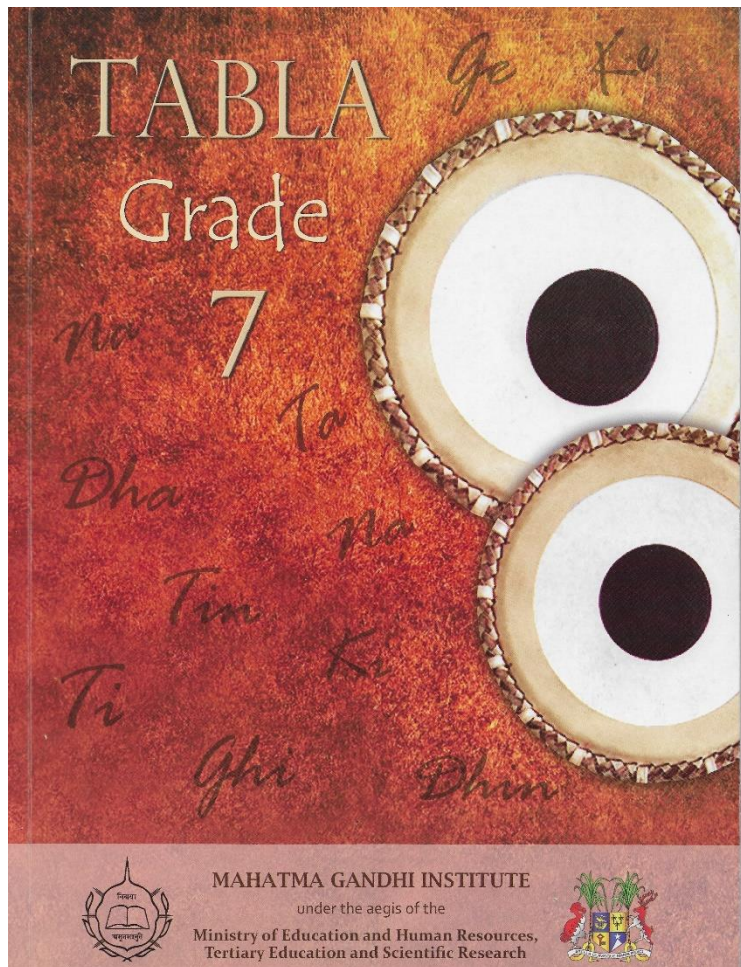


Grade 7 Textbooks to Learn Indian Musical Instruments
Sitar and Tabla

Published by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius
Project Coordinator: K. Mantadin

A Review by Swarna Thirumalai, M.A.



Importance of Instrumental Music

“Music is the food of love” says Shakespeare. Love is of many kinds. The first one is love of God, the second one is love between human beings. Music elevates human life, it brings

joy, and calms the wounded heart; it draws the human spirit closer to the great Spirit of the Creator God.

There are many musical instruments which add to the beauty of any kind of music. Here we shall see two books which talk, teach, help train young minds (and old ones also) to learn and train – to play instrumental music for the two Indian Classical Music genres, Carnatic Music and Hindustani Music.

Textbooks for Teaching/Learning Instrumental Music

These are textbooks written for seventh grade children. They are so tastefully and artistically presented with words, phrases and sentences attractively designed for the age group. The pictures, photos and all the graphics in the books are selected and presented in a very colourful and comprehensive manner. The children who read them and use them to learn to play these musical instruments of Indian culture as well as the teachers who teach them have much greater advantage over those who have no textbooks to neither teach nor learn these fine arts.

Very Skilled Team of Performers from Different Disciplines

Mr. Mantadin, the Project Coordinator and his writing team, Mr. Y. D. Yogeswar, Mr. S. Juggernaut and Mr. J. Lachmun, along with the graphic designers as well as the vetters, proofreaders, word process operator and others have all labored hard to produce these pioneering and unique textbooks.

