

## **NOTE EXTRAORDINAIRE...**

By amol palekar

I was hurt... fuming for a while... disturbed for many days...!

How could she say somethings fundamentally detrimental to my core, my integrity? And why did she not confront me with her doubts? How could she aver something behind my back without giving me a chance to address it... that too which could be easily thrashed out with material evidence???

Was our bond not as deep as I had believed it to be through those 30 odd years?

Rather than debasing her with a confrontation, I decided to withdraw... keep my distance from her!

After several months, my soul dragged me to her concert. Her divine music... her frail yet ascetically anchored presence filling the space with serenity! That was my diva... the *Note Extraordinaire*... She saw me sitting in the first row. Her glance summoned me to see her after the concert.

Drenched in her notes, I reached her home the very next morning; shook her hands with gratitude! She was oblivious to what all was churning in my mind for past several months. She reprimanded me for my months' absence; interpreted it wrongly; accused me of being selfish. After she crossed my patient threshold, I blurted out all those pent up feelings and confronted her for being unfair whilst giving factual clarifications. I could see the genuine pain in her eyes. I didn't wish to see her in a vulnerable state. *Sandhya's* tears were accusing me of treachery. I got up.

As we were about to leave, she held up the open door... clasped my hand warmly and said, "Amol, I've hurt quite a few... many have drifted away from me... too many misunderstandings to grapple with... I never meant to harm you and I was wrong in thinking on those lines."

Her trembling voice became thinner.

"Just be with me till the end... no matter what I say or do! Never part ever... will you?"

Probably to avoid showing her moist eyes, she hugged me and *Sandhya* both.

Time spent in complete silence as we drove back to *Pune* helped me to introspect my relationship of over three decades with *Kishori Amonkar*! We

were crossing the exact same *dhaba* in *Khopoli* where I had met her first during the mid 70s. I had rushed to her with the enthusiasm of an ardent fan. After exchanging notes on our mutual fondness for *Batata Wada*, she asked me, “Was *Mohanrao Palekar* related to you?” Her face lit up with my answer, “Yes, he was my *bade chacha*, paternal uncle.” While forming an immediate association with me, she narrated, with a child like zest, how *Mai* (*Mogubai Kurdikar*, her mother) had requested *Mohanrao* to teach her.

Thus our relationship bloomed from *Kishori ji* to *Kishori tai* to just *Tai* over last many years. I, of course, kept on following her musical journey as she went on scaling higher peaks through all over the world!

During the making of ‘*Bhinna Shadja*’, we travelled a great distance not only physically, geographically but emotionally too! She made tea for us, she fed us home cooked food amidst unending discussions on musical thoughts with *Sandhya*. I weathered through quite a few heated arguments with her on visual art. We glided seamlessly even through the so far closeted passage of her personal past.

And thus we chose to project her the way she emerged through ‘*Bhinna Shadja*’ ! A tiny, fragile body that evoked awe through her music, her idiosyncratic image... a career centric woman fighting for her rightful place in a patriarchal *gharana* system... an immensely original, and fearlessly creative mind to question the age old *parampara*... a woman wanting to hide her vulnerability with dignity... and so much more!

Indeed, I am in love with this entity... she has left us but I do not have to change the tense in the statement. I am still in love with her. I am not feeling the void even when we won't be able to see her singing... ever. I though feel petty that I had downsized her by giving so much significance to her not-so-noble qualities. I feel guilty of being ungrateful to her. I wish I had the magnanimity of not adulterating her true essence. I wish I had realized this when I could still show my tears to her. I wish *TAI* you were still just around the corner!!!