

SATURDAY
21 MARCH
2020

The Statesman

www.thestatesman.com



Pages 16 + 4 (18 total)
KOLKATA | NEW DELHI | SILIGURI | BIRBHAR

PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



'CONTAINMENT
PRIORITY TO
TACKLE VIRUS'



COVID-19 FEARS:
2020 CAMPAIGN IN
USA GOES DIGITAL



CRISES-HIT PUTIN
HOPES FOR
ECONOMIC REVIVAL

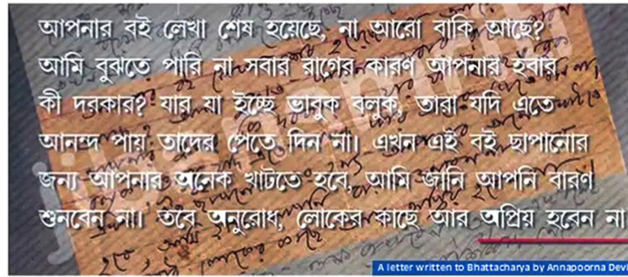


'LET'S GO INTO IT
WITH THE TEST
TEMPERAMENT'

The Statesman MARQUEE

Intrinsic beauty of melodies

To pay homage to the indomitable efforts of legends, a couple of musical events were organised recently in Kolkata



A letter written to Bhattacharya by Annapoorna Devi

MEENA BANERJEE

Story of his controversial life
Kolkata is calling you... Kolkata is a place of musical analysis. Listeners crave for sweet and fresh music. They analyse notes. Do not play dry music like me. My blessings are with you, go there and earn fame' — Baba Allaudin Khan had sent his good wishes to his Varanasi-based sarod player disciple Jotin Bhattacharya (1 January 1926 - 22 February 2016) on 8 August 1957.

The same year he had debuted in Kolkata's Tansen Sangeet Sammelan. Instant fame followed him soon after. Offers started pouring in. He started broadcasting from All India Radio. Prestigious HMV published his long playing record in 1972. One side of the album contained his self-invented *Sampoorna Kanda* — a milestone of his genius and classical music.

Music came to this son of Vedanta Vagesh Dhanath Devsharma naturally. At the tender age of eight, without any initiation or grooming, he played the tune of Pankaj Mullick's immortal *Pya Milan ko jana* on harmonium. This did not go unnoticed by Bijju Maharaj. He initiated young Bhattacharya to sarod. Music along with academics continued till he completed his Master's in philosophy from Banaras



Jotin Bhattacharya

Hindu University.

Later, in 1949, Bhattacharya set out for Malhar to learn at the feet of Baba Allaudin Khan. He lived there for seven years — not only as a disciple but also took charge as the personal secretary of Khan. The top part of his nine-pegged sarod carried an engraved portrait of Baba on a silver plate because the disciple's dedication did not know anything beyond his guru's commands that allowed him to explore within the tra-

dition. This vision of Sena Beekar *gharana* experimented with the *jauz* of sarod and also authored two books, *Ustad Allaudin Khan and His Music* (1979, in English) and *Ustad Allaudin Khan O Amra*.

And suddenly comments like 'he is a backbiter' began haunting him as myth and *maulana* (a lie because the latter books (part one and two in 1995-96) are memoirs in Bengali wherein he frankly captures his Malhar days. While referring

to the discord between Ravi Shankar and Baba's daughter Annapoorna, he admits to have cautioned Ravi Shankar about the rumours related to their turbulent married life. To this, Ravi Shankar's philosophical answer was, 'You don't know; Annapoorna is not able to adjust.'

This book also mentions another star-artist Nikhil Banerjee. The world of classical music is aware that on one ill-starred day Banerjee was forced to sever ties with Baba and leave Malhar. The widespread reason, which points towards a conspiracy masterminded by Bhattacharya, is refuted by him as a white lie because the hidden facts are totally different. He used his pen to serve the truth and not to save his skin. While he was working on the book, Annapoorna Devi wrote a letter cautioning him against wooing enmity. But, as predicted by her, he did not stop. This bold step against the high and mighty cost him dearly and he was relegated to anonymity, but till his last breath he clung on to his guru's ideals and the truth.

The controversial life is beautifully captured in *Jotin Bhattacharya Bolo (If You Dare to Speak the Truth)* — a documentary film. Beautiful, because its story-line touches hearts but does not allow the viewers' minds to overlook the proofs displayed at every step in the form of scanned letters or interviews of several people.

Dipali Bhattacharya, wife of Bhattacharya, conceded that he wrote this book at the behest of Baba Allaudin Khan. An agitated violinist Pranab Sen, disciple of Jotin *insha* says, 'His LP discs got suppressed, his music programmes got denied, his radio programmes were stopped, his disciples were bought... I, too, got offers.' According to journalist Amitabh Bhattacharya, 'If we read the book, we will see that whatever he picked up for considerations, none of them are out of context. It is not that he talked about people's vices and not about their virtues.' One is touched by Jotin *insha*'s philosophy, 'Everything is pre-planned and pre-destined. That's why I don't have any hatred or aversion towards anyone, anymore.'

Extensively researched, scripted and directed by Arindam Saha Sardar, this candid documentary became a reality only when Jeevansmriti, supported by Hind Motor Focus and encouraged by Amit Bhattacharya and Chandan Chakraborty, produced it. Hrishita Saha Sardar (director of photography) and Utsav Mondal (background music) have done a commendable job. After its debut in Varanasi in January 2020, the film was screened at several venues in Kolkata on repeated demands.