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*Sukanya Sarker*¹

INDIAN INSTRUMENT MAKERS IN PERFORMING ARTS

Annotation

The currently popular Indian Musical Instruments have undergone tremendous changes during the passing of time. This has occurred in terms of its playing styles, modes of presentations and its architecture. What caused these changes is remained to be studied. There might be some inter-relationship between these four factors, namely, the changes/advancement occurred in playing techniques, picking preferences of playable materials, changes in execution styles and the changes of architecture of the instruments. Consequently, the effect of changes in the society which directly reflected on the patronization and general attitude of the people towards this art form may have played important roles in the changes in music. How the musicians felt the urge of widening its area of penetration amongst the masses of the world and what was the impact of globalization on this art and craft remained to be studied.

Key words: Chikari, Chhauni, Tumba, Plecturm, Pegs, Chiselling, Seasoned, Drum, Teak, Tun, Wood, Khan, Sen, Kanji, Sharma, Rabab, Sarod.

*Суканья Саркер*¹

ОРЫНДАУШЫЛЫҚ ӨНЕРДЕГІ ҮНДІ АСПАПТАРЫН ӨНДІРУШІЛЕР

Аннотация

Қазіргі уақытта танымал үнді музыкалық аспаптары уақыт өте келе үлкен өзгерістерге ұшырады. Бұл оның ойын стилі, ұсыну тәсілдері және архитектурасынан көрінеді. Бұл өзгерістер немен байланысты екендігі әлі де зерттеуді қажет етеді. Жалпы төрт фактордың арасында қандай да бір байланыс бар, атап айтқанда ойнау техникасында болған өзгерістер/жетілдірулер, ойнатылатын материалдарды таңдаудағы артықшылық, орындау мәнеріндегі өзгерістер және аспаптардың архитектурасының өзгеруі. Демек, өнердің осы түріне адамдардың қамқорлығы мен жалпы көзқарасына тікелей әсер еткен қоғамдағы өзгерістердің әсері музыканың өзгеруінде маңызды рөл атқаруы мүмкін. Жалпы музыканттар әлемдік мәдениетке енгенде қандай сезімде болды және де жаһанданудың өнер мен қолөнерге әсері қандай болды, осының барлығы алдағы уақытта әлі де толық зерттеуді қажет етеді.

Түйінді сөздер: Хикари, Чхауни, Тумба, Плектр, қазық, ою, шыңдалған, Барабан, Тик, Тунг, агаиш, Хан, Сен, Кандзи, Шарма, Рабаб, Сарод.

*Суканья Саркер*¹

ИНДИЙСКИЕ ПРОИЗВОДИТЕЛИ ИНСТРУМЕНТОВ В ИСПОЛНИТЕЛЬСКОМ ИСКУССТВЕ

Аннотация

Популярные в настоящее время индийские музыкальные инструменты претерпели огромные изменения с течением времени. Это произошло с точки зрения стилей игры, способов представления и архитектуры. Что вызвало эти изменения, еще предстоит изучить. Возможно, существует некоторая взаимосвязь между четырьмя факторами, а именно: изменениями/улучшениями, произошедшими в технике игры, предпочтениями в выборе воспроизводимых материалов, изменениями в стилях исполнения и изменениями архитектуры инструментов. Следовательно, влияние изменений в обществе, которые непосредственно отразились на покровительстве и общем отношении людей к этому виду искусства, возможно, сыграли важную роль в изменениях в музыке. Как музыканты почувствовали желание расширить область своего проникновения в мировую культуру и каково было влияние глобализации на это искусство и ремесло, еще предстоит изучить.

Ключевые слова: Хикари, Чхауни, Тумба, Плектр, Кольшики, Резьба, Закаленный, Барабан, Тик, Тунг, Дерево, Хан, Сен, Кандзи, Шарма, Рабаб, Сарод.

Introduction. In this age of globalisation such an international journal is an welcome step for the cultural world. There is no denying the fact that India has a very rich cultural heritage since time immemorial. But for quite a long time India's contribution to art and culture has not been focused worldwide. It is true that during the ancient and mediaeval period some eminent foreign travellers visited India. They toured widely in our country, jotted down their observations on Indian social and cultural aspects and carried our culture to their respective countries. But their efforts were very much limited and confined to a small area. Hope such a journal would be of great help to carry Indian craft of Instrument making to large parts of the world. My article would be a sincere attempt to make a study on Instrument Maker who hitherto has not been given adequate importance which they deserve.

