

CLASS 9 (ENGLISH) (BEEHIVE) THE SOUND OF MUSIC –PART-2

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter gives, in brief, the life story of the great musician Bismillah Khan. He is a shehnai maestro. It also tells about the origin of the Shehnai. He is one of the great personalities of Hindustani music. He belongs to Banaras Gharana. His interest in music was visible from childhood. As a Shehnai player, he has won many national and international awards. Bismillah Khan thinks that music can bridge the gap between different communities. So he wants that music should be made a compulsory subject in schools.

THEME:

The feature is written on the theme that music transcends all barriers. The author's focus on Bismillah Khan's achievements in the field of classical music reveals how this great musician's life was devoted to passion for Shehnai. It was his secular approach to music that he sharpened his skill without any bias towards the source of his opportunities.

Answer these questions in 30–40 words.

1. Why did Aurangzeb ban the playing of the *pungi*?

A. Aurangzeb disliked the sound produced by the *pungi*. It was considered to be a reeded noisemaker as it was loud, shrill and unpleasant. So, he banned playing of *pungi* in his royal court.

2. How is a shehnai different from a *pungi*?

A. Although the shehnai is also a reeded musical instrument like the *pungi*, it differs in shape, size and the quality of sound produced by it. It was made with a hollow stem which was longer and broader than the *pungi* and had seven holes on it. The sound produced by the shehnai was soft and melodious in contrast to the shrill noise made by the *pungi*.

3. Where was the shehnai played traditionally? How did Bismillah Khan change this?

A. Traditionally, the shehnai was played at the royal court as part of the traditional collection of musical instruments called 'naubat', in the temples and at weddings. Bismillah Khan invented new ragas with the shehnai and thus, brought it on the stage among other classical musical instruments.

4. When and how did Bismillah Khan get his big break?

A. Bismillah Khan got his big break when in 1938 the All India Radio opened its Radio Station at Lucknow. He played shehnai from the radio station regularly and his music became popular through it.

5. Where did Bismillah Khan play the shehnai on 15 August 1947? Why was the event historic?

On 15th August 1947, Bismillah Khan played the shehnai from the Red Fort and greeted the entire country. The event was historic as it was the day when India gained independence from the British rule. Bismillah's performance was followed by the historic speech – 'Tryst with Destiny' given by India's first Prime Minister – Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

6. Why did Bismillah Khan refuse to start a shehnai school in the U.S.A.?

A. Bismillah Khan was attached to the temples of Benaras and the river Ganga. He could not leave them and so, refused to set up a shehnai school in the USA.

7. Find at least two instances in the text which tell you that Bismillah Khan loves India and Benaras.

A. Bismillah's love for India and Benaras are shown by the fact that he refused to set up a shehnai school in USA as he could not leave Benaras and river Ganga. Secondly, when he was honoured with the Bharat Ratna, he declared that Indian Classical music was India's richest heritage.