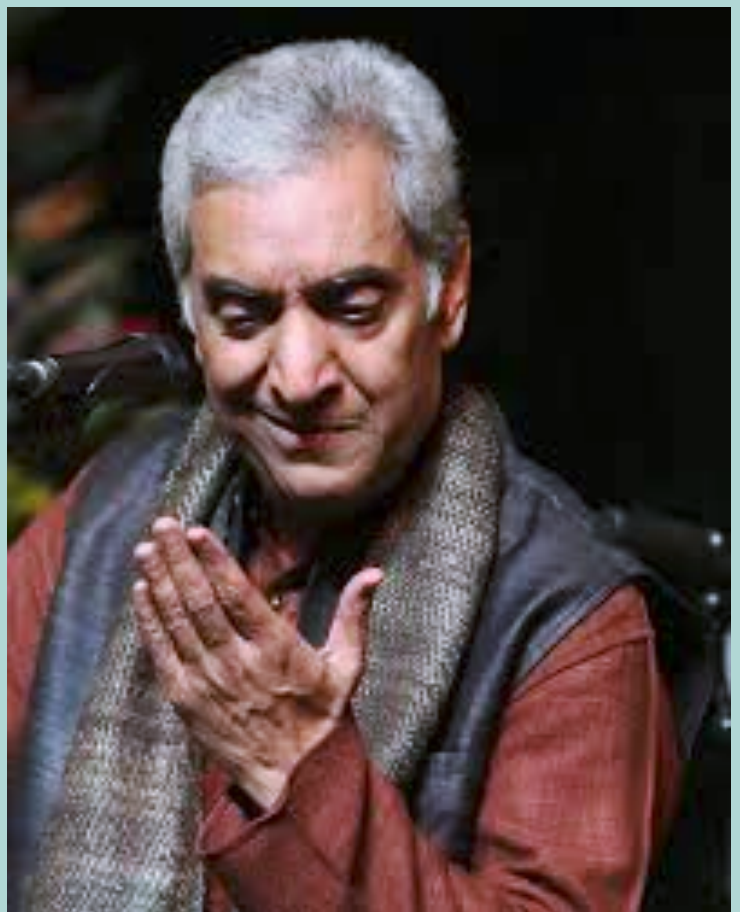


From the very first swar he utters, you know you are in the presence of someone who is not just a magnificent singer and scholar, but one who has also meditated deeply upon the meaning of his music...Madhup Mudgal is a moving and reassuring example of uncompromising purity. His musical sensibility, his impeccable training, his dedication, and intelligence mark him out as one of the finest artistes. Listening to him one is aware of the extraordinary quality of this musician – his unswerving devotion to form, his striving for perfection, his deep roots in the tradition that allow him to dialogue with other disciplines without losing sight of his own truth. Above all, this is a singer whose music is imbued with a rare and luminous quality of purity, depth and conviction.

Vidya Rao

Pandit Madhup Mudgal is one of India's best-known exponents of Khyal and devotional music. His initial training was under his father, the late Padma Shri Pandit Vinayachandra Maudgalya, the founder principal of Delhi's iconic music school Gandharva Mahavidyalaya. There pandit ji studied under Shri Vasant Thakar and Pandit Jasraj. During these years he was also able to absorb ideas from the many visiting musicians who formed part of the Vidyalaya's extended family. From age 17 onwards, the abiding influence on his art has been that of his mentor and Guru Pt Kumar Gandharva. This influence has shaped his style and approach to tradition and innovation. Today, Madhup ji is himself a dedicated and exacting teacher, and Principal of the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, New Delhi.

He is a regular performer at important platforms and festivals in India and abroad (among them the Fez Festival in Morocco, and at the Theatre de la Ville, Paris), and as a Top Grade artist of All India Radio, he features regularly on AIR's National Programme. He sings yearly at the Gandhi Jayanti programme organised by the Govt of India on 2nd October at Rajghat, Delhi.



At the same time, Madhup ji's classicism has not prevented him from innovating and experimenting. As composer for and conductor of the acclaimed Gandharva Choir, he has won the choir many accolades including choral performances at the Lincoln Center and Kennedy Center in prestigious festivals. Madhup ji has conducted workshops at renowned universities during his concert tours across the world.

