

EMBODYING CULTURE: GURUS, DISCIPLES AND TABLA PLAYERS

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an ethnography about the men and women who take up the practice and performance of a *Hindustani* (North Indian) drum called *tabla*, as a way of life. Learning *tabla* means that percussionists must find a *guru*, a learned master of the tradition who will guide them in their life long study of this instrument. The relationships formed between gurus and disciples are distinctively different in kind from teacher-student relations in Western knowledge systems. The guru-disciple tradition is a very specific, culturally dependent mode of learning originating from the Indian Brahmanical tradition of religious study. Discipleship is a form of apprenticeship which offers no easy translation, philosophically, culturally or spiritually. My ethnography and analysis of *tabla* as a way of life is presented from my own situated perspective as a *tabla* disciple of two *tabla* masters, Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, his son Ustad Zakir Hussain and as a visiting *tabla* enthusiast with another teacher of *tabla*, Ritesh Das. I offer a multi-local ethnography which centres on *tabla* communities based in Bombay, India, Toronto, Ontario, Vancouver, British Columbia, Seattle, Washington and the Bay Area of California.

As *tabla* travels around the globe, outside of India, the learning and teaching of this tradition changes somewhat in its new environments. However, learning to play *tabla* whether in Indian or diaspora cultures necessitates adopting Indian ways of knowing, learning and being. For those musicians of non-Indian ethnicity who become dedicated to this art form learning *tabla* also means learning to embody Indian cultural ways of doing and knowing. I posit that learning the cultural, as in learning *tabla*, begins in the body and the embodied mind. Knowing through and with the body requires re-conceptualizing anthropological concepts of culture, memory and tradition. Grounding an analytic concept of the body in the emerging critical Anthropology of the Body and the Anthropology of the Senses allows for an examination of the social as something more than cognitive and language based.

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INTRODUCTION: THE PASSION OF TABLA

The stories that follow in chapters one, two and three are select vignettes or segments of a journey that I have actively been engaged in for the past three years. In October of 1994 I became a student of a North Indian (*Hindustani*)¹ percussion instrument known as *tabla*. Learning to play *tabla* or any *Hindustani* instrument necessitates finding a teacher, a *guru*, a learned master of the tradition who will guide you in your studies and life long learning of such an instrument.² And so I became a disciple, an apprentice of *tabla*. In the beginning I did not realize that becoming a *tabla* apprentice would profoundly change my life.

My *tabla* journey began in Vancouver, British Columbia where I found a disciple of Ustad Alla Rakha Khan who was eking out a living performing and teaching the Punjab *gharana* or style of *tabla*³. My first teacher, Satwant Singh led me through the very painful process of learning basic *tabla* grammar known as *bols*.⁴ I already had plans to travel to Delhi to

¹Regula Qureshi defines *Hindustani* music as "the system of classical music common to the northern part of the Indian subcontinent, including regions of North India, Pakistan and more peripherally Bangladesh, as against the Southern or *Karnatak* system of classical music" (Qureshi 1991:164).

²The words *tabla* and *guru* will not be italicized in the text.

³ Within the *Hindustani* classical music system six major schools or styles (*gharanas*) of *tabla* have emerged. The Lucknow, Ajrara, Delhi, Farukhabad, Benares and Punjab *gharanas* have remained separate and distinct, but the teaching of some styles has moved from the traditional guru-disciple (*shishya*) relationship to the more modern musical colleges such as Gandharava Mahavidyalaya. Alla Rakha is a disciple of Mian Kadur Bux, guru of the Punjab *gharana*. Today as head of the Punjab *gharana* Alla Rakha continues to teach within the guru-disciple (*ustad-shagird*) structure.

⁴See glossary for an explanation of *bols*.

observe the teaching and learning of tabla at a musical college but Satwantji⁵ suggested that I also travel further south to Bombay and study with his teacher, Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, whom he affectionately referred to as Abbaji, a Muslim name for father. After four months in Delhi and Bombay I returned to Canada and studied with another tabla teacher, Ritesh Das, in Toronto. Riteshji has the largest number of tabla students of any institute in Canada. He teaches in the Lucknow style of tabla playing, under the guidance of Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri.⁶ The next part of my journey took me to Seattle, Washington where I began classes with Ustad Alla Rakha's son Ustad Zakir Hussain. Zakirji also teaches in the Bay area in California. I have travelled with Zakirji and some of his students up and down the West Coast, in the Bay Area and in Seattle, and have in the process become one of his students.

My interest in tabla as an instrument and in *Hindustani* music stems first and foremost from my love of Indian performance forms. My desire to learn tabla developed after writing (1991) about a South Indian classical dance form, *Bharata Natyam*. Because I could not dance myself I found that my descriptions and analysis of this dance form were lacking. I felt that I could not fully communicate to others the complexities, experiences and struggles of learning the dance as a cultural tradition. I have been a practitioner of Western percussion for most of my life. After attending a dance recital where I heard tabla

⁵In India the honorific suffix "ji" is often applied in addressing people such as older family members or those who are in a higher status category as a sign of respect. I have chosen to adopt this term as a form of respect when addressing my tabla masters, other teachers as well as other accomplished musicians.

⁶See Appendix 2 for listings of disciples and masters belonging to the Punjab and Lucknow schools.

drumming for the first time, I decided that I wanted to know more about this drum.

Learning to play tabla, being involved with a teacher or an ustad means more than learning technical skills in the body. Becoming a tabla disciple translates into more than how one moves her fingers to make sounds on a goat skinned drum.⁷ Learning to play tabla can also mean, if you are serious about it, learning about Indian cultural traditions, ways of doing, ways of knowing, ways of seeing. Some, in India and in North America, take up tabla one day and practice for a few weeks or months and then decide that it is just too difficult and never go back to it. However, for many just the opposite occurs and the result is what I like to call the passion of tabla. Satwantji often refers to this passion as 'tabla fever'. This passion for tabla first made sense to me when I got to know some of the disciples in Abbaji's class in Bombay. If someone is in love with what they do and what they do is play tabla, then playing tabla becomes an all encompassing, expressive, creative outlet. One of Abbaji's disciples remarked to me that "tabla is my life, my wife, my lover, my sister, my brother, my teacher, my everything". Zakirji pointed out to me early on in our relationship that tabla is part of the fabric or texture of everyday life in India. However, I have found that for many tabla players outside of India tabla also becomes an obsession and a necessary part of their existence as musicians and artists.

When a student gets beyond the initial struggle of learning basic strokes his/her first thoughts may be that the learning of this instrument will become easier. But then tabla start to demand that you spend more and more time with them. Being involved with tabla

⁷See Figure 1 for a photograph and listing of parts of the tabla.

means establishing certain times of the day where you simply do *riaz* (practice).⁸ The habit of learning in the hands, in the body and in the embodied mind, the repetition of counting out a composition, of reciting it again and again, and sitting cross-legged doesn't get any easier as time goes on. I am always working on specific strokes or *bols*, phrases or compositions. As I progressed as a student, I realized that the world of tabla is larger and more complex than I ever imagined it could be. The rhythms themselves are multiple and have meaning beyond the confines of language. There are patterns upon patterns to digest, dissect and count. Like an onion with its many layers, tabla too curiously reveals endless new forms, perspectives and rhythms.

Chapter Four is dedicated to my reflections on apprenticing as a tabla disciple. I argue that apprenticeship is a very distinctive form of participant-observation. Much has been written lately about the difficulties of continuing anthropological encounters in the postcolony. I suggest that a turn to the body can lead anthropology toward a new perspective of culture which 'returns', as it were, power and authority of cultural knowledge and tradition to those we study. The authority of cultural knowledge has always rested with the masters or cultural agents under study. Adopting apprenticeship as an anthropological method makes this point crystal clear. Achieving this different perspective requires theorizing about ethnographic experience in a serious way. I have grounded my theory of apprenticeship in a 'Critical Anthropology of the Body' which posits the experiences of the body as central to an analysis of everyday life.

⁸ Etymologically *riaz*, which comes from Arabic, suggests "abstinence, devotion, discipline and hard labor" (Neuman 1980:40). Neuman notes that in some contexts *riaz* does not translate into 'practice' or 'performance' but rather means worship. In the North American context doing one's *riaz* can also translate into worship, meditation or simply practice.

Chapter Five is a discussion of the process of mirroring the master. By viewing the cultural as embodied I examine how the learning of tabla is both reproduced and contested by disciples. I explore the significance of learning tabla as part of an Indian oral tradition system and the challenge posed to this way of learning in diaspora contexts. Entering into a relationship with a master of tabla also means being involved in a musical community. Learning tabla extends beyond the performance of strokes and rhythms to include a rich repertoire of musical and cultural stories about practicing and living *Hindustani* music.

My research into gurus and shishyas in North America and India has focused as much on artists of non-Indian origin as those of Indian ethnicity. The tabla communities in Toronto, Seattle, Vancouver and in the Bay area consist of men and women who come from various ethnic backgrounds. Tabla communities outside of India are, in part, products of on-going intercultural processes. They are not products of a South Asian diaspora only. Therefore it is necessary to somehow get beyond the idea of a South Asian Diaspora in relation to the playing, performance and teaching of tabla as 'Indian tradition'. For non-Indian disciples taking on tabla as an instrument means learning not only another musical system but other 'Indian' cultural traditions and relationships as well. Chapter Six focuses on the movement of tabla and tabla communities from India to North America and back again. Borrowing from Arjun Appadurai's (1991) work on ethnoscaples I coin the term 'tablasclapes' which I use to describe and explain the formation of tabla drumming and groups as a global phenomenon.

In all the following chapters I present and discuss tabla techniques and explore various rhythmic aspects of *Hindustani* music. However, it is important to mention that my

ethnography is not an ethnomusicological treatise on tabla technique and terminology. Rather, I offer an ethnography of the lived experiences of tabla players, of gurus and disciples. I have limited my discussion of rhythmic cycles in *the Hindustani* system to *tin tal* (sixteen beats) for purposes of consistency.⁹ It has been my experience that many students learn tabla within this specific time structure for the first few years of their apprenticeship.

⁹*Tal* refers to the rhythmic part of *Hindustani* music. See glossary for a more detailed explanation. I have restricted my examples of learning tabla to sixteen beats so that the reader can apprentice along with me and learn the complexities of one time cycle rather than learning small parts of various rhythmic cycles.

CHAPTER ONE SENSING ETHNOGRAPHY I

TOUCHING FEET: ON BECOMING A DISCIPLE

Bombay, India February 1995

After spending a month studying tabla at Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, a musical college located in central New Delhi, I decided it was time to leave for Bombay. When I stepped off the train with my bags and tape recorder in hand I was de-centred, my head was hurting and my body aching from sleeping on the train. It was a new city, there were new streets to get to know and to manoeuvre around in, and there were new people to get to know as well. There seemed to be different and even more unusual scents in Bombay, far more intense than those I had experienced in Delhi. The smells on the streets are so much more plentiful in Bombay because of the huge population and the warmer climate. Everywhere, I smelt urine, sweet flowers, smoke, pollution, excrement, daal, spices, fruits, incense, jasmine and sandalwood. Outside the train station the smell of the sea seemed to dominate all of the scents that I could identify.

Bombay streets are filled with cars, bicycles, taxis, buses, business men and women, road workers, and all manner of folk and vehicles. All at once you begin to hear different kinds of honking horns--loud ones, faint ones, long ones, robust burst-like ones. It is like a horn orchestra playing its overture over and over again. Loud Hindi *filmi* music blares out from taxi radios and small shops down the street. India is overwhelming to the senses, and Bombay, like other metropolitan centres in India, emits enough stimulation to overwhelm anyone.

On the way to tabla class the taxi stopped just in front of a place called Shivaji Park. In the front part of the park sits an open-aired Hindu temple dedicated to the god Ganesh¹.

Ganesha or Ganapati is the elephant headed god in Hindu tradition who symbolizes good luck and is considered to be the remover of all obstacles. There were lots of people sitting or strolling around the park, the sidewalk and the temple. Mothers with their children, single women, and some single men seemed to be waiting for something. It was close to sundown--perhaps some were waiting to watch the sun go down by the temple in the park. Many were waiting to receive blessings from the *pujari* or priest. Others had come for *darshan*, ²to see and to be seen by Ganesh.

Brahman priests were busy chanting vedic hymns and lighting sandalwood incense in the temple while devotees occupied themselves with buying garlands of flowers with orange, white and pink blossoms for their offerings. Although the roads seemed packed with cars, buses, taxis, bicycles and full of people busily going to and fro, the rhythm of Shivaji Park is a slower one. Here in front of the temple the pace slowed down to a standstill. People gathered in front of the temple, laid on the grass in the park or stopped by the peanutwala's cart, where he sat roasting nuts. On the other side of the street there were more vendors roasting, cooking or selling things in front of what at first glance, seemed to be very

¹Ganesh or Ganapati is an important deity in Hinduism. Hinduism centres on a tripartite model of Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Preserver), and Shiva (the destroyer). Ganesh, who is recognized by his elephant head, is the son of Shiva and his consort Parvati. Although Ganesh is essentially a Hindu deity, he is also worshipped or respected by those with other religious backgrounds in India.

²Darshan, is a Sanskrit word (literally 'seeing'). It has been suggested that darshan is the "single most common and significant element of Hindu worship" (Eck 1985:1). Importance is placed as much on seeing the icon or deity as being seen by the deity.

intimidating--looking iron gates. Just behind the gates to the left was a little *chai* stand called Simla Canteen. Further in I encountered another set of gates, and there I had to pass by guards.

"Where are you going? What is your purpose here," one man in an army khaki yelled out to me. He spoke in English because I was a foreigner and a white woman. "I am here for tabla class," I said. "I am a student of Alla Rakha Khan." "Accha," said the guard as he wagged his head from side to side acknowledging my answer. "You play tabla?" "*Han ji*," (yes) I replied. "Accha, go on in."

As I walked through the gates I noticed that there was a swimming pool directly in front of me. In the hot Bombay weather it looked like a good place to be. Young boys no more than the age of ten were splashing around playing ball in the water, while their mothers watched their antics from benches nearby. I walked up to the stone wall which separated the pool from the ocean below. Many folks were out at the beach, riding horses or strolling along on foot. As I turned the corner past the pool I faintly heard a sweet, ringing, most amazing sound! This sound was unlike any other I had ever heard in a percussion instrument. It was the sound of a ringing *na*.³ As I walked closer to this low-rise building surrounded by palm trees, I heard *na* more clearly. There were other sounds too. Besides the water of the ocean, there were low pulsating vibrations from the tabla *bayan*. *Ghe, dha, dha dha*. I had found my way to class.

³*Na* is one of first strokes or *bols* students learn. See glossary for a further explanation of *bols*.

Just outside the building on the front step were dozens of sandals and shoes. I took my sandals off and walked in the door. The smell of incense literally filled the room. It was a one room bungalow carpeted in a light grey. The carpet seemed cool to my feet! As I walked in, I passed by the cupboards where the school's tabla were kept. They sat in two cupboards with three shelves on each side. Class was just warming up. I was one of the first to arrive for the beginner-level section. I walked up to the front where the instructor was sitting. Three young boys, aged twelve or so, sat cross-legged in front of Ashok, Abbaji's assistant teacher. He was leading them through their *kaida* (composition) lesson. Ashok sat directly in front of them, to the left of a carpet and pillow and another set of tabla which I assumed belonged to Abbaji.

At both sides of Abbaji's tabla were icons of Ganesh. To the left on the wall sat a wooden framed print of Ganesh and around the picture hung a garland of white and orange flowers woven together. To the right of the tabla was a Ganapati statue sitting high on a stand. I realized that this was the source of the burning incense. Above the tabla was a ceiling fan typically seen in wealthy and middle class homes in Bombay and Delhi. The fan didn't seem to do much to cool down the room.

Ashok acknowledged my presence as I sat to his left against the wall with the others who had made it to class. Slowly more and more people joined us. When one student was finished, Ashok waggled his head to indicate that he was pleased with their playing, while the next student started to play. Everyone was working on different compositions. Upon being asked each student played the composition given to them to practice. One of them was the very first one I had learned. *Dha dha te te dha dha tun na, ta ta te te dha dha*

dhun na. He signalled me with his hands to play. "What do you know how to play?" he asked. "Play what you can, but also play *teen tal* first. Go slow at first, and then double it." *Dha dhin dhin dha dha dhin dhin dha, ta tin tin ta dha dhin dhin dha (Dha). Dha dha terekete dha dha tun na, ta ta terekete dha dha dhun na.*

He seemed pleased that I could play basic strokes. Ashok then asked another student to play. I retreated back to the wall with the others. All of a sudden Abbaji appeared at the door. He was accompanied by a disciple, Sanjay, who carefully helped him off with his shoes. We all stood up, he walked by us, paused for a moment, stopped in front of me, said "hello," and proceeded to take his place behind the tabla at the front of the room.

One by one each disciple lined up to pay respect to their guru. They each touched his feet. Some were touched on the head by Abbaji and in response to this they touched their foreheads or hearts, signifying his blessing and the energy that he had given them. In this first public appearance with Alla Rakha Khan I decided I should not touch his feet. What possible meaning could this gesture have for either of us at this point? I did not feel like I was his student yet--I had not received instruction. I remained against the wall. At the time I did not realize that my refraining from touching Abbaji's feet would create serious problems and a generally bad feeling with some of my fellow students.

About an hour had passed since I had arrived. Abbaji's presence marked a change in the next level of class. Many students with whom I had been sitting departed after they had paid their respects to their teacher. As more incense was lit in the Ganesh shrine, Abbaji called over one of the disciples with whom I had spent part of the day talking,

Kalyan**hai**⁴. Taking a moment to relax and re-position my aching legs and knees (although the body eventually adapts to sitting to long periods of time I was still finding sitting cross-legged a form of torture) I looked outside just in time to see the sun set on the ocean. This room seemed so peaceful and tranquil compared to the world outside the iron gates.

Uday quickly touched Abbaji's feet and left the room. What was going on? Abbaji signalled to Ashok to begin the class again and everyone found their spot by a tabla or to the side against the wall. Five students sat waiting very attentively for their turn to play. Without missing a beat each played a basic *tin tal theka* of sixteen beats and then a composition. Abbaji stopped them at certain points in their playing and made various kinds of remarks. Kalyan**hai** came back into the room, went up to Abbaji, touched his feet and gave him some papers before he found a spot next to me to watch class.

It was time for the next group of tabla students to play. Again, a student played *tin tal theka*, followed by the theme of the composition first slowly and doubling it, playing the body of the composition proper. Abbaji seemed rather frustrated with this student and decided to show him how to play the bols in a way which would mirror his own movements. Although Abbaji mainly spoke in Hindi, I could make out that the student was not getting the proper sound of a bol phrase. He took the covers off his tabla and started to play. Something changed in the room--suddenly I felt a sense of awe. When Abbaji played everyone sat on the edge of their seats and locked their eyes on his hands. When he played

⁴*Bhai*, a Hindi word for brother, is used by disciples to address other disciples. See glossary for a further explanation.

it felt like the most exciting thing ever to have happened in my life.⁵ The rituals of the class suddenly became very clear. Senior disciples kept the *tal* with their hands accenting 1, 5, 13, 1, 5, 13, 1 in the *tin tal* time cycle. Others yelled out *kya bat hai!* (wonderful, right on!), or simply gasped when Abbaji played some intricate bol phrase perfectly.

When Alla Rakha played there was an energy in the room like none other I had ever felt before. Earlier in the day, upon my first meeting with him at his home, I sensed this energy. We spent much of the afternoon drinking *chai*, eating cookies and chatting occasionally about Satwantji and Stefanbhai, my tabla brothers in Vancouver. But most of the time we just sat together, looking at each other. Even then I felt this sense of awe, this energy and feeling of total peacefulness and tranquillity.

Abbaji is very much a father figure to his disciples. Physically he is an older man aged seventy nine. He has slowed down in his daily movements. Abbaji shows his father like-image in other ways as well. At his home that first day and at class that evening, Abbaji's concern over whether or not I had found a place to stay was touching. Where would I stay tonight? Did I have enough food? Would I be alright until I found a more permanent place to live? I assured him that yes, I did have a place to stay for the evening and that I would keep looking for a more permanent type of lodging on my own. He seemed concerned but nodded and continued on with class.

⁵Abbaji's recordings had always overwhelmed me. This was the first time I witnessed his presence as a master of tabla. The intense emotion and concentration on Abbaji's playing by the other students in class added to my own fascination of this legendary master.

Things were beginning to speed up rhythmically. The more advanced students were playing very fast now. It was chaotic, I couldn't recognize any of the compositions they were performing. What I heard in a slower speed seemed to dramatically transform into something else at top speed. As Abbaji sat behind his tabla watching each student play, his fingers seemed to constantly be in motion. Sometimes his gestures marked quarter beats, sometimes they marked the pulses of the *tal* structure. Ashok too kept *tal* with his hands. I could tell that he knew each composition intimately. As he recited the composition being played, he kept the beat by hitting his leg with his palm. His whole body was moving back and forth rocking to the rhythm of the *tal* cycle. At various points other people kept *tal* as well. When one of the students played particularly well, others showed their appreciation and excitement by keeping the beat with their hands. Some marked time by using their hands, with one palm on top of another, while others hit the palm of their hands on their knees or legs. It did not really matter whether a student kept time with force and vigour or whether they did it more matter-of-factly, all seemed to intensely feel it in their bodies.

Unlike the Western concept of time, in which we feel a regular pulse in each musical bar, *Hindustani* music has a cyclical sense of time rather than a linear one. For example, much of Western rock and roll is based on a 4/4 time signature where the musician begins by counting one and ending on four. In the *Hindustani* system, and in the basic *tin tal* time cycle of sixteen beats, emphasis is always placed on what is called *sam*, the one. Counting time begins and ends with *sam*--the cycle begins at one, is counted up to 16 plus the one of the next cycle (i.e. the *sam*).

Each time a tabla player reached *sam* in their composition, everyone in the room acknowledged this with larger than life gestures. Hands swung up and down as if they were trying to catch gnats in the space in front of them. This up and down hand grabbing, coupled with facial gestures of excitement and accomplishment, denotes the importance of feeling the *sam*. Eventually you begin to remember that the climax will always end on the one. How could it be otherwise? At the moment you sense this to be the case in your mind, the body is already performing and remembering that the cycle is climaxing and then, of course, ending.

When the last disciple had played and Abbaji was pleased with his performance, class came to a close. "*Bas*, I will see you tomorrow," Abbaji said as he got up from his sacred space at the front of the room. Almost immediately, all the disciples surrounded him as he walked toward the door. Everyone was attempting to touch his feet before he reached the door. Sanjaybhai helped Abbaji on with his shoes by giving him his shoulder to lean on as he walked out the doorway. Ashok asked some students to help him put away the tabla in the cupboards. Many headed for the doorway and their sandals and were soon out on the street, walking beside or behind their master. I too hurried outside, quickly put on my sandals and tried to catch up to the crowd that has now gathering around Ustad Alla Rakha Khan. Everyone seemed to be heading toward the Simla Canteen *chai* stand around the corner from the armed guards. As we reached the *chai* stand Abbaji's car arrived. Again each student, but me, touched his feet as he climbed into the vehicle. We all waved goodbye as the car pulled out of the parking lot and beyond the iron gates onto Veer Sawarkar Marg.

A bunch of us stood around the *chai* stand drinking *chai* and discussing the events of class for a few minutes. Some were reciting *bol* phrases or compositions played in class, trying to remember them properly. Each variation was recited. It was like a big new puzzle, the latest challenge! All would keep taking turns--one would recite, then the others. There seemed to be an argument over the order of variations in a new *kaida*. Eventually Ashok joined us and settled the argument.

Kalyanbhai took me aside for a moment and said that he wanted to talk to me alone about class tonight. So, we waved goodbye to the others and walked out onto the street. The street was congested with cars, buses, scooters and bicycles. This was officially Bombay rush hour traffic. It was dark now, and the streets were noisy with horns blasting out tunes every few seconds. All the vendors had packed up their wares. Perhaps they had gone home for the night or they had moved further on down the street. It seemed odd that there were no people walking about now.

We were alone on the street except for the vehicles whizzing by. Kalyanbhai was acting strange. I didn't know him very well as we had only spent a few hours together, but his mannerisms seemed very different from earlier in the day. He was a bit nervous, kind of jittery, shuffling his feet from side to side as he stood on the street corner. "Why didn't you touch Abbaji's feet? Don't you know that you have to touch the feet of your teacher? The expectation is there, it's a respectful thing." I explained to my new brother that I felt no need to touch his feet, I didn't feel comfortable with it just yet. Why should I perform this gesture of humility if I had not yet received instruction from him? I had struggled with the

question of touching feet all day long and when it came time to actually do it, it just didn't feel right.⁶ And so, in the end I explained that I would touch the feet of a person who was my teacher when I actually became a student. Kalyan**bai** nodded in agreement with my explanation and said no more about it that night. I asked him what he was doing with all the papers for Abbaji. Apparently he was asked to deliver the payment for the rent of the building to the administrators at the gates. He helped me hail down a taxi and asked the driver how much it would cost to go to Bandra, the section of Bombay where I was staying. The taxi fare was set, and so I got in and left Kalyan standing in front of the Ganesh temple at Shivaji Park.

The next day I made my way over to Kalyan**bai's** for an early morning practice session. I wasn't getting the right sound on the *na* stroke, so we spent a lot of time going over just what the correct sound should be. I had realized earlier that I should be getting some sort of ringing sound from the stroke but I just didn't seem to be hitting it in the right way. The *na bol* is one of the most difficult strokes to master in tabla. The ring finger must be anchored on the far right side of the inner part of the tabla, a section of the tabla referred to as *the gab* or *shyahi*.⁷ While the ring finger is anchored on the *gab*, the middle finger should be lifted up from the *gab*, not resting on the tabla itself. This leaves the index finger free to touch or hit the *kinar*, the outer ring of the tabla skin. The wrist and thumb

⁶It was difficult for me to physically perform this act of humility toward a man I had met only hours before attending my first class. I assumed that a student was required to show respect toward their teacher by touching feet but because I had not been directly instructed by Abbaji I was confused as to whether I was really his student and so I restrained from doing so.

⁷See Figure 1.

play a major part in the execution of this stroke as well. If you visualize the act of turning a door knob where the wrist and thumb move in a circular anti-clockwise motion *na* picks up strength and clarity. The resulting sound should ring, it should not be muted in any way (when this stroke is played muted it becomes another *bol* known as *tuk*). To play a ringing *na*, the first bony section of the index finger should bounce up from hitting the tabla, from touching the *kinar*. Learning the correct series of movements and the right sound of *na* requires a significant amount of practice and patience. I was then in my fourth month of tabla lessons and *na* was not sounding very loudly or ringing very clearly yet.

Kalyanbhai told me he had been playing tabla for at least twelve years now. He comes from a family of musicians--his father being a local *Hindustani* vocal teacher. One of his father's 'tuitions'⁸ showed up while I was practicing tabla. The first thing he did after entering the apartment was to touch his teacher's feet. Kalyanbhai nudged me and whispered in my ear, "See that! Now you should understand how important this respect is to your teacher, we feel it is a way of showing how much you love him and respect him. It is very important and has much meaning in our lives." I realized then that Kalyanbhai was never going to let me forget that I made this grave mistake. He was giving me a lesson in respect and would at every opportunity bring up the subject to shame me.

I continued on with my practice in the music room, while Kalyan's father carried on his

⁸ 'Tuitions' are one type of learning context in Indian cultures. The tuition refers to students who travel to their teacher's home for one or two hours of musical instruction at a time. The time of each class depends on the master's schedule and on the amount of rupees a disciple can pay for the lessons. In Delhi I heard of similar cases where just the opposite occurs. Instead of the student seeking out the teacher it is the teacher who travels to the home of the students.

vocal lesson in the back room. *sa re ga, re ga ma, ga ma pa, ma pa dha, pa dha ni, dha ni sa*⁹. After a while Kalyan called me to stop and come into the other room. "Zakirbhai is talking on TV!" Kalyan said with major excitement in his voice. The whole family rushed to the television set to catch a glimpse of Zakirji. He was a guest on a talk show speaking about his life as a musician, as a tabla player. Later on in the day Kalyan confessed to me that he really had no major interest in becoming a tabla player until the day he saw Zakirji play. Seeing Zakirji play on stage had a profound effect on his life. He described the experience of watching Zakirji's tabla solo as a religious one. At one point in the concert he could see a shining light around Zakirji's body. It was an intense mystical moment that changed the direction of his life.

Now, everything Kalyan does is somehow connected to learning or performing tabla. Tabla has come to be like *puja* or worship for him. Before he begins every practice he prays to Saraswati,¹⁰ and to Ganesh. He suggested to me that perhaps I too could pray to Saraswati and Ganesh before practicing tabla. I had been thinking about setting up a small shrine to Ganesh where I practiced and so I told Kalyan my plan. He said that this could only help my playing.

⁹In the Indian musical system, *sa, re, ga, ma pa, dha, ni sa*, is equivalent to the Western solfeggio system *doh, rey, me, fa, so, la, ti doh*. Often in a vocal *Hindustani* performance the soloist will play with these syllables instead of singing a line of text or will enhance a line of text with these syllables.

¹⁰ In Hinduism Saraswati is worshipped as the goddess of learning. In the visual arts she is usually depicted holding a *vina* (a stringed instrument) and a book. Kinsley notes that she inspires and embodies "both the arts and sciences in human culture, she represents the greatness of human civilization in all its richness and diversity" (Kinsley 1986:60).

After practice we decided it was time to look for my very own set of tabla. Leaving the sounds of the vocal lesson behind we headed off to Dadar market to the music stores. The market was a fair distance away--we had to take two buses and a train to get there. In Kalyan's eyes this was just enough time for me to learn a new *kaida* theme and some variations. It didn't matter that we were on a bus, a train or walking down a rocky dirt road with dozens of people begging for rupees, Kalyan would make me count out all the compositions that I was working on. Once in a while he would throw out a new composition to me and see if I was picking up the *bols* correctly. Generally, he would challenge me with a *tukra*, a short type of composition that always ends in a catchy phrase repeated three times. He repeated the *bols* over and over again until I got it. I told him, "I really need to write this down!" "Do it orally--you can write it down later," Kalyan replied. He was relentless, always reciting, always counting, counting, counting.

The market was unbelievably crowded. Kalyan took my hand and guided me through a tea stall, which led to a luggage rack, which led to another store, and within minutes we were at a very impressive looking music store. It took two hours for Kalyan to play every tabla and *bayan* (left hand drum) in the store. After much debate with the shopkeepers he decided on one set for me to take. I thanked him for helping me out, taking me to Dadar market, and finding just the right tabla for my *riaz*. He became frustrated and angry. "It is my duty, my pleasure. You are a student of Abbaji's, I am a student of Abbaji's--we are *gurubhais*! Please don't thank me." In the coming months I came to rely heavily on Kalyan as a close friend and brother.

Riaz became a little easier now that I had a set of tabla to work with. A few days of practice helped me to feel more confident for my first performance for the master. *Na* and *dha* were becoming more solid, my *na* was starting to ring--a little. I was practicing an exercise for the *bayan* hand which helped to strengthen my index finger. *Bols* like *ghe* and *ge* which are played on the *bayan* are usually performed using the middle and index fingers. I needed to be able to play with the index finger also. The hand should sit like the head of a cobra, all curled up ready to strike, while the wrist rests comfortably on the top part of the *gab*. Using the fleshy part of the finger tip, the player makes a grabbing motion and touches the top part of the *bayan* skin. When a player strikes *ghe* and *na* simultaneously the sound of the *bols* change into what is called *dha*.

In the beginning, like learning to play most strokes on the tabla, the hands and fingers are stiff and awkward. Just when you think you are progressing and getting somewhere with the *bols* new ones are introduced and the hands become rigid again. After many hours and days of practice the flow of the strokes returns. I had been practicing alternating fingers for a few days when the index finger movement just seemed to happen. Without thinking about having to do it I sat down to practice and it just started to click. The action of one finger rolling into the next was beginning to feel like a natural movement, a familiar pattern.

Getting to class this evening seemed quicker than usual. It felt like the traffic on Linking Road (the only road that connected the northern parts of Bombay to the central parts of the city) was getting more and more congested everyday, but tonight we sailed across town to Shivaji Park. The sensation of driving in a car with speed was exhilarating! I was getting

use to showing up to class sweaty and tired from sitting in the hot, smelly and what-seemed-like-never-ending-traffic. I found myself counting out compositions at every possible place and time of the day. The taxi ride on the way to class was an excellent place to recite and count.

As I walked into the Institute, I saw Ashok sitting in his spot counting to himself. Later on, I realized that he was concentrating on a *kaida* variation for one of the younger beginner students. I nodded my head and he mirrored my gesture in acknowledgement of my arrival. He was counting on his fingers, just like I had been taught to do from the very beginning. Tabla players use their left hand fingers as markers to figure out where certain *bols* will fall on particular beats. Using his thumb as an indicator, Ashok counted from the base of the smallest finger, then moved up the finger to the first joint, then to the second joint and finally to the tip of the finger. In this way each finger marked out 4 beats or *matras*. Using the remaining fingers (or joints in the fingers) Ashok eventually reached 16 beats (suggesting that he was counting something in *tin tal*). I had seen other tabla players use their right hands in counting out compositions too. Some even start to count on the index finger first and end up using the smallest finger last. No matter which method is used the general principle remains the same. Counting on the fingers allows tabla players to visualize where the *bols* fall in relation to the structure of the tal. When counting out *tin tal*, for example, the number nine will always fall on the base of the middle finger.

Moments later Abbaji was at the doorway. We all stood up as he walked into the room and took his place by his tabla. Everyone hurried to touch his feet and so did I. I didn't want to

be scolded by my brothers again. Touching his feet felt strange and awkward but also comforting. Tonight I noticed that one of the disciples, a young Sikh man, knelt in front of him, bowed his head to the floor, then touched Abbaji's feet. Although everyone has their own way of touching feet, the act itself symbolizes extreme humility towards one's teacher. One of the first stories Satwantji told me was about his intense feelings of humility toward learning tabla with Abbaji. For him, being around Abbaji meant that he could barely breathe--it was like he was holding his breath the entire time they were together. Many feel this way in the presence of their teacher. It is difficult to play for or just be with someone who is a great master of a tradition. But along with general nervousness, being a student of tabla forces you to increase your sensory awareness. Learning tabla demands that you concentrate on touch, vision (the images of your teacher), sound, and the sensation of feeling correct movements in the body. Being around the master means attending to every possible sensation, feeling, and emotion. It is an intensely physical and emotional way of being.

Class tonight started with an American woman of Indian origin, Suphala, playing for Abbaji. There were three Indian men, mainly in their early twenties, and also one older man in the line up tonight along with one British man. Suphala started to play her composition. Abbaji stopped her after the third variation to discuss what was wrong. He very gently mentioned that certain *bols* should be played with a particular kind of emphasis. He and Ashok began to recite, slowly remembering in the voice and in the body the entirety of the composition. When Abbaji was satisfied that the *bols* worked in the *tal* structure, everyone started to recite with him. The rest of this section of class was dedicated to singing the *bols*. No one played. The older senior disciples not only recited with their teacher, but also

mirrored his exact movements in the hands. If Abbaji's hand curved to the left, they curved their hands to the left. Every movement every gesture was matched. Eventually everyone started writing down the *bols* they were singing.

