

NILOY AHSAN



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DHRUPAD & BEYOND

**For Niloy, music is a play of the Prana, an exploration of the sound within, and the practice of Dhrupad is a path to self-awareness.**

A 21st generation practitioner of the majestic Dagar lineage, Niloy Ahsan is an unconventional rare vocalist, mastering a distinctive repertoire, in-depth understanding of Indian music and culture as well as traditional and classical styles of Dhrupad, Dhamar and Khayal. By integrating the symmetry between the austerity of Dagarvani Dhrupad and the versatile musical possibilities of the Sadharani Geeti, Niloy has emerged as one of the finest and most promising Dhrupad vocalists of our time.

**T**he notes of a raga flow soft and reposeful, yet very precise. Niloy Ahsan's voice is sure and supple and seems to rise from a deep and inexhaustible well. He is singing a raga in the Dhrupad tradition, in the Dagar Vani Parampara. Niloy has been learning the art from Ustad Faiyaz Wasifuddin Dagar and the Gundecha brothers, who are among the foremost proponents of the art form. Dhrupad can be traced back to the Sama Veda. In ancient times, practising it meant a greater chance of salvation. Although a classical art, Dhrupad is primarily a form of worship. Offerings to the divine are made through the medium of music or nada. Dhrupad is also called Nada-yoga. Dhrupad can be seen at different levels as a meditation, a mantric recitation.

Niloy believes, like the ancient Rishis and Sufi mystics, that music can be a potent way of exploring the divine. The exploration of sound can also be considered a form of yoga: music is thus the exploration of sound, and the play of prana, at subtle levels, that makes it an act of healing. Niloy's approach to singing is thus holistic, as is the Dhrupad music itself. It is deeply embedded in a philosophy of self-awareness, of how we sit, speak, and by extension, sing. It is not surprising, therefore, that the raga unfolds slowly and with a sense of measure. The forte of the form is Alap. The process unfolds, and because a rigorous sadhana or spiritual effort is at the root of this, the singer and listener move to a realm that is beyond sound. Thus, though the dhrupad's forte is in alap, every aspect of a piece is viewed as equally important.

Niloy is a 21st generation practitioner of the Dagarvani Dhrupad lineage. He believes that the form preserves many of the most ancient principles of music, which might have been lost in the development of other classical forms of music. Such preservation has been possible due to the meticulousness of the Dhrupad guru-shishya tradition, which hands over the tradition directly from teacher to student. Various dhatus and kriyas, explore the principles in the most elaborate and detailed manner, and taught in the most rigorous fashion. But the form is also one with a heart: Niloy brings about the raga's particular traits, as well as a flowering of bhava.

A lot of energy gets accumulated, in this practice, and it can transform the human body and mind to higher dimensions. This is nothing other than a yogic and spiritual process.

Niloy's background in music is not only in the Dhrupad tradition. He has trained extensively, and since an early age, in the khayal tradition, as well as in Rabindra sangeet and Nazrul Geeti. His vision is to explore the depth of Dhrupad in its fullest manner keeping the very root that is the spiritual and yogic principles, well established. This is without losing his openness; rather, being total to fresh new ideas and diverse musical aspects.

Niloy has performed extensively in many parts of the country and the world, in prestigious venues such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Dhaka, Chennai and other cities. He has also performed with other artists, such as the Russian Maestro Vyaschaelev Guyvoronsky and the legendary rock artist, Boris Grebenshikov. He has performed at various major international festivals, such as the International music festival in St. Petersburg, Russia, and the annual classical music festival in Shilpakala, Dhaka, apart from giving concerts all over the world. His albums include 'Around Silence' released in 2013 in London, as well as 'Dodecameron' released in St. Petersburg in 2012.

