**The Shennai of Bismillah Khan**

### ****INTRODUCTION****

This chapter gives, in brief, the life story of the great musician Bismillah Khan. He is a Shehnai maestro. It also tells us about the origin of the Shehnai. Bismillah Khan is one of the great personalities of Hindustani music. He belongs to the Benaras Gharana. He was born in Dumraon in Bihar. His interest in music was visible from his childhood. As a Shehnai player, he has won national and international awards. He has travelled all over the world. He has also been awarded the nation’s highest award Bharat Ratna. 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.

***Introduction(2)***

 The feature traces the origin of ‘shehnai’ as an improved version of the pungi, a needed instrument, which was banned by Aurangzeb. It also narrates the journey of Bharat Ratan Bismillah Khan whose hard work and dedication to the art of ‘shehnai vaadan’ had enabled him to win the most cherished awards. In addition, the author brings to light Bismillah Khan’s patriotic devotion to India and his deep love for the Ganga in Benaras and the estate of Dumraon in Bihar.

**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 shehnai music reveals how this great musician’s life was devoted to his passion for shehnai. It was Bismillah Khan’s secular approach to music that he sharpened his skill without any bias towards the source of his opportunities. The life of this legendary musician is an example of the rich, cultural heritage of India that respects talent, irrespective of the religion of the artist.

**TITLE**

The title “The Sound of Music” and the subtitle “The Shehnai Bismillah Khan” are very appropriate as they are in accord with the contents of the feature, which celebrates the melodious music produced by Bismillah Khan’s shehnai. It also describes Bismillah Khan’s evolution and achievements as a pioneering shehnai player.

**MESSAGE**

The life sketch of Bismillah Khan teaches the important lesson that Indian music is very rich and invigorating. Great musicians like Bismillah Khan not only adopted and inherited traditional music but also enhanced it with their original contributions. The feature conveys the message in Bismillah Khan’s own words: “Teach your children music, this is Hindustan’s richest tradition; even the West is now coming to learn our music.” Another message that the feature gives is that one must love one’s country and rise above communal feelings.

**Value Points**

* Bismillah Khan was a great Shehnai Player. He belonged to a family of professional musicians.
* He was attracted towards Shehnai at the age of three and with his hard work he brought it on to the classical stage.
* Pungi a musical instrument was banned by Emperor Aurangzeb for its shrill, unpleasant sound.
* A barber of a family of musicians decided to improve the tonal quality of pungi. He took a hollow pipe longer than pungi and made seven holes on it. When he played on it, sweet and soft sounds were produced. Since it was played in the Shah’s Chamber and was Played by a Nai (barber), it was named Shehnai.
* The sound of Shehnai is considered auspicious. The Shehnai was part of the Warble (a group of nine traditional musical instruments) found in the royal courts. It was played only in temples and weddings.
* listed Bismillah Khan invented many raagas and played them on Shehnai.
* Bismillah Khan was born on March 21, 1916, in a musician family of Rasool Bux Kh Father Paigamber Bin was also great Shehnai player.
* His maternal uncle Ali Bux gave him Shehnai lessons. He practised playing Shehnai’ at Balaji and Mangla Maiya Temple and on the bank of river Ganga.
* At the age of 14, he played Shehnai with his uncle at Allahabad Music Conference and I was appreciated by Ustad Faiyaz Khan.
* Bismillah Khan was the first Indian to greet the nation, with his Shehnai on 15th August 1947 in Raag Kafi.
* Film director Vijay Bhatt named a film `Gunj Uthi Shehnai’. Bismillah Khan composed a hit song “Dil Ka Khilona Hai Toot Gaya