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Exploring the Acculturation of Second Generation Diasporic Indians Through the Practice of Hindustani Music

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the acculturation of second generation diasporic Indians living in metropolitan Washington D.C. through the practice of Hindustani music using insider information, background on social institutions developed by first and second generation diasporic Indians, an ethnographic study of the music teaching studio of Mr. Arun Bagal of West Friendship, Maryland, and the study of an institutionalized music event called the *Sangeet Prabhat* that occurs annually within the diasporic community. I also consider the role of Hindustani music as a tool through which cultural understanding is transmitted and received, and I demonstrate how the institutionalization of diasporic music practices provides a way to anchor these practices into the host country, while socializing second and third generation diasporic members towards developing and maintaining ties to the homeland.

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CHAPTER ONE

Origins and Theoretical Framework

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the acculturation of second generation members of the Indian diaspora in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area through an ethnographic study of the Hindustani music studio of Arun Bagal. I will also study how their acculturation is affected by the presence of institutionalization in the new homeland. Through the creation of their own institutionalized practices, members of the diaspora have anchored and legitimized the transmission and performance of Hindustani music.

In Bagal's studio, I have observed the music, how it is performed, and the teaching process. The music serves as the identity of the institution. While music has the ability to serve as an accompaniment or an enhancement to a pre-existing social event, in this particular situation, music serves as the stand-alone object, around which the members of the diaspora have created a system of weekly lessons where music is prepared for performances. The lessons are the means through which music is prepared and produced. The current setting requires that music lessons fit into a weekly schedule that is dictated by work, school, and other activities; hence, the students meet with their teacher for instruction on a weekly basis, for one hour, where the repertoire and practice of Hindustani music are taught in a systematic form. The performances serve as a means through which the music is displayed. Various events, such as cultural programs and concerts, which fit into models that are pre-established within the new homeland, serve as

a way to anchor the practice of Hindustani music to the new setting and justify the time and effort spent.

Though my insider ethnography, as a second generation member of the Indian diaspora who was born and raised in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area, I demonstrate how a Hindustani music studio is used as a site for negotiating culture between the homeland heritage, that is being passed on from first generation to second generation members of the diaspora, and the new homeland culture, which the second generation members of the diaspora have been born and raised in. Music plays an integral role in this process because it serves as a portable tool through which cultural values can be expressed, while being adaptable according to the demands of life in the new homeland. The adaptability of the music serves as a lens through which one can observe and analyze the acculturation of music, which provides a way to study the acculturation of members of the diaspora.

Positioning Myself

This thesis will focus on one event called the *Sangeet Prabhat* (musical morning) hosted by Mr. Arun Bagal, a Hindustani violinist and music teacher. The Sangeet Prabhat has been occurring annually since 1993, and it serves as a forum for music students and amateur musicians in the greater metropolitan Washington D.C. area to perform music for themselves and for each other. This event allows Bagal's students, particularly the children and teenagers, to have a place where they can display their artistic abilities and gain a sense of achievement for their efforts.

Such opportunities were not always available. As a child being raised in the Indian diaspora during the late 1980s and 1990s, I studied Hindustani classical voice with

a local teacher; however, I found few places to regularly perform my music. My only venues were my elementary school's International Night and rare cultural programs. While I felt encouraged, I did not have a regular performance schedule. Eventually, my Hindustani music studies paused for several years as I pursued the study of Western classical music, through private violin lessons, youth orchestras, and a system of pedagogy, performances, and opportunities for advancement, all of which were established through the American public school system. I thrived through the recognition and opportunities that were available to me through Western classical music – all of which provided me with the resume of extra-curricular activities that were necessary for university admission, especially when competing with university spots against fellow students from one of the top-ranked high schools in the United States.

The situation had already begun to change a few years later, as my younger sister was being raised; by then, the eldest members of the second generation had grown up, paving the way for rising members of their generation. They did this, for example, by forming Indian Students Associations and South Asian Students Associations at the secondary school and university levels; as second generation members of the diaspora were becoming acculturated into Western culture through their education, they were also becoming invested in maintaining ties to their cultural heritage through their own organizations.

At the beginning of my master's program, I became interested in studying the Indian diaspora, and I reviewed literature about the diaspora to supplement the knowledge that I already had from my own experiences and from those of my peers'. Two of the kinds of genres of the diasporic literature that I encountered are illustrated by

Story-wallah (Selvadurai 2005) and *The Expanding Landscape* (Petievich 1999). *Story-wallah* is a collection of short fiction works, written by members of the South Asian diaspora and compiled by Shyam Selvadurai. The stories explore South Asian diasporic identity through the retention of past, personal, and social histories, as well as adaptation to the present and possibilities for the future. In each story, the author describes the process of how an individual develops a personal identity, through interactions with groups of people and actively decides how to become a member of the group. Specific situations are unique to each story, presumably constructed from the authors' lives or the experiences of people close to the authors, providing insight to the authors' lives which are represented by the topics they choose to discuss in their work. Most of the works are written by second generation individuals who used writing as a way to explore their experiences of growing up in the diaspora, negotiating identity, and exploring topics that might have been considered "taboo" by either the homeland or host cultures.

A comparison between *Story-wallah* and *The Expanding Landscape* provides insider and outsider perspectives, as well as individual and collective perspectives, on how the individual becomes a member of the South Asian diaspora through his or her interactions with the homeland, other members of the diaspora, and the new homeland. In *The Expanding Landscape*, edited by Carla Petievich, a number of scholars of South Asia question what it is to be South Asian in the diaspora. National, ethnic, religious, and cultural aspects of South Asian diasporic identity are compared and contrasted with similar elements of identity that existed in South Asia, before the individual and/or group became a member of the South Asian diaspora. Most of the writers are outsiders, scholars, and the same age as the first generation diasporic individuals whom they

studied. Their view presented a type of ethnography, where I felt like I was experiencing diasporic Indian culture through the estranged lens of an outsider. For example, an article about a familiar temple from my childhood provided me with a great deal of critical insight on various aspects of the temple and its activities; however, I personally did not experience the same degree of depth and fulfillment that I experienced when reading passages of similar situations from *Story-Wallah*.

Social stigma resulting from issues such as non-mainstream behavior such as marrying outside of culture, careers in the arts and performance, and gender and sexuality are not discussed in *The Expanding Landscape*, which largely focuses on economic, social, cultural, religious, and political issues that affect the "mainstream" of the diaspora population. *Story-wallah* deals with "taboo" subjects more freely, perhaps because it is written by members of the diaspora who seem to be speaking for themselves and/or those close to them through their work.

Shyam Selvadurai shares his own background, personally and as a member of the South Asian diaspora, in the introduction of the book. He explains that he did not question his cultural identity until he emigrated from Sri Lanka to Canada, where he began to question what his Sri Lankanness was. He also shares that he began to come to terms with being gay after he moved to Canada. After sharing these personal revelations, Selvadurai discusses various topics of interest in diasporic studies, including gender and sexuality.

Selvadurai states, "one's authenticity within the South Asian diaspora, the sense that one is a true member of the group, is often determined by one's conformity to gender roles and expectations." He goes on to discuss "the burden of femininity," and the

expectation of women to uphold cultural values from the homeland. These statements are strongly supported by the short stories in the book, where females such as Daya in "Just Between Indians" and Sushi in "Crossmatch" cause great amounts of stress for their parents by not following the model that society has prescribed for an Indian girl coming from a "good home."

The limitations of the concept of diaspora, as suggested by Selvadurai, are evident in *The Expanding Landscape*, where most articles deal with those aspects of identity that are an effect of being a member of the South Asian diaspora. The book discusses social and class issues that are the result of economic and social stratification, issues regarding religion, the development of an ethnic identity, and some discussion about mixed heritages. Anomalies and transformations within individuals in the diaspora are not accounted for. Members of the diaspora are seen as individuals coming together as a group to maintain a collective identity. Authors of the articles in *The Expanding Landscape* depict the individuals that they study to be a "model minority," which reflects the information these authors have received from the individuals whom they have studied. The idealized South Asian communities that are presented in the book are the communities themselves in the way that they wish to be portrayed.

A fair comparison between the issues discussed in *Story-wallah* and *The Expanding Landscape* requires a comparison between the works themselves. In *Story-Wallah*, it is presumable that the authors would feel encouraged to write about topics that are not regularly discussed in order to gain acclaim. Insider perspective allows the writers to take intimate individualistic viewpoints in the stories, by sometimes sacrificing how the collective society is portrayed, in order to more acutely depict emotions that are

dealt with in the books. For example, "Cane is Bitter" by Sam Selvon tells the story of a young man who has returned to his village after spending time in the city pursuing higher education. When he returns to the city, he feels hassled by his family and village, all of whom want him to return to an ordinary village life and "settle down." Even the man's sister, who encourages him to stay in the village and teach what he has learned, is seen as a repressor of his individualism.

Individualism is a common theme in *Story-wallah*, a concept that Western readers can easily identity with. The strong emphasis on individualism as a theme in the stories that are selected is Selvadurai's attempt to show diversity within the diaspora, as well as a common theme that is shared between members of the diaspora that are from a diverse range of South Asian countries and time periods.

The Expanding Landscape is a collection of papers that were presented at a conference at Columbia University in 1993. According to the introduction by Petievich, the conference developed complex conceptualizations of "diaspora" and "identity" in reference to the South Asian diaspora. The conference focused on ideas such as diversity and self-identification within the diaspora, transnationality, the role of gender, and generational differences. These themes were studied by independent and institutionally-based scholars from a variety of locations, as well as younger scholars in the process of completing their education. Scholars included South Asians and non-South Asians from a variety of backgrounds, but it is interesting to note that all of the articles in *The Expanding Landscape* are written by women. The only male presence in the book is David Lelyveld's role as the chair of a panel discussion entitled "The Second Generation Speaks," whose transcription is included in the book.

While both books have the limitations that are caused by the bias of human authorship, they expertly deal with first and second generation issues, while leaving room for further dialogue from readers and future scholars to come.

There has been a significant body of ethnographic writing on the second generation of the Indian diaspora through the work of Gregory Diethrich (1999) in Chicago and Sunaina Maira (1999) in New York, both of whom explore ideas regarding identity through the consumption of youth culture. As the second generation matures, and as a younger population of second and third generation individuals mature, they are finding a further evolved situation from what has already been written about. By adding to the work of scholars before me, I hope that our combined efforts demonstrate the varied experiences of the Indian diaspora as it matures in the United States.

In my work, I wish to contribute to the current discourse by situating my perspective as a member of a latter part of the second generation of the Indian diaspora. Most of Bagal's students whom I observed are of elementary and secondary school age and I have analyzed their experience of Hindustani music in the Indian diaspora. I wish to share my findings on the role that institutionalization has played in their practice and performance of this music.

Theoretical Framework

In order to consider the acculturation of second generation members of the Indian diaspora, one requires a set of tools with which to explore the situation, raise significant questions, and develop conclusions. When I began my work, I first identified the individuals whom I encountered and observed as members of the Indian diaspora. In his essay, "Diasporas," James Clifford summarizes William Safran's definition of diasporas

as the following: "a history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly identified by this relationship" (Clifford 1994, 305). The Indian community that I observed in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area demonstrates all of these qualities. Particularly through their desire to return to the homeland, ongoing support, and a collective identity that is identified through this relationship, which sometimes alienates them from the host country, the community solidly situates itself as a diasporic community, as opposed to a group of Americans that maintain ties to their Indian heritage.

Individuals from a variety of homeland origins and host destinations can be considered to be members of a diaspora; however, depending on various factors such as the individual, the homeland, the host country, and the diasporic community, different diasporic communities can have different characteristics. For example, during the two years that I spent in Edmonton, Alberta for my master's degree, I found the diasporic Indian community in Edmonton to be very different from the community in Washington D.C. Since the two communities immigrated to North America at different times, pursued dissimilar careers, and were received differently in their host communities, the two communities evolved very divergently.

