

ACTIVITY REPORT

Baluji Music Foundation Re:Imagine India

with support from the British Council and the Arts



Re: Imagine India



Council of England

Phase One: Research and Development

3 January – 18 February 2016

Inner Vision
Music and Dance Tour
2016

Inner Vision Music and Dance Tour Overview Film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_9ZmPnAZR0

Aims

The aim of the R&D was to:

- Locate, and select seven accomplished blind/visually impaired musicians from a wide range of regions in India, who play local folk music.
- Share and exchange skills and knowledge.
- Work with them to create a unique program of music, in collaboration with Inner Vision Orchestra England, inspired by the rich variety of regional folk music of India.
- Conduct research into blind/visually impaired musician's lives.
- Form lasting collaborative partnerships between India and England.

Our Team

- Baluji Shrivastav, musical director of Baluji Music Foundation, and Inner Vision Orchestra is a blind musician born and educated in India. BBC News says "Baluji Shrivastav is one of the music world's most in-demand sitar players" www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-ouch-29688039. He speaks several Indian languages and could identify directly with the target group. His musical virtuosity and expertise enabled him to deliver the artistic integrity of the project.
- Dr David Baker, on the governing committee of Baluji Music Foundation, is an academic and a musician. He is the Principal Investigator for an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) 'Research Grants – Early Career project entitled 'Visually-impaired musicians' lives' (VIML). This will lead to training for conservatoire students and also outreach activities Partners. <http://vimusicians.ioe.ac.uk>
- Linda Shanson, BSc Anthropology, is secretary of Baluji Music Foundation .She is a published author and composer and manager of Baluji and the Inner Vision Orchestra, with extensive experience of working in India, and managing complex projects.
- Thuy Baker, a visually impaired concert pianist, member of Inner Vision Orchestra, and educator, bringing a western musical dimension to the creative process and exchange.
- Marie-Cecile Embleton, film maker who is making a film about the Inner Vision Orchestra. As assistant manager she provided digital support, filming, recording, blogging, and maintaining a digital profile of the project.

Preparation

Several days of research took place before leaving to create a draft itinerary and to plan what equipment we should take with us. This involved research online, and using Baluji's network in India. Information online about organisations in India was often unreliable and we understood that much of the planning would take place on the ground.

We explored the possibility of borrowing, or hiring a keyboard for Thuy to play, and decided it would be best to buy one and take it with us. Baluji also transported his semi-acoustic sitar, so we had a great deal of luggage.

We all arranged to have the necessary vaccinations well in advance of travel, and thankfully none of us became ill during the trip.

Dr. David Baker worked together with Professor Lucy Green, Baluji and myself to create the questionnaire which would form the basis of his research into Visually Impaired Musician's Lives in India. He created the online questionnaire for the Re-imagine India project, which can be reached via the link below and will be also added as an attachment to this report:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/NQZ2WVD>

We had wonderful support and encouragement from Nandini Muthuswamy at the British Council in Chennai and Priya Khanchandani, Head of Arts Programmes, India British Council Division British High Commission. They recommended places to stay and drivers we could use and some musicians that we could meet in Chennai and Kolkata. They provided the necessary letters of support that enabled us to arrange the business visas we required. Later in the tour Priya arranged for Baluji to hold an open workshop for blind musicians at the British Council theatre in Delhi.

There were severe floods in Chennai where we were due to start our research, and we were about to re-schedule our departure, but fortunately the airport reopened and we could proceed as planned.

Media and Press Interest

There was much interest in our work before we went and during the trip:



BBC WORLD SERVICE **NewsHour** **LISTEN** **On Now : World Business Report**
Bangladesh Bank Claims US Account Hacked

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Baluji Shrivastav's new Indian blind orchestra

Baluji Shrivastav is one of the music world's most in-demand sitar players and has performed with the likes of Coldplay, Stevie Wonder and at the 2012 Paralympics closing ceremony. He leads an ensemble of international blind musicians in the UK called the Inner Vision Orchestra and now he's on the search for a new blind orchestra comprising his fellow Indian musicians.

Picture of Baluji Shrivastav courtesy of Baluji Shrivastav.

