



THE WINGED FORM

AESTHETICAL ESSAYS
ON HINBUSTANI RHYTHM

S. K. Saxena



As a professor of philosophy at the University of Delhi, where he started the teaching of aesthetics in 1964, Dr. Sushil Kumar Saxena (b. 1921) has made some significant contributions to metaphysics and philosophy of religion as well. This is borne out by his first book, *Studies in the Metaphysics of Bradley* (1967), published by George Allen & Unwin (London) and Humanities Press (New York) in their prestigious Muirhead Library series of philosophical works; and *Ever Unto God: Essays on Gandhi and Religion* (1985), brought out by the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, New Delhi. Since then Dr Saxena has published six more books, all alike focusing on Hindustani Sangeet, and written all along from the viewpoint of contemporary Western aesthetics. Most of these books have been published by Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi. His essays and reviews have appeared in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, *Religious Studies* (U.K.); *Philosophy East and West*; and *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* (U.S.A.). His final overseas article, 'A Reply to My Critics', appeared in the April 1979 issue of *Philosophy East and West*.

Dr. Saxena has been a regular contribution to *Sangeet Natak*, the journal of Sangeet Natak Akademi. For his scholarly contribution to our performing arts he has been honoured with the Fellowship of Sangeet Natak Akademi and the state honour Padma Bhushan in 2008.

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

*Studies in the
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Aesthetical Essays

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A Selective Study*

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Eight Essays in Aesthetics*

*Hindustani Sangeet
Some Perspectives, Some Performers*

*Aesthetics
Approaches, Concepts and Problems*

About the Book

This collection of essays, a thoroughly revised and enlarged version of its earlier edition (1979), is a pioneering treatment of Hindustani rhythm in the way of contemporary (Western) aesthetics. It seeks, on the one hand, to determine and distinguish the meaning of such key words as *laya*, *mātrā*, *bol*, *theḱā*, *sama*, and *layakāri*, and, on the other hand, to seize the details and aesthetic semblances of live rhythm as they appear to contemplation.

Some wider aesthetical questions have also been addressed in this book. How, if at all, can rhythm be regarded as an autonomous art? What are the elements of its winged form, and how can it yet appear steadfast and virtually motionless? Is it proper to speak of the art of rhythm as symbolic in its significance or as expressive in some distinctive way? Or, can it be said to 'embody' what it signifies?

Insofar as rhythm is fast becoming a vital subject of aesthetic reflection in the West today, the book also seeks to weigh the conflicting views of two modern aestheticians, Susanne K. Langer and Philip Alperson, against the theory and practice of *Hindustāni* rhythm.

Every lover of this specific genre of rhythm stands to benefit from a reading of this book. It would prove to be of value also to those who are interested in Kathak dance, for no other classical dance of India depends so manifestly on rhythm.