The Indian diasporic community located in the Washington D.C. and Baltimore areas is a large group of individuals who originally come from a diverse range of geographical regions in India. The Indian diaspora consists of both established individuals and immigrants that have newly arrived from India and/or other countries. Although the diasporic community has a strong sense of community, a growing number

of members do not consider themselves to be defined solely by their heritage. They are acculturated into life as residents of Washington D.C. and Baltimore, both of which are vibrant, cosmopolitan cities with a large number of educational and professional possibilities. Most professionals who live in the city are temporary residents, having moved to Washington D.C. as a result of a career choice. The city publicizes itself as offering a vast array of media, arts, athletic, political, cultural, and social activities that are open and available to all of its residents and visitors. In Washington, "insider status" is quickly gained by simply participating in the city's offerings. Members of the current generation of the Indian diaspora have embraced these opportunities and have settled into life as Washingtonians or Baltimoreans.

The perception through which the Indian diaspora in these locations defines itself is somewhat explained by Samir Dayal's statements on diaspora and double consciousness. He states, "Doubleness as I am conceptualizing it is less a 'both/and' and more a 'neither just this/nor just that.' My attempt here is to conceive doubleness negatively, to explode the positive and equilibristic constructions of diaspora around the desire for belonging ideally to two or more places or cultures" (1996, 47). Dayal explains that his negative conception of doubleness aims to rid the dual identity from the perception of nostalgia. I observed a similar double consciousness in the students in Bagal's studio. Their decision to take Hindustani violin lessons in Bagal's studio was not considered to be an action of solely claiming Indian identity or rejecting an American identity--it held different connotations for each student. Each student's relationship with his family, the Guru, and the community has a significant effect on how the lessons fit into the construction of his identity.

The diasporic community becomes acculturated through the process of socialization. As members of the second generation of the Indian-American diaspora in Washington D.C. have matured, they have become socialized into two cultures: the North American culture in which they have been born and raised, as well as the Indian culture to which they have maintained ties through social institutions established by their parents. Thomas Turino explains the significance of socialization in his book, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe*, where he explains how individuals in Zimbabwe become cosmopolitan. He explains that the most significant aspect of this process is when individuals "internalize foreign ideas and practices and make them their own" (2000, 8). In a similar way, the second generation of the Indian-American diaspora has internalized the culture of the new and former homelands to naturalize their experience.

Diasporic organizations are successful because they create a system through which an organization is able to supersede the individual, thereby allowing for the possibility of the activity to become a naturalized part of the diasporic consciousness. As Turino states in the case of cosmopolitanism in Zimbabwe, "The key difference for the concept of cosmopolitanism is between imitation and internalization; the latter allows for internally generated cultural creativity, practices, and identities" (2000, 9). Similarly, the process of creating an institution internalizes the practice of diasporic art forms because the actual art form no longer requires the imitation of practices from the former homeland; rather, it has progressed to the point of naturalization for the diaspora and begins to gain value through social capital.

According to Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, "Groups that have high social capital—that are characterized by substantial or dense networks of relationships characterized by trust or obligation—are capable of doing things that groups with low social capital have difficulty doing" (2007, 228). In the case of the Indian-American diaspora, organizations allow for individuals to form a network in a place where they might otherwise face disadvantages from being relatively new to a place, while not carrying the burden of having to maintain ties at an individualized level, and thereby allowing members to adapt and acculturate to life in the new homeland.

The acculturation of members of the Indian diaspora has changed significantly from the first generation to the second generation as a result of accumulated social capital. Hindustani classical music was largely brought to the United States by members of the Indian diaspora; however, it was not unfamiliar to individuals in the United States when the immigrants arrived. Hindustani music was transferred to the United States through the Beatles and their incorporation of Ravi Shankar's music in their songs, as well as the increased immigration of Indians to the United States after the Immigration Act of 1965, which allowed for individuals to immigrate to the United States through their skills and professions. Most of the young adults that immigrated during this time were raised in post-independence India, which resulted in them bringing their nationalistic ideals and cultural art forms to the new homeland. In addition, they were a highly-educated and skilled group, most of whom pursued white-collar occupations such as engineering, accounting, and medical sciences.

During the 1970s, when most first-generation Indians were settling into the United States, cultural and religious groups formed within the community. These groups

served two purposes: to establish social ties among members of the diaspora and to maintain ties to values that were important to these individuals. In the introduction to *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, Martin Stokes states, "...the means by which ethnicities (as well as class subcultures) define themselves in music have to take into account the power relations which pertain between the groups defining and being defined" (1994, 20). When the first generation of Indians were establishing their own organizations within the United States, they were doing so in a country that was acquainted with their culture and music through the hippie movement and an introduction of Hindustani music through the Beatles. As a result, first-generation Indian-Americans were attempting to establish themselves in a new "homeland" where they did not have the opportunity to create their own first impressions to those around them; hence, these peoples were faced with two challenges. First, they had to assimilate into a foreign culture and attempt to raise children in a culture that they knew very little about. Second, they had to assert their own identities and define themselves against preconceived images that people in the new homeland had of them.

The lens through which I am studying the acculturation of the members of this diasporic community is that of Hindustani classical music. Hindustani classical music has been used in the diasporic community as a means through which members of the diaspora socialize and maintain ties to their homeland. When many of the first generation members of the Indian diaspora immigrated, musicians from India were brought to United States to perform concerts that were significant social events within the community. As the first generation matured, and as the community gained individuals

with musical talent, teaching Hindustani music became a tool through which traditional values could be transmitted to the second generation.

Why Music?

Hindustani classical music is a canonical tradition, similar to Western classical music. Both are art musics that share a level of prestige that results from their patronage by the elite, the professionalism of the musicians that traditionally pursued these art forms, and the complexity of the repertoire. However, in Hindustani classical music, compositions were always transmitted aurally from teacher to student. According to Bonnie Wade, in her book *Music in India: The Classical Traditions*, "In North India, many artists have taken pains to be certain that their knowledge is transmitted to only a few, if any, successors. They are extremely possessive of their traditions, which include not only specific songs, but also individualistic ways of rendering a rāga" (1987, 25). Through the work of Bhatkhande until his death in 1936, notations of compositions from different gharanas[1] were compiled and music conferences occurred that constructed the future of Hindustani music, by establishing the institutions of music conferences and music itself as integral aspects of Indian culture (Nayar 1989, 339). This dialogue and culture was imparted to many of the individuals that became the first generation of diasporic Indian immigrants to the United States during the late 1960s through the early 1980s. These individuals brought with them the idea that Hindustani classical music could serve as a tool through which one could impart aspects of Indian culture to future generations.

[1] Gharanas are hereditary lineages of professional musicians through which compositions and performance styles are transmitted from student to teacher.

The social and cultural meanings of Hindustani classical music have changed and been transferred from a feudal system that was prevalent in courts to the rising importance of the gharana system, which led to a strong sense of identity and identification for those associated with the system. The change continued during the rise of nationalism in India, which led to the performance of Hindustani music by non-hereditary musicians, to the transferal of teaching in music colleges and the public domain. These changes in social and cultural meanings have resulted in a change in the actual music as well. For example, ragas and compositions that were once known by only hereditary musicians, which were learned after years of intense study, can now be learned by members of the Indian diaspora living in Washington D.C. that take weekly, hour-long lessons. Although the composition may be somewhat similar, the fact that it is being learned under such different circumstances means that the music will inevitably change. In his book, *The Life of Music in North India: The Organization of an Artistic Tradition*, Daniel Neuman discusses "the ecology of Hindustani music culture," and explains how the changes to Hindustani music change the music altogether. Neuman states, "To the extent that non-hereditary musicians enter the ranks of professionals, it would appear that their musicianship will alter the cultural identification and musical significance of rāgs. When rāg *Malkauns* ceases to be the rāg of jinns and becomes a pentatonic scale, the music *becomes* something different because it *means* something different" (1980, 212). Hence in my work, I wish to investigate the effect of the new meaning of Hindustani music that has developed in the new homeland.

As I consider the new meaning of Hindustani music in the new homeland, I also consider the role of the violin. Although the primary instruments through which

Hindustani music has been expressed are the voice or native Indian instruments such as the sitar, sarangi, sarode, harmonium,[2] and tabla, the violin has gained a relatively secure role in Karnatik music. Although the violin was relatively marginal in Hindustani music until recently, it did gain popularity through music colleges, such as those in Bombay and in Pune. Since the violin is easily recognized as a high-status instrument by the Western world, it is an ideal instrument for diasporic Indians. The "bi-polar" ability of the instrument to identify in both eastern and western contexts makes it an ideal symbol for individuals that are negotiating identities.

A similar sentiment occurred in South India during the twentieth century. This is discussed by Amanda Weidman in her book *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India*. She states, "There was something about the violin—its Westernness and newness but also its uncanny ability to imitate the Karnatic voice—that made it flexible and resilient enough to withstand various experiments" (2006, 42). Likewise, I believe that the flexibility of the violin has made it an ideal instrument through which to study Hindustani music, and explore its possibilities, in diasporic contexts.

Finally, bringing together the many aspects of this project, I will consider the institutionalization that has resulted from the socialization and acculturation of the second generation members of the diaspora. Through her work, Lynne G. Zucker has found that there is a strong relationship between institutionalization and cultural persistence. She states, "the greater the degree of institutionalization, the greater the generational uniformity of cultural understandings, the greater the maintenance without direct social control, and the greater the resistance to change through personal influence" (1977, 742).

[2] The harmonium has been used in Hindustani music since at least the turn of the 20th century.

I argue that, in a diasporic environment, institutionalization provides a means through which generational uniformity can be expressed, and I challenge the idea that cultural persistence implies cultural fixity in this situation. Rather, I believe that institutionalization here results from an environment of social control coming from diverse social agency, where culture can persist through adaptation, and cultural continuity results from choices made from within the constraints of the new homeland. In this case, the second generation's practice of institutionalization has allowed it to develop and uphold the first generation's teachings, allowing for the culture to be maintained without the need for individualized monitoring. Overall, it allows a relatively new diasporic community to gain large amounts of social capital through the establishment of an entity that is recognized by the host country.

Origins of the Project

My original conceptualization of this project resulted from my personal reflections on being raised as a member of the Indian diaspora in Washington D.C. Music was an important part of my childhood from an early age. My parents enjoyed attending Hindustani music concerts, and they encouraged me to take lessons when I began showing an interest in Hindustani music. As a child, I took music lessons from Dr. Ajay Patel, a Hindustani violinist who lived in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area while he was completing a medical residency. Patel taught at the home of one of his students, and every Sunday afternoon my father and I would take music lessons. I learned how to play the harmonium and sing classical ragas.[3]

[3] Raga, rāg, and rag are used somewhat interchangeably during this thesis; although the spelling "raga" is most commonly used in written language, "rag" is most commonly used in spoken language.

I learned how to sing the notes of the ragas, *alankars*, simple compositions, and *tans*, all of which were taught to me aurally and written down for me by my Guru in a marbled notebook. During the week, I practiced and prepared lesson material for the following week. Through these lessons, I learned compositions that I performed at venues such as International Night at my elementary school, cultural programs within the diaspora, and for family and friends that visited our home. I was encouraged to learn and perform music, however, I did not continue with Hindustani music when Dr. Patel moved from Maryland at the completion of his residency.

While I continued my musical studies through the study of Western classical music, my Hindustani music lessons with Dr. Patel provided me a musical foundation that has served me well throughout my music studies. Knowing that the experience of the second generation was changing, and that a third generation was emerging on the scene, I chose to go back to the site of Dr. Patel's studio to observe what had changed. Dr. Patel is now living in Birmingham, Alabama, and I stayed at his home to take lessons for several days. He was teaching at a local Hindu temple; however, when I attempted to schedule visits to observe Dr. Patel's classes at his teaching studio, I found that his schedule had become irregular. He reasoned that students' desires to pursue school-related and Western musical activities, through which they would receive greater recognition and reward for their work, had led to the reduction in the size of his studio.

I questioned whether my initial belief of the changes in the experience of second generation members of the diaspora was valid. Through Dr. Patel's suggestion, I found the studio of Mr. Arun Bagal in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area. Although I was no longer located in the studio of the Guru who introduced me to Hindustani classical

music, I was back in the new homeland of my parents and in the diasporic community where I had been raised. Here, I found what I had been anticipating: a studio full of young children and teenagers that were eagerly pursuing classical Indian art forms.