Specific Issues. Our main focus will be on the instrument Sarod which is now well accepted as a prominent musical instrument. The instrument has its linkage with Afghanistan. Sarod has undergone considerable changes in terms of its playing techniques, use of music materials in presentation and in its architecture. This study will include the nuances of making of the Sarod of different styles. It will also give an idea of the socioeconomic condition of Instrument Maker and the effect of modernization in their craft as well as life.

I have tried to make an analytical study of Instrument makers who dedicated themselves to their art forms in accordance with the needs of the maestros and disciples of different gharanas have sincerely endeavoured to survey the expertise of the Instrument makers in different parts of India. I have done a survey of the owners and sellers of different musical shops of different cities. I met almost all the experienced makers of today and descendants of legendary makers in the different cities and suburban areas of India. I covered someone artists' experiences with the makers from all the four Gharanas. I am grateful to the makers, sellers, the maestros and their descendants who have helped me a lot in this endeavour.

My study is more or less unbiased. I have attached some relevant

photographs. This study of Instrument Makers is in accordance with the thought of a self-reliant nation and the concept of the “Make in India” project. Undoubtedly Sangeet Natak Akademi played vital role in shaping the career of Instrument-maker who often live a very simple daily life along with their craft. The idea of making Sarod started with Rabab which was an Afghan folk instrument.

Origin and Structure of Sarod

The body of the Sarod is made of a single block of wood preferably teak. But Tun and Mehgani are also used. The body of Sarod can be divided into three parts.

1. The peg box – 6 peg or 8 peg
2. The fingerboard – (One and a half foot – 18inch)/19 inch
3. The resonator – (enclosed with the parched goat skin) – 9 inch – 11 inch.

The peg box is almost 1 ft. long and 7 inch in diameter. This part is solid from inside. Tuning peg of the main playing strings are put on either side. The finger-board is covered with a metal sheet. On the right side of the finger board pegs of sympathetic strings are fixed in two rows. The finger-board is hollow from the inside and narrower near the peg box, but gradually becomes broader near the resonator.

The third portion of the Sarod is resonator. This is roundish in shape and 9 inches in diameter. This portion is covered with a very thin parched goat skin. Upon the middle portion of resonator a bridge made of bone about 3 inches long is fixed. The main playing strings rest upon the bridge in their respective grooves, but the sympathetic strings pass through the holes drilled in the bridge.

There are mainly two types of Sarod – the one with 6 pegs and the other is with 8 pegs. Both are equally developed but have distinctive features of their own. The type of Sarod which has 8 main strings and 2 Chikari strings, has a small extra bridge near the upper nut and four drone string rest upon it. These strings are tuned to the main notes of the raga which is to be played. This type of Sarod also has an extra resonator fixed in the bottom of peg box. It is longer than other type of Sarod.

Apart from these characteristics there is no other major difference in the structure of the Sarod of these two varieties. However sometimes the shape of drum of both varieties varies a lot and therefore the tonality is also quite different. The Sarod, with 8 main strings and 2 Chikari strings are played by Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, son of Baba Allauddin Khan and his disciples.

In all the other gharanas, the Sarod with six pegs is played. The drum of this type of Sarod is comparatively small and oval shaped. Ut. Amjad ali Khan’s Sarod is of this type. It has 6 main strings and 2 Chikari¹⁸⁶ with a

¹⁸⁶ There are two strings in Chikari of Sarod. It is generally tuned in the upper octave of the first note or Sa. Sa is known as Sharaj . The tone Sa in Western music is called as Tonic of a piece or scale.

shorter body ad 11 sympathetic (*Taraf*) strings. He uses the nails of his two fingers.

Nowadays the Sarod of Senia-Shahjahanpur differs slightly. Their drum is almost roundish and they use a wooden resonator and along with six main string and 2 Chikari. Sympathetic string varies from 11 to 15.

The Sarod is played with the help of a plectrum held in the right hand by means of two fingers and thumb. This plectrum is called “Jawa” which is made of coconut shell. Formerly a plectrum made of wire was used, which was not good enough. After many experiments with various materials such as horn, stone etc., it was found that the coconut shell is best.

Gopal Charan Sharma and Durga Charan Sharma

Gopal Charan Sharma, the finest maker of Sarod since pre-independence period stayed in undivided Bengal. He used to visit the maestros of the time and regularly went to Dhaka, Rajshahi, Gauripur, Bhawal known to be important cultural centres. But later on he came to Kolkata and settled there. He had a retail shop in Chitpur road and worked for all Maestros of Sarod.

