BOOK REVIEWS

Philosophy of Music

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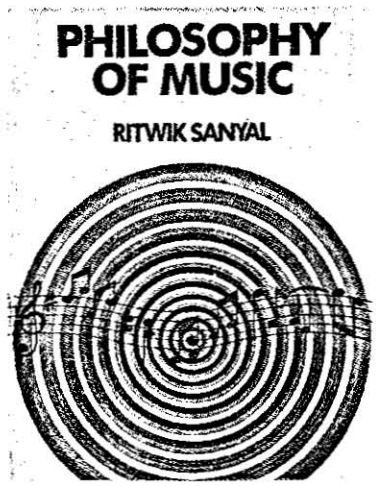
Somaiya Publications, Bombay, Rs 160.



So far as I know, this work is the first book in English on the philosophy of our music. It is certainly more ambitious, and more explicitly related to our traditional (Sanskrit) musicology, than my own published essays on Hindustani music from the view-point of philosophical aesthetics. Being formally trained in both philosophy and music, the author is clearly eligible to undertake the writing of such a book, though what he has been able to achieve is, of course, a different matter. I am not sure if the work will be widely read, but there is no doubt that we need books on the subject.

I also clearly see that, where a display of scholarship is not the author's main concern (Cf. the first para of Sec. 5, p. 20), his writing can be likeable. This is borne out by his summary of Abhinavagupta's account of aesthetic experience (pp. 56–7); the brief but sensible para on *rāga* (p. 82); and some interesting remarks on *avadhāna* (p. 103), though the 'component-constituent' distinction used here is suspect. At places, as in enumerating the excellences and defects of recitation on p. 143, the book shows an impressive eye for detail.

However, there is a good deal in the book which sets off these good points, and leaves a careful reader somewhat unhappy and unconvinced. But let me explain why I say so:

a. This is professedly a work on the philosophy of music. But a mere look at the way it opens makes one wonder if the task is properly conceived. According to tradition, philosophy is (in the main) a theoretical concern with the problems of reality, knowledge, and truth. The problem of meaning is a relatively recent addition to this list. But it is important; for, whatever be the question facing us, we cannot try to answer it without first comprehending it. Further, it is the comprehensiveness of its concern which has all along distinguished philosophy from the special sciences. Above all, philosophy aims at clear understanding. In view of all this, the most natural way to conceive of philosophy of music would be to say that it seeks to unravel the meaning of our talk about music—or of the basic concepts of our musical discourse; and to discuss the questions of reality, truth, and knowledge with regard to the following: music as creative activity and as art-work; our aesthetic experience and appreciation of music; and the place of music in life and reality, all from as many points of view as may be demanded by the nature of music as art. But, thus regarded, philosophy of music is clearly a very big subject; and anyone who works in this field cannot but find himself compelled to restrict his concern in keeping with the limits

of his own ability and aptitude. The present work, however, restricts its concern overmuch. It starts with, and is all along determined by, the assumption that the main, if not the only, problem which faces a philosopher of music is that of defining music, so that the different kinds of music could be properly graded (pp.1, 14, 17, 30, 32).

As a consequence, the author is nowhere able to provide what the two dominant ways of practising philosophy today, the linguistic-analytic and the phenomenological, would demand in respect of music: say, a clear and relatively adequate account of the meaning of the concepts that dominate our talk about the art, *and* of our aesthetic experience of it.

b. And, to turn to the author's self-appointed task, what definition does he end up with, after a free and flaunting use of technical jargon from quite a few disciplines? The following, as he himself puts it:

> Music is identifiable with the delight of the Self that realizes by conscious attention a beautiful or meaningful tonal matrix out of sound-matrix in action, feeling and understanding. [p. 206]

Now, in so far as it is not followed by any explanatory comments from the author himself, let me see what this definition means before I turn to consider if it makes sense.