Developing a methodology

When I first called Mr. Bagal to introduce myself and my project, he recognized my last name through his association with my parents, members of Washington's diasporic Indian community since the 1970s. He also welcomed me through my association with Dr. Patel; however, I found that the best way for me to enter Bagal's studio, and to re-enter the diasporic community that I wanted to study, was by taking violin lessons from Bagal. During my first lesson with Bagal, he was appreciative of my technique and the training that I had received on the violin through my undergraduate degree in music; however, he recommended that I re-enter my study of Hindustani music with Rag Yaman and focus on making my music sound "more Indian." We focused on the approach to and from each note, rather than the note itself, as well as the passages that made the raga sing, as opposed to the notes of the composition. For me, this return to the basics of violin playing reflected a shift that also had to occur in my mindset as an ethnographer.

Having been born and raised in this community, I realized I would find differences between my own experience and the environment that I would observe; however, I was not sure to what degree I would be considered an insider and to what degree I would be considered an outsider. In her article, *"Do You Really Live Here?" Thoughts on Insider Research,* Dydia DeLyser discusses a similar issue:

> "Being an insider is not simple. Kirin Narayan points out that 'even native anthropologists' are insiders only in certain regards: 'We all belong to

> several communities simultaneously. . . . [P]eople born within a society can be simultaneously both insiders and outsiders, just as those born elsewhere can be outsiders and, if they are lucky, insiders too" (2001, 442).

I experienced the phenomenon of being a simultaneous insider and outsider frequently during my work. Although I had been born and raised within this community, I no longer lived in it. Also, as an ethnographer, I was not necessarily always part of events within the studio and the community; arriving with my notebook, no matter how inconspicuous I attempted to remain, I was usually identified as an outsider. In addition, I was not sure to what degree my being an insider, or an outsider, would influence how members of the community interacted with me.

In "Toward a Mediation of Field Methods and Field Experience in Ethnomusicology," Timothy Rice discusses the negotiation between the perceived notions of insider vs. outsider that occurs during fieldwork. Of this experience he writes:

> "One of the most troubling questions was simple: Where was I? And I didn't mean the question just in spatial terms, that is, where is the field? Where was I in relation to ethnomusicological theory? And where was "I" in the temporal trajectory of myself becoming an ethnomusicologist and musician?" (1997, 109)

In my own work, I negotiated my space between being a young graduate student, a bi-musical musician returning to Hindustani classical music after over ten years of Western classical music study, and a member of the diaspora returning to her own community and trying to negotiate the space between respectful second generation diaspora member, young adult, and scholar. I felt unable to find my exact location within all of these categories, and for some time, I became pre-occupied with the task of positioning myself in the field, rather than collecting ethnographic data. Is his account, Timothy Rice says:

> "My understanding was neither precisely that of an outsider nor that of an insider. Although the linguistic methods of cognitive anthropology had helped me narrow the gap between emic and etic perspectives, I could not in the end close that gap completely. When, on the other hand, I abandoned those methods and acted musically, it seemed as if I fell right into the gap between insider and outsider, into a theoretical "no place" that felt very exciting, if not exactly like a utopia. I was neither an insider or an outsider" (1997, 110).

Having read these words for the first time during my first semester of graduate school, I appreciated the complexity of the situation; however, I did not fully understand the kind of effort required of the ethnographer until I placed myself in the field and began my own ethnographic work. Through the negotiation of my own identity as a diaspora member whose parents were still actively participating in community events, finding ties between myself and my informants – the grandmother of one of the students whose lessons I observed taught me how to read and write Gujarati during early teenage years, and learning how to use my status as a resource, I was able to observe a unique perspective on the current state of acculturation of the diasporic community.

Collecting data required that I recognize that I had naturalized much of my experience of the Indian diaspora. As a result, it was difficult to observe and discover pieces of information that I already knew. Through a process of defamiliarizing myself, by taking distance from the field and scrutinizing it, I was able to draw on my familiarity with a new perspective and collect "data" (Qureshi 2007; DeLyser 2001).

Most of my ethnographic data was gained through participant observation, which was dynamic and the nature of which changed depending on the situations I was faced with, and which was supplemented by my personal experiences. As an insider ethnographer, a significant amount of data was gained through conversations and

observations of a familiar group of people, where my nuanced status allowed me to collect multifaceted information.

In the beginning, I was solely a participant in Bagal's studio. I took bi-weekly lessons at his home, where I learned about Bagal's teaching style, the significance of the repertoire that he taught, briefly met all of the students in his studio, became acquainted with the members of Bagal's family (who also became familiar with my own family as this project progressed), and developed a sense of trust between the Guru and myself.

I allowed for Bagal to introduce me and my project to his students and their families, by providing him an abstract of the project that I had submitted to the Ethics Committee at the University and an ethics form. When I entered lessons, Bagal introduced me to students and parents as a graduate student that was doing a project on how he teaches. In the beginning, my only interaction with the students and their families was to ask their permission to record lessons and to get copies of the ethics form signed. I also exchanged contact information with the students whom I interacted more with, if there was a need to clarify information.

After observing the first lesson, I started asking the students and their families questions about the music and their lives outside of the music. I gained a great deal of information from these informal interviews that occurred before and after lessons. I observed lessons during approximately six weeks of summer 2006, the long weekend of October 2006, and the last two weeks of December 2006; in addition, I attended a New Year's Eve performance given by one of Bagal's students at the Hindu Temple in Silver Spring, Maryland, and I attended the Sangeet Prabhat in April 2007. All of my visits occurred during school breaks from my master's program at the University of Alberta.

While I was not in the area, I kept in touch with Bagal and his studio through email and through my family.

Overview of the thesis

The following chapters of my thesis will present the ethnographic data that I collected through my fieldwork, according to the theoretical framework that I have established through this introductory chapter. In the second chapter, I will present an ethnographic sketch of the Indian diaspora in the Washington D.C. from the late 1970s through the present; I will demonstrate how the first generation's establishment of the diasporic identity has been accepted and further developed by members of the second generation, resulting in acculturation of the community into the new homeland.

After having acquainted the reader with the setting in which my work takes place, the third chapter will provide insight into the process of taking weekly lessons in Bagal's studio. I will demonstrate how a sense of diasporic identity is established through taking Hindustani classical music lessons, the role of various generations of the diaspora in the process, and the role of music in this process. In the fourth chapter, I will present an ethnographic account of the *Sangeet Prabhat* and provide my own analysis on how the acculturation of second generation diaspora members has resulted in the institutionalization of Hindustani classical music. Finally, I will conclude the thesis with insights that I have gained from my work and recommendations for further study on this topic.

CHAPTER TWO

Acculturation through Generations: An Ethnographic Sketch of the Diasporic Community

In order to study the acculturation of the second generation diasporic Indians, it is necessary to look back at the first generation and how they influenced, and continue to influence, the development of the second generation. The majority of the first generation within the diasporic Indian community in metropolitan DC, the individuals that my research is focused on, immigrated between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the first wave of immigration resulted from the passing of the Immigration Act of 1965, which allowed for a significant number of South Asians to immigrate to the United States for the first time. Indians continued to immigrate to the United States, for career opportunities, post-secondary education, and economic opportunities through the 1970s and 1980s, when the first wave of first generation diasporic Indians were able to begin sponsoring relatives to immigrate as well. Hence, the experiences of the first generation are relatively diverse, and have been influenced by "newer" first generation members that have immigrated afterwards. In particular, those South Asians that immigrated to the area during the "tech boom" of the late 1990s and early 2000s re-shaped the landscape. Entering the host country with large salaries and into a setting where earlier immigrants had already established a strong diasporic presence, they negotiated their diasporic identities quickly compared to the first generation Indians that had immigrated thirty years prior to them. Seeing these newer immigrants arrive in the host country invoked a sense of nostalgia among older first

generation immigrants, many of whom had been of a similar age when they had first immigrated to the United States and who now had children the same ages as the newer first generation immigrants.

Thus, although my ethnographic work captures a generational situation to which I am an insider, it occurs within a dynamic situation that is constantly being changed and influenced by new waves of immigration, economic opportunity in the host country, and that variable degrees to which these and other forces influence each other. The complexity of the situation is well-described by Sandhya Shukla, in her book *India Abroad: Diasporic Cultures of Postwar America and England*:

> The "Indian diaspora" discussed here is simultaneously a concept and a set of social formations. In allowing us to consider how migrant peoples negotiate life amid tremendous social, cultural, and political change, by building the "imagined communities" of nations, by creating identities and by expressing themselves as multiply constituted, diaspora involves, always with qualification, ways of life—community, culture, and society. The term diaspora also conveys an affective experience in a world of nationals, through its proposition of global belonging as a means of self- and group representation. Yet neither globality nor diaspora should be interpreted to mean the absence of location" (2003, 4).

The primary goal of the first generation was to preserve culture that had been brought from the old homeland into the new one. Members within the community began organizing into groups that would allow for them to come together, share a similar culture, and socialize with each other. In this way, one of the first Indo-American organizations that developed within the 1970s was the India House of Worship, which developed as a result of the shared culture between its members.

Here, I adapt the definition of shared culture employed by Cornell and Hartmann:

> "...a set of more or less shared understandings and interpretations that include ideas about what is important and what is real as well as strategic and stylistic guides to action. Such ideas and guides may be embedded in

> myths and stories, expressed openly in ritual activity, communicated implicitly in extended processes of socialization, learned through shared experience, or sustained in other ways" (2007, 89).

According to its website, India House of Worship is "a tax-exempt non-profit religious organization registered in the state of Maryland on October 14, 1976, for the express purpose of providing a place for Hindu Vedic worship for the Indian-American community now settling in and around Washington D.C." Through its monthly meetings at a local high school, the organization observes the religious and cultural elements of Hindu holidays, as well as social events such as *Gujarat Divas* (Gujarat Day), with *deshbhakti* (patriotic) poems and songs. Such events provide a means through which older members of the diaspora are able to maintain nostalgic ties with Indian culture, while socializing the next generations of adults, young adults, and children.

In addition to the events that the India House of Worship celebrates through their monthly programs, they also publish a quarterly journal that includes previously unpublished articles in English and Gujarati. The articles tend to range from expository to religious to literary pieces that are of interest to first generation diasporic Indians and are often of a nostalgic nature. The journal also includes news and information that is relevant to the community. As the organization has matured, it has created a link between itself and the required community service program for public secondary schools in Montgomery County, Maryland, providing incentive for the second generation to become involved with the production of the journal.

The purpose of such an organization is to firmly root the Indian identities of the first generation of the diaspora and establish a space to develop the Indian-American identities of the second generation through monthly socialization. The effect of this

monthly socialization is not necessarily immediate; however, the self-perpetuating effect of a socially embedded identity has a long-term effect on the individual.

> "The more embedded in social relationships and in other organization of daily experience an identity is—the thicker it is—the more prominent a role it is likely to play in how people think about the world around them. This gives to ethnic and racial identities some self-perpetuating potential: The more established and socially embedded they are, the more likely they are to endure" (Cornell and Hartmann 2007, 215).

In addition, to some degree, it seems as though the preservation of culture is a by-product of not being assimilated. For example, while the habit of attending a monthly meeting of a diasporic organization promotes naturalized socialization, it also keeps the diasporic individuals from participating in activities in the host country during that time; hence, the participating in alternate ritualistic activity develops a sense of "otherness." Of course the self-perpetuating nature of this situation means that a sense of "otherness" may promote members of the diaspora to have the motivation to maintain ties to the former homeland.

A key aspect of India House of Worship, and of other organizations that developed at that time, is that they allowed second generation members of the diaspora, individuals that were being born and raised outside of the homeland, to participate in activities that would allow for the homeland culture to become an active part of their lives. Rather than just attending meetings, they were socialized and taught how to perform traditional art forms, such as music and dance, which allowed them to actively participate in the process of being Indian without having to actually return to the homeland.

New organizations then emerged that promoted active social and culture awareness with the diaspora, such as FOGANA (The Federation of Gujarati Associations in North America) which takes localized social, cultural, and religious institutions and

brings them together as one body, and whose original members' work has maintained its purpose and impact beyond their own generation. According to the FOGANA website, "The primary activity of FOGANA has revolved around preserving and enhancing the base of Gujarati Raas-Garba-Folk Dances. This is the best possible medium to get our younger generation interested in our heritage. FOGANA organizes competitions for interaction with others as well as preserving and enhancing the standard of genuine traditional art form" (FOGANA, n.d.). FOGANA maintains its own constitution, has an executive council, and is active through regional and national-level dance competitions.