As the night wore on, Abbaji finally asked me to play something for him. I had been waiting for his signal all night and had become quite nervous in the process. I sat down by a set of tabla, rubbed powder on my fingers, and started to play very slowly. Seconds after I started to play Abbaji stopped me. "Your na is not ringing. Look where your thumb is! Your *te te* is wrong, wrong!" He threw off his tabla covers and had me watch again and again how he played all the *bols* that I had just attempted to play. He had me concentrate on how he placed his right hand on the tabla. "Where is my thumb?" Abbaji asked. I replied that it sat comfortably on the rim of the tabla. He paid a great deal of attention to how my hand was sitting, it was to look exactly like his and frankly it wasn't looking anything like his hand at all. My thumb wouldn't rest on the rim of the tabla--it was stiff and up in the air. My hands were stiff and unsure of how to 'sit'. He assured me that things would improve, and that tomorrow we would work on new *bols*, a new composition.

I found a place to sit behind Ashok, close to the window by the wall. Abbaji asked for the *harmonium* to be brought to him. As the next disciple played *theka* and a *kaida*, Abbaji played *lahra* on the *harmonium*. The feeling of *tin tal*, of having to begin and end on the *sam*, seemed to be making more sense to me. The ending of all *kaida* compositions is marked by a three-fold repetitive pattern, a *tihai*. These patterns are valuable resources for tabla players. Eventually one tunes into this three-time repetition of phrases and knows that

the composition will soon come to *sam*.

Class ended when Abbaji played *harmonium* for the last senior student, the British man, to play that night. Like all of Abbaji's students, Jim's playing was impressive. His *bols* were clean, crisp, and to me, impressively fast. Abbaji stood up and made his way for the door. We rushed to touch his feet and said goodnight. Sanjay helped him out the door to his car. Tonight many of the *gurubhais* were walking with Abbaji, desiring to be around him. Everyone knew that he could recite a new composition at any time, and if you were not there to get it, chances were you never would. Suddenly Abbaji remembered that the next class would have to be cancelled because of Ramadan,¹¹ an important Muslim celebration. Stepping into the car, he remarked how happy he was about tonight's class. We touched his feet, helped him into the car and closed the door.

Bombay March 1995

Linking Road seemed particularly crowded, chaotic and noisy tonight. I was already feeling hot, and sticking to the taxi seat, when the putrid smell of urine and excrement from Chow Patty Beach wafted by my face and made me feel a little sick. The sidewalks were teeming with folks doing things, living their lives. One woman was sitting up in her bed, fanning her face with a piece of cardboard. Further down the road another woman was cooking *roti*, an Indian style of bread. Next to her was a young girl brushing her hair. She was looking at a group of young men who were trying to fix some kind of motor which had lost its will to

¹¹ Ramadan is celebrated during the ninth month of the Muslim year. Muslims are expected to fast from dawn to dusk during this time period.

work. Here, as for many, life is lived out on the street. It's all there to witness from early morning to late at night.

When I got to Shivaji Park, Vijay, a tabla student who I had talked with a little in class, and Kalyan were standing by Simla Canteen. We talked for a while about music and tabla until Kalyan made an embarrassing comment about the fact that my hair was hanging loose and not tied up for class. He was, in his own way, looking out for me, acting as my big brother. To Kalyan I was young, white, away from my home, and my husband. I had seen women wear their hair down in class, and so I didn't think anything of it. I didn't think it meant that I was trying to be alluring to the opposite sex, but Kalyan thought otherwise and made a point of mentioning it.

We got to class only to find out that Abbaji would not be coming. Ashok was conducting a very small class. He stopped for a minute to show off a beautifully handcrafted powder box which a student had made for Zakirji. It was a very striking box, someone had put a great deal of time and love into making it. It was made of three types of wood with intricate carvings on each end topped with emerald-like stones. Ashok was beaming with energy and had what I think of as that 'kid in a candy store' type of excitement about him. Apparently today was Zakirji's birthday, so class would end early and we would go the party.

After class many of the younger students went home. The rest of us, who always seemed to be together whether we were in class or at a concert, discussed how we would get to Abbaji's home in Malabar Hills. We started walking through Shivaji Park and on to the

market close by. As I walked along with Kalyan, Vijay, and Ashok another student hurried to catch up with us from the other side of the park. I had seen him in class everyday and was impressed with his dedication and performative skills. He was playing far better than others his age. He seemed to be a very close follower of Ashok and would sit beside him every evening in class. "And you are...?", I asked. "I'm a *gurubhai*," was all that he replied, as he flung his arms around Kalyan. His physical closeness to Kalyan at that moment struck me as an important part of everyday life among the disciples. Whenever they greeted each other, they hugged or touched hands. Often, I saw disciples holding hands as they walked along reciting and counting their latest compositions. As we walked through the park, we all held hands on and off and counted and recited. But the most immediate thing on our minds was the question, what kind of gifts to take to Zakirji?

Ashok asked me if I would like to have a gift for Zakirji. I thought that this would be an excellent idea. I was feeling a little ashamed that I had not known about the birthday celebration earlier. When we finally reached the market there was much confusion over whether we should all stick together or break off and meet up again. Kalyan, Vijay, and Vikram headed off to some flower shops down the street while Ashok (who had taken me under his wing) and I made our way to a material shop. Ashok decided that material for a new *kurta* would be an excellent and appropriate gift for me to give Zakirji. He too was going to purchase some material for a gift. The shopkeeper brought out yards upon yards of materials for us to peruse. Silks, cottons, shiny, matted and printed cloth were thrown in front of us. Some were gold, some were white, others brown, the choices seemed endless. He did not stop showing us cloth until every inch of the entire shop was covered with his samples.

Finally Ashok made his choice and asked the owner to cut the material into proper dimensions for a *kurta*. I had my eye on a nice plain white cotton material and was about to ask for it to be cut when Ashok voiced his displeasure over my decision. He thought that another material with shiny bright colours would be a better buy and a more pleasing aesthetic look for his *gurubhai*. He was quite insistent about this and so I agreed and asked for the material to be cut.

Armed with our presents Ashok and I left the material shop to search for the others. We came upon them a few minutes later--they too were holding gifts. Some, who had less money than others, decided on *mithai* (sweets), flowers, incense and the like. Everyone had something to give Zakirji.

We eventually made our way to Malabar Hills by bus and by taxi. The hills were steep and winding, but also beautiful and set in a very prestigious part of Bombay. Set by the sea, Malabar Hills seemed distant, removed from the lower lying areas where massive slums and poverty abound.

Before we entered Simla House (Abbaji's residence), we removed our sandals and placed them by the door. There was much activity in the living room. Microphones were being set up and tested, carpets were being moved around, and folks were looking for spots to claim as seats on the already laid carpet. All the furniture in the living room had been removed for the event. We greeted Abbaji at the door with smiles and enthusiasm. He too seemed very jolly, happy and generally excited about the day and the celebrations. All the *gurubhais* touched his feet. Being last in line, I dropped to the floor and touched his feet.

Tonight, while I was on the floor Abbaji laid his hand on my head. I suppose it felt special because I had seen him do this with his other disciples, disciples who had been with him a very long time. Without knowing much about me or my past, Abbaji accepted me as a student within moments of my first meeting with him. Because Satwantji had sent me to him, my entry into the community was solidified, clarified and immediate. I was a student of Satwantji's, of course I would be welcomed into the school, into the family.

Everyone who was anyone in *Hindustani* classical music was in this room. There were other older instrumentalists and vocalists sitting beside our teacher. Kalyan and the others also touched their feet. I smiled and stood at the back of the group, not knowing who they were or what I should do. The stream of musicians coming and going seemed endless. Shiv Kumar Sharma, the leading *santur* player, Hariprasad Chaurasia, a *bansuri* or flute master, Sultan Khan, a renowned *sarangi* maestro and beautiful vocalist, and many others were here to be with Zakirji. The room was buzzing with musicians, disciples, friends and family.

We caught Zakirji's eye for a moment. He was standing across the room with Jack, one of the American students from class. They were attending to the sound system and recording equipment for the evening performances. He told us to sit down and he would come over to see us when the equipment was properly set up.

Anticipating that there was going to be live music, we claimed a section of the carpet close to the front of the stage where the musicians would eventually be playing. Looking around the room, I recognized Jim sitting cross-legged over by the wall. He was talking with a

woman whom he introduced to me as his wife Sierry. To my left sat another tabla player, Leen, a Belgian musician who had been taking lessons with Abbaji for the past year. I had spoken with her one evening after class. She was an intriguing woman, very energetic, with a great sense of rhythm. Like everyone I had met in Abbaji's school, her passion and love for tabla were intense. For her, tabla is something magical, something extra-sensory, something spiritual. We talked for a while that evening about studying tabla, living in India, and about being a woman in a tradition which is predominately male. I wanted to get to know her more and spend time with her like I was with some of the others, but she was leaving for Belgium in a few days because her money had run out. The winter season was coming to a close, soon it would be too hot and the city would become unbearable to live in. It was approaching March now, and many of the foreigners would be packing up and leaving Bombay and their teachers until the next music season or until they could afford to return to India. Some like Jack and Jim had made Bombay their permanent home. Though they travelled back to Europe and America now and then, they were for much of the year physically close to Abbaji.

After some time, Zakirji finished smoothing out the bugs with the sound equipment and came over to greet us. All my fellow students quickly stood up and formed a line to say hello. He walked over to me, making me the first in line to greet him. Dressed in a white cotton *kurta* Zakirji shook my hand and introduced himself. As we met for the first time, Zakirji held my arm and was very congenial, charming and witty. "How are you finding India?" he asked. I told him that I was enjoying my time in Bombay--it was wonderful. I gave him the package that I was holding. He could tell right away that the gift was a cut of material. "Just what I always wanted!" he exclaimed. He continued to joke about the gift.

"Every year after my birthday I get to create a whole new wardrobe."

One after another, my *gurubhais* gave Zakirji presents and birthday wishes. As each one touched his feet, Zakirji touched his/her heads¹ in return. There was much respect and love apparent on the students' faces as they chatted with Zakirji about upcoming musical events. To have his attention if only for a moment was something priceless to them. There was no doubt that many idolized him.

Eventually the first set of musicians made their way up to the space in front of the room. We all sat down again in anticipation of the evening *ragas* which were about to begin. Folks were moving around finding places to sit when Zakirji's youngest brother, Taufiq, announced that the performances were going to begin momentarily. Zakirji made his way to the back of the room and sat down on a couch beside his father. The performers came up to the front of the room and sat down beside their instruments. On the far right side was a woman who held the *tanpura*, and sitting just in front of her sat Ustad Sultan Khan. To his left sat Fazal, Zakirji's other younger brother, who was to play tabla tonight, accompanying Khan Sahib's vocals.¹² The lighting was set, the microphones were in place and they started to record the events of the evening.

Khan sahib got underway singing very slowly with much emotion. He was beginning the

¹²The term sahib is often appended to the Muslim family name Khan as a form of respect.

piece with an *alap*¹³, a slow unveiling of the mood and texture of the composition he would later sing. The tabla player does not play during *alap*--it is essentially an unmetred section of *Hindustani* music. Almost immediately the talking buzz that filled the room switched to silence. All eyes were on the vocalist now. Every movement, every sound was monitored by the audience.

Sanjay came into the room close to where Leen, Kalyan and I were sitting. Kalyan whispered to him and tugged at his kurta so that he would come sit with us. We all sat very close together, and having another join us meant a very tight fit. But I was getting use to sitting this way with other tabla players. If we were in class we would sit so that our knees were touching. If we were outside class we would all be standing very close to each other. After Sanjay snuggled into the small space beside me, Kalyan took special care in fixing the back of his kurta, so that it would not get too wrinkled while the concert went on.

The *mehfil* was definitely going strong now. Later in the night, other musicians would take the place of those before them. Late in the evening, close to midnight, we ate dinner and drank *chai*. The party went on well into the small hours of the morning, a most usual occurrence for Indian musicians.

¹³In *Hindustani* classical music instrumental and vocal compositions follow a specified structure known as *alap-jor-jhala-gat*. The *alap* section is generally a slow, emotional rendering of the raga while the ending section called, the *gat*, becomes a fast, frenzied, highly rhythmic and technically challenging piece of music.

CHAPTER TWO SENSING ETHNOGRAPHY II

TABLA TALES

Toronto, Ontario

Having been a resident of Toronto for most of my life, it didn't take long for me to remember that winter was always nasty and brutal. Beautiful white snow quickly turns into black ice packed into lumps at every street corner. I was on my way to meet Ritesh Das at a coffee shop near the Spadina Road studio where he gives tabla classes. The *Coffee Hut* was a relaxing small cafe, just what I needed to warm up from the minus 12 Celsius degree weather outside. I soon realized that this was the place to find tabla players. Every other person who walked in the door was either a student of tabla or *kathak*¹, a North Indian classical dance style which is accompanied by tabla. As I was talking with Riteshji about his childhood and what it was like to grow up as a Bengali who was sent to a Catholic school in Calcutta, one of his senior disciples came into the cafe.

He was a young man who looked to be in his early twenties. He quickly introduced himself as Ed then left to grab a coffee before class. Riteshji mentioned that Ed, who has studied with him for the last seven years, was one of the senior students who played in Riteshji's

¹ Kathak was deemed one of five national/cultural dance forms after India's Independence in 1947. Essentially coming from the North of India, Kathak incorporates a combination of Muslim and Hindu elements. Katha, a Hindi, verb refers to story telling. In Kathak, the dancer utilizes various hand gestures (mudras), facial gestures and body postures to create characters and emotion in telling a story. Besides the use of *abhinaya* (hand, facial gestures) Kathak is also known for its pure dance element. The play of rhythm between the tabla player and the Kathak dancer is one of the most exciting aspects of the dance.

band the Toronto Tabla Ensemble.² The tabla section of the ensemble essentially consisted of four senior tabla disciples, Ed, Jai, Santosh, and Amar. Ed was the only white, Irish-Canadian to play in the Ensemble. While Jai's and Santosh's families are originally from India Amar's family comes from the West Indies. Riteshji confessed that although he felt close to many of his senior disciples, he felt particularly connected to Ed, who was a constant companion and a dear friend.

It was time to get to the studio for the evening's classes, so we got some coffee and treats to take back with us, and headed across the street. When we reached the second floor where the studio was located the scent of incense was quite strong. A deep breath of the jasmine scent took me back to Abbaji's class at Shivaji Park. Following the hall down to the end of the floor we arrived at M-Do, the studio co-run by Joanna and Ritesh Das. As we opened

² The Toronto Tabla Ensemble is a percussion ensemble headed by Ritesh Das. Founded in 1991, the Ensemble consists of four tabla players, a conga and auxiliary percussionist, a drum set player, and a Jal Tarang player, Joanna Das, who also dances North Indian kathak to the rhythms of the ensemble. The Ensemble incorporates many guest artists and percussionists into their live and recorded performances. Although the core of the compositions are influenced by and based on classical Indian tabla techniques, the pieces themselves musically evolve into something different. The presence of more than one tabla player on stage automatically changes tabla tradition. In the past tabla was generally an accompanying instrument for instrumentalists and vocalists, and more recently it has become a solo instrument. The ideology behind the Ensemble is that of Canadian 'multiculturalism', where the performers see themselves as collaborating with other cultural traditions and performers. This is not the first time tabla has been de-contextualized from Indian tradition and built upon to form a percussion ensemble. In 1984 Zakir Hussain successfully formed the Rhythm Experience in the Bay Area of California. This group of musicians has become a dynamic force on the World Music Scene, recording CD's and playing to sold out concerts across North America. "Zakir Hussain and the Rhythm Experience is a world percussion ensemble which weaves the rhythms of India, Cuba, Africa and the Middle East and Indonesia into a repertoire that combines skilfully improvised exchanges with precise unison drumming" (Minnecola 1993). Prior to the Rhythm Experience Zakir Hussain had formed the Diga Rhythm Band along with Mickey Hart, consisting of his most senior students from his then teaching post at Ali Akbar Khan College in San Rafael, California.

the door, Joanna, a *Kathak* teacher, was sitting on the floor unwinding her bells. *Kathak* dancers wear these bells around their ankles when they dance. We took off our boots and coats and walked into the studio proper. The room was bright with hard wood floors. One wall was covered with mirrors from the floor to the ceiling while the others sported posters of past events, workshops and concerts. One of the posters had pictures of both Joanna's guru, Sri Chitresh Das and Riteshji's guru, Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri.

It looked like it could be any dance studio in Toronto, except in the far left corner of the room there was a shrine or an altar dedicated to Shiva Nataraj.³ The icon of the dancing Shiva was quite large, a statue at least 4 or 5 feet high. Surrounding the Nataraj were vases with flowers, and various bells with flower petals beside them. Permeating all of this was burning incense, so strong and potent it was filling the room with a smoky haze. Joanna greeted us as we came into the studio. Her students were gearing up for tonight's classes. All of them were women, some Indian, some Irish, some Japanese. Ed was setting up a place to play over by the far wall of the studio. He laid down a rug then brought out his tabla, powder and hammer. Joanna retrieved the *harmonium* that was sitting over by the

³ Shiva Nataraj is Shiva manifest as Lord of the Dance. As presider of the dance, it is not unusual to see an icon of Shiva in a shrine somewhere on the stage of an Indian dance recital, whether it is Hindustani or Karnatic (Southern) classical dance. As Nataraj Shiva also figures prominently in Indian classical and folk music traditions. Many mythological connections have been made between Shiva and drumming in India. In the Nataraj icon one of Shiva's hands holds the sacred damaru, a drum resembling the shape of an hour glass. Symbolically Shiva is the creator of rhythm and the keeper of time. However, Shiva's son, Ganesh, also becomes significant to tabla players in tracing the origins of the drum. In a recent radio interview Zakir Hussain discussed the essential relationship between Shiva, Ganesh and the Indian folk drum Pakhawaj. "The Pakhawaj was given a language, tones, and sounds by the god Lord Shiva himself. His son, the elephant God Ganesh, was supposed to be the best player of this particular instrument" (Hussain 1996). For an ethnomusicological discussion on the origin of tabla see Gottlieb (1993:1-2).

Nataraj and sat down beside Ed. Kathak class started with Joanna playing *lahra* on the *harmonium* and Ed playing *theka* on tabla.

Riteshji showed me into the tabla room that was just off the back of the larger part of the studio. It was a small room just big enough for about three or four tabla students and one teacher. As we entered the tabla room I noticed the cupboard standing to the left of me--it was filled with tabla. Just beside the cupboard was another shrine, dedicated to Riteshji's father and mother and his teacher. He kept a very large picture of his father at the top of the altar, with flowers and incense all around it. Just underneath his father's picture were notebooks looking very used and rather old. After a moment I realized that these were Riteshji's tabla composition books. The books were very special to him, and so he kept them in a very sacred and safe place.

Riteshji lit some incense and turned on the heater that was sitting next to the altar. The room was cold and icy, like the weather outside, but soon the heater was doing its job. Within minutes two students were knocking on the door. "*Kaun hai?*" asked Riteshji as he sat in front of his tabla warming up for class. The door opened. It was Amert and Vikas, both arriving right on time for class to start. They came into the room, said hello to their teacher, and set up their tabla. Out came the *bayan*, the larger left hand drum, then the *dayan*, the right hand drum, the rings for the tabla to sit in, and powder.

Riteshji introduced me as a student of Satwantji and Abbaji and mentioned that I would be around for some time, sitting in on classes and asking questions. I asked, "why aren't your

students touching your feet? Don't you want them to touch your feet?" Riteshji replied that was something you do with your guru, and he was not a guru. Rather, he saw himself as an instructor. Riteshji's guru was still alive and representing the Lucknow style⁴ in a big way. He expected his students to touch his guru's feet but did not ask them to do the same with him. Respect for one's teacher can be shown in other ways, and in Riteshji's eyes, respect translated into learning your compositions, practicing and generally progressing as a tabla student. This was not India but multi-cultural Toronto, and as such he could not possibly demand or ask his students to show respect in the explicit Indian way--at least not with him. Apart from the fact that his guru was still living, at the age of thirty-seven Riteshji was far too young to be considered a guru.

Riteshji began to play the composition that they had been working on the previous week. He asked Amert and Vikas to start playing. They started to play very slowly and softly. Amert had been practicing the *kaida* and within seconds was playing with energy and confidence, but Vikas clearly had not been practicing and was having much difficulty getting the phrase *te te ka ta gu de ge ne*. The placement of his hand was becoming grounded in the manner that Riteshji's hands were sitting but he was still having problems

⁴Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri is one of the foremost exponents of the Lucknow style of tabla playing today. Riteshji refers most affectionately to him as his guru, often calling him by his Bengali nickname Bulbulda. He resides in San Rafael, California for most of the year where he teaches tabla at the Ali Akbar Khan College of Music but travels to Calcutta and other parts of India to perform and teach in the winter months. The differences between styles of tabla can be quite subtle but can also be very prominent. I have heard from various tabla players that it is more difficult to learn certain sequences of *bols* or *bol* phrases from another school. This may be problematic, in part, because the player does not normally use these same sequences in playing or creating various types of compositions and so the phrases are not familiar in the hands. Other differences between tabla styles can be found in how the hand 'looks' or 'sits' itself. The 'look' of the hand should mirror that of the teacher's.

getting the hand to make the right sounds. Riteshji stopped the class and confronted Vikas. The sounds of the dancer's bells carried into the tabla room providing a peculiar backdrop to the silent tension of the tabla class.

Riteshji stared intensely at Vikas, and in a gentle but firm manner, asked him why he had not been practicing tabla. Vikas openly confessed that he was lazy. A few seconds later he repeated this again and again until Riteshji spoke. "Well you have your answer," he remarked. He started into his lecture for the evening. "Tabla is something which forces you to confront yourself, to evaluate yourself, to set goals for yourself that only you can reach. Who are you in competition with?" Riteshji asked. Vikas did not answer, but sat solemnly with his head bowed down and his eyes on the carpet. "You are only in competition with yourself," Riteshji stated.

In the months to follow, Riteshji would voice his disapproval time and time again with others who came to class unprepared. Later in the evening we talked about his harshness or as he called it his "coming down hard" on Vikas. He confided to me that he understands the struggles, the dues one has to pay to one's teacher, to others in one's life, and to one's self if one wants to keep playing tabla. The life of a tabla player is a difficult one. Riteshji believes that you have to have discipline and *shakti* or strength in order to keep up the practice. He understands the reality of practicing tabla in a culture where so much importance is put on making money, making a living. The distractions in Canada are plentiful for a tabla artist. There is this constant juggling between attending to the art form, taking care of one's family and making a living. In Riteshji's eyes if the students have the discipline and the love for tabla then they will stick with it. If they do not fall in love with

it, they won't practice and he will confront them about coming to class which wastes everyone's time. Riteshji has seen many students come and go in the seven years that he has been teaching in Toronto, but some have stayed and are now out there in the world creating their own music with tabla.

Just when I thought that class was getting back on track, Riteshji asked Amert to play. It was a *kaida* from two years ago. Immediately she grabbed her binder where she has kept all her compositions typed out. "No, I want you to play a piece without looking at your notes," said Riteshji. Puzzled, Amert put her binder down by the powder canister. The room was again in silence. Amert stared at the floor, shifted her balance, stretched her legs, then settled back into a cross-legged position by the tabla. Riteshji asked again, "Okay, play something from a year ago, play a *kaida* from a year ago." Amert could not think of anything. "Let me at least see the theme on paper!" she exclaimed. "Okay, play something shorter, play a *tukra* or play a *gat*!" "At least give me the bols, say the first line for me," Amert replied.

Seeing that he was not getting anywhere with this kind of questioning, Riteshji opened her book and pointed to a *tukra*. "This one, it is from one year ago, you can play it," Riteshji said with an encouraging voice. Riteshji recited the first six bols but Amert did not know the composition. "Here is one from six months ago, play this one." Riteshji again recited the first phrase of the *tukra* composition but Amert did not remember it in its entirety. "Accha, here is one from two months ago, you remember this one," Riteshji said as he turned the heater off. Again the teacher recited but the student did not remember the short

tukra. Riteshji, bowing his head in shame and disappointment remarked to Amert, "I think you are telling me that you have no respect for me." He said this many times to Amert throughout class. She responded to his words by trying to make herself look smaller, and by keeping her eyes on the floor rather than on her teacher's eyes or hands.

Riteshji decided not to teach his students any new compositions. They had lots of material to work with and clearly were not practicing or remembering their repertoire at all. Rather than giving them new material, he began to quiz them on their knowledge of *tala*. "Where did the word *tala* come from?" asked Riteshji. None of his students could answer--they shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders. Riteshji's eyes seemed to light up at the prospect of telling the story of *tala*.

According to Riteshji, the tale of *tala* is traced back mythologically to Lord Shiva, the Destroyer. Shiva went into the *tandav* dance to destroy illusion. He had, in his repertoire, one hundred and eight different movements that he could perform as part of his dance. Practitioners of the martial arts in India also trace their origin back to the *Tandav* dance. There are exactly one hundred and eight movements in the martial arts repertoire. "Did you know that there is one *tal* which can go up to one hundred and eight *matras*?" Riteshji asked in the middle of telling the *tandava* story.

In Hindu mythology, as Riteshji told us, there are many gods and goddesses and where there is god, there is always a goddess. For example, where there is Shiva, there is Parvati; where there is Vishnu, there is Lakshmi; where there is Krishna, there is Radha. The

pairing of male and female, of the masculine and feminine, is always a part of life. The word *tala* originates from the pairing of *tadava* and *lasya--tandava* referring to Shiva and *lasya* to the soft feminine counterpart of Parvati, Shiva's consort. The *ta* of *tandava* and the *la* of *lasya* create the word *tala*.

Having ended his story of Shiva and Parvati and the creation of *tala*, Riteshji asked us how we would count out and play *rupak* tal. How would we play *dadra*? He was full of energy again. Telling a story always seemed to revitalize Riteshji. He enjoyed telling tales of the tabla and reliving moments that his teachers have shared with him. "How do we count *rupak*?" Riteshji asked again smiling all the while. They could not count it. Amert knew that *rupak* tal consisted of seven beats but was unsure of how to keep the tal with her hands. Slowly, Riteshji went over each tal and how to play *theke* in each one.

First he gave them the bols by recitation. Everyone recited and kept time with their hands marking out quarter beats. After a while we sang the bols and imitated how Riteshji kept *tal* with his hands, mirroring his claps and waves. Eventually, Amert and Vikas played the *bols* on the tabla. "Write it down, one should know the divisions of all the *tals*," said Riteshji. We reached for our notebooks and awaited his instructions. He showed us how to mark out the divisions of the *tal* on paper, how to show where the claps come in and where the *khali*,⁵ which is gestured with a wave, comes in.

⁵ *Khali* refers to the 'empty beat' in the *Hindustani tal* structure. For example, in counting teen tal, a 16 beat rhythmic structure, *khali* falls on the ninth beat and is shown with a wave of the hand. All other beats are shown with claps or finger taps in the time cycle. In tabla compositions *khali* is shown with closed strokes on the *bayan*. For examples on the use of *khali* in other *tals* see Gottlieb (1993).

"*Tik hai*," said Riteshji as we finish writing down the bols for *ek tal*. He suggested to Amert and Vikas that they might try to get some practice time this week, if they could. Amert and Vikas packed up their tabla, Riteshji covered up his tabla, and we all got up to leave for the night. Class was over. Amert asked us if we needed a ride home as she had a car tonight. Riteshji and I decided to take her up on her offer and followed her out of the studio to the car. On the way to St. Clair Avenue the atmosphere in the car seemed rather pleasant. Amert talked about her recent trip to India and about her life at university. Riteshji commented now and then on things she did in India and about her career plans. We listened to Riteshji's advice and by the time we got to his place Amert was laughing and joking with her teacher. It seemed that Riteshji had the ability to make his students extremely happy about themselves or extremely unhappy about their lack of practice.

A few weeks later, Riteshji invited me to join him and the Tabla Ensemble as they cut a CD at Chalet Studios. The studio was part of a large house nestled in the woods just off the main highway on the outskirts of Toronto. The weather was changing. The snow was starting to melt and the ice around the house was beginning to break. The warmer weather resulted in a patch of fog circling the studio. It seemed a rather ominous setting for the first evening of serious tabla practice and recording.

Over the next four days we cooked meals together, watched Hindi films on TV, played pool, practiced tabla and had many cups of tea. We walked, talked, breathed and slept tabla. It was an highly emotional and physically exhausting time for everybody. In the morning after clearing up the dishes, the tabla rehearsals would start, then the recording, and more recording, until Riteshji and his producer George Koller, were happy with the cuts.

The first night at the house had its magical moments. The studio was dark except for candles burning here and there. Joanna lit cone shaped incense which she had purchased during her recent tour in India at the front of the room. Everyone was full of energy and intensely focused on the task at hand. It seemed like the house was enveloped with tabla sounds from the kitchen to the bedrooms. Late at night, when we just couldn't stay awake any more, we went to bed. I woke up now and then and when I did I faintly heard tabla *bols* coming from the studio where all the tabla were stored for the night. *Dhin ne ge ne dha na ge ne dhin ne ge ne dha na ge ne* was playing in my unconscious. I couldn't make out the sounds at first as they were too fast, too hectic. All I could hear was the ringing *na*, but then gradually the *bols* became clearer, crisper, and then I could recognize the phrase *dhin ne ge ne*. In the morning I convinced myself that I must have dreamt about waking up and hearing the tabla play by themselves. After a day at the studio where all I heard, hour after hour, was tabla it only seemed logical that these same rhythms would repeat in my mind, over and over again.

There was much activity in the house all day long. Early in the morning we gathered in the kitchen to drink coffee and listen to tapes of morning ragas played on the sitar. Ed, Amar, Santosh and Jai would eventually find spots to practice tabla before the recordings for the day. The Ensemble were very close friends, always joking and hamming it up with each other. As we passed each other going up the stairs or in the hallway going from room to room we would recite *bols* to each other.

The guys enjoyed being together, playing music together. They cared for one another like

brothers. Ed seemed to take on the role of keeping the others in line. He would round them up for practice or get everyone going on cooking dinner. Ed was on top of whatever needed to be done. As I watched their rehearsals behind closed doors, away from Riteshji, I realized that Ed also took on the responsibility of teaching or coaching the others who needed help. Jai was having trouble remembering a certain section of a piece he was to play. Ed stayed with him until he knew the bols backwards and forwards, until he could really play it.

Toward the end of our stay at the studio I was beginning to feel like part of Riteshji's community, like part of the family. Although I was not formally a student I spent a great deal of time listening to Riteshji's teachings on tabla. On the last day of recording I decided to ask him a question about one particular type of tabla composition. I had heard *peshkar* compositions played in tabla solos in Bombay and had read about their existence in various ethnomusicological texts but had not seen the actual teaching of such.

It was early in the morning and I just finished drying the dishes in the kitchen with Jai and Ed when Riteshji walked into the room singing a love song in Bengali. He lingered around the table deciding whether to sit down and chat with us or continue on down the hall.

"Riteshji," I yelled out, "how do you teach your students *peshkar*?" His face turned sour as he stood beside me contemplating how to respond to my question. "Why ask a question you already know the answer to?" he responded. Tell me, what is *peshkar* Denise?" After a few moments I decided to give him a technical answer. "I think it is a kind of composition which has a fixed number of *bols* where the player can build different patterns from those fixed *bols*. It is supposed to be one of the most demanding types of compositions requiring

much skill, experience, and creativity. It's one of the most creative types of compositions in tabla." "You've insulted me," said Ritesh, "how can you ask me if or how I teach *peshkar*?" I could tell from the tone of his voice and his words that I had indeed insulted him. I had stepped over the line. I had asked too many questions. Perhaps I had asked a question in the wrong way.

Riteshji began to recount the story of Drona, a character from one of the Indian epics, the Mahabharata. The narrative of the Mahabharata centres around the rivalry of two families, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. This rivalry between the families eventually leads to a full scale war, to destruction. Drona, a master archer, was considered to be the finest archer in the world.

"Drona," Riteshji began, "promises Arjuna (one of the five Pandava brothers) that he will make him the best archer in the world." What Drona doesn't know is that he has a follower, Ekalavya, who secretly watches his every move and follows every aspect of his archery to perfection. This pupil never formally becomes a disciple of Drona's. Although Drona does not accept him as a disciple, Ekalavya continues to follow his teachings and sets up an altar dedicated to Drona with a sculpture of his very likeness at the centre of it.

One day in the forest Arjuna stumbles onto this altar. He thinks this to be rather odd. Why should there be an altar dedicated to Drona out in the forest? Off in the distance Arjuna sees Ekalavya, the young archer in action. He is magnificent, nothing can escape his deadly bow and arrow. Arjuna immediately went to Drona to remind him of the promise he had made. And so Arjuna brought Drona to the young archer with the amazing skills. The

young archer fell at Drona's feet. Drona stated that Ekalavya had followed his teachings very closely but had not given him any *guru dakshina* (payment) for this knowledge. Ekalavya asked Drona what he would like him to do. He told the Master that he could have whatever he desired or wished, that he would give him anything. Drona asked the young archer to cut off his thumb. Without hesitation Ekalavya cut off his thumb and presented it to Drona.

After finishing the story Riteshji left me alone in the kitchen to ponder the meaning behind his resurrection of Drona, Arjuna and Ekalavya. In some respects I was like Ekalavya. Although I was a tabla student, I was also an anthropologist, and a tabla player from another school. I had not formally tied strings (*ganda bandhan*)⁶ with him or with his guru and was therefore an outsider in some ways. As an outsider tabla player my right to know

⁶ The thread tying ceremony referred to as *ganda bandhan* is still an active and thriving part of the guru-shishya relationship in India and has been performed by many non-Indian students in North America and other parts of the world as well. *Bandhan* (Sanskrit *Bandha*) refers to the act of tying (Goody 1990:222). Tying threads with your teacher is a formal ritual where both parties pledge loyalty to each other and to remain in the master-disciple relationship for life. It has been described to me as being a joyous occasion where the teacher gives you his blessings and gives you advice on various aspects of your life and/or playing techniques. Part of the celebration involves the tabla student playing a solo. In playing these solos students speak of some kind of transformation in their playing. Some believe that the way they played on the day of their ceremony was the best they had ever done. Others talked of an energy transference from their teacher's hands to their's in the context of playing the solo. Although the thread tying ceremony originates from Hindu practices, this ritual applies to all tabla players from all religious backgrounds. For example, Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, a Muslim master, has tied strings with many of his students both in India and in North America. The practice of tying does not seem to be present among Zakirji's students. Instead, many of Zakirji's older students have tied with Ustad Alla Rakha Khan. On the other hand, Swapan Chaudhuri has tied with many of his disciples both in India and in North America. Although Swapanji does practice the ceremony he questions its significance in modern times. He suggests that it has become more like an industry and has lost its original meaning (Chaudhuri 1995). For more on tying threads in tabla communities see Neuman (1980) and Kippen (1988). For more on thread tying ceremonies, their relevance and practice in non-musical communities in India see Goody (1990).

about the performance of *peshkar* in Lucknow tradition did not exist.