To begin with, whatever be the complex process that gives rise to the ultimate feeling, music is a kind of *delight*. Further, it is a delight *of the self*; and, I may add, not a mere titillation of the ear. Such a delight cannot be had easily. It accrues only when, through a conscious effort of (discriminating) attention (or percipience, or निगाह) one is able to realize "a beautiful or meaningful tonal matrix out of [a] sound-matrix". Now, a tone is a sound of definite pitch, or a *svara*; and a matrix is that in which something is formed or embedded. So "tonal matrix" may be taken to mean the *rāga*-form, because whatever is presented to us in a recital of Indian classical music takes place within the precincts, and must bring out the grammatical and aesthetic personality, of a *rāga*. (The author himself translates *rāga* as melodic matrix, p. 70.). But, how are we to interpret the words "out of sound-matrix"? "Out of" can here only mean 'from—a source or some material'. This would not, however, be of any clear help. For, what could it mean to speak of realizing (the form of) a *rāga* out of a sound-matrix? If "sound-matrix" be taken to mean the world of sound considered quite generally, a *rāga* would seem to be *already* a "tonal matrix" realized out of the sound matrix; and so the self—be it that of the composer or interpreter-performer, or of the *rasika*—which is to experience the delight that music (according to the author) is, will not *have to realize* the tonal matrix *from* the sound matrix. Alternatively, could the author be taken to mean here that music is the delight which, say, the *rasika* experiences (or can experience) by focussing attention on the *rāga*-form, as against the totality of sounds —comprising those of drumming, besides vocal ones—that go to make a recital? One can hardly say yes; for what the drummer contributes, where he is allowed to help, is always a vital part of the total delight that a recital may generate. I am, in fact, unable to decide what the author could really mean here. And the remaining words in the extract cited—"in action, feeling and understanding"—only add to my difficulty. If, as seems necessary, they are to be taken along with "realize", a word which occurs well before the ones I am presently attending to, the net meaning would be: "realize [the tonal matrix] in action, feeling and understanding". This complex of words would, of course, make sense in respect of the performing musician. He indeed realizes or projects the *rāga*-form in terms of a creative act; and, what is more, with due *feeling* for, and *understanding* of, its aesthetic and grammatical character. But the *action*, if any, which the *rasika* may be said to perform in following the *rāga*-form is not

clear to me. If, in his case, the action in question is to be taken as simply the (relatively *passive*, see p. 115) activity of listening discriminately, the difference between the act of creation and that of listening would call for some *explanation*, but this is just not provided.

However, one emphasis of the author is clear here. Music is a delight of the self. Now, supposing for a while that this is so, what, I ask, would it mean if we make, as in fact we often do, the following simple remarks:

a. *Music* is the greatest of all arts.
b. It would be good if *music* were made a compulsory subject of study in schools.
c. What a miracle the art of *music* is: What wondrous suggestions of infinite height and depth can it evoke out of the limited stretch of a few tones!

Can the word 'music' be replaced with "a [particular] delight of the Self" in any of the above statements without at once depriving them of intelligible meaning? The trouble indeed is that, in spite of his liberal use of *various* points of view (referred to on p. xi) and technical jargon relating to *different* academic disciplines which may well impress some of us with his erudition, the author is often keener to make his writing look final and authoritative rather than lucid, patiently reasoned and persuasive. This is to be seen, I regret, a bit too freely in the book under review. Consider, for instance, the following:

[a.] The word 'music' is a predicate [p.1]

How, I ask, in some of the author's own utterances, such as the following? "'Music' in the narrow sense is synonymous with *vādya*" (p.1); "Music is a general concept [p.2]".

[b.] Existentialism is the view that whether a situation is a situation of music or not is existentially determined. [p.12]

This is clearly a bit too glib. Not existentialism as such, but the existentialist *view* of the matter is 'that whether...'

[c.] [In the case of a statue] the different stages of transformation in the process of carving or sculpting ... are the formal cause; and the finished statue is the final cause... the formal cause is the objective component; and the final cause is the objective constituent. [p.22]

No; for Aristotle "the material cause is 'that from which, as its constitutive material, something comes, for example the bronze of the statue'. The formal cause in that case must be the account of what the statue is—a statue, perhaps, of the goddess Athena." (A Flew: *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 59.) Upon the author's own view, I may add, the *rāga*—and not its being gradually projected — is the formal cause of music (p.71).

