

"Are you vocal or classical"?

"ARE you vocal or classical"? This innocent query from a rich donor (sitting next to a top-ranking artiste at a concert) and that of a self-styled "musicologist" who did not know what the "pakad" or "pakar" of a raga or the expression "mishrit raga" meant reflect the state of general ignorance even amongst those who may have some interest in music. Not that it matters much for those who like good music and go to concerts in large numbers. The important thing is the pleasure they derive. Even so, the need for knowledge cannot be overemphasised. It enables intelligent appreciation and enhances the pleasure.

During the last two decades many books on the theory and history of Hindustani music have been published in English and Hindi, serving as good sources of elementary or higher knowledge. These are in addition to the classical works on the subject. Pandit Amarnath's "Living Idioms in Hindustani Music" is not only a most welcome addition to the literature, it is a unique one, too, and the first of its kind. One of the country's eminent musicians and musicologists — often described as the musician's musician with a thoroughly intellectual approach —

LIVING IDIOMS IN HINDUSTANI MUSIC, a dictionary of terms and terminology; by Pandit Amarnath; Vikas Publishing House; Rs 125.

Pandit Amarnath deserves the thanks of all; for the very concept of this work, besides the rich contents of the volume. For, even in some of the well known books on Hindustani or Indian music one does not find a comprehensive enough glossary of musical terminology. As the sub-title itself makes it clear, Pandit Amarnath's book is a "dictionary of terms and terminology", which will be of help to all — students, connoisseurs and laymen alike. Arranged in alphabetical order, there is hardly any word in musical terminology — beginning with "aabhog (A); the concluding part of a

R. N. Varma

composition in dhrupad", to "zamzamaan" (Z), the shaking of notes — which has been left out. There is, in addition, an index, making the whole scheme of the book doubly helpful.

In an able introduction the learned author says that there is in this book "very little of history" because he strongly feels that the history of Indian music "in the shape in which it is available to us today is not essential to the understanding of the fundamentals of music". And yet, bits of history would be found where the names of various gharanas and their famous exponents occur in the dictionary — in their alphabetical order, of course. Unless, therefore, the author felt it was not worth mentioning, some people may treat the absence of any reference to Delhi Gharana as an

omission. There is, though, an article on the tabla tradition known as Dilli Baaj. Also, "Morris College", both in the text and the index, should be corrected in the next edition to "Morris College".

Pandit Amarnath concludes with a brief but very readable chapter on "some points of controversy in Hindustani music".

He deals with these with great clarity, making his observations quite informative. There is, for instance, a sub-section on raga Deepak, one of the six principal ragas but now extinct — not as a melody but as a name, according to the author. Was it like Nat or today's Yaman (also called Eman by the more orthodox)?

Pandit Amarnath finds weightage in favour of the latter. He has mentioned two schools of thought on this point — one holding that Nat was the sixth raga and the other that it was Deepak. As for Asawari and Jaunpuri, the difference is negligible yet the names are different.

A discussion on Shuddha Kalyan would have been welcome, and I am inclined to agree with the author, when he says that there is great need for "a common platform where representatives of different gharanaas can come together, standardise raga names, and give a new coherence to the fast-evolving grammar of our music".