

WHAT IS A RAGA?

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There have been as many definitions of "Raga" as there have been writers on the subject. Of course I'm no exception! We can get pretty complicated and theoretical, but that way of approaching Raga is ultimately unsatisfactory. Let me start instead by mentioning two things that a raga is **not**.

A raga is **not** a scale or a mode. The notes used in a given raga may be the same as those used in another raga - yet the total musical effect will be totally different.

A raga is **not** a tune. There may be many tunes or compositions composed in particular ragas - and there may be particular compositions which express the character of a raga wonderfully - but the tune is not the raga; the raga is not the tune.

Okay. It's not a scale, a mode or a tune. What is it? I'll try and explain it first in a totally over-simplified fashion, and then elaborate further with a few analogies. Here comes a definition:

A raga is a collection of notes. Some notes are more important than others; some may have special rules for their treatment (e.g. "the flattened third is to be used only in descent, and played with a slow, undulating vibrato"). The raga may be expressed in scalar form; but in essence it is a flexible set of rules for melodic improvisation.

Are you confused yet? Let me see if I can clarify things a little bit with an analogy. I think of ragas as "melodic personalities." Just as you can recognize your friend Carol from 5 blocks away (even though she is very small at that distance), so a listener can recognize a particular raga from the first two or three notes. A person has particular moods, tendencies, likes and dislikes; he or she may prefer particular clothes, may be happier in the morning than in the night (or vice versa), etc. Similarly, a raga will have melodic phrases or movements which are commonly heard, and others that are heard only rarely. In one raga the third seems a place of relaxation - in another the same note has a quality of urgency. Thus each raga has moods and emotional flavors which guide an improvising musician.

Even though a person may usually wear certain kinds of clothes, or cultivate certain aspects of appearance, we do not think of them as **consisting** of these things. Similarly, although we can describe a raga by talking about its ascent and descent, particular preferred combinations of notes, etc., we can never capture the essence in words. Just so you get an idea, though, here's a revised description of a popular raga, taken from a reference book by the Indian musicologist Subbha Rao:

“Raga Hindol is pentatonic in ascent and descent. The second and fifth are omitted. The ascent & descent of Hindol are: 1, 3, #4, 6, 7, #4, 6, 8 — 8, 7, 6, #4, 3, #4, 3, #4, 3, 1. Typical sequences include: 6 -, 6 -, 7, 6, #4 -, 8 -, 6, #4, 3 -, #4, 3 -, 1. The two most important notes are 6 and 3. The sequence 8 - 6 is used frequently. The group #4 - 3 is repeated several times in descent. The 7 should not be elongated, otherwise it will sound like another raga; in ascent the 7 is usually taken in the following sequence: 7, #4, 6, 8, which is peculiar to Hindol. This raga is meant to be sung in the upper register, with emphasis and force. Its mood is one of dignity; it is a popular raga and meant to be sung after midnight.”

When you realize that there are hundreds of ragas in common use among Hindustani musicians, and thousands which are heard less frequently, you begin to see the richness of this musical tradition!

INSTRUMENTS

banauri: side-blown bamboo flute

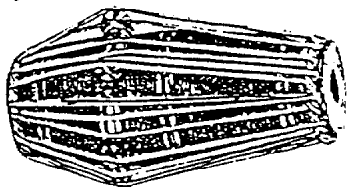
dholak: North Indian double-headed drum commonly used to accompany folk dances

ektal: one-string instrument, used to accompany songs of Bauls

ghatam: South Indian clay pot used as percussion instrument, played with fingers

harmonium: portable hand-pumped organ with Western-style 12-tone keyboard

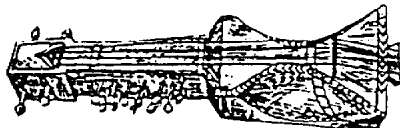
kanjira: Indian tambourine



mridangam: cylindrical, two-headed barrel drum; main South Indian percussion instrument

pakhawaj: similar to mridangam, two-headed North Indian cylindrical drum older than the tabla

santoor: North Indian cousin of hammered dulcimer



sarang: North Indian upright bowed string instrument; main accompaniment with region's vocal music

sarod: stringed instrument with hollow goat-skin-covered soundbox, played with a pick

shehnai: oboelike horn used in classical music and religious festivals

sitar: most popular stringed instrument in India; long-necked combination of melodic and sympathetically resonating strings played with a pick

surbahar: bass sitar

surmandal: zither- or autoharp-like instrument

tabla: most popular North Indian hand drum; consists of two variable-pitch drums, the right-hand tabla and left-hand bayan

tamboura: unfretted, stringed drone instrument heard in background of classical music performance

veena: ancestor of the sitar, still main accompanying instrument in South India

INDIAN Music Glossary

By no means a comprehensive list, this glossary is provided as a starting point for those coming to grips with the term-heavy world of South Asian music.