His brother Durga Charan Sharma also assisted him. His instruments were almost flawless. After Gopal’s demise his business was carried on by his brother Durga Charan Sharma. He made Sarod for eminent Sarod players like Pt. Radhika Mohan Maitra, his disciple Pt. Nimai Chand Dhar and later for Pt. Narendranath Dhar. Mr. Sharma’s son Mohan was a good artisan. Unfortunately Gopal Charan Sharma’s contribution to the art faded out to oblivion with his death.



Older version of Sarod made by Sri Gopal Charan Sharma



Sarod of Elliptical drum made by Sri Gopal Charan Sharma



Sarod made by Durga Charan Sharma

Hemen Sen's contribution as a Maker

The most prominent Instrument maker was Hemen Chandra Sen. He was appreciated for his Sitar, Tanpura, Sursringar, Surbahar. In 2003 he received the Hafiz Ali Khan award for his lifetime achievements from the Indian Prime Minister Sri Atal Bihari Bajpayee.

With his good sense of music and his close association with leading musicians, he established his own shop in 1946 in Calcutta. Baba Allauddin's brother Ayet Ali trained him how to make a Sarod. Within a short period of time he mastered the art of making Sarod. He achieved a worldwide reputation for the unique sustain and richness of sound. His Sarods are very nicely designed.

Many Sarod makers are indebted to him. He trained many makers under his guidance. Mr. Sen was sceptical about modern times. In an interview he lamented that Sitar or Sarod making is no longer as it was before. In earlier days' people were passionate about Classical music as the standard of musicians was much better. The disciples were trained for years before being allowed by their Gurus to perform publicly. Unfortunately, those golden days are now things of the past. The younger generations believe in a short cut form and their only ambition is to perform in television competition.¹⁸⁷

Mr. Sen's excellence as a Maker was recognised in the music world and his fame steadily rose to the peak. In recognition of his calibre he was invited in 1982 in an International fair organized by Government of India in London. There he represented Indian cultural heritage of musical instruments and the crafts of making and shared his sound knowledge with knowledgeable persons. He also visited some parts of USA and conducted workshops on the making of Sarod and Sitar at the Ali Akbar College of Music in California in the same year of "Bharat Utsav" in 1986.

Some of his instruments were exported to other countries. Mr. Sen's shop "Hemen & Co" is a favourite among musicians from various countries including U.S., Spain, Germany, Switzerland and Egypt.¹⁸⁸

After Sen's death, Ut. Amjad Ali Khan told the "The Telegraph"

"His touch was like that of an Irani Hakim. Touching the Sarod, he would know what needed to be done when it came for repairs. He gave a different dimension to the tonal quality of a Sarod."¹⁸⁹

Hemen Sen's two sons have worked with their father for decades and now continuing their father's tradition. His death was a great loss. The makers of today lack the expertise of Mr. Sen.

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.india-instruments.com/hemen-sen-sarod-maker.html>

¹⁸⁸ <https://www.vintagesitars.com/post/a-history-of-hemen-sen-~:text=Legendary%20sarod%20players%20like%20Amjad,the%20%22greatest%20sarod%20maker%22>

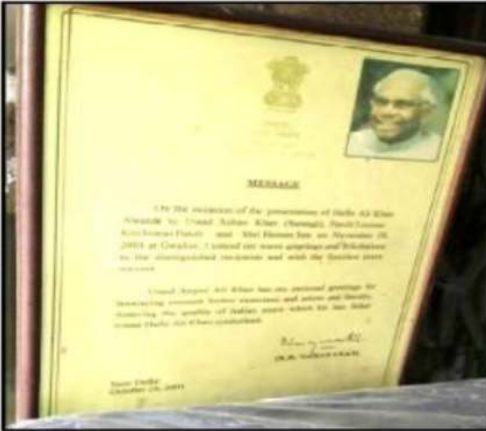
¹⁸⁹ <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/sarod-maker-with-sixth-sense/cid/562126>



Entrance of Hemen Sen's shop near Triangular Park, Kolkata



Hemen Sen



Hafiz Ali Khan Award by K.R. Narayanan



Photos of Hemen Sen



Allauddin Khan's Photograph



Experienced artisans of Ratan Sen

Ratan Kumar Sen

According to eldest son Ratan Sen, the yearly sale of Sarod is 25 to 30 pieces in average. They supply their instruments to different parts of India. The standard concert quality of Teak wood charges are too high. It varies from 80k to 1.5 Lacs.