Further, I fail to see the subtle line that the author draws between a 'component' and a 'constituent'. The former itself means 'a constituent part or aspect of something more complex'; and the latter, 'constituent', stands for a component part or ingredient.

[d.] ...When we talk about music that is a musicological situation... Musicology is talk about music. [pp. 34-5]

This, again, is very sweeping. *All* talk about music is not musicology. Would it be musicology if I just told the author that I have been asked to review his philosophical work on music? Clearly not, though it would certainly be some talk, however indirect, about music. Musicology is in fact the *scholarly* study of music.

[e.] 'Value' is one word for 'subject's attitude to object'. [p. 68]

This surprises me. 'Value' is rather the desirability of a thing, often in respect of some property. Quite generally, the word means worth, merit, or importance. It does not stand for an attitude, though when I find a thing valuable I may *also* adopt a certain

attitude towards it. An attitude as such is no necessary locus or index of value. What value could possibly be there in my *attitude* of indifference towards my fellow-beings?

[f.] 'Justice' may be defined as the balance of power over powerlessness. [p.96]

Upon this view, the greater the power of a man as compared to his fellow-beings, the greater is his claim to be regarded as ideally just!

[g.] All emotions recollected in tranquillity are sublime. [p. 167]

Even the emotion of embarrassment one might experience on being caught red-handed in some misdemeanour? Here, I believe, the recollected experience would still be felt as a kind of diminution in self-esteem; and would not seem to be elevating or sublime.

[h.] Today *sam* stands for a coincidence of the rhythm of the singer with the drummer. [p. 86]

Not at all! The *sama* is rather the focal point (or beat) at which the two, the singer and the drummer, are (now and then) required to coincide. The 'coincidence' itself is a mere sign of being in *tāla*. (But, of course, in practice, the *sama* is a good deal more: see my book *The Winged Form*, Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1979, pp. 127–35.)

[i.] A musical act must be artistic... [or] ideal, relatively permanent and impersonal. [p. 167]

The act of attaining to the *sama* in a well-designed way and with split-second accuracy is certainly musical and artistic. But in what sense is it "relatively permanent"?

[j.] In every art, the distinction between the good and the bad is made. The good is called beautiful. [p.140]

Picasso's *Guernica* is a very good—nay, a great—work of art. But it is *not* (generally) said to be *beautiful*. Today, meaning (of some kind) is regarded as a truer mark of good art than beauty.

I regret to say that a similar nonchalance is to be found in the author's attitude to both punctuation in the text and mention of books in 'Notes and References'. Absence of commas where they are clearly needed (as before 'whether' and after 'philosophical' in the fourth line, and before 'orthodox' and after 'reformed' in the seventh and eighth lines respectively, all on p. 16) is unhelpful to the careful reader; and so is the absence of publication details of some books on Western aesthetics (as on p. 33, nos. 12,19,22,23). Where Sparshott's *The Structure of Aesthetics* is referred to (p. 33, no. 23; p. 67, no.8; and p. 158) the opening article is missing; and, what is worse, the title of Mrs Langer's famous work *Feeling and Form* is reversed as *Form and Feeling* on p. 117 (no. 16). Even the name of this great 'systematic' aesthetician, Susanne K. Langer, has been misspelt Susan Langer (pp. 67, 69). Nor has the author taken care to provide any errata which could make amends for such errors of omission and commission as 'it' (p. 4 last but one line, third word); omission of 'player' after 'tablā' on p. 210; aristotelian (p. 22); "the relation between music and society *are* reciprocal" (p. 53, italics added); omission of 'as' after 'consoling' in the last line of the first para on p. 120; and wrong printing of 'change' and 'prepared' on p. 151.

Where the routine details of book-writing show such casualness, the reader cannot but wonder if the author has been careful in making big, comparative judgements. He claims that he is "a *world level* performer of Indian classical music of *all* variety" (p. 20, italics added, also the second title page); and that he has been trained in music for 12 years (1963–74) by "the *greatest* living exponent of Hindu music, Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar" and in "Sanskrit musicology...by the *greatest* living theoretician of [all the?] Hindu performing arts [,] Professor Dr.

