

INDIAN WIND INSTRUMENTS

INDIAN MUSIC STUDY GROUP

Tape Program:

1. BISMILLAH KHAN — SHEHNAI: RAGA KALAVATI

Bismillah Khan is the founder of the contemporary tradition of Hindustani reed playing. He comes from a hereditary musical family, devout Muslims who played for one of the primary Hindu temples in India's holiest city, Benares. Early in his career he became dissatisfied with the shehnai's constrained role, and began developing a more classical approach, with new fingering, lip and breath techniques, as well as a great deal of study in the various musical traditions. This recording, made during the sixties when he was in his prime, demonstrates his accomplishment. His intonation is precise, the phrases beautifully executed in a style that alternately recalls vocal and instrumental forms.



He is accompanied by *naqqara* drums, a paired set of drums not unlike the *tabla*, but played with sticks. These drums lack the *tabla*'s subtle tone colors, but make up for it with their tremendous power and exuberance. The improvisation moves from the initial *alap* stages to the rendition of the *gat*, then to the raga development, *taans* and a spectacular *jhala* which has become his trademark.

Kalavati is a light, pentatonic raga with relatively few constraints for the improviser; it evokes a playful, joyous mood that makes it a musicians' favorite.

2. RAGHUNATH PRASANNA — SHEHNAI: BHAIRAVI DHUN (EXCERPT)



This recording dates from the 1950's. Here Raghunath Prasanna, a folk shehnai player from North India, demonstrates the traditional manner of performance. Accompanied by several other shehnais and drums, he plays a "dhun" (folk tune) in the raga *Bhairavi*. Although his rendition is certainly soulful, it's less sophisticated and offers fewer rewards for the intensive listener.

3. MAULA BAKSH & PARTY — NAUBAT SHAHNAI: RAGA BHAIRAVI (EXCERPT)



Yet another rendition of the raga *Bhairavi*, this in the even less subtle "Naubat Shahnai" style. This style was played over the city gateways in the old walled cities of the Mughal emperors. In a sort of musical "clock," ragas were played at the appropriate times of the day or night — but without any delicacy of execution. This approach often featured extended solos on the *naqqara* while the shehnai played a simple tune over and over again.

4. NAUBAT SHAHNAI
(JABBALPUR).

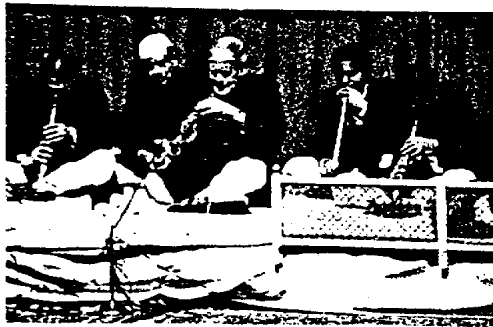
Yet another excerpt of Naubat Shahnai music, this one from Jabbalpur, in Madhya Pradesh.

"This ravishing music was played by pilgrims who came to visit the shrine during the annual Urs (religious ceremony celebrating the union of the soul of a deceased saint with the Supreme Spirit."

—John Levy—



5. BISMILLAH KHAN
DHUN



Bismillah Khan, like many other instrumentalists, enjoys rendering folk-tunes or dhun-s. These pieces are played in "lighter" talas like the 6-beat dadra or the 8-beat keherwa (also occasionally in teental). These renditions differ from the original folk forms in that the artist feels free to introduce motifs from other classical pieces and ragas, and generally treats the folk-tune as a "jumping-off point" rather than a

fixed, reiterated melody. These pieces are generally played later in a concert, as a sort of musical "snack."

6. PANDIT ANANT LAL
RAGA MARU BIHAG

After Bismillah Khan cleared the way, other shehnai artists began coming to prominence. These included the Delhi-based Anant Lal, who has become a highly respected concert artist. His improvisations owe a great deal to the vocal style, as this rendition of raga Maru Bihag (set to the vocal rhythm cycle of "vilambit ektal") shows. Recorded during Pune's Sawai Gandharva Festival in 1986, Anant Lal demonstrates great delicacy of execution and a lovely, lyrical approach that marks him as a major player.

7. **SURYAKANT AND RAMESH KHALADKAR —
SHEHNAI & SUNDRI: NATYA DHUN**

The Khaladkar family is based in Pune, where they are relatively well known as competent performers on these reed instruments. Suryakant Khaladkar plays the sundri, a sort of soprano version of the shehnai. I'm told that the sundri, rather than being a "double-reed" instrument, actually has six reeds, three on each side of the mouthpiece. I don't pretend to understand exactly how that works. Here Suryakant and his brother Ramesh Khaladkar render a duet performance based on a tune from the Marathi musical theatre — a major source of songs and tunes in Pune and Maharashtra state. In concert a theme like this would immediately be recognized and applauded. The two brothers work well together, the high tones of the sundri forming a pleasing complement to the sound of the shehnai.



SURYAKANT B. KHALADKAR
सुर्यकांत बी. खलदकर



RAMESH B. KHALADKAR
रमेश बी. खलदकर

8. **BISMILLAH KHAN & V.G. JOG
SHEHNAI & VIOLIN:
RAGA JAIJIVANTI**

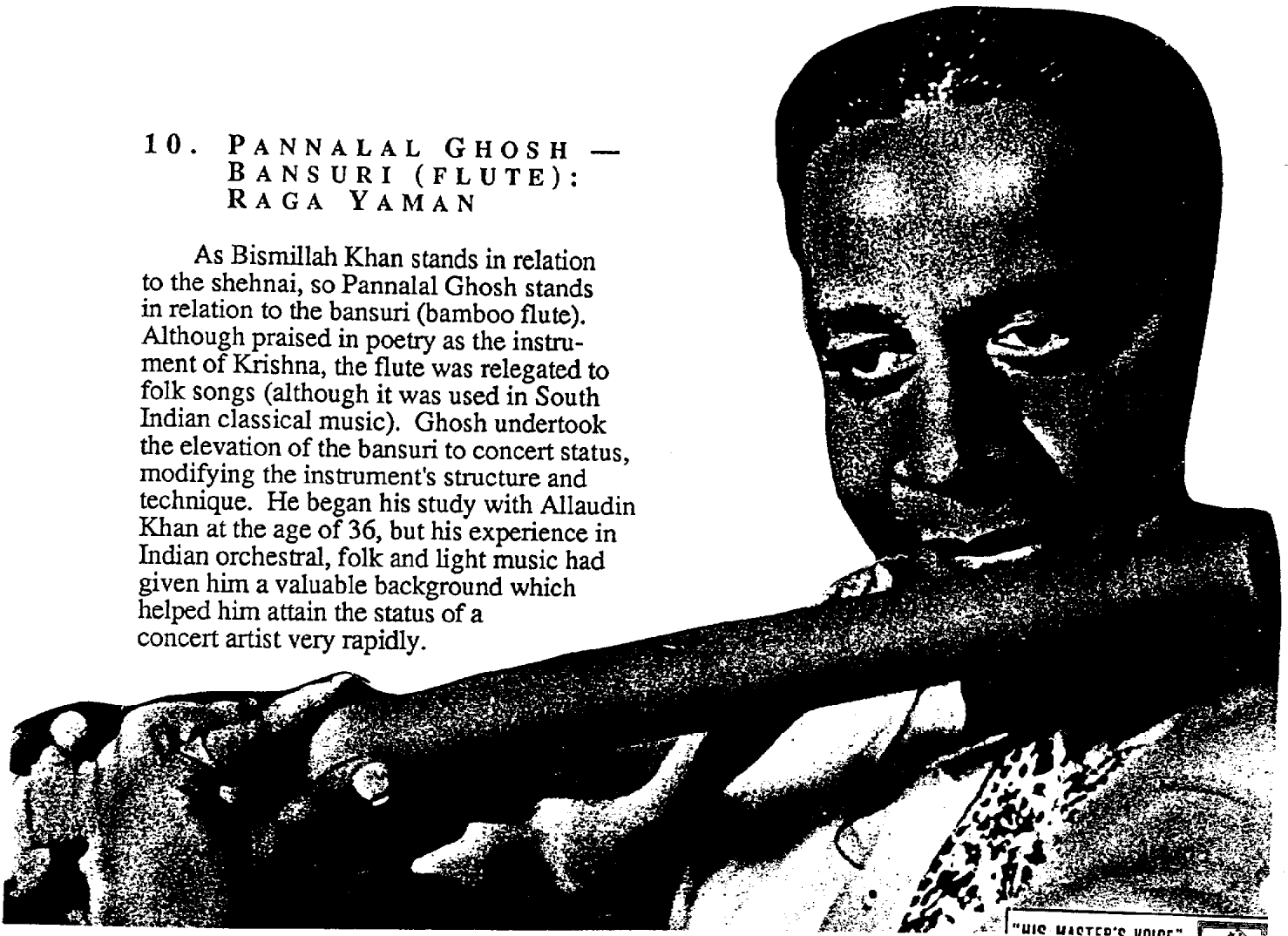
Finally it all comes back to the great master, Bismillah Khan. We hear him in a duet with the violinist V.G. Jog, as they perform the romantic raga Jaijivanti. The two work well together; violin and shehnai are startlingly similar in tone, but their melodic conceptions differ enough to make a pleasant contrast.