Music and Textbooks in the Indian Subcontinent

We must recognize the fact that although Music is billions of US dollars-worth industry in the Indian Subcontinent, hardly do we come across any such well-developed materials in the Subcontinent. While we appreciate the fact that the traditional face to face instruction on individual basis under a guru or tutor is very important, we also need to recognize the social as well as the personal value of classroom instruction using relevant textbooks. Music learning (and teaching) is no more the privilege of specific castes and religious groups. Psychological and social advantages of music can be extended to all, through classroom instruction using well-trained and well-developed textbooks such as the ones under review here.

Note to the Educators

A special mention should be made of the “Important Note to Educators” at the end of book – in the Appendix. It has been carefully formatted to present the educators and the teachers with the goals and objectives of these books.

“The listening and viewing components have been integrated in the syllabus as it is a key factor in the development of music and dance abilities. Teachers should provide a wide variety of listening and viewing experiences for learners to

stimulate active listening and viewing through questioning, prompting and suggestion.”

The Note also carries 16 different, helpful suggestions to the educator to develop the talents of students, to “align their instruction with the Aims, Learning Outcomes and Specific Learning Outcomes by focusing on active learning and critical thinking”. It also talks about “enriching the musical experience of the students – using historical context of music and dance, explaining the personal connections with them.”

Contents of Tabla Grade 7 Textbook

Chapter 1 Music
Chapter 2 Musical Instruments
Chapter 3 Tabla
Chapter 4 Handling of Instrument
Chapter 5 Laya
Chapter 6 Taal
Chapter 7 Notation System and Padhant
Chapter 8 Theeka
Chapter 9 Compositions in Teentaal
Chapter 10 Sound
Chapter 11 Riyaaz
Chapter 12 Music in Mauritius and Around the Globe
Glossary of Terms
Appendix

Review

There are 12 chapters followed by a Glossary of Terms. Chapter 2 is fascinating in the manner in which it traces the birth of musical instruments from ancient times. A fine-tuned classification of musical instruments is presented which is of much interest, not only useful for the students, but for even the general public like the parents and others to take an interest in and delve into this special knowledge of the Indian Musical Instruments, just for the fun of knowing about their cultural heritage.

The 3rd Chapter is fully devoted to the presentation of **Tabla** in the Tabla textbook. Tabla is a tremendously intriguing, universally acclaimed musical instrument. The origin, evolution, structure and parts of the Tabla are presented in pictures and clearly marked for the students to view and learn. The uses of specific parts of the Tabla and uses of tabla accessories are well presented and defined with their names given in colours so the students are guided to learn these names of parts and uses easily and smartly.

Chapter 4 is “Handling of the Instrument” -- shows how you sit, how you place your fingers on the instrument, and it teaches the Alphabets of Tabla. The hand and finger positions on the Tabla reveal the positions of each finger and the differences between the right drum and the left drum. The resonant and non-resonant sounds are explained and instructions for producing the sounds on both drums are given succinctly with diagrams, colour use and graphic strokes.

Chapter 12 is one of the many fascinating chapters of these books. – “Music in Mauritius and Around the Globe”. Beautiful pictures of different kinds of music are interspersed in this chapter and students can gain much relevant knowledge of music in Mauritius and around the world.