Every minute details of measurement make a lot of difference in making. (Even half of an inch may matter a lot.) They give their best materials, best workmanship in making every instrument. They take a special care in making renowned Personality's instrument. Generally, they make a Sarod with standard seasoned wood under the following specifications:

1. Diameter of the drum – 10.5 – 11 inch
2. Length of metal board – 19 inch (6 pegs)
3. Length of metal board – 18 inch (8 pegs)
4. Peg box length (15 – 17) inches for 8 pegs (12 – 14) inches for 6 pegs

He also sell fibre glass box for Sarod and Sitar.



Ratan Kumar Sen

Tapan Kumar Sen

The younger son Tapan Kumar Sen is carrying the heritage. Both of them are dedicated artisans. Both learnt the finer aspect of Instrument making from their father.

In the opinion of Tapan Sen some sense of music is essential to make a good & perfect instrument. He thinks maintenance is also a very important part of Sarod or any other instrument. He believes in making quality products. He thinks in final stage special care is needed for finer adjustments.

According to Tapan Sen at the time of changing the skin of the drum temper is extremely important. The seasoning, odour and proper chiselling of the wood are needed for perfect sound.

The expert hand, perfect measurement can make a standard instrument. He informed me that Kanailal and his son Murari were great makers. Both Hemen Sen and Kanailal exchanged their knowledge about different string instruments. Hiren Roy was a great Sitar maker. They shared their knowledge with each other.

The mistakes must be rectified before finishing work. “Tumba” has certain significance for balancing the Sarod and an effect on sound. Seasoning, odour, fibre and chiselling of wood is of utmost importance. The measurement of plate and drum should be proper.



Tapan Kumar Sen working with a Sarod with Mahadev Pramanik



Sarod before Chhauni with plate



View of the Tapan Kumar Sen's shop



Describing the importance of proper chiselling



Reputed Maker Dulal Chandra Kanji

Dulal Chandra Kanji, a carpenter, was from a rural background. He joined in a Naskar's Musical Instrument making Company known in 1958. As he did not get adequate knowledge of instrument making he joined Legendary Sarod maker Hemen Sen's workshop in 1961. Under Mr. Sen's guidance, he learnt all the minute details of instrument making. He came into

contact with some maestros of Hindustani Instrumental Music. After some time he used to visit eminent instrumentalists for proper maintenance of their instruments since 1980s. After gathering adequate experience and minute details of instruments specially the Sarod he started to make his own instruments..



Photograph of Dulal Chandra Kanji



Dulal Chandra Kanji with Sukanya Sarker

PHOTOGRAPH'S OF DULAL CHANDRAKANJI'S INTERVIEW

He slowly learnt to differentiate the texture of sound and tonal quality under the guidance of some noted musicians. Mr. Kanji started his own “Oriental Musikraft”. The quality of his instruments are satisfactory. A common complaint is that the accuracy of tuning of the pegs is not perfect. Whenever required he tries to solve the issue. He has a good business in Delh. He also looks after the maintenance such as parchment or Chhauni of the drum (belly of Sarod) and some other work. Mr. Kanji has done a lot of innovative work with the advice of eminent instrumentalists. But as I have already mentioned the problem of tuning the pegs still remains. A market study reveals Kanji’s instruments are more or less good. But some customers are not satisfied. Mr. Kanji informed about the scarcity of some product.

But the some eminent artists of Mumbai are more or less satisfied with the work of Mr. Kanji. He puts extra effort in making instruments of noted artists. His charges are more or less moderate and it varies from Rs 30k to 80k according to the quality of the wood. He worked for many institutions all over India. In 2018, Sangeet Natak Akademi invited him to be a part of a 3 days conference.

Mr Kanji’s workshop is in a remote village in South 24 Parganas of West Bengal . He has many other promising technicians for making of

different instrument. He used to supply fiber-glass box for instruments. He exports his instruments also.

Mr. Kanji has been appointed by the Deputy Curator of Sangeet Natak Akademi to train some young persons who have keen interest in this craft. He has allotted the different types of work to his trainees according to their aptitude. Sometimes the Deputy Curator visits Mr. Kanji's workshop to assess the progress of trainees.