9. **GAURI SHANKAR
CLARINET: RAGA PURIYA KALYAN**

The British introduced marching bands, which featured clarinets among other instruments like trumpets, trombones and euphoniums. The brass have never made it to the concert stage, but there are a few (very few) performers on the Hindustani style clarinet (sometimes referred to as "clarionet"). Mostly they confine themselves to accompanying or orchestral roles; playing in large ensembles as part of the backup group for a famous singer of devotional music, for example. However, some do have extensive classical training, like the artist heard here, Pt. Gauri Shankar. I have no information about him, unfortunately, but he's an astonishing player, as can be heard in his rendition of the lyrical evening raga Puriya Kalyan, with Sheetal Misra on the tabla.

**10. PANNALAL GHOSH —
BANSURI (FLUTE):
RAGA YAMAN**

As Bismillah Khan stands in relation to the shehnai, so Pannalal Ghosh stands in relation to the bansuri (bamboo flute). Although praised in poetry as the instrument of Krishna, the flute was relegated to folk songs (although it was used in South Indian classical music). Ghosh undertook the elevation of the bansuri to concert status, modifying the instrument's structure and technique. He began his study with Allaudin Khan at the age of 36, but his experience in Indian orchestral, folk and light music had given him a valuable background which helped him attain the status of a concert artist very rapidly.



This recording was made in 1959 (in the notes accompanying this paragraph you'll find a brief description of the recording session) with tabla accompaniment by Pannalal's brother Nikhil Ghosh. His rendering of the popular evening raga Yaman is lyrical and heartfelt; although his intonation is inexact by contemporary standards his tone is so sumptuous that it more than makes up for lapses in pitch.

- 11. JOHAN & TIBHA PAHAN
FOLK FLUTE, BIHARI STYLE**
**12. UNIDENTIFIED
FOLK FLUTE, JHUMUR STYLE**

These two excerpts demonstrate the rustic, unsophisticated beauty of Indian vernacular flute music. Both are melodically appealing but unornamented; the rhythms and formal structures are very simple, basically tunes repeated with minor variations.

13. PANNALAL GHOSH — RAGA SHRI

Ghosh demonstrates again his beautiful tone and exquisite, singing conception in this excerpt from his rendition of the profound evening raga Shri. Taken from the same recording that produced example 10, this performance is an acknowledged classic of Hindustani music, one that introduced Ghosh to a broad and appreciative audience.

14. DEVENDRA MURDESHWAR — RAGA YAMAN



Murdeshwar is a disciple of Pannalal Ghosh, and the influence of his guru can be clearly heard in his broad tone and vocal conception. This brief excerpt demonstrates why he was considered one of the finest flute players in India (currently his disciple Nityanand Haldipur is making a name for himself).

15. GOUR GOSWAMI — RAGA MARWA

Gour Goswami was based in Calcutta, and studied with Pannalal Ghosh as well as with the dhrupad vocalist T.L. Rana and others. His conception is very much a part of the Ghosh tradition; his tone is velvety and exquisite and his background in vocal music can be clearly heard in his phrases and ornaments. Goswami, incidentally, was the guru of the well-known American bansuri player Steve Gorn, whose performances have earned him critical praise in India and America.

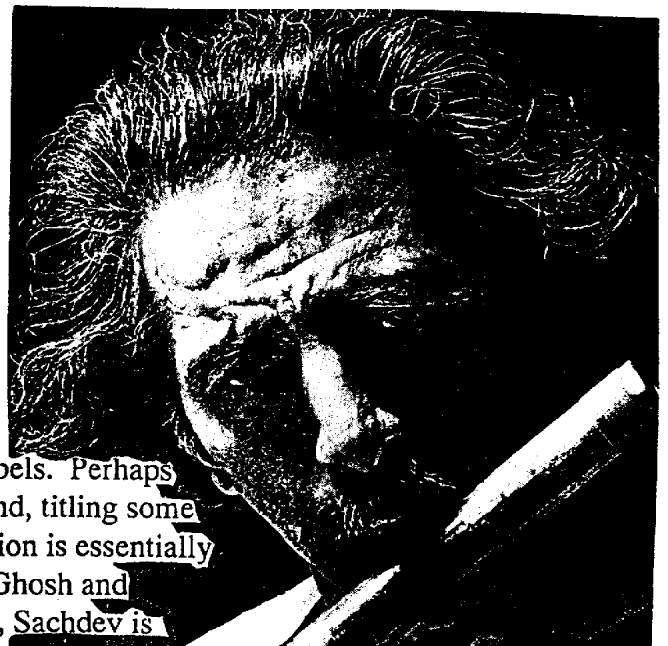


16. VIJAY RAGHAV RAO — RAGA MALKAUNS

Vijay Raghav Rao learned music from the sitarist Ravi Shankar, and thus presents an alternate conception from that of Pannalal Ghosh. While his concept is well-developed, with a clear sense of musical architecture, this recording (the only one of his that I could find) represents Rao on what must have been a bad night for intonation. I'm told that he is usually very tuneful.

17. G.S.SACHDEV — RAGA DESH

Sachdev studied with Vijay Raghav Rao, and has released a slew of albums on his own and other record labels. Perhaps unfortunately, he's been co-opted a bit by the "New Age" trend, titling some of his pieces "Cosmos," "Nirvana" and the like. His conception is essentially meditative; his virtuosity is underplayed. Where artists like Ghosh and Goswami vary their timbre to create different musical effects, Sachdev is somewhat monochromatic throughout.



18. HARIPRASAD CHAURASIA — RAGA BHOOPALI

Finally we come to the currently reigning master of the flute, Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia. Despite his original training in vocal music, his conception is essentially an instrumental one — much of his training has been with the Bombay based Annapurna Devi, surbahar player (sister of Ali Akbar Khan and Ravi Shankar's first wife) and daughter of Allaudin Khan. She is known throughout India as an instrumental teacher of the first magnitude, and Chaurasia is one of her most famous disciples. In these four excerpts he demonstrates his rendering of the traditional *alap/jor/jhala/gat* structure, accompanied on tabla by the great Allah Rakha. This concert was recorded in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1985; Zakir Hussein was scheduled to play but had double-booked himself and couldn't make it. Fortunately his father was available in New York, and quickly caught the next flight to Boston.

Chaurasia's technique is extremely advanced. With lips alone he can modulate his pitch by more than a minor third; coupled with his phenomenal breath control and amazingly well-coordinated fingers (the result, needless to say, of hours and hours of daily practice) he can evoke an infinite array of musical effects on his instrument. He is certainly the only flute player to accomplish such a detailed and precise *alap*, complete with extensive *jor* and *jhala* sections. In the *gat* sections, his rhythmic sense is very acute; it seems almost too good to be true.

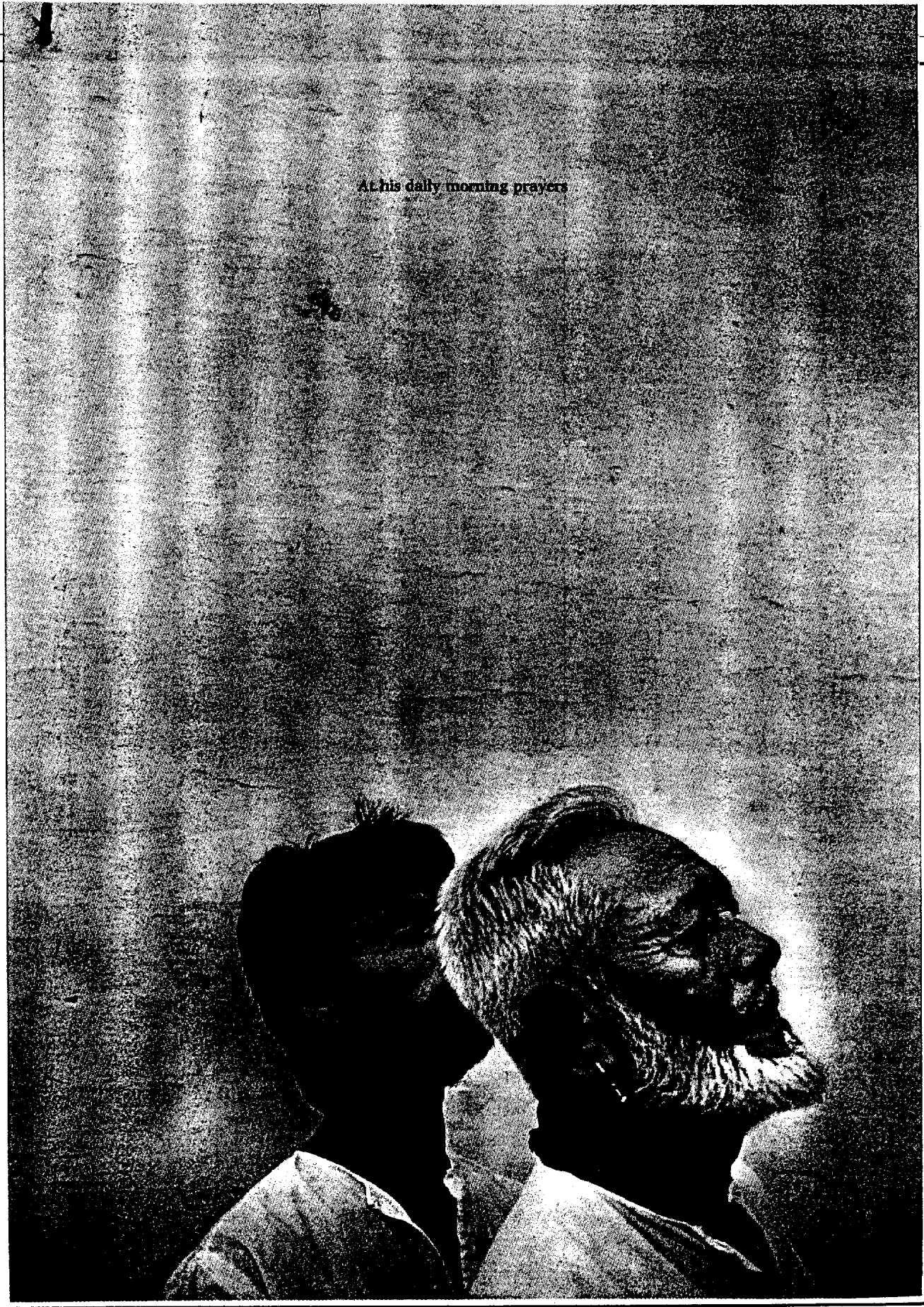
A lyrical and exquisite player, he is sometimes criticized for excessive display of technique. Those issues aside, he's surely an admirable musician, and is further known as a genuinely nice guy, with simple tastes and few interests beside music.

