



A Tribute To Pandit Bhimsen Joshi

By Pragya Mishra Thakur

This second *Raag-Rang* newsletter would be incomplete without a tribute to our revered Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, who passed away on January 24th, 2011 in Pune, leaving behind a legion of bereft music lovers. Pandit Bhimsen Joshi was a recipient of the Bharat Ratna and many other awards during his illustrious lifetime and was accorded a state funeral accompanied by a 21 gun salute at the Vaikunth Crematorium of Pune, Maharashtra. Mourners gathered in large numbers to pay homage amidst the emotive strains of his *abhangs* playing on the loudspeakers.

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi was born on Feb 4, 1922 at Gadag in the Dharwad district of Karnataka. During his long career as a masterful performer *Khayal gayaki*, Panditji enthralled generations with his flawless renditions. His performances swayed the crowds with a sonorous and powerful voice, fine musical sensibility and an unwavering grasp of the fundamentals. His style of singing was highly improvisatory, something that is impossible without an unshakable grasp of the fundamentals, and demanded great artistry. He reigned supreme as he manipulated melody, rhythm and tempo for a galvanizing and mesmerizing effect on his audiences. He was a proponent of the *Kirana Gharana* which places a tremendous emphasis on the fluidity of melody.

Pandit Bhimsen Joshi was so passionate about music from an early age that he left home at the tender age of 11 in a quest for a guru. He was eventually found and brought back home but there was no stopping him from pursuing his dream after that event. He went on to become the recipient of every possible award an honor that a musician in India can receive, culminating with the highest honor, the *Bharat Ratna*.



His fellow musicians shared some fond memories of their association with him upon his passing. One of the most memorable is the one shared by the *Carnatic sangeet* maestro Dr. Balamuralikrishna. He remembered with great fondness their famous *jugalbandis* when Panditji would sing a song in Hindi while Dr. Balamuralikrishna sang in a South Indian language. During the course of the performance Panditji would sometimes forget his Hindi words and with a natural fluidity drift into singing

in the South Indian language. He would move in and out of styles and language restrictions as if no such artificial boundaries ever existed. This spirit of unity and oneness was so clearly evident in his unforgettable rendition of the song that became a call for national integration and unity in India: *Mile Sur Mera Tumhara*.

Raag-Rang, now in its third year, through its efforts, hopes to cultivate the same dedication and the same passion in the young performers and musicians that we support and encourage. We want them to learn from Panditji's life and his words. Here are a few quotes he shared with the readers of *India Abroad* in an interview in 1997: "For a few years after learning music, I did not sing, I only listened, I heard a lot of music of different kinds. This is an education that is as important as practicing music. The singer has to be a great thief. From each person take the best to create your own style."

There is so much that our young performers could learn from his words about the importance of listening with attentiveness, understanding that listening to singers like Pandit Bhimsen Joshi, picking up on styles, inflection, rendition is as important as one's own practice.

We are hopeful that through our efforts we are nurturing a generation of performers who would do our great musicians like Pandit Bhimsen Joshi and our great traditions of Carnatic and Hindustani music and dances proud.

SPREADING THE COLORS OF MUSIC



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SPREADING THE COLORS OF MUSIC



Music – What life is Made Out Of.

By Shreya Katti; Age 11

I love music. It is my favorite thing to do and listen.
 As I listen to a song, I tap the beat with my feet.
 The music flows into my ears in delicate set harmony.
 Rhythm and lyrics pop into my head and settle there for the rest of the day.
 All of the songs I listen to inspire me in many ways and fill me with emotions.
 When I feel tired from hours of work in school, I come home and listen to music. It soothes me like cool ointment on burning skin. I like to play music also. The many variations I sing and play on my keyboard make me feel excited and happy that I could do them. Music can feel excited, scary, happy, sad, funny and many other emotions. I enjoy music like thousands of others in the world.
 I have heard of many people who sing hours on end. This makes me feel happy because people have such a great amount of passion towards music. The result of singing for a long time is that this produces good singers. Most of the great singers do not care about fame and fortune. Those people only care about music and their passion towards it.

MUSIC INSTRUCTION

- Ethnomedia Music Studio conducts classes under the guidance of Smt. Mitali Banerjee Bhawmik at:
 - The Bharat Sevasram Sangha, Kendall Park
 - Bridgewater
- Classes are also conducted in New Brunswick at the Rutgers University campus.

For more information on any of the above contact Smt. Mitali Banerjee Bhawmik at (908)-429-1120 or e-mail: bhawmikm@gmail.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Next concert will be in June 2011
 Details will be posted on our website.

Other Announcements: (not affiliated with Raag-Rang)

Summer Camp at Rutgers — June 27-July 1
 A music camp for children age 8-15. For more information contact Samir Chatterjee at samir@tabla.org

RAAG-RANG ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

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(e-mail address will be used for concert/event announcements only)

Type of annual membership:

____ Individual - \$ 25

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