

# The Importance of Singing

## A Traditional Hindu tale

One time a wealthy and powerful king wished to learn the art of sculpting, so he sent for a sculptor of repute.

"I am a great admirer of your work," he said, and several of his retinue murmured importantly and nodded in agreement. "I wish to learn your great art."

"Yes, I can teach you sculpting," said the artist. "Let me see some of your paintings."

"No, no, not painting," said the king. "Sculpting. I want to learn the art of sculpting."

"Of course, of course. But painting is the preliminary training for the visual arts. Please, let me see some of your paintings."

"Well, I have not painted at all."

"Hm, I see. Well, I can teach you that, I suppose. Let me see you dance."

"Dance? What has dance got to do with sculpting?"

"Surely one who wishes to portray the human form would first have studied its graceful movement."

"I do not dance."

The sculptor was taken aback. "Very well, I will teach you some dance, also. Bring your instrument."

The king began to falter. "Instrument? What instrument? I desire only to learn sculpting!"

"Listen to me. I have indicated the importance of the study of painting and dance to sculpting. Surely you understand that the dance is done to music of instruments? How could you expect to dance without knowing something about instrumental music?"

The king admitted that he didn't know anything at all about playing a musical instrument.

"Well, no matter. I will teach you to play. Now, sing something."

"I can't sing."

"You can't sing? You come to me expecting to learn the fine art of sculpting and you cannot sing? Doesn't the study of all art begin with singing? We have much work to do. Let's see, we shall spend the rest of today studying the first note of the scale..."

This is a paraphrase of a traditional story, as told by Ali Akbar Khan in his wonderful book  
"The Classical Music of North India"

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