

Ameer Khan's heir

By Our Music Critic

After Ameer Khan, who? This used to be the question some 15 years ago. Ustad Ameer Khan had established himself as one of those artists whose superior craft and completely individual style was expected to have a lasting effect on the coming generations of musicians.

A few years later music lovers and critics were almost certain that they had found the answer in Amarnath, who is now the head of the department of vocal music at the Triveni Kala Sangrahalaya. He performed on the 27 September at the Triveni garden theatre, the occasion being their annual music and dance festival.

Amarnath received his grounding in music from B. N. Datta, a fam-

ous teacher, first in Lahore and then after partition in Delhi. In those days Ustad Ameer Khan (who was also in Delhi) was not willing to accept pupils. He agreed to teach Amarnath, however, after

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seeing his (Amarnath's) intense desire and also his natural flair for the style.

Imitation is the first stage of all training, and so it was with Amarnath. But listeners over the radio and in concerts soon realized that between Ameer Khan and Amarnath there was a deep tempera-

mental affinity that went beyond mere imitation.

Ameer Khan took many disciples both before and after Amarnath. But there is no one in whose voice production and craft the music of the Ustad comes alive as in Amarnath. Many years have passed since Amarnath first became known. Over the years he has gone beyond mirroring Ameer Khan in thinking and feeling and acquired an individual idiom. This was borne out by his at the Triveni garden theatre.

He started his performance with 'simendru madhyam', a raga of Carnatic music, heard for the first time in Hindustani vocal music. It can be understood as a melody that uses the *komal dhaivat* in *manbuvani*, or the *shudh re* in *todi*.

In the *vilambit* Amarnath's voice does not have the same strength as that of the Ustad, but what he does have is the same seriousness and poise in the tone. In the lower octave he used the *dha* like a Carnatic musician, giving it a small oscillation, but in the middle octave the same note had a tinge of a morning 'raga' due, no doubt, to its nearness to *todi*. The entire movement set to *jhoomra taal* was relaxed, and progressed in a leisurely manner.

The composition in *drut ektaal* was Amarnath's own. The difference between him and his Ustad comes out clearly in this composition. Amarnath leans towards the light, though not necessarily the non-serious. Both in his choice of words and in their setting to music the compositions are ornate, and the embellishments of the Punjab style are frequently used. The *taan* aspect of his singing also seemed improved in this performance. There was another beautiful composition in *shahana* and a bhajan 'Ratian jogan din bairagi'. Apart from numerous interesting compositions in classical 'ragas' he is the composer who gave us those memorable songs like 'Jogiya se preet kiya dukh hoye' in 'Garam Coat'. He was also the composer in the documentary on Ghazal.

The other star performer in the festival was Uma Shankar Mishra, a well-known sitarist of the Allaud-din Khan school and in charge of the sitar department at Triveni. Uma Shankar is another artiste whose music is never less than serious. He has profited also from the Ravi Shankar style, but has his own individuality.