He has received many prestigious awards, among them the Fellowship from Jaipur Gems Charitable Trust, Mumbai, awarded by Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia, Ustaad Ghulam Mustafa Khan, Vidhushi Dr N Rajam, Pandit and Arvind Parikh, the Tata Trust Scholarship and Notun Kuri National award that was awarded to him by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

**Written by  
Deepa Onkar**

Principal Correspondent and  
Chief Sub-Editor at The Hindu  
Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India





# WORK EXPERIENCE

- 2018** Present: **Teaching Dhrupad** in Chennai  
Dhrupad Gurukul at Cultural Centre-  
SPACES
- 2014-16** **Taught Khayal and Dhrupad** in Shankar  
Mahadevan Academy (SMA)
- 2011-13** Collaborated with **Russian Jazz Maestro**  
and composer **Vyacheslav Guyvoronsky**  
and percussionist **Denis Kucherov**;  
performed as a trio in major venues in  
Russia; published two albums: **Around  
Silence and Dodecameron**
- 2013** Performed in St. Petersburg Court  
Capella with the legendary Russian singer  
**Boris Grebenshikov and with the St.  
Petersburg State Capella Symphony  
Orchestra**
- 1999-2006** Performed as an enlisted artiste in  
**Bangladesh National Television and  
National Radio**









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Receiving Jaipur Gems Charitable Trust Fellowship from Padma Vibhushan Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, Padma Vibhushan Pandit Hari Prasad Chaurasia, Padma Vibhushan Ustad Ghulam Mustafa Khan, Padma Bhushan Vidhushi Dr N Rajam and Padma Bhushan Pandit Arvind Parikh

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# DISCOGRAPHY

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## **Dance of Breath**

Genre: Dhrupad, Published by: CD baby in Nov 2019

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## **Around Silence**

Genre: Ethno-Jazz/ modern improvisation;  
released in the UK in 2013/03; published by  
English jazz label- Leo Records; spread all over  
Europe (France, Spain, Italy, England, Czech  
Republic, Poland, Russia) and America (US,  
Canada, Brazil)

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## **'Dodecameron'**

Genre: Ethno-Jazz, modern improvisation;  
Released in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation  
in November 2012; Published by 'Svobodnaya  
Kultura'



# P R E S S

// *Niloy, the gifted young disciple of Gundecha Brothers, impressed not just with his well-groomed voice but also with his total tunefulness, singing against just the drone of Tanpura. The reposeful Alap and Dhrupad in Raga Bageshree spoke of his total commitment and dedication towards this demanding discipline.*

**[The Hindu]**

// *Ahsan is gifted with a gorgeous voice and masters the subtleties of traditional Indian singing. At times, he conveys a mystical force comparable to Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (different cultures, same spirit).*

**[Monsieur Délire - France]**

// *An uncompromising vocalist.*

**[Percorsi Musicali - Italy]**

# SOULFUL MUSIC

City dwellers can explore the spirituality of Dhrupad music for the next three days

Institute Auditorium, Famous Dhrupad music exponents, Gundecha brothers, who started a training centre at Hyderabad, are conducting this festival to showcase the talent of their students from around the world. Their student Manish Jha, who performs with his brother Sanjeev Jha, comes to the city every month to train students. He says, "After this festival, we hope more people from the city bring Dhrupad music into their lives."

## THE PERFORMERS

**MURALI MOHAN GOWDA**  
Murali Mohan Gowda from Bangalore used to learn the Dhrupad and plays the Sarawati Veena during his free time. He quit his job in a multinational company to make music his full-time profession. After taking up Dhrupad music on Rudra Veena, he always faced the challenge of travelling with the large instrument and maintaining it.

Says Murali, "I have done many duet performances with Heikel. Since we learn from the same guru, our music blends into a beautiful traditional style, even though it comes from two people. Sensitising society on various issues also resulted in my participation in the Art in Transit festival, which took place at the Metro railway stations in Bengaluru."

**HEIKEL BEN MLOUKA**  
Heikel Ben Mlouka from Tunisia used to listen to lot of Indian classical music in his childhood. Says he, "I learnt the Sitar and Harmonium. About two years ago, I came to the gurukul in the Art in Transit festival, which took place at the Metro railway stations in Bengaluru. The Gundecha brothers suggested that I start learning the Rudra Veena. The moment I plucked the first note on the instrument, an inexpressible feeling of a different universe of sound touched my soul. I cannot leave it."