By comparing the two cover pages of the FOGANA programs that were produced in 2000, one sees examples of the motivation behind the dance competitions. The cover image of the FOGANA program (Figure 2) clearly represents a nostalgic image of rural Gujaratis, often re-enacted through folk dances that are performed at the competitions. The image is particularly noteworthy because most of the producers of and participants in the event come from professional families who have university degrees and are pursuing urban careers in engineering, medicine, mathematics, and the sciences, and their life experiences are far-removed from the rural scene depicted in the cover image. The second program (Figure 3) depicts a modernized artistic image of the dancers, thereby providing insight on how the dancers and dances are viewed by the participants who participate in them.

FOGANA provides a place for younger members of the diaspora, who might have previously practiced Gujarati dance forms such as raas, garba, and folk dances during Navratri or isolated events, to have reason to cultivate and improve their talents. Through a system of local, regional, and national competitions, FOGANA provides that

motivation for young people to engage in regular practices, which also provides an opportunity for second generation members, who might not ordinarily be in frequent contact with each other, to socialize on a regular basis.

Furthermore, organizations such as FOGANA see the need for the second generation to pursue activities that are comparable and competitive to offerings in the new homeland. For example, through its organized and institutionalized practice of dance competitions, FOGANA provides a forum through which children and young adults may compete and receive recognition for their efforts. Such recognition is valuable capital for entrance to competitive public and private secondary schools and universities, and it invests the children into the actual event and socializes them with a purpose. Over time, young adults that once participated in these activities as children join the committees of such organizations which ensure that the organization will last over time. In addition, these young adults have actively been creating their own organizations to meet diasporic needs. Shukla discusses a similar occurrence with regards to cultural festivals, aimed at diasporic Indians, that take place in the United States and England, "...the diaspora receiving this cultural production was hardly a passive receptacle; its members generated their own challenges from different conceptual and representation sites" (2003, 74). Through my own observations, and those of scholars who have studied similar occurrences, it is evident that these experiences have affected the experiences of second generation members who are now producing their own cultural representations, an example of which I experienced at a Hindustani music concert that I attended two years ago.

In 2005, I attended a Hindustani music concert featuring santoor and tabla at the Lisner Auditorium at George Washington University in Washington D.C. I attended the concert with my parents, two first-generation members of the diaspora who immigrated to the United States during the 1970s. While I knew that the concert was sold out, I did not know what to expect in regards to the demographic. We arrived just as the concert hall lights were dimming, so I did not have a chance to observe audience members before the concert began. The concert featured Ustad Zakir Hussain and Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, and I observed that solo sections, particularly Zakir Hussain's, received great reception from audience members. During the intermission, I noticed that a majority of the audience was comprised of teenagers and young adults, almost all of whom were second generation members of the diaspora that had been born and raised in the United States. The concert was hosted by an Indo-American organization, comprised of young adults, called Upakar. As I reflected on the evening, I realized that a traditional Indian art form and practice had not only been transplanted to the West, but it had been acculturated into a Western setting and had become naturalized by the members of the second generation. When I later asked various individuals attending the concert about their favorite musicians, names flowed freely from popular American musicians and bands to Hindustani classical performers, the latter of which would have been considered their parents' music just a few years earlier.

The Hindustani music concert of the second generation, however, was very different in appearance from a concert that would have occurred several years prior. In previous years, Hindustani music concerts, performed by world-renowned musicians, were often held in the basements of wealthy patrons' houses or in relatively modest

concert venues. Concerts often did not have precise starting or ending times and concert programs were often flexible and altered according to the wishes of audience members. The purpose of these concerts was socializing within the first generation community and the nostalgia that resulted from being in the presence of musicians and arts forms from the homeland. The Upakar concert that I attended in 2005 was very different. There was a printed program, an intermission, and the concert lasted approximately two to three hours, a length of time that is appropriate for a Western classical music concert but relatively short for a "traditional" Hindustani concert. While socializing did occur between audience members, socializing was not a primary goal of the concert. Most of the audience members seemed to be in attendance to actually enjoy the music. There was a large population of second generation diasporic Indians, many of who seemed to have a savvy understanding of Hindustani classical music based on their reactions to the concert.

As I considered the situation further, I realized that while the concert featured Hindustani classical music, it was not a traditional concert and had taken on the formality and characteristics of a Western classical music concert; however, the naturalization of this setting by the diasporic young adults that were in attendance convinced me that a new event had emerged. Thomas Turino analyzes a similar situation through Gregory Diethrich's fieldwork on desi[4] music among Indian-American diasporic youth in Chicago. Turino states,

> "The creative indexical combinations of Hindi film melodies with North American dance club rhythms and electronic instruments are signs of the actual components of this identity. The resulting genre is both an icon for the possibility of what this combination would sound and feel like for newcomers to the style, just as it is an index that emerges organically from

[4] The term "desi" loosely means "local," and it is used within the diasporic subculture as a way for individuals to greet each other, with regards to a shared familiarity over their South Asian background. The term has evolved somewhat in diasporic contexts as an allusion to fusion culture.

> this identity position for its innovators. For newcomers to the style, including the innovators in the initial stages, the creative indices of desi music provide a resistance to the old habitual ways of thinking about self ("inferior" "outsider" "misfit") through novel combination—a new possible model ("Indian-American us" "insider" "cool")—by a movement from signs of the actual (indices), to a possible model (icon), to internalization of the model and a new actualization of identity and community. And so the interplay of the possible and the actual continues as this style, or other replacement styles, continue to emerge with the emergent identity" (Turino 2000, 18).

As the second generation of the Indian diaspora emerges in Washington D.C., I believe that they have transformed Hindustani classical music concerts into a "new actualization of identity and community," similar to the way in which desi music in Chicago has taken Indian and North American music to create a new genre of music. Hindustani music is no longer being viewed as only the music of their parents' former homeland but as a music that they patronize and whose performance has been naturalized according to a style of performance that meets their needs in the United States.

I wish to use this example of a Hindustani classical music concert in Washington D.C. to show how the matrices of Hindustani music in India and in the United States have intersected and have created a new kind of consumption of Hindustani music as the second generation emerges. Referring to the idea that music takes on a new meaning when it is transferred to a new setting, and considering earlier first and second generation members of the diaspora have used music to define their identity in the host country, I would like to consider the implications of an event from my fieldwork.

During the year that I conducted fieldwork in Bagal's studio, one of the students whom I observed was a fifteen year old, sophomore in high school. She has been studying with Bagal for several years and is fairly advanced in her playing. She attends a local private school, where she is actively involved with school activities. She has

already begun thinking about university applications and has been absent from some of her lessons due to school-related activities such as the PSATs and school trips. When I asked her why she studies with Bagal, she told me that she had originally started playing violin in school and took private violin lessons with a Western classical teacher but was not able to find regular lessons until she switched to Hindustani classical violin lessons with Arun Bagal. She says that she enjoys Hindustani violin and would like to continue with it after high school; she does not particularly want to resume Western classical violin because she believes that it would be "a lot of work." This student is a very proficient and talented violinist, whose abilities I can appreciate after having studied violin for the past sixteen years.

On New Year's Eve 2006, she was going to perform at the local Hindu Temple in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her mother invited my family and me to her performance, so we attended. It was full of first, second, and third generation diasporic community members, largely from North India. The student's mother explained to me that there is a core group of families, including hers, that get together each week. As with the Upakar concert, I was surprised to find a sizeable population of young people in attendance, ranging from upper teens to early thirties, many of whom had come with their families and were socializing amongst themselves.

A number of individuals from the community sang before the dinner, which was served around 8 PM, during a program that was hosted by the priest from the temple. After dinner, the student performed a short composition; audience members were very supportive of her performance. The priest made a few comments after her performance. He said, "This is the future performing – the people that will eventually be taking over

the temple. Dhanya[5] to the parents..." He went on to promote the temple's music and yoga classes, and then he said, "Western music is just about dancing but not about "samskar,"[6] one finds Ishwar (God) within the "sur" (note).

There are several points of significance regarding this concert, and I propose "reading across the modes of expression," as recommended by Shukla who suggests that "the textual materials create the rather unbounded 'field' or 'archive' of representation. Reading across modes of expression, as well as through physical sites, I suggest is to get closer to diaspora life" (2003, 5). First, the inclusiveness of the Hindu religion and worship practices allow for the temple to serve as a site where musical practices can be taught and promoted. The temple provides "an umbrella" for the cultural practices of diasporic members, through its ability to retain and transmit the ideologies and theory of the homeland in a legitimized setting. Shukla states, "Diasporic cultures continually translate a set of differences into something new, yet those differences often appear within discourses of origins or other hierarchical social orders" (2003, 7). As a result, culture is framed by religion in the temple, which allows for faith and for historical foundations to be preserved. While Bagal provides a place to practice the classical form of Hindustani classical music, the temple provides a place for community members to socialize and promote individuals.

In the next chapter, I will present an ethnographic account of Bagal's studio to present the current situation in the diaspora and demonstrate how the practice of

[5] This word essentially means "with gratitude." In this case, the priest is expressing his gratitude to the parents for their role in her musical achievements.

[6] Samskara are teachings that are infused with cultural interpretations of moral values; one who lives his or her life according to these teachings is on the path to a karmically good existence.

Hindustani classical music allows for second generation members of the diaspora to negotiate their identity.

