

RAGA—SARITA by C. R. Vyas, Published by Satish C. Vyas, 3/4 Bhuta Nivas, Matunga, Bombay 400 019, 1984, Rs. 25.00 (*In Hindi*).

SWARAMAYEE by Prabha Atre. Published by Chetashree Prakashan, Amalner, 1984, Rs. 40.00 (*In Marathi*).

RAGA—SARITA comprises a collection of 121 *bandish*-es composed by the author. He has also set 107 of these compositions to traditional Hindustani *raga*-s, while the remaining 14 are cast in five melodies created by him. With the exception of one piece, which is a *tarana*, the *bandish*-es are all *khayal*-s rendered in slow (*vilambit*), medium (*madhya*) or fast (*drut*) tempi in a variety of familiar *tala*-s and with full musical notation in each case. Thus, in the main, the book appears to be in the nature of a textbook for use in scholastic education. It should also prove useful, in a wider sense, to performers interested in enlarging their repertoire.

RAGA—SARITA was published on the occasion of its author's 60th birthday in November 1984. C. R. Vyas, who has risen to prominence as a leading Hindustani vocalist, scholar and composer in recent years, is not a 'professional' in the conventional sense. Music to him has been a serious pursuit since his school days and the stresses and strains of doing a regular job did not deflect him to the slightest degree from his endeavour in a field as demanding as classical music. It is just as well that he chose to retire from service prematurely to devote himself completely to his art.

After his early grooming from Govindrao Bhatambrekar, an exponent of the Kirana *gharana*, Vyas benefited immensely from the guidance of Rajarambuva Paradkar and his distinguished *guru*, Yeshwantbuva Mirashi, the noted veteran of the Gwalior *gayaki*. Still later, he was associated with the eminent scholar-musician, S. N. Ratanjankar, and his noted disciples. And finally, he came under the influence of Jagannathbuva Purohit "Gunidas", the versatile scholar-musician and composer of the Agra *gharana*. The influence of these mentors is evident as much in his contribution as a composer as in his roles as performer and teacher.

It is a little difficult to attempt a summation of a book of this kind. Apart from the obvious fact that literary or rather 'composing' virtues claim due attention in the general scheme of evaluation, it would be equally true to say that the purpose or validity of such an endeavour must, in the final analysis, lie in its practical application. Be it a traditional or self-composed *raga* or *bandish*, its popular acceptance and eventual assimilation into the mainstream of the classical tradition must depend not so much on its novelty or structural authenticity as on its sustaining power and its potential as entertainment. And the performing platform is the only testing ground for all musical creations. It would, therefore, be unfair and even pretentious to attempt an assessment of the practical value of these compositions on the basis of their "cold-print" presentation. Besides the author's *Shiv-Abhogi* and *Dhanakoni-Kalyan*, this reviewer has had no occasion to hear the *raga*-s and *bandish*-es incorporated in the book. And these two have only served to evoke a mixed reaction.

Even so, the book does seek to break new ground in many ways, as has been pointed out by the noted scholar-musician, K. G. Ginde, in his foreword. For instance, the *asthayi* and *antara* sections of individual *khayal*-s are more brief and set within the framework of a single *avartan*. The tempo employed for *vilambit* compositions is, in most cases, actually *madhya* in its pace, unlike in the traditional *bandish*-es. The manner of coming to the *sam* also marks a novel departure from established practice. According to Ginde, the author has kept in view the changing trends and needs of the contemporary musical scene.

Call it a coincidence or what you will—this superbly produced book bears a striking resemblance to the commemoration volume published, a few months earlier, on the occasion of the 60th birthday of Kumar Gandharva. I have in mind *not* the photographic part of that volume, but the second part, which contains a portfolio of handwritten *bandish*-es. Also, like the Kumar Gandharva volume, the book under review is printed by offset on cream-coloured paper and the layout is more or less identical. Produced and published through the courtesy of the Indian Classical Music Foundation, the book under review is quite modestly priced so that it is within the reach of teachers and students.

Prabha Atre's SWARAMAYEE embodies a collection of nineteen articles and two poems, all published in various Marathi newspapers and magazines. The author, who is today one of our top-ranking vocalists of the Hindustani classical tradition, holds a bachelor's degree in science and law and a doctorate in music from the Gandharva Mahavidyalaya. She presently heads the music department of the S.N.D.T. Women's University, Bombay, and pursues writings on music as a hobby amid her academic and professional commitments.

The book can be said to fall, broadly, in three sections. In the first are sensitive profiles of four great stalwarts—Sureshbabu Mane and his illustrious sister, Hirabai Barodekar, who are Prabha Atre's mentors; Amir Khan and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, whose influence she acknowledges, and who have also shaped her style.

A wide range of topics is covered in the second section. The thirteen articles reveal her approach to the aesthetics of *khayal*-singing, the role of *sargam* in *raga* exploration, the relationship between musicians and critics, Indian music in the Western context, a national cultural policy in relation to classical music, and other allied subjects. There is also an account of her interesting interview with Bhimsen Joshi. The author's ingenious attempt, in another article, to find affinity between law and music makes fascinating reading.

The third section carries her article on the Kirana *gharana*, an autobiographical piece and two poems.

Prabha Atre has also made her mark as an *avant garde* vocalist and has often provoked controversies in the field. Yet she is proud of the Kirana tradition, and has a deep respect for our musical heritage. At the same time, she is aware of changing times and tastes and advocates a more catholic attitude towards the problems facing Hindustani music today.

While one may or may not agree with many of her assumptions or opinions, one has to concede that she has brought her considerable knowledge and experience

to bear on her writings. One admires the finesse and incisiveness with which she expresses whatever she wishes to convey to the reader. The narration is marked by elegance and lucidity and makes extremely pleasant reading. The book, financed jointly by the Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture and the Revoo Pratishthan, a public trust, is well-designed. It could have been more modestly priced, though.

—MOHAN NADKARNI

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