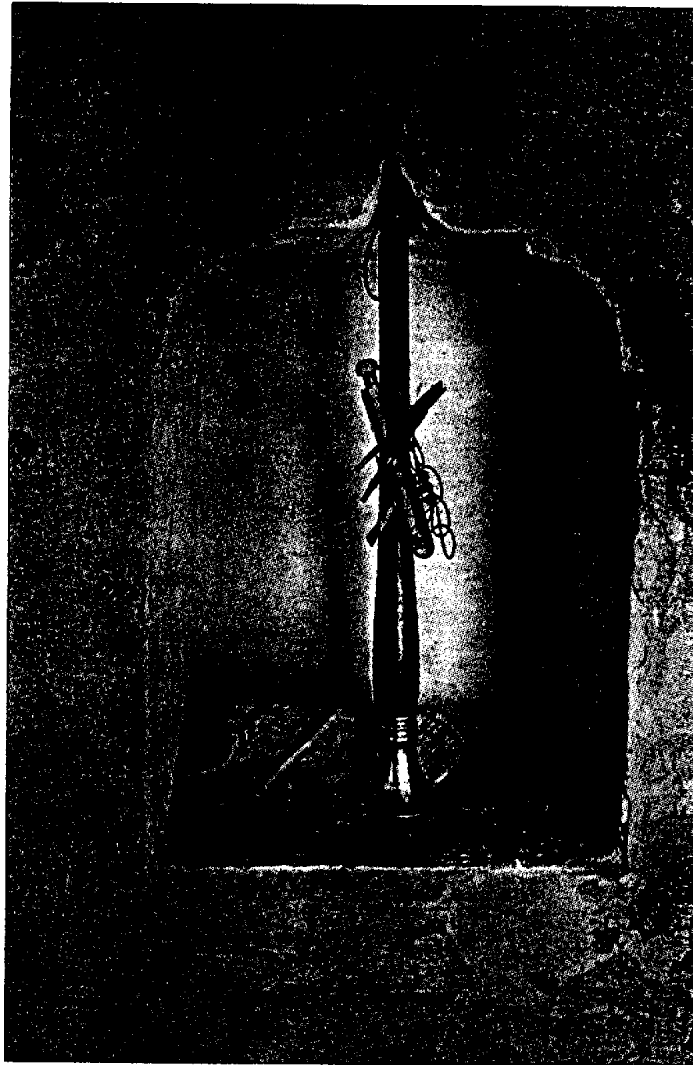


Recording Information:

- 1.) HMV lp, number unknown
- 2.) Columbia World Library 91A 02021
- 3.) Vanguard Nomad Lp SRV 73010
- 4.) Lyrichord Lp LLST L236
- 5.) HMV lp, number unknown
- 6.) Concert, Pune, India, 12/12/1986
- 7.) Polydor India 7" EP, 22-21-874
- 8.) HMV Cassette ST CS 7320
- 9.) Concert, no information available
- 10.) EMI Odeon Lp EALP 1252
- 11.) EMI Italy lp, CO64 17859
- 12.) Olympic Atlas Lp No. 6108
- 13.) EMI Odeon Lp EALP 1252
- 14.) Nonesuch Explorer H-72014
- 15.) Lyrichord CD 7387
- 16.) Olympic Lp No. 6178
- 17.) Chandi CD CPCD 104
- 18.) Concert, Cambridge, MA, 6/9/85

At his daily morning prayers





BISMILLAH KHAN

A MYSTIC UNION

In continuation of the recently-introduced series featuring living legends of Indian art and music, the photo-essay this issue focusses on Bismillah Khan, the legendary shehnai maestro.

PHOTO ESSAY

A STEADY, rhythmic thudding fills the air as hundreds of young Shias who have marched in procession to the *ziyarat* of the martyred Imam Hussain in Varanasi—a replica of his shrine in Karbala, Iraq—beat their chests and sing a dirge. Bismillah Khan, who is part of this "alam ka juloos", stands at the entrance to the tomb, holding aloft the *alam* (Hussain's standard) in memory of the slain grandson of Prophet Muhammad. He

tries to join in the song but his mouth quivers and he starts to sob openly, wiping his tears with corners of the flag. Veiled women in black weep as the lengthening shadow of a neem tree brings in the evening. "*Aya hai karbala mein gharib-ul watan koi*," the mourners sing, "*sub kuchh ho is jahan mein lekin mere karim, bhai ko zibah hote na dekhe bahen koi* (let no sister ever suffer the fate of having to watch her brother slaughtered)."



them: 'Is this *haraam*? I'm calling God, I'm thinking of Him. I'm searching for Him. Isn't this namaaz? Why do you call my search *haraam*?' They fell silent."

Each year, on the eighth day of Muharram, this devotee of the Shia faith who refuses to touch the reed of his shehnai with his lips unless he has offered his namaaz before sunrise, engages himself in his own private drama of religious apostasy. Dressed simply in white, he leads a procession, like a mischievous Pied Piper of rebellion, playing a silver shehnai reserved specially for the occasion. The procession winds its way through Varanasi's Byzantine lanes to the *rauzaa* of Imam Hussain. Here, just inside the gate, he sits cross-legged on the dusty ground in the fashion of a mendicant street minstrel and plays for hours, weeping copiously all the time, while the audience pitches coins into his lap.

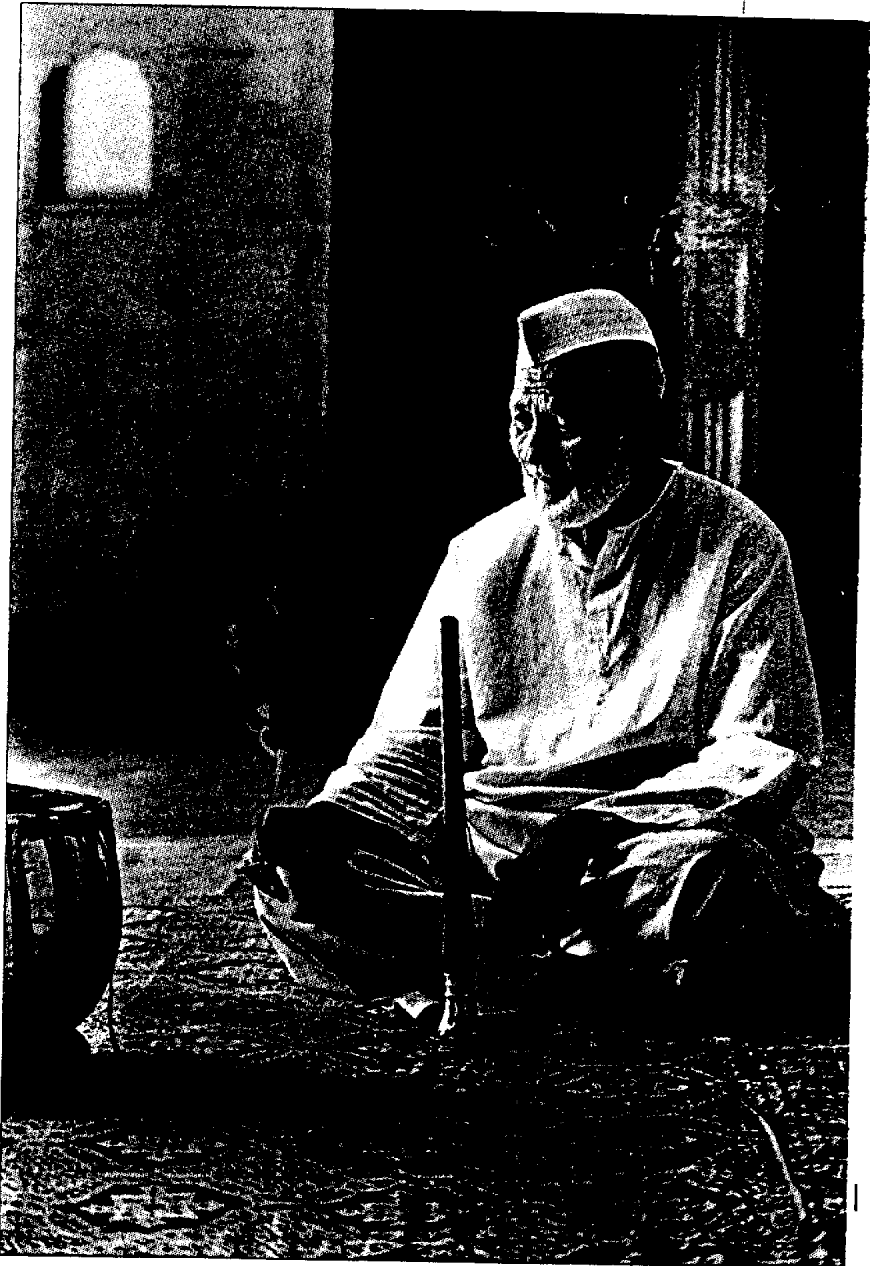
THIS is a simple man. A man of tenderness, a gentle, private man, yet given to unbridled display of emotion. When he laughs, the ground shakes. At 70, he is an immensely handsome man with a princely beard and eyes which glint with boyish mischief, his only "bad habit", he apologises, is smoking Wills cigarettes which he puffs with obvious relish. There is nothing about him that bespeaks his fame—his honorary doctorates, his Padma Vibhushan, his concerts in almost every capital around the world, his dozens of best-selling record albums. On India's first Republic Day ceremony it was Khan Sahib who poured his heart out in Raga Kaafi from Red Fort. On a more pop level, it was Khan Sahib who composed that magic film number 'Dil ka khilauna hai toot gaya' for the film *Goonj Uthi Shehnai*. He has made money but has spent it just as fast. He supports nearly 100 relatives, including 10 children.

