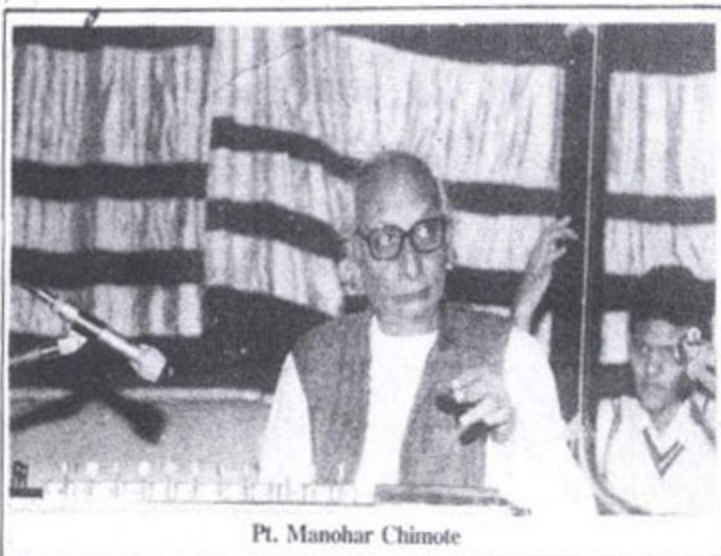


Samvadini just right for light music

By SUMIT SAVUR

The harmonium has had a chequered career in Hindustani music, although Maharashtra has always had a soft corner for it. The perfectionists have regarded it as an imperfect instrument and preferred the sarangi to the harmonium by virtue of the latter's *gayaki* potential, while the harmonium is incapable of sustaining a steady note akin to the human voice and woefully lacks the *meend* reproduction so essential in its role as an accompaniment to a vocalist. With all its avowed deficiencies, the harmonium has held its place principally because sarangi players are virtually an endangered species whereas the protagonists of the harmonium are in ascendency.

Maharashtra has been particularly blessed with a galaxy of gifted exponents of the harmonium which in-



Pt. Manohar Chimote

cludes Govindrao Tombe, Purshotam Walawalkar, Appa Jalgaonkar, Govindrao Patwardhan, Vasanti Mhapsekar (the foremost woman exponent of the instrument) and the late Ustad Ghulam Rasool whose name was inseparably associated with Ustad Faiyaz Khan.

We wish him luck in his missionary efforts.

MUSIC REVIEW

There are many more (too numerous to mention here) but the pioneer role of Pandit Manohar Chimote in popularising the harmonium has been singularly noteworthy. This 58-year-old maestro of the keyboard has toiled all his life to raise the harmonium to the level of a full-fledged concert instrument on par with the sitar, sarod and the like. He has done everything possible — to modify the keyboard, add strings within the sound box and innovated upon the very technique.

His improved instrument, significantly named the Samvadini can communicate a lot more than the humble harmonium. Though admittedly a vast improvement, the founder will realise that the establishment of the Samvadini Foundation to further raise the instrument to solo concert status may well prove a pipe dream.

The inaugural concert of the Samvadini Foundation was befittingly presented by Pandit Chimote himself on the auspicious morning of Buddha Purnima (May 13) at the Chhabildas School. He commenced his recital with raga Bairadi which essentially sounds like Marwa with a dash of Bibhas — a rather incongruous choice for an opening item. Although there was no denying Chimote's exceptional mastery, the limitation of even the improved Samvadini to sustain the mood was obvious from the fact that the *vilambit* lasted a mere 15 minutes and the *drut* a trifle longer. (The present-day sitarist lavishes an hour to 1½ while a flutist like Hariprasad has been known to spend 2 hours over a raga).

The Bhatiyar which followed was a short and sweet cameo lasting barely ten minutes long. Perhaps the most abiding impression was made by the Todi. The post-interval session was dominated by a *ragmala* like Pahadi *dhun* which revealed Chimote at his imaginative best. He was also at ease playing a light Marathi *dhun* which compels me to observe that perhaps the Samvadini is best suited for light music. Tanmoy Bose on tabla did not quite rise to the occasion this time.

In Bombay