

EVELYN GLENNIE LISTENS TO SOUND WITHOUT HEARING IT

Little girl Evelyn at Royal Academy of Music Rush hour crowds pushed for place on the underground train platform. A little girl of about seventeen was nervous for the coming train. It was her first day at the famous Royal Academy of Music in London. She was deaf. So she was facing a bigger challenge in life. Evelyn's deafness detected Evelyn Glennie was from Scotland. She lost her hearing gradually. Her mother saw it when Evelyn was eight-year-old. Evelyn hid this growing weakness from her friends and teachers. By eleven, her marks lessened. The headmistress told her mother to take her to a specialist. It was known that her hearing loss was due to gradual nerve damage. She was advised to wear a hearing aid.

HOW EVELYN 'HEARS'

But Evelyn was determined to lead a nor-mal life. She wanted to pursue her interest in music. One day she saw a girl playing xylo-phone. She too decided to play it. Ron Forbes recognised Evelyn's talent in it. He told her to listen it not through ears but sense it some other way. Evelyn said that suddenly she could feel the higher and lower drums differently. She could also sense certain notes in different parts of her body. She could open her mind and body to different sounds.

EVELYN'S HEIGHT OF SUCCESS

She never looked back. She toured the United Kingdom with a youth orchestra. She had decided to make music her life. She auditioned for the Royal Academy of Music in London by playing the xylophone. There she scored the highest in its history. She moved from orchestral work to solo performances. After her three-year course she had got most of the top awards.

EVELYN WORLD'S MOST WANTED MULTI PER-CUSSIONIST

She is not proud of her achievements. She says that if one knows one's goal, one can get it. She is now at the top. She is the world's most wanted multi percussionist. She has mastery over 1,000 instruments.

EVELYN'S OTHER INTEREST

Without hearing she functions with ease. She speaks fluently with a Scottish lilt. She learnt French and mastered basic Japanese.

EVELYN'S 'HEARING' THE MUSIC

She says that music pours in through every part of her body. At times, she plays the xylophone. She can sense the sound passing in her fingertips. She feels the sound of the drums when she leans on them. She removes her shoes on a wooden platform. She does so to feel the vibrations in her body.

HOW GOD HAS BLESSED EVELYN

In 1991, she was awarded the Soloist of the Year Award. It is the most famous award of the Royal Philharmonic Society. Master percussionist James Blades says that God may have taken her hearing. But He has given her something extraordinary.

EVELYN AS INSPIRATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED

Evelyn says that she is a workaholic. She has to work more harder than classical musicians. She gives regular concerts. She also gives free concerts in schools and hospitals. She gives priority to young musicians. Ann Richlin of the Beethoven Fund for Deaf Children says that Evelyn is a shining inspiration for deaf children.

EVELYN A SOURCE OF PLEASURE ALSO

Evelyn has brought percussion to the front of the orchestra. She is an inspiration to the handicapped. She has given great pleasure to millions.

II

THE SHEHNAI OF BISMILLAH KHAN HISTORY OF 'SHEHNAI'

Emperor Aurangzeb banned the playing of pungi in the palace. The reason was that it had a sharp and unpleasant sound. A barber thought to improve it. He chose a pipe with a natural hollow stem. He made seven holes on its body. He played on it closing and opening some of these holes. It produced a sweet sound. He played it before the royalty. It needed a name. So it was named after the player. He was a 'nai' (barber). It was first played in the Shah's chambers.

'SHEHNAI' AND BISMILLAH KHAN

The sound of the shehnai was considered auspicious. So it is played in temples and at weddings in north India. Earlier it was part of the traditional music groups. Ustad Bismillah Khan has brought it onto the classical stage.

BISMILLAH'S CHILDHOOD

As a five-year old Bismillah Khan played gilli-danda near a pond in Dumraon in Bihar. He would go to the nearby Bihariji temple. There he would sing the Bhojpuri chaita. At the end he would earn a big laddu weighing 1.25 kg. It was on behalf of the local Maha-raj. This happened 80 years ago. This little boy later earned the Bharat Ratna. It is the highest civilian honour.

BISMILLAH KHAN'S BIRTH AND PARENTS

Bismillah Khan was born on March 21, 1916 in a family of musicians in Bihar. His grandfather Rasool Bux Khan was the shehnai-nawaz of the Bhojpur king's court. His father Paigambar Bux and other ancestors were great shehnai players.

BISMILLAH AS A YOUNG SINGER

The young boy Bismillah Khan took to music early in life. At three, his mother took him to his maternal uncle's house in Benaras. He was attracted towards his uncle's practise the shehnai. Soon he started going with his uncle Ali Bux to the Vishnu temple in Varanasi to play the shehnai. Soon he started practising the playing of the instrument. For years the temple of Balaji and Mangla Maiya and the banks of the Ganga became the places where he could practise. The flowing waters of the Ganga inspired him to invent new raagas.