To listen to the interview with James Menendez on BBC which took place before we left for India please access the link below:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03cvq5v>

As a result of the above interview which was heard in India, Baluji was contacted by Radio Udaan , which is run by blind people in India and they interviewed him on Skype. This was heard by many blind people in India and led to further meetings in India. Later Baluji went to Ludiana as guest of honour at the Radio Udaan Convention for blind people. The convention was felicitated by Mr. Harpal Singh, Dipti Director Department of Social Security Government of Punjab, Virender Kaur Thandi Chairperson, Social Welfare Board Government of Punjab, Mr. C. Ravindran Director VRTC Punjab, Mrs. Harsimrat Kaur Badal Member of Parliament, Mr. Rakesh Kapoor Chief Executive Officer Paramount Impex Punjab, Dr. Madhu Singal Founder Member Mitra Jyoti Bangalore and Dr. Ramesh Kumar Sarin General Secretary Progressive Society New Delhi.



Radio Udaan Interview on Re Imagine India

Listen to Baluji talking about the Re Imagine India project with the Baluji Music Foundation live from Chennai on blind radio station Radio Udaan here: <https://youtu.be/IVLCLfWuRg8>

[Read Full Review](#)

https://www.dropbox.com/s/nu2fh5wezsxvecg/IMG_0455.JPG?dl=0 While conducting research in Agra Baluji visited the village of his birth in Usmanpur where he was mobbed by the villagers:



BALUJI MOBBED BY FANS IN USMANPUR



Re Imagine in Usmanpur

Baluji was received like a star in his home village Usmanpur on his birthday! He and the Re: Imagine team were shown around the village by the son of the woman who tried to treat Baluji's eye infection unsuccessfully. They showed us the place where he was born in a mud brick house.

Baluji's biography was featured in the press, as well as information on the Re: Imagine India project.

To view the press clipping, click here!

https://www.dropbox.com/s/nu2fh5wezsvxvecg/IMG_0455.JPG?dl=0

While visiting Mandvi in Bhuj, Gujarat, Baluji was interviewed on TV.



Baluji on Maa Ashapura News

Baluji appeared on Maa Ashapura News in Kutch, talking about the Re:Imagine India project. Watch the interview here!https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDhFP_2lRrAY

Read Full Review

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDhFP_2lRrAY

ભુજ-શુક્રવાર ૧૨-૦૨-૨૦૧૯

પ્યાતનામ સંગીતવિદ્દંપતીએ માંડવીના દિવ્યાંગોને આપી તાલીમ

એક ગઢવી દ્વારા શરૂ કરાયેલા આ સંગીત એ પ્રાથમિકજાનના જીવનનું પૂર્ણ અને હોવાથી ભારતીય સંગીતજોનું અંતરરાષ્ટ્રીય શ્રેણે પૂર્ણ માટે યોગદાન રહ્યું છે. ભારત એ બહુભાષી દેશ છે અને એકાંત એવો દેશ છે અને અનેક પ્રાંતનું અલગ અલગ લોકસંગીત વન-વગડે ભરતીને યજુ વરાહતો ગોવાળ પછા લખદ રીતે વગાડતા હોય ત્યારે વન વગાડતા યજુ પશોઓ પણ એ સંગીત સાંભળવા એક ઘણે ઊભા રહી જાય છે. વાત કરવી છે ભારતના પ્રત્યેક પ્રદેશના સંગીતની જાણકારી મેરાવતા ઉસ્માનપુરા (આચા)ના તત્તની સુદેશાએ એવા બાલુજી શ્રીવાસ્તવની બાળપણથી જ પ્રસાવજી શ્રીવાસ્તવને પાંચ વર્ષની બાલ ઉંમરથી જ સંગીત પ્રત્યેની ભૂખ જાગી હતી અને નાના-મોટા પ્રાદેશિક સંગીત વાલો વગાડતા પણ સંગીતની જ્ય જેમ વગાડતો ગયો તેમ બીજા વધુ દેશોમાં અનેકાનેક સ્ટેજ પ્રોગ્રામોમાં પોતાનું સંગીત પીરસ્યું છે, જ્યારે ભારતમાં મેરા ઘર પ્યારા ધર, શ્રીવાસ્તવજી દુનિયાના ૪૦થી વધુ દેશોમાં અનેકાનેક સ્ટેજ પ્રોગ્રામોમાં પોતાનું સંગીત પીરસ્યું છે, જ્યારે ભારતમાં મેરા ઘર પ્યારા ધર, મળી ગયા અને બંને જીવનભર માટે સાથે રહેવાનો નિર્ણય કર્યો. લગ્નજીવન બાદ આ દંપતીએ ભારતના વિસરાતા જતા શારંગીય સંગીતને વગવડતું રાખવા દેશના વિવિધ પ્રાંતોમાં કરીને દિવ્યાંગોને સંગીતની તાલીમ આપવાનું શરૂ કર્યું છે તે અંગત હાલમાં તેઓ માંડવીના વિકલાંગ કન્યા શ્રીવાલય અને તાલીમશાળા ખાતે હાલમાં વિકલાંગ બાળકોને તાલીમ આપી રહ્યા છે. એ દરમિયાન તેમણે મુલાકાતમાં કર્યું હતું કે, ૨૦૧૭ સુધી દેશની તમામ વિકલાંગ મુજિક સ્કૂલોની મુલાકાત લઈ દંપતીએ નક્કી કર્યું છે કે, સંગીતને પુનઃ પ્રાગૃત કરાશે. તેમની આ મુલાકાતમાં કન્યા જાણીતા સંગીત શિક્ષક ચીમનભાઈ પટેલ, ઉન્નજિતલિલ જાજા, નારાયભાઈ મહેશ્વરી, પુશાલ બરિયા, કાનજીભાઈ મહેશ્વરી, લક્ષ્મીબેન, માણશીભાઈ ગઢવી, બનીને અંબજીનો અને વિકલાંગોમાં વિશ્વાસ પેઠા કરવાનું કામ કરી રહ્યા છે. આગામી માનવરે આ સંગીત શિક્ષકો બાલુજી શ્રીવાસ્તવ અને લી-બી શાનસેનને કાર્યક્રમ ધરશે યર મહાદેવ સંગીતયાત્રામાં મદદરૂપ મંદિર, મસ્જા રોડ ખાતે યોજાશે.

