



(LYRCD 7387)

THE INDIAN BAMBOO FLUTE
GOUR GOSWAMI & STEVEN GORN

Tracks:

1. Rag Marwa/Sunset Raga - 28:06
 2. Rag Jog/Deep Night Raga - 16:30
- Total running time 44:55

In Calcutta, in the spring of 1971, Ram Banerjee, a Bengali vocalist, introduced me to Sri Gour Goswami. The day of the meeting I nervously practiced the one raga, which I had studied in Benares. Mr. Banerjee picked me up at my hotel in Sudder Street and we went by taxi to the district of Hedwa in north Calcutta. This was 'old world' India; narrow lanes lined with sweet shops, tea stands and sari merchants. Bells were ringing from small neighborhood temples, and the air was thick and pungent. I was both thrilled and totally awkward. I didn't speak Bengali, nor did I know anything about the world I was entering.

We were directed thru a door and along a corridor to a small courtyard. The north end housed a small family temple. An old Brahmin priest, a cow and a servant were the only creatures in sight. The servant motioned to a room on the south end of the court, and following Mr. Banerjee I entered the music room. Seated on the floor were six men all dressed in white. The atmosphere was casual, but the energy clearly revolved around the guru. Gour Goswami was a robust man of middle age. He sat with noble posture, firmly on the ground with his feet tucked under his dhoti. His lips were red from the betel-nut he was chewing. A cup of tea was at his side and a harmonium and flute case lay on the floor before him.

He asked me from whom I had learned to play the bansuri. When I told him he let me know that I had learned from an insignificant person. I was irritated with such arrogance and was anxious to play for him and show him what I knew. He said, "Where is your flute?" When he looked at it he quickly added, "this is not made properly." Tea was served. I sipped it furiously as an endless conversation in Bengali ensued. Finally I was asked to play. Nervously I played Rag Rageshree.

Gour Goswami listened, as did everyone in the room to this western curiosity, and when I finished he said, "You have a good sense for this music, but you have not been taught properly." He then took out his flute and played for me. And I smiled from my heart. The sound of the flute was deep, warm and velvety, and utterly weightless. Sound and color arising out of nowhere...one note sliding into another...thick and porous...one moment a cloud, the next air rushing thru bamboo. With faster passages came bird-like flutters cascading one on top of another and leaving an imprint in the air. And then it was over, and once again we were drinking tea. I requested instruction and a new phase of my life began.

During the year that followed and again in 1974. I worked hard to capture that marvelous sound and make Indian music my own. Lessons were rarely private. In a group, listening to the other students, I began to appreciate the relationship between guru and disciple, and the genuine openness, which arises in a situation structured by protocol and hierarchy. I learned to sing and relate to the flute as a direct extension of my voice. The music was neither written in notation nor learned by rote. I learned through an assimilation of the essence and quality of the music. Playing the 'right passage' or showing the image of a particular raga is not a matter of repeating something correctly as much as it is synchronizing spontaneous inspiration with an adherence to the grammar and theory of the raga. When the image of the raga comes alive, elaboration and ornamentation flow effortlessly.

Gour Goswami was both generous and patient with me. The more I practiced the more he revealed. His senior disciple, Deba Prasad Banerjee, and tabla player Samir Mazumder practiced with me, accepted me as a younger brother and encouraged me to work even harder. After a year, Gour Goswami allowed me to perform with him and accompany him on tour. This was a thrilling experience and yet just another beginning in my study of Indian music - Steven Gorn

SRI GOUR GOSWAMI

Sri Gour Goswami trained with the late Pannalal Ghosh, Pt. RamKrisna Misra, and the dhrupad singer T.L. Rana. He was a composer, director and recording artist for All India Radio, Calcutta, and performed throughout India. He died of a heart attack in 1975. His playing was characterized by 'mir' and 'gamak' and he could evoke the 'rasa,' the juice or essence of a note or a raga with a single sound. The timeless and spacious mood of his 'vilamvit ek tal,' (slow twelve beat rhythm cycle) conjures up an old world India image. Exploring the landscape of a raga, his playing was serious, mythic and yet playfully human.

The recording of Rag Marwa was made in 1974. Marwa is the raga of sunset, and like the colors of twilight it is quiet and contemplative and yet filled with passion and expectation. The raga is presented in the khyal vocal format of 'vilamvit ek tal' and 'drut teen tal.'

STEVEN GORN

Steven Gorn trained in clarinet, saxophone and music composition before traveling to Asia where he studied classical and folk music in India, Indonesia and Japan. He became a disciple of Sri Gour Goswami in Calcutta in 1971, and accompanied him in concerts in West Bengal. Since then he has received critical acclaim throughout Europe and the United States for his performances of Indian classical music in Europe and North America. He is also active in the field of contemporary world music and has recorded with Paul Simon, Richie Havens, Paul Winter, Jack DeJohnette, Glen Velez, and many others. Deepak Chopra, Krishna Das, Coleman Barks, Jai Uttal, Jerome Robbins, and Julie Taymor are among those who have sought out his virtuoso bamboo flute. He has composed for film, television, dance and theatre, and performed in concerts and festivals throughout the world, drawing from classical Indian, jazz and world music to create a distinctive signature sound.

Rag Jog is a deep night and introspective raga. It is presented in the same format as Rag Marwa, and is dedicated to the memory of Sri Gour Goswami. Sri Samir Mazumder (tabla) is disciple of Sri Samta Prasad of Benares. He also studied with the late Sri Kanai Dutta. He accompanied Gour Goswami regularly in concert throughout India, and toured America in 1976 with Gour Goswami's disciple Deba Prasad Banerjee.

RAY SPIEGEL

Ray Spiegel (tabla) was born in New York City in 1953, and began studying tabla in 1970. His teachers are the famed masters of the tabla, Ustad Alla Rakha and Zakir Hussain. Ray has performed and recorded with many well known musicians.

1. Rag Marwa/Sunset Raga 2. Rag Jog/The Deep Night Raga
Gour Goswami, bansuri flute Samir Mazuner, Tabla Steven Gorn, bansuri flute, Ray Spiegel, tabla

Credits:

Produced by Steven Gorn

Rag Jog and album notes Steven Gorn

Special thanks to Sri Deba Prasad Banerjee

For further information visit Steven Gorn's website at:

<http://www.stevegorn.com>

Digitally remastered under the direction of Steven Gorn

This recording is unique in that it captures a style of flute playing belonging to "old world India." In the mysterious unfolding of RAG MARWA, the great Bansuri master

Gour Goswami evokes the essence of twilight and dusk. His well known American disciple, Steven Gorn concludes the recording with rendition of the late night RAG JOG, illustrating the transmission from guru to disciple of this timeless musical tradition. Tabla accompaniment is provided by Samir Mazumder and Ray Spiegel.



Lyrichord Discs Inc.

PO Box 1977 Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10011 Ph: 212 404 8290 Fax: 212 404 8291
email: nick@lyrichord.com Web: www.lyrichord.com

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