His work with solo dancers and his compositions for choreographed group dance works use a variety of poetic texts and are much appreciated by both connoisseurs and lay listeners. Some of these include 'Punarnava', 'Sankriti' and 'Saptakam' productions for Sangeet Natak Akademi. He has composed music for the film on Pt DV. Paluskar. He has also collaborated with eminent Jazz musicians Paulo Moura, Harmeto Pascoal and Benjamim Taubkin in Brazil. He is well known for his compositions and rendering of poetry by saint-poets Kabir, Meera, Surdas, Tu Isidas and Nanak.

In 2006 Madhup ji received the Padma Shri award for his immense contribution to the field of Khyal, and music education. He has been a member of various influential committees of Government institutions such as the Department of Culture, the Sahitya Kala Parishad, and the Executive Council of Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi.



In Hindu mythology, Gandharvas are heavenly spirits that possess exceptional music skills. In 1935, a 13-year-old boy gained popularity as 'Kumar Gandharva' (meaning young gandharva) and lived up to this title bestowed upon him. Nobody ever referred to him by any other name after that.

His father sent him to study music under the well-known Classical teacher, B.R. Deodhar. His mastery of technique and musical knowledge was so rapid that Gandharva himself was teaching at the school before he had turned 20. By his early 20s, Gandharva was seen as a star of music and was praised by critics.

In 1947, he was stricken with tuberculosis, and was told by doctors that he would never sing again. He was advised to move to the drier climate of Dewas, Madhya Pradesh for his health where he lived the rest of his life. Doctors told him that trying to sing could be fatal and that there was little hope of recovery. Stories of Gandharva ji in this period depict a man lying in bed and listening to the sounds of nature around him: birds, the wind, passing street-singers. They also detail how he would hum to himself, almost inaudibly. Hess speculates that this was the beginning of Gandharva ji's radical new conception of the nirguni bhajan, which celebrates a formless divinity.¹

In 1952, a treatment for tuberculosis emerged, and gradually, helped by excellent medical support and care from his wife, he recovered and began singing again. However, his voice and singing style would always bear the scars of his illness: one of his lungs had been rendered useless, so he had to adapt to singing with a single lung.

He was not only a master at Khyal, Pandit ji also experimented with other forms of singing such as Nirguni bhajans, folk songs, and with both ragas and presentation. He is remembered for his great legacy of innovation, questioning tradition without rejecting it wholesale, resulting in music in touch with the roots of Indian culture.

He breathed his last on January 12, 1992 at his Dewas residence. His mortal remains were cremated with full state honours and his funeral was attended by hundreds of music lovers from all over the country. The illustrious singer, known for his innovative style and penchant for creating new ragas, had been honoured with the Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and the Kalidas Samman.

[Listen to Kumar Gandharva as a child](#)

[Listen to a Nirguni Bhajan](#)



The Gandharva Mahavidyalaya, is one of the oldest music teaching institutions in India, founded by Vishnu Digambar Paluskar in Lahore in the first decade of the 20th-century. After partition, its main branches remained in Delhi and Mumbai.

As we saw in the book about Dhrupad, the patrons of classical music were the Royal courts. As such it had enjoyed the privilege of honour and esteem which it was deprived of it under the British Rule. Due to this, the public had begun to form pre conceived notions about the art and artists that gave classical arts a negative image. Musicians were being looked upon as illiterate, whimsical and uncultured persons by the society and public at large. Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar was aware of the humiliating treatment shown by the society and public towards music and musicians and aimed to uplift music and musicians to the esteemed and honorable status of today. Music education had been largely in the hands of music families and their Gharanas. It was not seen as a feasible profession or even hobby for the Indian middle class. DV Paluskar and VN Bhatkhande changed this by introducing institutionalized settings for music with degrees that society needed at that time. Music education was made accessible to everyone in the 20th century.

In 1896 Pt. Paluskar set out on a Bharat Yatra with his two disciples. He conducted music programs at Aundh, Satara, Baroda, Rajasthan etc and received accolades and recognition. In the year 1898 he entered Punjab and on 5th May, 1901, Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar established the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya at Lahore.

After that, he established the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya in Mumbai and inspired many other music institutes throughout the country. Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar laid down his life on 21st August, 1931. The task of democratizing music education was taken over by his disciples, who had, by then established in the field of music as teachers and artistes.

