ancient and varied heritage.

A HISTORY OF VARANASI

Varanasi is one of India's holiest cities and the oldest continually inhabited, seeming to be so old and holy that no one has been able to exact a date of its initial establishment.[14] The earliest mentions of the city come from the Puranas and refer to the Kashi kingdom around 1000 BCE, although there is speculation that the city may have existed as far back as 2000 BCE when the Aryans first moved into the Gangetic plain.

From the sixth century BCE onward Varanasi's history becomes much clearer. The creation of ancient texts such as the Mahabharat, the Puranas, and the Jataka tales all mention Varanasi (or one of its other names), and it was already a full-fledged city by the time Gautama

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[13] Sinha, Kunal. *A Banarasi On Varanasi* (New Delhi: Bluejay Books, 2004), 17-20.
[14] San Chirico, Kerry P.C. *Encyclopaedia of Global Religion, Vol. 1.* "Banaras" (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2012), 114.

Buddha travelled from Gaya, where he reached enlightenment, to Sarnath, a suburb of

Varanasi.[15]

Throughout its history, Varanasi has always been the aim of conquerors. As a prosperous

city known throughout Asia for its cotton and silk cloth, as well as a center for religion, many

neighboring kingdoms found this desirable. Varanasi has fallen under the rule of the neighboring

Koshala king in the seventh century BCE and Magadh kind in the sixth century BCE. Then in the

late third century BCE the Mauryas ruled Varanasi. As it developed as an important trading

center, it came under control of the Guptas between 305 and 1090 CE. The constant shifts in

power allowed for a wealth of cultural diversity to flourish in Varanasi, with many different

traditions of Hinduism taking root as well as Buddhism.[16]

The next few centuries were spent under the rule of various Hindu kingdoms. It was

during this period that the city became a true center of Brahminical Hinduism. In the eighth

century CE, Varanasi fell captive to Tantra. By the eleventh century, Shaivism and Vaishnavism

were prominent.[17]

Then in 1194, the advancing Muslim army defeated the squabbling Hindu kingdoms,

razed Banaras to the ground, and remained in power over the Gangetic plain for the next five

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[15] Sinha, *A Banarasi On Varanasi,* 7.
[16] Sinha, *A Banarasi On Varanasi,* 8.
[17] Sinha, *A Banarasi On Varanasi,* 9.

hundred years. This, quite obviously, disrupted the religious ways of Varanasi and many temples

were destroyed during this period. This is also the period during which the trademark ghats were

built by Emperor Akbar.

After the fall of the Mughal Empire into the hands of the British Raj and into the modern

and independent India, Varanasi continued to be a major city, situated along major trade routes

and world-renowned for it's famous silk and revered for it's sacredness. The numerous

influences forced upon Varanasi throughout its history have resulted in a unique and strong

culture that you can sense the moment you step out onto the street. From the old cobbled streets,

to the countless mandirs, to the famous ghats, all juxtaposed with technology stores and new

hippie hangouts, the vast history of the city is extremely evident.

VARANASI AS A MUSICAL CENTER

Varanasi is home to a great number of Hindustani classical music legends, and such

astounding prevalence of success stems from the deeply rooted musical culture. The Banaras

Gharana originated from the folk traditions of the area and fostered the cultivation of a

prominent and distinct style in singing and instrumental music.

As the name would suggest, the Banaras *Gharana* for the tablā also originated in

Varanasi. Founded by Pandit Ram Sahai over two hundred years ago, the *Gharana* has since

gained notoriety all over India and is considered one of the six notable *Gharanas* of tablā (the

others being Delhi *Gharana*, Ajrada *Gharana*, Lucknow *Gharana*, Farrukhabad *Gharana*, and

Punjab *Gharana*).[18] In the middle of Pt. Ram Sahai's prolific career, he turned his attentions

away from the public to the creation of a new style of tablā playing. His innovations in the

positioning of the hand on the drum and more efficient use of fingers led to an increase in the

range of tone and dynamics of the tablā. He also composed many new types of compositions, in

addition to those he wrote for existing ones. This led to greater versatility in tablā playing, and it

also established the unique Banaras *baaj*, or way of playing.[19]

