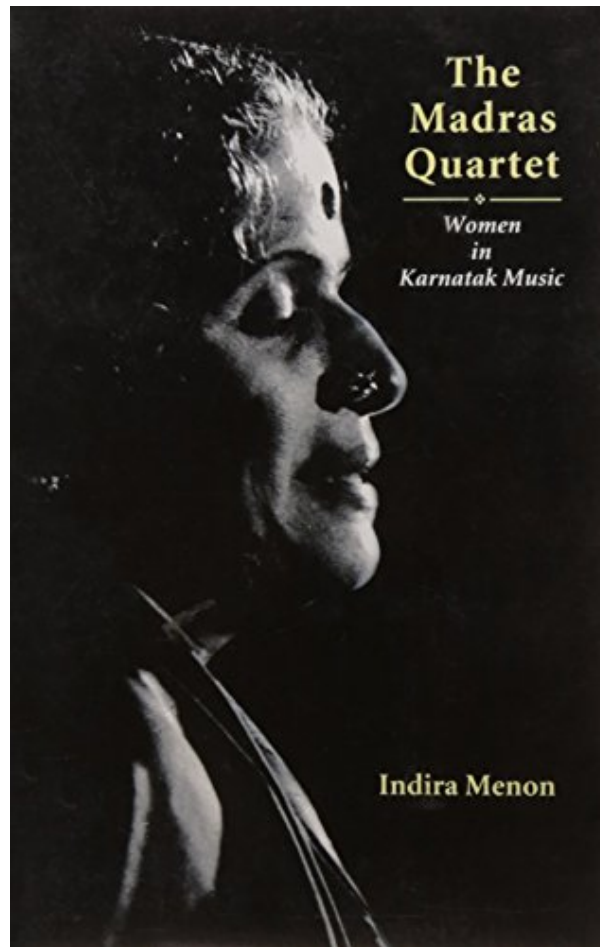
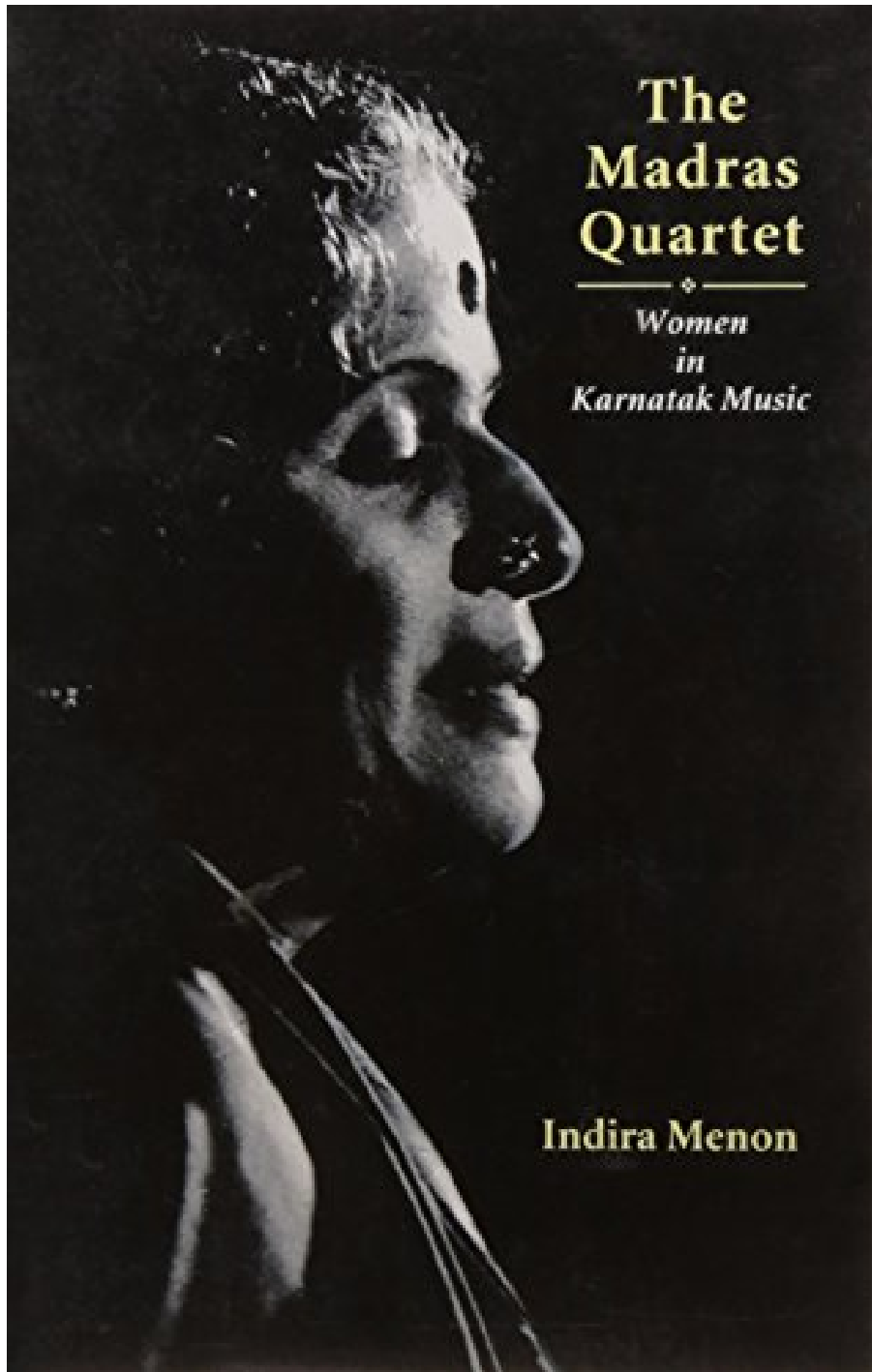


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on lives of women who have contributed to development of modern Karnatak music. lives and ideas

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This book is an introduction to women musicians of the Carnatic tradition. It is organized into 3 sections. The first section is a general history of Carnatic music, especially focusing on the Trinity composers, and later how women temple dancers lost their social status and subsequently transformed themselves to become respected classical musicians. The second section of the book provides a concise overview of Carnatic music theory, especially the varnam and kriti. It also includes information about the instruments used in Carnatic music, their history, structure, and playing techniques. The final section of the book takes up the biographies of the four women vocalists featured on the cover: M. S. Subbulakshmi, T. Brinda, D. K. Pattammal, and M. L. Vasanthakumari. These women did not actually form a quartet, but they were all well known musicians from Madras over the same time period. The descriptions of the women vary from biographical details to scholarly critique of individual performances. At the end of the book are appendices including a listing of charity concerts given by Subbulakshmi, a select discography of women musicians, a glossary, and a select bibliography.

The first two sections of the book do an excellent job of establishing the context that the women from Madras were working in. However, the linkages between the earlier sections and the remaining chapters are very weak. Menon also tends to name-drop occasionally, seeming to include mention of as many contemporary musicians as possible. On occasion, she also uses terminology that may not be clear to Western readers who have not studied Carnatic theory previously. Nevertheless, the book does an admirable job of describing how women came to be accepted in the male-dominated world of Carnatic classical performance- -without any help or influence by Western feminists. Menon also makes clear why one's musical heritage is so vital in Indian music by describing how ones learns not only style from one's teacher,

but also the very compositions themselves. Compositions are given to students as gifts from the guru, and thus they cannot be learned by outsiders unless "stolen" from recordings or the like. For this reason, and also to maintain the elite status of Carnatic music by controlling where it could be played, some Carnatic virtuosos would not allow any recordings of their music.

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