MUSICAL STYLES and GENERAL TERMS

alap: beginning of the raga, during which the player explores the melodic structure through serene, free-form improvisation without rhythmic accompaniment

Bauls: wandering religious minstrels of Bengal

bhajan: popular devotional music

bhangra: percussive dance-pop with Punjabi roots, developed by the Indo-Pakistani youth of the U.K.

bhangramuffin: hybrid of dancehall reggae and bhangra developed by Apache Indian and others

bol: scatlike syllabic vocalization representing drum strokes on percussion instruments

Carnatic: also *Karnatak*; classical tradition of South India

dhrupad: ancient classical North Indian vocal style accompanied by pakhawaj

film: literally film music; most popular style in South Asia and the diaspora

galnes: wandering bards of Nepal

gat: third part of fixed composition of the raga, during which the drums enter and the tala is established

ghazal: musical love poems, with origins in ancient Persia

Hindustani: classical tradition of North India

Indipop: fusion of Indian music and Western pop championed by Sheila Chandra

jhala: final movement and climax of the raga, a speed- and rhythm-oriented section before introduction of the main composition

Jor: second part of the raga, during which the rhythm is developed and the raga's theme elaborated

khyal: classical vocal music style of North India and Pakistan developed from dhrupad

kriti: most important devotional song form in South India; consists of three sections: *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and *caranam*

playback: film songs lip-synched by actors in Indian movies

qawwali: ecstatic religious music of the Sufi sect of Islam popularized by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, the Sabri Bros. and others

raga: literally "that which colors the mind;" the melodic form associated with definite time of day or season, on which classical player improvises his performance; there are tens of thousands of ragas in Indian music

rasa: main mood or sentiment of raga

sawal jabab: pyrotechnic interplay between sitar or other instrument and the tabla that takes place during the jhala

tala: fixed rhythmic cycles with regular pattern of beats and accents; there are hundreds of talas

thumri: light, romantic semiclassical vocal style, sometimes performed instrumentally



(Sources: Ali Akbar College of Music, the Music Circle of Southern California and Ira Landgarten. Thanks to Andy Krikun for his invaluable assistance and expertise.)

COMPILED BY TOM CHEYNEY

ASAMPLE OF HINDUSTANI
NOTATION AS DEVELOPED BY
V. N. BHATKHANDÉ

राग बिहाग—स्वरविस्तार

१. ग, रेसा, नि, सा, ग, मग, प, गमग, रेसा, सा, रेसा ।
२. निसा, ग, मग, प, गमग, निसा, गम, ग, मगप, पग,
मग, रेसा, निरेसा ।
३. निसाग, मग, प, गमग, निप, गमग, निसागम, धप,
गमग, प, गमग, रेसा, सारेसा ।
४. निप, नि, सा, गसा, गमगसा, निसागमपगमग, सा,
निसागमप, निप मप, गमग, साग, मपगमग,
रेसा, निरेसा ।
५. सा, निनिप, निसा, रेनिसा, ग, निसा, पग, मग, निसा,
निसागमपग, मग, निसा, सां, निप गमपगमग,
रेसा, सारेसा ।
६. निसाग, सा, ग, मग, प, गमग, नि, प, गमग, सां,
निप, गमग, गमपगमग, रेसा, नि, रेसां ।
७. निप, निसा, गमप, नि, सा, प, निसा, गमग, सा, सा,
प, गमग, सा, सां, निप, गमपगमग, सा, निसागमप-
निसारेंसां, निप, गमपगमग, सा ।
८. सा, निसा, रेसा, गमग, सा, गमपगमग, सा, गमपनि,
प, गमपगमग सा, गमपनिसां, गरेंसां, निप,
गमपगमग, रेसा ।

६. सासाग, मग, प, गमग, सागमपनिप, गमग, सागम, पनिसां, निप, गमग, सागमपनिसारैसांनिधप, मपधर्मप, गमग, प, गमग, रेसा, सा, रेसा ।