WORKSHOP OF DULAL CHANDRA KANJI



Instrument maker Subhas Chandra Bhowmik

Subhas Bhowmick belongs to a family of expert carpentry and had keen interest in the craft of Instrument making since his youth. His father Kanailal worked in Legendary Sitar maker Hiren Roy workshop for some time. After that he served Radha Krishna Sharma's workshop for many years and learnt the craft's detail of instrument making. Kanailal established a musical shop in Howrah more than 60 years ago. He started with repairing work of Sarod. From 1984 Subhas joined his father's business.

He gathered a certain level of expertise after working with his father. Later on he gained knowledge of making standard Tanpura. According Subhas, they named it "Tanpuri" which is played as accompanying instrument with Instrumental music. Subhas had worked for legendary instrumentalists. He can make many types of instruments. But at present he makes Sarod, Sitar and Santoor.

He used to dispatch a lot of Sarods for export. He has also a good business with many shop owners of Mumbai, Delhi and other places. His charges are moderate.

Lucknow and its rich Cultural Heritage

Lucknow has a rich cultural heritage since Mughal period. It is a real pleasure to connect with the people who belong to Instrument makers' fraternity in Lucknow. Most of the veteran artisans and makers are not alive now. But their descendants are still doing wonderful traditional work. The makers of Lucknow are very keen to decorate the "Saaz"¹⁹⁰ or in other words the beautification of the Instruments.

The most renowned shops are the following

1. Melody Mart
2. Shaukat Ali, Sitar Maker
3. Sunda Musical Company
4. National Harmonium House

Melody Mart and Shaukat Ali, Sitar Maker still now doing a fairly good business. The first one is one of the most renowned Musical retail shops of Lucknow. It was founded by Mohammad Hussain, a great artisan of Northern India. It manufactures many Indian acoustic instruments like Sarod, Sitar, Esraj, Sarangi etc. His instruments were beautifully decorated. After his demise in 2002, his son Md Sultan became the owner. He has many wonderful artisans like Akhlaq, Baburam and others. With the help of these artisans Md Sultan worked for Patiala Gharana and many maestros of Instrumental music. During my interview, Md. Sultan was recollecting his memories of golden periods.

He makes Sarods and other instruments according to individual's

¹⁹⁰

The word Saaz is generally used to mean any Musical Instrument (www.quora.com).

requirement and does the repair works. His elder son Md. Najeeb loves the craft of Instrument making. He showed me some exquisite decoration on Sarod and other instruments which resembles Pietra-Dura¹⁹¹ art of Mughal period.

They respect their technician Sukumar Chaturvedi. His father Md. Hussain had also trained many persons as artisan like Nizam.

Sitar maker: Shaukat Ali

‘Shaukat Sitar Maker’ one of the most oldest shops of Latouche Road, Lucknow was established in early 20th century. His father Barkat Ali, one the most renowned instrument makers, was the founder of the shop.

He used to make and play Sitar. Barkat Ali's son Shaukat Ali was also a very talented instrument maker and worked in this profession for more than 40 years. Shaukat Ali had two sons – Akbar Ali and Ashiq Ali. Now they are in same profession. Akbar Ali is a very sincere maker and he showed me his workshop where I found lots of Sitar and Instruments boxes of fibre glass.

He told me that this industry is in the process of steady decline as the people's mind set has been changed. I was very much encouraged to find that even in this situation the sincerity, love and respect for their art remain intact.

But their main concentration is on Sitar making. It won't be an exaggeration to say that once a seat of Classical Music with special reference to string instrument is more or less dismal. Many of the Instrumental music shops are there. But as there is no demand for Indian instruments they have been forced to sell mainly Guitar, Synthesizer, Key-board and some other Western Instruments for present generation. The Aminabad area of Hazratganj appears to be the main centre of Hindustani Musical Instruments. Still I found a ray of hope as some descendants of renowned makers of yesteryears are making an effort to keep it alive. We must always keep in view that there is a universal truth, anything classical has a lean period.

National Museum of New Delhi

I got a glimpse of Sarods of 19th and 20th century from different parts of India in the National Museum in New Delhi. It is a wonderful place to learn the history of Indian Cultural Heritage.

This museum provides special facilities to musicians and students of musicology. The well known Sarod maestro Smt. Sharan Rani Backliwal has donated a large number of musical instruments.

¹⁹¹ Pietra dura, (Italian: “hard stone”), in mosaic, any of several kinds of hard stone used in commesso mosaic work, an art that flourished in Florence particularly in the late 16th and 17th centuries and involved the fashioning of highly illusionistic pictures out of cut-to-shape pieces of coloured stone.