Prem Lata Sharma of BHU" who "theoretically analysed", for the author's benefit when he was "researching under her", *"all important concepts and categories and techniques of creating structures of beauty in music"* (pp. 208–9, italics mine). If the first claim is true, one must sympathize with the author for having been given so little chance to perform at the more important music festivals in the capital. As for the claim made on behalf of his mentors, I fear it must have been a little embarassing *to them*, cultured and polite as they both are, but *I* here react with a protest, on the basis of some simple facts. During the period of the author's training under Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar, Ustad Rahimuddin Khan, the eldest member of the Dagar family, was alive; and he was *known* as a *vocalist*, whereas Ustad Zia Mohiuddin is not. So, if by 'music' the author here means vocal music too, he is clearly open to question. (The author, I may add, speaks of Zia Mohiuddin's 'oral' tradition too, p. 211). As for the superlative compliment he pays to his *guru* in Sanskrit musicology, I may just put a question. Did the author make the judgement *after* a thorough assessment of the scholarship of Thakur Jaidev Singh and Acharya K.C.D. Brihaspati who have both been regarded as experts in the field in question? Dr Sharma's own ability is, of course, not my present concern. But I am not sure if *the author* has profited much from her ability to analyze "*all* important concepts...categories and creative principles" of *sangeet*. If he has, how could he speak of *nṛtta* as he does: "bodily motion" (p.2) "not sonic but syllabic in character" (p. 86)? Any bodily motion—say, of changing sides in the bed—is not *nṛtta*. *Nṛtta* is that aspect of dance the charm or meaning of which is, in the main, rhythmic; and, in so far as the *recitation* of rhythmic syllables—which all have a distinct audile character, and are, as a rule, interlinked with the intent of appealing to the ear too—is a vital part of the dance here, *nṛtta* cannot be categorically denied a sonic quality.

To get an overall idea of the author's attitudes and judgements I have carefully gone through the book's preface and appendices as well; and here, too, I find a good deal that is questionable. In the preface, the author distinguishes *Hindu* music from both Hindustani and Carnatic musics, and laments that the "anti-Hindu" dogmatists have been suppressing *dhrupad* (or *dhruvapada*?), Hindu music *par excellence*, "by saying that it is dead". In Appendix I this note of protest is even louder, and its target broader:

> Hindustani music...[is]...a secular, profane and meretricious mutation of Hindu music brought about by the elitistic muslims and their Hindu cohorts during the muslim rule... *khyal* has become so very stereotyped and fossilized that it has lost its elan for good ...[and] even its meretricious flavour. The old time courtesans...have become extinct yielding place to half-westernized de-Hinduised whores who seldom sing...[But] Hindu music is still alive, e.g., in Zia Mohiuddin Dagar's oral and playing tradition...A renaissance of Hindu music is in the offing. Since 1975 *dhrupad* mela-s have been held every year in Varanasi...and...Vrindavan...[Yet] some would like to boost Hindustani music...by just ignoring Hindu music by belittling their performances.
> [p.210–11]

I object as follows to what the above passage says or implies:

a. Hindu music is here not only distinguished from, but openly preferred to, Hindustani music by which the author means: *khyāl, thumri, ghazal*, Sarangi, and Tabla. (One is left wondering why Sitar, Sarod and flute are left out here.) Now, let me do a little thinking about both aspects of the matter, though I feel a little hesitant as I say so, because philosophy is the author's "home discipline" (p. 209).