The Delhi Branch was established in 1939 by its Founder-Principal Shri Vinaya Chandra Maudgalya, disciple of the veteran musician, Pandit Vinayakrao Patwardhan and father of its present director Pandit Madhup Mudgal.

The Vidyalaya's main objective was to commemorate the great saint -musician and resuscitator of Hindustani music, Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, and to keep up the ideals set down by him in order to popularize Indian classical music amongst the masses through :

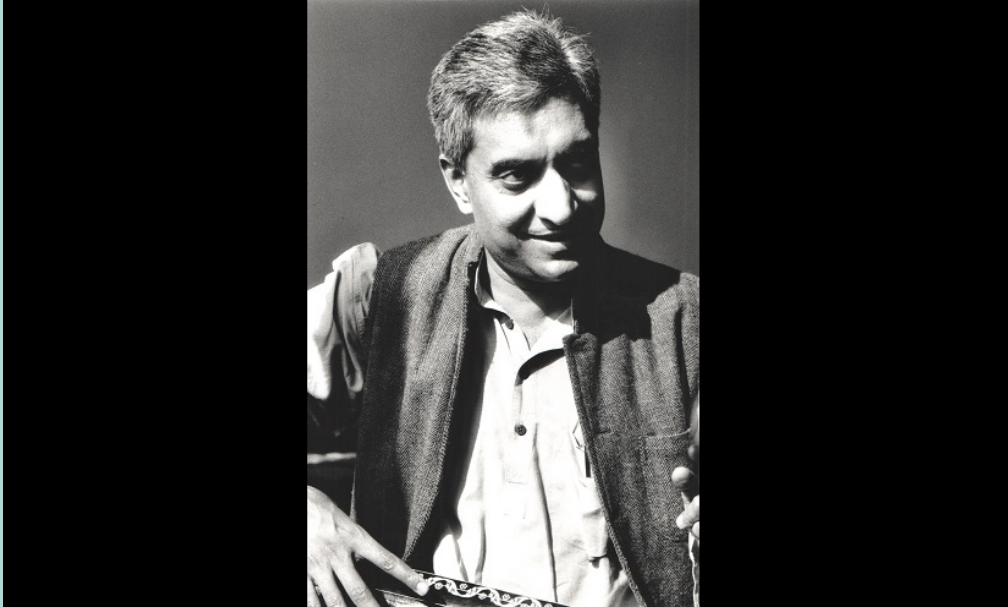
- . modernized methods of teaching music
- . training of qualified teachers, and
- . by restoring to music its an integral part of our culture.



Madhup Mudgal: My life changed after I heard Kumar Gandharva's nirgun bhajans

The maestro Madhup Mudgal shares some heady, intimate vignettes about his music

By Sujata Prasad, in First Post, 2018



Listening to Padma Shri Madhup Mudgal's '*Kabir Sandhya*' is a riveting experience. Mudgal, known for his *khayal* and *bhajan* renditions, is a disciple of Kumar Gandharva. He is also the conductor of the Gandharva Choir, and principal of Delhi's Gandharva Mahavidyalaya.

On 7 September, Mudgal held audiences at the India International Centre spellbound with not only classics like '*Haman Hai Ishq-e-Mastana*', '*Ram Gun*', '*Chali Meri Sakhi*', but also new compositions. It is not easy to coax the self-effacing maestro to speak about himself, but over the course of this conversation, he shared some heady, deeply intimate vignettes about his music.

Your new compositions have a haunting, unforgettable quality. How long did it take you to compose them?

One of my students gifted me a special book on Kabir containing a large corpus of his poems. While reading it, I embarked on a new, obsessive journey. Slowly over a period of two or three months, I managed to compose music for several verses that resonated at different levels. It was a very beautiful, creative period, one which I often reminisce about nostalgically. I sang one of the compositions, '*Paani Mein Meen Piyaasi*' at Gandhi Smriti on 2 October, to overwhelming response.

I was looking for an opportunity to present the rest of them. The concert at IIC was a dream come true.

In the rendering of *Kabir Bani*, your most abiding influence has been of your mentor and guru Kumar Gandharva, but the notes we heard on 7 September were quintessentially yours.

It is true that the abiding influence has been that of Kumarji. Not a day goes by without remembering him with love and gratitude. But these compositions came almost as divine benediction. I was possessed by Kabir's inexorable poetic vision. The musical notes flowed out of me effortlessly, organically.