१०. सामगप, निप, सां, नि, प, रैसां, निप, गंसंगं, सां, निप, सां, निप, गमग, सागमपनिसां, गंसंपंगंसंगं, सां, निप, गमग, प, गमग, रेसा, सा, रेसा ।

११. निसागमप, गमप, निप, सां, निप, धर्मप, गमग, पंगं, मंगं, सां, निप, धर्मप, गमग, प, गमग, रेसा, नि, रेसा, ।

१२. सासागरेसा, सासागमरेसा, सासागमपगमगरेसा, सासागमपनिनि, पपगमपगगमरेसा ।

१३. निसागरेसासा, निसागमगरेसासा, निसागमपगमगरेसासा, निसागमपनिपप, गमपगमगरेसासा, निसागमपनिनिसारैसां, निधपगमपगमगरेसासा, निसागमपनिसांगंगरैसांनिधपगमपगमगरेसासा ।

१४. गमप, नि, नि, सां, सां, सांरैसां, गं, निसां, पं, गंसंगं, निसां, सां, गंसां, निप, सां, नि, प, ग, मप, प, गं, मंगं, सां, निप, ग, मप, ग, मग, सा ।

१५. सासा, प, मप, धप, सां, निप, रैसां, निप, प, गमग, नि, प, गमप, गमग, सा ।

१६. प, सां, सां, गं, सां, गंसंपंगंसंगं, सां, सां, रैसां, निप, सां, निप, गमपनिसांगं, मंपं, गंसंगं सां, निप, ग, मप, गमग, रेसा, सारैसा ।

१७. सा, गमग, पर्मगमग, गमपनिधपर्मपगमग, गमपनिसारैसांनिधपर्मपगमग, गमपनिसांगंगरैसांनिधपर्मपगमग, गमपनिसांगंसंपंगंसंगरैसांनिधपर्मपगमग, गमपनिधपर्मगरेसा ।

१८. सां, निसां, पनिसां, सांनिधपर्मगमपनि, सां, सांनिधपर्मगरेसानिसागमपनिसां, रैसां, गंरैसां, मंगरैसां, पंसंगंसंगरैसां, गंगरैसांनिधपप, गमपमगरेसा ।

राग—कोमल आसावरी

इस राग में ऋषभ, गांधार, धैवत और निषाद कोमल तथा अन्य सब स्वर शुद्ध लगते हैं।

जाती—ओडव-संपूर्ण वादी—धैवत संवादी—गांधार

समय—दिन का दूसरा प्रहर

राग का मुख्य अंग—ध म प मग रे सा

आरोह—सा रे म प निध, सा

अवरोह—सा नि ध म प मग, ग रे सा

विशेष—इस राग का सब चलन आसावरी की तरह ही होता है, केवल शुद्ध ऋषभ की जगह कोमल ऋषभ का उपयोग होता है। आसावरी के स्वरूप को कठिन बनाने के लिये ही उसमें कोमल ऋषभ लेकर गाते हैं। साधारणतया आराह में निषाद वर्जित रहता है। किन्तु इस नियम के अपवाद-स्वरूप “प ध नि ध म प ग” इस प्रकार निषाद लेने का प्रचार है। तथा जौनपुरी के ढंग के स्वरसमूह भी इसमें लिये जाते हैं। जैसे—“म प ध नि सा नि ध प।” इस का रस कलण श्रंगार है।

आलापः— १ सा नि ध नि धंसा, रे म ग म ग, ग रे ग रे रे नि
षानि सा

२ सार रे म ग म ग, ग रे रे म, प म ग ग, ग रे ग षानि षानि सा

३ सार रे म, प म तप, प नि ध नि धप, धु म प म ग, ग रे रे नि षानि सा

४ ग रे ग रे मप, म प ध नि धम, प ध नि षम, म प ध म ग म ग,
ग रे ग रे नि सा

५ सार रे म म रे म, मप ध नि धम, प धु नि सा, रे नि धप धम, म प
धु नि षम ग रे, रे म प धु म प ध म ग रे रे, रे नि सा