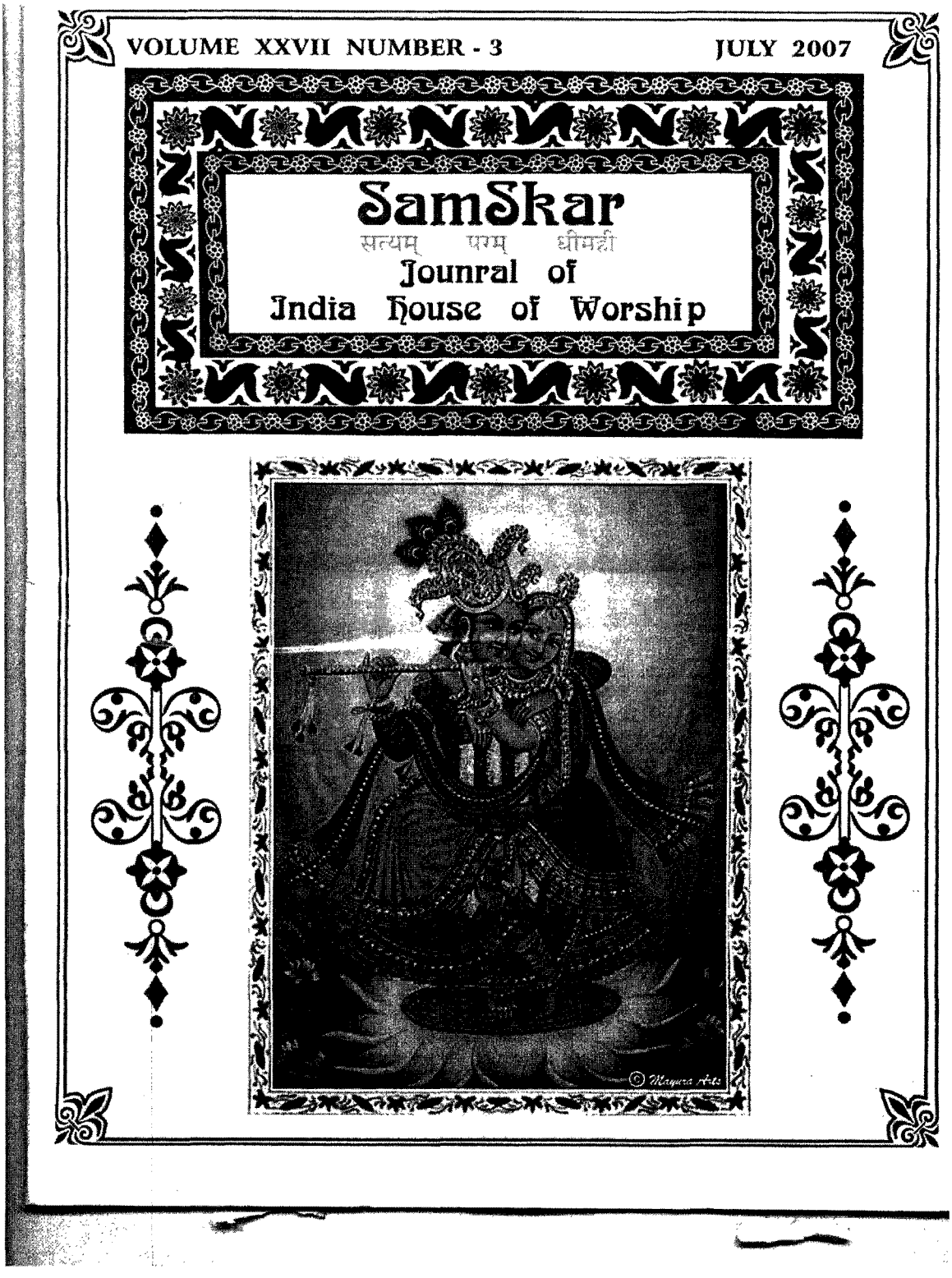

Figure 1

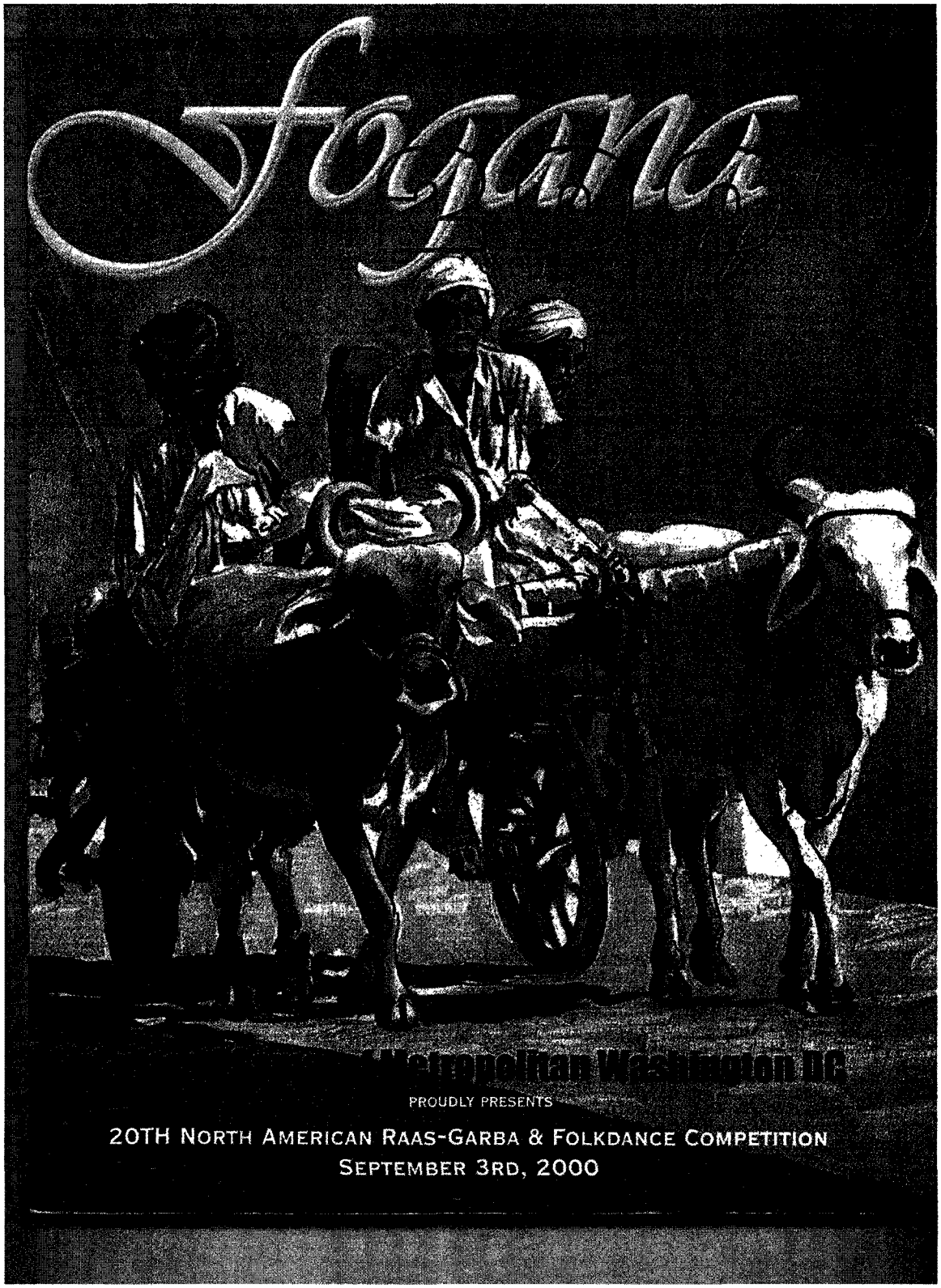

Figure 2

Figure 3

CHAPTER THREE

The Negotiation of Identity through Music Lessons

Music lessons have become a mainstay for imparting the culture of the homeland to members of the Indian diaspora in the United States. How do these Hindustani music lessons affect a student's cultural identity? Every week, the violin students of Arun Bagal attend their weekly lesson at his home in West Friendship, Maryland, a community located just outside of the Washington D.C. and Baltimore metropolitan area. Bagal is an engineer by profession; however, his spare time has been devoted to the learning, performing and teaching of Hindustani vocal and violin music. Bagal's first guru was Pandit Bhaskar Chandavarkar, a disciple of Ravi Shankar, and he also spent ten years training with Padmashree Pandit Vijay Raghav Rao.[7]

In this chapter, I will study how the process of taking music lessons with Bagal delineates the cultural identity of the students -- an identity that is constructed as a result of the relationships that occur through the context of the music lesson. I will present my ethnography of the music studio and my analysis of the situation, based on my observations and responses that I received from the students, their families, and the Guru. Broader discourse on the Indian diaspora in North America has defined the "desi" as having cultivated an identity that incorporates Indian and North American culture. Through the process of presenting my ethnographic research, I will examine how the findings of my data fit into the discourse on the Indian diaspora that has been established by previous scholars.

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[7] Pandit Vijay Raghav Rao is a foremost Indian flautist, whose performances, compositions, and film scores have had a significant impact on Hindustani classical music.

When I observed lessons or addressed questions to Bagal, his students, and their parents, the responses I received began with the assumption that I understood current trends in the diaspora. My fieldwork initially involved studying these relationships by conversing with the participants, and by attending and observing the lessons of three of Bagal's violin students during the summer of 2006: a middle-aged male in his mid-50s, born in India, and two female violin students, ages seven and fourteen, both of whom were born and raised in the United States. The students each attend a weekly private violin lesson for about one hour. The two younger students are usually accompanied by a parent, who has driven them to the lesson. The adult student is sometimes accompanied by his wife. Although the adult student met Arun Bagal through his interest in pursuing Hindustani violin lessons, he and his family have become personal friends with the Bagal family; hence, his wife's presence at the lessons usually connotes a social visit within the construct of the music lesson.

The actual lesson is a ritual event that is similar for all of the students, despite the differences in their ages and backgrounds. For the lesson, the student arrives at Bagal's house and proceeds to the basement entrance of his home; it is here that Bagal has created an ideal space for the transmission and retention of Hindustani music. Students leave their shoes outside the door and enter Bagal's studio. There are couches towards the rear of the studio, where parents often sit during their child's lesson, followed by an open space where one takes their lesson. Bagal sits on a raised platform area and the student sits on the floor in front of him; he dresses in traditional Indian clothing, serving as a visual image of the culture that he represents. The soundscape is permeated by the drone

of the tanpura, and Arun Bagal, the Guru, is focused on the raga compositions that he will be teaching, which he is already playing as the student enters the studio.

The student enters the traditional Indian space and becomes part of a ritual that has been transported to the new homeland. The younger students, who have not previously taken music lessons in India, are continuing the tradition of a Hindustani music lesson in the new homeland. The student's sense of cultural identity is affected by entering this space; however, the student's sense of identity also has an effect on the ritual itself. According to the older violin student, the Guru provides an "authentic" experience through the environment that he has created. I believe that the context of the lesson in each student's life provides a different meaning. For example, Bagal's teenaged violin student stated that she is motivated to attend lessons because she enjoys playing her instrument and the music that she plays. The adult violin student finds that his hobby of music parallels his spiritual journey as well as his aesthetic and epistemological awareness.

Although the space that Bagal has created resembles a traditional space where Hindustani music is taught and learned, there are elements of Americanization present. The students are dressed in Western clothing, and they often bring with them anecdotes of a week spent in school or at work. Cell phones are turned off, bottled water is present, and parents look forward to the chance to rest on the couches and listen to their child while reading *The Washington Post.* This weekly ritual is sometimes interrupted by younger students' school-related activities or a family vacation, but Arun Bagal is always prepared to bring the students' focus back to the lesson and the music. His studio reflects an acceptance of the double consciousness of his students, because his own identity

involves a variety of experiences as a professional, an established member of the diaspora, husband, father, grandfather, and music teacher. Bagal's studio demonstrates his relationship with some of these experiences. For example, the studio contains professional sound equipment for rehearsals and performances, as well as a computer and keyboard, a pair of tablas, tanpura and tabla machine, Bagal's own violin, and a binder that contains the notations of the ragas that Bagal has learned and now teaches. The room also contains a photograph of Bagal's wife in traditional clothing, images of Hindu Gods, and Indian and Western American/European violin memorabilia. The violin itself represents a hybrid identity through its ability to express Hindustani music on an instrument that is familiar to the students' non-Indian peers. Sitar and tabla lessons have been popular in Washington DC and Baltimore since the late 1970s; however, the violin is emerging as a new medium through which to learn Hindustani music, with the added benefits of being portable and easy to find in the United States.

Do the students actually respond to these relationships between themselves, the Guru, the studio, and the sense of the identity that is created? Bagal's adult violin student, who has previously taken music lessons during his childhood in India as well as with Indian music teachers in the United States, stated that the authenticity of the situation is created by Bagal. Bagal establishes himself as the Guru, the student is presented with a space in which to learn Hindustani music, and the lesson begins.

During the first lesson that I observed, Bagal's seven year old student was learning to play the national anthem of India. She is at an elementary level of violin playing, still learning the basics of how to care for her instrument and how to produce a good tone. While she seems to learn quickly, she has some difficulty coordinating

melody and rhythm; either she plays all of the melody properly or plays the rhythm properly. Bagal helps the student bridge this gap by playing parts of the song for her and having her point at the musical notation as he plays. The lesson is oriented towards making sure that the student learns how to play in tune, coordinate her fingerings and bowings, and maintain a relatively legato bow stroke that matches how Bagal sings the notes.

Her parents sit on the couches in the studio and seem proud of her efforts. This student presents the ideal example of a student establishing ties to her "former" homeland. She is learning to play the national anthem of India, a country that her family obviously maintains ties to but most likely will not permanently return to. Based on my personal experience, I predict that the Indian anthem will likely be performed at cultural programs, where both the American and Indian national anthems are performed by children and teenagers to represent their ties to the new and former homeland.

When I asked the student's parents why they have chosen Hindustani violin as an activity for their daughter, the mother replied her child is very active and learning music is "like meditation" for her. She believes that her child will benefit from the effects of the music lessons, which will provide a balance to the effects of playing soccer. Both parents have emigrated from India and are actively involved in American life as members of the Indian diaspora; they participate in a variety of musical, cultural, and athletic activities with other members of the diaspora while also participating in the extra-curricular offerings of their Americanized, professional and educational lives. The parents tell me that they feel lucky to have found a music teacher like Bagal for their daughter. Bagal is very enthusiastic about teaching the young girl. He is very patient and

he enjoys working with children. Although the student is a quick learner, she lacks coordination in her playing. Bagal believes that the student will be able to solve the issue of not being able to coordinate melody and rhythm after spending some more time studying the violin. The student is rewarded at the end of her lesson with a candy treat of two peanut M & Ms.

