

USTAD SHAHADAT HOSSAIN KHAN

Requiem for the Unsung Maestro



C R ABRAR

HE was no ordinary instrumentalist. Neither was he a run-of-the-mill tutor of music. He was a gifted musician, a rare talent, groomed in one of the most illustrious *gharanas* of sub-continent classical

music. He was a regular member of the Grand Union Orchestra of the UK, making seasonal trips there.

The enchantment of interaction of the *jawa* and strings of Shahadat's sarod not only imprinted on the hearts of fellow Bangladeshis, it conveyed the best of Bangladeshi culture to the world community that has been perfected by successive generations of artistes from this family of Brahmanbaria.

Thespian Mamunur Rashid recalls with fondness how Shahadat enthralled the audience for hours at the inaugural session of the *Chaitra Shankranti* organised by the Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation about two decades ago. The audience was disappointed when someone other than Shahadat performed the opening number the following year. Through this single feat the maestro introduced the magical sound of sarod to a new cohort of music lovers of the city. Adil Khan, former senior UN official based in Yangon, remembers how after a gala performance of the artiste, the Indian ambassador asked Khan if he would mind if the Ambassador "stole him" for the following evening. "It was a stellar recital", remembers Khan with pride as a fellow Bangladeshi.

During one of our conversations Shahadat recalled the blessings he received from Bangabandhu after a performance in Ganabhaban at the age of 16 in 1974.

Impressed by his recital the father of the nation gifted him his signed cheque of Tk 5,000 and wrote in a piece of paper: "Hope you become Alauddin Khan one day". He also fondly recalled the warm embrace he received from the celebrated Begum Akhtar after his performance at a programme organised by All India Radio in Sri Nagar, Kashmir, in 1974 during his maiden trip to India as an artiste. On that occasion he shared the platform with her, and sarod virtuosos Ustad Amjad Ali Khan and Ustad Bahadur Khan. He also told me that at a soiree at Dhaka University music exponent Waheedul Huq asked him to render *raag Meghmallar*. Huq teasingly observed if the young musician could bring rain through his performance then he would think that the latter was on the right track of gaining the

title Ustad. "As luck would have it, it began to pour soon after my rendition", fondly recollected the maestro.

Though Shahadat won the hearts of thousands of classical music connoisseurs, he did not get carried away by his success. Instead of basking in his own glory, he worked hard to disseminate the accomplishments of his renowned family. In the first half of September every year he used to organise at least one public event to mark birth anniversaries of his late father Ustad Abed Hossain Khan and grandfather Ustad Ayat Ali Khan. Even during Covid-19 he was busy trying to put the final touches on a documentary that celebrated the contributions of the Khans to sub-continent's classical music. Acutely aware of the deep inroads made by corporations in the music industry that essentially promotes established celebrities, Shahadat championed the nurturing and presenting of young talents, making every effort to privilege merit over mediocrity, talent over sycophancy and partisanship.

Despite all his achievements Shahadat was a simple, soft spoken and ever respectful person. A loving father, a committed



Ustad Shahadat Hossain Khan (Centre) performing at a programme, flanked by other artistes.

husband, a dedicated teacher and a charming friend, after the 1988 floods he and his wife adopted a lost girl, raised, educated and wedded her off. Through my interaction with him over the decades I have seen him trying his best to look after his not-so-well-off relatives and co-artiste in the industry. When I asked him why he charged his pupils such a low amount, he said many of them were on low salaries, some were dependent on tutoring. "If I raise my fees I may still get students, but then I will miss out on these talents," he added. He maintained his dignity both as senior BJMC official and as an artiste. Without hesitation he acknowledged the support he received from senior colleagues in pursuing his music career.

Time and again in different platforms Shahadat underscored the need for increased state patronage to classical music in the form of employment opportunities of talented artistes, enhancement in their honorarium, holding of classical music conferences and seminars and introducing music in school and college curricula. He could not understand why the government, if it could spend such huge amounts of resources on cricket and football, was so apathetical

towards classical music. He was fearful sarod as a musical instrument could face extinction in Bangladesh, unless concrete steps were immediately taken.

The contribution of this illustrious family to Bangladesh's culture is manifested as both father Ustad Abed Khan and son Ustad Shahadat Khan are uniquely placed as recipients of Ekushey Padak from the same family in 1985 and 1994 respectively. While receiving the award the latter shared the podium with celebrated writer Humayun Ahmed. Nobonita Chowdhury, the young music exponent, noted that his passing away in all likelihood marks the end to the age-old tradition of a *gharana* in which even a well-groomed artiste could perform solo only if he secured the explicit instruction of the guru.