THE ORIGINS OF THE TABLĀ

Tablā has been the primary percussion instrument in North Indian music since the

eighteenth century.[20] There are many theories for the origin of this instrument, but these remain

highly disputed due to the fact that the tablā likely existed before it was named such. It is

believed to have been created anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand ago, and when

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18 Misra, *Playing Techniques of Tabla,* 3-4.
19 Sinha, *A Banarasi On Varanasi,* 187-188.
20 Wade, *Music in India,* 135.

you consider the countless oral histories that cannot be taken into account, the issue of the tablā's

origin becomes very complicated indeed.[21]

There are three theories of the tablā's origins that are commonly adopted today. The first

credits the creation of the tablā to Amir Khusrau, a famous thirtheenth century Mughal musician.

He supposedly split the *pakhawaj*, a single cylindrical drum whose treble side *puri* resembles

that of the tablā, in two and thus created the tablā.[22]

The second theory claims that after the great pakhawaj player, Siddhar Khan Dhari, lost

in a music competition to Bhavani Das in the eighteenth century, he was so angry he broke his

pakhawaj in two.[23] Either he dashed in on the ground and it broke into two parts, or he cut it

down the middle with a sword, according to which version you know. Even after the pakhawaj

split, Siddhar Khan Dhari found that the two parts were still making noise and named the new

instrument 'tablā' after the phrase 'tab-bhi-bola' ('still it speaks').

The third theory is based more on actual evidence and historical facts than the previous

theories. It traces the tablā back far in history, identifying tablā-like drums depicted in the seals

of Mohenjodaro (around 2600 BCE) and in the paintings and carvings in various Hindu, Jain and

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[21] Beronja, *The Art of the Indian Tabla,* 53.

[22] Naimpalli, Sadanand. *Theory and Practice of Tabla* (Mumbai: Popular Prakashan Pvt. Ltd., 2005), 13.

[23] See Appendix D for a picture of the *pakhawaj.*

Buddhist temples. Many of the earliest texts, including the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana*, and the *Natya Shastra* mention percussion instruments related to the tablā. This theory traces the origins of the tablā back to hourglass shaped drums like the *mridangam*, *damaru* and *tripushkara*. According to this theory, all Indian drums with membranes are descended from the ancient *tripushkara*. As it was dissembled over time, it created a wide variety of drums, including the tablā.[24]

Apart from the physical the creation of the tablā, there are also many theories related to the etymology of the tablā, provided even more contrasting opinions for the history of the tablā. The term *tablā* is traceable directly to the Arabic *tabl*, which itself can be traced back even further. Meaning any flat, board-like surface, the word *tabl* is used in Arabic to describe any drum whose membrane faces upwards. If the tablā derives its name from Arabic then it is possible that it was introduced into Indian classical music by Mughal influences.[25]

The main difference in these sets of theories is who is credited with the creation of the tablā. While evidence suggests that there were Islamic influences, which is especially true for many other Hindustani musical instruments, many Indian musicians, who also happen to be

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[24] Beronja, *The Art of the Indian Tabla,* 56-58.

[25] Wade, *Music in India,* 136.

Hindu, are quick to refute this.[26] Perhaps with the rise of Indian Nationalism, especially in the

wake of the British Raj, there has been a tendency to favor indigenous theories.

RECENT HISTORY OF THE TABLĀ

Despite the highly disputed origins of the tablā's early history, it is much easier to trace

once it was given the name tablā and the first iconographic depiction of the instrument appeared

in 1808. This was the first time that an instrument closely resembling the tablā of today was

shown in texts, although for several decades preceding this there were depictions of similar

drums found in Mughal-style miniatures.

As the types of music that the tablā accompanied rose to popularity, the tablā itself rose

in popularity and developed both in these styles and as a solo instrument. In the period from

1750 to 1850, the tablā underwent many changes, at last becoming more and more recognizable.