Minutes later Riteshji returned to the kitchen, where I was still standing not knowing quite what I was to think or how to proceed. Finally Riteshji talked about the structure of *peshkar*. His mood had changed. He seemed more willing to discuss the finer points of learning about this type of composition. Soon he was into another story about gurus and disciples. This time it was about him and his guru, Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri. After playing a concert, Swapanji come up to Riteshji and began to critique his playing. "This was good, that was good, you should have played more of this," he said, "but that *peshkar*, well don't do that! Maybe try to play it when you are forty." Riteshji went on to say that you can really only know its meaning when you have experienced life. It is not something technical, it is not just a simple set of bols. The power of *peshkar* is in how you play the bols, how you emote feeling in performing them. Having made his point Riteshji wandered down the hall leaving me to think again about his stories.

This was not the last time I was to hear the story of Drona in the teaching of tabla. Later in one of Riteshji's intermediate level classes at the Spadina Road studio he told the story again. His reason for telling the story this time was quite different from the first time in the kitchen. It was the next class with Amert and Vikas and Vikas was having difficulty with his right hand thumb. Going from the *bol dha* to the *bol dhin* requires that the thumb first hang to the left and then follow the index finger over, having it sit right on the rim of the tabla. For some reason Vikas was doing this in the reverse. Essentially his thumb was keeping him from playing the *bols* correctly. When Riteshji noticed that he started to do

this he yelled out to him, "watch your thumb!" "Do you know the story of Drona?" Riteshji asked. Amert and Vikas knew of the Mahabharata. Vikas said he didn't know the story well enough to tell it, but he knew about it. Riteshji again told the story of Drona the archer and the young rival disciple to Arjuna, only this time the message pertained to the importance of the thumb. Having your thumb cut off is equal to having your skill taken away from you. Indeed, playing tabla would be impossible without a thumb.

This time Riteshji ended the story with a 'true consequence' of the cutting of the thumb. He mentioned that today, in certain parts of India, there exists a school of archery which practices thumbless bowing. Riteshji was pointing to the relevance of the story in skill learning and he was making a statement about the connections between an ancient India (the Mahabharata) and life as it exists today (the thumbless school of archery). In stressing the importance of the positioning of the right hand thumb Riteshji evoked the story of Drona from the Mahabharata. In using the Mahabharata to explain problems in learning tabla, in learning the *bols* in the hands, Riteshji's recounting of Drona revealed a different meaning or a different set of meanings in the class context. Without the thumb doing what it is supposed to do it becomes difficult to practice and perform certain *bols*.

Nevertheless, Riteshji's first telling of the myth stayed in my mind. I had followed his teachings both in and outside of classes and I had spent a great deal of time just being with him as he practiced and performed. I had learned much about his philosophies surrounding teaching tabla in a multi-cultural context and had in the process become a close friend. Even though I was a friend, I was still an anthropologist and a tabla student of a different *gharana*. My identity was at best ambiguous. It was becoming difficult for both of us to

negotiate my multiple identities. I decided that it was time to leave for Vancouver to prepare for my summer classes with Zakirji.

CHAPTER THREE SENSING ETHNOGRAPHY III

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

The West Coast Scene

Vancouver/Seattle

Stefan had been learning tabla from Abbaji, Zakirji and Satwantji for three years now. In the process of doing so, he had become a dedicated disciple. His love and passion for tabla was taking him on a new path, providing him with a new direction in his life. When we first met in 1994 he had been out of high school only a few short years and had found himself a job as a sales clerk at a record store in Vancouver. The job barely allowed him to pay the bills, but it meant survival by day so that he could practice tabla by night. *Riaz* was fast becoming his only activity outside of work. At times I wondered whether this was a passion, an obsession or an intimate type of dedication? Everything he did in life centred around learning tabla. In some ways, Stefan seemed to be a Canadian version of *Kalyanbhai*, except that *Kalyanbhai* had an edge, he lived in India.

Stefan eventually quit his job and left for his second trip to Bombay to study with Ustad Alla Rakha Khan (Abbaji). His first attempt studying in India was short-lived when he contracted malaria. This second chance, however, proved to be successful and he came back to Canada playing stronger than ever before. After he returned to Vancouver in the summer of 1996, we began to practice together in anticipation of Zakirji's upcoming classes in Seattle. Stefan always referred to me as his tabla sister. I could always go to him for help with the compositions that I was working on. Many times I did not have to ask for tips. He monitored my progress and kept fixing my hand to sit in the way it was supposed to.

We usually gathered at his home before leaving for Seattle classes. One day as I entered his room to sit and practice, I noticed how similar the arrangement of the room was to other tabla players' houses in India. The room was filled with tabla, a *lahra* machine, which players use as a metronome for keeping time to practice playing in *Hindustani* classical style, powder canisters, and an alter dedicated to Zakirji and Abbaji. The alter consisted of a large picture of Zakirji and a separate one of Abbaji lovingly placed on the top of a table, surrounded by rose petals, a carefully selected assortment of stones that Stefan had picked up by the ocean side, and burning incense. I remembered also that Satwantji had carefully selected photos of Abbaji and placed them on the walls of his tabla room. Whenever I went to visit Satwantji, Abbaji's presence in the room was a very comforting feeling. Here too in Stefan's house, our teacher's presence was always felt. As I practiced *dha ge tin na ke na na ge dhin na ge na* over and over again, I would glance over to their pictures on the table.

Before Stefan left for Bombay he had increased his practice time from six hours a day to nine. Lately he had been playing about six hours a day while Satwantji had reached up to eleven hours. I had increased my *riaz* to four hours, sometimes five, a day. We were all intensely focused on improving our clarity, speed and strength.

Travelling to Seattle from Vancouver by car took us through rocky mountain passes bordering on the Pacific ocean. We would listen to tabla solos, recite our own compositions (or try to remember them), and talk of Zakirji's latest recordings, concerts and movies. Zakirji had always been a major topic of conversation with most tabla players I had met,

but speaking with Stefan and Zakirji's other students about him took on a new significance.¹ Always they spoke of him with much love, joy and excitement in their voices. We all intensely desired to be around him, learn from him, walk with him and talk with him about tabla and life.

After arriving in Seattle we drove directly to Emam's, a senior student of Zakirji's. Although Emam had been learning from Abbaji since 1979, he shortly thereafter took up studies with Zakirji as well. Emam and Zakirji have formed a deep and close friendship over the years. Emam followed Zakirji to classes in California, spent time with him on tour in India protecting him from over zealous fans, and now, along with another senior student, Tor, was helping to set up classes in Seattle. Emam greeted us, as he usually did, with a big hug and a smile. He liked to wear comfortable, loose pants with a short *kurta*-like shirt of black or white. He kept his black hair long, so that his curly locks fell to the top of his shoulders. He had prepared something for us to eat. We sat on the floor ate, and spoke about many Indian instrumentalists. Eventually we got out our tabla to practice.

¹ In all the communities where I studied tabla people inevitably discussed Zakirji's successes and struggles in becoming a musician. There are many stories circulating about his great strength and skill in tabla. Many students, whether from within the Punjab school or not, take up tabla after seeing him perform in concert. In many ways he has become a tabla idol for young Indian boys and a catalyst for their studying of tabla as Indian culture. In California, I traced some of the Zakir myths to stories recounted in Mickey Hart's *Drumming at the Edge of Magic: A Journey Into the Spirit of Percussion* (1990). Hart includes in his text Zakirji's own story of his *chilla*, a Sufi practice or ritual performed by musicians and others for forty days and forty nights. It is a kind of ritual retreat where the tabla player goes into isolation at the instruction of his/her master. Although Zakirji mentions that one is supposed to perform three such retreats in a lifetime, he only recounts two. During the *chilla* Zakirji has visions, it is a time of great self awareness and knowledge. Upon reading Hart's book some tabla students in North America have attempted to perform their own kind of *chilla*. Some have done this with Zakirji's help and advice, while others have performed smaller versions of the forty day ritual on their own.

I was having difficulty with a *bol* Zakirji had introduced in class the year before. The *ne* *bol* requires that the player use the bony section of the right hand ring finger to hit the *gab* section of the tabla. Up until then, I seldom used the ring finger by itself. Usually my finger was anchored on the *gab* and only lifted in unison with the middle finger to play *te* of *tete*. My first attempt to play *ne* was less than successful--I could barely get a sound out of the tabla. The sound was weak and my finger felt strange; it was as if it was in a deep sleep and would not wake up to perform. Stefan and Emam gave me an exercise which would help to strengthen my playing *ne*. It was part of a *rela* composition Zakirji had taught them two years ago. *Dha ge ne dha ge ne dhin ne na ge dhin ne*.

There was always much to learn, listen for, and watch whenever we all got together. I quickly wrote down the exercise before things progressed any further. Sitting cross-legged in front of our tabla in a circle, Emam began to play *tin tal theka*. Soon we all joined in playing the *tal*. Emam instructed Stefan to play a *kaida* while the rest of us kept playing *tekha*. We would each take turns playing different *kaidas* or *gats*. Some would inevitably always come out on *sam*. I was having problems with tempo and would either finish too early or too late. Eventually others had problems as well, missing *sam*, if only by a fraction of a second. It was a challenge, requiring extreme patience, intense concentration of the body, and mind and attending to the other players' place and sense of rhythm in the *tal* structure.

The afternoon went by quickly. Soon it was time to pack up the tabla and powder and head out to class. We made our way to the University of Washington campus where our tabla

lessons were to take place. We found the music room on the second floor, left our shoes at the doorway, and claimed our spots on the wooden floor in front of a portable blackboard. The room was empty except for a riser at the front by the windows. Others wandered into the room, set up their carpets and tabla, and started to warm up. Emam brought in Zakirji's tabla, a carpet for Zakirji to sit on, pillows, and some food to eat. He took special care in setting up Zakirji's space on the riser at the front of the room. In fact, Emam always made sure that Zakirji was comfortable and getting enough sleep and food to eat. He always looked out for his teacher and friend. He made it his job to see to as many details as possible so that Zakirji could rest and relax.

Tor walked in with his tabla. Constantly telling stories and cracking jokes, his robust laughter filled the room. He knew everyone in the room. It took him a while to get by everyone to the front of the riser. Most of the people in the room were his own students from Seattle. Others had travelled from Portland and points in between. They were Americans of all types, some were Japanese American, some Irish, and a few were of Indian origin. After listening to Tor's stories of musicians and his tales of learning from Zakirji, I realized that he was a pivotal figure in the history of tabla in North America. He had been a student of Zakirji's in the early years in California and was one of the original members of Zakirji's percussion ensemble, The Diga Rhythm Band. It seemed that here too, tabla culture was as much a complex of stories as it was a complex of rhythms, *bols*, and social interactions. There was one story in particular I heard Tor recount in various places. It was a story of a dear and close friend of his, Pete, who had taken up tabla many years ago, around the time of Tor's initiation into the world of tabla. His skill was amazing, intense, beautiful and encouraging to Tor as well as to others.

I had heard of similar accounts about Pete from Zakirji's brother Fazal.² Pete would travel to Bombay to learn from Abbaji, and was in the house day after day practicing, reciting and performing compositions. Seeing this American fellow who held such a deep love and passion for tabla caught Fazal's attention. This indeed must be something special if someone from North America travelled to live and study with his father. Pete and Fazal would compete whenever they got the chance to do so. Pete would begin practicing tabla before Fazal left for school and would still be practicing when he arrived home later in the day. Fazal stressed that his speed was always a little bit faster than Pete's, and this would make Pete practice even more. Unfortunately Pete's tabla career was short lived. He died in the mid 1980s. Both Fazal's and Tor's deep friendship with Pete lives on through telling Pete's story to the younger generation of tabla players.

When Zakirji entered the room he took off his shoes by the door and stopped to chat with the students before heading up to his place by the window. As usual he wore a *kurta-pajama*. This one was made of cotton dyed in a dark blue. Always he joked with us to help us relax and get re-acquainted. Because of his hectic performance and recording schedule Zakirji has decided to teach for only two months of the year.³ There is an

² Fazal Qureshi is the second son of Ustad Alla Rakha Khan. As a disciple of Alla Rakha Khan and Zakir Hussain, Fazal is fast becoming a popular tabla accompanist in *Hindustani* classical music. He performs in India, and in Europe, composes, and records for not only classical music but has also ventured into the world of fusion with his own band, Mynta, based in Europe. Recently (1997) Fazal has set up a tabla school in Edmonton, Alberta and Vancouver, British Columbia where he teaches in the summer months.

³ Zakirji's concert schedule includes more than one hundred and fifty dates around the world per year. On top of this he does numerous Indian classical music recordings, world music recordings, composes, performs and advises for feature films such as Bernardo Bertolucci's "Little Buddha" and Anita Desai's "In Custody". In recent years he has also begun to act in select feature films. His extensive touring schedule has allowed him to showcase his

expectation that serious students travel to India in the winter months to attend concerts and be in the scene to digest and observe all that is possible. In our conversations together, Zakirji stressed the necessity of watching and observing what other tabla players do in performance. Many accompaniment skills are learned by being with your teacher during concerts. The general tendency in teaching tabla, though, is to teach it as a solo artistic form. Learning to accompany is an on-going process which takes place over many years.

The first group of students to play had formed a semi-circle around Zakirji's tabla. Everyone was playing something different as they warmed up waiting for class to begin. It sounded chaotic and loud to my ears. Each tabla was tuned to a different pitch resulting in a collage of tabla noise. Class was divided into three sections, beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. The students who were ready to start made up the beginner level. Behind them in my row were the intermediate students and behind us sat the more advanced students. In the first two groups I noticed that five of us were women. This seemed more or less consistent with the year before.⁴ Many sat chatting to smaller groups of people,

phenomenal skills and knowledge of music. In the process of doing so Zakirji's popularity has soared to a major celebrity status in India and among those in North America and Europe who follow his career. In North America I have heard others refer to him as "my favourite rock star." In India, Zakirji is a much sought after celebrity for consumer endorsements such as Taj Mahal Tea. This includes media coverage in the form of commercials as well as billboards and posters. In addition to his California and Seattle classes, Zakirji also teaches periodically in Bombay at his father's school, The Alla Rakha Institute of Music, and gives workshops in other parts of the world.

⁴ Tabla players have traditionally been predominately male in the public sphere in India. Although as tabla moves around the globe the numbers of women in the learning of classical *Hindustani* tabla increases. In India, however, it is still difficult for many women to take up the life of a tabla artist in the way that men can and do. There are many complex issues surrounding this problem not the least of which is control over and access to patronage or performing arts dollars. In Ustad Alla Rakha's school there is only a handful of Indian female students, one of which has climbed to the professional level performing for audiences both in

renewing friendships from the previous years.

As Zakir began to play, everyone turned their attention to him. All eyes were on his hands. *Taka terekete taka terekete*. Soon everyone picked up the exercise and attempted to play along with him. Under our breath we recited the *bols* so that our hands would remember the sequence. Where was he stressing the pulse? What was the intonation of this *bol* or that one? Where were the accents? Just as soon as I felt comfortable and in the groove of the moment, he changed the phrase by moving accents around and changing tempo. There was no time to think. We had to attend to the moment with all our concentration and just do as he did. It was a game of follow the teacher if you can. He stopped the class and said, "Watch and imitate. Get your wrists to fall down. It's just a matter of getting used to the drum." He started again slowly moving the accents around and around changing our conversation with each other, changing the feel of the exercise. Our tempo was all over the place. We consistently sped up after each cycle of the exercise.

I remembered the thoughts Zakirji had expressed last year when the same thing happened in class. One of the students asked why it was that we always speed up. Zakirji responded, "It's a natural tendency to rush. We are always trying to catch up to something. We always

and outside of India. Anuradha Pal is an exception to the ruling pattern. In North America the numbers of female students both of Indian origin and non-Indian origin are slowly increasing. This has been especially so in the last five years. Zakirji has attracted growing numbers of female percussionists who travel from various parts of the world such as Germany, Belgium and Italy to study tabla. One of Zakirji's senior students in the Bay Area, Dana Pandey performs along Zakirji in The Rhythm Experience. Swapan Chaudhuri also has female students both in San Rafael, California at the Ali Akbar College of Music, and in Basel, Switzerland where he gives workshops every year. Although the public life of tabla, in the past, has very much been a male one I have heard accounts from Indian artists which suggest that tabla has also historically been played in the home by their aunts, mothers and sisters as well.

want to get paid more than someone else and we always want a better car than somebody else. We always want a nicer house. I don't know--who knows? We just want to go forward. I have always noticed that when I have my students play with a tape they are always rushing. They are ahead of the tape by a couple of steps. I don't know why. There is just a natural tendency to drive it as opposed to just letting it relax. We always drive it. Always there is this drive." The student remarked, "And you are steady?" Zakirji immediately replied, "I don't think I'm steady! I am also driving it. It's just that I have a little bit more control over how much drive. It's just not as much as someone else, right? I have seen drummers who naturally tend to relax so much that they are actually dragging it. There are such drummers who drag it, but then there are others who drive it. Although it seems to be moving forward, sometimes it doesn't really move forward as much as it actually seems. It just means that it has an up feeling. I've rarely found drummers who are steady. In Indian music, it's a natural tendency to start very slow and end up very fast."

As class continued, Zakirji led us through various types of exercises. He would stop now and then and comment on someone's hands. Often times he didn't need to speak but signalled his displeasure with a student's laziness of the hands, body and lack of concentration with various gestures. He looked at his hands and then looked at ours and shook his head. "Do your hands look like this?" Zakirji yelled out over the motion and sound of twenty-five tabla students. The next moment he would have us write down the *bols*, all the while telling jokes and making us laugh. Emam and Tor would chime in as well, creating a very relaxing and welcoming atmosphere once again.

Zakirji played on introducing various *tihais* that we could use in our tabla repertoire. He

would present one *tihai* and then using a similar pattern and the same *bols* develop it into another one by changing the rests and accents. He questioned us on our knowledge of a *tihai*. What was it supposed to do? When do you use it? How could we define it? Not entirely happy with the answers given, Zakirji took great care in explaining the structure and beauty of a *tihai* in various compositions.

Eventually the first class came to a close and our group moved up to the front. It was getting hot in the music room. Many were beginning to use more and more powder to counter-act their sweating, sometimes nervous hands. When my hand started to sweat I could feel the tabla bending under my touch. I would dip my hands in powder again and again but it didn't seem to do much good. My fingers kept sticking to the black *gab* in the middle. Large bits of black ink stained my fingers. Stefan nudged me to look at Zakirji's hands as he started the class using the same *tihais* played moments before. The tempo was picking up. Stefan again whispered to me to watch Zakirji's hands and the placement of his fingers on the top part of the *gab*. "Look at how they move, check out where the hand sits." Indeed every gesture, every movement, began to take on a new meaning, a new intensity.

Something else changed at that moment as well. After reviewing the *tihais* we worked on a new *kaida* headline, phrase by phrase. Zakirji's method in teaching the whole of a composition is to section off or isolate each phrase of the initial headline. He played the first phrase and we followed him, repeating it again and again. Once we 'had it' in our hands, he introduced the next phrase and so on until we could play it in its entirety. "Now recite it," Zakirji yelled out to us. *Dhin ne na ge dhin ne ge ghe na ge dhin ne na na ke ne*,

tin ne na ke tin ne ke ke na ge dhin ne na na ge ne. Using our hands to mark the beats in *tal*, we faintly recited the *bols*, some still unsure of where the accents were and of the softness or hardness of the *bol* sequences. Writing the *bols* down on the blackboard, Zakirji pointed to the difference between an accented or stressed *bol* like *ghe*, which is played with more strength and loudness than *ge*, which should be balanced with other *bols* in the sequence. Again he had us recite the headline, but this time we emphasized *ghe* of *ge ghe* and *ke* of *ke ke* in their proper places. It sounded different from the first time and it felt different in the *tal* structure. The accent was on the upbeat, show-casing *ge ghe na ge* in an interesting and beautiful way. Playing *ghe* and *ge* back to back, or 'double ge', was something new for many of us, and took a little getting used to.

After much reciting, I could tell Zakirji was happier with our rhythm and interpretation of the headline. "Now play it just in the same way as you have said it," he remarked. We attempted to play as Zakirji had asked. Five or eight minutes into playing the *bols* concentrating only on doing what our teacher was doing at the same time, I felt an overwhelming sense of connectedness to Zakirji and everyone playing in the room. It was a kind of energy I had heard about from other students, but had not, until then, experienced. Was it an illusion that what was coming out of his hands was directly going in my eyes and out my hands? Nevertheless, there was some kind of energy transmitted around and between tabla players at that moment which somehow allowed for an extraordinary unified sensation. Mirroring our teacher visually through the hands, and listening to his sound and interpretation of the composition in a focused way, ignited a kind of total communication between us. I felt a similar kind of energy or altered perception such as this only once

before during one afternoon of practice alone. I was working on a composition for well over one year and had finally reached a significant speed in the process of doubling it. When I began to play the headline at slow speed I was playing faster than my normal speed so that when I doubled it I increased the speed to what I thought was far too fast a tempo to control. However, to my surprise, my hands took off at lightning speed. Were these my hands? I could feel the rest of my body being pulled to the left of the tabla while my hands proceeded to perform without the rest of me. I wasn't thinking or reciting but observing these hands playing faster and faster. Time went by very slowly. In fact what seemed like hours was only minutes. Time had slowed down, my breathing slowed down but my hands were playing faster than they had ever played before. Usually my heartbeat increases when I double a composition but this time my body fell into a kind of stasis, a kind of pause. It was an interesting experience and is one I have never felt again.

After we had finished playing the composition Zakirji showed us how to take it apart, phrase by phrase, to make smaller types of exercises. The beauty of the structure lay in its simplicity. We could easily section off *bol* sequences to practice *tin ne* or *dhin ne* using *dhine ne na ge*. I realized that although Zakirji covered a number of *bols* by teaching certain compositions in the advanced classes, in the first two groups he consistently stressed *ne* and *ti*. *Ti* is played on the top of the tabla *gab* using the first bony section of the middle finger. It should be played strong and sound crisp or tight. Essentially the finger should just drop and hug the top part of the *gab*. The key in *ti* is to keep the finger near the top and not to move it down into the centre spot.

One of the main elements of tabla playing Zakirji continuously stressed was the use of

space. He emphasized that the hand on the tabla should move within a specific range. Indeed there is no need to come down from this central position unless a *bol* requires this (for example *dheri dheri* or *di*). Many tones and *bols* can be played from the top part of the tabla, such as *tete*, *terekete*, *ti*, *na*, *tun*, *tin* etc. Always, he showed us the hows of 'doing', so that we could effectively get the job done. Positioning the fingers correctly does allow for the development of clarity and then, of course, increased speed in tabla playing.

There were many times Zakirji simply talked about the necessity of placing the hands correctly. His message to us was always to concentrate on the hand posture and positioning first, which comes in part from keeping the back straight and shoulders relaxed, and to worry about the sound later. The positioning of the hands leads the player to the right sound. If the hand positioning and subsequent wrist action is right the sound will come. Here the sense of touch, which leads to proper sound production, becomes a central focus of body memory and cognitive learning. Touching the tabla *bol* by *bol* creates certain bodily and hand sensations. After much repetition the body begins to remember these sensations or feelings in the fingers and arms. Slowly, and with much practice, playing the *bol* correctly with the hands gives way to a stronger, clearer sound. Listening to the teacher play in class, in concerts and on tapes also figures in training the ear to hear what the sounds of *na* or *dha* should be. Eventually the ear 'tunes in' and remembers the tones, the crispness, softness or hardness of the *bol* sounds.

When it was time for the advanced class to play, we retreated to the back of the room with our tabla and carpets. Often Zakirji took the time in between these sessions to play what

he had just taught us, or something he wanted to work out at lightening speed. Emam, Tor, Stefan and Steve, a tabla player who had been studying with Zakirji for five years now, as well as others, sat in anticipation of a *tihai* ending on *sam*. They marked the beat with a clap and exclaimed *wah, kya bat hai*, or ahhh! As always when our teacher played there was an electricity, an energy which immediately filled the room.

Building on his previous lessons that night, Zakirji added to the number of variations in the *kaida* composition. Next came two *tihais*, both with very different characters. Class was becoming more difficult to follow, things were happening faster. After some joking with Emam and Tor, Zakirji gave us his next composition. It was a type of *terekete rela*. A *rela* is a kind of composition which is played extremely fast. Zakirji often asked Tor or Steve to write the *bols* down on the blackboard. Tonight it was Tor's job to clearly write out the *bols*, sectioning off each *bol* phrase to mark the beats or *matras*.

After passing on one last composition, Zakirji thanked us for our attention and ended class. Four and a half hours had passed since we first sat down. Many began to gather around Zakirji, wanting his attention or advice over this or that. He always took the time to talk to his students about their lives, loves and desires. If they needed him he was there for them. I realized that Zakirji played different roles to different students. For some he was their friend and teacher, for others he was like a brother, and yet for others he was a father figure, or a larger than life mythical master. Nevertheless, all highly respect him as a man and as a master of tabla tradition and culture. Speaking together about his relationships with his students, Zakirji mentioned that he expects the student to initiate the kind of

relationship they want. "Just be friends with me," Zakirji stated. Later it became clear to me that being friends does not discount also being humble toward him in various ways, including touching his feet.

Bay Area, California

In the fall of 1995, Leen, who had travelled from Belgium to study with Zakirji in California, came to visit me in Vancouver. We spent much time just getting to know each other and Vancouver by doing the things that tourists do. I found myself captivated by her tabla playing. I watched her technique and tried to absorb all that she was doing. She played with much emotion, intensity and feeling. She played with her soul and was not obsessed with playing fast as many other tabla students I had met had been. She encouraged me to return to California with her and get to know some of the tabla players down there.

Leen took me to Oakland to stay with her friends Tim and Andrea. Andrea was a clothes/textile designer. Tim, now in his early forties, had been bitten by the tabla bug fifteen years previously. Originally a Western percussionist, he had taken up tabla playing first under Ustad Alla Rakha Khan and Zakirji. Eventually he connected with and became a disciple of Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri at the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael. When we first arrived at Tim's house there was much talk about Leen's trip and about tabla. They acted like brother and sister, laughing at each other's jokes and teasing one another. Tim and Leen had met in Bombay many years ago during the winter seasons at concerts. It didn't matter to them that they were students from different schools, what mattered was the larger picture--learning about tabla and *Hindustani* music.

The house was set in Victorian style and was quite spacious with high ceilings. The neighbourhood mainly consisted of lower rent houses. Across the street stood the local Baptist church where on a Sunday morning we would awake to the choir's soulful calling of the Lord. Tim had constructed a magnificent tabla room in the central part of his old Victorian house on the first floor. It was here that he taught his private students⁵ and where many tabla players would gather and practice or perform for each other. There was always much tabla activity in the house from morning to night. Each morning Tim woke us up by softly playing a *kaida*. In the late morning and early afternoon he taught classes, and later we practiced. When we passed each other in the hall or gathered in the kitchen away from the tabla, we recited compositions for each other, counted them out, or talked of instrumentalists, concerts and people in the music scene.

It was in this house where I first met Zakirji's students Peter and Dorothee. Dorothee had come from Germany for the summer months to study tabla. Peter, an "all round" musician, had been playing piano since he was a child. He had picked up cello and tabla by his early university years in Chicago and was now living and performing in San Francisco. Peter had, like Leen, travelled to India many times to study with Zakirji's father, learn *Hindustani* music, and follow Zakirji on tour. He often spoke of the classical music culture in Bombay, telling us stories about learning to accompany with Hariji's bansuri classes.⁶

⁵ Although Tim has select students come to his home to learn tabla, he also teaches beginner and intermediate level classes under the supervision of Swapan Chaudhuri at the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael. At the time of my stay there Tim was one of two senior disciples to take over the instruction of the younger students at the College.

⁶ Hariprasad Chaurasia is one of the most popular *bansuri* or flute players in India today. As a master of his instrument Chaurasia attracts many disciples from other cultures. Although he teaches mainly in Bombay he also gives workshops and classes in North America and other

There are many more opportunities to learn about the music in India. Being there counted in a multiplicity of ways. Although there were fewer chances of learning about the music in the larger scheme of things in California, in my new found family there were daily opportunities to learn about tabla. Just being around older, more skilled students affected my skills and my aesthetic sensibility toward tabla.

We talked at great length about learning and performing tabla as non-Indian artists. The reality is that serious artists in India begin to study between the ages of five and seven, whereas many drummers in North America and Europe take up tabla in their early, mid or late twenties and thirties. Very few tabla players of non-Indian origin choose to compete in the professional classical market. The challenge for those who take up this instrument as a way of life outside of India is to somehow incorporate classical tabla with their traditions, be it jazz or types of musical fusions.

Now and then, when the house was quiet, I had a chance to talk with Leen about her relationship with her teacher. Zakirji was a constant topic in many conversations anyway. It was not difficult to get his students to open up about their life with their teacher. Leen's very first encounter with Zakirji was in a dream. He woke her up in the middle of the night playing loudly, frantically, intensely. Leen didn't know anything about this man or the instrument at that time. This 'calling' instigated a long search, which eventually took her to India. On her journey, she went from one tabla teacher to another but knew that she really should be learning from Zakirji. Many friends and family discouraged her from

parts of the world. Part of the learning process in India for North Americans or Europeans involves such activities with classical musicians.

seeking him out, suggesting that such a prominent sought after master would have no time for her. Leen pressed on, and eventually made her way to Bombay. She contacted Zakirji at Simla House by phone. He told her to come over at a certain time to talk. When they finally met face to face he smiled and said, "What took you so long?"

As we talked further, I mentioned to Leen that I thought Zakirji was an extremely affecting person. "Yeah," she said, "He is a master; he is a spiritual master too." "Does he guide you in your life?" I asked. "He's an example, yes. When I saw him for the first time I laughed. I said, wow here's my brother, the elder brother I always wanted. I felt that he was the same, in a way, the same as me. The energy! You can feel how he thinks and feels, how he plays the music. He transmits something and that is the thing that I want to do as well in my own way. Music is a channel to transmit something else, higher values in life, beauty, love. And I just see him in a stage much further on than me. In terms of practical decisions, I'm in full control of my own life. It's my decision to do one thing or another. However, part of him attracts me."

"He opens up barriers that I don't see. It's like he can just push buttons. It's all in the plane of energy. He does things to you--that is a fact. It's like he holds this big mirror in front of you and you just have to look. So of course you grow, you learn, things change. Things change anyway--every minute, every second, whether you see [this] that's your thing. Everything changes, and of course learning from him changes you. He's a powerful teacher. He becomes part of you, and this he has been from the very beginning."

Leen's description of her first encounter with Zakirji in a dream fascinated me. Later, she

told me that she dreams of him and of tabla all the time. I had first heard about tabla dreams years ago from Satwantji. He told me that when he was in Bombay studying with Abbaji, he was so intensely focused on learning the music that many nights he dreamt of compositions. I made a note about Satwantji's dreaming in my journal. It was not until I questioned Leen further that I realized dreaming of tabla was a much larger phenomenon affecting not only Leen's and Satwantji's lives, but other students' lives as well. In fact Leen said, "Peter, Dorothee and I all have these dreams." Tabla dreams can take the form of lessons in a house somewhere where Zakirji teaches a composition or part of a composition. Although there are many different kinds of dreams, the common denominator is the presence of the teacher. The dreaming times are usually connected to intense practice and class time with the master.

For Peter, the majority of tabla dreams which were of actual lessons took place in the beginning years of studying the instrument. He did, however, recount a recent dream about his teacher. He had fallen asleep counting (or trying to count) a *chakradar*, which he was to play that week at a performance with other advanced students. He was having a difficult time concentrating because of work pressures and deadlines and he had not spent much time practicing the composition. Time was running out, and he had become frustrated with the task at hand. That night, Zakirji appeared at the foot of his bed as Peter sat counting out the composition. Zakirji was watching TV, sitting on the bed listening to Peter's continuous counting mistakes. He turned to Peter and said, "Why can't you get it? It's simple." Then he turned around and continued to watch the TV.

My interest in tabla dreams became more and more intense. Why were all these students

dreaming of tabla? Why didn't I have these dreams? One of my first questions to students I met then became, "Have you had the dreams?" Inevitably, they all said "yes", I have had these dreams. Speaking with one of Zakirji's senior students, Michael, a member of the Rhythm Experience, and an accomplished tabla player in the California scene, lead me to the conclusion that the dreams were indeed a way of working out anxieties about tabla and about the relationship of student to teacher. Michael's dreams tended to revolve around the problems and pressures of playing in public with such a master. Although his dreams didn't usually include Zakirji teaching him compositions, Zakirji was always present.

The following year I met a young Indian tabla player, a Hindu, who told me about his dreams of Zakirji and of compositions. Because of his young age and Indian upbringing, he could only image Zakirji as a father figure, as a master. The idea of becoming friends was completely out of the question. Not only did he have dreams of compositions, but also spiritual ones where Zakirji gave him guidance, and comforted him. He always kept a picture of his teacher in his room, and he prayed to the icon before going to sleep. If he was having difficulty studying for an exam, he would pray to his teacher, and in the night Zakirji would be there encouraging him, telling him that things would turn out well.

I went back to the transcriptions of the first interview I had conducted with an older female student of Zakirji's. Although she had taken up other *Hindustani* instruments and left tabla many years ago she remembered her dreams of Zakirji and tabla quite vividly. She would have dreams of compositions at night, go into class the next day, and find Zakirji playing it *bol* by *bol*. Certainly the connection these students had to their teacher was an intense and intimate one.

In my second year studying with Zakirji I also experienced the dreaming. I had by and large given up on the idea, thinking that perhaps I was too inexperienced or uptight about learning tabla that I just could not connect with my teacher the way others had. It happened one day after a very energetic class with Zakirji in Seattle. During the day I had practiced for nearly five hours, carefully playing the new compositions over and over again. That night after I fell asleep I suddenly awoke feeling tired and scared. My body felt heavy--it was as if I was going to fall through my bed onto the floor. I knew I was beside my husband and so I tried to call out to him to help me. I was paralysed. I could not move, I could not talk. Just then Zakirji whispered in my right ear, "Just relax, you have to go through this." My tension dissolved, knowing that Zakirji was with me.

I could not see him--but I could hear him. He played *bols* so loud and so fast that I thought my ears would explode. He played to the right of me, then to the left, as if moving me through space to some kind of a destination. The *bols* were crystal clear but he played so frantically that as soon as I heard them new ones came flooding out. This happened over and over again for what seemed like hours. He played well over fifteen compositions, none of which I could remember. We travelled to India, to Thailand, to China and to Berkeley campus, where he was actually teaching that evening. I kept thinking "Where is Zakirji?" At that moment he appeared in front of me, dressed in a white *kurta* waggling his head from side to side. "You must touch my feet," he said to me. Touch his feet? I thought this was strange, as he never asked anyone to touch his feet, people just did it. So I touched his feet and we continued on the journey. When I awoke the next morning I had remembered much about the dream, but I could not remember any of the compositions Zakirji had played.