**MUSICAL BROTHERHOOD:** The Gundecha brothers are conducting the music festival in the city

**ASHAN ZULKERNAEEN NILOY**  
This musician from Dhaka feels that the younger generation is slowly understanding the depth of Dhrupad music and the following is increasing. Says Niloy, "This music integrates very well with the science of Yoga as it has an interaction with the body and mind. It's very popular abroad and people in India are understanding the importance."

**AMITA SHINHA MAHAPATRA**  
Amita from Mumbai, took to Dhrupad music at a workshop by Ustad Bahadur Khan Dagar. She says, "The purity of sound, rhythm and the words have brought peace in my life. The experience of understanding the philosophy of music can change your perception of life."

**SUPRIYO MAITRO AND SATYENDRA SINGH SOLANKI**  
Supriyo Maitro from Jalpaiguri feels that Dhrupad has a scientific voice training system, which enlightens the spirit and soul of a human. Says Supriyo, "I used to work as an Assistant Professor of Music in Vidyaasagar University before I decided to pack my bags and proceed to the gurukul at Bhopal. The gurukul gave me everything and a scholarship to survive."

**RUPIA AMITABH**  
Rupa Amitabh from New Delhi saw an advertisement about a Dhrupad workshop and attended the auditions. Till then she was deeply involved in the Khayal form of singing. Says Rupa, "It took a lot of time for me to understand the meditative form of this music. I know many foreigners who practice Dhrupad music because they like the stillness in it."

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# रवीन्द्र भवन में आशा की किरण कार्यक्रम का आयोजन बांग्लादेश के एहसान ने ध्रुपद गायकी की छोड़ी छा

**भोपाल** • रवीन्द्र भवन में बुधवार को श्रुतिलय लोक कल्याण समिति व किरण विविध कला द्वारा आशा की किरण का आयोजन बुधवार को किया। इस दौरान भरतनाट्यम, कथक, ध्रुपद गायन और तबला वादन की प्रस्तुति दी गई। कार्यक्रम का मुख्य अकर्षण रहे बांग्लादेश के ध्रुपद गायक एहसान जुल्करनाईन। जिनोंने अपनी गायकी से सभी का मन मोह लिया। उन्होंने ध्रुपद आलाप के राश्री में निबद्ध धमार ताल में दो बंदों पे का की। ये पद्मश्री गुंडेचा बंदस के स्टूडेंट हैं। इस अवसर पर मुख्य अतिथि डॉली शर्मा, विशिष्ट अतिथि प्रख्यात नृत्यांगना डॉ. लता सिंह मुग्गी और प्रख्यात तबला वादक चन्द्रशेखर पिपलखरे उपस्थित रहे।

**कथक में राधा-कृष्ण प्रेम :** इससे पहले कार्यक्रम शुरूआत गणेश वंदना से की गई। इसमें पांच बाल कलाकारों ने मन मोहक प्रस्तुति से उन्मुखित दर्शकों का मन मोह लिया। मानवर्ष भोजन के कथक पर आमद, तोड़े, कवित्र की प्रस्तुति दी। उन्होंने राधा-कृष्ण प्रेम को दिखाया। इसके बाद शिव तबल के साथ प्रस्तुति का समापन किया।

**THE HINDU**  
Two recent events in New Delhi proved that Dhrupad is very much alive. The common notion that Dhrupad has lost its popularity these days, was quite contradicted by the enthusiasm of Dhrupad lovers in two totally different programmes this past week. The first was an impressive Dhrupad recital by Mousley Ahsan Zulkarnaen from Bangladesh, performing for the Delhi International Arts Festival (DIAF) at the Habitat Centre and the second was the Silver Jubilee Dhrupad Samah of the Dhrupad Academy at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. Neeloy, the gifted young disciple of Gundecha Bandha, impressed not just with his well grounded voice but also with his soulfulness, singing against just the drone of Tanpura. The respectful akrap and dhrupad in raga Rageshri spoke of his total commitment and dedication towards this demanding discipline. He was accompanied on pakhawaj by Roman Das, also from Bangladesh and a disciple of Pt. Akhlesh Gundecha.