It is a pity that like many others before him, including writer Showkat Ali, filmmaker Shubhash Dutta and poet Al Mahmud, this music genius, the last of his genre, did not receive due recognition during his lifetime nor at his death. This appears to be the trend in a society that is dominated by self-publicity, commercialism and narrow partisan divide. Perhaps as a nation we need to acknowledge this collective failing. After all culture broadens the mind and enriches people spiritually. Pursuit of classical music not only exposes the nation to the richness of its own culture and heritage, it can also be a pathway to combat the spread of obscurantism and intolerance.

December 1 marked the anniversary of my *nara badha* (initiation of a disciple) with Ustad Shahadat Khan. He and I did not get to meet in person since the outbreak of the pandemic, though our lessons continued uninterrupted online. I decided to greet him in person on the anniversary and planned to present him a couple of classy *punjabis* that he donned during his performances. Little did I know that fate had planned otherwise. Instead, I was destined to write this obituary on that very day. Adieu my Maestro, life will no longer be the same without you around.

CR Abrar is an academic. He was a student of Ustad Shahadat Hossain Khan and his father Ustad Abed Hossain Khan.

Lost in Translation?

Understanding Relevance of Women, Peace & Security in Arms Control & Disarmament



RENATA H DALAQUA

WHAT does the Women, Peace and Security Agenda have to do with arms control and disarmament?"

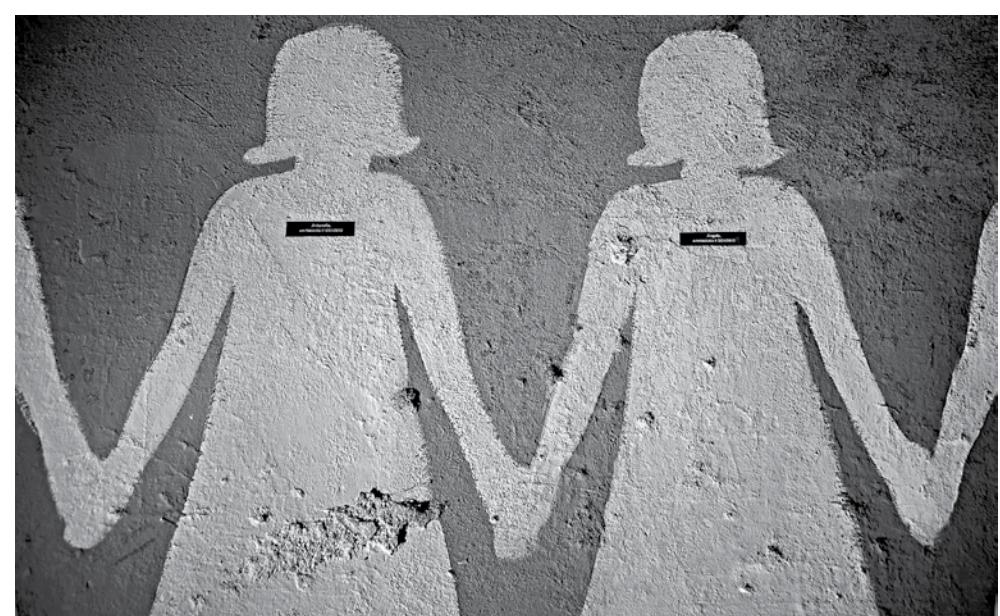
Under varying formulations, this question keeps coming up whenever someone refers to the Women,

humanitarian and development responses need to take account of the specific needs of women and girls.

Since SCR 1325 (2000), the Security Council has adopted 10 resolutions on WPS, collectively forming the basis for what is often referred to as the WPS Agenda. It is commonly defined as having four interconnected pillars:

i) Meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels and in all aspects of international security;

iv) Relief and Recovery, that is, ensuring that the voices and concerns of women and girls are accounted for when creating the structural conditions necessary for sustainable peace. Arms control and disarmament measures can strengthen all those pillars, effectively helping to implement the WPS Agenda. Despite these convergences, multilateral processes on WPS have rarely addressed the governance of weapons. For its part, initiatives in the field of arms control



The WPS Agenda provides a practical structure for the comprehensive integration of gender perspectives across the whole range of arms control and disarmament processes.