The word "secular" means 'not concerned with religion or spiritual matters'. "Profane" too may be taken as *secular*, but in so far as this adjective (in italics) has already been given the first place, it has to be interpreted as 'unhallowed', 'showing contempt of sacred things'. As for "meretricious", its meanings—all of them pejorative, if in varying degree—may be listed thus: 'charac-

teristic or worthy of a harlot', 'flashy', 'gaudy'. Now, if Hindustani music (or, say, *khyāl*, for the sake of brevity) is *such* a degenerate mutation of Hindu music, the latter must be said to be religious or spiritual, holy or committed to sacred ends, and saintly (as opposed to 'befitting a harlot'), substantial (as opposed to 'flashy'), and simple and unostentatious (because not 'gaudy'). But is it really so? Is the music of Pandit Omkarnath Thakur at its best cheap and vulgar, *or* deep and powerful, elevating, or even at places sublime? Did the singing of Ustad Amir Khan generally strike us as flashy (or gaudy) *or* as deep and contemplative? One may wonder similarly with regard to the artistry of Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. And what about the other master vocalist of today, Kumar Gandharva? Does not his singing, as a rule, show dignity, power and a certain ethereality? (I am thinking here specially of his brief television recital of *bhajans*, all in a definite *rāga-tāla* setting, on the night of 18 August 1988.) Is *any dhrupad* singer of today, barring perhaps the author of the book under review, superior to Kumar Gandharva in respect of these qualities? I leave out the author simply because I have not so far heard him.

And if *dhrupad* is to be preferred to *khyāl* because the latter is secular, is all *dhrupad*-singing, we may ask, religious or spiritual? But perhaps I am distinguishing the two a little too roughly. For, strange though it may seem, the author prefers to put the religious in (immediate) opposition to the mystical, not to the secular. He says (p. 208): "Hindu music is mystical; Carnatic music, religious." If the mystical be taken as that which relates to mysticism, and if, as would only be proper, mysticism be regarded as 'the habit or tendency of religious thought and feeling of those who seek direct communion with God or the divine', would it serve to distinguish Hindu from Carnatic music *clearly* if we say, as the author does, that whereas the former is mystical, the latter is religious? What bewilders me further is that though it is the (generally) religious which covers the (specifically) mystical, the author sweepingly says that *because it is mystical, the Hindu music is the most comprehensive* (p. 208). But, quite apart from these semantic considerations, how exactly is *dhrupad* as it is sung today *mystical*? I have myself been an avid listener at *ālāpa-dhrupad* concerts for more than 35 years, and have the highest regard for the power of this ancient art form to charm us with its sublime beauty and grandeur, and of course (in *ālāpa*) quite without the aid of words and rhythmic beats. I believe further that, in respect of an almost spiritual leanness of manner coupled with an irresistible fineness of appeal, perhaps nothing in the region of north Indian music can match the *ārādhanātmaka dhrupads* of the *dhrupad*-singer. But these are only one of the many kinds of *dhrupad*; and I have never seen them—perhaps, they are not meant to be—presented at music festivals. And as for the other kinds, I mean the simple *chautāla* ones that one usually hears in concert halls, I regret to say that there is no mystique or compositional excellence about them. I am not able to see the subtle reason why the author (implies that he) prefers out-and-out Hindu and Indian whores to "half-westernised and de-Hinduised" ones, but I certainly see it clearly that if the words "stereotyped and fossilized" are taken to mean 'deficient in creative life and variety, the *dhrupad* singers of today have perhaps a little better title to the ugly epithets than the *khyāliyās*, though, I must forthwith add, for sheer dignity and fineness of appeal, as also in respect of certain other effects which I have referred to elsewhere (see my essay: 'Ālāpa in Ḍhruvapada Gāyaki', *Sangeet Natak* 81–82, pp. 49–50), *ālāpa* of some of the present-day *dhrupad* singers, even where they struggle to be true to the way of their forefathers, can hardly be excelled by our contemporary exponents of *khyāl*.

b. Nor can I agree with what the erudite author says (in the passage under review) about the abiding vitality and resurgence of 'Hindu' music in the face of opposition

(from quarters best known to the author). Why I disagree may be put piecemeal.