VIEW OF DIFFERENT INSTRUMENTS IN NATIONAL MUSEUM



Sangeet Natak Akademi

This Museum of this Akademi was inaugurated by the world-wide acclaimed violinist Yehudi Menuhin in 1964. The Akademi organized a memorable exhibition which included a vast number of instruments as many as four hundred from different parts of the world in 1968. The musical instruments of the Akademi can be classified under the following term since ancient times

1. Tata Vadya (Chordophones)
2. Sushira Vadya (Aerophones)
3. Ghara Vadya (Idiophones)
4. Avanaddha Vadya (Membranephones)



Instruments of Sangeet Natak Akademi Archive



Maihar style Sarod kept in Sangeet Natak Akademi's Archive



Sarod kept in Sangeet Natak Akademi Museum maker Sri Gopal Charan Sharma

The Government of India with collaboration of Sangeet Natak Akademi appointed few experienced Instrument makers to train some artisans and learners in a systematic way. Recently there was a cultural exhibition, in Kolkata.

From 12th December to 16th December, 2018 a cultural exhibition “O Bharat Mela” was organised at a place in Kolkata.

A maker of Rabab from Kashmir has come to Kolkata from 12th December to 16th December, 2018 in O Bharat Mela to exhibit different stages of making Rabab.

A review committee was formed which was consisted of several experienced artisans from different parts of India like Kashim Sahab of Tabla making, Dulal Chandra Kanji of Sarod making, Mangala Prasad Sharma of Sitar making and Deputy curator of Sangeet Natak Akademi.



Making process of Rabab from initial to final stage (Chiseling & other wooden work)



Making process of Sarod & finally finished Sarod

Causes behind becoming “Heritage Craft”

Classical Music throughout the ages is limited to a selected number of people. Its appreciation may be limited to a few but it remains in the society permanently. Classical Music is not expected to be appreciated by the mass as it needs patience and a temperament to understand the finer aspects of this art and craft. (and its technical understanding).

So far as instrumental music is concerned the persons associated with the making of different instrumental music especially Sarod, unanimously complained that the demand of this particular instrument is constantly declining, the reasons behind this decline are many. Many veteran instrument makers told that the demand of Sarod was fairly good from the 50s of the 20th century to the first decade of 21st century. The process of this decline according to many other makers actually started from 90s of the last century. The reasons behind this gradual decline are many. First all the price of a Sarod made of exceptionally high standard wood (Teak) for standard wood (Tun) is very high and because of this it is beyond the reach of many beginners, as their parents cannot afford to bear this high price. As a result even some enthusiastic beginners are deprived. Only a very talented few come forward

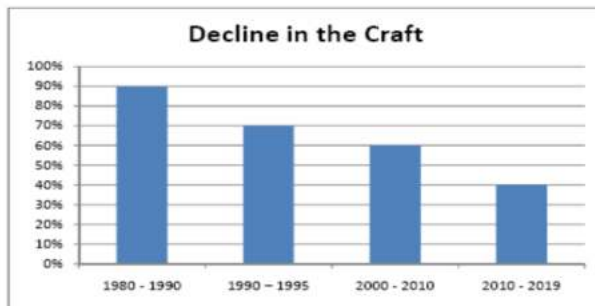
to learn this instrument. Naturally, the makers do not get orders for this instrument in large number. When the makers come to realize that their present profession is not sufficient for their livelihood, they often switched over to other profession. I have come across one standard makers (Melody Mart) in Lucknow, U.P. who out of frustration converted a portion of their famous shop “Melody Mart” into medical (surgical goods) shop. On the other hand, some very renowned makers are continuing their as they did earlier.

As the makers who have a lot of passion for this craft never think of switching over to any other profession in spite of the fact their sale also decreased to some degree. I have met quite a few maker and shop-owners who are continuing this profession to keep the craft alive.

There are varied causes for the decline of this craft.

- No platform for Instrumental Music concerts.
- Varied activities of children learners.
- Time constraints.
- Lack of passion and love for this art.
- Lack of motivational support (viewpoint of seller).
- From maestro’s point of view, “inability of judge self capacity or talent in music and lack of love”.
- Very few used to do proper Riyaz.

But in modern times the young generation is not very much interested in traditional Indian Classical music instrument making as its demand is steadily declining.



Time	1980 - 1990	1990 - 1995	2000 - 2010	2010 - 2019
Decline in the Craft	90%	70%	60%	40%

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