

VIEWS



I think I have landed myself in trouble with my comment. I hope opposition parties here will not take me amiss — NOBEL

LAUREATE MUHAMMAD YUNUS STATING HIS COMMENT ON ACQUISITION OF FARMLAND FOR INDUSTRIES WAS A 'THEORETICAL PROPOSITION'

Music divided by Partition

Documentary *Khayal Darpan* traces the decline of Hindustani music in post-1947 Pakistan

Delhi filmmaker Yousuf Saeed's 106-minute documentary, *Khayal Darpan*, screened publicly and privately in the city last week, records the decline of the Hindustani classical music tradition in Pakistan since Independence. Musicians speak nostalgically of pre-1947 times when people from all over undivided India flocked to Lahore to hear the finest vocalists in the country. Music was everywhere and even unlettered vendors of vegetables and fruit were connoisseurs. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's nephew Nisar Ali recalls that to be acknowledged as an *ustad* at the *Takia Meerasian* was to receive an international certificate of merit.

Things changed gradually after Partition. Saeed spent six months on a research fellowship, travelling to Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad, interviewing musicians and scholars and attending concerts to put together this piece of cultural history which documents how an art was slaughtered at the alter of identity politics.

After Partition, culture became a defining factor of identity on both sides of the border. But, as lawyer and musicologist Raza Kazim remarks, "While Pakistan became an Islamic nation, India projected itself internationally as



Sarah Zaman speaks of the difficulties a girl child faces in wanting to learn classical music

secular." So Hindustani music, with its overwhelming Muslim contribution, became a marker of its identity.

Vocalist Sarah Zaman relates an anecdote to underline the post-Partition attitude towards classical music. It was difficult as a girl child, she says, to have her talent recognised and encouraged. And yet her mother took her to Nizam Sahib who asked what she would like her daughter to learn. "In her innocence," reports Zaman, "my mother said she would like me to learn *ilme mauseeqi*" the art of music. Nizam Sahib was so moved. He had not heard this phrase uttered since Partition.

Every war with India pushed classical music further back. "Before the '65 war," says vocalist Badruzzaman, "there used to be week-long festivals of music on ra-

but they were not banned either," says critic Sarawat Ali. Ghazal and qawwali singers like Mehdi Hasan and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan brought the full force of their training in classical music to their performance, giving it its unique quality.

In the midst of all this, the blind vocalist Aliya Rashid's tale demonstrates how simple it is to cross political borders and negotiate cultural differences, given the will. Aliya Rashid trained for four years with the Gundecha brothers in Bhopal. She claims to be the only Pakistani to have been given a four-year visa to do so. She admits that she had heard awful things about what would be done to her in India.

But she had heard some good things too. "I found that the good things were better and the bad things I ignored," she smiles.

Music once bound the hearts and minds of people in Delhi, Calcutta, Mumbai, Karachi and Lahore. Even after Partition, till 1964 musicians performed regularly in Delhi. Says Badruzzaman, "Ustad Fahimuddin Khan once came to hear me. There were other musicians who came, Asad Ali Khan the *beenkar* for instance."

Then he adds with a deep sigh, "Such lovable people. We long to meet them, but we are stuck here, lifeless. And they are stuck there. When we think of it, all we can do is cry."

dio. All of that stopped after the war."

As it is, names of *ragas* had been changed for radio. Shiv Kalyan had become Shab Kalyan. *Ragas* named after Hindu deities like *Shankara* and *Durga* had been banned. But what was to be done with lyrics in which deities' names figured?

In an attempt to get around this hurdle, Badruzzaman requested a famous poet to rewrite the lyrics. The poet was furious. "Who has given you the right to change old texts?" he thundered. "Those texts carry the history of our tradition. Who are you to destroy that?"

Prohibited from practising their art, many khayal singers turned to musical forms like the ghazal and qawwali, which were seen as being part of Islamic culture. "They were not encouraged,

letters to the editor

Thank you, *Mirror*!

Mumbai Mirror has done a great service to Mumbaiers by publishing the telephone numbers of the newly-elected representatives to the municipal corporation.

This will certainly go a long way in ensuring that our 'trusted' representatives don't drift into amnesia with regard to their election promises and are pulled up when they fail to perform.

We hope the cell numbers mentioned are functioning. A good beginning, nevertheless.

Smita H Chandaver

World Cup team is a joke

The attitude of the team at Rajkot was disgusting. However, most members of the same team have still been selected for reasons best known to the selectors.

Even then Virender Sehwag's inclusion in the team comes as a big surprise, especially after his performance at Rajkot. If Ganguly can be dropped due to non-performance why not Sehwag? That many people were selected despite poor performance is sure to discourage those who have been doing consistently well at the domestic level.

India's team for the World Cup is the joke of the year.

R K Lahiri

Cut Mumbai's power

Mumbaiers' attitude towards load-shedding reeks of selfishness. Despite enjoying uninterrupted power supply they refuse to suffer even an hour of power cuts, though areas right next to them go nearly half a day without electricity.

Why can't there be cuts in residential areas? I agree Mumbai is the financial capital of the country but doesn't rest of Maharashtra also contribute to the economy? How does the government justify this step-motherly treatment towards the suburbs? Also despite getting preferential treatment the island city doesn't find it necessary to vote in BMC polls. Colaba recorded the lowest percentage of voting at 26%. Is this how they repay the benefits provided to them?

Diptee Dhonde

Want to be heard? Write in to us at mirrorfeedback@gmail.com

One of the most eminent critics in the city, Shanta Gokhale will separate the best from the banal on Mumbai's culturescape each week



bloggers' park

Our daily column on what the world wide web is talking about



SEHWAG RETAINED IN WORLD CUP SQUAD

■ For all the talk about getting the right combination and infusing young blood, India's squad for the World Cup is old fare. The selectors had little choice, and once you saw Sehwag's name on the sheet, you knew they had thrown in the towel. Here is a man who was dropped for consistently underperforming. He comes back against Sri Lanka. He plays with such infectious diffidence and gets out cheap. (Honestly, one felt pity for Najafgarh's favourite son. He was more comfortable back in the dressing room than in the middle.) Next day, he is queuing up to collect his flight ticket to the Caribbean. Sehwag's selection is because he is good fielder and can get a few overs through easily. If he bats well, I would count that as a plus.

<http://www.vkpedia.com/2007/02/12/selection-charades/>

■ In Sehwag's case, the very fact that he played the third Test at Cape Town despite being out of form and

in spite of being the lesser spinner compared to Harbhajan sealed the deal for him. I had written earlier that the selectors are fooling nobody by "dropping" Sehwag as he would be a shoo-in to play Sri Lanka. True to form, the selectors obliged.

<http://dopaisekatamasha.blogspot.com/2007/02/st-ray-thoughts-on-team-india.html>

■ Virender Sehwag's World Cup ticket was never in doubt. 300 against Pakistan, 196 in a single day against the Aussies at Sydney and just missing his unique record of completing a century in the very first session of a Test match. Those days are the reason we should believe in him.

Are his appearances in just two ODIs against Sri Lanka good enough test for a World Cup berth? Yes. Because the pressure is no less. Sehwag will make around similar news now if he makes a century against Sri Lanka, than he will with a century against Kenya in Cricket World Cup 2007.

<http://talkcricket.dopanne.com/2007/02/03/Learn+To+Dig+In+Mr+Sehwag++Specially+When+You+And+India+Need+To.aspx>

JUST LIKE THAT! AJIT NINAN



We call it 'Moily Tapes', meant to silence the errant BJP—Bureaucrats, Judges, Politicians...

Virender Sehwag's name figures in the 15-member squad for World Cup 2007