



MANJIRI ASANARE-KELKAR

## Singing a different tune

Though Manjiri Asanare-Kelkar was born in a family of reputed tabla players in Sangli, Maharashtra, she took to learning Kathak at the age of six and won many competitions. But her father, Anand Asanare, knowing the limited scope of Kathak in Sangli, made her take up singing as well. "Soon after that I won the first prize in a music competition in All India Radio, in both classical and light classical vocal music," recalls Manjiri. By 16, she shifted focus to singing, choosing to become an exponent of the Jaipur *gharana*. Had it not been for her father, the Jaipur *gharana*'s loss would have been Kathak's gain.

Manjiri, now 32, first trained under Pt. Chintubua Mhaikar, and after she met Pt. Madhusudan

Kanetkar, a disciple of Bhurjikhani Saheb, she started taking *taleem* (musical training) of the Jaipur *gharana*. "Panditji told me to be open to the best things in other styles and accept them," she says. Pt. Kanetkar

was closely associated with Master Krishnarao, Bal Gandharva and Pt. Gajananbua Joshi and one can see the influence of their styles in her presentation.

Manjiri's first performance was at the prestigious Sawai Gandharva festival in Pune, in 1993. At 22, she was the youngest performer in the company of stalwarts like Pt. Firoz Dastur and Pt. Bhimsen Joshi. Since then she has not looked back. She was awarded the Kesarbai Kerkar scholarship in 1994, and was named 'Young Performing Artist of The Year 1994' by National Centre for Performing Arts, Mumbai. The Pune-based Alurkar music house has released two of her cassettes. Manjiri's most cherished performance was in March this year, at the India Habitat Centre, Delhi. "It was the last concert in which my father accompanied me on the tabla. He passed away recently," she says.

When not immersed in music, she just "loves being in the house and cooking". One of her favourite pastimes is going for long walks with husband Abhijit and daughter Manasi. ■