

# *Shanti Hiranand*

INDIAN VOCALIST | LIGHT CLASSICAL AND GHAZAL SINGER | COMPOSER | WRITER

## PADMA SHRI SHANTI HIRANAND

### **The Prodigy**

**Shanti Hiranand** was literally born to music; in the culturally vibrant city of Lucknow. Her penchant for music goes back to her childhood and it was not long before it became an all-consuming passion in her life. She started her training in music at the Music College of Lucknow along with her studies. However it was not long before it was abruptly interrupted and she was sent to pursue regular studies. But Shanti did not let this dampen her interest. Her sheer devotion to her art was apparent even at the age of 10, and her music lessons resumed. By now her parents had moved to Lahore. Her tutelage took place under a blind woman Indira Kohli. Shanti accompanied her teacher to many a music conference. She also started singing in musical sittings and broadcast her first radio programme in March 1947. After the partition, her family returned to Lucknow where she continued her studies right upto M.A in philosophy which she topped, where her musical training in light and classical music began in right earnest. The young Shanti was by now performing at music conferences and she had become a familiar voice on AIR, broadcasting as she was singing from all over the country. These initial forays into music fetched her many a laurel. The Murphy award came her way as well as a film Nausherwan-e-Adil, in which she gave the background music. She also acted and sang in a film Sidharth which based on a book Razor's edge written by Ronald Rooks.

### **The Pupil**

**Shanti Hiranand** reached a turning point in her life when in the year 1952, she met her guru, guide and mentor the legendary, Begum Akhtar. Who decided to take her under her wings. In Shanti, she saw the glimmerings of a unique talent and she took it upon herself to chisel that and present it to the world. Shanti spent long years with her guru, imbibing her music style and learning a whole new way of life, accompanying her to performances, concerts and conferences. Cherishing every precious gem of learning that her guru showered on her she enriched her music immensely. Little surprise that Begum Akhtar was moved to remark, just a few months before her death, at a concert in Vododara that, "If you want to hear my music after my death, hear it through Shanti's singing." Begum Akhtar passed away on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 1974. To this day, Shanti gives a concert on that day, in memory of her guru.

### **The Performer**

**Shanti Hiranand**, has with her soul-stirring performances kept alive the style of her guru, Begum Akhtar, in Ghazals Thumri and Dadra. Dance of the Winds, an internationally acclaimed film, has a Thumri and dadra sung by her in her characteristic inimitable style. Another much hailed film, Siddharth had the theme song provided by her in Thumri Piloo. Shanti has been singing on AIR for over 67 years. ITC Sangeet Sammelan, Centre for Performing Arts, Sahitya Kala Parishad and Sanskar... over the years, her performances have become synonymous with an unforgettable kind of magic that never ceases to leave her audience enthralled. Sent there by the government of India in 1981, she was the first female Indian artist to perform in Pakistan. She gave concerts in Lahore, Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Karachi. Each of her concerts received a standing ovation. Pakistan's ambassador to India at that time, presented a complete album of her performances in Pakistan to the then Prime Minister of India Mrs. Indira Gandhi, saying that Shanti was the true ambassador of India and that if such ambassadors continue to be sent the relations between the two countries could be cordial and friendly. She performed again in Pakistan in 1984 at the Consulate General of India and her music was highly appreciated. Shanti has given concerts and lecture demonstrations all over the globe –Toronto, Vancouver, Boston, New York, Milwaukee, Washington,

London and Geneva. These events were significant milestones in propagating the traditional style of Hindustani light classical music abroad. She was honoured by the Council of Asian Indian Associations of Greater Washington; by the Sur Sangam cultural and educational organization of New York; and by the Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan in London.

### **The Book**

**Shanti Hiranand** has penned all her experiences with Beghum Akhtar in a beautiful biography called "[Beghum Akhtar – The story of my Ammi](#)" which has been published by Viva Books. The pictorial descriptive book was an instant sell out and has been appreciated by audiences worldwide.

Her dedication to the Guru was not only to writing a book about her and shanty ji herself, her efforts finally saw light when her guru's grave was redone and centenary was celebrated after 30 years of her death on national level. She further adds, the dedication to guru is the only way to learn.

### **The Awards**

Padmashri – Awarded by the Government of India in 2007.

- The Sahitya Kala Parishad Award presented by the Delhi Administration to outstanding artists of Delhi.
- The Hamdard Urdu Award.
- The All India Sindhu Cultural Society Award.
- The Kalyani Kala Kendra Award.
- Sindhi Academy Award.
- Hinduja Kala Award.
- Triveni Kala Sangam Award.

Life Long achievement award from Delhi State.

### **The Press**

#### **Times of India, Mumbai**

The spontaneity of manner, the feeling, poetic enunciation and tender emotive charm that characterized Shanti Hiranand's light classical numbers show worthwhile grooming from her illustrious mentor.

#### **Times of India, Delhi**

**Shanti Hiranand** endowed with a very melodious, rich, vibrant voice, sings with great feeling and sincerity infusing every word with the meaningful mood of the composer, bringing out its very soul. The deeply moved audience was in such raptures and ecstasy that they requested an ever-obliging Shanti to sing more and more even after the usual finale.

#### **Pioneer**

Shanti's rendition of ghazals, thumri and dadra was a memorable experience even for the sophisticated audience. The haunting melodies and the matching voice with unbelievable range and volume apart from the superb timbre cast a spell for more than two hours.

#### **Pakistan Times, Rawalpindi**

When Shanti Hiranand appeared on the stage of the Liaquat Memorial Hall, it seemed an age had returned, an age bygone. Many among the audience were tempted to close their eyes and imagine that they were in the presence of Begum Akhtar. Seldom has an artist imbibed so much from the mentor.

The Herald Though the general opinion is that the art of ghazal singing is superior in Pakistan, Shanti Hiranand is perhaps the best ghazal singer India has to offer.