# तबले की थाप शिवगुणों का बख

अगली कड़ी में जुनियर बच्चों का तबला वादन हुआ। सोनियर गुप में तबला वादन की शुरुआत विलम्बित लय तीन ताल में उजान, कायदे, रौले और तिहाई की प्रस्तुति दी। वहीं माध्य लय में चुकड़े व दूत लय में लगीया और तिरकर की तिहाई के साथ जुगलबंदी की प्रस्तुति से सभी को दिल जीत लिया। इसके बाद जुनियर बच्चों ने शिव तबल लय में कायदे, कायदे की तिहाई की परफार्मेंस दी।

भरतनाट्यम में रिया झा ने शिवशक्ति के अर्धनारीखर रूप प्रस्तुति से पूरे वातावरण में भक्तिभाव का संघार कराया। शिव के गुणों को बखान अपने के माध्यम से किया। कार्यक्रम अंतिम कड़ी में श्रुति वेद्यार ने सिद्धार वादन किया। इस दौरान उन्होंने राम यमन का धवन क म हर निबद्ध तीन ताल में अलाप शाला की प्रस्तुति दी। तबले पर चन्मिल रिग्ल ने संगत दी।

**Dhrupad Vibes**  
**Shala 142**  
142/2 Bairo Alto, Assagao (Next to Purple Valley Yoga Center)  
Artist contribution: 500 INR  
7:30 PM  
03 FEB 2020

**अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय ध्रुपद मेला**  
सन्मार्ग 24 फरवरी, 2020  
चौथी निर्या 8

**विरल कलाकारों ने प्रस्तुति से एक नई ऊंचाई प्रदान की**

**29th July 18 Dhrupad Utsav**  
Performances free for all  
6pm - 9pm  
Dhrupad Sankula Group 2, Tara Kini, Ahsan Zulkarnaen, Pakhawaj Vrind

**2019 में देव प्रस्कार की घोषणा**  
स्वाति निरुपाल एवार्ड  
अनुपम कश्यप शिरोमणी  
कौशिक चक्रवर्ती  
श्रीनिवास शर्मा  
प्रधान कवि श्री कल्याण मिश्र एवं  
संयोजक उज्जवाला (दिल्ली) उज्जवाला

**delhi international arts festival**  
8TH DECEMBER, 6:30PM  
MPHITHEATRE, INDIA HABITAT CENTRE  
ASHAN ZULKARNAEEN, ANANDITA NEOGY, VERA VRISHNARAJ

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**THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION INSTITUTE OF CULTURE GOLPARK, KOLKATA IN ASSOCIATION WITH DHRUPAD SANSTHAN BHOPAL, M.P.**  
**Dhrupad Utsav KOLKATA**  
15 March 2019, At 4.30pm  
• PAYTON MACDONALD (VOCAL)  
• ASHAN ZULKARNAEEN NILOY (VOCAL)  
• BIHAR BROTHERS-SANJEEV JHA & MANISH KUMAR(VOCAL JUGALBANDI)  
• PAKHWAJ VRIND BY PT. AKHLESH GUNDECHA & STUDENTS  
16 March 2019, At 5.00 Pm  
• MURALI MOHAN GOWDA & HEIKEL BEN MLOUKA (RUDRA VEENA JUGALBANDI)  
• SUPRIYO MAITRO (VOCAL)  
• GUNDECHA BROTHERS & SOURABRATA CHAKRABARTY (VOCAL AND SURBAHAR)  
ACCOMPANIMENT BY :  
Dyepashwar Deshmukh, Apoorva Lal Manna, Dineshak Tiwari, Roman Das, Nishant Singh  
VENUE : VIVEKANANDA HALL  
ALL ARE CORDIALLY WELCOME

# PERFORMANCES INTERNATIONAL

**February 2020:** 46th International Dhrupad  
Mela, Varanasi

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**December 2018:** Delhi International Arts  
Festival, Delhi

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**December 2018:** Chayanat Classical Music  
Festival, Dhaka

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**August 2015:** International Indian Music  
Festival, Saint-Petersburg