First, it is wrong to suggest that Hindu music (comprising *dhrupad dhamār*, Veenā) is still alive (only) in the oral and playing tradition of Zia Mohiuddin Dagar. I am tempted to add the bracketed 'only' because, though the word does not occur in the passage being discussed, it is *implied* by the fact that whereas this particular artist's name occurs twice even in the Index (pp. 220, 228), no other member of the Dagar family finds a mention in the book, not even Ustad Rahimuddin Khan Dagar and the earlier pair of Dagar Brothers, Ustad Nasir Moinuddin Dagar and Ustad Nasir Aminuddin Dagar, who have done so much to make *dhrupad-ālāpa* known even outside India. Nor is there any reference to Ustad Zaheeruddin and Ustad Fayaazuddin Dagar who featured in Festival of India in Japan. Further, Ustad Zia Mohiuddin Dagar is (rightly) acclaimed as a superb Veenā player, not as a vocalist; and his oral tradition, if any, can hardly be regarded as a widely operative force.

Second, if it at all makes sense to speak thus, the resurgence (in independent India) of *ālāpa-dhrupad* began much earlier than 1975. The renaissance of an art form is helped more by the brilliance of individual artistes and art-works than by the mere congregation of artistes at *melās*; and, so far as my knowledge goes, in the capital of India the *ālāpa-dhrupad* form made its power felt first in the Radio Sangeet Sammelan of 1956 when Ustad Rahimuddin Khan Dagar did *ālāpa* in *rāga* Gurjari Todi so well that it struck one and all as being exceptionally sweet, tender, chaste and tranquil; and again in the following year when on the occasion of the Vishnu Digambar Jayanti, Ustad Nasir Moinuddin and Ustad Nasir Aminuddin Dagar provided *ālāpa* in Surdāsi Malhar that I still remember as awe-inspiring.

Third, at least since 1953 I have not seen even a trace of bias against *alapa-dhrupad* in the writings or activities of any leading newspaper or cultural institution of Delhi; and I can only wonder which precise sources of mischief the learned author has in mind when he speaks of intentional belittlement of the art of *dhrupad* singers. Be that as it may, no amount of invective against *khyāl* (see "vulgar", p. 8; "decadent", "degenerate", p. 15; "profane", p. 201) or extolment of *dhrupad* (p. 116) is going to help *dhrupad*; it alone can help itself by revealing its intrinsic power and beauty in terms of recitals of irresistible appeal. Artistic resurgence is not the same thing as political propaganda or academic polemic.

S. K. SAXENA

The Natya Sastra

English translation
by a Board of Scholars

Sri Satguru Publications, Delhi
(presumably) 1988, Rs 300.

Whether it goes back to the B.C. era or originated some time nearer to the eighth century A.D., whether it was written by one man or by several who further may have belonged to different and widely spaced generations, the *Natyashastra*, attributed by our tradition to Bharata, is a great text. But in all probability we have not as yet got a clue as to what it really says.

That sounds like an over-smart and consequently stupid thing to say. But is it? The fact seems to be that we have not clearly grasped the real meaning of the ideas in the text. Take for instance the *rasa* concept which is basic not only to dramaturgy but poetics too and can be extended to the visual arts as well as was fascinatingly attempted by Dr B.N. Goswamy in the case of the

exhibition of Indian sculptures held in Paris and San Francisco in 1986. Since poetic and dramatic experience is an experience of the psyche, the sensibility, the terms of its definition in any tradition, should be capable of translation in terms of other traditions and also of the relevant scientific disciplines. Proceeding on these lines, as far back as 1965, in my *Sanskrit Poetics,* I ventured this interpretation. The *sthayibhava* is sentiment as defined by Shand, a product of evolutionary and social experience, the organized constellation of affective reactivities around an object. The latent reactivity is triggered by the *alambana* and *uddipana vibhavas* which correspond to the primary and ancillary stimuli in Konrad Lorenz's scheme. The *vyabhichari bhavas* correspond to McDougall's derived emotions, being modifications of the basic affective mood modulating with changing episodic contexts. The *anubhavas* are the results of the excitation reflected in the physique, the *sattvika-bhavas* being the sub-category of involuntary reactions like blushing and horripilation with deep ties with the chemistry of the endocrines. The dramatic context thus becomes both a representation and re-presentation of life situations, affective transfer is effected by sympathetic induction, and the potential reactivity becomes relishable *rasa.* I wish someone had blown this interpretation to pieces, for then we might have had a better one. But no heed was paid to it by the pundits and their stance seems to be this: our cuisine is not the same as the European; we do not prepare *rogan josh* the way the French make their *paté de foie gras*; similarly, our aesthetics works with *sthayi, vibhava,* and what not; the Caucasians can work with objective correlatives whatever that may mean.

