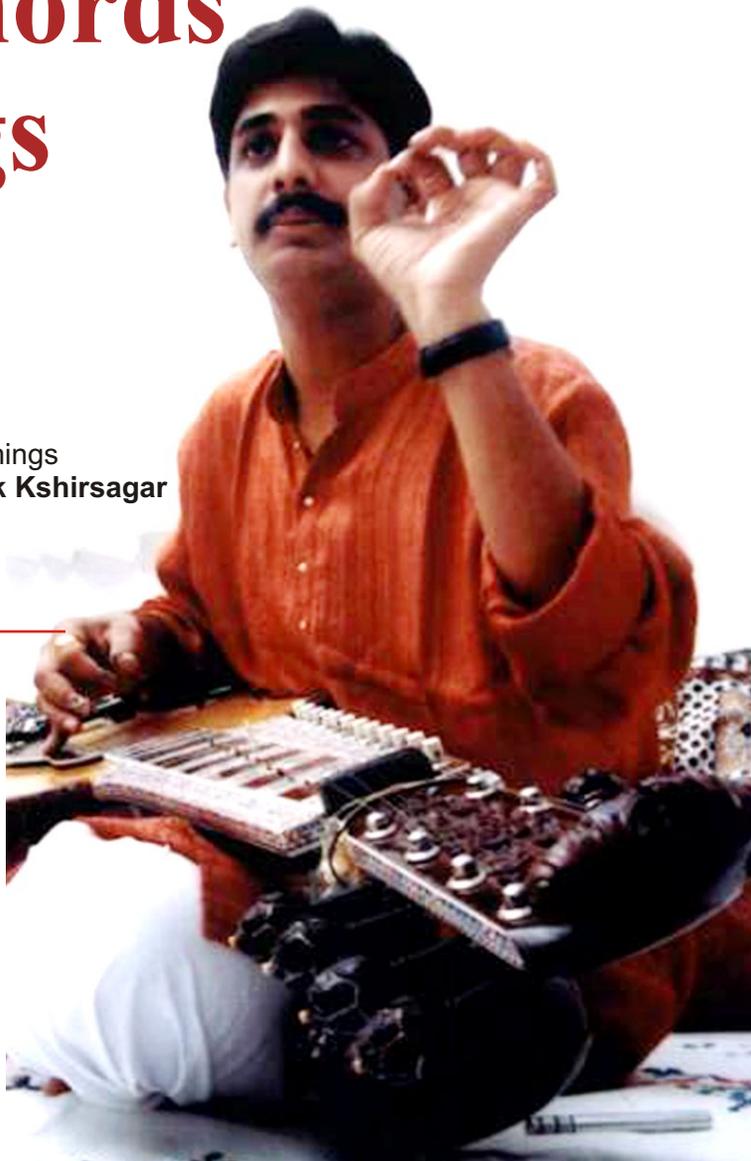


From chords to strings

Having fought various shortcomings as a non-percussionist, **Deepak Kshirsagar** comes across a promising Mohan Veena artiste



Deepak Kshirsagar is a lesson for all who give lack of a guru as the excuse for not performing well. Having performed at the HCL concert, India Habitat Centre, recently, Kshirsagar, a mohan-veena artiste from Jodhpur, confirms the fact that an instrument can be adopted even after doing a change-over in art.

He was a vocalist fortunate enough to be able to imibe "all" that a Maharashtrian musician can in Pune. Big time concerts, an immense platform to perform at, the right approach to compete with other upcoming names and most importantly the inspiring in the city.

Also the combination of Rajasthani and Marathi tastes, which has lent some rarely seen qualities in the musician.

Kshirsagar takes care of what is required of him in a Hindustani classical concert, fusing regionality, rather justifying it, with the balanced performance of *Maand* and *Hichki*. In fact it has made him flexible, now able to pamper an instrumental concert. His folk presentations come across as authentically as a die-hard Rampuria would sing the local thumaris or a Banarasi a *Kajri*.

He tells us, "I learnt from my grandfather Pt. B.N. Kshirsagar and was for long practising vocal

music. But soon realised that I was not cut-out for it. Then I came across Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt in one of his recitals. This is when I thought of pursuing with an instrument. I brought my guitar and started practising".

The artiste is visibly fluent with his improvisations. Ghaseets are used seldom, the way they should be, yet come across strongly. Having learnt most of his art from Satish Khanwalkar, he dedicates most of his 'fundas' to him

In fact an aspect close to this upcoming artiste's heart was sticking to the basics. Expectedly, sincere to his preference of simple improvisations of **rag Yaman**, Kshirsagar proved the point that young names are more accepted when they play basic ragas. Most importantly, he kept his

imagination balanced. The alaap and jod revolved round the skill to jut Teevra madhyam in combination circling around-re-pa-ma-re-ma, and ma-pa-ni-ma-pa. Kshirsagar is visibly fluent with his improvisations. Ghaseets are used

Seldom, the way they should be, yet come across strongly. *Khatka*, and *murki* truly have a reflection of Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt's handling of the bar on the string. But Kshirsagar, having learnt most of his art from Satish Khanwalkar, dedicates most of his "Fundas" to him.

"I tried my best to be in touch with Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt. But he was rarely in Jaipur, owing to concert schedules. So I never got to learn from him regularly. Whenever I visited him, I would start from the basics and would often land up practising just one taan throughout. That couldn't go on for long. Also he has a shortcoming in terms of having a son of my age as his disciple. Things would have got awkward I realised I had to be on my own. That is when I became more sincere towards my skill."

Kshirsagar has relied on the alankarik improvisation for his concerts to a great extent. Be it the allap, the *jod*, the taans or the *jhala*, alankars and the system *badhat*. "I haven't really been careful actually, improvisations come in a systematic pattern when I sit down to play," he quips.

At places he compels his audience to acknowledge his affection towards the drone string in his instrument. Where he often slides the finger from the *baaj* towards drone for catching on the *mukhada* after various improvisation. This skill is used in *jhala*stoo.

"It requires quite an effort on part of the fingers. There is always a risk of compromising on the beat ... by a fraction of a seconds due to finger placement. I have always tried to be very neat with it."

But he offers a point that is rarely talked about by people playing veena. (He at times uses the synonyms, Indian guitar for instrument). While most of us know the mohan-veena humongous production in Jaipur Kshirsagar tell that a major chunk of this instrument comes from Kolkata. The city has grabbed the attention of this instrument.

"There is a bit of an awkward controversy about the rights regarding design and model of the mohan-veena," he tells us.

- S. Mehrishi