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**Janaki Bakhle.** *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. xvi + 338 pp. \$24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-19-516611-8; \$99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-516610-1.

**Two Men and Music:  
Nationalism in the  
Making of an Indian  
Classical Tradition**

Janaki Bakhle

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**Reviewed by** Denise Guidry (Department of English, University of Florida)

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## Notes on a Nation

In *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition*, Janaki Bakhle addresses the interpenetrations of nation, religion, and cultural identity, centering on developments in western India's Deccan region, in the creation of a music that could be termed simultaneously classical and modern. Bakhle's text reflects the sprawling nature of these questions raised in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, bringing multitudes of texts, figures, and theoretical schools together in a capacious, intricate analysis that contributes admirably to several fields of study. This project's interventions are especially important because, as Bakhle points out, music is "the one (and perhaps only) art form said to have successfully resisted colonial influence during the nineteenth century" (p. 1). Further, few historians have written about Indian music, and Bakhle finds that musicologists have tended to elide history in their analyses, preferring instead to romanticize important figures.

Bakhle's original assumption that she would write a book about "the move from 'Muslim music' to 'Hindu nation,' aided by colonialism" reflects just how many influ-

ences shaped this complex history (p. 257). The very meanings of central terms like "nationalist," "modern," "classical," and even "Indian" shift from individual to individual within the text. The almost impossible scope of these debates is contained by Bakhle's focus on one geographic region, and the author manages these many developmental factors admirably, helpfully cueing connections that may come hundreds of pages away. Drawing on such diverse primary sources as treatises, musicians' biographies and memoirs, music school records, and conference proceedings, Bakhle emphasizes that this creation of an Indian national tradition was consciously done and was thus not the product of somehow pure, organic emergence; to that end, the theories of Partha Chatterjee, Benedict Anderson, and Edward Said inform her work. Bakhle does not romanticize this process of creation, but acknowledges that as various groups benefited from the reforms being made, entire institutions were eliminated; for example, family-based, guild-like groups of predominantly Muslim musicians were displaced by other rising institutions as relationships between musical performance and feminine propriety were redefined.

Modern Indian classical music was born of the work of many men (and a few women), among them musicians, colonial music critics, Indian music scholars, and princely rulers. Further, it “was (and is) fundamentally a performer- and performance-centered system” in which composers are not privileged as they are in Western traditions (p. 69). This tradition was born of a broad range of debates, among them the origins and significance of Indian musical notation; the proper role of women in the performance and passing on of music; whether musicians’ performances should be regulated by princely, colonial, and national government; and whether India’s national music was sacred, secular, or some combination of both. If Indian music is ancient in origin, what are the implications for the origins of the Indian nation itself? (Is Indian music solely Vedic in origin? Is it solely born of Indian traditions, or does it have Arabian, Persian, and Turkish influences?) What constitutes authorship when, for generations, music was not written down, but rather was handed down in performance by musicians who protected their interests by concealing titles and even sections of musical works? Is Indian music also Hindu music in light of the tremendous influence of Muslim musicians?

Rather than focusing the entire history on the two titular men—Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande and Vishnu Digambar Paluskar—Bakhle builds the book around them after establishing her structure and methodology in a dense but helpful, thoughtfully mapped introduction. Throughout *Two Men*, individuals are not relegated to the chapters focusing on their work, but rather appear and reappear in the narrative to illustrate how they influenced each other and the development of music. Bakhle thus uses her first two chapters, which comprise the first third of the book, to establish historical contexts of the musical world Bhatkhande and Paluskar sought to reform. Chapter 1 focuses on the traditions, and with time, the bureaucratization of musical performance at princely courts, centering on the state of Baroda (in the present-day state of Gujarat). Chapter 2 continues this historical contextualization, focusing on “the history of music’s transformative role in the creation of a gendered, and national, public cultural sphere and, at the same time, the transformation of music itself” (p. 51). The chapter focuses on colonial criticism of Indian music, much of it written by British officials with little or no musical training, as well as the spread of music to the public through education and music appreciation societies, and “the transformation of Marathi folk theater into respectable Marathi music drama (sangeet natak) theater”

(p. 51). The chapter also discusses debates over musical notation and its relation to the putative inferiority or superiority of Indian music. The acceptance of notation inadvertently had a significant impact on women by helping to create a musically literate audience, including women.