The tablā as we know it today, however, is probably no more than seventy to one hundred years

old.[27]

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[26] When I asked my Guruji about this theory, he immediately denied any Islamic influence on the tablā.

[27] Wade, *Music in India,* 135-137.

THE TABLĀ WITHIN ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT

The tablā is the most popular percussion instrument of North India, representing a great

and long tradition. [28] Especially in Varanasi, the music community is very prominent and well

respected. Musicians have a tight-knit community and seem to not only know who everyone else

is, but also their entire musical lineage.

Although it has been suggested that in the past those who played the tablā were of low

social status, today the great musicians are generally of high social standing and almost always

from the Brahmin caste.[29] This is made quite apparent by the titles given to expert musicians,

Pandit or *Ustad*. The title *Pandit* is conferred only to expert Hindu male musicians who belong

to the Brahmin caste, and the title *Ustad* is given to the Muslim equivalent. *Vidushi* and *Begum*

are the titles given to female Hindus and Muslims respectively, though you encounter these

much less often.

The tablā functions in many spheres of Indian society, from the spiritual and religious to

the more public spheres. In the past, tablā musicians would often be patronized by the prominent

courts of their area, as well as play for different temples and religious rituals. Today, the

religious aspect of their playing still comprise an important part of their tablā careers. They are

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[28] Misra, *Playing Techniques of Tabla*, 11.
[29] Beronja, *The Art of the Indian Tabla,* 53.

no longer tied to courts, however, and must rely on playing concerts for the general public in

order to gain notoriety.

For many musicians, there is a clear distinction between performing as a means of

communicating their art form to the audience and performing the tablā as a means of

entertainment. Top tablā musicians consider their playing to be art-music that is distinguished

from other forms of music and do not see their role as entertainment.[30]

Recently in Indian society there has been a vast increase in consumerism, extending into

the musical sphere as well. Through this "commodification" of music, the role of the tablā

musician must also shift to meet the demands of his or her audience. Although Indian music has

changed a great deal over the past century, it has changed more because society has changed and

less because the elite audience knowledgeable in *rasa* has diminished. The great musicians still

strive for the 'Musician's Truth,' which touches the mind, heart, and soul of audiences no matter

their level of discernment. [31]

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[30] Raja, Deepak. *Hindustani Music: A tradition in transition* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd, 2005), 2.

[31] Raja, *Hindustani Music,* ix.

BECOMING PART OF THE TRADITION

Although I was only able to spend a month in Varanasi learning the tablā, this experience still provided me with many perspectives essential to this study. Ethnographers adopt many research roles in order to gain the information they need, and I opted for the most complete membership into the Banaras *Gharana* as I could.[32]

This complete participation began on the first day of my *guru-shishya parampara*, when my Guruji and I performed a small *puja* to honor his Guruji, a great master on tablā. After the incense was burned, the mala was draped around his portrait, and the *prasad* had been eaten, the real work began. Despite all my hard work, my Guruji would constantly remind me that students generally study the tablā for over ten years before becoming accomplished.

In order to make up for the absurdly short amount of time I had to learn such a complex instrument, I would practice and take lessons every day. It became my own sort of ritual. Just before five o'clock, the street vendors, tuk-tuk drivers and local people of Assi Ghat would see me pass through on my way to my tablā lessons. I would often have people that I did not know call out to me and ask, "how was your tablā lesson today?" And so I became another fixture in the crazy community that comprises Varanasi.

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[32] Bucerius, Sandra M. "Becoming a 'Trusted Outsider': Gender, Ethnicity, and Inequality in Ethnographic Research." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography.* (2013): 690-721.

CONCLUSIONS

Going into this project, I had many concerns about being accepted into such a traditional and male-dominated field. Varanasi is a city that revels in its traditional history and culture and there are so few known female tablā players, yet I was received by my Guruji and the rest of Varanasi not as a curiosity, but as a genuine seeker of knowledge.