Since then, I have had many dreams of tabla lessons. Always, Zakirji is teaching us about life and tabla. These dreams have become for me another way of knowing, an ultimate kind of embodiment of Zakirji's teachings. It is a way of knowing and understanding which is deeply embedded in its Indian origins. I asked a colleague from India, an anthropologist, if I were Indian would I question the fact that I have these dreams of my teacher? "No", he replied, "Everyone knows that the guru gives you the third eye, the pathway to knowledge."

CHAPTER FOUR

AN APPRENTICING ANTHROPOLOGIST: THEORIZING THE METHOD

The Anthropology of Apprenticeship

In critiquing colonial anthropology researchers have mainly concerned themselves with the issue of the politics of representation. In creating a postcolonial anthropology some analysts have been persistent in their attempts to open new textual strategies in their texts for the purpose of 'giving voice' to their previously silenced subjects of study. But while our concern with representing others is an important one we have moved toward producing ethnographies which translate our engagement with the other as essentially language oriented. Focusing on the issue of representation only goes so far in rethinking the anthropological enterprise. In this chapter I argue for a need to go beyond the idea of 'voice' or symbolic notions of political realities and examine the embodiedness of political action, of cultural reproduction and of social realities.

My research both adopts and builds upon anthropological models of lived experience which see everyday experience and the acquisition of performative knowledge as central in how people reproduce or transform their cultural lives and traditions. I argue that learning and teaching the cultural must be envisioned as embodied activities. Because we live our lives in and through our bodies any theory of lived experience must take into account the primacy of our relation to others as bodily. A turn to the body which focuses on the daily experiences of subjects follows in the emerging tradition of a critical anthropology of the body.

Unlike past theories of the body in the discipline a critical anthropology of the body attempts to account for how bodies mean in culture in ways other than through language based models. In rendering the body as 'culture writ large' anthropologists have, perhaps unintentionally, created and sustained a disembodied subject. Cultural bodies are inevitably reduced to cognitive structures of meaning: bodies mean in culture either as signs, symbols or linguistic metaphors.¹

Michael Jackson has actively protested against earlier versions of the body which reduce the body to cognitive and linguistic meaning.² As Jackson points out "this subjugation of the bodily to the semantic is empirically untenable" (Jackson 1989:122). A critical

¹ The anthropological record concerning ritual and performance has shown that the body plays a significant role in culture. However, much of the work has treated the body as a sign, symbol or linguistic metaphor for culture itself. It is this very idea of the body which pervades anthropological analyses and descriptions of ritual, performance and every life. These past theories of the body in anthropology have almost exclusively focused on the social and cultural construction of an embodied self (Mauss 1973; Douglas 1966, 1975, 1970). Those who offered an anthropology of the body, such as Mauss and Douglas, followed the Durkheimian model of the social body as essentially a moral one. Both Mauss and Douglas emphasized the connection between the physical and social body in relation to the individual, culture and society. Whereas Mauss attended to the cultural construction of 'body techniques', such as walking, sitting, or standing (Mauss 1973), Douglas treated the body as a classificatory schema, or as a metaphor for society at large. The idea of the body as a sign or as a representation of culture itself was firmly established.

²It is important to note that the American school of Kinesics (Birdwhistell 1970; Efron 1942; Ekman & Friesen 1975; Scherer & Ekman 1982; Tuite 1993; La Barre 1947), which focuses on the study of gesturality and non-verbal communication/behaviour also promotes the body and body parts as objectified structures. Gestural studies have utilized linguistic models in their analysis of the body and body communication. Kristeva points out that analytically Kinesics is very close to anthropological linguistics. The body here is studied in terms of 'repetitive elements' in communication and then abstracted, tested for structural significance (Kristeva 1978:277). Although Boas (1944) clearly marks the birth of American Kinesics, it was Sapir and his idea that corporeal gesture is a code which has come to dominate much of the study of gesturality and its meaning (Kristeva 1978:273). The meaning of the body is rendered in terms of transmittable codes.

anthropology of the body seeks to explain cultural ways of knowing and doing as stemming from the experiences of the body. The study of this body opens up new theoretical and methodological avenues of anthropological investigation. Indeed, the central question becomes how does the body know? As Ann Game tells us "...the body provides the basis for a different conception of knowledge: we might know with our bodies. In this regard, the authentic of experience might be reclaimed; if there is any truth, it is the truth of the body" (Game 1991:192).

In order to engage Indian concepts of the body, which constitute in part, the principles of Indian performance, it is crucial to leave behind the Cartesian dualism of a knowing mind guiding a passive body. According to Hindu philosophical doctrine mind and body are intrinsically linked to one another (Staal 1983/84; Zarilli 1984, 1987 1990; Alter 1992). Indeed there is no privileging of mind over body, no separation of matter and mind (Staal 1983/84). Consequently, constructing a theory of the body which articulates with how musicians learn and teach performative knowledge necessitates displacing the mind/body dichotomy and attending to how we learn through all the senses. In this way the anthropologist can reveal the mutually informing nature of theory and method, of constructs and lived experience. Learning to be a tabla player requires concentration on sound, image, and feeling 'correct' movements in the body. *Sensing ethnography*³ depends primarily on

³Paul Stoller (1995) coins the term *sensing ethnography* in his recent work on embodiment and spirit possession among the Hauka in West Africa. Stoller is concerned that anthropologists have lost their senses and are writing ethnographies which seem disconnected from the people they study. For Stoller "recognition of multisensorial perception leads to a more embodied, radically phenomenological approach to ethnographic fieldwork, a more sensorially evocative body of ethnographic writing and a more rigorous framework for the analysis of culture-in-society" (Stoller 1995:16). Stoller is one of a growing number of anthropologists who advocate a critical anthropology of the senses (Howes 1991; Stoller 1995, 1989; Jackson 1996, 1989).

recreating and communicating our lived experiences with others to others. Similarly, how we 'do' anthropology in the field should somehow reflect how we go about living our lives as embodied individuals.

An inquiry into the relationship between tabla disciples and masters, which posits the body as subject in social theory and privileges bodily or experiential knowledge as central to ways of learning and teaching 'cultural' knowledge, necessitates adopting the field method of participant-observation. Apprenticeship, as one form of participant-observation, allows the researcher to experience and communicate the embodiedness of self and other. The method of participant-*observation* has been and continues to be a highly prized form of anthropological investigation. It is our primary way of *collecting data*. Adopting the apprentice approach to the study of others moves the discipline toward a reconceptualization of the fieldwork process. It questions basic assumptions about how we do what we do, the doing of anthropology. This task demands nothing less than reconstructing what lies at the very heart of the anthropological enterprise. How do we learn anthropologically? How can we simultaneously go beyond and work within the problematic of postcolonial fields? How do we re-invent the doing of fieldwork when cultural, political and gendered boundaries are constantly shifting and reforming?

I suggest that in order to move away from the notion of culture as object or text which leads us toward reading a reality 'out there', anthropologists begin with embodied experience. An apprenticeship approach to the acquisition and self-reflection of knowledge does not subscribe to the notion that all fieldwork is synonymous with the activity of inscription. The act of writing, the keeping of notes, is part of the fieldwork process but it

does not constitute the whole of it by any means.⁴ Often times as a tabla student I did not and indeed could not take notes at the most crucial times of learning. When I was learning a composition strictly in the oral tradition by reciting or voicing the *bols*, I needed to concentrate fully on the movements and motion of my teacher. The moments of doing the lesson require a keen awareness of all the senses or the player essentially loses the chance to 'pick it up'.⁵

In talking about this intense form of learning with tabla players I realized that others too felt the necessity to be fully in the moment in order to learn anything at all. It seemed that when we all started to think about the fact that we were playing this *bol* and then another one on top of another one etc., we couldn't keep up with the others and lost the sequence. Classes with Zakirji were always this way. Every moment was a challenge and when I started to think about the performance of *bols* I became frustrated, stopped playing and was basically left out of the exercise. Writing out the compositions while learning them was either frowned upon by all teachers or was simply not allowed. If the composition was a

⁴Okely reminds us that field notes "may be no more than a trigger for bodily and hitherto subconscious memories" (Okely 1992:16). She goes further and suggests that we cannot "write down the knowledge at the time of experiencing it, although we may retrospectively write of it in autobiographical modes"(Okely 1992:16).

⁵Dance ethnologist Deidre Sklar talks about the importance of kinaesthetically empathizing with others (Sklar 1994, 1991). In developing her method of kinaesthetic empathy, Sklar builds on the idea that movement embodies cultural knowledge. If one is to understand the other then one should attempt to move with them and feel as they do. This, she feels, provides an opening "into the kind of cultural knowledge that is not available through words or observations alone" (Sklar 1994:11). But although Sklar's method of kinaesthetic empathy focuses on the idea of bodily memory and bodily intelligence, she grounds all corporeal knowledge in movement itself paying little attention to the importance of other sensory modes of knowing such as sound and sight. The study of tabla players necessitates attending to how all the senses work together as embodied knowledge.

particularly difficult or complex one we might be allowed to write in our books but generally the exercise involved waiting until the end of class to write down the *bols*. At times the act of writing in front of the teacher resulted in embarrassment for the students. Many of us were subjected to ridicule if we were not totally involved in the task at hand. However, learning takes place as much in the everyday interactions with the master as it does within class proper. If the teacher is reciting a composition the player's only avenue is to pick it up on the spot through voicing and counting with the fingers. Following the master around with a notebook in this context would be viewed as absurd, resulting in further ridicule or embarrassment.

Learning about others begins in the body as much as in the mind and as such our understanding can never be primarily cognitive or textual. Adopting the apprenticeship approach requires that the dominant metaphor of culture as text, which is present in much postcolonial anthropology, be replaced with one of embodiment. A turn to embodiment necessitates a turn to the senses where much of what we call 'cultural' is passed-on, re-invented, contested and/or reproduced. Indeed if the site of the cultural shifts from texts and symbolic representations of mind to the embodiedness of being anthropology and anthropologists can question the dominant position of analyzing and knowing the other in language terms. Experiential knowledge then, which constitutes the very core of how we know what we know, becomes the central focus of investigation.

I am arguing that in *tabla*, at least, it is in the training of the body, in skill acquisition through the transmission process between masters and disciples, where the cultural is taking place. Similarly the everyday sites where *gurubhais* and *gurubehins* interact, converse and

perform together also provides a space where an intense learning of the cultural goes on.⁶ Here performative knowledge is seen as existing alongside cultural and spiritual knowledge. The act(s) of transmission or the giving of techniques and compositions becomes more than a mere transfer of technical and performative knowledge. Rather, the space of passing on the performative is simultaneously a passing on of culturally complex ideas, ways of knowing, thinking, feeling, and being. It is important to note here that the body is not viewed as just another category of investigation among many. The body is seen as something which runs through all aspects of the 'life world'.⁷ We cannot simply add the body and stir, as it were, and assume that the previous silence of bodily and experiential knowledge will somehow correct itself by becoming just one more aspect or element of the cultural. An anthropology of apprenticeship sees the embodiment of subjects as the ground of the cultural itself.⁸

The idea of embodiment as a paradigm for analysis in anthropology is gaining some headway (Csordas 1993, 1990, 1994). Csordas and others have called for a shift to

⁶ Disciples of the same guru call each other brother or sister. They effectively enter into fictive kin relations with one another and can call on each other for help with particular techniques and compositions.

⁷The 'life world' simply refers to the lived experiences of subjects as they go about creating and re-creating their identities. The life world term is increasingly being used by phenomenological anthropologists (for example see Jackson 1996) in their attempts to locate, describe and explain the site of the cultural.

⁸The culture concept is one of the most hotly contested analytic categories in the discipline of anthropology today. Rather than promoting the notion of a culture which assumes the existence of a bounded whole I adopt the term 'cultural' which allows for the inclusion of difference or multiple embodied agents. Some anthropologists such as Abu-Lughod (1991) and Appadurai (1991) have argued for a movement away from the idea of culture. I see the cultural as a partial movement away from older conceptions which do not acknowledge important differences within social groups.

embodiment as a necessary tool in our examinations of the cultural. They see the task at hand as one of increasing our knowledge and research of embodiment to a level where analysts can effectively use the embodiment paradigm in addition to already existing models and ethnographies. The idea here is not to rid anthropology of symbolic models of knowing but rather to enhance the already existing literature with the textured, sensorily provocative way of describing and analyzing others through and with the body.

Radical Empiricism

William James's writings on radical empiricism resonate with the apprentice approach to knowing anthropologically. Radical empiricism⁹ places the knowing, active self in the immediacy of our experiences to and with others in the world. James discusses lived experience in terms of activity (James 1922), in the doing itself. In his introduction to the *Essential Writings* Wilshire notes that James's idea of "consciousness and of self cannot be understood as a sequence of mental events" which emerge from the past as a result of neurological events. (Wilshire 1984:xxix). Firmly moving away from categories of mind as central in analysis, radical empiricism redirects anthropological inquiries back to the sensual, to the embodiment of knowing.

According to James understanding and memory are not purely mental acts. "The world experienced (field of consciousness) comes at all times with our body as its centre, centre

⁹"Radical empiricism' is the "doctrine that experience is the final criterion of reality in knowledge" (Runes 1992:105). Jackson stresses that this method is different from traditional empiricisms which assume "that the knower and the known inhabit disconnected worlds" (Jackson 1989:5). Unlike traditional empiricism the radical posits experience as something which is actively created rather than passively received (Jackson 1989:5).

of vision, centre of action, centre of interest" (James in Wilshire 1984:211). It is only with our bodies that memories, traditions and identities can be reproduced or re-invented. For James "the body is the storm centre, the origin of co-ordinates, the constant place of stress. Everything circles around it, and is felt from its point of view" (James in Wilshire 1984:211).

Although James' construction of the body as an "it" is now somewhat questionable, he does indeed acknowledge the necessary positioning of active subjects as embodied. This idea is closely connected to recent feminist notions of objectivity and embodiment. Breaking down the subject/object, mind/body dualisms into a knowledge tuned to resonancy has become one of the central tenets in feminist theories (Haraway 1988; Abu-Lughod 1990; Visweswaran 1988; Fox-Keller 1982, 1985) and a necessary discussion in the creation of a feminist ethnography. Haraway in particular has argued for an idea of embodiment which requires an understanding of the body that is positioned and located in time and space. A situated knowledge is one which is always partial and open-ended.¹⁰ The self is seen as a "complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body" (Haraway 1988:589). Such

¹⁰Abu-Lughod stresses that situated knowledge is an attempt to "reclaim and redefine objectivity to mean precisely the situated view" (Abu-Lughod 1990:15). In an attempt to get beyond the subject/object and mind/body dichotomies, Haraway posits a feminist objectivity in terms of location. Situated knowledge is an argument which goes against the grain of other feminist models which see the body as a naturalized or essentialized entity. Instead a situated knowledge or partial perspective allows the analyst to mediate between the subjects, herself and her situated location. Rather than promoting a relativistic perspective in place of the essential body Haraway suggests a knowledge attuned to partiality (Haraway 1988:584), which is positioned in possible webs of connections such as gender, class, caste etc. It is important to stress that the method of situatedness does indeed have a wider application in anthropology extending beyond the discourse of feminist theory. Situated knowledges has been used by various ethnographers who are concerned about theorizing difference as central to an analysis of self and other. It should also be noted that the situated perspective is not necessarily limited to the method of apprenticeship but is used in other types of participant-observation as well.

feminist theories of embodiment as Haraway's provide an important dimension to an anthropology of apprenticeship, one which seeks to describe and explain that learning the cultural is always grounded from a particular embodied standpoint.

James' work on radical empiricism focuses the analyst's attention toward what he calls "the flow of experience". In other words, rather than viewing our interactions and experiences with others as discontinuous, static objects, the researcher should insist on rendering these at "their face value, just as they come" (James in Wilshire 1984:220). Radical empiricism leads the anthropologist to the living flow of experience, which can only be seen or felt from a situated position (i.e. that of a body). What we learn and how we learn it is dependent on our experiences in relation to objects and others in the world from our central bodily position. In this sense the act(s) of learning from others are more than individual private acts. They are at once individual and cultural activities.

Jackson (1989, 1996), Stoller (1995), Bloch (1990), Bourdieu (1977, 1984), and Goulet (1994) have been paramount in promoting the importance of adopting James's essential idea of describing the other in a radically empirical way. Jackson maintains that the importance of radical empiricism is that it stresses the "ethnographer's interactions with those he/she lives with and studies, while urging us to clarify the way in which our knowledge is grounded in practical perspectives and participatory experiences in the field as much as our detached observations" (Jackson 1989:3). He goes further and suggests that the method seeks to include, indeed, is built upon, the idea that the experiences of the researcher are crucial in ethnographic knowledge production. As such, the experimental field is defined as one of "interactions and intersubjectivity" (Jackson 1989:3). The ethnographer herself

becomes part of the field of inquiry as an experimental subject. In other words what takes place between masters and apprentices becomes the primary data. Focusing on lived experience in this way allows for the inclusion of diverse forms of knowledge acquisition. It recognizes indigenous ways of knowing such as the case of dreaming about the master, his compositions and/or intricate and highly complex rhythms.¹¹

James takes special care in pointing out the necessity and importance of seeing other kinds of knowledge as central in everyday lives. He suggests that "mystical experiences are as direct perceptions of fact for those who have them as any sensations ever were for us" (James in Wilshire 1984:248). Extra-ordinary encounters are then direct perceptions of fact for those who experience them. Simply, they become another avenue of knowledge production and in the case of tabla players and dreams these kind of experiences also become a way of cultivating the very intimate, spiritual relationship between disciple and master.

Adopting a radically empirical method in the anthropology of apprenticeship necessitates theorizing about participation or experiential knowledge. Jackson tells us as much when he refers to the grounding of our participatory experiences in the field as crucial in how we know other peoples. Re-evaluating what we mean by participation, action, or involvement in the ethnographic way of life is an important but difficult task. The experiences of the participant-observer have traditionally been presented in ethnographies as a way of

¹¹The experimental field also allows for the possibility of the anthropologist to experience indigenous knowledge systems. Becoming immersed in a cultural context as an apprentice may lead the anthropologist to these types of dreaming experiences.

maintaining and gaining authority in the discipline. I know simply because "I was there".¹² As such, experience or participation rarely comes under attack or is problematized in any significant way. Re-evaluating the meaning of ethnographic experience must begin with our taken for granted assumptions about the relationship of the field worker self and the subsequent textual other. Engaging in an apprenticeship, in an experience with other cultural selves, is an engagement of a student to a master. In this way authority or dominant relations of power are transferred from the academic analyst to the master of a tradition, skill and/or body of knowledge.

Although in this ethnography I present some of the teachings and experiences of Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, Ustad Zakir Hussain, Ritesh Das, Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri and their disciples, their knowledge of tabla and *Hindustani* classical music will always far outweigh that of a young tabla/anthropologist apprentice. In the end the master is the master and the disciple will always remain in a subservient position to him. And, as in any profession, becoming a tabla player, which is dependent on the relationships of gurus and disciples, takes a lifetime of dedication as an apprentice. Gaining legitimacy and authority in this ethnographic context demands a significant amount of on-going activity.

¹²Anthropologists have been talking about the use of experiential knowledge in ethnographies as ways of gaining authority in their texts for quite some time now. The crisis in the anthropological representation of others has moved its practitioners toward reflection on this very habit. Clifford (1986), Van Mannen (1988), and Geertz (1988) are among those who have pointed to the use and abuse of the anthropologist self as a textual strategy in knowledge production. However, these anthropologists have offered little discussion on the importance of theorizing anthropological practice as an embodied, contextually dependent mode of doing. Their reflections have taken place in and between the texts where they tend to see the cultural.

Situatedness

Theorizing participation means that the anthropologist can no longer attempt to carry out the 'ideal' of participant-observation. Much has been written lately about the crisis in the 'doing' of anthropology. As Said points out in his article "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors", there is a justified "fear that today's anthropologists can no longer go to the postcolonial field with quite the same ease as in former times" (Said 1989:209). Indeed the very act of 'being in the field' means that the ethnographer is entering a complex site of power relations. In questioning whether there can ever be a feminist ethnography, Judith Stacey (1991:114) suggests that there are conflicts of interest and emotion between the ethnographer as participant, and the ethnographer as observer or exploiting researcher. Conflicts of interest and asymmetrical power relations are "an inescapable feature of [the] ethnographic method."

Apprenticeship as a method makes explicit the power relations at work within the ethnographic context. My situated status and role as student means that I am a seeker of knowledge rather than a musical expert. As a white, female, middle-class scholar entering into a master/student relationship with older Sikh, Muslim and Hindu males, I am automatically seen as marginal to various communities in India as well as to South Asian communities in North America. Although as a woman and as a white Canadian I do not belong to the dominant core of tabla communities, I share my marginality with many other non-Indian artists from all over the world. Peter, Dorothee, Leen and Stefan are among

those who share my experiences of living in the guru-disciple zone.¹³ Since taking up the apprenticeship we have come to share many of the same struggles, joys and tensions which are a part of the guru-disciple relationship.

Doing fieldwork then, should translate into being accountable to those who have become a part of an ethnographer's life. Viveswaran (1988:39) notes that "if we have learned anything about anthropology's encounter with colonialism, the question is not really whether anthropologists can represent people better, but whether we can be accountable to peoples' own struggles for self-representation and self-determination." The apprentice approach moves us toward accountability. Here, accountability translates into the anthropologist seeking to describe and explain the embodiment of being in a cultural world. The ethnographic stories I presented in the preceding chapters, I believe, begin to do just this.

It was precisely because I was going through the same trials and tribulations as the others that they accepted me into their lives as a fellow player, friend and sister. If I was having problems with certain *bols* such as *tereketetaka*, others would inevitably tell me stories about how they got through the tough times, the times of major frustration with the hands. The desire to be around each other, practice together and to get to know each other, was at times extremely intense. It didn't matter to others whether or not I was writing a book

¹³Although I speak about sharing experiences here with my tabla colleagues who are not of Indian origin (we are all non-Indians together), it is important to note that we come from many different cultures such as German, Belgium, American, and Canadian. There are many differences which separate us from dominant Indian males in tabla communities. For example there are many gendered differences at work within the learning and teaching of tabla which I will examine more closely in later chapters.

about them or the master, what mattered was that I could play with them, show progress in the hands and in my aesthetic sensibility toward *Hindustani* rhythm and music. In this ethnographic context doing the lesson or performing the rhythms is the only way to gain social/cultural acceptance. It is the only way to become a competent member of tabla communities.

Adopting the apprentice approach, then, demands that the anthropologist explicitly challenge the rigid subject/object dichotomy upon which the Method is based and executed in postcolonial fields. It questions the assumption that a field worker can effectively participate in and observe cultural phenomena at the same time. The idea that the ethnographer must somehow effectively participate in a new and somewhat strange way of life and observe, in the Malinowskian sense of observation as detachment and objectification of the other, only serves to create a personal and ethical crisis in the doing of ethnography. Adopting the way of life of tabla players demands nothing less than total participation and commitment to those who share your life and to the artistic form under study.

The importance of total participation became very clear to me in the early days of learning tabla with Abbaji in Bombay. One of his senior disciples, Prakash, pointed out to me the significance of always being ready to learn at a moment's notice. If the guru says, "come over now I will give you a lesson," the shishya cannot reply by saying "No, I think I will rest today and then tomorrow I will come." Simply, you cannot say "No, I have to write about what happened yesterday or I need time to digest yesterday's lesson." The student is compelled to have a lesson or the guru may shrug him/her off and reply by stating that he

is busy tomorrow or will not be available again for some time. When the teacher wants to teach, the student must be ready and willing to learn at any time or in any place. In India, if the master wants to teach at two o'clock in the morning after he has played a concert, the shishya must be willing to oblige. There is no discussion, there is no negotiation. Although this may seem to be a rather harsh course of action to an outsider, the master's busy performance schedule does at times only allow for giving lessons when and if there is a lull in concert activity. But also, if a student wants to learn the art he/she must be physically close to the master and live as he does. This intense kind of learning may only take place over a few short months in a year or in the course of a few days if ever at all.¹⁴ However, in North America, there exists a softening of this part of the guru-shishya relationship. Classes tend to be more regulated in Canada and the United States where they are organized for one day a week, or in the case of masters who travel extensively, two to three times a week for a couple of months.

¹⁴This pattern of intense learning with the master, I believe, is a recent re-invention of what has traditionally been known in India as the *gurukula* system of learning. The *gurukula* style dictated that the shishya leave his/her familial surroundings and go to live with his/her master to study. The traditional mode of learning, still found in many parts of India, has become important in the study of artistic forms such as dance and music, in the quest for spiritual guidance as well as in many other intellectual and craft forms of education. For example, in his formative years as a tabla disciple in Calcutta, Ritesh Das lived in the *gurukula* context under his first master Pandit Shankar Ghosh (Farukabad *gharana*). Living with the master is in many senses seen to be an ideal situation for the learning of a skill, tradition or body of knowledge since the disciple is in constant, close contact to the master. As the disciple takes up the apprenticeship he/she becomes like a member of the family who does service where it is needed, such as keeping accounts or going to the market. Learning the trade, then, takes place when the master is willing to teach, which could be at any time of the day or night. Many concerts take place late in the evening and as such musicians keep slightly later hours than others in the community. Both Ustad Alla Rakha Khan and Ustad Zakir Hussain keep hectic performance schedules and may only be around their students at certain times of the year. In this sense the moments of learning, which take place in such a short time span between students and masters, are intense ones.

It is important to mention, however, that the idea of observation has at least two senses in the ethnographic method. Indeed part of what observation is, is participatory in nature. Part of learning about tabla involves watching the teacher, other students and other musicians. Much of being a tabla apprentice involves observing and absorbing all that is going on around you. In this way, observation can be seen as part of the total engagement of a way of life. This kind of observation which incorporates participating in different ways of learning, knowing and collecting data is very different from the idea of the ethnographer as distanced observer.

Apprenticing: Pretense or Reality?

The role of the ethnographer as 'student' is not a new technique in data collection. Many monographs and ethnographies are ripe with analogies of the ethnographer as a student of the culture he/she is studying. Indeed the accounts in which the ethnographers place themselves as student participants of musical forms, tend to communicate what it means, or feels, to be a part of a musical culture, or community far more effectively than if they simply took on the role of observer (Sudnow 1979, 1978; Chernoff 1979, 1993; Kippen 1988; Ranade 1984). Similarly, those anthropologists who have taken up the method of apprenticeship, such as Stoller (1987) and Taussig (1987), which draw the reader toward the embodied nature of multisensory experience, have created very textured accounts of other ways of life.

John Miller Chernoff, an anthropologist who became a student of African percussion, provides useful insights into the problematics of participating and observing as fieldwork methods. Chernoff found that while learning to play the drums he had to forgo the usual

method of analyzing every moment of the experience: "Just as one cannot think one's way into growth, there will be times when one is not aware, indeed cannot be aware, that what one is doing is providing the basis for significant work or discoveries" (Chernoff 1993:14). Chernoff mentions that although this kind of participant-observation cannot claim the scientific rigour of other methods, "it is especially well suited to examine relationships of intimacy and differentiation and processes of individuation and communal expression" (Chernoff 1993:21).

Although the apprentice approach to participant observation in anthropology has been most frequently utilized by ethnomusicologists and dance ethnologists (Neuman 1980, 1974; Kippen 1988; Chernoff 1993, 1979; Sudnow 1978; Naimpally 1988; Zarrilli 1987, 1984), recently there has been a growing interest in the practice of apprenticeship within the wider discipline (Coy 1989; Stoller 1987; Cooper 1989; Goody 1989; Dow 1989; Taussig 1987). The strength of apprenticeship as an anthropological method is that it "does indeed lead one to appreciate the rules more concretely for having them govern one's own behaviour, for having to live by them" (Cooper 1989:148). I would add that learning the rules includes learning ways to manipulate and manoeuvre within them.¹⁵

Apprenticeship not only trains an unskilled person in a trade (be it a craft or other specialized knowledge), it also provides an opening into a network of social and cultural relationships from the very beginning. Those individuals and groups you will speak with, live with, and learn from is already established. In the case of tabla players this includes the

¹⁵For an example of how disciples manoeuvre within the apprentice system see Chapter Five "The Habit of Touching Feet".

guru, his/her disciples, other musicians and their families. Relationships such as these carry with them certain obligations which must be achieved if the anthropologist is to continue 'doing' fieldwork.

Past studies of apprenticeship have neglected to examine the significance of creating and sustaining concrete ties that inevitably bind an apprentice to a master or larger social organization and culture (Lave and Wenger 1991; Dow 1989; Cooper 1989). Often the researcher complains of an enforced type of schizophrenia arising from the problematics of engaging in a double role of apprentice as in a skill or trade and the role of apprentice as an anthropologist connected to developing his/her own intellectual career. Cooper, in particular, discusses his apprenticeship in terms of a fiction where all players in the game (the master and other apprentices) are required to suspend their disbelief and continue to live 'as if' the anthropologist was indeed a real apprentice (Cooper 1989:138). Again the notion of the method as a pretense is echoed in Dow's explanation of his unsuccessful attempts as an apprentice shaman. "My role as an anthropologist conflicted with my role as an apprentice. In general the anthropologist is interested in gathering information systematically with an eye to its use in publication, explanation and testing theory, whereas the apprentice is interested in learning the skills of a trade or profession" (Dow 1989:207). Dow later confesses that had he concentrated on developing 'the proper spiritual relationship' with his master he would have become a better shaman and a worse anthropologist (Dow 1989:207).

In living the life, in becoming habituated as a tabla player in each community, I had to learn how to respect the master, how to talk with him, how to live as he does. In India,

learning to be humble and respect the master's authority can manifest itself in many ways from touching the master's feet and that of other masters in the classical music tradition to forms of service like paying bills or making *chai*. Learning proper ways of interacting became central to my musical identity. A disciple learns these rules well because they have to live by them. In this sense the anthropologist as apprentice does more than take on a new role in his/her life. Apprenticeship in the form of tabla discipleship necessitates that the researcher engage in all aspects of another way of life. In doing so, I became and continue to progress as a musician, tabla player and anthropologist. It was essential that I learn in the disciple context first to gain access and then further my knowledge of not only performative techniques but also cultural ways of knowing embedded within the learning institution of gurus and disciples. Becoming a disciple requires that one enter into a series of fictive kin relationships which carry with them rights and obligations within a particular school or *gharana* of tabla.¹⁶ The ideal of the guru-shishya in India is to establish and cultivate long lasting ties between the members of one's musical community. Apprenticeship here translates into a ground of learning for a lifetime.

Those anthropologists who have taken up apprenticeship (Dow 1989 and Cooper 1989)

¹⁶*Gharanas* or schools are often used as a means of identifying disciples as part of a family of musicians. Literally translated as "of the house" membership of a *gharana* means that one is accepted into an extended musical family. But also, in belonging to a school such as Punjab or Lucknow the disciple is expected to practice a specific performative style, the style of the guru. Neuman notes that gharanas are usually named after cities (for example Benares, Punjab, Delhi Farukabad, Lucknow) of which the founders of the schools were born or started to teach in (Neuman 1980, 1978). This does not mean that major exponents of these schools only teach within these named cities or regions. For example, although Ustad Alla Rakha Khan is head of the Punjab *gharana* he lives and teaches in Bombay. Ustad Zakir Hussain, the son of Ustad Alla Rakha and the most senior disciple of the Punjab school resides in San Anselmo, California. Similarly Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri, a leading exponent of the Lucknow *gharana*, was born and raised in Calcutta and now resides in San Rafael, California.

with a view to gaining immediate knowledge or data have created ethnographies which promote the role of the apprentice field worker as a temporary and transient one. One is not really apprentice material and as such when the ethnographer leaves the field the apprenticeship is over. But although this method can and does provide the analyst with quick access to knowledge skills and cultural data it is important to remember that apprenticeship relationships are on-going, ever changing and adapting in new and different contexts over time. The more time an apprentice spends doing the music, the more in-depth and textured his/her knowledge becomes. This also holds true for the anthropologist. For example, I did not come to an understanding of the importance and frequency of dreaming tabla until I had been practicing and learning the drum for at least two years. Like other students I started to experience a deeper connection to our teacher both in my waking and unconscious moments. Dreaming tabla did not necessarily make me perform tabla *bols* more clearly or more precisely but they did open up new ways of establishing intimacy with other students and teachers. Experiencing dreams or visions served to further my understanding of Indian cultural ways of being, so very important to the cultivation of the guru-disciple relationship. Experiencing the spiritual side of learning tabla did not make me a better tabla player and a worse anthropologist. Rather, these moments of learning deepened my connection to those I lived with, studied with and hence lead me to an avenue of investigation in discipleship among tabla communities that I might not have looked at otherwise.

The notion of apprenticeship as a form of play amongst anthropologists is not a surprising one. Within the wider discipline participant-observation is often viewed as a means to engage in a contrived fiction. In his work on witchcraft and magic among the Azande

Evans-Pritchard discusses his own conflict in adopting participant-observation as a method. "...I found it useful if I wanted to understand how and why Africans are doing certain things to do them myself; I had a hut and byre like theirs; I went hunting with them with spear and bow and arrow; I learned to make pots; I consulted oracles; and so forth. But clearly one has to recognize that there is a certain pretence in such attempts at participation, and people do not always appreciate them" (Evans-Pritchard 1976:243).

An anthropology of apprenticeship cannot subscribe to the idea of participant-observation as a field of play. Adopting apprenticeship as a method can transform the researcher into an apprentice. Although Evans-Pritchard writes about his experiences among the Azande as partly pretense, later on his thoughts turn to the importance of being changed by the experiences themselves. "...I wonder whether anthropologists always realize that in the course of their fieldwork they can be and sometimes are, transformed by the people they are making a study of, that in a subtle kind of way and possibly unknown to themselves they have what used to be called 'gone native'. If an anthropologist is a sensitive person it could hardly be otherwise" (Evans-Pritchard 1976:245). Others, such as Jackson (1989) discuss participation as key to understanding from the very beginning. "Many of my most valued insights into Kuranko social life have followed from comparable cultivation and imitation of practical skills: hoeing on a farm, dancing (as one body), lighting a kerosene lantern properly, weaving a mat, consulting a diviner" (Jackson 1989:135). Jackson stresses that "participation thus becomes an end in itself rather than a means of gathering closely observed data which will be subject to interpretation elsewhere after the event" (Jackson 1989:135).

