I dedicate this record to my guru, Ravi Shankar.

Shamim Ahmed
Monitor Presents India's Great \textbf{SHAMIM AHMED}

Three Ragas: Bageshwari • Nat-Bhairav • Khamaj

\textbf{SHAMIM AHMED}, Sitar

\textbf{ZAKIR HUSSAIN},Tabla

\textbf{AMANAT}, Tanpura

To appreciate Indian classical music, it is necessary to understand a little about its techniques and its tradition. Whether vocal or instrumental, it has a definite pattern. Melodic in form, it is based on scales or \textit{ragas} on which a musician improvises. The music on this record is Hindustani Melodic in form, it is based on scales or first upon two notes, then three, until in a thrilling climax, a specific time of the day or night for heightened effect. In this recording, Shamim Ahmed presents three \textit{ragas}—Bageshwari, Nat-Bhairav and Khamaj. Of these, Bageshwari is presented in the order described above; first the \textit{alap}, then the \textit{jod}, and finally the \textit{gat} in medium and fast tempo. All these are necessarily compressed into twenty minutes. The remaining two, Nat-Bhairav and Khamaj, are presented in shorter pieces of ten minutes each.

\textit{Bageshwari}: this \textit{raga}, with the scale:

\[
\text{A, D, G, B, E, D, G, B, E, D, G, B, E}
\]

is played in the hours just preceding midnight. In keeping with the mood of these hours, it is a sensuous, romantic \textit{raga} expressing a yearning for things to come. It is the moment before spring bursts forth, the moment before the torrent or ecstasy envelops all.

\textit{Nat-Bhairav} is a mixture of two \textit{ragas}, Nat and Bhairav. Scale:

\[
\text{A, D, G, B, E, D, G, B, E}
\]


Of the two, Nat is somber and ponderous while Bhairav, which is played early in the morning, strikes a note of hope, of expectancy. It may be described as the herald of dawn and signifies the peace which pervades the universe when the night is not yet dead and the new day not quite born.

Despite this, Nat-Bhairav, as a combination, has undertones of pathos, relieved in Ahmed's rendering by the use of the rather lively Rupak \textit{taal} of seven beats (3/2/2) which lends it a lift, a leaping rhythm.

\textit{Khamaj} is a light-hearted melody used as the basis for romantic songs. The scale is:

\[
\text{A, D, G, B, E, G, B, E}
\]

In Ahmed's hands, Khamaj is a gay, fitting and youthful melody. It is obvious that Ahmed thoroughly enjoys playing this and other lighthearted \textit{ragas}. His improvisations are spontaneous and remarkable for the joy that he evinces while creating music. His presentation is also exceptional for the almost perfect union he achieves with Zakir Hussain's rollickingly merry Teen Taal.

\textbf{THE INSTRUMENTS}

The \textit{Sitar}, as it is today, was fashioned some seven hundred years ago. It has six or seven main strings, and nineteen sympathetic or resonating strings. The body of the instrument is carved out of teak wood and two dried gourds, one large and one small, affixed at either end, amplify the sound. The \textit{Sitar} has twenty movable frets so that the instrument can be returned for each melodic form or \textit{raga} by increasing or decreasing the spaces between the frets.

The plec trom, worn on the index finger of the right hand, is used to pluck the main strings. A skilled player will produce micro tones, and even the most sensitive nuances and slides (which in Indian music are called \textit{meend}) by pulling the main string to the side. This string is so flexible, that four to five notes can be produced by pulling it. The \textit{Sitar}'s most fascinating feature is the extraordinary range of sounds that can be created from it—from deep guttural reverberations to the most piercing high notes.

The \textit{Tabla} is a two-piece drum. The right hand piece is known as the \textit{Tala} or \textit{Danyan} and the left hand one is known as \textit{Daga} or \textit{Banyan}. It is an instrument derived from the Pakhawaj, an old Indian drum which is placed horizontally and played at both ends.

The \textit{Tabla}, as any other drum, in Indian music is not an instrument used purely for keeping the beat. Creating a rhythmic counterpoint of stunning complexity the player 'accompanies' an instrumentalist, and the \textit{taal} played binds his music, but side by side, he is weaving his own patterns of rhythm, creating his own music. In other words it may be said that the \textit{Tabla} and the \textit{Tana} are counterpointal.

The \textit{Tanpura} (or \textit{Tomboura}) has four strings but no frets. It is used exclusively for accompaniment, to help the instrumentalist or singer to keep in tune. It keeps a steady drone throughout the performance or concert. The \textit{Tana} is played by Amanat in this recording.

\textbf{SHAMIM AHMED}

The key words of Shamim Ahmed's music are unquestioningly \textit{Sadhana} and \textit{Tapascharya}, both words—from Sanskrit—meaning wholehearted dedication of physical and spiritual energy to the achievement of perfection.

As a result of arduous and long daily practice sessions, Shamim Ahmed, at 29 is one of the brightest stars rising on the horizon of Indian classical music. The young exponent was born in a family, where for generations, men have devoted their lives to music. The family is called Agra Gharam and is one of the most prominent in the world of Indian classical music. Ahmed's father, Gulam Rasool Khan, taught music for 35 years and initiated his son into the art of vocal music, even as a child. However, Ahmed's singing career was cut short by a severe attack of typhoid and he turned his talent to the Sitar. Since 1955, Ahmed has been a disciple of Ravi Shankar and feels that he owes his success to the master. Indeed, this, his first recording to be released in the United States, in his words is "dedicated to my Guru".

\textbf{ZAKIR HUSSAIN}

At sixteen, Zakir Hussain has the distinction of having played the \textit{Tabla} in all the larger cities of India. Son of Alla Rakha, who has been termed “the world's greatest drummer” by critics and who is well-known in the United States, Zakir was literally born to the \textit{Tabla}. Asked when he actually started playing it, Zakir jokingly replies: "My mother told me that I drummed my fingers on the milk-bottle as a baby!" Zakir Hussain, with his deft touch and his completely relaxed manner of tabla playing, already shows definite signs of becoming a great name in the world of Indian music. He too dedicates this, his first ever recording, to his Guru and father: Alla Rakha.

Notes by \textbf{VIMLA PATIL}