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**August 2014:** Cultural Centre Dom, Moscow

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**November 2014:** Annual Classical Music  
Festival, Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka

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**November 2013:** Court Chapel, Saint  
Petersburg

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**March 2012:** Gallery '12th July', Saint  
Petersburg



# PERFORMANCES NATIONAL

**February 2020:** Amethyst, International Women's Association, Chennai

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**January 2020:** Athanaad, Bhopal

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**February 2020:** Mehfil, Anjuna, Goa

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**February 2020:** Shala 142, Goa

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**November 2019:** Smaran, Dhrupad Sansthan, Bhopal

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**March 2019:** Dhrupad Utsav in Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata

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**March 2019:** Dhrupad Utsav in Kalakshetra Foundation, Chennai

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**February 2019:** International Bhumi Shakti Conference, Trichy

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**December 2018:** Chayanat Classical Music Festival, Dhaka, Bangladesh

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**November 2018:** Amir Khosru Institute of Music, Delhi

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**November 2018:** Pathshala, Krishnamurti Foundation, Chennai

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**October 2018:** Smaran, Dhrupad Sansthan, Bhopal

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**August 2018:** Bengaluru Dhrupad festival, Bengaluru

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**June 2018:** Rabindra Bhavan, Bhopal

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**September 2017:** Dhrupad Festival, Hyderabad

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**March 2017:** International Dhrupads Festival, Udaipur

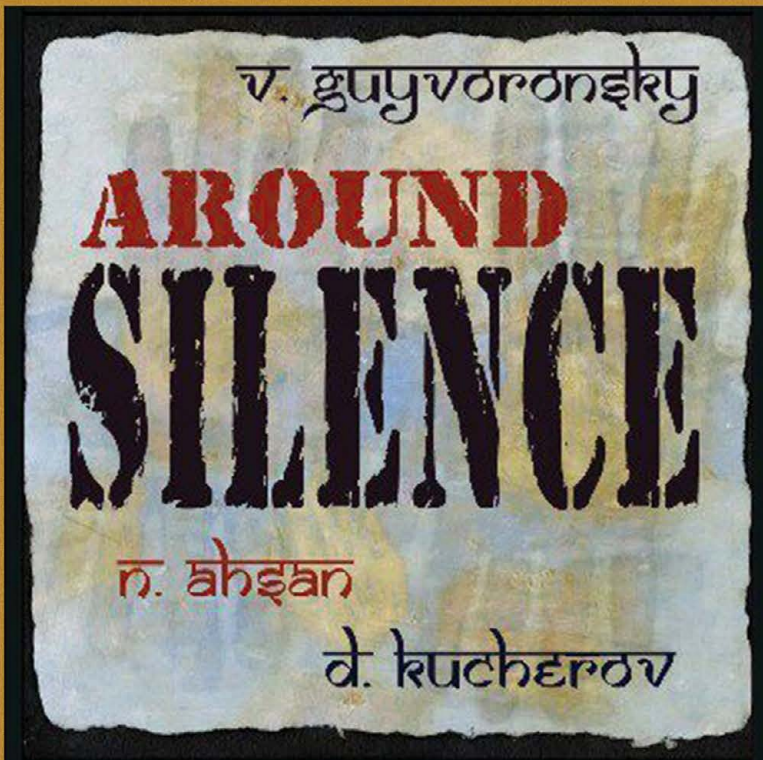
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**February 2017:** Dhrupad Utsav in Kalakshetra Foundation, Chennai

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**November, 2016:** Smaran, Dhrupad Sansthan, Bhopal





D H R U P A D  
**G U R U K U L**  
C H E N N A I

***At Cultural Centre - Spaces***

*Chennai Dhrupad Gurukul is an initiative of the Gundecha Brothers, a continuum of their mission to spread Dhrupad to the furthest corners of the world. It has been facilitated in the heart of Chennai at Cultural Centre Spaces. It was inaugurated on 8 September, 2018 by Pt. Ramakant Gundecha and prominent writer and photographer Sadanand Menon. Since then Niloy Ahsan has been teaching there.*