The middle two chapters establish Bhatkhande’s (chapter 3) and Paluskar’s (chapter 4) tensely competing agendas and scholarship, their attitudes towards musicians, and the great differences between and varying successes of their work. Despite their immense influence, little historical work has been done on either. Bhatkhande believed that religion and music should be separate, but that North and South Indian music should be melded. He held that Indian music was, as Bakhle puts it, “fundamentally modern, not ancient,” and thus not defined by ancient Vedic origins (p. 98). Bhatkhande’s interest in origins centered instead around Sanskrit texts on music, from which a canon of criticism and musical pieces could be created. Paluskar, on the other hand, believed Hinduism central to defining Indian music and to distinguishing it from Western music. Bakhle writes, “Bhatkhande wished to nationalize music, Paluskar wanted music to be nationalist” (p. 177). Bakhle does not privilege one view over another, but rather uses both to illustrate complexities of “colonial modernity” (p. 179). Paluskar was ultimately the more successful and influential of the two, and Bakhle’s interest lies in part in the question of why one man’s work, and indeed his personality, led to this greater success.

In the final two chapters, Bakhle extends her analysis of the state of Indian music by discussing the legacies of Paluskar and Bhatkhande’s music schools and conferences in chapter 5, and, in chapter 6, the effects of their debates on the worlds of individual musicians (including one woman) who resisted the emerging subordination of musicians to theorists. Chapter 6 brings the story full circle, connecting *Two Men*’s “basic themes” with the effects of princely state policies on musicians and the divergent paths of two musicians, Abdul Karim Khan and his estranged daughter Hirabai Barodekar. Here, the reader who might have felt a bit frustrated by the apparent sprawl of the people and developments covered in the previous chapters will reap the rewards of Bakhle’s carefully structured project (p. 216).

Bakhle closes *Two Men and Music* with commentary on how the conditions of both source material and historiography on Indian classical music have harmed historians’ ability to construct accurate accounts of how in-

dividuals and schools contributed to the development of Indian classical music. She exhorts scholars to shift away from “hagiographic” accounts that obscure actual developments and lavish far too much credit on their subjects. Bakhle also laments the tendency of various historical figures’ followers to allow stingy, piecemeal access to musical and autobiographical manuscripts.

Bakhle helpfully defines Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati musical terms parenthetically within the text and in a helpful glossary. Some terms defined in the text do not appear in the glossary, however, which can be inconvenient and distracting, especially for those unfamiliar with Indian musical traditions. (For example, terms for “woman dancer” and “male dancer” appear on pages 267 and 270, respectively, but do not appear in the glossary.)

*Two Men* holds wide appeal for readers with a diversity of interests; the book’s few shortcomings tend to be specific to a reader’s lack of background in the particular discourses in which Bakhle writes. (One curious

element is that all of the book’s illustrations appear in one chapter, although this is unsurprising given the difficulty of access to musical sources, as Bakhle illustrates in the introduction.) The book will appeal, of course, to scholars of Indian national development, as well as to those interested in Indian culture during and after the colonial period. Music’s unique resistance, among artistic and cultural forms, to British colonial control will be especially significant for scholars of postcolonialism. Non-musicians will have little difficulty following Bakhle’s narrative, despite the multiple musical forms and terms this history necessarily discusses in depth. One does find oneself wishing for an accompanying audio CD that could illustrate the various musical terms and ideas so central to the story, but this is far from a failing of Bakhle’s capacious tale; rather, this wish speaks to the vividness and appeal of Bakhle’s work, including for readers who know little about her subject matter. It speaks as well to her mastery of a sprawling, occasionally opaque history spanning two centuries and dozens of influential figures and locations.

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