As the student packs her violin and enjoys her treat, Bagal interacts with the student's parents. Bagal's relationship with the student's parents is significant. Although Bagal is the student's Guru, he serves a sort of mentor to the parents as well. At the age of seven, the student is more than one generation removed from Bagal; her parents are the age of Bagal's own children. The parents respect Bagal as an elder member of the community, and they trust Bagal's understanding of their child's future. This is evident in the way that Bagal assures the parents that their child will be able to coordinate rhythm and melody after some more experience with the violin. Not only is he sharing cultural and musical knowledge with the child, Bagal is passing on aspects of his parenting knowledge to the next generation of parents. Bagal himself is the model of a successful parent having raised three children that have grown up to become members of the Indian diaspora. I believe that the parents lucky not only for having found a good music teacher for their daughter, but a positive parenting model for themselves.

Relationships established between those involved with the music studio form a diasporic community. The parents interact with Bagal at the beginning and end of lessons to discuss the progress of the student. The adults will also talk about current events in the community, share news about family life, etc. Bagal's wife will occasionally come downstairs into the studio to greet parents, some of whom she has

become personal friends with. A sense of community is developed within the studio, with students meeting each other at the beginnings and ends of their lessons, and with polite conversation occurring during the transitions between lessons. Meaningful friendships do develop as a result of these interactions. When Mrs. Bagal's mother recently passed away, Bagal's adult student and his wife were involved with the ritualistic social visits that occur after the passing of a family member. It is evident that a close relationship had developed, even though both families had only known each other for a few months through music lessons.

Bagal's teenaged violin student has been studying with him for several years, and the student and Bagal's families are also friends outside of the studio. The student enjoys playing violin and is self-motivated to practice and attend lessons. Her lessons begin with tuning her violin and proceed to the learning of an alap. The alap is an opening section to the performance of a raga, which is a prescribed framework for the building of compositions. The entire alap and most of the composition are learned by ear before notation is introduced. The alap section is improvised and unmetered, and it is where the foundation and the essence of the raga are created. Bagal begins to teach the alap by playing a phrase of music and having the student repeat after him. During the alap, the student learns how different degrees of the scale interact with each other: how notes are approached, how ornamentation is created, and which notes are to be avoided. As the lesson continues, passages become increasingly complex and Bagal continues to teach the alap section until he feels comfortable that the student has understood the concepts of the raga.

During the process of learning the alap section, the student becomes entirely focused on Bagal and the notes that he is producing. One notes that the student begins to slightly imitate Bagal's mannerisms such as his style of holding the violin, the way in which he begins passages, his actions while playing, and the expression on his face. The student becomes a version of her teacher. As her persona begins to change noticeably, the accuracy with which she is able to follow Bagal through the alap increases significantly. By the end of the exercise, the student is almost able to anticipate what Bagal will play by having become a reflection of his identity. This exercise builds awareness of an Indian component in the student's identity, because it forces the student to adapt to an intuitive understanding of raga that is distinctly Indian.

Bagal then introduces the actual notes of the raga, explaining how each one is approached during the aroha, the ascending order of the notes, and the avroha, the descending order of the notes. The student learns how to incorporate knowledge learned during the alap[8] section into the performance of the aroha and avroha. Bagal shares his own teacher's instructions that each note is like a diamond; it must be polished until it sparkles. A strong emphasis is placed on how one approaches the notes, not simply the imitation of the melodic lines that are presented. Bagal presents the student with a variety of possibilities through which she can emphasize the more significant notes in the raga; he includes some work in the upper positions of the violin, which allows the player to develop a line without sacrificing tone. The fingerings that Bagal provides are creative and quite adaptive, and they do show his knowledge of Western violin technique through lessons that he had taken between his studies with Chandavarkar and Raghav Rao, when

[8] An alap is a free-composed section that establishes the ambience of the raga, while showcasing the virtuosity of the performer and the beauty of the raga.

he was living in Germany because of a job transfer. As the student masters one concept, Bagal accommodates accordingly and expands the line slightly further. This continues until the student has a thorough grasp of the notes that she will be working with.

Next, Bagal introduces the student to the formal composition. The student hears each line before she sees it written down, either through Bagal playing it for her or by his singing the line as he writes out the notation in the student's notebook. The student is encouraged to learn the music by ear rather than through written notation, which serves as a frame through which to remember the composition and understand how the melody interacts with the tabla cycle.

Figure 4 provides an example of the notation that Bagal uses to teach music to his students; the notation is derived from the Bhatkhande system, which is used in music colleges across northern and western India today. SRGMPDNS represents the seven notes of the diatonic scale; the line below the second and seventh scale degrees represents those pitches being lowered by one semitone, compared to hose they would sound in a major scale. Dots above and below the notes indicate that these notes are one octave higher or lower then they would be in the "normal range" of the scale, which is usually based around middle-C. Finally, the dashes in the alap section indicate approximate pauses that the player should take, and the dashes in the composition indicate rests. Since the composition is in a sixteen-beat cycle, the dashes indicate time passing for beats when notes are not being played.

This particular example, in Rag Ahir Bhairav, demonstrates the set structure of the raga, as demonstrated by the aroha, avroha, and the first half of the notated

composition. An aspect unique to Bagal's teaching style is the notated alap section. As explained earlier, while he teaches this section aurally, he also provides notated lines for his students that demonstrate the nature of the raga and allow them to maintain an understanding of the nuances of the raga when they are not in their lessons. The notation demonstrates Bagal's ability to transform the teaching of the alap into a Western context, while maintaining an "Indianized" understanding of the raga.

The procedure according to which the raga is learned and performed establishes a relationship between the student and the raga. The performance serves as an opportunity to explore cultural identity. It is a relatively flexible process, due to the fact that the performance of a raga allows for the musician to individualize her presentation of the raga according to her own volition. The process of finding a sense of purpose in a prescribed setting is explained by Regula Qureshi in her analysis of the Qawwali listening process where she describes how guidelines within the listening process facilitate the achievement of spiritual purpose, with rules that flexibly apply "to govern a wide range of internal experience and external expression" (1995, 118). These rules, Qureshi states, "even embody certain potential contradictions inherent in both the experience and expression."

In a similar way, I believe that the raga allows a framework within which the student is able to experience and express elements of her identity. This occurs through the interaction between what is transmitted from Guru to student, what is retained by the student, and what is then performed by the student during her own performance of the raga. While this expression occurs through a traditional Indian art form, it does not require the student to proclaim or negate any particular degree of Indian identity. Such

awareness transcends a "double consciousness" (Dayal 1996, 47), a new experience where the member of the diaspora simply lives according to naturalized experiences that constitute her identity, which results in the emergence of a new relationship. It allows for the student to build her own relationship with her identity as a "desi," without negating her American identity or affirming her Indian identity.

Writers on the second generation diaspora experience have emphasized a dichotomy between identities as performed by Indian-American youth. In her article on the subculture of Indian-American youth, Sunaina Maira concluded that the subculture that she observed in New York provides a way "to *contain* the presumed paradoxes of second-generation experiences by performing a hybrid identity that is still questioned by many of these youth themselves" (1999, 52–53). She states that she agrees with Gayatri Gopinath who concludes, based on her work in Britain, that "bhangra as performance must be understood, then, not as a manifestation of the free play of a hybrid identity but rather as a creative response to the demand for coherence and stability within specific racial and cultural contexts, a means by which to 'work the trap that one is inevitably in'" (Maira 1999, 53).

The experience of the diaspora varies in different locations and situations; however, my observations of the current situation of the Indian diaspora in Washington D.C. did not find such dichotomies to be present. While the students are brought to violin lessons by their parents, all of the students whom I interviewed told me that they are genuinely interested in pursuing their hobby. Rising early on a Sunday morning for the actual lesson may not be ideal, but the students do enjoy having the chance to pursue music. While the music lessons did have the added benefit of reaffirming cultural

heritage, the practice did not necessarily define a direct link to Indian culture. Instead it simply serves as a possibility to explore identity on an individualized basis. Whether it is through the performance of a raga, the composition of a cadenza, or the painting of a picture, current members of the diaspora that I observed view the desi experience to be a component of their identity as an individual that does not have to be subject to evaluation or classification.

I believe that the experience of the diaspora is localized and encapsulated, and it evolves differently in different social environments. The individuals whom I observed are able to accept the disparate nature of their identity and have naturalized it. With the advent of MTV Desi, the popularity of literature written by members of the Indian diaspora, and the settling of the desi subculture that Maira (1999) and Gopinath (1994) observed in their articles, the diaspora faces a different situation. The process of experiencing a desi identity is as simple as going to Barnes and Noble and reading the most recently arrived desi literature or going to any dance club in the metropolitan area and hearing the latest desi-inspired remix. Desi culture has permeated cosmopolitan life in Washington D.C.; hence, while issues regarding ones' identity in the diaspora do remain, new questions are emerging. These questions are emerging through the observation of what the current desi is actually practicing -- a multi-dimensional identity where the diasporic element no longer remains a central or dichotomous factor. I believe that understanding the current situation requires further study of the desi, through an interactive exploration of the process of being "desi," to determine how, and even if, he or she decides to utilize the availability of a diasporic identity to define individual identity.

Figure 4
Musical Notation of Rag Ahir Bhairav

Aroha

S R G M P D N Ṡ

Avroha

Ṡ N D P M G R S

Example of a notated line of the alap –

RSRSNSN ---------- N^{S} ----- D ---------- D^{-N} P

Portion of the notated composition --

Sthai

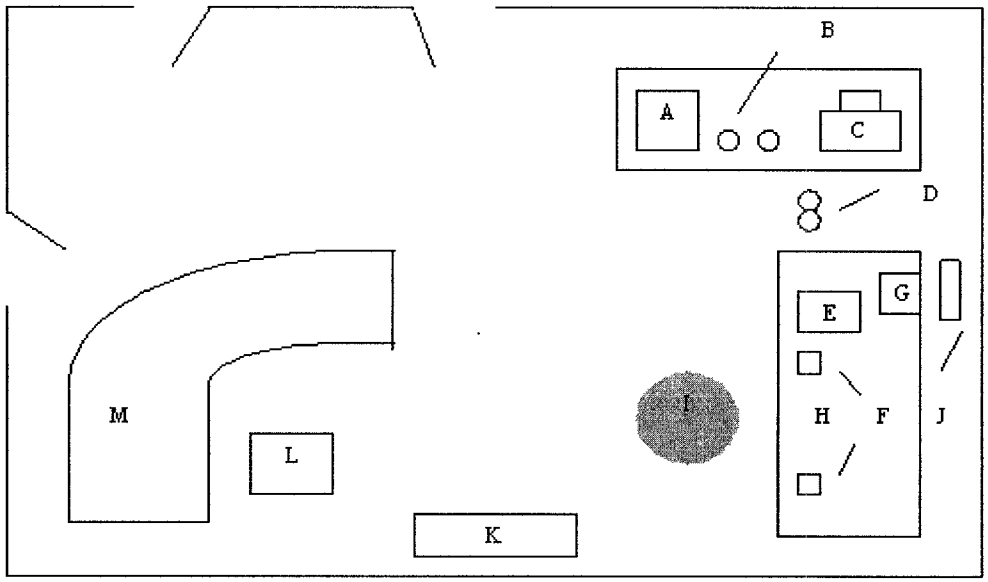
X **2** **O** **3**

- - - - - - G M R—S -NSR

G - - - M - - G MP-D N - Ṡ –

RG RS – N D P - -

Figure 5
Diagram of Arun Bagal's Studio



A. sound equipment
B. microphones
C. computer
D. tabla
E. harmonium
F. tanpura machines
G. notation binders
H. Arun Bagal (this is the space on the platform where Bagal usually sits)
I. student (some students sit on an ottoman during lessons; most sit on the floor)
J. altar
K. fireplace with violin-related memorabilia
L. coffee table
M. couches (where parents often sit during lessons)

CHAPTER FOUR

An Ethnographic Description of the Sangeet Prabhat

In this chapter, I will present an ethnographic description of the Sangeet Prabhat, an annual musical event that has been hosted by Arun Bagal since 1993. After having examined the acculturation of the Indian diaspora through generations and the impact this has had on the second generation's exploration of their identities in the first chapter of this thesis, I will now investigate how the Sangeet Prabhat demonstrates the effect of institutionalized practices in the host country on the practice of Hindustani music. In this chapter, I will identify the Indianized and Westernized aspects of diasporic life for second generation individuals, as observed during the Sangeet Prabhat. I argue that this event demonstrates the continued acculturation of second generation diasporic Indians who have truly become invested in preserving and maintaining the culture for themselves and for rising generations.

