

*Sixteenth Death Anniversary
of the
Late Ustad Amir Khan Sahib
16th and 17th February, 1990*

He is always with us through his philosophy of music

Once a teen-age boy was severely punished by his father at his outspokenness in a Mehfil of Ustads. One of the Ustad boastfully claimed, "I have crossed over the ocean of Naad." Then the young Amir said, "But Khan Sahib, do you know how much depth the Ocean bears and at which point?"

Amir Khan was trained under the strict discipline of his father. He was not even allowed by his father to sing in "Aakar" to the age of 25. He could practise in Sargams only.

Once Amir Khan had to perform at a place where his father could not accompany him. The boy decided to practise 'Aakar' on his own for eight days in order to compete with the musicians participating in the 'Jalsa'. His performance was a success. But coming back home, he had to bow before his father's commands—to practise the Sargams again for another six months.

Music was Amir Khan's identification. His style was his very faith and belief. Rendering was his philosophy by which he showered his blessings. The Tanpura, Darbari, and Jhoomra were the language through which he conveyed the message of his philosophy.

I recall an incident of the early fifties. Half-lying on a 'chatai' at my place with a "sur mandal" in his hands he was singing Gujri. We were so moved that we had to beg him to stop. Our throats were choking.

And we saw his eyes brimming with tears, behind his glasses.

The temper of his taans appeared—as though he asked, What else? What else is possible? Such was his tremendous capacity. He was never content with his performances. Once he asked my opinion about one of his compositions in Ahir Bhairav. I said 'Khan Sahib, have you started singing light music? He was very happy with my manner of complimenting him. It was the simple and lucid exposition of his classism that I had felt. He blessed me and said, "You are a very sensitive student."

Once a popular vocalist of India, while chatting with him said, "Khan Sahib, the range of my voice is three octaves whereas you sing only in two." Khan Sahib was Lived and simply asked him to get out of his house "Koorh. He doesn't know even the alphabet of music".—This was Khan Sahib's attitude towards the 'range' of voice.

As a teacher he was unique. One had to remain in his company and simply listen, never asking anything and waiting for his appropriate mood. Suddenly he would come out with so many secrets.

Who says he is no more—he is always with us through his philosophy of music.

Pt. AMAR NATH