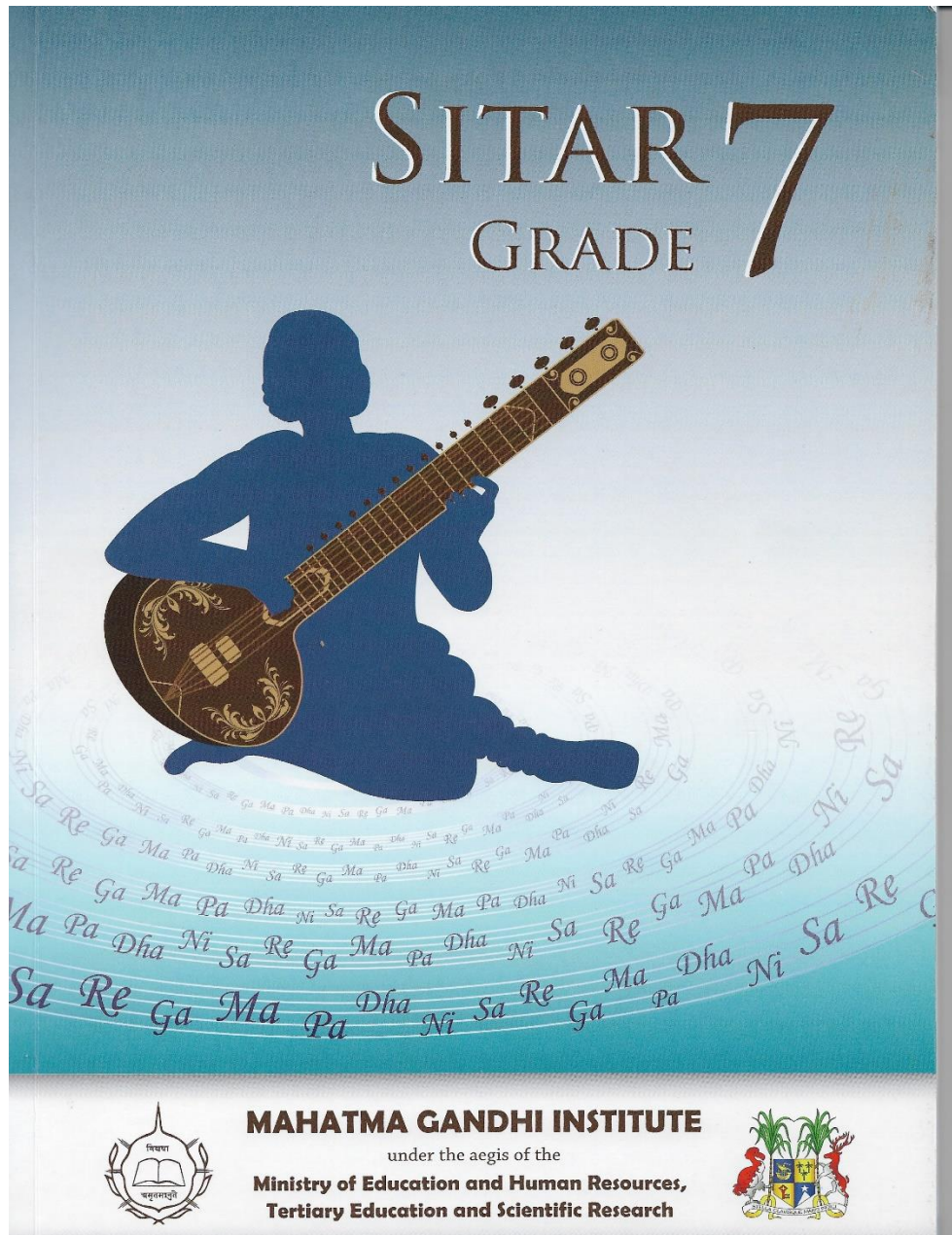
Senior Faculty Mantadin, the Project Coordinator and Head of the Department of Percussion Instruments in Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius, says in the Preface:

“This grade 7 textbook lays the foundation in each discipline and provides learners with the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to progress towards higher grades. It also takes into consideration the multicultural nature of our Society and its traditions.”

The purpose of the textbook is well-described: “This textbook is support material that gives direction to the educators in the teaching and learning process by linking the curricular components, curricular expectations, pedagogical principles and assessments”. In other words, the role of the teacher and the classroom and even the tests and examinations are not ignored.

The Coordinator Mr. Mantadin also declares, “The practical aspects of the discipline have been integrated under “**Practical**” with step-by-step technique laying emphasis on the mastery of skills from one level to another.”

The lessons are well-graded and use easy to understand simple language. Of course, the technical terms will take some time to master. Fortunately for the users of the textbook, there is a Glossary of Terms given at the end of the book. Lucid definitions/meanings are offered. This certainly is of immense help for the non-formal students who learn to play the instruments as well as for the private tutors who more often than not offer tuitions at home. I am glad that the multiple functions are well taken care of.