Recently other anthropologists have also spoken about the necessity of documenting and exploring their own transformations in the process of doing fieldwork (Goulet 1994; Guedon; 1994; Mills 1994; Jackson 1989; Stoller 1987). Rather than marginalizing their extra-ordinary experiences in the process of collecting data to casual conversations within mainstream academic circles, they have brought discussions of their field encounters to the centre of anthropological investigation.¹⁷ In many cases the acquisition of cultural knowledge through experiential engagements with others has created an effective technique in furthering the anthropologist's understanding of cultural ways of knowing, seeing and feeling. Focusing on extra-ordinary exchanges among indigenous communities, then, has become an added tool in the anthropologist's methodological tool kit. And it has also provided a new theoretical ground (Goulet & Young 1994) for analyzing and documenting other ways of knowing.

A successful anthropology of apprenticeship necessitates a certain transformation of the anthropologist/researcher. As a tabla apprentice I had to change my daily habits to revolve around performing and sustaining several hours of practice. This was no easy task as I was brought up in Canada and my body was used to sitting in chairs. Tabla is played on the floor in a cross-legged position and as such one must re-habituate the body in order to accommodate for such times and modes of sitting. Transforming the body was a central part of my fieldwork experience as well as changing my ways of interacting with teachers, gurus and masters.

¹⁷ The kinds of extra-ordinary encounters documented and discussed by these anthropologists include dreams, visions, re-incarnations, the practice of sorcery and the practice of yoga.

The question of 'going native' must be set aside in such ethnographic encounters. The objective was never or could never be to become 'Indian'. Instead, my objective as a tabla apprentice was simultaneously to become a tabla player and further my knowledge of *Hindustani* music in India and in the global community. In carrying out these tasks I came to realize that the anthropological field is not "out there" connected to a piece of land or a bounded geographical site. In an anthropology of apprenticeship the field becomes the site of the body. Unlike other anthropological encounters, an embodied apprenticeship is not contingent upon a return from 'the field'. One is always already within the field of work, within the field of learning. As our ideas of anthropology change so too do our ideas of what constitutes the field of inquiry. And as Clifford recently pointed out "...we may find it useful to think of the field as a habitus rather than as a place, a cluster of embodied dispositions and practices" (Clifford 1997:69).

Adopting a theory of embodiment in the form of apprenticeship questions the privileged position of understanding others through language and cognitive models only. Alternatively, apprenticeship leads the ethnographer to go beyond the Eurocentric concept of knowing as seeing to include what we feel, hear, smell, and taste as crucial in our relations to and comprehension of others. It leads us to a concept of the cultural in every sense.

Gurus, Disciples and Tabla Players

The guru-shishya *parampara* (tradition) is a very specific, culturally dependent mode of learning originating from the Indian Brahmanical tradition¹⁸ of religious study. It is a form of apprenticeship which offers no easy translation, philosophically, culturally or spiritually. Anthropologists have barely begun to decipher the significance and importance of this form of apprenticing within Indian cultural contexts, not to mention the possible use of this form of learning in its de-territorialized spaces within the South Asian diaspora. Milton Singer has, in the past, referred to the guru-disciple relationship as a "kind of apprenticeship" which can be used in both religious and secular activities (Singer 1972:221). And while much literature on the meaning of gurus and disciples has been generated in religious scholarship (Mlecko 1982; Brent 1972; Pandit 1963; Muktanada 1971; Singh 1973; Harper 1972; Gupta 1994; Mitchiner 1992) little research has been carried out with a view to the actual learning process itself.

There is no doubt that the guru-shishya is a profound and intimate socio-cultural and personal relationship. In many forms of education whether religious, performative or otherwise finding a guru and developing a relationship with him/her is crucial. Just as the master gives of his time and his love to his disciples so too the disciple must give of herself/himself in reciprocal ways. Ashok Ranade argues that "what transpires between a guru and his shishya is qualitatively different from what usually takes place in a teacher-

¹⁸ Brahmins are the priestly caste connected to Hinduism. In India the caste system is based on four levels of placement which sees the Brahmins at the highest level, followed by the ksatriyas or landholders, the vaisyas or merchants and sudras or servants, herders, artisans and cultivators caste. For a more in-depth discussion on the caste system in India see Kolenda 1978; Tyler 1973).

student relationship" (Ranade 1984:31). It is not unusual for someone in India to have a variety of gurus, such as a spiritual one, and, if they are a musician, also a musical one. In India, entering into a relationship with a music ustad or guru means entering into a relationship for a lifetime. In fact, the relationship continues on even after the master has died, as the disciple is ideally seen to embody his teachings, style and identity.¹⁹

Ethnomusicologists (Kippen 1988; Neuman 1980, 1974; Stewart 1974) argue that tracing one's history through a guru is paramount in the creation of one's musical identity. The idea of succession in a school or *gharana* continues to be a driving force in Indian musical communities and in other parts of the world located in the South Asian diaspora.

In a discipleship the guru becomes a central figure in your life. In India the traditional model of the guru/shishya revolves around two central concepts. The disciple must follow the rules of obedience, *susrusa*, and have implicit faith, *sraddha*, in the teachings of the master (Zimmer 1951:48). Obedience and implicit faith imply reverence, and of course service to one's teacher in whatever way the teacher sees fit or demands (Nuttall 1991). It is imperative that the guru is seen to hold and impart absolute knowledge, knowledge

¹⁹Discipleship differs from European and North American concepts of apprenticeship in significant ways. Etymologically apprentice comes from the latin *apprehendere*, meaning one bound to another to learn a trade or art. Being involved in an apprenticeship assumes that the apprentice will effectively learn the trade, or serve a certain length of time under a master in the state of apprenticeship much in the same way a medical intern will assume the status of Doctor after his/her internship is completed. In a discipleship, however, this relationship is constantly on-going, even after the disciple has gone out and started to represent the teachings and philosophies of his/her master. One rarely assumes the title of guru in Hindu traditions or similarly the title of Ustad among Muslim communities until the master has died. The phenomenon of both Ustad Alla Rakha and his son Ustad Zakir Hussain sharing the same title at the same time is uncommon in Hindustani musical communities. Even though Zakirji has been given the title Ustad he is still Alla Rakha's oldest son and tabla disciple. The practice of discipleship is considered to be a life-long journey.

gained through experience in order for the reproduction of his/her mastery. The disciple must fervently obey and assume that what he/she is being taught is the tradition itself without question. Zakirji (1995) described the character of growing up in this kind of musical atmosphere where the student must accept the principle of implicit faith in one's guru.

I think most of my generation who learned music, we learned in the same way--no questions--just a leap of faith. That leap of faith was based on the belief that guru is who guru is supposed to be. That leap of faith actually classifies what your tradition or your roots are. I mean if I believe that my father teaches Punjab style, then that is what I am learning. If I don't believe this then what am I doing? Am I learning something else? In those days this unquestioned obedience provided that and therefore Lucknow was Lucknow, Punjab was Punjab, Benares was Benares. I think that if this questioning had begun a hundred years ago, maybe it would not have been so. These schools or *gharanas* may not have come into existence or maybe just one or two would have. So I think that it was a good thing that that happened. And also we were illiterate in the olden days and therefore analysis was not part of learning, writing it down was not part of learning and therefore classifying things or creating an index was not necessarily part of things. When you sit down and start to pen things and name things and provide definitions that is when the questions arise. We didn't even get that far, the guy sang and you played or you sang it back and that was it. Even in playing it wasn't like each syllable was worked on. Okay you do this here and do this there and when you go fast you compensate by doing this. No, you just presumed that what has been taught at a certain speed you are suppose to do that at the high speed. It's through years of work and checking things that one discovers by one's own what compensations have to be made in order to be able to play at a certain speed the same thing that you play in a slow speed. The illiteracy was one of the reasons why these questions never existed and you just did not question your teacher at all.

Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri (1995) also discussed this idea of blind faith with me in an interview at his home in San Rafael, California. Although today he is in his early 50s he has been learning tabla from his guru since the age of five.²⁰

²⁰ Swapan Chaudhuri is a disciple of Pandit Santosh Krishna Biswas who teaches the Lucknow style of tabla in Calcutta.

Indian social structure is set up in such a way that you don't ask any questions to the guru. If your guru or teacher says you do this one, this line of practice you do it. Sometimes we have, inside our heads, a question. Why do I have to do this? Why is he saying it? But in India we were raised not to ask any questions to our teacher. Whatever he is saying--do it. So, one time I asked my guru why is that? Why do I have to do it? He kept on doing it and there was a point when I just lost it and I said why do I have to do it? What is the reason? And he said you don't ask questions to me. I'm not going to answer your question why. I'm saying it and you'll do it and you'll find your answer after one year, that's it. And it is true because when he was telling me to do certain things he realized that I was weak on that particular point. But I did not see that. So, after one year I found that yes, I was weak on that point and in fact in doing what he said to do I learned a lot out of it. From that point on I stopped asking him any questions.

Tabla disciples in Ustad Alla Rakha's school, both of Indian and non-Indian origin, told me stories about the power and strength of learning in this way. Often unquestioned obedience creates a series of emotional and physical struggles within the disciple's learning of tabla as well as in his/her daily life. Prakash and others have mentioned that although this way of learning seems difficult at first through vigilance and devotion the disciple learns that there was a reason for the request of the teacher. Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri stresses that the guru's way of teaching leads the student to discover for oneself the answer to his/her question. He suggests that if something is unknown to you and you are pushing yourself to find a reason for the question when you actually solve the problem it is "such a joy". Swapanji (1995) goes on to say that "It is like a challenge to you. You solve it and it's great. And when you solve it by yourself you go very deep. You see things--at every point you see it."

The concepts of implicit faith and unquestioned obedience can be traced back to spiritual or

religious texts in India known as the Upanishads (Mlecko 1982:37).²¹ Mlecko describes the relationship of student and teacher as one of spiritual reciprocity where the "guru provided guidance and knowledge on the spiritual path and the sisya reciprocated with obedience and devotion" (Mlecko 1982:37).²² He goes on to suggest that very early on in Indian cultures respect for the guru was evolving into a devotional form similar to that given to God. Through service, submission or devotion a disciple pays his/her respects to the master. The status of a guru or a master in Indian communities is seen as above, in some ways, the respect and humility you should have for your parents. Masters are mediums through which god speaks or communicates and therefore they provide a direct path to the divine, to the holy.

Citing from the Chandogyo Upanishad, Mlecko uncovered a verse of text which embodies the notion of guru as god.²³ The gods said "We can give you the knowledge...but only the teacher can show the way" (Chandogyo Upanishad cited in Mlecko 1982:37). Mlecko mentions that although the guru is supposed to provide intellectual and verbal guidance in explaining the scriptures he is also to teach by his everyday acts, in everything from what he eats to when he sleeps. "To be near the guru, to humbly and reverently serve and obey him is to find, to know and to experience the 'way'" (Mlecko 1982:37). The Upanishads also indicate that it is not so much that the teacher shows the path, but that he embodies the

²¹ Literally Upanishad means sitting down opposite somebody (Mlecko 1982:35).

²² Devotion or *bhakti* is a significant concept in Indian spiritualism. *Bhakti* can refer simply to devotion or to the acts of a devotee.

²³ Similarly references to the guru as embodying the divine can be found in other religious texts such as the Vedas, Puranas and the Tantras (Mlecko 1982).

path (Gupta 1994:27).

Experiencing the way is dependent upon unquestioned obedience. Swapanji's story about questioning his master provides a clue to the significance of doing what the master demands, without question. In following his guru's advice he came to reflect on his technique, his weak point in playing, and found the answer to his problem. Just as his guru told him that he would have his answer to his question in one year, he did indeed find the answer after a year of practice and came to realize the importance of humility, reverence and strict obedience to his guru.

Discipleship, then, requires a certain devotion to one's teacher. In India, *bhakti* or devotion to the master can and does take the form of worship much like the worship of a devotee to his/her god. A disciple may set up an altar in his/her home and dedicate this to his/her teacher by prominently featuring a framed picture of the master. The burning of incense in an altar, the presentation of gifts to the master or touching the master's feet are all important ways of showing continuing devotion, love and respect. There is a strong connection between the devotion of a disciple and his/her will to obey the master. In his recent work on gurus and mysticism Gupta points to a very interesting correspondence between obedience, devotion and the dreaming times. He states that "to be a true devotee, one has to obey the guru even in a dream and follow all his directions in letter and spirit" (Gupta 1994:220). Although ideally the disciple should follow his master's teachings even in a dream I found that amongst tabla players dreams do not always prove to contain correct or accurate information on technique. I was told a story by one tabla disciple who had a dream about his teacher showing him a composition and when he went to his teacher

to tell him about the dream the teacher replied that he had showed him wrongly and proceeded to instruct him to play the composition correctly. It is important to note that in practice the dream itself may not always be technically accurate but, as in this instance, the dream did guide the student to seek out the knowledge through a more direct form of communication. The phenomenon of dreaming inaccuracies in tabla technique, however, does not discount the significance of the dreaming as a way to knowing culturally and spiritually.

The practice of disciples equating the guru with the status of god amongst *Hindustani* musicians is common place. As I was attending concerts both in India and in North America, inevitably disciples would evoke a line of text from the Vedas which promoted this very idea. In a recent radio interview Zakirji also brought attention to this concept. "There is a sentence in the Vedas which says Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Guru Deva Maheswara.²⁴ In other words there are three great gods, Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara, the Trinity of the creator, the protector and the destroyer. The guru is a combination of all these three. So, guru is supposed to be the highest entity as far as Indian music and tradition is concerned" (Hussain 1996).

Evoking the Hindu pantheon of gods, even by Zakirji who is a Muslim, is one very important way in which disciples keep alive the divine aspects of the guru-shishya system. It is not unusual for a disciple to image his/her guru as similar to an ascetic, to a holy man in everything from how he has lived his life to how he teaches in present day. Prakash

²⁴Maheswara is another name used for Shiva.

often described the events of Abbaji's life in terms of struggle and sacrifice.

Going through all that with great control, getting over every hurdle and be successful in every mission he [Abbaji] has had to sacrifice a lot. Every artist has to do this. They reach a stage where they become very vibrant. It becomes like a discipline, just like the spiritual one. Your only aim is God and nothing else. Similarly, Abbaji's only aim is tabla. So even when you are sitting around him there is this magnetic field of tabla *bols* going around and you just get engulfed with it. That is my observation. Even though he is just sitting he is looking at everything in musical and rhythmic terms. From his balcony you can see the sea. When he sees the waves I can see from his eye and from his expression that when he sees the waves the rhythm of the waves is fascinating him also. He is getting inspiration from that or he is creating something from that inspiration. When he sees the sun, the movement of the sun in that also there is *lay*.²⁵ He sees *lay* in everything. We say that he has achieved his goal--tabla but he says no, one lifetime is not enough. And it is not truly speaking it is not enough. Whenever you go near the horizon again the horizon is miles away. So it's just like that. You learn more and more *kaidas* more and more knowledge, try to improve more and more and yet there is this vast ocean right in front of you (Prakash 1995).

I too experienced a sense of awe and peacefulness while in Abbaji's presence whenever I was with him and I saw and heard him counting or reciting tabla *bols*. And even in the moments when he was just sitting and looking around there was an indescribable energy surrounding him.

Just as the musical master has made sacrifices in his life to achieve the highest standards of artistry so too must the disciple follow in his example. The guru teaches as much through his experience in how he lives his life as he does through discourse and verbal explanations. That is to say, in India the principle of unquestioned obedience suggests that the guru teaches in a profound way through his everyday actions. Spending time with the teacher, whenever that may be, means creating and maintaining a closeness to him. To be

²⁵*Laya* or *lay* is the *Hindustani* musical term for rhythm/tempo.

physically near the guru leads one to experience the way. Zakirji told me once that an ideal student is one who inspires the teacher to teach. The ideal student should somehow extract the knowledge that he/she is seeking from the teacher and interpret as closely as possible the teachings of that teacher (Hussain 1995). Interpretation, then, is dependent upon being around the guru or ustad as much as possible within the disciple's lifetime.

Body as Knowledge, Culture as Body

In an apprenticeship, such as in discipleship, it is imperative that the analyst account for the creation and re-invention of knowledge and tradition as part of lived experience. While William James provides a necessary corrective to the idea of the cultural through his concept of radical empiricism, Merleau-Ponty's concept of the body in social theory goes further and posits the experiences of the body as central to social realities. Increasingly anthropologists and sociologists are drawing on Merleau-Ponty's model of the body (Jackson 1989; Csordas 1990, 1993; Stoller 1989; Turner 1992, 1991) in their attempts to develop descriptions of lived experience. There exists, as well, a neo-philosophical movement (Dillon 1990, 1991; Levin 1991; Madison 1990; Smith 1990), which seeks to go beyond the limited Merleau-Pontian analyses of the 1960s. Merleau-Ponty posits the body as subject in social theory. Through his concept of the lived body Merleau-Ponty firmly locates social practice and interaction as products of active embodied agents. The body, no longer rendered as powerless and unknowing, is seen as culture itself. The body is not a sign of culture but rather is envisioned as cultural, as social.²⁶ Social practice, which

²⁶Bryan Turner suggests that "if we take Merleau-Ponty seriously then the body, as part of human agency, is not somehow beyond or even alongside the social". The body is not promoted as a metaphor for the social but as social, cultural (Turner 1992:92).

depends on acquiring both bodily and cognitive knowledge, is no longer equated with texts.

In his theory of intersubjectivity Merleau-Ponty develops his idea of the essential social nature of human relations and interactions. Here he promotes the creation of self in relation to other as essentially stemming from our bodies. Bodily knowledge, according to Merleau-Ponty, is a kind of knowledge which cannot be reduced to cognition. However, he does not deny that language also is central to the creation of identities. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the lived body suggests that the body is internally structured. Indeed, the body has its own organization. Identities of self (gendered, ethnic, musician etc.) are formed in and through social interaction. Levin, drawing on Merleau-Ponty, points out that "much of our comportment is choreographed by 'postural impregnation' or a proximity and intimacy with other through gestures, postures...and bodily attitudes" (Levin 1990:38). Merleau-Ponty's embodied subject then, is inherently interactional. It is oriented towards engaging and developing its sociability and as such is well suited for an analysis of the very close and intimate relationship between gurus and disciples.

In positing that the body has, from the beginning, its own order (corporeal schema) and that bodies are inherently interactional, Merleau-Ponty promotes a powerful concept of embodied subjects. In envisioning a body which has its own order, he rejects the notion that all cultural and social practices are imposed on the self from the outside, from society. Culture is not seen as wholly external of self. Rather, agents, as embodied subjects, have within their bodies culture itself. This does not mean that the body is "some pervasive stuff out of which all things are carved" (Dillon 1990:25). For Merleau-Ponty the body becomes the medium "for the complex dialectic between individuation and socialization" (Dillon

1991:9). In this sense, bodies are active carriers of both individual and cultural identities.

In his concept of lived body, however, Merleau-Ponty stops short of acknowledging that agents experience their bodies as gendered. 'This is a significant shortcoming because any theory of embodied subjectivity should take into account the primacy of gender as both an analytic category and as how we structure our perspectives. Judith Butler's theory of gender as performance (1990, 1993)²⁷ provides a necessary added dimension to the phenomenological model of human action. Butler locates her concept of gender in 'corporeality', in the performances of the body. Butler sees gender like other identities as something which is created through repetitive 'corporeal stylization'. "The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body, and hence must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Butler 1990:140).

Butler emphasizes that gendered identities are constantly changing. They are not stable or solidified. While Butler stresses the dynamic properties of identity creation she also draws attention to the body's ontological status. In place of our conceptions of 'construction' Butler calls for a return to the "notion of matter, not as a site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter" (Butler 1993:9)

²⁷Here I use Butler's theory of gender as an analytic category to theorize about embodiment and identity as performative. Although it is important to acknowledge that bodies are always gendered, I do not take up a study of gender in this dissertation.

'Corporeal stylization' or the performances of the body, then, provides another effective avenue to analyze both the reproductions and transformations going on within the learning and teaching of tabla traditions. It allows for an examination of identity which includes categories such as cultural, gendered, musical or otherwise. It leads to a powerful model of the lived body, of experiential knowledge.

In this chapter I have argued for a move toward an anthropology of apprenticeship as an embodied field method. In shifting the anthropological focus from issues of representation to notions of accountability an embodied apprenticeship seeks to communicate the reality of living our lives with others in cultural fields. As Paul Stoller stresses, "apprenticeship demands respect" (Stoller 1989:156). As such, the method must be seen as more than a form of play or, simply, the taking on of roles. Apprenticeship requires a serious engagement of other cultural knowledge systems and structures. The apprentice approach to knowledge is, I believe, the key that unlocks the meaning, both bodily and cognitive, to the lived experiences of tabla players.

Adopting the apprenticeship approach guides the analyst to the experiences of the body. In the end the ethnographer comes to know the life world of tabla artists because he/she has become one. The performances of the drum and all those social/cultural ways of knowing embedded within the guru-disciple relationship becomes embodied or sedimented in the habitual patterns of daily life.

In this chapter I have also argued that apprenticeship moves the ethnographer toward a feminist perspective of social and human relations, toward a recognition of situated

knowledge. Here the body is seen as central to social identities and the passing on of cultural memory or tabla knowledge. The gendered body leads to a formation of an active notion of embodied agency in social theory. Memory is envisioned as located in the corporeal, in the performances of the body.

CHAPTER FIVE

EMBODYING CULTURAL MEMORY: LEARNING TO BECOME THE MASTER

Of central concern in my study of tabla communities is the question how do tabla disciples learn? How do communities, removed from their original social context, pass on important cultural knowledge through teaching performance such as the *Hindustani* musical form? How are South Asians and others in the diaspora transplanting and re-constructing 'tradition' from their place of origin? Indeed how do deterritorialized communities remember? If continuity with the past depends primarily on performing tradition what have our concepts of memory, culture, community, and tradition really explained? What categories, norms, values are invested with such importance that they become sedimented in habitual body knowledge? How is it that cultural memory is re-established, reproduced or transformed through the teaching and learning of classical tabla?¹

In apprenticing as a tabla disciple in India and in North America I realized that any theory of cultural learning needed to allow for the importance of acquiring skills, memory or knowledge in the body, and the embodied mind. In this chapter I argue that acts of remembering or the passing on of knowledge must be seen as stemming from an active embodied subjectivity. Learning and transmitting tabla knowledge whether technical or otherwise must be viewed, in part, as powerful intentional acts resulting in the reproduction of oral tradition in Indian and diaspora cultures.

¹In order to effectively get at cultural memory and tradition as embodied processes I bracket out issues of social and political conflict within tabla communities. Discussions of cultural contestation and conflict both within specific tabla schools and between them would provide a valuable avenue of further investigation.

In my analysis of cultural memory among tabla players I will examine the 'meaningful' body as a habitual body. I intend to explore how cultural bodies mean in ways other than through cognition. In positing that learning the cultural depends on developing our ideas of body knowledge I do not deny the importance of conscious, cognitive knowledge in cultural reproduction and transformation, but rather displace it. In displacing the primacy of mind and cognitive intentionality in human interaction the analyst is faced with the question how does the body mean? To speak of the body as a language or as a system of codes, I believe, unnecessarily limits the field of anthropological investigation. Similarly, if how we know does not depend solely on representations of mind or symbolic models of action how is the anthropologist to render intelligible the practices of cultural memory? Envisioning the passing on of knowledge as embedded in the performances of the body, as corporeal,² can lead anthropology toward a theory of embodied cultural memory.

Mirroring the Flesh

In the previous chapter I argued that learning the cultural in tabla communities takes place first and foremost between the master and his disciple. I have also stressed that much of

²In discussing the body in terms of performances and in locating the cultural in the corporeal I am not subscribing to a concept of the body as purely physical or biological. The idea of the body as solely biological stems from the Cartesian dualistic vision of the body as physical, separate from mind and passive. Rather, I adopt Hindu and Buddhist philosophies of the body which do not view the body as something exclusively physical. Staal stresses that Hindu concepts do not "support the idea that the body occupies a separate and special place" (Staal 1983/1984:35). In other words in India the body is not "regarded as purely physical because there has never been a category of the purely physical" (Staal 1983/1984:35). He goes on to say that it is not so much that the body is privileged in Indian philosophies but that it is not excluded in the same way that Western cultures have envisioned. Therefore "cultivation of the body is required not only in order to reach so called "physical" goals, but also to achieve so called "spiritual" goals (Staal 1983/1984:35). Knowing, then, must be discussed in terms of an embodied subjectivity. Knowing can only come about through bodily experience, through the cultivation of body habits.

creating one's identity as a musician and as a tabla player depends on being around, as much as possible, the master's other disciples as well as other musicians within the master's immediate socio-cultural and musical networks. Passing on the traditions of tabla necessitates a close and intimate association with one's teacher and musical community. Learning and communicating tradition is therefore an intensely social phenomenon. Identities of self are created and sustained in the presence of others.

Merleau-Ponty (1964, 1962) provides some crucial insights on these intense stages of learning. He expresses his ideas on subjectivity through a concept he calls 'flesh'. Flesh refers to those moments in the 'mirror-stage' of child development where the self is created in relation to other. Self-identity is primarily formed through the flesh. Madison refers to the question of the flesh as "the problem of sameness and otherness, of identity and difference, of the one and its other" (Madison 1990:29). For Merleau-Ponty the creation of self identity and the relation of self to other is not just a process of alienation. Central to his concept of the flesh is the notion of 'reversibility'. Merleau-Ponty describes this process of reversibility as one of my hands touching another, touching me. "Every reflection...is after the model of the reflection of the hand touching by the hand touched" (Merleau-Ponty in Levin 1991:66). He argues that in our moment of narcissism, our reflections are subject to reversal (Dillon 1991:49). In other words in those moments of reflection "I am already for myself an other" (Madison 1990:33).

Otherness is seen here as an internal phenomenon. The other is not external to self, but rather is what the self "discovers in moments of reflexivity" (Madison 1990:33). Dillon articulates that for Merleau-Ponty, "there is a structuring of mutual recognition, a

structuring of reciprocity in the mirror of the flesh" (Dillon 1991:62). Therefore subjectivity is formed in and through social interaction. The self is formed from a process of education located in a mirroring of those around us, in a mirroring of the master.

Imitation as Tradition

Learning to become a tabla player and a disciple is indeed an on-going process of mirroring the master. From the very beginning the student is required to copy every movement, feeling and emotion of the teacher. While attending a concert which included a performance by one of Abbaji's senior disciples in Bombay I realized that in the world of *Hindustani* music a real copying of the master could materialize over the course of a sustained apprenticeship. Prakash was performing a tabla solo at a music conference. I sat in the back of the auditorium with my other tabla brothers whom I had just recently met at the school. Prakash first performed a *peshkar* composition and then proceeded to play others. In the process of watching and listening to Prakash I was struck by the way he played, recited and talked on stage. His every movement, sound, and hand gesture mirrored Ustad Alla Rakha Khan's. Periodically I heard tabla players yell out from the back "Abbaji is famous, Abbaji is famous!"

As the excitement of the crowd grew, Prakash would pause and proceed to verbally praise his teacher who was sitting in the front row of the auditorium. At every possible point in his performance he reflected all comments given to him by the audience toward his teacher. The praise of 'similarity of the master' from his *gurubhais*, "Abbaji is famous," served to further heighten the intensity of tabla players and other musicians in the audience. My tabla brothers were focused on keeping the *tal* with their hands. They knew most of the

compositions themselves, having either heard their master play them or having learned them in class. All *tihais* were recited along with Prakash's playing, increasing the excitement and expectation of coming to the end of the cycle, to *sam*.

I spoke with Zakirji about the idea of copying the master, about the practice of imitation in tabla playing. He likes to refer to the learning process as one of being influenced by the master rather than one of imitating the teacher. "I'm influenced by a lot of tabla players and I'm definitely influenced by my father who is my teacher. And I do stuff which he does. And probably fifteen years ago I did it exactly the way he did" (Hussain 1995).

As I talked with Zakirji about Prakash's performance in Bombay I began to realize that copying the master, although extremely important and necessary for the continuance of tabla technique, is really one stage of various stages that a tabla player goes through in the course of his/her life as a musician. For Zakirji copying is a starting point.

When you start somewhere, it doesn't mean that you do it once or twice and then you go on. Obviously the start itself could be one level of your learning period which could span five years, seven years, eight years, ten years, and then you may be comfortable enough to say okay now I have got this, let's see what I can do with it on my own. What can I inject into this which can make it my own, which is going to give my stamp to it. So if someone like Prakash is imitating my father I say fine that's great--now give him five or six years and see where he goes with it. I'm not going to say okay it's been five weeks now he should change.

In your formative years you need to ride on someone's shoulder. When a child is born, a child is carried. A child just doesn't walk on his own. So he is going to be carried. That would be on the photographs of what my teacher was or is to me--the same with Prakash. And he will probably go through similar periods of being like my father, possibly being like me, possibly being like some other tabla player who would influence him and so on and on until he finds Prakash at the end of the road somewhere along the line. That is when he will be regarded as a fine musician or a great tabla player and that also will be depending on what he finds as valid or not and how

positive it is and how great it is. And that is way in the future. When I was learning I was to be exactly like my teacher and even though I am different now I wouldn't have had it any other way then (Hussain:1995).

Imitating the master, then, is indeed a necessary first step in the creation of one's musical identity, one that may continue on for ten or more years. Zakirji stresses that copying actually provides the musician with the strength and tools needed to progress creatively.

For a tree to grow it has to be firmly planted in the ground. Grounding is an important issue. I had to be. If I don't have my own identity, if I'm not grounded properly in my own tradition, which gives me my identity to start with, I would loose my identity if I ventured out and tried to do something different. So it is important and essential in a traditional art form that I be as my teacher is. That I project that same image so that I am grounded, I have the roots, then after that if I go out and co-exist with a different environment with a different influence, that I will not loose my identity, that I will have a bag in which to store all these other computer chips or microchips or gigabits or megabits that I would encounter and accumulate. These would then go into a bag which would be my identity of that particular time which may be Benares, which may be Punjab, which may be anything (Hussain 1995).

In the beginning stages of tabla training there is a certain importance placed on becoming one's teacher. As Zakirji mentioned it is essential to 'be as my teacher is'. Attempting to 'be as my teacher is' or copying the master is an extremely difficult task and is one, I argue, which takes as much creativity as a breaking off from 'tradition' entails.

Reproducing the master's every movement or adopting his way of being and knowing takes a significant amount of training and practice as Zakirji previously mentioned. Reproduction should not be thought of here as a passive activity. Rather, the moments of reflection, of mirroring, are ones which are actively or intentionally sought and produced. Copying the master or other tabla players demands creativity if the student is to carry on the techniques or style of the guru and actually reproduce the art form and provide a continuity with the past.

Crucial to reproduction in tabla playing is the idea of interpretation of the master's compositions. "Interpretation," Prakash says, "only happens when you are in association with the guru for a very long time." This physical closeness to the guru is necessary for a kind of total communication between the master and his disciple. Within this context of learning there exists a belief that one can indeed 'become the master' in a musical and spiritual sense. Prakash stressed that through constant contact with the teacher the "guru can transform his soul into the shishya."

You have to be physically closer [to the guru]. You have to be. Just by sitting with him there is some energy being transmitted. The more you are close to him, the more you take in that energy, the more of his thoughts and his way of thinking and all that comes into the shishya (Prakash 1995).

Mimesis and the Habitual Body

Recently critical theories of imitation and mimesis have begun to surface in anthropological literature. Many of these theorists have attempted to tackle the questions of embodiment in social practice (Taussig 1993, Jackson 1989). This developing stream of thought goes against the grain of earlier theories of copying (Tarde 1969) which failed to acknowledge that imitation was based on a reciprocal engagement of other peoples. For Gabriel Tarde imitation was grounded in a "hierarchical relationship of domination between master and slave or father and son..." (Leys 1993:286). Ideas of imitation today, however, tend to follow the perspective of Tarde's major critic, G.H. Mead (1934). For Mead "imitation does not involve unconscious submission to the hypnotic command of the leader" but depends on a "sympathetic identification with the other that is grounded in equality" and the recognition of difference (Leys 1993:300). According to Mead imitation "occurs only on the basis of internal representations made possible by the manipulations of the human hand" (Leys 1993:302). In other words the hand is seen as the "instrument of difference" (Leys

1993:302).

Taussig (1993) and Jackson (1989) have, in different ways, posited the mimetic faculty as the primary analytic concept for the study of the embodied subject. For Taussig, "the ability to mime, and mime well...is the capacity to other" (Taussig 1993:19). Where Jackson focuses on mime in ritual performances, Taussig sees mimesis as an everyday performance. It is crucial to identity construction. It "registers both sameness and difference of being like and of being other" (Taussig 1993:129).

Taussig draws on Walter Benjamin's theory of perception to explain how the creation of self (identity) in relation to other is a mimetic act, an embodied act (or series of acts). He argues that mimesis is a two-layered concept which involves a "copying or imitation and a palpable, sensuous connection between the very body of the perceiver and the perceived" (Taussig 1993:21). He goes on to argue that images engage "not so much with the mind as with the embodied mind..." (Taussig 1993:23). This is an important idea for the development of a theory of cultural memory because, like Mead's analysis, it suggests that we form and sustain our identities from a kind of knowledge which is based on something other than cognition.

In positing that agents know through mimesis Benjamin discovers that the structure of memory is decisive in developing a theory of experience. Following Bergson, Benjamin rejects the idea that knowledge or memory is located only in the mind. Knowing "is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data" (Benjamin in Arendt 1968:157). Benjamin's

concept of copying, on becoming similar to others, also draws attention to the phenomenon of dreaming about tabla masters, techniques or classes. "The acceptance of shocks", Benjamin writes, "is facilitated by training in coping with stimuli, and, if need be, dreams as well as recollection may be enlisted" (Benjamin in Arendt 1968:162). Indeed learning to copy the master or other disciples may take place through dreams in addition to face-to-face interaction. Dreaming about the master amongst tabla disciples must be understood, in part, as a way to knowing culturally. It is another kind of mimesis which leads to an understanding of others and toward a comprehension of tabla traditions.

Adopting the position of learning through mimesis is a powerful way to examine the creation and/or reconstruction of deeply sedimented habits. Tabla players create, reproduce and transform their worlds through repetitive habitual action. Theories of the habitual body are not new to the discipline of anthropology. Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990) has been paramount in establishing a complex theory of the habitual body. In his theory of 'habitus' Bourdieu shows how bodily habits structure social and cultural practice. He states, "what is learned by the body is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is" (Bourdieu 1990:73).

Bourdieu (1990, 1977), Butler (1993, 1990), and Taussig (1993) explicitly draw attention to the repetitive elements of socialization, to the mimetic quality of acquiring habitual practices. Taussig and Butler are interested in creating a social theory which depicts the body as being a site of power. The power of a resisting body exists in the habitual body. That is to say, the power of the body can be found at the level of habitual ways of moving and knowing.

In a discussion of Benjamin's concept of mimesis Taussig notes that "Habit offers a profound example of tactile knowing and is very much on Benjamin's mind, because only at the depth of habit is radical change effected, where unconscious strata of culture are built into social routines as bodily dispositions. The revolutionary task could thus be considered as one in which "habit" has to catch up with itself" (Taussig 1993:25). According to Taussig, revolution, transformation and empowerment can only come about through changing those deeply sedimented cultural practices which we experience through habit. An embodied subject creates or transforms their structures and systems through performative habitual practices. And as Benjamin points out it is at the "depth of habit" where the effects of cultural change are at work.