६ ग रे ग रे म मप, म प नि ध नि धप धम, म षप नि धप, धम, म षप

नि ध नि धंसा, नि सा रे, सा रे ग रे नि धंसा, सा नि धप धम,

म प ध धु प म प, म ग म ग, ग रे ग रे नि षानि सा

७ सा, रे म प नि ध नि धा धम, म प नि ध नि धंसा नि सा, रे षानि

षानि सा, रे म म ग रे ग रे षानि षानि सा, रे नि धप धम, म प धु सा

नि धमप ध, नि ध नि धम ग रे, ग रे ग रे षानि सा

८ म ग म ग रे सा, प म ग म रे सा, नि ध नि धप धम, सा नि ध नि ध

प धम, रे रे नि ध मप धम ग रे, ग रे नि, म ग रे, प म ग रे प रे षानि

षानि धमप धम ग रे, ग रे ग रे षानि सा

तानः— १ सार रे म ग रे सा, सार रे मप म ग रे सा, सार रे मप धमप

धम ग रे सा, सार रे मप ध नि धप म ग रे सा, सार रे मप सा नि धमप धम ग

रे सा, सार रे मप नि सा रे रे नि धमप धम ग रे सा, सार रे मप नि सा रे

ग रे ग रे नि धमप धम ग रे सा

१० रे रे मप प ध मप प नि धि ध मप प ध मप ध मप ग रे रे सा सा, रे रे

ममपपनिधिधसासांनि नि रे रे वि नि गंग रे रे नि नि मंगरे रे
रे वि नि धधममपपधधममगरे रे रे सासा

११ रेग रे-रेग रे नि सा-गंग-रे-रे-मपम-मपम-गंग-धनि
ध-धनिध-मम-नि सांनि-नि सांनि-धध-मपम-मपम-गंग-रे ग
रे-रे ग रे-नि सा

१३ सा रे मपधनि नि-धनि नि-धप-मपधनि सा रे रे-सा रे रे-नि ध-
सा रे ग रे-रे ग रे-रे ग रे-रे नि-धनि सा रे रे-सा रे रे-
नि ध-मपधनि नि-धनि नि-धमग रे-रे मपधध-पधध-मग रे सा

१३ ममग रे रे-धधममग-नि नि धधमम-सा सा नि नि धध-रे रे
सा सा नि नि-गंग-रे रे-मम-गंग-रे रे-नि नि-गंग-रे रे-नि नि-
रे रे-नि नि-धध-नि नि-धध-मम-पप-धध-मम-गंग-रे रे-
सासा

१४ पधध-पप-मग रे सा-धनि नि-पधध-मपप-मग रे सा-सा रे रे-
नि सा सा-धनि नि-पधध-मपप-मग रे सा

१५ सा रे रे-मम-मपप-पधध-धसासा-सा रे रे-रे ग-सा रे रे-
नि सा सा-धनि नि-पधध-मपप-गंग-सा रे रे-नि सासा

क्र. २० राग-कोमल आसावरी, लक्षणगीत; तीनताल (मध्यलय)
आसावरी भेद गुनि गात । कोमल री युत मधुर प्रकार ' गधनि ' मृदु
सुरन सोहत प्रात ॥ ४० ॥ नृप-मंत्री ' ध-ग ' सुरन सुहावत ॥ ओढव
सम्पूरन दिखलावत । भक्ति भरु करण मधुर भाव प्रगटावत ॥ १ ॥

सा रे म प सा वि धू प धू म प म गू ग रे सा ग रे ग रे
आ सा व री भे . द गु नि गा त को म ल

ग रे सा सा रे म प प नि धू प प वि धू धू धू रे नि सा नि धू प न
री यु त म धुर प्र का . र ग ध नि ष ड सु र

म प धू म गू रे सा सा रे म प सा वि धू प धू म प म गू ग
सो . ह त प्रा . त आ . सा . व री . भे . द गु नि

॥ अंतरा ॥

म म प नि धू धू सा सा रे नि सा सां वि धू धू सा रे
नृ मं त्री ध ग सु र न सु हा व त ओ ढ व सं प

गू ग रे सा रे नि धू प म म प सा नि धू प म म प
र न दि ख ला . व त भ क्ति अ रु क र ण

नि धू धू म प म गू रे सा सा रे म प सा
व प्र ग टा . त आ . सा . व री

Imagine an ocean: vast, deep, ever-changing, with unfathomable depths and currents, multitudes of life forms both known and mysterious, temperatures from frozen to tropical; ancient yet ever-renewing; giver of life and death and beyond.