To benefit from culture, we have to assimilate it, not just sit on it. This great text has been a close preserve of people whose scholarship is inbred beyond the possibility of creative genetic mutations. The full Sanskrit text itself took a century to emerge, appearing piecemeal from 1865 onwards, each fragment discovered and edited by a different man, and today there are considerable variations in the published versions of the full text. And here we have to recognize and live with a truth whether we like it or not. Most of our theatre men today, brilliant and well aware of world trends though they may be, are not proficient in Sanskrit. They need the text in languages they know, and English would have trans-regional readership. This need has not been fully met. But the English rendering by Manmohan Ghosh sponsored by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (Bibliotheca Indica, 1950) is good enough and it is high time it was reprinted, preferably in paperback. More translations are welcome, but they cannot compromise on quality.

This brings us to the book under review which, I am sorry to say, does not merit detailed comment. It has announced itself as an "English Translation by a Board of Scholars". The names of the scholars have not been disclosed. We are also not told which text has been used; it is not the Nirnayasagar or Baroda texts. About this we have the statement:

Unfortunately the text we have followed contains many

printing mistakes and serious editorial blunders. Wherever it is possible we have corrected the text and translated.

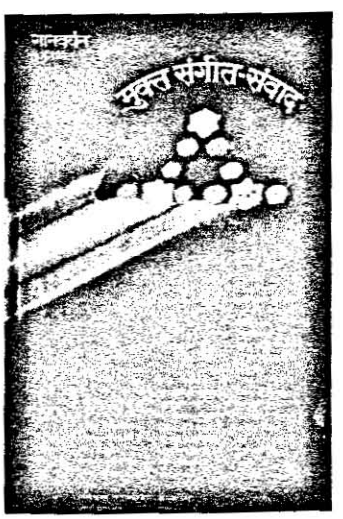
But the board has in turn been generous with its own mistakes: 'Grthodorp' for 'orthodox', 'ferosity', 'Ganga Vatarana'; 'Bhavas' has been translated as 'emotional tracts'. The Board has contempt for punctuation and an obsessive love for capital letters which bob up in the most unlikely places. Notes lack Ghosh's comprehensiveness, clarity and helpfulness.

While awaiting less slipshod renderings of the full text, we might attempt a parallel attack. Each important concept can be dealt with in a separate monograph, with citations not only from the *Natyashastra* but subsequent texts too and, above all, suggestions about creatively handling it in modern reconstruction as well as experimentation. Bharata has mentioned square, triangular, and oblong shapes for the stage too (not only the theatre hall). Can we recruit the computer to dig up all references to stages of unusual shape? In spite of all that the late V. Raghavan wrote about it, the concept of *vritti* has still not been fully clarified. Since both definition and specimens of the *bhana* (single-actor playlet) are available, we can have a monograph on it and also study whether its gesture language should remain realistic or attempt sophisticated mime, even attempt modern-dance-type movements, whether we can introduce it as a practice form in the curriculum of training, both in script-writing and acting.

KRISHNA CHAITANYA

Mukta Sangita-Samvada

edited by
Shrirang Sangoram
Ganavardhan Samstha, Pune, 1989.
452 pages, 8 plates, Rs 111.



A word about the genesis of this unique book on music and dance (*sangîta* of course covers both) in Marathi will be quite in order. Ganavardhan Samstha is a ten-year-old music circle in Pune with a difference. Besides arranging concerts in vocal and instrumental music and dance by established as well as promising artists, the circle has also been arranging, beginning from 1982, a yearly conference of paper-readings, lecture-demonstrations, and interviews in which artists, critics, and art lovers have engaged themselves in an ongoing dialogue, so to say. This carefully edited and produced volume of 44 pieces that have been gleaned largely from these conferences over the years has obviously been a labour of love. The publication with its relatively low price was made possible by donations large and small from individuals, business firms, and institutions. Out of these pieces vocal music claims 25, instrumental music seven, music in general eight, and dance four. Never before has so much material (30 pieces) been elicited from Indian performing artists by way of critical reflection on their own art. Arriving at publishable scripts is a feat in itself. Each piece carries a short editorial introduction to the author and the topic.

