

[Note: After the announcements for accompanists]

Ruchira Panda, over a twenty-year career, has been presenting a unique texture of music as an exponent of North Indian classical and semi-classical forms. It is the sound and feeling of a niche, exclusive style, the Kotali Gharana.

A multi-faceted personality, she is a Hindustani Classical vocalist, composer, guru, philanthropist, a community welfare activist and a music history researcher.

She is an A grade artist of All India Radio and DoorDarshan, an Empaneled Artist of Indian Council for Cultural Relations and SPICMACAY. As a Senior Fellow of The Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India, she is authoring important research on the historical linkages between world music traditions. She is the founder of Paramparik, a social welfare nonprofit organization that has financially sponsored more than eight thousand daughters and sons of the many marginalized communities of Bengal and is well known for hosting some of the best curated Indian Classical Music Conferences since 2001. Above all, her disciples are already graded artists of AIR and performing in the concert circuit of India.

Ruchira happens to be the only global voice of Kotali Gharana, a lineage of classical vocal masters originally hailing from Kotalipara in pre-partition Bengal. She received 25 long years of taalim exclusively under the tutelage of Pandit Manas Chakraborty.

Four generations back, the Kotali maestros imbibed elements of many lineages, including Kirana, Rampur, Gwalior, Khurja, Bishnupur and then added a touch of Bengali intellectualism, emotion-infused *mizaaj*, and an added emphasis on *raagdaari*, modern lyrics and intense melodies.

Her gharana keeps creating new compositions—exquisite khayal bandishes, thumris, tapkhayals—but the repertoire also includes some of the near-extinct light classical forms of India most have not heard about: Jhoola, Birha, Patjhar, Jaad ke Geet, Pasar ke Geet etc.

Her signature voice, as you'll notice, has a uniquely deep timbre and in the upper registers, a high-octane chest voice that has power, yet is enmeshed with modulated emotion. It is the human striving for the ethereal—beyond grammar, form and skill, it is an aesthetic experience.