His house in Varanasi, in Sarai Harha, is an ample but decrepit structure. His living-room, which also serves as a guest-room, is sparsely furnished with creaky wooden benches and a large *takht* on which, at given times of the day, his children perform namaaz, oblivious of guests and visitors. Still in incessant demand as a player he travels by train regularly with his troupe, often by second class. He hates to fly. And when travel arrangements are being made, the house buzzes with activity as instruments are laid out, ancient steel trunks and torn British Airways flight-bags are packed with clothes and lunch-boxes stuffed with rice and samosas. The shehnai-player, whose name is as familiar even to the international jet set as that of Ravi Shanker, travels by cycle-rickshaw. And as he wheels down the city's streets at the head of a caravan of rickshaws, smiling at well-wishers, he looks as happy as a British lord in a Rolls Royce.

Until Bismillah Khan burst upon the centre-stage of Indian music with his strange little instrument at the All-India Music Conference in Calcutta in 1937 at the age of 20, the shehnai was considered an instrument reserved for wedding processions or Hindu religious rituals. His ancestors were court musicians in the princely state of Dumraon in Bihar. His uncle, the late Ali Bux 'Vilayatu', was a shehnai-player attached to Varanasi's Vishwanath Temple. Khan Sahib remembers him as a hard taskmaster, "who may not have been able to conjure up the rain with his playing but could bring you to tears in a minute. I was never interested in studies. While others were at their books, I used to sneak out and play marbles

or blow on Mamu's (uncle's) shehnai. He always knew I would be a shehnai-player".

Even as a devout Shia, Khan Sahib is also a devotee of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of music. And at the age of 12, he recalls, he received a signal—a peculiarly Hindu signal—that his *sadhana* (devotion) had been rewarded. He recalls: "Mamu used to do his *riyaaz* (practice) at the temple of Balaji (an avatar of Vishnu) for 18 years. He told



Relaxing with a cigarette after a Shehnai session

me to do the same thing. I would begin my *riyaaz* at the mandir at 7 p.m. and end at 11 p.m., during which time I usually played four ragas. After a year-and-a-half, Mamu told me, 'if you see anything, just don't talk about it'. One night as I was playing, deep in meditation, I smelled

On this special day of prayer and mourning, Khan Sahib has already spent two hours at the shrine which includes replicas of the *rauzaas* (tombs) of Fatima Zehra, the Prophet's daughter, and Hazrat Abbas, Hussain's younger brother. He has visited each site, dressed in a white kurta and pyjama, offered incense and prostrated

Practicing with *chelas* in Varanasi; (right) singing Bhairav



himself in adulation. As he completes his rounds, stopping finally at the *rauzaa* of Imam Hussain, he reads out the names of the 72 *shaheeds* (martyrs) of Karbala, who were butchered in the 7th century A.D. when Hussain refused assent to Yezid's Caliphate. His head bowed, arms stretched out in supplication, Khan Sahib mutters a prayer: "You gave me everything. You gave me your life. *Ya Khuda, Ya Rahmatkaar*. My tears are the tears of gratitude." When finally, the long evening turns to dusk, he washes his feet and settles down on arthritic knees, swathed in heavy bandages, to two hours of namaaz—a lonely, beatific figure doubled over in pain and ecstasy.

"*Music, sur, namaaz*. It is the same thing. We reach Allah in different ways. A musician can learn. He can play beautifully. But unless he can mix his music with religion, unless he strives to meet God, he will only have *kalaa* (art) but no *assar* (mystical union). He will always stand at the edge of the ocean and never reach the heights of purity."

Khan Sahib is soaked in religion. It is his sustaining life-force. But it is this same religion that damns music, condemns it as an act of rape. For the Shias, music is *haraam* (taboo). But for the man who took the shehnai out

of wedding processions and *naubatkhaanaas*—the shehnai player, traditionally was to be heard and not seen—and who was able to weave patterns of dazzling intricacy into its music as he brought it to the centre-stage of classical respectability, his instrument is also his Quran. Where others see conflict and contradiction between his music and his religion, he sees only a divine unity.

"When the maulvis and maulanas ask me about this, I tell them, sometimes with irritation, that I can't explain it. I feel it. I feel it. If music is *haraam*, then why has it reached such heights? Why does it make me soar towards heaven? The religion of music is one. All others are different. I tell the maulanas, this is the only *haqeeqat* (reality). This is the world. My namaaz is the seven *shuddh* and five *komal surs*.

And if this is *haraam*, then I say: *aur haraam karo, aur haraam karo* (if music be a thing of sin, sin on)."

"I was once in an argument with some Shia maulvis in Iraq. They were well versed in their subject and were making several effective arguments about the reasons why music ought to be damned. At first I was left speechless. Then I closed my eyes and began to sing in Raga Bhairav: Allah-hee....Allah-hee...Allah-hee....I continued to raise the pitch. I opened my eyes and I asked



PHOTO ESSAY

something. It was an indescribable scent, something like sandalwood and jasmine and incense. I thought it was the aroma of the Ganges. But the scent got more powerful. I opened my eyes—and when I speak about it I still get goose-flesh—when I opened my eyes, there was Balaji standing right next to me, *kamandal* in hand, exactly as he is pictured. My door was locked from inside. Nobody was allowed to enter when I did my *riyaaz*. He said, 'play, son'. But I was in a cold sweat. I stopped playing.

"He smiled, and disappeared. I unlocked the door. I thought a *faqir* may have come in. I took a lantern and searched all the streets. They were empty. I ran home, ate quickly and slept. Mamu had understood what had happened. But he teased me, pretending he knew nothing. But as I blurted out the experience, Mamu slapped me, because he had asked me earlier not to talk about anything that might happen to me. Then he kissed me and asked me to go buy vegetables. Mamu always told me, 'never look back, keep going forward'. Even now I go to Balaji's mandir alone, at night and play all by myself. When I play

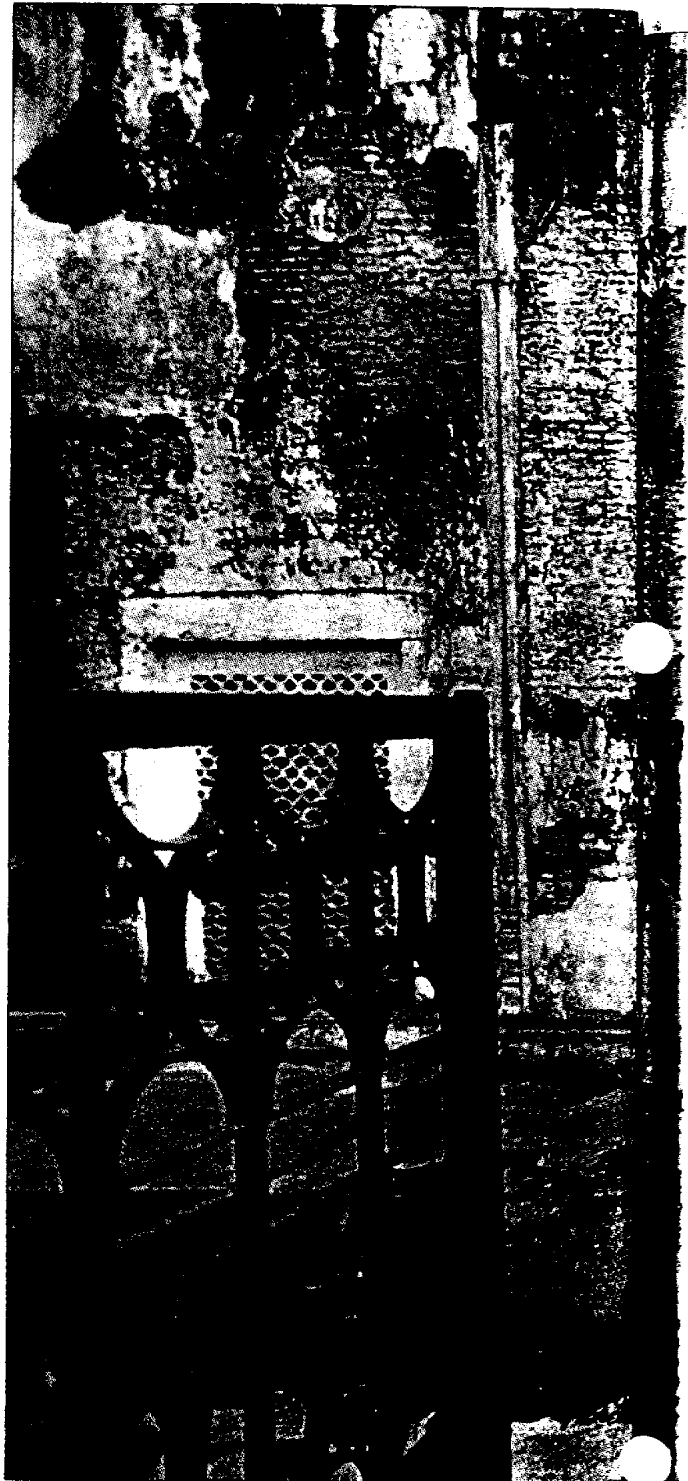


With grandson in Varanasi home

before others, in my heart I'm still listening to my gurus. In my heart, they clap for me at the appropriate time.

