

Teaching since 1957 (first as head, Vocal Music Department, Triveni Kala Sangam, and then as Guru, Hindustani Music, Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra), several performing artistes were trained under him. Well-known among them are Baldev Raj Verma, Mahendra Sharma and Shanti Sharma. He also taught students under cultural exchange programmes — from countries such as Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan under the auspices of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

Panditji wrote the much-acclaimed *Living Idioms in Hindustani Music*, a dictionary of terms and terminology. This best selling title records for contemporary and coming generations the dying vocabulary of the oral traditions of Hindustani music. Pandit Amarnath also directed a 3-year research project on the teaching systems and methods of Hindustani music for the Indian Council for Social Science Research (1985-1988).

Panditji received the 1976-77 Swaramani Award, the 1987-88 Sahitya Kala Parishad Award, the 1992 Raja Ram Mohan Roy Award and the 1995 B.N. Datta Memorial Award for his contribution to music.

Pandit Amarnath just completed a biography of his guru, Ustad Amir Khan Saheb, and also *Conversations with Pandit Amarnath*, a work that promises to be a landmark in the world of musical thought. The book covers a wide spectrum of issues and is expected to be published soon.

## A student remembers

With the passing away of Pandit Amarnathji, yet another of the last stalwarts has left our midst. To understand and evaluate properly, the invaluable contribution made by him to our classical music tradition, one has to analyse the musical values and principles which he held dear all his life. He was a staunch believer in the idea that music transcends the condition of being simply an 'art-form'. Music was, to him, direct communion with Brahman, and it was for this reason that even as his health and vigour failed him, and indeed even as he lay ravaged by cancer, he continued to live in his own word of *sur*, *raga* and bliss. Music was his whole inner world, inextricably linked with his very breath.

What he bequeathed to us, his disciples and admirers cannot be expressed in words — it was not just technique, grammar, or *bandish* that he gave us. More than that, a whole vision of the world of *ragas* and the *khayal* form. As a guru, I cannot imagine anyone more generous, brilliantly intuitive in his grasp of his material, more noble and giving. He gave the lie to all those stories of formidable gurus putting their disciples to gruelling tests and yet being secretive and forbidding about imparting *taleem*. We feel humbled when we look back and realise how easily and lovingly he

poured into us all his creative thoughts, how he shared his inner world with us, the privileged ones who could be in his presence.

I had the honour of seeing him compose for films, plays, television programmes — he had a way of playing with nuances and textures, and then, of course, his gift for poetry — his memorable *bandishes* which are his legacy to the world of *khayal*. We were also witness to a facet of his genius that few heard — his lilting *thumri*, *dadra* in the Punjab *ang*.

A sufi by temperament, simple and spartan in his habits, he lived the richest possible life a man can. A master in his chosen form, a visionary and a poet, a man of courage and conviction, old-world grace and charm, and deep within, a loner, a monk, who was witness to changing mores and manners. With his passing away, an era has come to an end.

—**Shanti Sharma**