These circumstances help us to understand certain limitations. The music discussed is largely classical Hindustani music or popular music in its orbit, the dance discussed is largely Kathak—but there are interesting exceptions: there is a piece each on Vedic chant (G. H. Tarlekar), comparison of Hindustani and Carnatic music (Dinkar Kaikini), jazz (Warren Sanders, a young American), Western popular music (Suhaschandra Kulkarni), classical dance (Sucheta Bhide Chapekar, an exponent of Bharatanatyam, and Kanak Rele, an exponent of Kathakali). The audience kept in view is the interested and articulate music lover and the fledgeling artist rather than the specialist, the scholar, or the accomplished artist. This fact and the average length of 2800 words present constraints which, however, are also concomitant with certain advantages. The authors have expressed themselves in a language they are at home with, they occasionally give musical scores, the style tends to be concise, clear, and precise rather than popularizing, mystifying, or prolix (as is too often the case with musical writings in India). In sum, the volume represents the new musical culture in India where different systems, *gharānās* and arts rub shoulders with each other and with the general literary culture, and where music lovers, critics, and even artists may be pursuing other professions such as engineering, medicine, management, economics, psychology, and so forth.

As one would expect, many of the pieces deal with specific topics such as the Gwalior, Jaipur, Agra, Bhendibazar, and Kirana *gharānās* (Arolkar, Wamanrao Deshpande, Haldankar, Janorikar, Shrikant Deshpande), instruments like the Sitar, the harmonium, the violin, the flute, and the Tabla (Usman Khan, Arvind Thatte, Madhukar Godse, Arvind Gajendragadkar), Kathak dance style (Manisha Sathe), art forms like *dhrupad, khyal, thumri, natyagita, bhavagita, ghazal* (Saiduddin Dagar, Wamanrao Deshpande, Vina Sahasrabuddhe, Prabha Atre, Jitendra Abhisheki, Gajanan Watve, Sanjiv Shende, Kusum Shende, Shashikala Shirgopikar). Others take up more basic topics like *raga, bandish, chiz, shruti,* choreography (C.R. Vyas, Rajabhau Deo, Padmakar Barve, Madhusudan Patwardhan, K. G. Ginde, Alaka Deo-Marulkar, Arvind Marathe, Sangoram, Kanak Rele) and topics of ampler scope such as the interrelation between music and dance, the aptitude and education of a music lover or an artist, the impact of mass media and socio-cultural changes, and the crying need of appreciative and critical writing on performing arts (Rohini Bhate, Vidyadhar Vyas, Vasantrao Deshpande, Parvin Sultana and Dilshad Khan, Dattopant Deshpande, Shanta Nisal, Vidyadhar Pandit, Bhaskar Chandavarkar, Ashok Ranade).

There is much here that is informative and insightful. Occasionally, interesting points emerge that will bear further discussion—as when Prabha Atre claims that lighter forms like *thumri* ultimately gravitate towards abstract forms like *khayal*, or Usman Khan discusses how the Sitar liberated melodic instruments from the dominating model of vocal music, or Padmakar Barve or Arvind Marathe in their different ways question the received wisdom about the identity of a *raga*, or Vasantrao Deshpande criticizes certain current practices in the training and self-education of young artists, or Madhusudan Patwardhan critically examines the traditional association between a *raga* and a certain time of the day, or Bhaskar Chandavarkar speculates on the long-term potentially deleterious effects of the exclusive use of Amplitude Modulation broadcasting.

The Samstha and the enterprising editor deserve to be congratulated for exploring a new vehicle of musical thinking. The effort deserves to be widely known (perhaps through Hindi or English versions) and emulated by other circles of this kind. A sophisticated art like Indian music or dance deserves a sophisticated running comment and discussion.

ASHOK R. KELKAR