"In music, the *sur* is a clean thing, it is a pure thing. It cannot be deceived and it cannot deceive anybody. It is like a mirror in which you see the world and in which I can see my own face when I play. When I start playing, the

mind wanders here and there and takes me with it. But all the time I am striving for the *assar*. But when that comes, when the *sur* clicks, it is like I am unconscious and the heart has taken over. Sometimes I don't understand who is playing. Or I feel that I am playing at a *mazaar*, or in front of ancient sages. And all I can think of is, '*he mere maalik tu mujhe lele* (God, take me away), *tu hee nirankaar, tu hee*



phool aur phal mein (God. You alone are formless. You alone in flower and fruit)'.
"I am getting old now. Not in my heart. But in my body. The heart yearns to go on and on but this body sometimes tires and these wretched knees start aching

In mourning in a procession of Shia muslims

after four hours of playing. And I now have that all-too-human worry. Thirty years ago, I used to think I had conquered or was about to conquer the world. What foolishness! Now I say, Bismillah, you haven't reached anywhere. The world may know and listen to your ragas, but Bismillah, life will soon finish and your yearnings will still remain. This music is still an ocean. I want to cross it.



PHOTO ESSAY

But I have barely reached the shore. I haven't yet even taken a dip in it."

Khan Sahib has not groomed a disciple. He teaches students when he has the time but there is no special heir. Of his six sons—Mahtab, Nayab, Hussein, Famin, Kazim, and Nazim—the youngest, Nazim, plays the tabla. "The days of *adaab* (old world manners and values) are gone," he says. "Musicians now go to school. They do not do *sadhana* with gurus. They want instant results. But the

great old masters who did their penance—Fayyaz Khan, Abdul Karim Khan, Onkar Nath—died poor. No one knows about their sacrifices. Consider Swami Haridas. He produced Tansen. But no one knows Swami Haridas. They had no time for their own lives. No time for their families, their children. There are very few in this age who can do the real *riyaaz*. You have to have the ability to wipe yourself out. You have to get up before sunrise on freezing mornings, offer namaaz, go to the mandir, and begin

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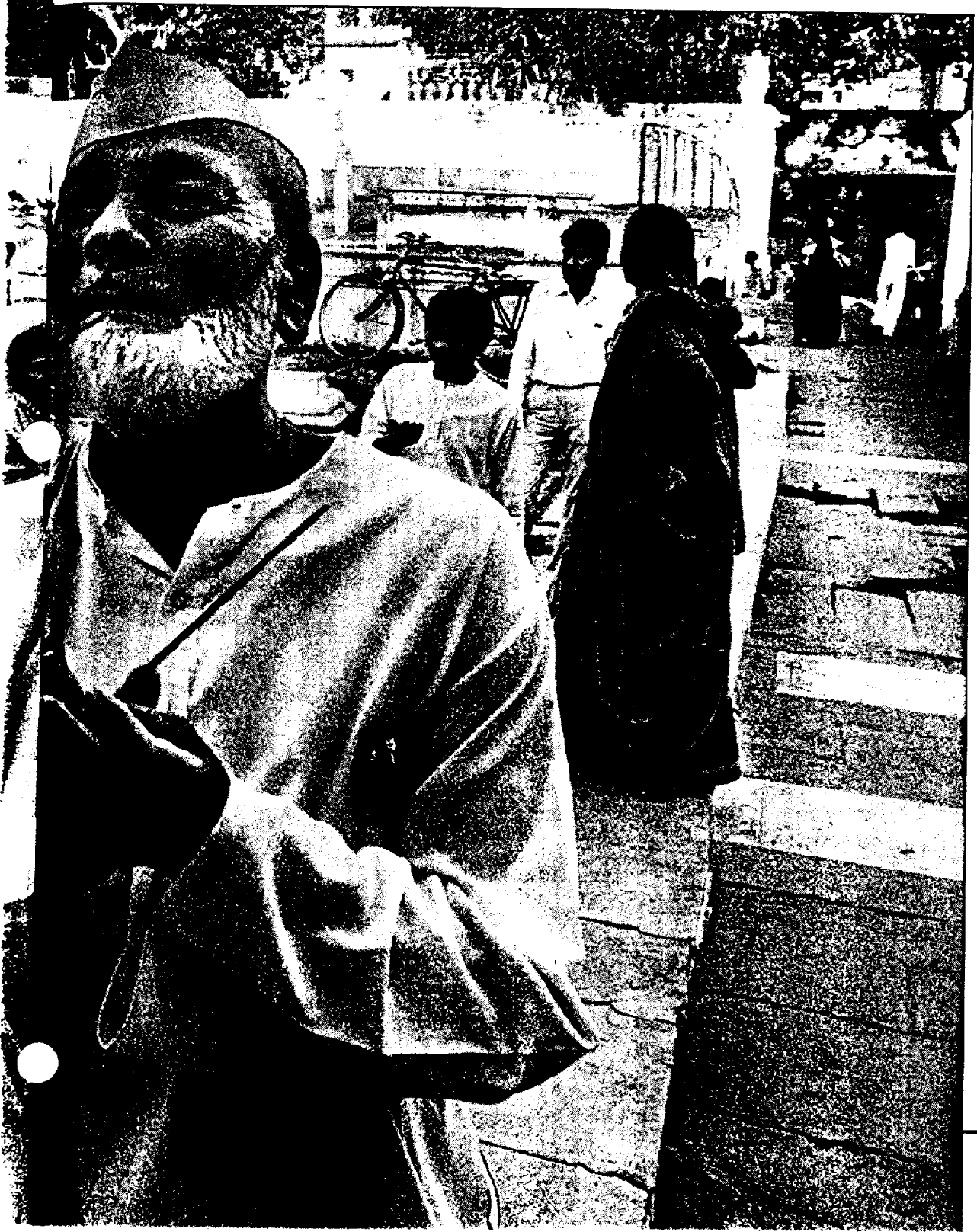
practice. These days musicians want to rise at 10 a.m. to go to music schools.

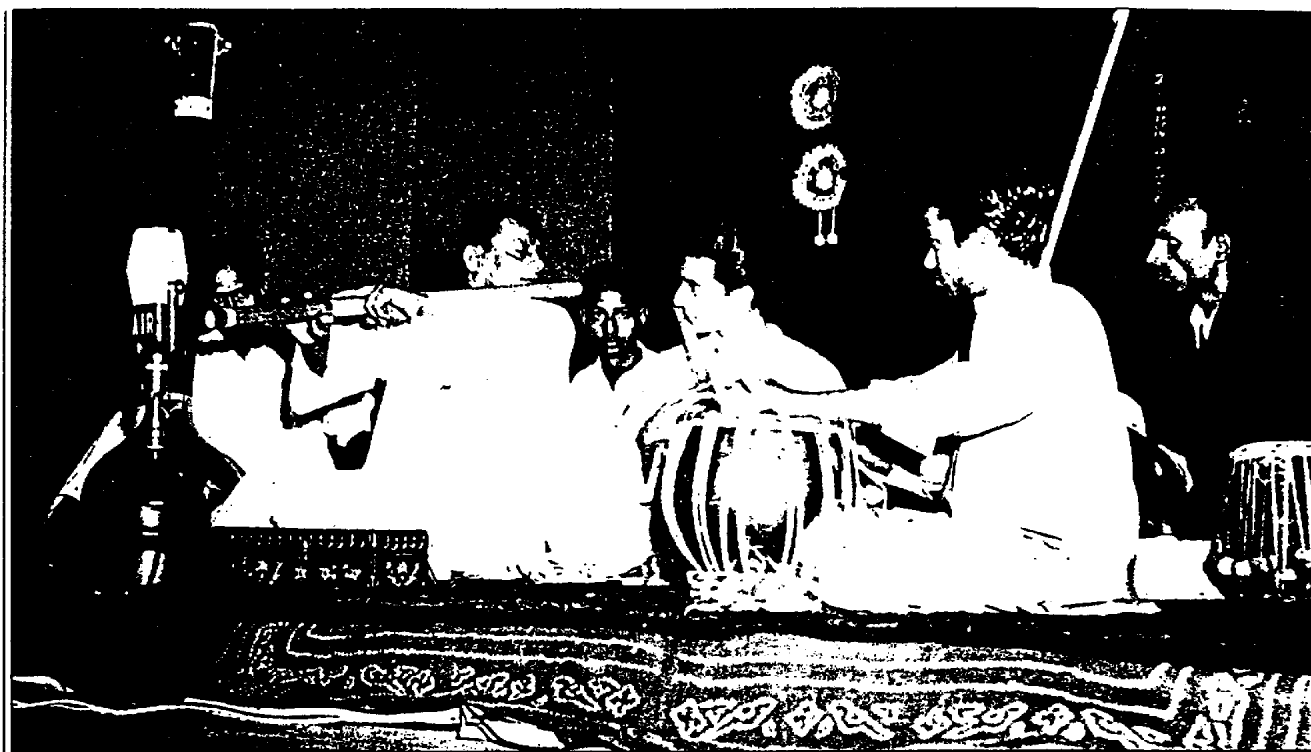
"But which music school has produced a Fayyaz or an Abdul Karim Khan? I say, leave those schools *aur aao maidan mein* (and come out into the real battle). But you have to have the discipline and the tenacity. Someone like me can give his time to a student, but the taker has to be

willing to take, to wrest that time from his guru. He must find the time for his own *tapasya*. I remember when I was a boy and often my guru, tired from the day, would retire at 4 a.m.. I would be awake. I had been waiting for him. I used to go to his bedroom and begin pressing his tired feet. He would look at me and he would know what I wanted. He would shake off his slumber and come alive. He would give me his shehnai and tell me: 'all right son, start playing'."