હાર્દિક સભિનંદન
આપશ્રીએ ગુજરાત યુનિવર્સિટીમાં Master in Civil Engineering - 2015 Construction &

લગ્નની ૬૦ મી સફળ વર્ષગાંઠ નિમિત્તે હાર્દિક શુભેચ્છા
આપ દેવ આપના દરમિયાન ઉત્તમના સફળ વર્ષ ગણી કરી ૬૦ માં પહોંચી કામને આગે કરી સફળ તો ત્યારે આપ તમને કામું કોનોની સેવક તરીકે કાર્યવાહી કરું.

તારામતીબેન સંવિહાપસાદ પંડ્યા (મહાધર, વા.૧૫૨-૬૩૬૪)

Article in Gujarati about work with blind people and our link with Andh Apang Manav Kalyan Society which is our partner in Gujarat.

Progress on Tour

1. Chennai

January 3-6 January

The day after we arrived we had a meeting at the British Council in Chennai.



Priya Khanchandani , Head of Arts Programmes, India British Council Division British High Commission, Thuy Hoang ,David Baker, Linda Shanson, Baluji Shrivastav, and Nandini Muthuswamy at the British Council in Chennai. Picture taken by Marie Cecile Embleton.

Priya flew from Delhi to join us at the meeting where we discussed our project and they gave us very helpful contacts, guidance and encouragement.

In Chennai –

we met and played music with three musicians and made one new partner.

M J Comaganin,

Vocalist and Music Director, Comaganin Raaga Priya , an orchestra of twenty visually challenged members. Orchestra has done nearly 2700 shows all over the world in major Indian languages like Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Hindi and a few songs in English.



Here is a link to the music that took place after several hours of travelling through the heavy traffic of Chennai https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxcJ_k6PxLU



Dr. David Baker interviewing M.J. Comaganin for his research into Visually Impaired Musician's Lives

Dr Gayatri Sankaran

An accomplished playback singer who works for All India Radio; recipient of Padmashri award from the Indian Government.

Link to the music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTtZsOf1b80>



Dr. Chandrasekaran Violinist <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SikxXrcuvec>



Nethrodaya Blind School

<http://www.nethrodaya.org>

Mr.C.Govindakrishnan is the partially sighted inspirational founder and director of this self-help institution for the differently abled. Started in 2002, it provides a host of career-enabling facilities to underprivileged boys and girls, most of them originating from rural areas. In recognition of its outstanding services to the differently abled community of Tamilnadu, Nethrodaya was selected for the Award as the “ Best Social Service Institution 2012 “ by Government Of Tamilnadu. He would lend his support and be willing to be our partner in any future work we wish do in Chennai.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29Kc54sd6O8&feature=em-upload_owner

His message is you can!