Similarly in her theory of gender (identity) as a corporeal stylized act, Judith Butler suggests that profound change takes place at the depth of habit. As I mentioned in the previous chapter Butler emphasizes that identities are constantly in motion. Gender is seen as an everyday act or set of actions, as something which is repeated. Her concept of gender is based on the idea of performing bodies. In other words, Butler grounds her analytic conception of gender within the framework of performance or performativity.

Performativity for Butler is, "neither free play nor theatrical self-representation; nor can it simply be equated with performance" (Butler 1993:95). Rather, performance translates here as a 'forced reiteration of norms' i.e. gender takes shape within "a regularized and constrained repetition of norms "(Butler 1993:95).

Gender is thus a series of acts which are repeated within a set of constraining and enabling boundaries. Gender is neither freely constructed nor positively determined or fixed in

cultural fields. Subjects are seen as both enabled and constrained at the depth of habit. Locating agency in this way provides the analyst with the tools to discuss not only what is being constructed with body performances but also allows for an understanding of what is not being constructed or reproduced at the level of habit. As Butler stresses transformation occurs when the ritual is not repeated. It is in the failure to repeat practices where a "subversion of identity becomes possible" (Butler 1990:145). "Agency, then, is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition" (Butler 1990:145).

Key to understanding Butler's idea of identities, whether gendered or musical, is the way she envisions the relation between repetition, memory, and agency as constituted in time. According to Butler "...repetition is not performed by a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject" (Butler 1993:95). The power of the body subject lies in the ability to repeat subversive acts. Performance is seen as a ritualized production and not as a singular act or event as such. Corporeal stylizations always materialize within certain cultural constraints and "under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production" (Butler 1993:95).

The Habit of Touching Feet

The requirement of touching the master's feet or his contemporaries' feet in tabla communities provides one such example of the way in which change or subversion is at work at the depth of habit. In some diaspora and Indian contexts touching feet is a contested practice but in most communities, however, it is seen as a necessary act of humility, as a form of paying respect to one's teacher. It seems that when the guru or

teacher is closer in age to the student he does not demand or physically require his students to touch his feet.³ Zakirji and Riteshji are examples of this type where although they do not demand this act of humility for themselves they do, however, demand that their students touch the feet of their masters. I do not mean to imply that Zakirji's students, both in India and In North America, do not occasionally show their respect by touching his feet. In India a disciple would seem very much out of place if he/she at least didn't attempt to touch his feet in the presence of other disciples. And in North America, disciples that have been with him a long time or have travelled with him to India who have seen the practice and realized the importance of touching feet also periodically perform this act of humility. However, in the presence of Zakirji's father it is imperative for a disciple to show respect in this way. Similarly Riteshji feels that it is essential for his students to show respect for his guru, Swapan Chaudhuri, or other senior musicians by touching feet.

³While studying in Delhi I witnessed a series of struggles surrounding the gesture of touching the master's feet. Upon my arrival in India I spent some time at the musical college Gandharva Mahavidyalaya with one of the resident tabla teachers, Kulbushan Bhargava. Kulbushanji teaches the Delhi style of tabla to students who range from the ages of five to forty. Kulbushanji was in his early thirties, similar to my age group. He never allowed me to touch his feet at the college in front of the students even though each morning upon my arrival I witnessed all of the other students either touch his feet or attempt to touch his feet as he sat at the front of the class tuning his tabla. He never seemed concerned about the younger students paying respect to him in this way, however, when the older students closer to his age or ones older than him attempted to do so he quickly cupped their hands and pushed them back toward the students. I sensed that he felt overwhelmed by these acts of humility and so I asked him why he always acted in this way every morning. Kulbushanji felt that because he was a relatively young tabla teacher it was not essential that the students show their love for him in this way. He explained that although he didn't want the younger students to touch his feet they are taught to respect their elders in this way and so he allows this to continue. However, the practice of touching feet by those of similar or older age to the master is a little more problematic. Kulbushanji felt uncomfortable with older students performing the gesture. And although, in India, a disciple is to show deference to one's teacher by touching feet it seems that there is an on-going struggle in those contexts where the master belongs to a similar or younger age group than the student.

When students fail to repeat the performance of touching the master's feet they are scolded for not doing so. Showing a lack of respect in this way can create general bad feeling amongst the other disciples as well. I found this to be the case very early on in my classes with Abbaji. Kalyan**bai** took every opportunity possible to remind me of the importance of touching Abbaji's feet when he was present in the room.

In India, the touching of feet becomes part of the disciple's habitual mode of being. If the student does not live up to his/her responsibility he/she is reminded of the importance of being humble to his/her teacher. The pressure to perform this gesture of humility is ever present. In North America, however, the performance of touching feet is not always repeated. Because it is not part of daily life for young Canadians or Americans (whether of South Asian origin or not), there seems to be much confusion over when to do it and with whom you do it with. For example, while studying with Riteshji and his students I witnessed an interesting incidence concerning touching feet or paying respects when Ramesh Misra, a Bengali *sarangi* maestro, came to visit. Rameshji came to Riteshji's studio to watch the tabla students rehearse for an upcoming performance. Riteshji was the first one to greet Rameshji at the door. After Rameshji took off his shoes at the doorway he entered the studio proper where Riteshji then knelt to the floor and touched Rameshji's feet. Ed, Amar, Jai, Santosh and others continued to sit on the floor watching the greeting ritual. As I looked around at their faces I could sense a moment of confusion, a type of hesitation. No one stood up. No one walked over to Rameshji and touched his feet. Everyone sat cross-legged, said hello and continued to play their instruments. Immediately Riteshji yelled out to us, "what is wrong with you all don't you know that there is a senior musician standing in the room?" "At least you could stand when he enters the room," said Riteshji. Eventually

everyone stood up and waited until Rameshji was sitting comfortably on a carpet before they sat down again.

Clearly Riteshji felt that his students had not given Rameshji the proper respect that he deserved. While speaking with his students about the incident I confirmed my belief that others had also felt a certain hesitation about touching feet when Rameshji came in the room. Ed mentioned that he wanted to touch Rameshji's feet but since no one else stood up to do so he didn't want to seem "out of place". Upon reflection Ed wished that he had gone with his gut feeling and touched the musician's feet. Later that evening at a dinner I saw Ed touch Rameshji's feet as he was saying goodnight to him.

In the North American context, therefore, touching feet has not as yet become part of the habitual practices of being a tabla disciple. Whereas in India performing the gesture comes automatically and is part of a disciple's daily habits (or fast becomes part of one's daily routine) in North America showing humility to senior musicians or one's teacher is not always part of a tabla player's lived experience.⁴ Even if a student is greeting the teacher's teacher or senior musicians and this gesture is expected of him/her it seems that there is an on-going struggle, both bodily and emotionally, by the student to defer to the master in this way. In India and in North America part of the struggle over touching feet seems to revolve around the problematic of the young age of the master although in India, the actual practice

⁴ Although touching feet has not necessarily become a daily activity for Riteshji's students in Toronto or for Zakirji's students in Seattle and the Bay area of California, Swapan Chaudhuri's students seem to pay their respects to him in this way every time they greet him before class at the Ali Akbar Khan College of Music. Swapanji promotes this habit on a daily basis and therefore within this part of the California tabla community touching feet has become sedimented in the body as part of memory.

of it continues and is very much a part of the guru-disciple relationship. In North America, though, touching feet is not expected or demanded by the teacher on a daily basis and therefore this way of submitting does not become sedimented in the body, as it were. When the circumstances arise for a disciple to touch feet the student hesitates or freezes and may eventually be ridiculed for not doing so.

Culture, Memory, Embodiment

The example of touching feet in tabla communities questions the assumption that memory is something which is codified or stored in the mind. It reminds us that the past is actively repeated or re-created by and with cultural bodies. But if memory is not located in the mind in the form of neurological activity alone how are we to think about acts of remembering? Indeed the question then arises how is memory embodied? In order to formulate a theory of memory as embodied it is necessary to connect notions of culture, individual, habit (or memory) and body with skill acquisition. If memory or knowledge acquisition is envisioned as located in the body, in the 'corporeal', anthropologists can begin to talk about how subjects learn as embodied cultural agents and how groups pass on important cultural knowledge in the teaching of performance.

It is important to note that my theory of cultural memory as performative does not dispute that part of what communities do in passing on traditions is present symbolic images of themselves to themselves as well as to others. Rather, I suggest that positing a theory of embodied memory would allow for a wider scope of anthropological investigation into how memory is re-created and then passed on within cultural groups. In part, meaning arises from the 'doing' of cultural performances. And, I argue, it is in the 'doing', in the practice

of tabla, where disciples learn not only tabla techniques but a total way of knowing and being as musicians and cultural agents.

Bourdieu perhaps more than any other social scientist has drawn upon the alternative view of the body as practice or habit. Taking Mauss as his point of departure Bourdieu builds on the idea of bodily techniques, such as sitting and walking, to create his model of the habitus. He suggests that what we know and how we know it is learned primarily through and with cultural bodies. In creating a habitus, agents are involved in establishing common sense knowledge. Common sense knowledge is a form of body knowledge. According to Bourdieu agents "order thoughts and suggest feeling through the rigorous marshalling of practice and the orderly disposition of bodies" (Bourdieu 1990:69). The habitus "cannot be reduced to a 'body image' or even to a 'body concept', a subjective representation largely based on the representation of ones' own body produced and returned by others" (Bourdieu 1990:71).

Central to the process of acquiring common sense knowledge is the performance of a practical mimesis (Bourdieu 1990:73). These performances do not necessarily pass through consciousness or materialize into discourse. Indeed, agents may not be aware that what they are performing are the actions of others. A practical mimesis is always at work in skill acquisition and is a form of imitation which is quite different from a conscious, purposive engagement of a subject's desire to reproduce the traditions of the master. It is a type of body knowledge which is crucial for the continuance of living traditions.

For example, upon my return from California where I spent most of my waking moments

either playing *tabla*, reciting *bols* or watching others perform similar actions I had, unknowingly, picked up certain techniques in my playing. Part of learning the *bayan* or left hand drum involves learning how to use the wrist to put pressure on the skin. Hugging the skin with the wrist allows for a type of modulation on the skin which raises or lowers the sound of the *bols ghe, ge and dha*. Increasing the level of wrist pressure results in a higher sound while decreasing the wrist pressure allows for the play of a lower note. In the hands of a master or an accomplished *tabla* player the *bayan* can produce an incredible tonal range of one octave or more. It was not until Stefan remarked to me how much better I was playing my *bayan* after my return from California that I realized my left hand was indeed learning to perform modulations.

The process of practical mimesis suggests that memory is, at least in part, located in the performances of the body. When a *tabla* player is around the master or other students he/she is involved in producing what Bourdieu calls a living memory. Here the body does not "represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life" (Bourdieu 1990:73). It is imperative to note that the performance of living memory is not just a process of "mechanical learning through trial and error" (Bourdieu 1990:74). Acquiring bodily knowledge is more than a mechanical process because it is here that memories form into a systematic, structured repertoire of common sense knowledge which a subject can then call on at will (Bourdieu 1990:75).

The notion of living memory, where agents are seen to enact the past rather than memorize it, leads to a provocative rendering of how oral tradition works and continues to be passed

on amongst tabla disciples. The idea of memory as something which is embodied or performed is also apparent in Paul Connerton's work on *How Societies Remember* (1989). Connerton draws attention to the performances of bodily memories as part of how communities present images to themselves and to others. In doing so, Connerton also attends to the body as the site of oral tradition where the activity of passing on knowledge is taking place. For Connerton, remembering begins in the body, in performances or ritual enactments.⁵

Connerton makes an important distinction between bodily and cognitive knowledge in positing a concept which he calls the social habit memory. He argues that the habit memory of the subject is not identical with that subjects' cognitive memory of rules and codes-nor is it simply an additional thing" (Connerton 1989:31). Crucial in past studies of memory is this notion of encoding (Connerton 1989:27). Memory is frequently represented as the process of constructing a "'schema', a 'coding' which enables us to distinguish and therefore to recall" (Connerton 1989:27).

In Connerton's view memory is established in two significant ways; through inscribing practices (i.e. texts, photos, books, audio cassettes, video cassettes etc.) and by incorporating practices. Incorporating practices are seen to constitute the social habit memory. The habit memory is based on a notion of the body as performative. When we perform habitual actions we are simultaneously 'doing' individual and cultural acts. These actions, Connerton claims, are incorporating practices. It is in these practices where cultural

⁵Connerton discusses these cultural performances as commemorative ceremonies.

memory is also at work. Stoller pointed to the strength of Connerton's thesis when he said, "in cultural memory, the past, as it were, is sedimented in the body" (Stoller 1995:29).

Connerton's concept of memory as located in the habitual body provides us with a theory of the embodied subject. His notion of cultural memory, however, is also a deeply historical one. It is in the study of bodily practices, he argues, "that leads us to see that images of the past and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by (more or less ritual) performances" (Connerton 1989:40). Promoting a sense of history in this way, as embodied performances, establishes a concept of tradition as one which is grounded in images of the past, in repetitions, but also is one which allows for those moments of re-creation or re-invention. Tradition in tabla communities, it seems, is constantly on the move and yet the masters can see their image in others.⁶

Oral Tradition: Passing on Tabla Knowledge

The power of cultural memory in India and the Diaspora is located in the continuance of an oral tradition. In India and in North America I have found that continuity with the past is based predominately on the on-going relationships musicians have with each other through the medium of oral tradition. These relationships can be multi-faceted and complex ones.

⁶ I should note that copying players other than one's master can and does seem to be a part of the Hindustani musical tradition in India. Zakirji mentioned that he saw his image mirrored not only by his students but by other tabla players as well. At present, Zakirji has become a popular figure in the tabla world and seems to hold considerable influence over younger, rising tabla artists. This influence can be seen in everything from how some players execute technique to how they perform on stage, by flicking their hair or gesturing in the body in the way that Zakirji does. In the past, Zakirji stressed, his father was copied by tabla players who were not his students. And although Zakirji sees his image in other performers as something positive he mentions that "at the same time it is a passing thing" (Hussain 1995).

Passing on tabla technique to a student is not just a simple exchange of money for knowledge. Rather, the passing on of *bols* or compositions becomes just one part of the total musical experience of engaging in this oral tradition.

As a way of knowing and learning oral tradition has been and continues to be a significant type of education in Indian society (Ranade 1984). Indeed, Ranade argues, "oral tradition is a living cultural force" (Ranade 1984:24). This seems to be the case for those groups who have become deterritorialized from the sub-continent as well.⁷ As such, it is essential for all those who take up tabla to engage in an oral tradition. Although I have met some drummers in North America who originally attempted to learn tabla from various texts, in the end they became frustrated and sought out a master for lessons.

In India, oral tradition has existed alongside written or textual modes of learning. Learning music, such as learning other forms of education in India, incorporates both textual and oral ways of knowing. What then makes learning in this way different from sitting down and reading a book? Ranade suggests that "it is not the absence of being 'written' that makes...tradition 'oral' but the significance attached to the oral-aural processes by the communicators concerned that makes it so" (Ranade 1984:5). This is especially evident in both the teaching and learning of tabla in India and the diaspora cultures.

⁷Here I am referring to those communities which teach various styles of Indian dance, such as *Bharata Natyam* (a South Indian dance form), *Odissi* (classical performative style from Orissa state) or *Kathak* (a North Indian dance form), and musical styles such as *Mrdangam* and *Kanjira* (South Indian percussion forms), *dholak*, *pakhawaj*, and tabla (North Indian percussion forms). Oral tradition as a way of knowing may extend into non-performative sectors of the South Asian diaspora as well.

India has been described by researchers (Staal 1989; Coward 1989, 1991) as a 'mantra' culture.⁸ The importance of the word as a way of knowing does not lay in its written form but in the doing or performance through various repetitions. As Staal has pointed out, "in India language is not something with which you name something; it is something with which you do something" (Staal in Coward 1991:166). The power of the word lay in its repetition through voicing. In an oral tradition sound is accorded prominence. Texts or notations of tabla compositions, although present in musical colleges and elsewhere in India, are seen as secondary or supplementary aids in knowledge acquisition. Knowing a composition, Satwantji once told me, means being able to recite it. This message 'recitation is knowledge' was echoed by every teacher I met. Knowing through recitation, through attending to one's own sound production based on the sound of the teacher's voice and playing, is seen to take precedence over textual inscriptions or musical notation form.

In an oral tradition, such as that which is at work in the passing on of tabla technique, sensing through and with the body becomes the primary resource for acquiring and maintaining musical knowledge. Even though compositions may be written in some fashion, either by using the recently developed style of Indian notation or some variation of it, these inscriptions should be seen as a supplementary way of knowing.⁹ This is consistent with Ranade's findings in his study of oral tradition and the *Hindustani* musical system

⁸ Coward (1991:3) suggests that Hindus begin and end their days with the chanting of mantras. Many of the tabla players I met who practiced Hinduism stressed that the first thing they did upon rising in the morning was to recite all of the names of god before they began their morning tabla practice. Coward also points out that Muslims also give meaning to words through chanting them. The chanting of the Qur'an suggests that the power of the divine can be heard through the saying of sacred words (Coward 1991:5-6).

⁹See Appendix 1 for a sample of musical notation style.

(Ranade 1984).

Classes with the master take the form of repeating what he does in the way that he does. This includes various forms of gesturing in the body, placing the hands as he does on the tabla and listening to how he produces the desired sound of the *bols*. If the master sits in front of a student and plays a composition or exercise the student is required to mirror his motions. Similarly if the guru proceeds to recite the student is expected to do the same. Often classes are based on reciting the compositions first before playing actually begins. Developing an aesthetic sensibility toward *Hindustani* rhythm and sound, then, depends on reciting the language of the tabla.

Learning to play tabla necessitates voicing the corresponding sound of the stroke which could be *na*, *dha*, *tun*, *tete*, *takaterekete*, *dhin*, *dhun* or many others. Teachers refer to these sounds or *bols* as the "grammar of tabla". These syllables are then strung together to form patterns or phrases which, in turn, are used to construct various types of compositions. The language of tabla can be thought of as a series of patterns. For example, in a *kaida* composition the player is given a theme which is constructed from certain *bols*. Variations are performed from those given *bols* or syllables. Part of learning to play tabla involves learning to create patterns within this type of compositional structure.

But although tabla is talked about as a language it is important to stress that this 'language' is not taught as propositional knowledge. The sounds or *bols* which make up phrases which are compositions are not sentences or stories, as it were. There is no equivalent linguistic

meaning at work in learning to create compositions or variations within those compositions. However, there is, at times, an emphasis placed on developing the recitation of *bols* into a conversation with one's audience. Zakirji in particular stresses this type of recitation where he encourages his students to connect with their audiences in this way. It is possible to pose a type of question with a *bol* phrase such as *dha ti dha ge tina kena* by raising the pitch of the voice at the end of the phrase. Similarly in answering a question or in making a statement one could sound out *bols* by lowering the voice. And while there is no precise linguistic translation taking place in this performative context there seems to be a development of using the *bols* like a language when tabla students socialize with one another.

While I was living in California with Tim and Leen we would often 'speak' to each other using *bols*. Reciting the compositions in *tal* or in time as they have been passed on to the student is one way in which students converse when they are practicing together. But at times the practice of recitation turns informal and students begin to play around with the *bol* sounds not in any specific metre or *tal* structure but in a conversational style. It seems that any time I am around other tabla students, whether in North America or in India, this form of play takes place. *Dha ti dha ge tina kena? Na ge na ge na ge.*

I also experienced this form of recitational play between students during a recent tour (1996) with my teachers.¹⁰ Those of us who followed along on the west coast tour

¹⁰The "Percussion Maestros of North and South India" featured Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, Ustad Zakir Hussain, T.H. Vinayakram, Bhavani Shankar, Fazal Qureshi, Selva Ganesh and Ustad Sultan Khan on *sarangi*.

included Stefan from Vancouver, Steve from Portland, and Tim and Jim from California. Tim and Jim, both students of Swapan Chaudhuri, had followed the masters from their base in California, while Stefan, Steve and I joined them in Seattle. Travelling from Seattle to Vancouver turned into a two hour period of continuous recitation. When we stopped for gas we all gathered in a circle and recited various compositions from Punjab and Lucknow styles. However, the recitations didn't stop there. We were separated into two cars, the Canadians in one and the Californians in the other. At various times Tim and Jim pulled up alongside our car, rolled down their window and yelled out various compositions over the sounds of the highway. The recitations didn't stop until we gathered at my house in Vancouver and got out our tabla and began to play. It seems that when tabla students get together the conversation inevitably turns into a ground of learning or exchange of tabla knowledge through recitation.

Although the recitation of *bols* can develop into something like a conversation in both performative and informal practice sessions with tabla players in learning how to play compositions in the classical style and in a specific *tal* the student essentially relies upon acquiring skills in the body and the embodied mind. This is the case for playing the tabla as well as voicing the basic grammar. The example of learning the composition *dhin ne na ge dhin ne ghe ge na ge dhin ne na na ke ne* in Zakirji's class (see Chapter Three "California Dreaming"), suggests that knowing a composition is dependent on the student's ability to both pick up the *bols* with the voice and the hands simultaneously. However, being able to play a composition also depends upon the student's interpretation of the master's compositions. None of this is possible without the player first reciting the *bols*, either out

loud or under their breath, while at the same time feeling a pulse in the body. Feeling the rhythm translates into keeping the *tal* with the hand (by hitting the knee with the palm or one palm on top of another) either through marking quarter beats or whole beats. Voicing properly, in time, allows for a sense of where the *bols* are placed in relation to the prescribed cycle.

Counting, feeling the rhythm, and listening to how the teacher either speaks the *bols* or plays them are taught as forms of embodied knowledge. In learning how to play a composition the student is involved in learning how to count or how to calculate what at times can be extremely complex rhythmic patterns to fit into a time cycle. A player will know that he/she has calculated this correctly if the composition or ending *tihai* comes out on *sam*, the one of the following cycle. Here again the hand is used as a marker of beats, allowing for a visual and tactile sensing of the pulse.¹¹

There is, then, a complex mathematical structure involved in the science of tabla. Learning to count and calculate mathematically begins on day one in an apprentice's life. Counting is not taught as an abstract entity but as embodied knowledge. It is with the embodied mind that a player first learns compositional types and then begins to play with these structures. Improvising patterns within compositional types can only take place if the student knows how to feel the rhythm and count in *tal*. Improvisation depends on a keen

¹¹The thumb is used as an indicator to mark off four beats on each finger by touching each joint. Starting with the smallest finger the player moves up the finger until he/she reaches the finger tip and then starts with the bottom of the ring finger and so on until the index finger tip is reached. Using *tin tal* as an example, when the tabla player reaches the tip of the index finger he/she has reached the number sixteen. The player then moves onto the base of the smallest finger again to count out *sam*, the one of the next cycle.

understanding of numbers.¹²

Recitation of *bols* in *tal* requires a 'tuning in' to all of one's senses. In many classes I witnessed and experienced a deep confusion while learning compositions. It was not until the teacher had the class recite in *tal* that I and my fellow students started to understand a composition and feel the rhythm. Recitation also serves as a system of checks and balances for proper sound production and for the interpretation of the master's repertoire. One time Stefan was having problems remembering the whole of some compositions. His practice had become stagnant and unproductive. He mentioned that he had not been reciting for months. This was quite unusual for Stefan as he usually recited for quite some time before he actually sat down to play. I asked him if his lack of recitation was the reason why his practice was so fragmented. He suggested that this was the case, but also in not reciting the *bols* he found that the sound of his playing was also lacking. Correct sound production does seem to rely upon continued recitation. Listening to the voicing proves to be an effective check against the sound of the hands on the tabla.

Vision and Sound: Contesting ways of knowing

Crucial for the continuance of tabla as an oral tradition is the emphasis placed on hearing and listening to sound. As the teaching of tabla moves around the world, outside of India, this way of knowing and learning collides with Western modes of understanding. For those who take up the practice of tabla in North America knowing stems from vision.

Understanding is primarily based on reading and questioning texts. When tabla masters

¹²A player essentially learns, through listening and watching the master and then by his/her own experience, when to begin a *tihai* so that it ends on the beginning of the next cycle.

introduce orality as a way of learning in Canada and in America they are confronted with resistance and frustration from their students. When Riteshji first started to teach in Toronto he accommodated his students by allowing them to write down compositions while class was in session. Recently, however, he has changed this process by banning all writing of compositions until the end of class. Riteshji encountered much opposition over his new way of teaching. "They all hate me for this," Riteshji exclaimed. The sudden change in teaching and learning *bols* through the oral medium was precipitated by problems with his students not remembering their repertoire. They were not able to play the important cultural resources such as *kaidas*, *gats*, *tukras* and *relas* upon the teacher's request.

When Riteshji asked Amert, a tabla student of three years, to play a composition she had been taught two years prior she could not. "Let me look at my book," she said. When asked if she could play a shorter composition, a *tukra*, that she had been given two months prior to class she could not. Amert was essentially relying on notations to remember. In doing so, she had not properly picked up the rhythms and *bols*. When a player learns a composition on the spot, through recitation first, they tend to remember them by continued recitation and repetition of the *bols*. It is only through repetition that rhythms are sedimented in the hands, in the body and the embodied mind. There are, of course, major differences in the learning patterns of younger and more accomplished or senior students. Those who have been playing for some time tend to understand compositions and exercises more quickly than beginners. I very rarely saw Riteshji's senior students write down *bols* unless they were confronted with a difficult or complex variation.

Writing or reading compositions in Abbaji's classes was not at all a proper activity to engage in for beginner and intermediate students. This does not mean that my tabla brothers in Bombay did not refer to written notations of compositions. As students we were required to learn in the traditional way, through attending to the master's sound. It was only after a student's class was over that writing took place. Even then writing down the *bols* was overseen by one of Abbaji's senior disciples. Periodically I saw that the more experienced disciples kept their tabla books on their laps and would glance down at them when they encountered a particularly difficult spot in a composition.

Learning orally requires a student to concentrate on both the images and sound of the master. Referring to written compositions during this process severely restricts a student from hearing what is being presented to them. But also, copying the master means visually focusing on his every movement. And when a student reads a text instead of looking at his/her master the objective of picking up the *bols* and the master's way of doing may be missed.

Zakirji also expressed this message in one of his California classes I attended. Zakirji was teaching us a *kaida* composition in *tin tal*. His usual method of passing on a *kaida* was to present the theme very slowly and in segments. He played two phrases *dha ti ge dha ti ge ge*, followed by another phrase *na ge na na ge*, and then ended it with *tina kena*. Within a few minutes we were playing the first section or part of the theme. He then suggested that we think of the phrases as a sequence of numbers. *Dha ti ge* became one, *dha ti ge ge* become two, *na ge na na ge* became three and *tina kena* became four. Thinking about the

phrases in this way easily allows a student to create variations on the theme by changing the sequence of the numbered *bol* phrases.

After playing the first line of the theme, *dha ti ge dha ti ge ge na ge na na ge tina kena* (known as the *bhari* or full sound section of the theme) Zakirji asked us to play the ending line (known as *khali* where open bols such as *ge* or *dha* become closed strokes such as *ke* and *ta*). We were now playing a full theme, *dha ti ge dha ti ge ge na ge na na ge tina kena, ta ti ke ta ti ke ke na ge na na ge dhina gena*. A few students seemed confused when the second line of the theme was introduced. One student, a man in his early thirties, continually played *na* when he should have played *dha* and played *dha* when he should have played *na*. Zakirji yelled out to him to watch what he was doing. However the student continued to play incorrectly. Eventually Zakirji stopped the class and mentioned to the student once more that he was not playing the composition correctly. The *na/dha* confusion seemed to stem from the student not attending to Zakirji's hands. Instead he was reading the composition from a piece of paper which he kept in front of his tabla. Zakirji stressed that he should be looking at his teacher. Class started again but some, rather than playing, were busy writing down the variations. Zakirji seemed displeased and immediately stopped class again.

This is the problem. I have to tell you something. It is fine to write something down, look at it and play it. That does not give you the ability to listen to something and recognize it, watch it and register it. I love to do the easy way, okay write this down now look at it and play it. Normally if I have a difficult composition I do that. I say write this down, now play. Try as much as possible to catch it. It may take a few minutes longer but try and catch it. Imprint it here [in the hands] by watching as well as in here [in the ear] by listening. And so correcting this would help you to recognize what it

is that you are supposed to do. It takes a little bit longer. What would be a good idea is until I tell you to write it try not to write it. It is going to be tough but we're here to make it tough on you (Hussain 1996).

Learning to learn orally for students in North America continues to be an on-going challenge. It is difficult to acquire knowledge or technique through oral tradition if how one knows is by reading notation or inscriptions in books. Learning tabla in the oral way necessitates changing how one learns at the depth of habit. As Zakirji stated learning orally may take a little longer in the beginning and it may be difficult requiring much concentration but in the end the player will have the knowledge. In this tradition or way of knowing a player must ideally learn to catch what is being presented. In both Toronto and California classes the teachers did not deny text as a resource or extra-remembering device. Rather, Riteshji and Zakirji were attempting to displace knowing through the textual in learning tabla technique. Focusing on the written only serves to create a series of problems for both the teachers and students in teaching and learning tabla knowledge. What is at stake here is a struggle between Indian and Western knowledge systems.

Terekete Obsessions: Rhythms and Stories

In becoming a tabla player *riaz* or practice fast becomes the central focus of a musician's life. It is a total way of being and knowing. Learning how to count, how to feel the rhythms, to feel the *khali* and *the sam* are crucial for the development of tabla technique. Like many of my encounters in my tabla journey *riaz* always proved to be a humbling experience. Often I heard both masters and students say that there are no short cuts in learning this instrument. In other words, "you have to do the time."

My frustrations with tabla practice seemed to mirror those of other students. One of the first phrases I learned was *terekete* (or *tetekete*). Each *bol* should be played evenly allowing for a smooth, precise phrase. The difficulty in playing *terekete* lies in executing the final *te* of the phrase. When *terekete* is followed with a *dha* or *ta*, in moving from *te* to *ta* or *dha*, the *te* loses its sound. Stefan refers to this phenomenon as "the Cadbury secret, a real mystery".¹³ In my second year of practice I could not play *terekete* correctly. I went through four months of playing it in different compositions and in various exercises but nothing seemed to improve the sound quality or force of the final *te*. Stefan went through a similar *terekete* obsession in his practice the year before. He was extremely frustrated with practicing. All of our conversations eventually turned to *riaz* and to the problems of *terekete*. He focused on this phrase for most of the year in his attempts to get the sound just right. Eventually we both moved on to other problems with the hands.

Riaz is an important topic of conversation amongst tabla friends. In Indian and in North American tabla communities many stories circulate about long and sometimes physically painful accounts of *riaz* by masters and devoted disciples. In Bombay, Toronto, and in the Bay area I heard similar stories about Zakirji's extensive, strenuous *riaz*. The story always centred around the time of his ritual *chilla* where he would play day and night. Many mentioned that he tied a string to his hair and attached the string to the ceiling of his room so he could continue to stay awake to keep on practicing. Telling stories, such as this one, is yet another aspect of oral tradition in tabla communities. Zakirji's *chilla* episode signifies the importance of continual practice as a student of tabla. It is told by teachers and students

¹³Stefan is referring to the Cadbury chocolate company's television advertisement which poses the question of how the company gets its' caramilk filling inside the chocolate square.

alike in classes as well as in other social contexts such as when students gather to practice.

Other stories connected to the meaning and habit of practice reflect the personal rather than the physical pain of the tabla player. Swapanji spoke to me about his struggles with *riaz*.

When he started to learn tabla he was a young boy and had not really developed a dedication to the art form. He took tabla lessons because his father, an established medical doctor in a prominent Bengali community, demanded that he do so. Throughout much of his childhood and into his early adult life as an economics major in a Calcutta university Swapanji struggled with his father's insistence of daily *riaz*. Swapanji was intent on becoming an economist and moving to America. The direction of his life changed drastically when he was asked to accompany Ali Akbar Khan (*sarod* maestro) on stage one evening. The concert was broadcast on All India Radio (AIR). Swapanji received much praise and attention as a tabla artist from that point on. Suddenly he was in demand as a top notch tabla accompanist. Even though today Swapanji is a successful international tabla accompanist and soloist he still speaks bitterly about his many years of forced tabla practice. Being told to practice tabla seven days a week, for hours a day for nineteen years is not easily forgotten. However, he knows that had he not listened to his father's demands he would not be where he is today.

Swapanji's personal account of his trials with *riaz* are echoed by Riteshji in his classes with his students. No matter what Swapanji did in life his father insisted that he come back to the tabla, to *riaz*. Riteshji had at one time in his life given up *riaz*. He felt that photography was his calling and left tabla for a new career. One day as he was taking

pictures at the Ali Akbar College where Swapanji was teaching Swapanji confronted him about his new found interest. "No matter what you do," Swapanji said, "you will always come back to tabla." This encounter had a profound effect on Riteshji's life. Swapanji's words cut deep into Riteshji's soul. He soon developed a close relationship with Swapanji as a tabla master, eventually moved to Toronto with Joanna (a *Kathak* dancer and his wife at the time) and set up a school.

I often heard Swapanji's philosophy of practice embodied in Riteshji's teachings with his students. One evening while waiting for his senior students to gather for class I noticed Riteshji pacing up and down the corridor just outside of the studio. As usual Santosh, the youngest member of the class, was late. The others sat patiently, knowing that this time Santosh was going to feel the wrath of Riteshji's anger. About halfway through the class Santosh showed up at the door, took off his shoes and immediately started to apologize for his lateness. He had many reasons for coming late that evening but none of them seemed to sooth Riteshji's agitated state. Riteshji stopped class and spoke directly to Santosh about the importance of practice and showing respect for his teacher and his fellow students. Regardless of what was happening in his life at that moment, whether it was school related or a new girlfriend, the continuity of his life was tabla. "You will always come back to tabla," Riteshji stated.

Santosh's lateness provided Riteshji with an opening to discuss the meaning of *riaz as habit*. He believes that to progress as a tabla player and as a musician one needs to practice everyday no matter what obstacles life presents. Nothing should stop riaz, not the death of a loved one, nor illness in the family, falling in love or falling out of love. A tabla student

must practice when he/she is experiencing all emotions such as love, hate, anger or sadness.¹⁴ Only then will a player begin to express or emote in playing a composition.

Zakirji too discusses the development of a tabla player or musician as stemming from a student's lived experiences in the world. In doing so, he draws an analogy between Indian dancers and musicians.

It's a lived experience, that is what it is. That's important. I mean look at a dancer. A young dancer is going to be much different than a more seasoned veteran. A seasoned veteran has lived through the *rasas*. A seasoned veteran has seen the pain, has seen the love, has been made love to, has been transported to various parts of one's awareness and felt those tingling sensations that exist there and then is able to express those in her *abhinaya*.¹⁵ But a young dancer who is a teenager, who is possibly a virgin may not necessarily know anything about love, may not necessarily know anything about what Radha and Krishna felt or what *bhakti* is, devotion is, what surrender is, what is love or anything (Hussain 1995).

