

WITH the change in social life and cultural patterns, music, too, has experienced many changes in its form and content. Whether it be folk music, art music or the dance, every form is under a constant process of change. And it is due to this phenomenon that many music schools have vanished and new institutions have emerged during the past century. *Haanda*, the traditional congregation, popular with music lovers of Sindh in the 19th and 20th century lives in fragile record of music in Sindh.

Haanda connotes a congregation where masters of music, their students, vocalists and instrumentalists perform before a selected gathering of music connoisseurs and receive laurels from them. From organizational point of view, it was an indigenous music concert in which a huge copper or silver plate used to be placed before the performer. Every performer, according to his order of seniority would come on the stage, and show his or her skill. As a token of appreciation if someone from the audience liked to present a cash award, he would go to the stage and drop that in the utensil amid the audience applause. This trend was at its climax in the mid-19th century and remained popular for almost a century.

How this institution began in Sindh cannot exactly be ascertained but some mention of small congregations can be found before Talpurs (1781). The English travellers and officials have mentioned some personal drawing rooms in Shikarpur, Hyderabad, Khairpur and Karachi where artistes gathered and performed before an audience, mostly drawn from music lovers known to the hosts. But this was mostly confined to dance songs and mystic music. The addition of congregations in which classical music was presented came at a later stage.

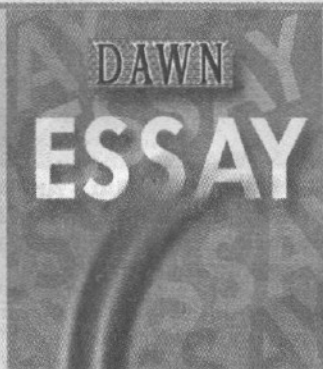
The tradition of music in Sindh, as in other parts of the subcontinent, is an old one. Here, almost all forms of music have been in practice, such as the ritual music, festival music and the work songs, art music etc. The art music or the classical music drew special attention when vocalists and instrumentalists came from outside and settled here during the days of Talpur rulers (1781-1843). Mir Ali Murad Khan was a music lover and it was during his era that Ustad Bakhshu Khan and his brother Ustad

Haanda: a lost musical tradition

BY SHAIKH AZIZ

AST Dawn 21-4-02

The tradition of haanda — that saw the congregation of masters of music, their students, vocalists and instrumentalists — is lost in the changed world of technological advancement. It is yet another case of neglect of the traditional form of this art, which seems to have given its place, without a fight, to pop music



Sadiq Ali Khan of Jaisalmir settled in Khairpur around 1830, and later shifted to Hyderabad.

Instrumentalists and dancers from Delhi and other far off places also visited Khairpur and performed there. Farid Bakhsh of Multan also settled here, while Ustad Naboo Khan, Ustad Piyaro Khan and Ustad Hado Khan of Gwalior settled in Shikarpur. Their descendants also shifted to Hyderabad later.

Once a large forest used for hunting, Shikarpur had developed into a hub of trading and cultural activities during the Talpur era and it was the rising prosperity of the city that attracted musicians who came and settled there.

Similarly, Ustad Amir Khan and his nephew, Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan, of Patiala settled in Hyderabad and established their school where they made efforts for the promotion of classical music. Among the other music luminaries of that time, Ustad Jamalo Khan, Ustad Gaman Khan, Ustad Mubarrak Ali Khan, Ustad Murad Ali Khan and Ustad Bibo Khan made tremendous

efforts for the popularity of classical music. Among the lesser known, yet great vocalists, were Pir Bakhsh Khan and Nabidad Khan, Ustad Yousuf Khati, Hoshoo Shidi, Master Bikhhal, Allahdino Noonari, Mithoo Mahraj, Khairati, Chetangur and Kundangur and many more contributed towards the promotion of art music in later 19th and early 20th century.

