

The Shehnai of Bismillah Khan

Thinking about the text

I. Tick the right answer.

Answer:

1. The pungi was a ‘reeded noisemaker.’
2. A barber transformed the pungi into a shehnai.
3. Bismillah Khan’s paternal ancestors were professional musicians.
4. Bismillah Khan learnt to play the shehnai from Ali Bux.
5. Bismillah Khan’s first trip abroad was to Afghanistan.

III. Answer these questions in 30–40 words.

1. Why did Aurangzeb ban the playing of the pungi?

Answer:

Aurangzeb banned the playing of musical instrument pungi because it had a shrill and unpleasant sound.

2. How is a shehnai different from a pungi?

Answer:

Shehnai is an improved version of pungi as it has a better tonal quality than pungi. It is a natural hollow stem pipe that is longer and broader than a pungi. It has seven holes on the body of the pipe.

3. Where was the shehnai played traditionally? How did Bismillah Khan change this?

Answer:

The shehnai was traditionally played in royal courts, temples and weddings. Ustaaad Bismillah Khan changed the tradition by bringing this instrument onto the classical stage.

4. When and how did Bismillah Khan get his big break?

Answer:

Bismillah Khan got his big break in 1938 when he played shehnai on radio on the occasion of the opening of the All India Radio in Lucknow. Soon he became an often heard player on radio.

5. Where did Bismillah Khan play the shehnai on 15 August 1947? Why was the event historic?

Answer:

On 15 August 1947, Bismillah Khan played shehnai at the Red Fort. He was the first Indian to greet the nation with his musical instrument. The event was historical because India got Independence from the British rule on that day. He poured his heart out in the presence of a large number of people including pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

6. Why did Bismillah Khan refuse to start a shehnai school in the U.S.A.?

Answer:

Bismillah Khan refused to start a shehnai school in the U.S.A. because he did not want to stay away from India. He was really fond of Benaras, the River Ganga and Dumraon. He loved India so much and he did not want to settle anywhere except India. That is why whenever he was in a foreign country, he kept yearning to see Hindustan.

7. Find at least two instances in the text which tell you that Bismillah Khan loves India and Benaras.

Answer:

The two instances that show Bismillah Khan's love for India and Banaras are:

(i) Bismillah Khan refused one of his student's offer to start a shehnai school in U.S.A. because of his immense love for Benares, River Ganga and Dumraon.

(ii) The second instance is when Khansaab was asked by Shekhar Gupta about moving to Pakistan during the partition, he said that he would never leave Benaras.

Thinking about language

I. Complete the following sentences. Beginning with a to-verb, try to answer the questions in brackets.

Answer:

1. The school sports team hopes to win the match.
2. We all want to be happy.
3. They advised the hearing-impaired child's mother to consult a doctor.
4. The authorities permitted us to start the construction work.
5. A musician decided to open a music school for children.

II. From the text on Bismillah Khan, find the words and phrases that match these definitions and write them down. The number of the paragraph where you will find the words/phrases has been given for you in brackets.

1. the home of royal people (1) _____ .
2. the state of being alone (5) _____ .
3. a part which is absolutely necessary (2) _____ .
4. to do something not done before (5) _____ .
5. without much effort (13) _____ .
6. quickly and in large quantities (9) _____ and _____ .

Answer:

1. the royal residence
2. solitude
3. indispensable

4. improvise

5. effortlessly

6. fast and thick

III. Tick the right answer.

Answer:

1. When something is revived, it lives again.

2. When a government bans something, it wants it stopped.

3. When something is considered auspicious, welcome it.

4. When we take to something, we find it interesting.

5. When you appreciate something, you find it good and useful.

6. When you replicate something, you do it for the second time.

7. When we come to terms with something, it is no longer upsetting.