Stories about *riaz* tend to focus on issues of devotion and dedication to one's teacher and to the discipline of practice as daily habit. Even though tales are told about Zakirji's amazing feats of long, sustained practice he stressed that good *riaz* does not depend on the length of practice but on what and how one practices. "I'm not of the opinion that one should

¹⁴ Riteshji is referring to the Indian aesthetic known as *rasa*. Translated roughly as 'taste', 'essence' or 'beauty' the principles of *rasa* can be found in the *Natya Shastra*, a Sanskrit treatise on dance, drama, and music. According to the *Natya Shastra* there are nine such principles in Indian performance theory. In Indian dance the erotic sentiment or *srngara rasa* is the most predominant *rasa* evoked. The others are *hasya* (comic), *bibhatsa* (odious), *santa* (peaceful), *raudra* (pathetic), *vira* (heroic), *bhayanka* (terrible), and *adbhuta* (marvellous). It is interesting to note that when I asked various tabla players about communicating emotion or *rasa* in their playing they inevitably spoke about the relation between dance and emotion.

¹⁵ *Abhinaya* includes all of those stylized gestures (of the hands, face, body) which a dancer uses to portray male and female characters in narrating a story. Literally it means "to bring forth". I have found that among South Indian dancers (Nuttall 1991), the term *abhinaya* is used interchangeably with *bhava* or emotion.

practice fifteen hours a day" (Hussain 1995). He suggests to his students to practice only if they are focused and attending to what they are doing.

If you don't know what you are doing and not absorbing the information that is coming from your practice to you, what's the point? Then you are just mechanical and your hands are running away with it and your mind is just not there with it when they both need to be together. So therefore as long as you are focused you practice. Then also I emphasize a lot to my students that they must learn vocabulary and that means either singing/reciting or just playing the vocabulary which is the grammar, which is actually *kaidas*. I don't encourage them to play fast compositions or *relas*. I just say work on the vocabulary, the grammar, the *kaidas*, things that require focus, concentration and creativity (Hussain 1995).

Zakirji, like his father, stresses the importance of recitation in one's daily *riaz* routine.

Ethnomusicologists (Neuman 1980; Kippen 1988) have referred to this part of practice as silent *riaz* where the player either voices the *bols* or does *riaz* of the mind. Practice of the mind, as Kippen discusses it, is where the player thinks about how she/he should do the physical playing (Kippen 1988:13). None of the tabla players I met and developed friendships with used this term to describe what they do when they practice. Zakirji in particular discusses the habit of *riaz* as a total way of being. A student should not think of practice as segmented into different parts but rather he/she should view *riaz* as an on-going singular activity which takes place throughout the day.

You have to recite to get your brain to work and your brain has to work so that your hands can get the signal to be able to do what it has to do. It's not like there are different aspects of one *riaz*, there is just one *riaz*. When the old masters said that they were practicing for eighteen hours a day they weren't actually playing for eighteen hours a day. They may have been playing for eight hours a day but the rest of the time they were singing, reciting, conversing--you know collaborating or discussing rhythms and so on. That is what happened. In the olden days they had very little to do. There were no TVs, no radios, and so this is what they did all day long. I have seen great masters who would sit in their living rooms all day long just singing. These great vocal masters, vocalists were just singing all day. And it was their practice. Nothing else to do--just sing. Someone may come to visit to sit

down and talk with him or have a cup of tea. All the while they are talking or singing and so on. The guy leaves and they are back to their singing. It was a daily routine, all day long. So, I have seen some great tabla players who would just sit all day next to their tabla. The tabla was always there so if they felt like turning around and playing a little they did. It was always within reach. Or when the students were there and they were hanging out half the time, through the day, they were just reciting, singing rhythms. So it is all that.

Zakirji's reflections on the "olden days" of a musician's life provides insight into the significance of practice as lived experience. His tale of practice also sheds light on the myth of accomplished musicians physically performing *riaz* every hour of the day and night. As Zakirji mentioned the masters were not physically playing for eighteen hours of the day they were also reciting, conversing and interacting with other colleagues. Here *riaz* is depicted as centring around an intense social lifestyle. In essence life was practice, *riaz* was habit.

Today the mythology which centres on extreme physical practice still resonates with students who attempt to develop as tabla players and musicians. The social atmosphere of living with other students, reciting and learning with others, drinking tea, and playing until the small hours of the morning continues to be a desired space. The times of intense learning and practice, however, may only take place at certain times of the year when students gather to learn from the master. If a player lives in a thriving musical community such as Toronto where the teacher lives and works most of the year students may get more of a constant dose of learning in this way. In communities such as Vancouver, however, many tabla players complain of living in musical isolation for most of the year. When opportunities arise to socialize with other tabla students these interactions tend to result in continuous practice sessions.

The Master's Message

More often than not in a master's teachings there is a figurative message which exists alongside his literal, practical lesson for the day (Nuttall 1996). For example, tabla masters will invoke a story from their lives, from one of the epics (the Mahabharata or the Ramayana) or from other religious texts to explain why a disciple is having difficulty in performing certain techniques in the hands. The contexts in which these stories are told, such as Riteshji's account of Drona the archer from the Mahabharata (see Chapter 3 "Tabla Tales"), stem from the student either repeating or failing to repeat specific bodily practices and hand/finger techniques. Riteshji's version of Drona the archer, in this instance, focused on the proper placement and use of the thumb in archery. One could easily draw an analogy with the practice of tabla where the thumb must 'hang out' in unison with the rest of the hand in order for the player to execute fingering properly. Riteshji reinforced his position on the importance of the thumb when he ended the story of Drona by mentioning that the young archer, Ekalavaya, must cut off his thumb as payment to the master for spying on his teachings. While the other students in the room, Vikas and Amert, thought that Riteshji was making a comment on playing proper technique I felt that he was, in part, commenting on my position as an outsider or spy. Was he uneasy about my association with another teacher? Was he questioning my dedication as a tabla student? Perhaps he was questioning the dedication of others as well. After all it seemed that it was Vikas's backward thumb motion that precipitated Riteshji's telling of the story.

Recently Kirin Narayan (1993) has written about her encounters with a Hindu spiritual master, Swamiji, who teaches by passing on stories to his disciples. In telling his stories, or versions of stories from Sanskritic spiritual texts, Swamiji improvises on an already

established narrative as he goes along (Narayan 1993:43). The telling of a story is altered according to who is present and the context in which it is being told. In an attempt to give meaning to these stories in her own life Narayan comes to the conclusion that her guru leaves the moral of the tale and his reason for telling it open. Messages are ambiguous and are interpreted in different ways by different people depending on their own lived experiences (Narayan 1993:43). The master's message, in the teaching of tabla, is also subject to differing interpretations by disciples.

Although teachers rely upon cultural narratives such as the epics to present both moral and literal messages to their students tabla masters also draw from personal experiences in life to explain rhythms, techniques and even problems with tempo. In class Zakirji drew a parallel between a student's tendency to increase tempo in tabla playing with the nature of human beings as consuming animals who always want more material things in life. People want to go further faster and so why should playing tabla be any different? Zakirji's comments on life as hectic and fast-paced were brought on by student concern over the inevitable increase in tempo and questions about how to control the hands.

The relationships between masters and students, then, are multi-faceted ones. The interactions which take place inside and outside of class have many meanings. And while some masters develop a repertoire of stories as part of their teachings or may rely upon analogies or metaphors from personal experiences others, such as Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, mainly focus on the practical aspects on teaching tabla to students. There is no unified system which dictates how a master is to communicate to his disciples. In this sense the way each master teaches is unique.

Stories about Feet

Trinh Minh-Ha's discussion of women as keepers and transmitters of oral tradition sheds some light on the connection between memory, sensing and the telling of stories. Trinh mentions that "the world's earliest archives or libraries were the memories of women. Patiently transmitted from mouth to ear, body to body, hand to hand. In the process of story telling, speaking and listening refer to realities that do not involve just the imagination. The speech is seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched. It destroys, brings to life, nurtures" (Minh-Ha 1989:121). The stories of tabla are typically embedded in the sensual, of touching and being touched. In India, one of the very first encounters a disciple has with a master is the touching of feet. The relationship is a reciprocal one, you are touched or given blessings as you touch the master's feet. This is a sensuous connection between two people, a sacred thing. It signifies love, devotion, respect and reverence.

It seems that in tabla communities stories about feet are multiple and are always connected in some way to the sacred nature of the master and/or the tabla. Once in Zakirji's class I made the mistake of stretching my legs while sitting in the front row of the senior class. I had, momentarily, forgot that I was pointing my feet at Zakirji's body and tabla. He stopped the class to remind me (and others) about the importance of acting respectfully toward the drum. The context in which we were learning was sacred, the tabla itself was a sacred instrument and so one should not, out of politeness, point something as unclean as one's feet toward the tabla.

The concept of feet as impure surfaced in another story I heard in Vancouver. It was the story of a young tabla apprentice who, in travelling to a concert, placed his tabla parallel to

his feet in the car. The other tabla players in the vehicle were shocked by this young Indian apprentice who dared to rest his tabla so close to his feet. It seems that if you treat the tabla in this way bad luck is most surely to follow. Putting feet on or near the tabla shows little respect for the sacredness of the instrument.

Stories in tabla communities, whether they focus on the physical or personal struggles of *riaz*, issues of dedication to the master and to the instrument or about the sacredness of the drum, are ambiguous. As Trinh Minh-Ha suggests, "Each story is at once a fragment and a whole; a whole within a whole. And the same story has always been changing, for things which do not shift and grow cannot continue to circulate" (Minh-Ha 1989:123). Stories are always changing and circulating, in part, because they are performed. For disciples, meaning arises from the telling of tales or stories which connect in a most practical way to the difficulties of learning tabla technique and tabla culture.

In this chapter I have argued that learning and teaching the cultural are embodied activities. The continuance of cultural memory depends, in part, on the performances of the body. Remembering the past is not just the process of a 'coding' in the mind. Rather, tabla players remember the past by enacting it. In essence we remember with all our senses. Memory is established in the voice through recitations, in the hands through touch repetition, in the eyes through images of the teacher as well as in the embodied mind.

In creating a theory of embodied memory I have also argued for a concept of the body as a habitual one. The past, as Connerton stresses, becomes sedimented in our social habit memories. Continuity of the past relies upon enacting Indian ways of knowing and learning

through oral tradition. Learning to play the tabla orally, however, constitutes only one aspect of this oral tradition. Involved in the passing on of tabla knowledge is a repertoire of stories connected to the importance of practice, the significance of the guru-disciple institution and the sacredness of the tabla itself. In various ways the stories about tabla and tabla players connect to the performances of the body.

CHAPTER SIX

TABLASCAPES: A STUDY OF THE INTERCULTURAL

Global and Local Articulations

Increasingly the practice and performance of *Hindustani* tabla is becoming an international phenomenon. Although rooted in Indian and diaspora cultures tabla is played by drummers from various cultural, ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. Today a tabla player could just as easily be German, Italian, Australian, Canadian, American, Japanese, South African or Indian (not to mention the possible multiplicity of hyphenated identities arising from these localities). And although some students develop into full time musicians I have met others, from India, North America, and Europe, who are also chefs, sales clerks, doctors, lawyers, businessmen and women, computer analysts, architects, school teachers and house painters.

Tabla players are actively involved in creating musical and cultural communities around the globe. They are building networks of alliances with other tabla players, other percussionists as well as with other musicians both inside and outside of the *Hindustani* and *Karnatic* classical music traditions. In creating and maintaining their communities tabla players are incorporating both local and global elements. These moments of networking or community building flow back and forth between cultural borders, between cultural music systems.

The Toronto, Californian/West Coast communities that I have described in previous chapters account for only a few of the many emerging organizations, schools or groups of tabla artists in the North American context. At the same time these tabla communities are

connected to larger groups (*gharanas*) in India. In the North American context alone the continuous movement of masters and disciples is overwhelming. While I attended Zakirji's classes in Berkeley, other students arrived from such places as Edmonton Alberta, Vancouver British Columbia, Los Angeles California, Bremen Germany, Ghent Belgium, and Detroit Michigan. In-between giving classes and co-running a record label Zakirji flew off to Switzerland and India and then returned to California all within a week and a half. Contemporary tabla players are on the move.¹

In an analysis of lived experience it is necessary to account for both local and global links between individuals and communities wherever they may be. These cultural flows are complex, multiple, and tied to an ever increasing number of other musical cultures. Musicologists and anthropologists alike need to develop new ways of talking about musical communities, their complexities, and the connecting webs of musical styles, forms, and players which constitute them. In doing so, it is essential to challenge and re-conceptualize the global/local and dominant/minority dualisms which are characteristic of past studies of ethnicity and deterritorialized peoples.

Recent diaspora and intercultural studies have shown that anthropological encounters are increasingly based in multiple locations (Marcus 1986; Clifford 1997, 1993). The ethnographic stories I presented in Chapters one, two, and three include activities/interactions from various localities such as Bombay, Vancouver, Toronto, Seattle,

¹It is important to note that other tabla players can and do lead more of a localized existence. Although a limited number of tabla players are increasingly travelling and performing outside of India many do not.

and the Bay area of California. In turn the players in these communities are connected to other players throughout the world. It seems that developing multi-local ethnographies will be crucial for a contemporary anthropology. Creating the necessary tools for a successful multi-local ethnography requires that the analyst attend to the phenomenon of subjects living their lives as simultaneously here (local) and there (global).

Arjun Appadurai (1991) provides such an avenue in his theory of 'ethnoscapes'. Appadurai uses the idea of ethnoscapes in an attempt to capture the dynamic flow of people (immigrants, tourists, guest workers etc.) and things as they move around the globe.

Appadurai suggests that ethnographers replace older conceptions of communities, villages and localities (1991:209) with the more ambiguous term scapes (these include ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finascapes and ideoscapes) (Appadurai 1990). "The landscapes of group identity--the ethnoscapes--around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious or culturally homogeneous" (Appadurai 1991:191).

Re-conceptualizing cultural movement in this way, as scapes or networks of interactions and the exchange of commodities, allows the analyst to envision groups/individuals as both here (local) and elsewhere at the same time. How, then, are we to understand locality in this ethno-exploding, fast moving, transcultural world? Appadurai suggests that "the task of ethnography now becomes the unravelling of a conundrum: what is the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalized, deterritorialized world? (Appadurai 1991:196).

Crucial to the development of a multi-local ethnography and the study of cosmopolitan

cultural forms is the task of rendering locality or subjectivity without resorting to or presupposing "either the authority of the Western experience or the models derived from that experience" (Appadurai 1991:192). Appadurai (1997) takes this idea further in a recent discussion on contemporary art in Asia. He asks, how are we to study globalization as processes which promote the idea of Asia as both active and critical in these processes? The constant in all these cultural flows or movements is the body. Cultural bodies are the site of the local. Global processes, Appadurai notes, are localized upon and into bodies in the most extreme forms (Appadurai 1997). Theorizing a multi-local ethnography will also depend upon developing sophisticated concepts of transcultural and travelling bodies.

Sites of Crossing: Studying Interculturalism

Tablascales provide a good way to think about the cultural processes at work in tabla communities around the world.² Like travelling bodies tablascales are constantly moving back and forth between borders, diasporas, and other ethnoscales or localities. It is essential to note, however, that cultural flows such as the ones tabla players are involved in are not uni-directional. As Clifford points out in his article *Sites of Crossing: Borders and Diasporas in the Late 20th Century* (1993) "cultural flows...are not linear but involve complex branches and feedback loops" (Clifford 1993:3).³ These complex cultural flows which branch out and feedback into each other form the basis for a study of the

²It is important to stress that although tablascales emerge from and are dependent upon the South Asian diaspora (economically, socially, and politically) they also extend beyond it. In a sense tabla communities enjoy a certain amount of autonomy from the established *Hindustani* musical circles in diaspora contexts because the players that constitute these communities are also European, African, and other percussionists as well as South Asian.

³See also Clifford (1997) *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, for more about the relation between diaspora and border cultures and transcultural processes.

intercultural. According to Clifford "border and diaspora cultures are produced through intercultural experiences of crossing" (Clifford 1993:3). Studying the intercultural necessitates that researchers account for many kinds of crossings. People moving between cultures of origin and the newly formed or on-going diaspora cultures are one such type of crossing. However, in the case of tabla players there are multiple crossings taking place between musical and cultural contexts. Players of non-Indian origin are also crossing borders into diaspora and Indian musical cultures in increasingly larger numbers than ever before.

Although the presence of non-Indian players, in some ways, re-configures tabla music as something other than classical or *Hindustani* I have also found that many players of South Asian origin are also re-inventing and transforming the sounds of tabla into other styles and types of music. The hybridization, mixing or fusion of tabla sounds and rhythms with jazz, pop or other musical styles has formed the basis for a vibrant, ever-expanding category of world music. Players, such as Zakirji who collaborated with other Indian percussionists and John McClaughlin to form Shakti, created the North American based Rhythm Experience and Diga Rhythm Bands, and Trilok Gurtu, who also helped to merge tabla with John McClaughlin's jazz fusion style have been instrumental in promoting the kind of musical atmosphere necessary for the development and proliferation of tabla as a transglobal phenomenon.

The emergence of tabla as a celebrated artistic form and as part of world music, however, must be seen as stemming from the movements and labours of the tabla masters in India

who were active in re-creating tabla as both a solo and accompaniment instrument.⁴

Hindustani music, its' players and the instruments which constitute it were originally connected to the Mogul courts in the North of India.⁵ And as Zakirji stressed in one interview:

...tabla has existed in its form which [has been] pretty much the same for the last couple of hundred years. And it has been developing in its shape and form that it is in ...its repertoire is being developed and so on. There are photographs⁶ of tabla which exist that can date back to almost the sixteenth century. So it has been around that long. It is not like a very quick instant that [tabla] came about and suddenly shot to the top of the world in India. No, it did not, it has been there for a long time. But I think whether you talk about *sitar* or *sarod* or *vina* or tabla or *pakhawaj* or *sarangi* none of these things would have come to the forefront of mass recognition if they had not been brought to the masses. Fifty years ago they were in the palaces and they stayed there. Twenty years ago they were in the masses but it was very limited simply because television exposure was not there, television exposure on a world wide basis was not there and radio was not so well established. So it was limited (Hussain 1995).

The re-invention/reformation of tabla outside of court patronage in the early parts of the twentieth century was indeed a crucial element for the continuance and development of tabla and *Hindustani* classical music in India.⁷ Zakirji attributes the success of this movement to the contributions of tabla masters such as his father, Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, Pandit Kishen Maharaj and Pandit Shanta Prasad. According to Zakirji:

...it was at the time when there was very little media coverage available,

⁴Kippen (1991) has written about the changing social status of tabla players over the last 100 years. His article provides a preliminary sketch of the various images of tabla players in Indian cultures. Where once public perceptions associated tabla players with a 'brothel' (courts and salons) existence (Kippen 1991:17) today tabla artists are out in the public domain performing at conferences, music schools and colleges (Kippen 1991:21).

⁵Ethnomusicologist Joan Erdman outlines how the patronage of tabla music changed from the court system to a more public one in Rajasthan (Erdman 1985)

⁶Zakirji is, I believe, referring to Moghul paintings which provide images of tabla.

conservatism was at its peak, tabla was still a second class instrument and the tabla player was still a lowly being on the ladder of Indian classical music. So to have taken that and worked with that and then developed it up to a point where these people became household names and were in demand as such that audiences demanded to see them with certain musicians--to have achieved that level of acceptance and popularity with such little media attention and support and coverage is pretty amazing (Hussain 1995).

Along with other tabla masters such as Pandit Kishen Maharaj of Benares, and Ustad Ahmedjan Thirakwa of Delhi, Ustad Alla Rakha Khan's achievements in the world of *Hindustani* classical music have been far reaching. His association with Ravi Shankar (sitarist) in the 1960s and 70s brought tabla and *Hindustani* classical music to millions of people. This literally opened the door for the study of tabla in North America and Europe. The phenomenon of tabla playing and its development in Canada and the States can be seen as stemming from Alla Rakha's involvement with percussionists in America and elsewhere.⁷ The types of crossings (both musical and cultural) for tabla masters such as Ustad Alla Rakha were located within the South Asian diaspora cultures as well as within the emerging rock cultures in North America and Europe.⁸

Mediascapes

In the past within the South Asian diaspora classical music lovers could attend public concerts, workshops or perhaps home gatherings (*mehfils*). Today tabla moves quickly

⁷Ustad Alla Rakha developed relationships with percussionists Mickey Hart, Buddy Rich and others. Between 1968-69 Ustad Alla Rakha also began to teach tabla in various cities in the United States. In 1970 Ustad Zakir Hussain immigrated to America and started teaching as well.

⁸Other tabla masters who have played significant roles in re-establishing tabla either within classical music circles or beyond them include; Chattur Lal, Kumar Bose, MahaParush Mishra, Santa Prasad, Shankar Ghosh, Anindo Chatterjee, Shafat Ahmed Khan, Shafquat Hussain, Kishen Maharaj, Swapan Chaudhuri and many others.

from one locale to another through various mediums such as video and TV or cassettes and CDs, through the internet (on-line tabla classes, discussions and information/web pages) as well as through public concert events. Media technology has not only influenced the types of venues used for classical *Hindustani* music it has also helped to promote and diffuse various tabla images and sounds around the world.

The development of mediascapes such as the ones outlined above have also changed, to some extent, how and when tabla players communicate with each other in-between class activities. Some tabla players track other players through internet e-mailing systems. As tabla students travel from North America to India in the winters for the classical music season they connect with others back home instantaneously. Computer technology is yet another way in which players circulate stories about other musicians or the masters and exchange compositions.

Other Tabla Crossings

The crossing over of non-South Asian players into tabla communities has changed how musicians communicate with each other but it has also changed tabla music stylistically. Zakirji attributes some stylistic change to the presence of non-South Asians in the learning and performance of tabla. I asked him if his teaching and performance of tabla outside of India was changing tabla tradition.

I don't think I'm changing it, what is happening is whoever is embracing it is expressing it in his or her own fashion. Now the people who are taking this tradition on are not just Indians any more; they are Africans or Australians or Germans and so their approach to it is their's and therefore it is different. And therefore it technically changes, it creatively changes...because they have their own approach, they have their own way of looking at music, at rhythm,

at patterns, at accents. They have heard jazz, they have heard Western classical music and all that so they have their own approach. It is not Indian any more so therefore it is different. And I think my contribution can only be that I have helped it to be globally available. And people all over the globe who are embracing it are actually changing the way it looks because it is becoming part of their vocabulary and therefore it is becoming a tradition with a language that is more universal. It's making more sense to people in South Africa at the same time to people in Argentina at the same time to people in Tokyo (Hussain 1995).

Tabla is indeed becoming a "language which is more universal". For South Asians like Amar, Jai and Santosh in Toronto tabla can just as easily symbolize Indian tradition and culture while at other times it can be used to represent Canadian or transglobal experiences. The Toronto Tabla Ensemble sees its objective as a collaboration of musical peoples, styles and forms. These types of musical groups are involved in fusing together often diverse rhythmic structures, patterns, and traditions such as Japanese taiko, African darbuka and Indian tabla.

In San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver, Toronto and other cities around the world, tabla players are also actively re-forming tabla patterns and rhythms with other percussive influences into their performances. For musicians such as Peter⁹ who lives in San Francisco and Leen¹⁰ who lives in Ghent playing outside of the *Hindustani* musical tradition is seen as the only path to take economically and artistically. And while they love to play classically it is important for them to have their own 'voices' heard and create their own

⁹Peter has recently been fusing tabla rhythms with various musical styles in his band *Warm Wires* which is based out of San Francisco. The band mixes acoustic and electric guitar with Indian *sarangi* and tabla.

¹⁰Leen actively collaborates with various musicians in Europe. In our interviews Leen mentioned that she hopes to bring together diverse influences such as differing styles of flamenco dance and music and tabla patterns/sounds into her recorded and live performances.

musical niche. Other musicians such as Tim and Jim who are *gurubhais* of the Lucknow *gharana* perform tabla duets in Oakland, San Francisco and surrounding areas. Although they are, in part, consciously reproducing Lucknow compositions they are also changing tabla tradition into something which is their's, something which is musically different from Hindustani. Often in Toronto and in California I heard various students such as Santosh, Leen and Peter declare "tabla is something no one can take away from me." Tabla, then, becomes a significant element in identity construction whether that identity is 'musician', 'percussionist', 'Indian', 'Canadian', 'American' etc.

The routes that tabla players travel today suggest that tabla music will continue to be re-invented or transformed in various ways. These re-inventions, fusions or mixings are felt and heard in India as well as in the diaspora cultures. Fazal Quershi's collaborative efforts with the Swedish group Mynta is an interesting case in point. In November of 1987 Fazal toured Europe with his own Indian fusion band Divya. After playing a concert in Stockholm, which had been arranged by Mynta, he was asked to record with the Swedish musicians. Over the years Fazal has toured with the group in Europe and in India. Today Mynta plays to full houses in Bombay, Bangalore as well as in other Indian cities. In their performances and recordings they have brought together diverse musical elements such as Swedish folk, Indian classical and American rap.

Mapping transcultural experiences through sites of crossing leads the analyst to a multi-layered set of lived experiences and meanings. Although I have explored some of the connections between various tabla players, communities and locales these are partial ones. Crossing sites involves on-going moments of network building, communication and include

the passing on of tabla knowledge, technique, and ways of being. Central to the study of intercultural experiences is this continuous movement of people and things branching out and looping back. The travelling nature of people and sound, of players and their music, demands that researchers focus on the emerging ethnoscaples of group and individual identities which make up these cultural flows between diasporas and other contexts. These cultural flows are fuelled, in part, by the circulation and consumption of classical *Hindustani* tabla as well as by the various reformations and re-inventions of tabla into world and other music categories. It is difficult to make a living as a classical tabla player in Indian and diaspora contexts. Classical Indian music enjoys a limited but faithful audience world wide. As such tabla players (both South Asian and others) actively search out alternative musical contexts. It is in these newly formed alternative spaces where tabla is being re-invented as a "tradition with a language which is more universal."

Further research into the relation between Indian and diaspora musical systems and communities could focus on the efforts of instrumental and/or vocal masters such as Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Ali Akbar Khan (sarodist) and Pandit Jasraj (vocalist) as well as the tabla masters who accompanied them to establish *Hindustani* music institutions in California and other locales in North America and Europe over the past forty years. Life histories of tabla masters such as Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, Ustad Zakir Hussain, Pandit Kishen Maharaj, Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri and others which document the transition of tabla from an accompaniment instrument of the court system to a celebrated solo artistic form would also prove to be a beneficial avenue of investigation.

Changing Models: Gurus and Disciples

At the very centre of tablascape or communities is the presence and authority of the master. As tabla and tabla masters travel to other parts of the globe outside of India the teaching of tradition and technique changes somewhat to account for other ways of seeing, knowing and living. And within India the lived relations between tabla gurus and disciples are also in transition. Past studies of tabla communities (Neuman 1980; Kippen 1988) have described the guru-disciple or ustad-shagird tradition as one which is modelled after the familial father and son relationship. In Abbaji's school in Bombay this type of fictive kin relation is still sought after and established.¹¹ Even though relatively few students are female it is important to acknowledge the inclusion of father and daughter relations as well. At the time of my apprenticeship in Abbaji's school (1995) there were approximately five to six women attending regular classes out of a total of fifty students.

Abbaji's school combines both the traditional guru-shishya model with the more modern college type of atmosphere. As a tabla master and celebrated performer Abbaji is in great demand. Many students travel from various parts of India, Europe, North America, Japan, and elsewhere to learn tabla from the head of the Punjab *gharana* in the winter seasons (October-May). The large number of students necessitated establishing an Institute where disciples could regularly attend classes each week. In Abbaji's absence classes continue on with the help of one of his senior disciples, Ashok. The introduction of the Institute

¹¹Although I found the father/son-daughter ideal at work in Abbaji's school this was not the case in every master-disciple relationship that I encountered with other teachers in Bombay and Delhi. In situations where the guru is close to the age group of the student relations tend to follow the lines of elder brother to brother or brother to sister rather than father to son/daughter.

accommodates the increase in tabla students and yet allows for the development of close interpersonal relations between student and master. In the winter months especially it is inevitable that students connect with the master and other disciples outside of class whether at concerts or other smaller types of musical gatherings.

Although the father-son/daughter model of social interaction is still prevalent within the Bombay-Punjab *gharana* it has not travelled to or been reproduced in diaspora cultures. In the North American context tabla masters develop different types of relationships with their students which include: brother/sister, brother/brother, uncle/nephew, uncle/niece as well as relations built on notions of friendship. Within Riteshji's school there exists a strong bond of brotherhood between the senior students and Riteshji. Jai, Amar, Santosh and Ed relate to their teacher as a brother/friend in one minute and yet defer to him as a guru in the next minute. Living the life of a tabla student in this context requires a continuous negotiation between interacting with and viewing the teacher as both close friend and master.¹²

Therefore there is a constant tension between a relationship based on friendship which involves equal power relations and a relationship founded upon the guru-disciple tradition which suggests unequal relations of power.

¹²Often tabla students mentioned that the most difficult part of the guru-disciple relationship was this constant movement between the teacher as close friend and master. In developing intimate ties with a master the master can get involved in many aspects of a student's life. In times where the teacher inquires about relationships with girlfriends, boyfriends or parents, items not directly related to playing tabla, I have witnessed deep emotional struggles with students holding back information about these other parts of their lives. Establishing a relationship with a tabla teacher can translate into that teacher becoming involved in all or many aspects of the student's life. This part of the guru-disciple relation seems to come as a surprise to some students in the North American communities.

Zakirji too develops close friendships with his students in North America. Each relationship is unique in that he allows the student to initiate the direction of the relationship from the first moments of their meeting. For some Zakirji may become like an elder brother, a friend-teacher, father-figure or a guru. One of Zakirji's senior students, Michael, suggested that Zakirji relates to his students on a level that they want or need and while some want a close, personal relationship with him others are "so in awe of him that they can't have a friend relationship" (Lewis 1995). Even though he does not demand physical acts of humility from his students such as touching feet Zakirji enjoys a tremendous amount of respect from drummers who become his students. At times, in North America, this respect does translate into touching feet, carrying his tabla or arranging flights, places to stay, eat, etc.

I don't demand or ask my students to respect me probably because they have been to India and they have seen how things are over there, how teachers are treated or maybe they have a conception of what they have heard or read about what a guru is and so on. They probably have ideas in their head about what students should be doing towards a guru, being towards a guru. Apart from that I think probably they have seen what I do and maybe that makes them feel that I deserve their respect and if that is the case then that is what happens. I don't demand any physical action of respect.

I don't demand that they touch my feet. I don't demand that they bow to me or carry my drums for me or any such thing or iron my clothes for me. If they want to carry my drums for me they do that but it is because they want to I never ask them. I'm sure there are other musicians, certain other types of musicians, who feel that this is also part of the discipline, that this is part of the process and that to be of service to your teacher means to learn to be humble. So they feel that that is one aspect of your learning, one area of your studies so they enforce these rules on students but I don't. I probably don't because I know that they already know about it and they have seen it happen and so they know what to do or I just feel that I get enough respect from them anyway and so it's fine. I prefer to be more on a friendly term with my students. I prefer to be close to them I don't prefer to be away from them. I don't want to be a pedestal higher than them because then I am not able to be available to them completely. I'm only available to them as a guru and therefore there is this definite distinction between the space that I occupy and the place that they occupy.

...I don't like to be put in an area where I have to act formal, where I have to be formal and I have to be of a higher standard of person so I look down on my students and they look up at me. It's just not the way I am. And so that is the way I am with my students--just be friends with me. And in more ways it is like an elder brother or even in some ways a father figure. You can be friends with your father but is very difficult to be friends with your teacher or guru. Possibly you can be friends with your teacher but not necessarily with your guru...The approach of a student is still expected to be of the old type [obedient, subservient] and I just don't cater to that. I would rather have my student tell me Zakirji I'm not happy with this or you know why is something black and not yellow or whatever or you shouldn't have done this Zakirji. I don't want to be beyond reproach. I just want to be like...I don't know maybe I'm afraid that if I'm a teacher of the old guru variety I will be so much up in the clouds that I'll miss a lot in the realm of reality (Hussain 1995).

The inclusion of the guru as friend in diaspora cultures suggests that the master-student tradition, at least in the Toronto and Californian tabla communities, is undergoing a significant transition. This sometimes formal, sometimes informal type of relationship is always shifting ground. Throughout his many years studying and performing with Zakirji Michael has felt unsure about his relationship with his teacher-friend. Because Michael and Zakirji were of similar age Michael decided to tie strings with Abbaji, who is an older man and Zakirji's teacher.¹³ "It was safer to do it with Abbaji", said Michael. He had sensed that Zakirji didn't want formalized relationships with his Western students and so tying strings with Abbaji seemed more plausible. "Tying *ganda* with Abbaji was a way of being close to Zakir, of moving into the school" (Lewis 1995). Although Michael has not formally tied strings with Zakirji he mentions that there is definitely a space between him as a student and Zakirji as a teacher and while at other times he thinks of Zakirji as a

¹³Tying strings (*ganda bandhan*) with a guru or ustad signifies a bond of loyalty and commitment for both the teacher and student. Stories circulate in various communities about the importance of staying loyal to the teacher one has tied strings with. Swapanji in particular stressed that the guru has the power to take away the skills of a student who has suddenly become disloyal by taking up with another teacher (Chaudhuri 1995).

musician and fellow performer he is never an equal but always a student (Lewis 1995).¹⁴ Others, such as Leen, have stressed that their relationship to Zakirji has changed over time. "I feel more comfortable with him now", says Leen. "In the beginning he was more of a god to me than anything but now he is coming down, he is like a brother" (Minton 1995).

Traditionally the guru-disciple institution has been reproduced through the ceremonial tying of threads where students and teachers pledge to bond for life. The absence of this ritual in diaspora cultures does not translate into superficial guru-shishya relationships. In fact quite the opposite occurs. Many seek out and establish close, intimate connections with their tabla masters. Whether or not this relationship is indeed one linked for a lifetime though seems to be left up to the student. I asked Zakirji when he enters into a relationship with a student is it for life?

Remember I was talking to you about that? That when a teacher connects with a student a teacher expects that student to represent him on stage. That I imagine to be a fact. And so even if I may not approach my teaching a student with that idea in mind I think subconsciously I think that to be true. I think that okay I am going to give my time and make my effort in getting this knowledge across to this person so it will do some good, and it will come out, and it will last, and it will be shared and it will be passed on. Okay. I have had situations where my students come to me and say "you know what I am not going to [continue this]". "But you are good, you've got the talent, you will make it and everything". "But Zakirji I only do this for my enjoyment for my fun, I don't really feel like...". Then why did I spend all this time with you? Why did I make this effort? I could have just handed you a book and said here read this all you need to know is in here. So, I presume that when I am teaching that that will be so, but I have been in this country for such a long time, in America, that I have seen students come and go and have therefore conditioned myself to the idea that when I am teaching

¹⁴ I should mention that Zakirji does not frown upon his students studying with other tabla teachers. If a player can learn something from someone else he/she should make that connection. In his classes as well Zakirji actively teaches about the differences between *gharanas* or styles such as Lucknow, Punjab, Delhi and others through analyzing and presenting various types of compositions.

somebody that I cannot force that life long commitment to them. It will be up to them as students to come up with that.