These artistes belonged to traditional style of keeping up the music alive. They believed and practised *ustad-shagrid (guru-shishak)* school of teaching in which the teacher would pay due attention in teaching all intricacies of the art. For this, either the student had to stay with the teacher and take strenuous sessions of learning and undertaking *riyaz* or make some *otara (takiya or makan)* as a common place of teaching. Like Punjab's *takiyas*, the Makans of Sindh have also contributed towards the promotion of traditional music for ages and have been instrumental in popularizing classical music.

While in the other parts of the subcontinent, rajas and nawabs used to patronize classical music, in Sindh the

Talpur rulers and a few moneyed people could afford it. Mir Ali Murad Talpur of Khairpur and Seth Vishandas Manjhowaro were two eminent promoters of music. In mid-1850s, such *haandas* were held in Shikarpur. By 1870s it became popular all over Sindh and *haandas* were held at many centres.

Seth Vishandas was a popular figure in promoting music, besides contributing enormously to social work. Born to a land-holding family of Manjhoo, Dadu district, he engaged in various businesses in various cities and rose to become a wealthy man. But despite that he was a philanthropist. He established many hospitals, and when in 1897-98, a plague broke out in Karachi, Hyderabad and other parts of Sindh, he established special centres where patients were treated. Besides, he established other centres for the welfare of widows, children and set up schools.

He had a special liking for music. Not only did he promote various artistes, he set up 12 centres all over Sindh where music concerts were held. Among them, the centre at Karachi, located at Lakshmidas Street, near Merewether Tower, and at Vishan Nagar, Hyderabad, were known for being hosts to large gatherings. In Hyderabad, he also built a separate boarding house known as '*Hadey Khan ji maarri*' where Ustad Gaman Khan, Ustad Piyaro Khan, Ustad Amir Khan, Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan and other used to reside.

It was at the Vishan Nagar where *haandas* were held, participated by such vocalists as Omkarnath Thakur, Ali Bakhsh Khan (Journalist), his brother Fateh Ali Khan (Taan kaptan), Hirabai Barodkar, Patwardhan, Bhaskar Rao, Narain Rao Viyas, Chhote Ghulam Ali Khan, Ustad Nisar Hussain, Tawakal Hussain Khan, besides local masters Ustad Gaman Khan, Ustad Piyaro Khan, Ustad Jamal Khan, Ustad Bibo Khan, Ustad Saindho Khan, Ustad Umeed Ali Khan, Ustad Allahdino

t tion

on- Noonari. It was in this centre
it. that Zahida Perveen and
of Farida Khanum took lessons
eth from Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan.

ere Another centre for *haan-*
of *das* was Holmstead Hall,
uch built by a philanthropist and
in named after a doctor who
it had served the town well.
ver Basically built as a town hall,
held Holmstead Hall staged mem-
orable *haandas* in which emi-
nent vocalists and instrumen-
talists participated. After
Independence, the status of
Holmstead Hall was restored
by establishing Radio
Pakistan Hyderabad there,
which later shifted to its
present building when it was
ready. In that capacity, an
annual music conference
became a permanent feature
with live broadcast and was
participated by eminent
artistes of the country. For
some years, the practice has
been discontinued.

In Karachi, Vishan Sabha,
established by Seth
Vishandas, was the main
centre of art music where
haandas were held and par-
ticipated by eminent vocal-
ists and instrumentalists.
Here, such artistes as
Pundit Balkrishanchand,
Pundit Venkatrao, Pundit
Patwardhan, Ustad Fayaz
Hussain Khan, Ustad Rajab
Ali, Ustad Ramzan Khan,
Ustad Mubarak Ali Khan
participated. This music
centre was opened for gen-
eral public for two days a
week and without any
charge.

Haandas were also held in
Shikarpur where artistes
belonging to Gwalior *gha-*
rana had settled in the begin-
ning and later shifted to var-
ious places of Sindh.

Besides these centres
where *haandas* were held,
makaans and shrines also
played an important role in
promoting music where
haandas could not be held
but here the artistes use to
pay tribute to the mystics in
music. In fact, very few clas-
sical artistes went to perform
there, but the mystic music
and its variations got promo-
tion at these places which are
located everywhere in Sindh.
The tradition goes on but the
institution of *haanda* is lost
in the changed world of tech-
nological advancement. ■