—INDERJIT BADHWAR in Varanasi

Weeping copiously in communion with God





Pannalal Ghosh (second from left): a special magic

MUSIC/MOHAN NADKARNI

SUBLIME GENIUS

His music was sublime. His commitment to his art, total.

Pannalal Ghosh was the finest flautist in Hindustani music. A visionary who evolved a new style of playing the instrument and imparted a classical cachet to it as well.

Mohan Nadkarni profiles the maestro whose dazzling artistry opened new horizons before his premature death 27 years ago.

If it is the sitar, it must be Ravi Shankar or Vilayat Khan. If it is the sarod, it must be Amjad Ali Khan (not Ali Akbar Khan!) And if it is the flute, it must be Hariprasad Chaurasia. These are—to cite only a few examples—the sort of myths most sponsors of mammoth musical events seem to have somehow sought to build up, strengthen and perpetuate among *rasikas* all over the country over the years.

What is, however, ignored or overlooked in the process, is the fact that the world of classical music is much wider, richer and more varied. There has been a glorious line-up of men of initiative and vision who, in the decades gone by, pioneered new styles and vogues in the field, by sheer talent, genius and dedication. Ironically, few of them are remembered today.

Pannalal Ghosh is one such great maestro, the significance of whose contribution to woodwind music seems to have been almost forgotten today. He was only 48 when he suddenly died of a heart attack on April 20, 1960.

The pastoral flute had remained for centuries a simple folk medium, till Pannababu picked it up and raised it to the status and dignity of a major concert instrument. The shehnai, on the other hand, had long achieved pride of place in temples and princely courts by its association with auspicious events and ceremonial occasions. The shehnai's migration to the concert hall, therefore, almost seemed a natural development. In this sense, Pannababu's was an achievement far greater than Bismillah Khan's.

But behind this achievement lay years of relentless experimentation and unending research. The story of the evolution of the tiny, shrill-

sounding cylinder into a giant, deep-toned classical instrument is the saga of a life that revealed, within its short span, an immense talent, a fecund imagination, a boldness of spirit, an earnestness of effort and a singleness of purpose—all so typical of Pannalal Ghosh.

Music beckoned to Pannababu when he was only seven years old—an age when most boys are occupied with games and other diversions of childhood. And while he played simple, breezy tunes to the delight of the local folk of Barisal, now in Bangladesh, his inventive genius toyed with the idea of extending the

tonal capabilities of his flute. Thus followed a systematic study of its structure and technique.

A variety of materials, from aluminium and brass to plastic and bamboo, in varied shapes and sizes, suggested themselves and bamboo was the most appropriate.

Even so, the medium had many limitations. But he overcame them with extensive research, backed by his amazing innovativeness. In the first instance, he increased the length of his bansuri to 32 inches (48 cm), with a corresponding increase in its bore, in order to facilitate the rendition of profound, serious melo-

dies, like *malhar*, *todi*, *darbari* or *marwa*. Next, he added an extra playing hole at the lower end of the instrument. The idea here was to extend its tonal range and also make possible the rendition of the finer points, such as *khatkas* and *murkis*, commonly associated with light classical and lighter musical themes.

Last but by no means least, was Pannababu's invention of a special bass flute, consisting of only four playing holes, to enable the performer to reach the lower (bass) *shadjia*. This also helped the player to extend his capability in rendering any melody. The increase in the size of the instrument, coupled with the performer's anatomical limitations, made it necessary to restrict the number of playing holes to four, producing only the five *swaras*, namely, *pancham*, *madhyam*, *gandhar*, *rishabh* and *shadjia*, in the lower octave. This, in other words, comprises an entire half octave in the lower register.

It was in the mid-thirties that Pannalal Ghosh evolved and perfected a style of flute-playing that marked a radical departure from the centuries-old technique. That was the time when no one had even foreseen the possibility of harnessing the bansuri as an effective instrument for the unfolding of elaborate classical melodies.

The listeners were struck as much by the tonal quality of Pannababu's flute as by the range and variety of his improvisation. So perfect indeed was its adaptation to classical articulation that it could afford the inimitable nuances of the human voice with a naturalness all its own.

What is more, it was Pannababu who pioneered the introduction of *gavaki* to woodwind and thereby

enlarged the scope of his medium to encompass wider fields of musical form and design.

His touch was soft; his blowing was smooth and soothing; and he explored the resources of his sensitive but difficult medium with the humility and reverence of an ardent worshipper. Added to this was his implicit adherence to technical fidelity and formal purity—a quality one finds but rarely in the latter-day practitioners of Hindustani music.

No less infinite was his range of expression. He was an interpreter *par excellence*, with an instinct for the spirit of his theme. If his fingers had the mellowness to create the solemn, reposeful sequences of a slow-tempo *marwa* or *darbari*, they also had the vivacity to evoke the dramatic appeal of a racy, high-pitched *sohoni* or *adana*. His devotional tunes conveyed full yet tender emotion, even as his lyricism heightened the sensuous charm of his *thumris*, *kajris*, *bhatialis* and *bauls*.

Pannababu was virtually self-taught; he did not find his real guru, Ustad Allauddin Khan of Maihar, till he was 36! He inherited his passion for music from his father, Akshay Kumar Ghosh, who was a government official but also a sitarist and equally interested in physical culture.

Pannababu first made his mark as a prospective flautist when New Theatres, the well-known film studio in Calcutta, spotted his talent and employed him on its orchestral staff for background music in 1934. This proved fruitful in two ways. It was here that he met Rai Chand Boral, the celebrated composer and music director, and Khushi Mohammad Khan, the noted harmonist. The former initiated him into the mysteries of film music and orchestration, while the latter gave him systematic instruction in flute-playing.

New Theatres, it would appear, had correctly sensed the youngster's potential, if we go by the fact that his first month's salary of Rs 45 was increased to Rs 100 from the following month. As Pannababu often used to say, "This salary was equivalent to a thousand rupees today." He also benefited from the guidance of Himanshu Dutt.

But the strongest influence on the development of Pannababu's music came from Ustad Allauddin Khan, who is acknowledged as the greatest living orthodox teacher in Hindustani music of the present century. Perfectionism was the keynote of the Ustad's teaching and he infused that virtue in his devoted disciple even while he encouraged him to develop his individuality in expression. That explains why Pannababu's style presented such a unique blend of technique and temperament, of authen-

GOLDEN VOICE

Mohan Nadkarni profiles playback singer Parul Ghosh, wife of the maestro



How many of our present-day playback singers or music directors, let alone film-goers, have heard of Parul Biswas, who later came to be known as the wife of the flute maestro, Pannababu Ghosh? How many are aware that she was the sister of Anil Biswas, that stalwart among the music directors of yesteryear? Or that she was herself a pioneer playback singer in her own right?

Quite possibly, most of today's film celebrities may not have even cut their musical teeth when Parul Ghosh, like Kanan Devi of the New Theatres of hallowed memory, ruled supreme in her field. The old-timers still in our midst recall with nostalgia the charm and variety of her songs in films like *Basant*, *Hamari Baat*, *Jwar Bhata*, *Milan* and *Namaste*.

Born at Barisal (also the birth-place of Pannababu, which is now in Bangladesh), in 1915, Parul inherited her musical propensities from her mother, Satyabhama Biswas, who was a popular exponent of *kirtans*. She entered the world of playback singing after she came down to Bombay with Pannababu in 1940.

Parul's debut as a playback singer and her career in the profession was admittedly much too brief, but no less significant. That was the time when public opinion was not still completely reconciled to the idea of a non-professional artiste, who was also a housewife, taking to a career in the celluloid world.

Those who have seen the Bombay Talkies hit *Basant*, will forever remember those utterly charming solo ditties, like *Meri*

chhoti si man-mein, *Ummeed unse kya thi*, and duets such as *Kanta lago re sajanwa*; *Gori more Ganga ke par* and *Aya basant sakhi*.

Parul lent her voice to Devika Rani in *Hamari Baat*. It was A.R. Kardar's *Namaste*, in which Parul sang for Protima Das Gupta, that took her and her listeners to great heights.

The permanent break from a highly promising career came when Parul chose the life of an average Hindu housewife, looking after domestic affairs, attending to her illustrious husband and her two daughters, Sudha and Noopur. The younger one, Noopur, succumbed to small pox in her infancy in 1951. This misfortune, in a sense, started a chain of tragic happenings in the family. Pannababu died in Delhi in 1960 when he was at the height of his fame.

It would seem as though Parul's cup of sorrow was not full even after her husband's death. Even as her own health started rapidly deteriorating, she lived to see the death of her only surviving daughter in 1970. Utterly disconsolate and ailing, Parul Ghosh died at Malad in Bombay on August 13, 1977, unsung and unhonoured.