Going forth with this attitude, I delved as deep into my tablā studies as I could. In order to understand a music, one must be able to know what to listen for in it and also to learn in the thought patterns of the culture.[33] I applied this teaching by trying to absorb not only the new music I was learning, but also the culture of Varanasi and my relationships I made while studying there.

While I may not have accomplished exactly what I set out to do at the beginning of this project, opening myself up to my surroundings allowed me gain a better understanding of Indian society, in which the tablā in closely interwoven, and greatly affected my understanding of music in general. As I learned an instrument completely different from any I had studied before, with a completely different notation and theory behind it, I am able to apply this new knowledge to all of my musical endeavors, allowing my new eastern influences to color my western background.

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[33] Wade, *Music in India,* 3.

It is said that pulse and vibration are the basics of all things and rhythm is their manifestation. The entire universe functions according to the laws of rhythm, from the moon to our body. Rhythm has an influence on human beings because a person is, in a sense, rhythm itself. Through our heartbeat, our breath, and even in our molecular vibrations we represent rhythm. Each heartbeat proves that rhythm is not only all around and inside the human body, but it is the basic pulsation of man's existence; and playing a percussion instrument is just a person's desire to be united with the cosmic resonance.[34]

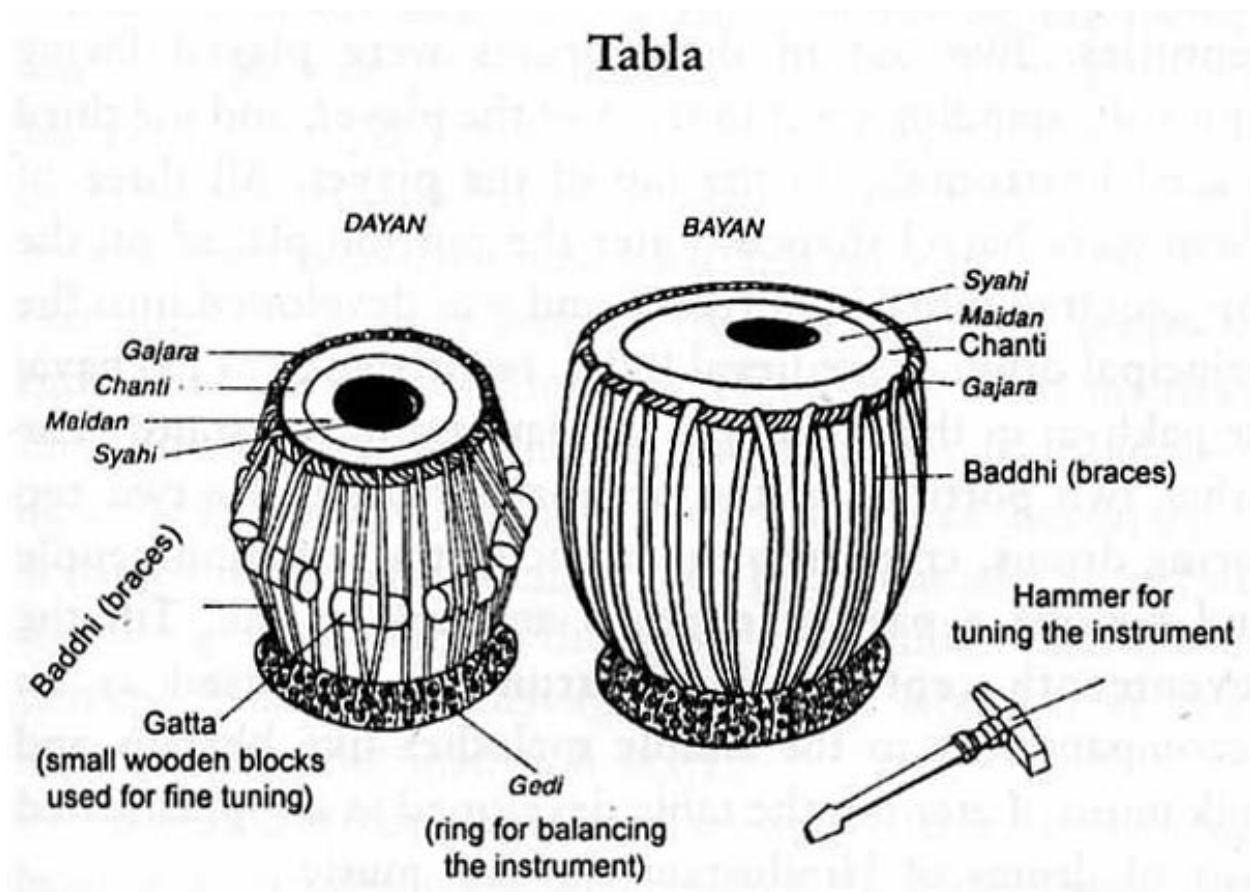[34] Beronja, *The Art of the Indian Tabla*, 10.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Tablā students generally study under their Guru for years and years on end, while I had only one month to spend with mine; and so, I look at this as only the beginning. I was only able to touch briefly on the history of the tablā and it's social context, and a more in depth study would elicit some very interesting insights into the tablā tradition.