So my function at the moment I feel, at least in America or in Europe, outside of India, is to make people aware of the tradition that I represent not necessarily to make people performers of that tradition. So my approach is to make them aware of this tradition. Out of that if someone emerges who is focused enough and passionate enough and committed enough to want to reach the level of being a representative of this tradition and I see that that is definitely a factor that the commitment does exist then my commitment to that person will be life long. And I would make sure that I do what I can to make that person reach the goal they want...in that sense there are people like Emam or Dana or Tor or Pete or Michael Lewis or so many of them, Joe Cohen who have been studying with me for the past 15, 16 18 years. Some of them have reached a point where they have started going out and representing, some of them haven't yet.

Showing dedication and devotion to one's teacher and to tabla as an artistic form takes years of continued practice and being around the master in class and at concerts as much as possible. Over the course of two years of fieldwork amongst tabla communities in North America I have seen a number of drummers both begin and end their tabla careers. Others though continue to progress as players and connect with their teacher whenever and however they can.

Gendering the Ties of Tabla

Just as the relations between masters and students are changing in the transition from Indian to diaspora cultures so to do relationships between students. In India same-sex affection is considered to be the ideal in public contexts. Cross-sex affection is not publically promoted or encouraged. Relations between *gurubhais* tend to become physically close through the holding of hands, through touching fingers or by sitting close together in public spaces such as in class or at concerts. And although my fellow students also interacted with me and other foreign women in similar ways in public spaces it seems that women players of

Indian origin do not participate in this physically close type of affection with other *gurubhais*. Cross-sex affection interactions in India are highly formalized. Often my fellow female students spoke about the problems of learning tabla in India where the relationships between men and women are socially rigid. In this context practicing with other students becomes problematic. As Leen mentioned a woman cannot go over to a young boy's house to practice whenever she feels like it.

In North America, however, gendered activities are more informal and relaxed. Students, both male and female, gather together to practice, exchange compositions, travel to concerts and the like. The physical closeness of *gurubhais* does not seem to extend into diaspora cultures in the way that it can and does in Indian contexts. Same-sex affection is not necessarily regarded as ideal in public spaces. Male to male relationships do not seem to include the same kind of physical intimacy as they tend to do in Indian tabla communities. And while some female to female relationships do evolve into close or openly affectionate ones others do not.

Questioning the Master

Teaching in the diaspora has necessitated major changes in how masters communicate, interact and relate to their students both inside and outside of classes and lessons. In North America, the transmission of tabla knowledge and technique now includes time for students to question their teacher on such issues as the structure and design of various types of compositions. I have also found that questioning the master on technique in such a direct and open way is part of the learning process in musical colleges in India such as Gandharava Mahavidyalaya. In Abbaji's school where the more traditional guru/disciple

teaching style is still prevalent, however, there is little space for questioning the master.

Tabla teachers in North America have found that students actively ask questions and analyze what they are given to play or practice. The inclusion of questioning as a pattern and process of learning tabla knowledge goes against the grain of traditional guru-disciple interactions. Zakirji stresses that he has learned to approach the teaching of tabla differently after coming to the United States and teaching students who learn in Western ways.

...I have learned to approach tabla much more differently than I use to after coming out of India, after coming to the West and seeing percussionists and drummers and musicians and people approach this instrument. My way of teaching has become a little bit different--it is much more with the idea of making people relax with this instrument, with the idea of actually becoming involved in a sense, that to be able to actually play from the first day on as opposed to saying okay you have to spend the next year playing *na*. No, my approach has become a little bit different. When I first started it was like okay this is *tin tal* you just play this for a whole session--nothing else. That was the only concession that I was making. I was giving them a whole *tin tal* and saying only for one session as opposed to a whole two years.

Today in class Zakirji may teach one, two or three different *kaida* compositions with four to eight or more variations, a *gat*, a *rela*, and other types of compositions within a four hour class. Similarly in a one hour class Riteshji or Swapanji may decide to teach an entire *kaida* with two or three *tihais*. The amount of material a student learns in class has increased substantially over the years since tabla's introduction to North America. As Zakirji mentioned in our interviews his teaching style has changed dramatically in terms of the amount of strokes or *bols* and compositions he gives students at any given time. Whereas once Zakirji expected a student to practice one *bol* such as *na* for a year he now transmits entire compositions in single sessions.

Within the diaspora and intercultural contexts in North America, then, the teaching of this complex rhythmic structure and musical system has undergone significant changes. Relationships between gurus and disciples and disciples and disciples have adapted, reformed and taken on new shapes. In India, guru-disciple relationships are based on submission and obedience to one's teacher. This allows little space for questioning masters during class. In North America, questioning becomes a crucial part of how knowledge is transmitted and passed on within tabla communities. Zakirji discusses the phenomenon of questioning in the passing on of tabla knowledge as something which profoundly changed his teaching and understanding of tabla.

...And now in present day when we are teaching we are encountering a different kind of an animal, a student who talks back. A student who says why is this this and why is it not that? Why is a *gat* a *gat* and it's not a *paran*? Why is a *tihai* a *tihai* and why is a *chakradar* so different from a something else or other? And why is this a *rela* and why is that not a *rela*? Why is this a *kaida* and why is that a *peshkar*? And these questions have come and believe me when I first started teaching in 1970 I had no answers to these questions. I had to come up with answers and so I had to analyze. I was lucky I had a teacher who was my father so I could take certain liberties. So based on certain prodding and then getting some answers I came up with definitions which make sense and ways to explain things which made some sense. So it's only now in these past 20 years or so that we have come up with answers to questions about the studies of tabla. And it is only in the last 20-25 years when more than one book has appeared on tabla. I mean who wrote books on tabla before? Nobody.

Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter I have discussed the necessity of exploring the lived experiences of tabla players and groups as they are played out in multiple locales around the globe. In doing so I have suggested that researchers view diaspora and intercultural experiences in terms of ethnoscares. Tablascares allows for a study of the intercultural, of mixing, of crossing, and of returning. Envisioning tabla communities as constitutive of a shifting ethnoscape of

identities and musical experiences insists that ethnographers take into account the travelling nature of people and things as both local and global. Ethnoscapes leads the analyst toward a situated mapping of personal and group histories.

Central for a development of a multi-local ethnography is the idea of the body as the site of the cultural. It is through and with the body that agents struggle to reproduce, re-invent or transform their musical and cultural traditions. Those of non-Indian ethnicity who cross over into South Asian diaspora cultures by taking up tabla as a way of life must also learn to embody the cultural. Embodying the cultural, as in these instances, means learning to work within Indian knowledge systems such as the oral tradition and adopting the master's way of seeing and doing.

In the move from India to North America I have found that guru-disciple relationships are also in transition. Although the father-son model may change to include brother, uncle or other close kin relations the development of a student's personal and musical life with his/her master remains a most intimate one.

EPILOGUE

Over the past few years I have met and befriended many tabla players who in the process of becoming tabla disciples and performers have, in various ways, dedicated their lives to playing and learning about classical tabla. For those who lead a double professional life as both doctors, computer analysts, businessmen and businesswomen etc. and as tabla players learning tabla also becomes a devotion, an act of worship. Learning tabla as an apprentice drummer has changed my life significantly. The more I learn the more I realize how much more there is to learn. I too have developed a deep love and passion for tabla as an instrument and for *Hindustani* classical music as a sophisticated cultural/musical system. I am in awe of those who attempt to take up tabla as a way of life both in India and in diaspora cultures. For many, learning tabla means entering into a life of struggle which includes training the body and the embodied mind to adapt to Indian ways of knowing, feeling and being. And for those who do not also work within other professions becoming a tabla player can also mean a life of financial struggle.

My entry into tabla communities was not unlike other students of tabla of non-Indian ethnicity who have actively sought out a guru or a tabla master in their attempts to learn the complexities of this percussive instrument. Learning about tabla necessitates finding and connecting with a master. Keeping up this intense relationship often means substantially changing one's life to follow and to be in the presence of the master. Inspiration, continued love, and devotion to tabla as an instrument and to the master as a guide in the learning of tabla comes, in part, from being together. There is always an intense desire to be around the master to get the next tabla "fix" and to rejuvenate the passion of tabla.

My journey into the world of tabla music and the lives of tabla players centred on three different guru-disciple relationships with Abbaji (Ustad Alla Rakha), Zakirji (Ustad Zakir Hussain) and Riteshji (Ritesh Das). Other data and observations were based on interviews and time spent with Riteshji's guru Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri as well as various tabla students belonging to both the Punjab and Lucknow *gharanas*. My relationship to the tabla masters in each community developed in different ways. Abbaji became like a father to me. From our first moments of meeting Abbaji welcomed me into his school, his family and his life. My relationship with Abbaji continues to be one based on a recognition of the guru as embodying the divine. In this sense Abbaji's character will always remain somewhat mysterious to me. As Prakash so eloquently expressed in our interviews Abbaji's only aim in life is to perform and pass on tabla knowledge to those who seek it. At the age of seventy-nine he still considers himself to be a student of this elaborate and most complex artistic form. Abbaji's perception of his role as a student reflects a deep understanding of tabla and of life; there is always more to learn and learning itself requires a sense of humility toward the art form and those who practice it. Every time I sit down to practice I keep Abbaji's philosophy of tabla in mind.

As with my other tabla colleagues such as Leen, Peter, Dorothee and Stefan, Zakirji became both a teacher and friend. Zakirji's school in California is made up of a group of drummers who have created a very strong sense of family and community. This family has been growing and changing for the last seventeen to eighteen years in the South Asian diaspora located in the Bay area and has recently moved up the west coast to include Seattle, Washington.

Even though Zakirji's students may relate to him as a friend he is also their teacher. There is always a deep respect and love shown for Zakirji as a master of this tradition. To many of us his talent, skill and knowledge of tabla seems other-worldly or magical even after he has shown us how to achieve the desired strokes or techniques. Like his father Zakirji talks about the necessity of continual learning. Tabla, like other professions, is a living tradition. There is always more to incorporate, understand and digest. "I'm still learning", Zakirji says. "There is no such thing as okay now you have learned (tabla). So you are always learning. There is more to learn. It is like you are a doctor; there is always a new disease to deal with or a new virus to understand or a new way of operating or new equipment to deal with. There is always something new to learn--same thing with music" (Hussain 1995).

Even though my relationship to Zakirji and Abbaji is still young my commitment to them is strong and is one which I intend to continue for many years to come. My connection first to Abbaji and then to Zakirji has increasingly become spiritual as well as practical in learning tabla knowledge. It was precisely because of this spiritual connection that I came to understand how different guru-disciple relationships are to Western notions and behaviours of students and teachers. The dreaming that I and others experience when we are intensely focused on *riaz* or because we are around our teacher is something markedly different from what transpires in student-teacher relationships. If I had not apprenticed as a tabla player/student I would not have experienced this unique, most intense spiritual side of engaging with a guru or master. Because I experienced the dreaming myself others opened up and told me of their dreams which seemed remarkably similar in content and form and yet decidedly different and unique to their lives.

My relationship with Riteshji developed quite differently from my other two encounters. When I arrived on Riteshji's studio door I had already been learning from Abbaji and his student Satwantji. I was involved with a different school and so I was never completely a student of Riteshji's. I always felt that I was an outsider in a double sense; as an anthropologist/academic and as a disciple of another *gharana*. Riteshji and I spent many days and months together over the course of two years and in the end we became close friends. Even though this friendship developed I realized that my visits were just visits. I was always passing through his school, it was never a return home.

The method of apprenticeship as I have used it is, perhaps, one of the most intensive forms of participant-observation available to anthropologists. By situating myself as an apprentice tabla player I have made explicit how I came to understand and embody the teachings of my masters. By theorizing experiential knowledge as embodied I feel that I have contributed to current discussions in anthropology on the problematics of carrying out research in postcolonial fields. Becoming a disciple means that the researcher/apprentice must relinquish, to a certain extent, personal power in/over her life. Just like other disciples the researcher becomes involved in a series of rights and obligations connected to the master. Authority of tradition, technique, and knowledge lies in the hands of the masters. Becoming an apprentice means that there will be times of embarrassment in front of others, times when you are yelled at or singled out for playing incorrectly. However, becoming an apprentice tabla player also means that there will be moments of great joy, love, satisfaction, and peacefulness. The transformation of an anthropological self becomes the

ideal or the objective in apprenticeship. My anthropological masters have often remarked that good anthropological encounters should somehow change our ways of thinking about life, other people, and ourselves. Discipleship goes further than this in the sense that the anthropologist is faced with re-inventing her entire way of living.

Adopting the method of apprenticeship in the learning of tabla necessitates a move away from reproducing the dominant models of education and of anthropological understanding as primarily cognitive and textually based. Apprenticeship demands theorizing the acquisition of knowledge as embodied. This turn to the body reflects the reality of living our lives in the world. It widens an anthropological concept of culture to include all the senses, which need to be understood in ways other than symbolic. My research, then, both compliments and adds to the growing discourse on learning and embodiment in the disciplines of anthropology, education, feminism, and in performance studies such as music, dance and drama, as well as to the current philosophical debates on the phenomenological body and radical empiricism.

Within the discipline of anthropology research on the study of a meaningful body is increasingly moving toward phenomenological perspectives. This emphasis on a critical anthropology of the body along with the emerging anthropology of the senses focuses analytical conceptions of the body toward one which is grounded in daily life. Embodiment is a way of life. Embodiment is seen as the ground of culture. Envisioning embodiment in this way opens up a lucrative field of study in the discipline centring on the relation between culture and memory, culture and history (colonial and otherwise), and culture (body) as knowledge. My research is my beginning in this line of inquiry. Pursuing

embodiment as the ground of culture does not stand in opposition to cognitive studies of educational processes or symbolic interpretations of other peoples but rather exists alongside such analytic perspectives. The task that lies ahead for a critical anthropology of the body is to bring the study of embodiment up to a level equal to that of the current dominant cognitive and symbolic paradigms.

Unlike other studies of tabla and *Hindustani* classical music which primarily focus on the study of tabla as it is played out in various locales in India, I have focused on the movement of teaching and performing tabla in diaspora cultures as well. My musical ethnography of three separate yet interconnected tabla communities in Bombay, Toronto, and California/West Coast, I believe, adds to and challenges existing ethnomusicological monographs. Since the publication of Kippen's (1988) and Neuman's (1980, 1974) studies the numbers of students taking up tabla around the world have greatly increased. Much of this global activity stems from the efforts of tabla masters travelling, performing and setting up educational institutions in diaspora cultures. My teachers, Ustad Alla Rakha Khan and Ustad Zakir Hussain, have been instrumental in this regard.

The literature on *Hindustani* music and musicians within the field of ethnomusicology is growing. The global phenomenon of tabla playing demands that researchers attend to the re-inventions and reproductions of musical lives both within India and beyond. My ethnography provides a partial anthropological account of the significance of the Punjab style in its global formation. Few ethnomusicological texts have yet touched on the importance of the Punjab style and Ustad Alla Rakha's contribution in the creation of modern tabla in India and other parts of the globe. Also, these ethnomusicological

documents focus exclusively on the technical structures of compositions.

Recently others, such as Kippen (1991) and Ruckert (1995), have recognized Ustad Zakir Hussain as a pivotal figure in the diffusion of tabla music outside of India and as a catalyst in increasing the status of tabla playing within *Hindustani* music circles. My ethnography adds to the growing awareness of Zakirji's profound influence in the world of *Hindustani* and other music not only as a performer but as an ustad, as a master of tabla.

My ethnography has also contributed to discourses which centre on religious experiences and ways of living. I have offered a series of stories about a relationship based on mutual understanding and recognition. The guru-disciple relationship is indeed a powerful connection between two people. This relationship does not cease to exist outside of India but rather becomes re-invented with the body and the embodied mind in diaspora communities. My discussions on gurus and disciples, I feel, have contributed to the existing ethnicity research on spirituality and diaspora experiences.

GLOSSARY

Note: Some ethnomusicological definitions used have been taken from Gottlieb (1993) and Ranade (1990). Other definitions come from Nuttall (1991). The musical and dance definitions are limited and do not encompass all possible meanings or usages in current *Hindustani* and *Karnatic* practices.

- Abbaji* Muslim address for father.
- abhinaya* (Sanskrit) "to bring forth". Refers to mimetic elements used in Indian classical dance forms. The term is used interchangeably with *bhava* or emotion.
- accha* (Hindi) good, okay
- alap* (Sanskrit) Also *alapa*. Beginning section of composition which introduces some melodic ideas of the *raga*.
- badri* Gut string section of the tabla.
- Bandra* An area of Bombay.
- bansuri* (Hindi) "bans" (Sanskrit) "vamsha" = bamboo. *Hindustani* flute made of bamboo.
- bas* (Hindi) enough, that's it
- bayan* (Hindi "left"). The left hand drum of the tabla pair. I have also heard the *bayan* referred to as *duggi* or *dugga*.
- behin* (Hindi) Sister
- bhai* (Hindi) Brother
- bhakti* (Sanskrit) Devotion to god.
- Bharata-Natyam* A South Indian classical dance form accompanied by *mrdangam* (South Indian classical percussion). *Bharata* = India, *Natyam* = dance/drama. Originally this dance was called *sadir*, performed by dancers (*devadasis*) in Hindu temples. After India's independence in 1947 *sadir* was re-created into *Bharata Natyam* (India's dance) along with *Kathakali* (South Indian drama from Kerala), *Odissi* (dance form from Orissa), *Kathak* (North Indian dance), *Kuchipudi* (from Andhra Pradesh) and *Manipuri* (from Manipur).
- bhari* (Hindi) "full".

<i>bol</i>	(Hindi) "word". The hindi verb <i>bolna</i> means to speak. <i>Bols</i> are strokes on the tabla which actually correspond to a sound made by the voice. The <i>bols</i> are onomatopoeic syllables, used by tabla players as an aid for the memorization of compositions. <i>Bols</i> are units which are then strung together to create phrases. For example the bols <i>ghe</i> , <i>re</i> , <i>na</i> and <i>ge</i> (pronounced ghay, ray, nah ge) are frequently heard together as a phrase like ge re na ge. Similarly the <i>bols te ke te</i> are strung together to create the phrase <i>terekete</i> or <i>tetekete</i> .
<i>chai</i>	(Hindi) Tea
<i>chakradar</i>	(Hindi) "wheel". A type of tabla composition which builds on fixed bols ending in a three fold pattern, a <i>tihai</i> . A <i>chakradar</i> itself is played three times.
<i>chatu</i>	Wooden dowels used on the right hand tabla which move up and down. These are important for tuning the instrument.
<i>chilla</i>	A ritual retreat of forty days and forty nights. Usually a disciple is instructed by his/her guru on the time and place of the event.
<i>darshan</i>	(Sanskrit) To see the divine
<i>dayan</i>	(Hindi) "right". Refers to the right hand tabla drum also known simply as tabla.
<i>ek tal</i>	A rhythmic cycle of 12 beats.
<i>ganda-bandhan</i>	(Sanskrit "bandha"). Refers to tying of threads between guru and disciple (ustad-shagird).
<i>Ganesh</i>	Remover of Obstacles, a symbol of luck in Hindu tradition. He is the second son of <i>Shiva</i> and <i>Parvati</i> .
<i>gat</i>	(Hindi) "going", "manner of going". (Sanskrit) "gati". A type of composition in solo tabla playing, which is pre-composed. Also <i>gat</i> can refer to melodic patterns performed by soloists while tabla players improvise.
<i>gharana</i>	(Hindi) "household". Implying of the same house or family. In the case of performing arts <i>gharana</i> often translates into style or school.
<i>gab</i>	(Bengali) The middle circle of the tabla and <i>bayan</i> , which is constructed from rice paste and iron fillings. Usually it is referred to as <i>shyahi</i> , however, I have also heard tabla players in Delhi, Bombay, Toronto, Seattle and the Bay Area use the word <i>gab</i> .

<i>guru</i>	(Sanskrit and Hindi) "destroyer of ignorance". A teacher, a master. A form of address for a learned master.
<i>gurubhai</i>	Brothers under one guru. Disciples within a particular school will refer to each other as <i>gurubhais</i> or will call their fellow student a brother by appending <i>bhai</i> to the end of their name. Similarly if a student is referring to a female disciple she is referred to as a <i>gurubehin</i> and becomes a sister to the other disciples.
<i>han ji</i>	(Hindi) "yes"
<i>harmonium</i>	A key board with bellows. One hand is used for the keys while the other hand fans the bellows.
<i>hindustani</i>	Northern Indian music system.
<i>ji</i>	An honorific suffix added to the end of a name or title, such as <i>guru</i> , which specifies respect.
<i>kaida</i>	Also <i>Qayada</i> . (Hindi/Urdu) lit. "law". A type of composition in <i>tabla</i> repertoires which has a fixed structure. The <i>kaida</i> pattern always has a theme of fixed bols which is then followed by a number of variations based on those fixed bols, ending with a <i>tihai</i> .
<i>karnatic</i>	Southern Indian music system.
<i>kathak</i>	<i>Hindustani</i> classical dance form which is accompanied by <i>tabla</i> .
<i>Kaun hai?</i>	(Hindi) Who is it?
<i>kinar</i>	(Hindi), (Persian) "kanar". "Edge" or "border". The outer ring or edge of the <i>tabla</i> skin. Like the inner skin of the <i>tabla</i> head the <i>kinar</i> is made from goat.
<i>khali</i>	(Arabic) "empty".
<i>kherava</i>	A <i>tal</i> in 8 <i>matras</i> or beats.
<i>kurta</i>	(Hindi) North Indian male form of dress. A long shirt with pockets is usually worn over loose fitting pants or pajamas.
<i>kya bat hai</i>	(Hindi) Wonderful!
<i>lahra</i>	Also <i>lehra</i> . Hindi (lit. "a wave") It is a melodic pattern used in the accompaniment for solo <i>tabla</i> playing and performances. Whereas <i>sarangi</i> and other melodic instruments are used as the accompaniment for concert performances most <i>tabla</i> teachers use the <i>harmonium</i> for in-class accompaniment.

<i>lasya</i>	(Sanskrit) Feminine movement.
<i>laya</i>	Also <i>lay</i> . Tempo/rhythm. There are three: slow (<i>vilambit</i>), medium (<i>madhya</i>), and fast (<i>drut</i>).
<i>matra</i>	Beat.
<i>mehfil</i>	(Urdu) Intimate gathering.
<i>pakhawaj</i>	A horizontal two-faced drum. Gottlieb (1993:137) notes that "The <i>pakhawaj</i> may...have been an important influence which led to the development of the modern tabla".
<i>parampara</i>	(Sanskrit) Tradition.
<i>paran</i>	(Hindi) "parhna", "to read", "to recite". A compositional type used in <i>Kathak</i> and <i>pakhawaj</i> performances.
<i>peshkar</i>	(Hindi) "pesh", to present respectfully. A compositional type in solo tabla which is usually presented at the beginning of the performance/concert in slow tempo.
<i>puja</i>	(Sanskrit) Worship which involves various rituals such as lighting incense, offering of flowers and recitation of prayer verses. Worship can be performed differently in different parts of India.
<i>pujari</i>	(Sanskrit) A Hindu priest who does <i>puja</i> or worship to a deity.
<i>puri</i>	Skins or heads of the tabla and <i>bayan</i> which are made from goat.
<i>raga</i>	(Sanskrit, Hindi) "rag". Melody. Equivalent in some ways to the Western idea of scale, however, <i>raga</i> is more than a mere combination of specified notes in a scale. <i>Ragas</i> have a certain predominant emotion or <i>rasa</i> , such as love or heroism. Many are performed according to the time of day such as early morning, dusk, sundown or mid-afternoon.
<i>Ramadan</i>	A Muslim celebration which falls on the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar. It is characterized by a time of fasting.
<i>rasa</i>	(Sanskrit) The fundamental aesthetic principle of Indian art. It can be referred to as "taste", "flavour", "essence" or beauty. I have also heard <i>rasa</i> referred to as "juice" by various tabla players.
<i>rela</i>	(Hindi) "flood", "rushing". A type of tabla and <i>pakhawaj</i> composition played very fast.

<i>riaz</i>	(Persian) Practice. <i>Riaz</i> for tabla players includes both playing the actual <i>bols</i> and singing or reciting the <i>bols</i> in time, in <i>tal</i> .
<i>rupak tal</i>	A rhythmic cycle of 7 beats or <i>matras</i> .
<i>sakti</i>	Also <i>shakti</i> . (Sanskrit) Female energy or energy.
<i>sam</i>	(Hindi) "equal", "coming together". Most important beat in the <i>Hindustani</i> rhythmic cycle. Emphasis is placed on the number one in each cycle.
<i>sarangi</i>	(Sanskrit) "saranga", which means bow. Ranade (1990:113) notes that it is also derived as "sou" meaning hundred and "rangi" meaning colours. <i>Sarangi</i> , originally a folk instrument, has in the last seventy five years developed into a classical concert instrument (Ranade 1990). As a <i>Hindustani</i> instrument <i>sarangi</i> is like a bowed fiddle which is played upright. And although a solo instrument in its own right it is also used as a melodic instrument in accompanying solo tabla playing.
<i>Saraswati</i>	(Sanskrit) Goddess of learning in Hindu tradition.
<i>sarod</i>	A fretless, stringed <i>Hindustani</i> instrument played horizontally.
<i>shagird</i>	(Urdu/Persian) Disciple/student.
<i>shishya</i>	(Sanskrit) Disciple.
<i>Shiva</i>	One of the two great deities (the other is Vishnu) of modern Hinduism.
<i>shyahi</i>	(Persian) "ink" also "black". The inner part of the tabla and <i>bayan</i> heads consisting of iron fillings and rice past. Alternately referred to as <i>gab</i> amongst some communities of tabla players.
<i>sraddha</i>	(Sanskrit) Implicit faith. Students must submit to and have complete faith in their guru.
<i>susrusa</i>	(Sanskrit) Obedience and service towards the guru.
<i>tala</i>	(Sanskrit) "palm of the hand". Also <i>tal</i> (Hindi) Rhythmic cycle in both <i>Hindustani</i> and <i>Karnatic</i> music systems. Gottlieb (1990:140) notes that the word <i>tal</i> comes from the practice of counting time by clapping hands. There are many different <i>tals</i> , each having a certain number of beats. For example, the most widely used <i>tal</i> in <i>Hindustani</i> music is <i>tin tal</i> which has 16 beats. Others include <i>jhap</i> (10), <i>rupak</i> (7), <i>ek</i> (12), <i>dadra</i> (6), <i>kherava</i> (8).
<i>tandava</i>	(Sanskrit) Refers to the dance of Shiva in the process of creation.

- tanpura* (Persian) "tumbura". (Sanskrit) "tumba" which means a long gourd. The drone instrument in *Hindustani* music. In the past tanpuras were made from a gourd with gut strings but today there are many electronic ones modelled after the traditional gourd shaped ones.
- theka* (Hindi) "prop", "support", "mainstay". A rhythmic outline or structure used by tabla players to keep time within the *tal* cycle. It outlines the structural form as well as the divisions of timing of the *tal*. Each *tal* has a different *theka*. Each *theka* consists of a specified number and arrangement of *bols*, however, the structure of the *theka* can and is elaborated on in performance. *Theka* is played prior to and after a composition.
- tihai* (Hindi) "a third part". A bol phrase which is repeated three times. *Tihais* (standard cadential patterns) are used to conclude various types of compositions such as the *rela*, the *peshkar* and the *kaida*. They are also found at the end of *tukra*, *chakradar* and some *gat* compositions.
- tik hai* (Hindi) Okay, that's fine.
- tin tal* (Hindi) "three beats". A rhythmic cycle of 16 beats. As Gottlieb (1990) notes the 16 beats of *tin tal* are grouped into four *vibhags* or sections of four beats each. The first, second, and fourth *vibhags* "receive a stress and are counted, hence the designation "three beats"". Therefore the numbers one, five, and 13 are stressed while the number nine is shown as *khali*, the empty beat (which is not stressed).
- tukra* (Hindi) "a segment", "a part of a piece". A type of composition in solo tabla playing and classical performance. Length of composition is very short ending in a *tihai*.
- ustad* (Persian) "Master", "expert". Used as a form of address for Muslim teachers.
- vina* A South Indian stringed musical instrument which is plucked like a guitar.

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Appendix 1: Sample of Tabla Notation

Kaida theme: *Tin tal* (16 beats) It is played twice to complete a full cycle.

+ DHA TE TE DHA TE TE DHA DHA TE TE DHA GE TIN NA KE NA

o TA TE TE TA TE TE DHA DHA TE TE DHA GE DHIN NA GE NA

Variation:

+ DHA TE TE DHA TE TE DHA DHA DHA TE TE DHA TE TE DHA DHA

DHA TE TE DHA TE TE DHA DHA TE TE DHA GE TIN NA KE NA

o TA TE TE TA TE TE TA TA TA TE TE TA TE TE DHA DHA

DHA TE TE DHA TE TE DHA DHA TE TE DHA GE DHIN NA GE NA (DHA)x

Legend:

+ = *bhari*

o = *khali*

— = *matra*

x = *sam*

Appendix 2: Members of the Punjab and Lucknow *Gharanas***Punjab *Gharana***

Ustad Mian Kadur Bux, Ustad Alla Rakha Khan, Ustad Zakir Hussain (first son of Alla Rakha), Fazal Qureshi (second son of Alla Rakha), and Taufiq Qureshi (third son of Alla Rakha).

Bombay members (disciples):

Prakash, Anuradha Pal, Ashok, Kalyan, Vijay, Sanjay, Jim, Jack, Leen Minton, Suphala Patankar.

Vancouver/Seattle/Bay Area, California members (disciples):

Dana Pandey, Michael Lewis, Satwant Singh, Emam, Tor Dietrickson, Joe Cohen, Peter Altenburg, Stefan, Steve, Dorothee Krause.

Lucknow *Gharana*

Pandit Santosh Krishna Biswas (Calcutta), Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri.

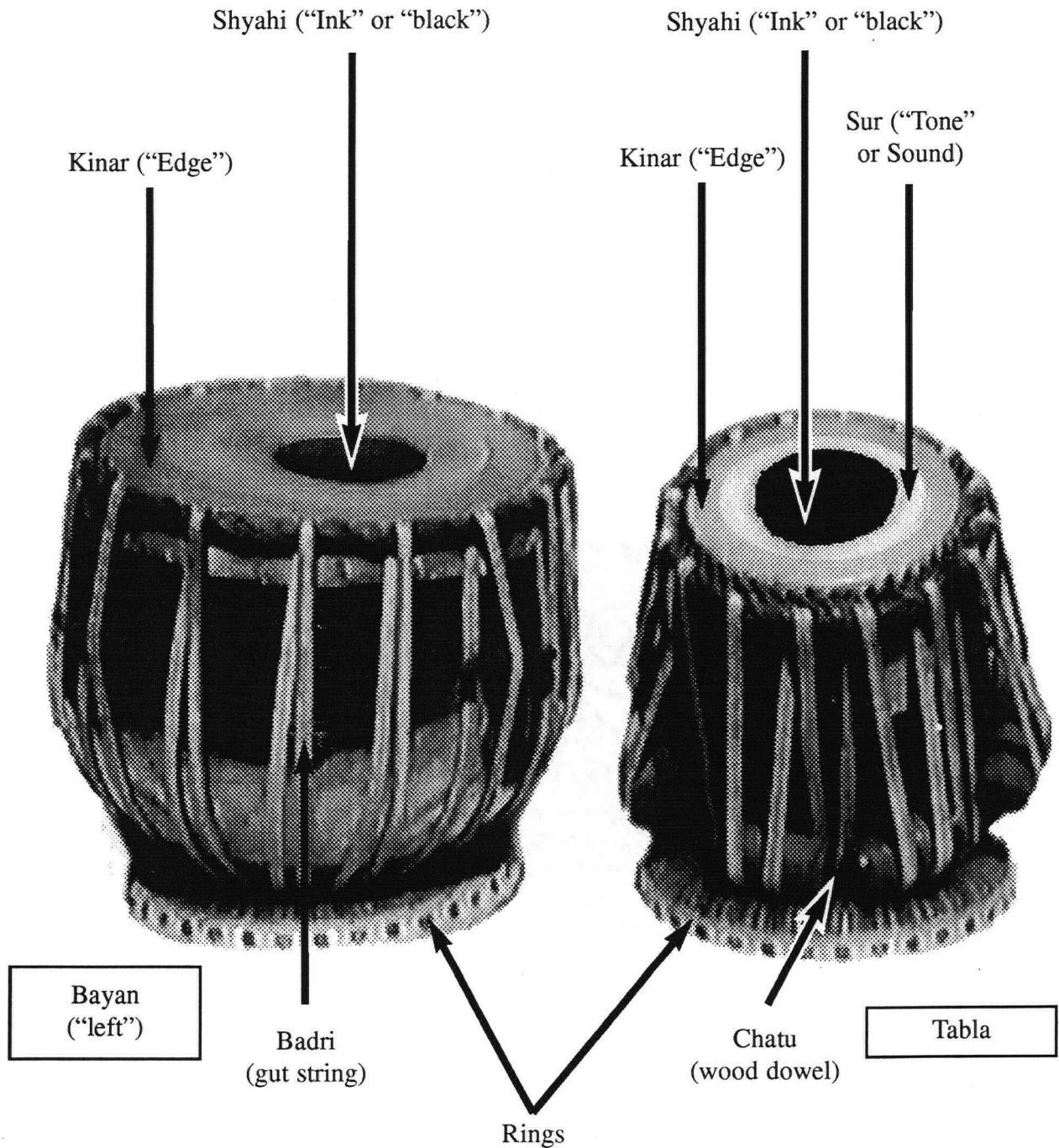
San Rafael, California members (disciples): Tim Witter, Jim Owen

Toronto (disciples): Ritesh Das, Jai, Amar, Santosh, Ed, Vikas, Amert, Joanna Das.

Note: Membership listings do not include all senior or other disciples of either the Bombay-Punjab or Lucknow-California/Toronto *gharanas*. Some names have been changed to protect individual identities. Some players requested first name use only. Names of players have been listed under the cities or regions in which they first appear in the dissertation. However, this does not mean that players only practice, perform, teach or take classes in those cities.

Appendix 3 Parts of the Tabla

Figure 1: Parts of the Tabla



Generally both left and right hand drums are referred to as Tabla. The right hand Tabla is made from various types of wood, such as rosewood and teak. The left hand drum is usually made from brass. The Tabla heads (Puri) are goat skin.

Appendix 4 Map of India

Figure 2: Map of India



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