

Music in words

Pandit Amarnath is not just a musician. Over the past half a century, he has emerged as an innovator, a poet composer, a researcher and an analyst. And although he teaches in the *guru-shishya parampara* at Delhi's Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra, he is not at all an orthodox. An able interpreter of the Indore *gharana*, his career has travelled a 45-year-old journey on the road to total musicality.

"Without being conscious of the technicalities, if you can enjoy what it is, then that is the real listening of music. When you get involved in such a music, you would want to learn more about it. And that becomes education," he says. "This will deepen your involvement and lead to better appreciation of it all." This seems to be the rationale behind his putting together of a book that he has titled *Living Idioms in Hindustani Music*, A

dictionary of Terms and Terminology. This handy volume is bound to become one of the more important contributions made to Hindustani music lovers in the recent years. It was in 1977 that Pandit Amarnath first thought of putting together the dictionary and worked at intervals on it for nearly five to seven years. Why did he think of doing it? "I have gathered insights into various facets of Hindustani music over the years. I also constantly thought of my first *guru*, B.N. Dutta of the Kirana *gharana*, under whom I learnt a lot about music and musicality." One day as he was sitting alone with his *guru*, Amarnath, who had trained for about five years under him, became emotional and asked if he could offer anything as

guru-dakshina. Normally a jovial person, the *guru* became serious and told him "*Beta, jaise maine tumko pyar se sikhaya, vaise hi sabko tum sikhana.*" Amarnath has since taught anyone who was sincere enough. The dictionary is one more expression of his *guru-dakshina*.

Later, on coming to Delhi, Amarnath became a *shagird* of Ustad Amir Khan of the Indore *gharana*. But, Amarnath did not merely become proficient in music. He has evidently been a thinking musician who has never stopped exploring the various nuances and shades of the different aspects of Hindustani music. The dictionary is in a way, a byproduct of this exploration. Essentially a book explaining terms and technicalities, this volume or

its author is not overawed by mere technicalities. The volume will enhance the joy of listening of all those who like Hindustani music.

The first Indian musician to perform at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard, Pandit Amarnath has to his credit more than 200 original *khayal* compositions. He has also composed music for feature films, documentaries and tele-serials. He was given the Swarmani Award as well as the 1987-88 Sahitya Kala Parishad Award. He has given many lecture-cum-demonstrations at Harvard, at ITC's Sangeet Research Academy in Calcutta, and at a number of other places. He has recently completed a research project on the teaching systems and methods of Hindustani music

for the Indian Council for Social Science Research.

"Sometimes you immensely enjoy a street song and sometimes you don't even like the performance of a master. This is because music is something beyond art or science. It is a search for musicality within oneself and unless this involvement of the person rendering it is present one cannot enjoy it", says Pandit Amarnath.

The Indian approach to music, he explained, was not one of orchestra. "Play a violin at the India International Centre and it can be heard at the Lodi gardens, but play a veena and you will feel that only the player can truly listen to it. Our entire tradition of music and musicality has something to do with this search within." Inevitably, in this search terms and terminologies came up which have prompted this very useful book.

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