2 .BANGALURU

6 January-10 January

Here we visited and worked with the blind dancers at the Shree Ramana Maharishi Academy, and made a new partnership with charitable trust Mitra Jyothi run by Madhu Singhal.

Shree Ramana Maharishi Academy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUsIjngtOzw>

We worked with the professional dance troupe of blind dancers resident and educated at the Academy. The Academy is willing to be our partner in Bangaluru for future work and collaboration.



MITRA JYOTI

www.mitrajyothi.org

Mitra Jyoti- a registered charitable trust formed in 1990 with the objective of integrating persons with disability into mainstream society. Madhu also accompanied Baluji at the Radio Udaan convention in Ludiana Punjab. She is keen to continue a relationship with Baluji Music Foundation in future work. He discovered some talented singers in her institution. Baluji re-strung and renovated the instruments that were unusable till he restored them.



3. KOLKATA

10 January-13 January

We met two musicians, one who is also a producer. We formed a partnership with Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys' Academy.

Saheb Sharma



Saheb Sharma

Programming head, producer and sound designer at Radio BongOnet

Kolkata Area, India | Entertainment

Current	Radio BongOnet, X-RaF - Experimental Raga and Folk
Previous	Radio BongConnect, Radio Sabka Sath
Education	International School of Business and Media

Saheb produces experimental music and is an active member of the National Federation of the Blind. At his studio we met and played with Sayani Palit.

Sayani Palit

www.sayanipalit.in

Sayani has a first class first in Bachelor's and Master's degree in Classical Music from Calcutta University, Sayani is a regular performing artist of All India Radio.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QR5WHLFL64>

Playing with Baluji in Saheb Sharma's studio Kolkata

Ramakrishna Mission Blind Boys' Academy

www.rkmbba.org

The Academy is registered under Societies Registration Act, XXI of 1860 and under PWD Act 1995 under State Commissioner of Disabilities. This institute occupies a pioneering position in the field of Visual Impairment through education, vocational trainings, Rehabilitation and other services for the visually impaired students. This is a completely Residential institute only for the Blind Boys .We met the Principal Biswajit Ghosh who is himself a graduate of the school. We had an extensive tour of the school and attended a concert. They are keen to form a partnership with us for the future.



Principal Biswajit Ghosh Blind Boy's Academy

4 JAIPUR

14 January-19 January

We met several musicians and formed a partnership with Kawa Music and Rajasthan Netrahin Kalyan Sanghi .

Kawa Music

www.kawamusic.in

Kawa Music was founded by Hameed Khan Kawa to promote local folk art and music.

Rajasthan Netrahin Kalyan Sanghi

The organisation was established with an aim to protect and promote the interests of the blind and help them to become self-supporting and earn their livelihood and live a dignified life. The main objectives of the organisation include providing them better education and training, make the society and government aware of their duty towards the blind, promote cottage industries for the blind on a small scale and conduct treatment camps for curable eye diseases and prevention of the diseases.



Kawa Music arranged a press conference at the Jaipur Press Club, where violinist Sachethan Ram and members of Rajasthan Netrahin Kalyan Sanghi performed and discussed disability issues for TV and press.

Here is a clip of the people at the press conference, singing along with the artists!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bXRjbgqvnPI>

5. AGRA

19 January- 25 January

The partner here is Surkuti Blind School founded by Baluji in 1976.



Tabla maestro Lala Ram teacher at Surkuti school

6. DELHI

26 January-31 January (January 30 at Ludiana Punjab for radio Udaan Conference)

Gokul Chandra and his band of musicians joined Baluji in an open workshop at the theatre of the British Council in Delhi. We have also been offered an introduction to the Minister of Tourism should we progress to phase two of our project.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Rb0Gt6p6dA>




We spoke with our partner in Delhi, but could not meet Dr. Vikas Gupta at that time because of his health problems. We met Pooja Varma who made the arrangements for the event at the British Council. All the staff were very welcoming and helpful to the musicians.

7. GUJARAT

Bhuj and Mandvi

1 February-16 February

We were discovered by **Andh Apang Manav Kalyan Society** who arranged for us to meet several talented blind musicians. They are very keen to work with us in the future and are influential throughout the state of Gujarat.