It is, therefore, something to be grateful for the fact that Parul Ghosh finds place along with old celebrities in the reissue of an impressive line-up of evergreen hits recently brought out by the Gramophone Company of India (HMV) to mark Fifty Years of Playback Singing.

ticity and appeal, of tradition and experiment—all of which constitute the hallmark of the Ustad's *Seni gharana*.

This rare synthesis of tradition and experiment lent a new dimension to his melodic innovations, like *Dipavali*, *Jayant*, *Chandra Mouli* and *Noopur Dhvani* (composed in memory of his second daughter, who died in infancy). This was equally true of his Hindustani adaptations of several Carnatic ragas. They were marked by structural authenticity and enduring appeal. So were his *Kalinga Vijaya*, *Ritu Raj* and several other thematic composi-

tions which he offered us as conductor, when he joined the National Orchestra of AIR in Delhi, towards the end of 1956.

Before he came down to Bombay in 1940, Pannababu had the opportunity to tour Europe with a troupe of Chhau dancers as music director. It was again as a music director that Pannababu began living in Bombay. Under the banner of Bombay Talkies, he scored the evergreen music for *Basant*. Even though he composed the music for a dozen or so films that came his way, he soon realised that film music did not suit his classical impulse. He gave it up

and obtained the tutelage of Ustad Allauddin Khan in 1947.

I vividly remember my first meeting with the maestro at the Bombay AIR studios in October 1949. I had been an ardent fan of his woodwind music since 1941—through his radio concerts. I have nostalgic memories specially of his duets with D Ame] which were regularly broadcast from AIR Bombay on Gokul Ashtami Day, year after year. The understanding between the two artistes was truly remarkable. They played by turns, supplementing and complementing each other in conjuring and projecting a heart-warming, melodic build-up.

I also have bitter-sweet memories of my last meeting with the maestro 10 years later—in October 1959. The place was HMV studios in Bombay, where he had come to record his music at the instance of G N Joshi, then HMV's recording chief. Pannababu was his usual sunny, affable self and he had recorded his repertoire without any retake. He had come to Bombay from Delhi on a brief holiday—and he returned to the capital, only to go away from our midst forever, barely six months later.

It was during my few visits to his residence in Bombay as well as Delhi, that I saw the human side of the maestro's personality. His Bombay home at Malad, then a sleepy little town, was an old building.

The maestro would receive me with a broad smile that seemed to come from the innermost recesses of a loving heart. Though he looked always cheerful and humorous, he was a man of few words, more willing to listen than speak. There was restraint and dignity in his thought, word and deed. I have watched him immersed in meditation and worship, seated in a yogic posture, before his family deity at home. Equally deep was his devotion to daily *riyaz* and reading.

A generous guru, Pannababu built up a fairly large following. Among his leading direct disciples are Haripada Choudhary, Devendra Murdeshwar (who is also his son-in-law), V G Karnad, Suraj Narayan Purohit, Rashbehari Desai and others. The other flautists like Hariprasad Chaurasia and Raghunath Seth, whose playing bears the deep impress of his style. All things considered, however, his art was *sui generis* and it passed into oblivion with him.

But he was mindful of his obligation to posterity. He has left behind a fairly large repertoire of recorded music through tapes and long-playing discs. In these are enshrined many of the sublime moments which Pannababu always strove to create and share with his listeners. In this sense, one can say that his music is not totally lost to coming generations.

9 Ustad Bismillah Khan

The shehnai is perhaps the most popular of all the instruments in Indian music, because it sounds extremely sweet. It is an ancient wind instrument, played all over India. It is played morning and evening at the time of prayer in most big temples, during holy festivals, and on all auspicious occasions. The sound of a shehnai at once fills the atmosphere with a soothing sweetness and sublime peace. This small instrument, hardly two feet long, produces magic notes that hypnotize listeners.

Bismillah Khan, the most outstanding and world famous shehnai player, has attained astonishing mastery over the instrument.

He was born in a small village in Bihar about 60 years ago. He spent his childhood in the holy city of Varanasi, on the banks of the Ganga, where his uncle was the official shehnai player in the famous Vishvanath temple. It was due to this that Bismillah became interested in playing the shehnai. At an early age he familiarized himself, with various forms of the music of U.P., such as Thumri, Chaiti, Kajri, Sawani, etc. Later he studied Khayal music and mastered a large number of ragas.

I met and heard Bismillah Khan for the first time in 1941, when he came to our studio for a recording. At that time his elder brother also played with him. Both the brothers were expert players, but the famous Urdu saying '*Bade bhai so tade bhai, lekin chhote bhai—Subhanallah!*'* perfectly described the brothers. When they performed together, Bismillah Khan always played down his own part as he did not wish to overshadow his brother. 'Even though I have the ability, I must always remember that he is my elder brother,' he always said with humility

* The elder brother is the elder brother, but the younger brother—may the Lord be praised!

USTAD BISMILLAH KHAN

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granted and, at last, Bismillah Khan boarded a plane. He completed the Haj pilgrimage at state expense and, fortified by prayers and blessings received from Allah, reached England safely. Bismillah Khan was the star attraction at the Edinburgh festival that year. His shehnai, sometimes soft and sweet, sometimes vibrantly alive with sonorous rich alap, filled the air and brought the vast audience under its magic spell. The next day the papers were full of lavish praise for his divine performance. The following year, he received an invitation from the U.S.A. Having realized how comfortable it is to travel by air, he did not raise any objections. He toured all over America regaling millions of people. He has since become a veteran air traveller and is always willing to visit any country of the world.

The Government of India bestowed on him the title "Padmashri"; later he was further honoured by the title "Padmabhushan", and now the "Padmavibhushan" has been conferred on him. In spite of being glorified in this manner he remained as modest as ever. When invited for a recording he always came without demur. He once had a programme at seven in the evening, and had a reservation on an early morning train the next day. At my request he came to our studio at about midnight, after the concert. By early dawn he had recorded material sufficient for two records. After having breakfast in our studio he went straight to the station to catch the train.

I was always trying to find new ways to increase the sales of our records. When the jugalbandi record of Ravi Shankar's sitar and Ali Akbar's sarod proved to be a hit, I decided to record a jugalbandi of the shehnai with some other instrument.

A jugalbandi of the shehnai and the sitar was used in the film *Gunj Uthi Shehnai* and it was a great success. It had been played by Bismillah Khan and Sitar Nawaz Abdul Halim Jaffar Khan. When I put my idea to Halim Jaffar he said to me candidly, 'It won't work. The jugalbandi in the film fitted in with the situation in the picture.' Also the jugalbandi in the film lasted for only three minutes. An LP record, 20 minutes long, would not, according to him, be able to hold the interest of the listeners. The sitar sounds very soft and gentle compared to the vibrant and powerful notes of the shehnai. The volume

and modesty. I ventured to question him about this after the death of his elder brother. He said again, 'He was my elder brother, hence it was not proper for me to play better than him.'

Bismillah Khan's party included three or four accompanists, one of whom gave him the main complementary support. Instead of a tabla, a duggi player provided rhythm accompaniment. Nowadays, Bismillah Khan has a tabla also. The duggi consists of two drums, like a tabla and dugga, but smaller in size. The duggi has neither the resounding quality of the tabla nor the peculiarity that the tabla has of sustaining the frequencies of a note (aas) but since it is the traditional instrument in U.P., Bismillah Khan prefers to have it.

Ever since Ali Akbar Khan and Ravi Shankar introduced Indian music to the West, a number of Indian musicians have been invited to perform abroad. It was therefore hardly surprising that a musician of Bismillah Khan's calibre should be one of them. In 1964, when I visited London and Europe, I found that many music lovers in U.K., France, Germany and other countries had already come under the spell of Bismillah Khan's LP records.

On my return I repeatedly urged Bismillah Khan to accept invitations from those countries. But he was mortally afraid of air travel, and hence avoided going abroad. When in 1965, he received an invitation to play in Europe, he made impossible demands just to get out of it. The LP records which we used to release every three or four months, further increased the interest of western listeners. In 1966 he again received through the Indian Government a flattering invitation from the U.K. to participate in the famous Edinburgh Festival. He resorted to his old tactic of making impossible demands such as, 'I won't go by plane, I want ten people to accompany me and I want so much remuneration besides . . .', etc. etc. This was done in the hope that the invitation would be withdrawn. But he was pressurized into accepting the invitation by a very senior official in the Indian Government who offered him fresh inducements. Bismillah Khan agreed to go to Edinburgh, but on one condition. He demanded that he and his staff should be first taken, at state expense, on a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. This wish was

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DOWN MELODY LANE

of a sitar can be electrically magnified only up to a certain limit. Any further increase will result in distortion. (This is true of all musical instruments.) I therefore gave up the idea for the time being. But when Bismillah Khan went abroad to perform in the Edinburgh festival, where Ustad Vilayat Khan also was giving a sitar recital, I grabbed the opportunity. Through our London office we were successful in bringing out an LP with these two star artists on the shehnai and the sitar.

After this successful experiment the idea of making another jugalbandi of the shehnai and some other instrument gripped me. The famous violinist Pandit V. G. Jog was at that time a producer at AIR Bombay. I made this proposal to him. Mr. Jog immediately favoured the idea and in a few days a joint programme of shehnai and violin sponsored by All India Radio, Bombay was held before a select audience. The programme, in my opinion, was not a success, and was not at all what I had expected it to be. However, I still felt that it could be done well, and came up with an idea which I discussed with my friend Pandit Jog. I suggested that the two instruments having similar tonal qualities would sound well together if they were played in different octaves. When, for instance, Bismillah Khan played in Taar saptak, Pandit Jog could play in Mandra and Madhya saptak, and when Khan Saheb was in the lower saptak, Pandit Jog could play in Taar saptak. There would thus be a striking contrast in tone, pitch and timbre. The artistry of both the veteran players would be emphasized and there would be a perfect blending of the two instruments. When we did this and issued the record, true to my expectation, it was a thundering success.

