



A Southern Music

TM Krishna

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T.M. Krishna, one of the foremost Karnatik vocalists today, begins his panoramic exploration of that tradition with a fundamental question: what is music? Taking nothing for granted and addressing diverse readers from Karnatik music's rich spectrum and beyond it, Krishna provides a path-breaking overview of south Indian classical music.

Krishna advances provocative ideas about various aspects of its practice. Central to his thinking is the concept of 'art music', the ability to achieve abstraction, as the foundational character of Karnatik music. Excavating its various elements and examining them up close, he then unveils the majesty and grandeur of the form, in the process lending the reader a new eye with which to appreciate the music in its entirety. But Karnatik music does not exist in isolation. In his explorations, he sights the visible connections and unappreciated intersections between this music form and others – Hindustani music, bharatanatyam, fusion music and cine music – treading new, often contentious, ground.

A Southern Music seeks to retrace the sources of Karnatik music even as it reflects on its self-renewing vitality today. To that end, Krishna examines a number of issues that Karnatik music must face up to: questions of gender and caste, the role of religion and of lyrics inspired by devotional sentiments, the diaspora and its relationship to 'classical' music, technology – and all this in a the world that has opened up very fast and very emphatically to new experiences, yet closed its mind to much that is its priceless inheritance.

Unquestionably, the definitive book on Karnatik music.

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