Another topic that I was unable to breach in this project is that of gender within the tablā tradition. Historically, tablā playing has been male dominated, but as India modernizes and women are coming to the forefront in many other fields, the same holds true for tablā. There has been an increase in female tablā players, both at the world-renowned level and the more casual student level, especially within the last twenty years or so and a study reflecting this trend in tablā playing could prove fruitful indeed.

Tabla

DAYAN

BAYAN

Gajara

Chanti

Maidan

Syahi

Baddhi (braces)

Gatta
(small wooden blocks
used for fine tuning)

Syahi
Maidan
Chanti
Gajara

Baddhi (braces)

Hammer for
tuning the instrument

Gedi
(ring for balancing
the instrument)

***This diagram is from the audience perspective.

Main Theka

Dha Dhin Dhin Dha	Dha Dhin Dhin Dha	Dha Tin Tin Ta	Ta Dhin Dhin Dha
×	2	0	3

Kism (1)

Dha	Dhin	|DhinDhin|	|Dhati|	Dha	Dhin	|DhinDhin|	|Dhati|
×				2			

Dha	Tin	|TinTin|		Tati		|TaTa|	Dhin	|DhinDhin|	|Dhati|
0				3			

Kism (2)

DhaSTrak	Dhinna	DhinDhin	Dhati ǀ
×			
DhaSTrak	DhinSSKra	DhinDhin	Dhati ǀ
2			
DhaSTrak	Tinna	TinTin	Tati ǀ
0			
TaSTrak	DhinSSKra	DhinDhin	Dhati ǀ
3			

Tihai:

Titekata Gadigana	DhaS Titekata	Gadigana Dha	STitekata Gadigana
×	2	0	3
Dha			
×			

A simple composition in *teen tal*.

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[35] Misra, *Playing Techniques of Tablā*, 26-27.

VARANASI
CITY MAP

Map not to Scale

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Pakhawaj

Baddhi (braces)

Syahi (black paste)

