

BOOK REVIEW

INDIAN MUSICAL TRADITIONS, by V.H. Deshpande; (Popular Prakashan, 1973), pp. XVII+116. Price Rs. 25/-.

This is more or less an English version of Vamanrao Deshpande's Marathi book, *Gharandaz Gayadic*, which created quite a sensation in the musical circles of Maharashtra a few years ago.

The book is on the very interesting *phenomenon* of *gharanas*; but it is not a historical account. As a matter of fact there is no reliable and comprehensive history of *gharanas* at all! Deshpande's work, however, deals with the aesthetic qualities of *gharanas* of Hindustani vocal music as they exist.

I shall not attempt a chapterwise discussion here, but try to get at what is, I think, the essence of the book.

First, I should point out the limitation which restricts the value of the book. It deals only with Hindustani music and that too vocal music. Vamanrao's Marathi title therefore is more to the point than this English one. For this work does not cover all traditions and not all systems of our music. A little probe into Karnatak music might have given a different colour to the ideas expressed herein. The basic concept to which we will turn later — is certainly credible and interesting; but, perhaps, the author might not have written this book the way he has written it if, say, he had also looked into the growth of Karnatak music and instrumental music.

What exactly are *gharanas*? Vamanrao prefers to avoid the words 'styles' and 'schools' and calls them 'houses'. I think he is very near the fact here. I would also suggest the term 'guild', as this is how *gharanas* have been born and have grown. Till very recently in India knowledge has mostly been passed from father to son. Even when a disciple from outside the family fold gets initiated and achieves eminence, he will yet consider the eldest member of the family as the head (*khalifa*) of the *gharana*: the *Khalifa* may be younger and less knowledgeable than he, but must be revered. It is this centering round a family, the creation of an artists guild, which is a main factor of the formation of a *gharana*. Another important factor which

the author rightly emphasizes is that musical training has been — and I hope it will not disappear — the *guru* to *sisya* transference. This creates a very close rapport in ethos, techniques and mannerisms between the two, thus forming a strong tie of habit and tradition. Another statement is that for the establishment of a *gharana*, there must be at least three generations in the lineage. This is open to question. Most of the *gharanas* do have such a tradition. But even an accepted one like the 'Jaipur' started with Alladiya Khan and seems to be ending with the next generation of Kesar Bai and others. There are indeed few in the third. As for the 'Indore' it had become very popular and accepted with the propounder, the late Ameer Khan, and now with his disciples still with us. People are talking now of the 'Kumar' *gharana*; those who have taken to the style of Sivappa Komkali. There are others who imagine a Bhatkhande *gharana* !!

It is for one such reason that the present reviewer had suggested that *gharanas* and *Vanis* were better studied as dialects of music analogous to linguistic and speech dialects. The possible methods of differentiation and analysis had also been indicated.

Deshpande has suggested a very good approach to the *formal* analysis of *gharanas* and I think he is the first to have made 'reasonable' statements of such a kind. He takes two major elements of Indian music as the basic differentia the *Svara* ('note', 'tone') and *laya* ('rhythm', 'tempo'). *Gharana*-s are placed as points or areas on a straight or curved line connecting these two polarizing quantities. 'Kirana' for instance is at the tone-pole and 'Agra' at the rhythm-pole. (Incidentally, Vamanrao would have done well to have discussed more Wahid Khan in the context of 'Kirana'. It is obvious that this branch of 'Kirana', including Hirabai is qualitatively very different from the Karim Khan branch). 'Gwalior' and 'Jaipur' are placed at appropriate places on this bipolar continuum. I may here draw the attention of the reader to Deshpande's earlier essay, *Random Thoughts on Carl Seashore, Banis and Gharanas*, wherein he relates the *Vani*-s and *gharana*-s to the tonal, the dynamic, the temporal and the qualitative aspects of sound.

Closely related, though not similar, to this line of logic is Ashok Ranade's incisive analysis of *gharana*-s in terms of 'intensification' and 'extensification' (if I may coin such a word), in his Marathi work, *Sangeetache Soundarya Sastra*.

The main drawback of Deshpande's book is its highly subjective evaluation of the various *gharana*-s. An objective adherence to his postulates would have made this work more discussable.

Prof. B.R. Deodhar contributes a very good foreword. The translation is excellent, though I am not entirely happy with the glossary.

All in all, a pioneering study and I recommend it to those interested in breaking away from the rigidity of orthodox musicology.

B.C. Deva