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Shri Khushalbhai D. Badiya

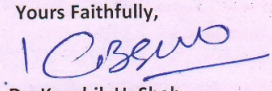
Ref.No.: 467/16


DATE:15/02/2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN


RE- Developing a Partnership of Andh Apang Manav Kalyan Society in Kutch India with Baluji Music Foundation in UK.

We look forward to working with Baluji Music Foundation to facilitate the "Inner Vision Music and Dance Tour" 2017. Our Mandvi located organisation is highly respected and recognised as effective in promoting independence of disabled people and their wellbeing, including participation in cultural events which would be enhanced through engagement with this project. Our expertise of working in Gujarat, and our extensive network would be crucial to the success of putting on the proposed show, or shows in the region as part of the proposed performance tour. We anticipate that this would be the beginning of a fruitful, and mutually beneficial relationship of Andh Apang Mandav Kalyan Society with the Baluji Music Foundation.

Yours Faithfully,
for 
Dr. Kaushik H. Shah
President Andh Apang Mandav Kalyan Society



Before Surgery



After Surgery

Income tax Exemption U/S 80 G -(5) Vide No. CIT / JAM / TECH / II(B) / 80G / 239-50 / 3443

Indrajit performs on vocals and harmonium

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FtZzs9XLg>

Mansingh performs Katch folk songs also playing harmonium and accompanied by Indrajit on tabla, and Chimanbhai Patel on violin.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aPoMOA7fwc&feature=youtu.be>



Chimanbhai Patel

DR.DAVID BAKER ARTS AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH

Dr. David Baker extended his Arts and Humanities Research Council work, "Visually impaired musicians' lives" (VIML), 2013-15 by travelling to India with the team. More information, including summary findings from VIML, can be found at <http://vimusicians.ioe.ac.uk> Although receiving responses from many countries around the world, VIML likely attracted substantial quantities of respondents who engaged in music and associated networks related to reading music and its accessibility tech. Since it set out to explore the UK, it also involved blind and partially-sighted musicians who were English speakers either as a first or alternative language. There was a sizeable question mark, therefore, over whether or not there were many more blind and partially-sighted people in countries such as India who had not been reached, those perhaps learning music through oral traditions, in community or informal contexts, and without notation. The team wanted to know, therefore, if the themes of e.g. "accessibility" (e.g. of learning and musical participation opportunities, or resources), "independent mobility" (or contrariwise "dependence"), and "identity" found in VIML were mirrored in these Indian lives. Perhaps there would be key differences in the way these critical threads applied to musicians' lives in the subcontinent. Drawing out these had the potential to lead to solutions for the challenges faced or, indeed, lines of further research enquiry.

"Re-imagine India" was an opportunity for David to meet with some inspirational musicians in India to hear and record their fascinating life stories, and to look at personal experiences beyond the perimeter of VIML. Some of the data gathered will feed into a research paper to be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal in 2016. In tandem, the "Re-imagine India" work has already been mentioned in a new co-authored book by David and Professor Lucy Green of the UCL Institute of Education called *Insights in Sound: Visually Impaired Musicians' Lives and Learning*, which will be published by Ashgate Press (Taylor and Francis). Dissemination of this kind has the benefit of raising awareness of these differently-abled people in wider society.

In addition, the Institute of Education (IoE) will assist BMF to increase the accessibility and input of visually-impaired visitors to the IoE website. Visitors will be linked from the BMF website to the IoE VIML research website. The IoE will have the specialist support of their IT services, made available to BMF to facilitate the link, ultimately contributing to the continuing research element of our work.

Conclusion

This research trip was successful in locating musicians, partners and in gathering research information for investigation into VIML. It was physically and emotionally demanding due to the extensive travelling involved. We feel we have made lasting and valuable connections with the people and the places we visited.

We were amazed at the abundance of musical talent we discovered and have more than enough material for research and to develop a program to perform. We are confident that we could work together with our partners and their networks to support the tour in India. The success of the trip was also in the strength of the R&D team that supported each other and helped to make it an enjoyable and productive experience. This owed much to the ability of the target group to identify and communicate with Baluji Shrivastav who was the link between India and the UK, through his languages and his musical prowess, and him leading the project as a totally blind person.

It is clear that the tour we would plan would need adequate funding support for the complex requirements of the company that would perform. We have no doubts concerning the artistic excellence we can achieve with the artists we have met, and the interest in the project from the public and the press, especially if we include musicians from England in the ensemble. This is the message that our prospective partners have emphasised.