Gajra

Maidan   Chanti

Gatta (small wooden blocks used for fine tuning)
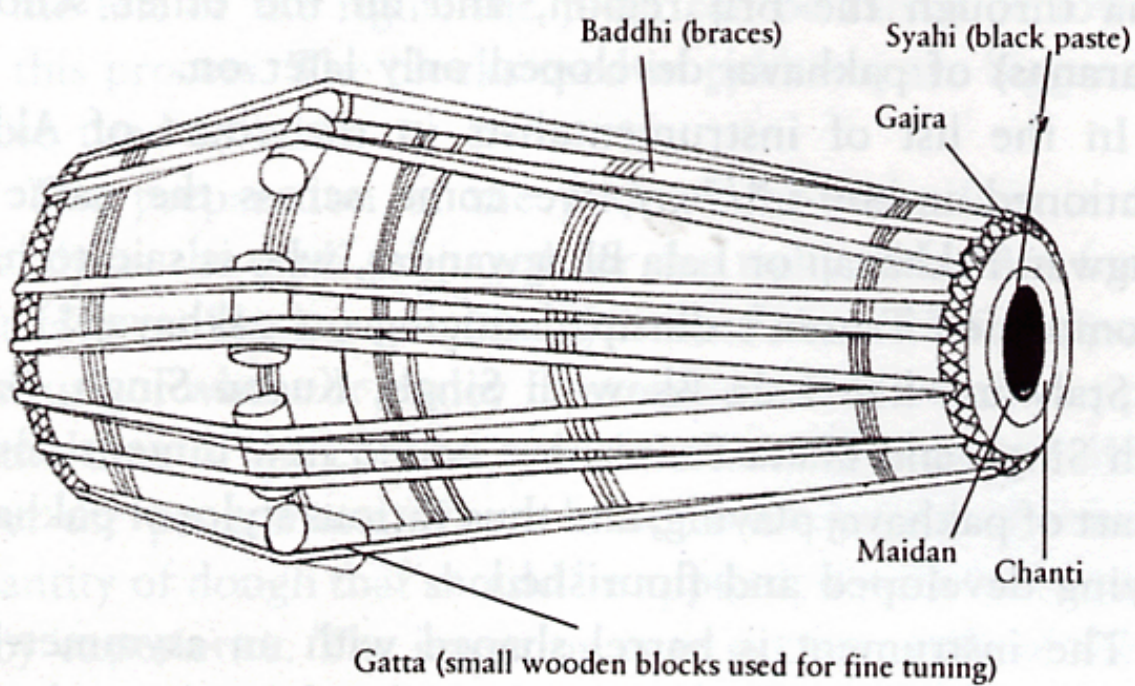
GLOSSARY

Avritti: the passage of one cycle of the *tāla* from its first *matra* to its last.

Baaj: A style of playing.

Baddhi: Braces that stretch from the *gajara* to the *gudri* at the bottom of the drum.

Bayan: The left drum.

Bol: Words or mnemonic syllables used in a rhythmic or melodic composition.

Chanti: Edge of thick goatskin surrounding the *puri*.

Chogun: Four beats per measure; quadruple count.

Dayan: The right drum.

Dogun: Two beats per measure; double speed.

Gajara: Thick belt made of strong water buffalo hide weaved to form the rim of the *puri*.

Gedi: Ring of cloth that the *bayan* and *dayan* sit on.

Gharana: literally 'household;' it describes the different traditions in music or art that are established by an artist and his descendents.

Gudri: Small wheel of water buffalo hide that attaches the *baddhi* to the bottom of the shell of the drums.

Guru-shishya parampara: The guru-to-student lineage.

Gutta: Wooden blocks used for tuning.

Kayada: tablā composition or exercise; the basis for a succession of variations.

Kism: The variations of a *kayada*; synonymous with *palta* and *prastar*.

Kosha: A *kosha* is a distance roughly equal to two miles.

Lav/Maidan: Base of membrane; found in between *puri* and *chanti*.

Matra: a single beat; also used to denote a measure of beats.

Pakhawaj: A drum with a single cylindrical body and *puri* on both ends; the treble end *puri* resembles that of the *tablā*.

Pandit: The title given to a Hindu male expert in his field; must be a Brahmin.

Puri: Goatskin membrane stretched across body of drum.

Shastrya sangeet: literally 'scientific music;' now the term 'classical music' is used instead.

Syahi: Round black spot on found on the *puri*; helps control sound.

Tablā: Set of two drums commonly played in North India.

Teen Tal: cycle of 16 counts (4 + 4 + 4 + 4).

Thah: One beat per measure.

Theka: The basic cyclic form which has an unchangeable pattern of bols.

Ustad: The title given to a Muslim male expert in his field.

Varnas: The individual words that make up bols.