It is a sunny spring morning, close to the end of the April, and I briskly walk down the path around the side of Arun Bagal's house to enter the basement music studio. I am dressed in a light purple salwar kameez, an Indian outfit consisting of baggy pants, a long knee-length tunic, and a scarf. Shoes are left outside of the studio, as a sign of respect, and chai has been placed in a large thermal container for individuals needing refreshments. In the studio, a relatively large crowd of fifty to sixty individuals, mostly Indian-Americans ranging from children to adults, are gathered early on a Sunday morning for the annual Sangeet Prabhat. I have been observing Bagal's studio, during mid and end-of-semester breaks for almost one year, and I recognize most of the audience members as Bagal's students and their families, amateur musicians from within

the community, and community members with whom I have grown up. The program promptly begins at 9 AM, hosted by a master of ceremonies, whose humor and personality ease the audience, many of who are sipping chai from styrofoam cups, to an awakened attention. It is a morning of music, featuring children and young adults, taught by Bagal and other music teachers in the community, as well as advanced amateur musicians from the community. The youngest children perform first – traditional bhajans and Hindustani classical compositions – each receiving a gift from Bagal at the end of their performance. The concert continues for several hours, without intermission; when needing a break from sitting on the floor, audience members get up and walk around between performances. During the four hours of music, participants and the audience members remain focused on the music, and at the end of the morning, the group enjoys a quick potluck lunch, hosted by Mrs. Bagal, and socialize before leaving the Bagals' home and returning to their usual weekend routines.

Diasporic Indians have taken Hindustani music and transferred it to a completely new setting where methods of transmission and the meaning of the music, that is created through the practice of creating and performing, are being re-defined. As explained in the previous chapter, the method of transmission in Bagal's studio involves weekly lessons that occur in a relatively formulaic manner. The student enters the studio to find Bagal practicing the raga that he will be teaching or completing the lesson of the student prior. When the student is ready, Bagal introduces new repertoire by introducing an alap section that is taught in an imitative fashion. Then, he introduces the notes of the compositions, teaches elaborations, and finally introduces a set of tans. Compared to lessons taught by hereditary musicians in India, the formal teaching of the raga is

relatively quick. Is the Hindustani music that is taught in this manner "authentic"? I believe it is. The transmission of the music follows a method and pattern that is comparable to a lesson in a music college or other institution. While the integrity of the Guru and the raga are strong, Bagal realizes the needs of his students to learn and become accomplished on their instruments.

In reference to questions regarding cultural production and authenticity in the case of Africans and African Americans, Kamari Maxine Clarke states, "Disjunctures in formulations of belonging, on both sides of the Atlantic, highlight the complex (and sometimes conflicting) basis upon which membership is forged and the institutional norms through which meanings are understood" (2006, 139). I believe that the circumstance applies when discussing the practice of Indian art forms among diasporic Indians. In this case, diasporic Indians have taken models prescribed by the Western environment of the host country to create a sense of meaning and purpose for the transmission of Hindustani music. As a weekly lesson, the practice of Hindustani music is recognized as an extra-curricular, equivalent to piano lessons or soccer practice; however, both of the former have larger events such as concerts, games, and competitions that legitimize the practice and work required to pursue these activities. It is this need for legitimization where the Sangeet Prabhat finds its place.

The process of negotiating the expectations between two entities, which in this case are the Westernized host country and Hindustani classical traditions, has been discussed in other ethnomusicological contexts. For example, in *Performing Ethnomusicology: Teaching and Representation in World Music Ensembles*, Ricardo D.

Trimillos discusses the need for ethnomusicologists to balance the needs of institutional expectations and the needs of a world music ensemble. He states,

> "...an ethnomusicologist teaching a study group may find himself in a curious position, in which his competence in the tradition is not comparable to that of colleagues supervising Western ensembles. In some cases the ethnomusicologist may be uncomfortable leading a study group, and even more so presenting its performance in a public setting. Nevertheless, both have become institutional expectations for the ethnomusicologist—*cum*—study group teacher" (2004, 43).

The Sangeet Prabhat demonstrates how diasporic Indians have taken their desire to share diasporic art forms, despite their differences from the way in which Western classical music is practiced and performed, and even the manner in which Hindustani music is traditionally performed, and create a setting that meets the needs of the diasporic community. The result is an event, comparable to a Western classical music recital infused with traditional Indian social values, which provides legitimacy for the hours of practice that second generation children and teenagers have spent practicing Hindustani classical music.

The Sangeet Prabhat is an event that was created by Arun Bagal and that has been held annually since 1993, with the exception of 2006 when Bagal moved to his new house in West Friendship, Maryland. The yearly program begins at 9 AM and continues, without intermission, through all of the performances. Bagal takes pride in starting the program at exactly 9 AM every year, particularly because Indo-Americans are known for their "flexible" interpretations of time. This year, 2007, Bagal hosts the event at his own home. Because it has grown to a size larger than could be accommodated in Bagal's previous home in Columbia, Maryland, it was usually held at the homes of various community members in Washington D.C.'s suburban cities such as Bethesda, Maryland

and Vienna, Virginia. The actual location of the event is relatively unimportant, as long as it is easily accessible and community members can be accommodated.

Bagal explains that he does not rent a hall for the event, because of the expense that would accrue and because he believes in maintaining the principle of the event, which is to have a forum for music around the same time each year that professional musicians begin visiting from India. The audience is requested to pay for their admission to an individual who sits outside to collect money before the event; although the admission cost is not specified, most adults pay fifteen dollars each, and children and students enter free-of-cost. Bagal says that the money that he collects helps to offset his expenses for hosting the event, as well as honoraria for the more advanced musicians. The presence of these more experienced musicians provides a level of sophistication to the event, which at times resembles a musical recital at a public school; the experienced musicians represent the possibility of advancement in musicianship skills and study of music as a life-long pursuit.

Through the Sangeet Prabhat, Bagal states that he attempts to provide a forum through which music students and amateur students can present their own music, and he is particularly interested in supporting the younger generation of Indo-American musicians. The timing of the event occurs at the beginning of the spring concert season, which is when many Hindustani classical musicians arrive in North American for performances. Bagal uses the concert season as a way of framing the relevance of the Sangeet Prabhat.

Before the performances begin, Bagal's wife, dressed in a sari that complements the kurta pyjama (traditional Indian outfit of tunic and pants) that Bagal wears when he

teaches and performs music, lights candles at the Hindu altar that has been set up for this event; most of the audience members seem to be Hindu, although they are from varied regions of northern India. Although the event displays acculturated Hindu practices, Hinduism is not the focus of the event. The kind of Hinduism that is observed serves the purpose of establishing cultural ties to the diasporic homeland, rather than imparting religious belief.

Mrs. Bagal's mother, Bagal's mother-in-law, who passed away at the end of 2006, is remembered during Bagal's speech, especially for her love of Hindustani music and her support of Bagal's own music and his students' music. Both gestures are an important part of the diasporic Indian culture, which is largely based on religious beliefs and values that place an emphasis on elder members of society. The lessons, and especially events such as the Sangeet Prabhat, socialize the second generation, and in some cases, third generation members of the diaspora to Indian social and cultural values. Bagal then introduces the master of ceremonies, who hosts the entire morning; from this point onward, the master of ceremonies serves as the host of the event. Mrs. Bagal serves as the hostess for the residence; she prepares and maintains a steady supply of chai, which is kept outside of the basement door, and she coordinates the luncheon of potluck foods brought by Bagal's students' families. My parents and I contribute by bringing raita, a yogurt dish, for the luncheon.

The master of ceremonies is a friend of Bagal's and a former music student, who introduces Bagal and the event, the participants and their compositions, and recounts Sangeet Prabhat history, between performances, for the audience members. The presence of a master of ceremonies removes Bagal from the event and establishes focus on the

forum and its status as an institution within the community. Most of the audience members are seated on the floor and remain in their spots during the four hours of performances; there is some shuffling between performances, when individuals might get up to stretch or drink some chai, but otherwise most of the audience members remain seated. Older audience members sit on couches and chairs that have been set up at the back of the room.

The event begins with a performance by an eight year old student of Bagal's; she is the youngest student of the event. She is dressed in a pink salwar kameez with her hair in two long braids, sitting between her father who accompanies her on the tabla, and Bagal who accompanies her on the harmonium. She begins the morning with a Ganapati[9] bhajan[10] whose invocation, according to Bagal, is a good way to start the event. The event begins with an aroha and avroha, the singing of the composition which is very well-articulated and shows understanding of the words' meaning, and is completed with the performance of several tans. The girl is approximately ten years old and appears to be the quintessential Indian schoolgirl, however, her voice is strong and her tans show evidence of focused practice. Her performance lasts just a few minutes but is confident, and at the end of it, she is congratulated by Mrs. Bagal who presents her with a gift.

The next performance is of an older girl, a young teenager, who performs a composition in Rag Ahir Todi on the violin.[11] She holds her violin in the Western classical way, as does Bagal when he is performing and teaching, and she is also

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[9] Ganapati is the Gujarati/Marathi name used to refer to Lord Ganesh.

[10] The Ganapati bhajan is an invocation to the Lord Ganesh, the "elephant" God who is believed to be the remover of obstacles and whose invocation is considered essential to guarantee the auspiciousness of events.

[11] This is not the same teenaged violin student whom I had described in chapters one and two; she was not able to attend because she was in Virginia Beach for a school trip.

accompanied by her father. Her parents have a great appreciation of music, and her grandparents, family friends of my family and also supporters of music and musicians including me as I was growing up, are also in attendance. She plays a short alap section, a short composition, and some tans; the master of ceremonies notes that her composition was written by Vijay Ragav Rao, Bagal's own teacher.

As the morning progresses, compositions increase in length. The first longer performance of approximately eight to ten minutes is presented by two teenaged sisters. They perform a short composition and bhajan, which they begin by alternating lines in the alap section. They sing the composition, with a few alternated tans, and then sing the bhajan, which also ends with alternated tans. The performance is well-rehearsed. The next performer is a teenaged male, from a Gujarati family that is actively involved in the community and who my own family has known for years, who performs a tabla solo in teental that is set to an electronic lehra.[12] The boy is not a student of Bagal's, and he thanks Bagal for the opportunity to perform before he begins. Although his nerves rush him somewhat in the beginning, the boy eases into the tala and he performs his solo sections very competently.

As the program continues, the age, and particularly, advancement of the students increases. All of the students know the order in which they are performing, and they have their instruments and music unpacked and ready in the next room. Compositions have been practiced and rehearsed ahead of time; in some cases, students perform in small duets together. The children, approximately aged eight through fifteen, are dressed formally, all of them are wear Indian clothing. The younger females are wearing salwar

[12] A lehra is a repeating melody line that is often played by an instrumentalist to showcase the virtuosity of a tabla player. These days, electronic machines provide good-sounding lehras and often substitute instrumentalists for practice, and sometimes performance, purposes.

kameez, some of the older women are wearing saris, and almost all of the males that are performing are wearing kurta pyjama, with the exception of some of the tabla players that accompany the younger children.

Although the setting is the same, the atmosphere is quite different from the lessons described in the previous chapter. During lessons, students and parents are usually dressed in Western clothing and some of the students tend to be quite casually, though neatly, dressed. Jeans, sweatpants, and skirts are normal and acceptable during lessons, although Bagal always remains dressed in kurta pyjama when he is in a Hindustani music setting. On the day of the performance, the students adopt the cultural matrix adopted by Bagal by imitating cultural norms of dress, performance practice, and performance etiquette. One aspect that I find particularly noteworthy is that the performances are not formulaic; they are not a recitation of notes learned during lessons. The "Indian-ness" of the compositions is evident in the approach of each note, the display of vocal and violin technique, emphasis on words being sung, and the hand gestures that are used place emphasis on particular phrases. Each of the students noticeably enter a "zone" when they are performing, which reveals the depth of Bagal's teaching and the students' receptiveness and abilities to absorb these teachings, internalize them, and perform accordingly.