BISMILLAH'S RISE

At the age of 14 Bismillah accompanied his uncle to the Allahabad Music Conference. The opening of the All India Radio in Lucknow in 1938 became a big break for him. He became a shehnai player on radio.

BISMILLAH AS 'THE FIRST INDIAN'

Bismillah Khan became the first Indian to greet the nation with his shehnai on August 15, 1947. He played Raag Kafi from Red Fort to people like Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

BISMILLAH KHAN GOES ABROAD AND HIS EFFECT ON FILM WORLD

Bismillah Khan has given many memorable performances both in India and abroad. His first trip abroad was to Afghanistan. King Zahir Shah was deeply impressed by his shehnai. He gave him priceless Persian carpets. Film director Vijay Bhatt was greatly impressed. He named his film Gunj Uthi Shehnai after the instrument. The film was a hit and his composition Dil ka khilona hai toot gaya became a record breaker.

FILM WORLD NOT BISMILLAH'S LIKE

Bismillah Khan's music in films didn't go beyond Vijay Bhatt's Gunj Uthi Shehnai and Vikram Srinivas's Kannada film Sanadhi Apanna. He found the film world artificial and glamorous. He could not compromise with it.

BISMILLAH KHAN'S AWARDS

Awards came in plenty for him. He became the first Indian to perform at the Lincoln Centre Hall in the USA. He took part in the World Exposition in Montreal, in the Cannes Art Festival and in the Osaka Trade Fair. An auditorium in Teheran was named after him 'Tahar Mosiquee Ustaad Bismillah Khan'. National awards like the Padmashri, the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Vibhushan were conferred on him.

'BHARAT RATNA' AWARDED

In 2001 he was awarded India's highest civilian award the 'Bharat Ratna'. At this he said, "Teach your children music. This is Hindustan's richest tradition: even the West is now coming to learn our music". Bismillah Khan's love for his roots Bismillah Khan has travelled all over the world. But he is greatly fond of Benaras and Dumraon. A student of his once wanted him to head a shehnai school in the USA. He promised to recreate an atmosphere of Benaras by making temples there. But Khansaab asked him if he would transport River Ganga there. He says that whenever he is abroad, he yearns to see Hindustan. While in Mumbai he thinks of only Varanasi and the holy Ganga. And while in Varanasi, he misses the 'mattha' in Dumraon.

BISMILLAH KHAN'S LIFE—A GREAT EXAMPLE

Ustad Bismillah Khan's life is a perfect example of the rich cultural heritage of India. It accepts that a Muslim like him can play the shehnai every morning at the Kashi Vishwanath temple.

THE SOUND OF MUSIC

Notes:

This chapter is about two music maestros and their lives. We will learn about multi-percussionist, Evelyn Glennie and Bismillah Khan, the *shehnai* player. The Sound of Music summary recaps the whole chapter in a simpler and easier form. In this chapter, students will learn about the interesting lives of the two musical legends. One part is about the Scottish musician, Evelyn and the other is about Indian legend, Bismillah Khan. Further, this chapter chooses these two musicians because of their interesting lives. It will help students gain insight into their struggles and hard work. You will learn how hard work and determination can serve us well. It stays true to its name and gives inside stories and facts behind the glitz and glamour of these musicians.

The Sound of Music Summary in English

- The Sound of Music divides into two parts. Each part focuses on two musicians, Evelyn Glennie and Bismillah Khan. Part one throws light on Evelyn's life and struggles to become a successful musician. Students will learn that she is a multi-percussionist. She has the talent to play hundreds of instruments perfectly. It tells how she gained international recognition.
- What's interesting is the Evelyn is profoundly deaf. The musician learned to listen to music through her body and not ears. She does not hear music, she feels it. You will learn that was 11 years old when she found out she had trouble hearing. Nonetheless, that did not stop her from pursuing her career in music.
- Thus, her teacher, Ron Forbes was the one to recognize her talent. He unlocked doors to her potential and helped her achieve the impossible. She is now one of the most renowned names in the music industry. She has many accolades and awards to her name and serves as a great inspiration to the specially-abled community.
- Next comes part II, where we learn about Bismillah Khan as well as the origin of *shehnai*. It was Bismillah Khan who popularised this instrument and took it to the world stage. He broke the myth of *shehnai* not being capable to create independent tunes. He came from a family of musicians.
- Further, Bismillah Khan had a very secular upbringing. He grew up practising on the banks of River Ganga. He went to the mosque as well as the temple. After achieving immense success, he was awarded various titles. He is also a recipient of the highest civilian award of India- The Bharat Ratna.
- In addition to that, he has won all three awards of Padma Bhushan, Padmashree and Padma Vibhushan. Interestingly, he was the first person to be invited to play *shehnai* at the Red Fort in 1947, while greeting Independent India.
- Most importantly, he represented India on the international stage as well. An auditorium in Tehran is also by his name. Moreover, despite many opportunities, Bismillah Khan never left his home-town Varanasi. He dedicated his life to music and passed away in 2006.