Sitar Grade 7 Textbook

Just as in the textbook on Tabla, the book on Sitar is also an attractive and unique endeavor. There are 10 Chapters as follows:

- Chapter 1 Music
- Chapter 2 Sitar
- Chapter 3 Nad and Shruti
- Chapter 4 Swara, Saptak and Ashtak

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 18:11 November 2018
Grade 7 Textbooks to Learn to Play Indian Musical Instruments Tabla and Sitar
Published by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius. Project Coordinator: K. Mantadin
A Review by Swarna Thirumalai, M.A.

Chapter 5 Varna and Alankar
Chapter 6 Raag
Chapter 7 Compositions
Chapter 8 Taal and Laya
Chapter 9 Notation System
Chapter 10 Classification of Musical Instruments
Glossary of Terms
Appendix

Chapter 2 is on **Sitar** – with a brief origin and history of its inception, growth and evolution. The parts of the instrument, their functions, the sitting posture, handling of the instrument, hand and finger positions, movements of both hands, as well as cleaning and maintenance of the **Sitar** are described in detail and made easy to learn with colourful, appropriate photos, diagrams and masterly graphic strokes.

As in the book on Tabla, the notation system for **Sitar** is well-explained here, and just as the educators will find it easier to teach Notation for Sitar. A very useful subsection presents the principles and practices of safety – very important for the young students.

In Chapter 5, Varna and Alankar are defined and described in a very thorough, interesting manner, for the seventh-grade students to understand and practice. In the same way in other chapters Swara, Saptak and Ashtak, Raag, Compositions, Taal and Laya as well as the Notation System are presented with illustrations and exercises. The last chapter, 10th Chapter presents an interesting and useful classification of Musical Instruments. This chapter is a prelude to the next level of textbooks, I believe.

In both the textbooks, each chapter contains exercises, then questions at the end to help the learners view, listen, learn and practice.

Goals and Processes

The Project Coordinator Mr. Mantadin and his team of educators, veters and other members have all put in much good work. As this is a novel project, from the work we see they have gone through many stages of formatting, changing, adding, and refining. We have a final splendid product in the form of these two textbooks. However, I do believe and hope that there is continuous tracking of the actual use of these textbooks in the classroom, identifying the difficulties of comprehension and practice faced by students, and recording the comments and observations, and suggestions of the teachers for future revision. Textbooks will always need changes, improvements, etc., also because of evolving backgrounds of the students and the other members of the target audience.

How About Textbooks for the Differently Abled Children and Adults as well as Older People?

In addition to the above, I would also like to suggest that the Mahatma Gandhi Institute should also pioneer producing some textbooks for the use of musical instruments by and for the benefit of the differently abled children and adults. Music, especially instrumental music, has an enormous positive effect on the behavior and performance of the differently abled persons. In addition, the older persons need also specially prepared textbooks to play and enjoy instrumental music. It will be an interesting and useful exercise to grade the traditional Naad and Swar, etc. to suit the needs of the differently abled and older individuals. In addition to the differently abled and older persons in the Republic of Mauritius, there are millions of differently abled and older persons in the Indian Subcontinent, who will benefit by this exercise. In addition, such work will be monumental contribution of the Department of Percussion Instruments of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Mauritius.

To Conclude

I would like to conclude this Review with an insightful statement of Mrs. Gyan, GOSK, Director-General, Mahatma Gandhi Institute and Rabindranath Tagore Institute, which clearly implies that Indian Music is for all and that Indian Music must be taught, learned and performed crossing ethnic, religious and caste barriers: “Students come from a variety of social and cultural environments which expose them to different types, genres and registers in the arts. ... at a time when the country is looking at new avenues for continued economic development and more importantly at new avenues to enhance equity, social justice and inclusion, it is our small contribution to the ‘grande aventure’ of holistic education.” Indeed, a pioneering contribution.

Swarna Thirumalai, M.A.
swarnadevi@comcast.net