

WEST'S INCREASING INTEREST IN INDIAN MUSIC

Ustad Vilayat Khan's Tour Impressions

BACK home from a European tour early in August, Ustad Vilayat Khan, well-known Sitar player, and Tabla maestro, Nikhil Ghosh, spoke of the "warm and cordial reception" they had abroad. Their nine-week tour, sponsored by the Asian Music Circle of London, was a "triumph for Indian classical music." The artists gave recitals in England, France and Belgium before audiences comprising music composers, critics, conductors and musicians of international fame and at the Alderburgh Festival of Music and Arts.

Giving his impressions at a function organised by the Bombay Union of Journalists in Bombay on August 2, Ustad Vilayat Khan said that Indian classical music was now being increasingly appreciated by Western countries. "Our artists were assured of a warm welcome there," he said. But, the Ustad added, the people who visited these countries should not be only eminent musicians and artists but they should also, by their personal behaviour, prove true representatives of Indian culture.

In France

In France, Ustad Vilayat Khan said, music lovers suggested that a class for Indian music should be started in that country and Indian artists could visit France and stay there for some time. Dr. Elmburst of Darington Hall in England, emphasised the need, the Ustad pointed out, of having teachers of Indian music stay in England for coaching students who were eager to learn Indian music, both instrumental and vocal.

The Ustad continued: "We found younger audiences more expressive in their appreciation of Indian music. This is probably because they are fond of Jazz and Rock N'Roll and



| Ustad Vilayat Khan

its rhythm as they can feel something of that rhythm in Indian music."

Ustad Vilayat Khan said that while he highly appreciated Western music, he felt that a synthesis of Western and Indian music was not possible. "Our whole approach, our whole conception of music is so different from that of Western music, that we should not try to spoil our music by attempting to mix Western music with it".

"London Times" Comment

Reviewing one of their concerts, the *London Times* wrote: "...to familiarise us with a kind of music that can be appreciated only when our ears have been attuned to its niceties, Ustad Vilayat Khan, who gave a recital on the Sitar, a large seven-stringed guitar, at Conway Hall, is plainly a player who commands great

delicacy of touch and eloquence of phrasing..... The audience was moved to laughter by the wordless dialogues between the Sitar and the Tabla or was silent before its asservation, pleading or delicate hinting. The Tabla drums were played with a intuitive understanding of their part in the ensemble by Nikhil Ghosh."

Both the artists were proud to have been associated with Mr. Yehudi Menuhin, International President of the Asian Music Circle, who was their host at the Alderburgh Festival.

Visit to Brussels Fair

One of the more fascinating aspects of their tour was a visit to the Brussels Fair, where they held a programme at the American Pavilion. Ustad Vilayat Khan said: "We were also invited for programmes on the French Radio and Television and the Flemish Radio and Television studios."

Giving his impressions further, the Ustad

said that their programmes were all well-attended, on many occasions people were seen going away disappointed as tickets were sold out, there was pin-drop silence at all recitals, concerts started on time and doors closed punctually....this proved beyond a shadow of doubt that Indian music was gaining strength in the West and, perhaps, within the next few years, there would be a growing demand for more artists from India.

Friendly People

Ustad Vilayat Khan said that people in the West were very receptive and congenial. They made friends easily. "They appreciated our way of thinking and living and are eager to learn more and more. Being a friendly lot, they took us round to places of interest, historical importance and educational value. We snatched time to attend the Houses of Parliament in session and also attended a Sunday service at the Westminster Abbey and paid a visit to St. Paul's Church. These things will remain green in our memory" the Ustad concluded.