During my 7-month trip around the world no fresh record of Bismillah Khan was made. As soon as I resumed duty after my return in March 1971, I decided to record two fast-selling artists who had not been available during my absence. They were Bismillah Khan and Bhimsen Joshi. The annual music festival of Sur Singar Samsad usually takes place in Bombay in April every year and it is usually inaugurated by Bismillah Khan. I therefore sent him a telegram and a letter asking him to spare time for a recording during his visit to the city.

Pride of Pilibhit

Pick up a bamboo flute for Rs 2 or order one for Rs 2,000

TUCKED away in a corner of Uttar Pradesh along the Himalayan foothills adjoining the Nepal border, Pilibhit's only claim to fame so far had been that it was, until recently, represented in Parliament by Maneka Gandhi. Briefly it figured in the media spotlight once again a few weeks ago, when 10 alleged Punjab terrorists were killed there in a controversial 'encounter'. But Pilibhit, in fact, has a much older claim to uniqueness: it is here that more than 95 per cent of India's flutes are produced.

The flute sustains about 500 Muslim families of Pilibhit town, two dozen of them employers and the rest workers. Most of them manufacture the ordinary 'standard' flutes, available for a few rupees throughout the country, intended mainly as a source of amusement for children. There is only one family, of eight brothers and employing 20 workers, which produces the high quality 'musical' flutes that top flautists like Hari Prasad Chaurasia require. A complete set of 19 flutes, each tuned perfectly to a different pitch, costs around Rs 450, while those used by professionals, which are made to order, cost around Rs 2,000 each.

The most curious aspect of this trade is that the principal raw material is not available locally. The bamboo comes from faraway Assam, from the Barak Valley districts of Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar. How did Pilibhit then become the manufacturing centre? Apparently, until the 1940s, the raw material used was not bamboo, but *nigali* wood, which came from neighbouring Nepal. "But *nigali* wood is hard to cut and peel," says Khurshid Ahmed, one of the eight brothers. "Bamboo is much better."

In the early forties, for reasons no one can now remember, the supply of *nigali* wood stopped. So Khurshid Ahmed's grandfather Natha Sheikh began scouring the country for suitable raw material. He found it in the



Tuned to perfection. Khurshid tests a flute while brother Idris plays

bamboo grown around Dhaka. After 1947 supplies from Dhaka stopped, too, but fortunately Sheikh found a similar sort of bamboo in Karimganj—originally part of Sylhet district, and adjoining the Bangladesh border.

The standard flutes are mass-produced, in a step-by-step sequence, with a group of workers perfecting just one particular stage in the process. The first stage involves cutting the bamboo obtained to a particular standard size (there are many such standard sizes, varying from eight inches to three and a half feet), the second requires peeling the bamboo until the surface is smooth and uniform. It is then soaked

in water briefly to soften it, before the first hole is made, close to one end: it is the hole through which the flautist blows.

In the next stage, one end of the hollow pipe is sealed by inserting a piece of *arhar* wood: the lower part of the stalk of the *arhar dal* crop. (The musical flutes use cork, not *arhar*.) For absolute beginners, a slit is made in the *arhar*—this stage is known as *mooch katna*—and sounds can be produced by blowing from this end as well. Finally a straight line is drawn down the length of the bamboo stick, and six holes, at regular intervals, made at the other end.

This is the most crucial part: in musical flutes, the precise location of each hole is minutely examined by the brothers. The size of the holes is also crucial: the brothers ensure quality by using a chromatic tuner. Sandpapering and polishing constitute the last stages.

A considerable amount of musical knowledge is required in the manufacture of these 'musical' flutes. But it remains virtually the exclusive preserve of this one family. Khurshid's father, Abdul Nabi, had himself done considerable theoretical work in this direction: he had even briefly begun a state-funded centre in Pilibhit to teach the art. Unfortunately the centre was closed down after Nabi's death in 1987.

The world of difference between the standard flutes and the musical ones can be seen from the fact that while the two dozen standard manufacturers produce around 1,000 flutes a day, Khurshid Ahmed and his brothers make barely ten!

—DEBASHISH MUKERJI

PICS: KRISHAN SAITH



Different notes. Workman making a standard flute

As a member of the governing body of Sur Singar Samsad I attended a meeting at the residence of its director Mr. Brijnarayan. Bismillah Khan also dropped in at the time of the meeting which was held on a Thursday. The sammelan was to open on Saturday and we therefore agreed to have the recording session the previous morning, that is, Friday.

Friday is the Muslim day of prayer, and devout Muslims take particular care not to miss their noon prayer. Khan Sahab therefore agreed to do the recording from 8.30 in the morning so that he would be able to attend the Jumma after the recording. Accordingly I came to the studio at 8.30 on the dot. I was followed almost immediately by Bismillah Khan's accompanists. Soon afterwards Khan Sahab came up in the lift. I went to greet him and was surprised to see that he was wearing dark glasses. I had never before seen him in dark glasses and was all the more perplexed to see him wearing them so early in the morning. Bismillah gave an explanation. Bombay at that time was in the grip of a particularly infectious eye epidemic—conjunctivitis—and Khan Sahab had fallen victim to it. He said to me, 'I couldn't sleep at all last night and I'm feeling very miserable.'

I said, 'You shouldn't have bothered to come, then.'

'Oh no! I couldn't do that,' he said, smiling. 'I gave you my word that I would come at 8.30. I didn't want you to say that I don't keep my promises.'

I was touched to the core. A true artist is always careful to preserve good relations with his friends. Khan Sahab really looked as if he was in great pain. Seeing him thus I said, 'We will cancel the recording.'

'No no,' he said. 'Since I am here now, we shall see what we can do.'

He took his seat on the platform and in two hours he recorded two ragas and a thumri for an LP. I was standing right in front of him. He was holding the shehnai to his lips and was completely engrossed in the haunting music that poured out from the tiny instrument. He played on, completely oblivious of his discomfort and his streaming eyes. He finished the magnificent recording and asked me if I wanted more!

The late Pannalal Ghosh was known all over India for his unparalleled excellence in playing the flute. He first came down to Bombay as a musician in the Bombay Talkies. Later he scored the music for films in which his wife Shrimati Parul Ghosh was the playback singer. I got him to do several 78 r.p.m. recordings. He very often broadcast flute duets with D. Amel (Dinkarrao Amembal) which were memorable for their sweetness and artistry. Pannalal held his flute horizontally and sideways to play it while D. Amel held it in front, at right angles to his lips. The performances, though highly classical were always enjoyable because Pannalal used to play in Mandra and Madhya saptakas (a saptak is an octave) while D. Amel played in Madhya and Taar saptakas. Both of them would give very pleasing performances of delightful passages of the same raga, in their individual styles. I very much wanted to record the jugalbandi (duet) performance of the two, but soon afterwards, Pannalal left Bombay to settle in Delhi, and therefore my desire remained unfulfilled. When LP records were introduced, I decided to record Pannalal for an LP. Whenever he came down to Bombay, I would always seek him out and request him to record for us. My perseverance was rewarded when after a wait of 4 to 5 years he finally agreed. His recording was arranged to begin at about 5.30 in the evening. But to get an artist into the proper mood and warmed up for a good recording is not as easy as just playing a record. It takes considerable time and concentration on the part of the artist to rise to the required level. At 6.30 in the evening we were still at the rehearsal stage.

What I miss most after my retirement from H.M.V. is the pleasure I used to get from Bismillah Khan's shehnai. I am sure that by God's grace, he will continue to delight millions in our country and abroad for many years to come.

My boss (who was later given the title 'Kudhon ke Badshah' by Begum Akhtar) dropped in at the studio after finishing his routine office work. The first question he asked on entering was, 'Mr. Joshi, have you finished?' I replied, smiling, 'We haven't even started.' Poor man, he never knew the amount of effort which went into getting the artist into the proper mood and getting a perfect artistic performance out of him.

Happily Pannalal soon warmed up sufficiently, and, after the departure of the official, recorded ragas Shri and Yaman. His flawless artistry on the flute and the superb tabla support by his gifted brother Pandit Nikhil Ghosh still regale lovers of classical music. After the recording of the LP, Pannalal was in an extremely happy mood. He said to me, 'Mr. Joshi, the night is young; you may take as many more recordings as you wish.'

When an artist is in top form and mood, one must take the fullest advantage of it. Therefore even though Pannalal was scheduled to record only one LP, I recorded, that memorable night, as many as eight sides of 45 r.p.m. EP recordings.

According to his agreement with us, Pannalal was later to receive royalties, but Nikhil Ghosh and the tanpura player were to be paid in cash. The next morning I prepared bills for this payment and sent it to the boss. He sent for me and asked me in a dry tone, 'Where was the necessity of doing so many recordings when only one was sanctioned? Who is going to pay all this money?'

I tried to reason with him—Pannalal was a great artist; I got him after waiting for several years; when such an artist volunteered of his own accord to record, it was my duty in the interests of the company and art to do so. . . . However he was not convinced and I finally lost patience and said, 'I did what I thought proper; if you are not willing to pay, I will pay from my own pocket.' With this angry remark I walked out of his office. A few minutes later I received the voucher with his signature.

Barely four months later Pannalal died of a heart attack in Delhi. One of the greatest musicians in India was lost for ever,

* The King of Fools

and all that remained were the recordings made by me on that memorable night.