The presentation of the performance shows a strong synthesis of Western and Indian values. The thorough organization, and the recital-like flow of the program, demonstrates Westernization. The master of ceremonies provides insight and commentary during brief pauses as performers enter and leave the stage, sound equipment is adjusted, and Bagal tunes the electronic tanpura and instruments according

to each of his students' needs. All of the children, however, are respectful young Indians who have evidently been socialized to have respect for Bagal, the event, their teachers, and the audience. They all thank the audience and Bagal at the ends of their performances, at which point they return to their proud parents.

The performers' parents, as well as some grandparents, are in attendance, and almost all of the students stay to hear the more advanced performers. Parents take photos and videotape their children's performances and help each other find the best angles from which to record their child's performance. The parents are very enthusiastic about all of the children's performances, and the event has the anticipation of a public school music concert combined with additional community reinforcement. During the performances, all of the students whose lessons I have observed notice that I am in attendance; they wave from the audience, and they make sure that I am taking notes while they are performing.

At this point, some of the amateur musicians and two of Bagal's adult female vocal students perform. Each student receives a gift from Mrs. Bagal after their performance. The amateur musicians receive flowers and an honorarium. In addition, fellow teachers are also acknowledged. A music teacher, who is senior to Bagal, is warmly welcomed and invited to accompany musicians on the harmonium. Although gender does not play a particularly significant role in the studio or during the Sangeet Prabhat, age and seniority are viewed with high regard. The presence of the oldest teachers and senior-most individuals at the event are held in the highest regard.

The compositions get longer as the morning progresses. The first amateur musician from the community has a doctorate in sociology from the University of

Maryland, has produced her own CD, and sings a composition in Rag Alhaiya Bilawal and a Kabir bhajan, both of which are well-received by the audience. Her tabla player is a secondary school math teacher with a master's degree in education. As Bagal had noted earlier, these two individuals reveal that there are many local musicians that are very accomplished and talented but have not pursued music as a profession. The forum of the Sangeet Prabhat provides an excellent place for them to showcase their talents, while inspiring younger generations of Hindustani classical music students who are still in the introductory stages of their career.

The morning continues with a classical vocal composition performed by a teenaged, male vocal student of Bagal's, accompanied on keyboard by another male student of approximately the same age. The vocalist has an acute sense of phrasing, which he expresses through elaborate tans, and the accompanist, whom I had observed earlier in lessons where he had been learning the arduous task of playing fluently on the keyboard, shines as an accompanist. They are accompanied by the father of the violinist who performed earlier during the morning. The morning ends with a long performance by a Guru bhai[13] of Bagal's, whom he proudly introduces, and who plays for approximately thirty minutes on sitar. Once again, in the midst of an event that exudes Westernization, Bagal provides cultural insight of Indian values by having students perform together, as well as by showing how he and fellow students who he had studied alongside with earlier have remained in contact and in support of each other. I do believe that these teachings are absorbed by the students, all of whom are friendly and supportive of each other during the event.

[13] A Guru bhai is another student who has studied with the same Guru; this relationship often forms a strong bond, and these individuals support each other for the rest of their lives.

At the end of the performances, Bagal acknowledges all of the individuals that have contributed their time and effort towards the event, particularly the master of ceremonies, the sound technician who arranged microphones before and after performances and balanced sound during performances, all of the individuals that have contributed food, and his wife for hosting the event at their home. Mrs. Bagal and the master of ceremonies acknowledge Bagal's efforts, and they invite everyone upstairs for lunch. There is a light lunch assembled and distributed on paper plates. There is traditional Indian food, as well as pasta and bread as an option for the children. Most individuals eat quickly, greet each other and engage in light conversation, and leave. I am able to catch up with all of the students that I have observed and their families during the luncheon.

During the luncheon, I discover that I am socially connected to many of the students whom I have been observing, such as the violinist and the tabla player whom I described earlier, through relations between their families and mine. The mother of one of the violinists is a second generation member of the diaspora who my parents have known since they immigrated to the United States. The grandson of my former Gujarati teacher is another one of Bagal's students, and my family is also well-acquainted with this family. I am re-introduced to many of the students through these relationships. Once again, my outsider status as an ethnomusicologist is overshadowed by my insider status as a second generation member of the diasporic community.

While social interactions do become important towards the end of the morning, socializing between those in attendance lasts for less than an hour before individuals depart to complete weekend errands and activities.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Through this thesis, I have examined the acculturation of second generation members of the Indian diaspora through an ethnographic study of the Hindustani music studio of Arun Bagal. I observed three major domains – the evolution of the Indian diaspora in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, the process of taking weekly Hindustani classical music lessons with Bagal, and the annual Sangeet Prabhat – and studied them through the frameworks of diaspora, generational differences between diasporic members, socialization, acculturation and identity, Hindustani music, and institutionalization. My study contributes to existing studies on the first and second generations of the Indian diaspora in North America by providing additional insight on how this diverse, generationally-staggered collection of individuals have acculturated into the culture of the host country, while negotiating their ties with the homeland.

When I first began this study, under the guidance of my advisor, the process of problematizing the observations that I made in the field was a challenge for me. I encountered situations that were similar to my and my sister's upbringing, all of which were relatively naturalized aspects of my identity. Having been raised as a deeply-rooted insider within the diaspora, it would have been easier for me to cull ethnographic data from the Western classical music world that I entered later in childhood and have always truly felt like an outsider in. Through the process of defamiliarization, I took the ambiguity of a naturalized setting, pursued scholarship, and re-established connections with my natural setting to provide nuances to my work.

The process of making conclusions from this data, however, proved to be problematic again. I began to encounter terms such as hybridity, re-signification, acculturation, and authenticity, which made me feel as though I was becoming deeply entrenched in terms that came relatively close to describing the broader implications of what I was studying, but did not allow me to navigate the nuanced differences that I was seeing between my diasporic field and that of scholars before me. I came to realize that, as an ethnographer, it is up to me to demonstrate how my perspective on the diasporic situation is different and that my ability to do this would be the goal of my master's thesis.

As I navigated these terms, I took a look back at my field, and I recalled past and relatively recent conversations with Bagal's female, teenaged violin student – the girl whose New Year's Eve temple performance I had attended and whose lessons I always enjoyed observing. She asked me questions about various academic options in secondary school, pursuing music beyond secondary school, deciding on where to go to college, how to maintain close ties to family, and other questions that younger second generation "siblings" within the diasporic community had asked me before. Why was I the person being asked these questions? I now found myself looking reflexively at the ways I naturalized my own upbringing. I had managed to negotiate an upbringing within a home that was deeply connected to the homeland and in a host country where I had managed to have a fair amount of success. My own upbringing had not been infused with questions about hybridity, authenticity, and the other issues that diasporic Indians before me had faced, and I wanted to share the experience of the diaspora through this lens within my thesis.

I do not believe that my experience is entirely unique. As I mentioned earlier, the first and second generations of the Indian diaspora have immigrated to the United States in a staggered way. For example, there are individuals whose parents immigrated during the 1970s and have been born and raised entirely in the United States, such as myself, that are socializing with young adults that have recently emigrated from India and would be considered first generation diaspora members. In the midst of this, earlier members of the diaspora have been born and raised entirely in the United States and are now raising their children. It is the acculturation of these individuals that has lead to a second generational experience that is similar to the one that I have studied in this thesis.

In the case of my own work, the ethnographic research that I have presented has provided some further insight into the theoretical questions that I posed at the beginning of this thesis. The ethnographic analysis of the Sangeet Prabhat provides further insight to the concept of acculturation, which is that the process of acculturation does not imply a shift from one culture towards another; rather, it is a process of negotiation through which an individual and/or a community works with two or more different cultures through the use of a diasporic object. In this case, Hindustani classical music serves as that object, because it serves as a way to affirm an Indian culture while identifying with American cultural life through the process in which the music is transmitted and performed.

Socialization allows for members of the diaspora to become increasingly acculturated into American practices, with each subsequent generation becoming increasingly accommodated in a new space where these individuals are able to create

their own space through practices that are firmly rooted in the socialized institutionalization that is taught through formal education in the host country.

The proof of this can largely be seen in colleges and universities across North America. These days, it is common for second generation diasporic Indians to have taken dance or music lessons prior to attending university, and when they arrive at University, they often establish cultural and social groups that are based on diasporic arts. Indian Students Associations, South Asian Students Associations, and various other organizations are known for showcasing diasporic art forms at their institutions.

As these new practices emerge, one begins to look for new questions to ask in this community, which remains a diaspora tied to the homeland, but has begun to re-define the idea of a homeland through their interactions with each other. Young adults within the diaspora now communicate through technology such as email, instant messaging systems, and social networking sites such as facebook. Through social networking sites, a second-generation diasporic Indian can not only monitor and control his or her own experience as a desi, but also monitor and evaluate this experience against those of other second generation diasporic individuals and even those within the homeland. For example, through a social networking site, I am able to keep in touch with the Indian community that I grew up with, my cousins in India, and other diasporic Indians living in North America. I can also track their activities, pieces of their identity such as favorite books, movies or music, and compare photographs and other methods through which one defines individual identity. The result is a constantly reflexive experience for a diasporic individual and one must ask how this reflexivity affects the meaning of the homeland and host country: the two defining aspects of a diasporic individual's identity.

For solutions to this problem, I look to the work of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. She proposes:

> "To think of diaspora as a dispersal marked by displacement still assumes the primacy of an earlier placement-of physical proximity and contiguity even as the local conditions of diaspora (copresence and coterritoriality) are richly theorized. Increasingly, however, as distance becomes a function of time, the instantaneity of telecommunication produces a vivid sense of hereness and interactivity the feeling of presence. The result is an extreme case of physical distance and social proximity under the conditions of disembodied presence and immateriality of place. New spaces of dispersal are produced-traversed and compressed-by technologies of connection and telepresence. Physical locations can be experienced as *accidents of proximity,* while common interest, rather than common location, can become the basis of social life in a medium where location is defined not by geographical coordinates but by the topic of conversation..." (1994, 342).

How can this new version of the diaspora be studied? Through ethnography that asks "what" and "how," as opposed to "who" and "where." The former allows for conclusions to maintain a reflexive relevance among insiders who do not consider themselves to be hybrids as much as they consider themselves to be individuals defining themselves in a space "just like everyone else."

As I was completing my work on this thesis, I came across the *Ethnomusicology Forum* issue on "Musical Performance in the Diaspora" (2007). In the introduction, Tina K. Ramnarine recommends "calibration to argue against using the diasporic turn as merely another way of labeling and mapping the musical world even as we take into account the specificities of diaspora" (2007, 12). I believe that this solution, of calibrating the experience of diasporic individuals, provides a way through which one can gauge changes within a diasporic community, such as the work I have produced, and provide new insights without necessarily having to realign the theoretical tools with which work has been undertaken or produce a new conclusion. Rather, calibration

provides the space in which an ethnographer may experiment with ways to use these theoretical tools and to try out the possible conclusions that they may produce, while allowing the diasporic individuals the freedom to negotiate and naturalize their experiences without the burden of complex classifications. In the case of diasporic studies, I believe that this is especially important, because each individual scholar provides a unique contribution to a localized, generational diasporic situation that comes together to construct the identity of the diaspora as a whole.

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Appendix
Log of Ethnographic Data Collected from June 2006 – July 2007

Lessons taken with Arun Bagal

June – July 2006

June 4, 11, 21: Rag Yaman
June 25, 28: Rag Bhairav
July 2: Rag Bihag
July 5: Rag Malkauns
July 12: Rag Desh
July 16: Rag Yaman (additional work on tans)
July 19: Rag Joa
July 23: Rag Nat Bhairav

December 2006

Rag Maru Bihag

Lessons observed

July 2006 – Observed multiple lessons of a seven-year old female, fifteen-year old female, and adult male student
October 2006 – Continued to observe the above three students
December 2006 – Observed the above students, a teenaged male vocalist, teenaged male keyboard player, and a thirteen-year old female violin student

Major events

New Year's Eve Concert at the Hindu Temple in December 2006
Sangeet Prabhat in April 2007

Interviews

Arun Bagal

- Formal interview: July 2006
- Email correspondence: July 2006 – July 2007
- Informal interviews: October 2006, December 2006, July 2007

Informal interviews conducted with students and parents before and after lessons
Informal interviews conducted at the New Year's Concert in December
Informal interviews conducted after the Sangeet Prabhat
Maintained communication with students through facebook and the social interactions through family and friends