PHOTO: FILIPPO MONTEFORTE/AFP

ii) Prevention of violence against women and girls and of any violation of their rights.

iii) Protection of women and girls from all forms of violence and from any violation of their rights;

and disarmament to improve women's participation and tackle gendered impacts of weapons have not been framed explicitly in connection with the WPS Agenda.

v) Misconceptions. How do we explain

this disconnect? UNIDIR found two misconceptions that hinder the integration of WPS and arms control.

First, is the belief that gender relates primarily or even exclusively to women and girls. This is not the case. Gender is a broad construct that refers to the roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate or a "norm" for women and men, for girls and boys, and for non-binary or gender-fluid people.

Gender norms are socially constructed differences—as opposed to biological differences (sex)—and they function as social rules of behaviour, setting out what is desirable and possible to do as a man or a woman in a given context.

Gender points to a relational view of male, female, and trans categories as contextually and relationally defined. Thus, the way women interact with issues of weapons and armed conflict cannot be addressed by focusing only on women.

For this conversation to be effective, men and masculinities must be part of the Agenda. Moreover, as long as gender-related debates are considered "women's issues", their reach will be limited and progress towards the integration of gender perspectives into arms control and disarmament will be slow.

The second misconception is that WPS resolutions only apply to conflict or post-conflict situations and, thus, would not be relevant to multilateral arms control processes, which tend to be seen as instruments negotiated by and for societies considered to be at peace.

But this is not true, as many of the WPS-related activities are relevant in peacetime as well, especially those that deal with prevention of violence in general and of violence against women and girls. Femicides, in which weapons play a role, are particularly visible in areas or countries that are otherwise

relatively peaceful.

vi) Moving forward. As the WPS Agenda enters its third decade, states and civil society actors are looking for ways to strengthen its implementation. UNIDIR's research offers several recommendations to contribute to those efforts.

vii) Go beyond merely adding women. Efforts should be taken to ensure that women, men and persons of other gender identities affected by armed violence can meaningfully participate in arms control and disarmament. This could take participation to the next level, overcoming the simplistic notion that gender equates to women.

viii) In addition to small arms control, the goals of prevention and protection should inform multilateral processes on cybersecurity. After all, online gender-based violence (GBV) is a serious issue and it can turn into armed violence, as we have seen in attacks perpetrated by the so-called incels.

ix) Lessons learned from gender-sensitive victim assistance in mine action should be applied to protocols and agreements dealing with weapons of mass destruction. In view of sex-specific and gendered effects of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, a gender-responsive approach to assistance under WMD treaties could help states and their populations to become more resilient and recover more rapidly.

Ultimately, the WPS Agenda provides a practical structure for the comprehensive integration of gender perspectives across the whole range of arms control and disarmament processes. Bringing these policy areas closer should be of equal interest to both arms control practitioners as well as WPS advocates.

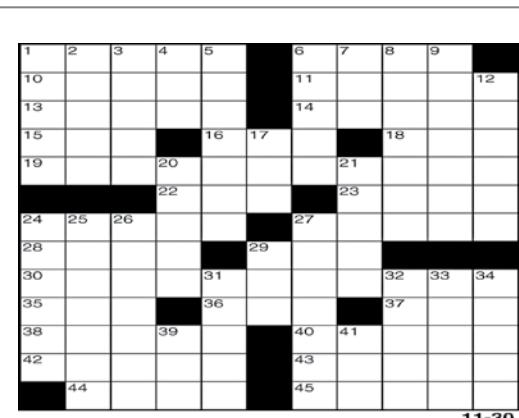
Renata H Dalaqua is Programme Lead for Gender & Disarmament at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). This piece presents findings from a larger research project. The author is grateful to Dr Renata Dwan and Dr Henri Myrttinen for their contribution and insights.

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CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

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- 10 Vietnam's capital 36 Charged atom
- 11 Spew lava 37 Battling stat
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- 14 – Haute, Indiana 40 John of Plymouth
- 15 Night before a holiday 42 More polite
- 16 Museum focus 43 Gaggle group
- 18 Light metal 44 Golf pegs
- 19 Leads in a race 45 Like some seals
- 22 Paid player 29 Question of identity
- 23 Mob revolt 31 Strata
- 24 Eyelashes 32 Command
- 27 Colors 33 Heavier than heavy
- 28 Prayer finish 34 Had a feast
- 29 Director 39 Look upon
- Anderson 5 "My Way" singer 41 Michele of "Glee"
- 30 Lights candles 6 Davis of "Jezebel"



BEETLE BAILEY



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BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



QUOTEABLE



EMILY DICKINSON
(1830-1886)
American poet.

Those who have not found the heaven below, will fail of it above.

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