That is Indian music, or more accurately, the music of the Indian subcontinent, including not only the giant nation of India itself but also Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and other smaller islands. Of all the world's regions, only Africa rivals India for a musical heritage reaching so far back in time, so varied and complex, and so closely interwoven into daily life yet imbued with meanings transcending mere physical existence.

The music of India, like the subcontinent itself, is actually a conglomeration of sounds and musical forms from many distinct cultures, from nomadic wanderers of

great deserts to tribal residents of subtropical jungles to villagers living on the slopes of the highest mountains on Earth. Ranging from the "primitive" to the most complex structures ever developed, from the ancient to most modern, the myriad of Indian musical genres defies categorization or analysis except by the most dedicated ethnomusicologist writing lengthy books or articles in the most scholarly academic journals.

This author is not such an expert, and *The Beat* is not such a scholarly journal. But it must be recognized that, in the explosion of interest in world musics over the past few years, Indian music has been largely neglected by Westerners, including those who are interested in music from other parts of the globe. There are any number of reasons for this, with the most common one being simple lack of

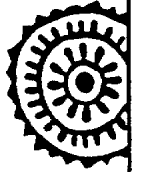
exposure. But India's beats are the ultimate beats; as any truly aware drummer will tell you, Indian rhythms are the most complex developed by humans. Layer some extended and intricate melodies, patterns and improvisations over the rhythms, all of this played on instruments distinctly Indian in sound, and you've got the basic ingredients. In the hands of accomplished players and singers, the music of India can be extremely rewarding for anyone willing to listen with open ears.

In light of the rich and lengthy history, extreme variety and overall complexity of much of Indian music, and how much of it there is to choose from, any brief exploration will unavoidably be superficial. Think of this article then as a mere dip of the toe into the ocean of Indian music, and then, depending on whether you like how it feels, maybe consider taking a deeper plunge.

Raga OBSESSION

A Whirlwind Tour
Through the Universe
of Indian Music

BY STEVE HEILIG



India's music is broadly divided into two geographically based traditions; Hindustani in the north and Carnatic (or Karnatak) in the south. The two forms are largely similar in form but use different instruments to play differing *ragas*, the basic musical form for Indian classical music. A *raga* (literally, "that which colors the mind") is a precise melodic structure with defined stages and fixed movements, meant to convey a particular mood, time of day or night or season, sometimes with a ceremonial or religious message or story. There are thousands of different *ragas* and hundreds of corresponding rhythmic cycles, or *talas*.

Learning to play music this complex on any instrument is a lifelong endeavor. By the time most Indian musicians are ready to perform or record, they have undergone intense training for many years or even decades, starting from early childhood. This process of studying with a master or guru is the *sadhana*, and only after learning many *ragas* and other fixed compositions does a musician begin to add their own personal interpretations and improvisations. Indian musicians find freedom only after much discipline.

Many of India's instruments are unique, and some are as complex as the music itself. The *sitar* is the most popular stringed instrument and was developed over thousands of years, reaching its current form more than 700 years ago; it has six main strings, 18 sympathetic or vibrating strings, and 20 movable frets. The *sarod* is carved from a single piece of wood, has 25 strings and is fretless. The *tamboura* or *tanpura* is a 4- or 5-stringed instrument used for the common drone background heard in much Indian music. The *sarangi* is also a string instrument and is played with a bow, like a cello. Other string instruments include the violin and *veena*, the South Indian ancestor of the *sitar*.

Indian musicians play a wide variety of percussion instruments, including common-looking clay pots (*ghatam*) and two-headed barrel drums (*mridangam*), but the *tabla* drums are the most popular percussives, with a *tabla* set featuring two drums capable of a wide variety of tones and flavors. Wind instruments, such as the *bansuri* or bamboo flute, are also common in some types of music.

Musicians playing these instruments must be capable of great concentration

since the extended movements in a developing *raga* require incredible feats of memory. After all, how many Western classical performers could recreate a Beethoven symphony without sheet music? The interactions in the *ragas* and improvisations of Indian music also demand great intuitive empathy with the other musicians as well as blinding speed in some of the *talas*. And in some of the traditional performances in India itself, great physical stamina is needed for concerts that may run for many hours into the night. But when the musicians are good and the audience is with them, time flies by as the endless variations and moods in the music draw everyone into the process of artistic creation.

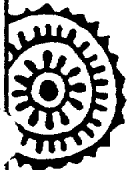


For many listeners in the West, Indian music has begun—and too often ended—with Ravi Shankar. Not that there is any better place to start; his virtuosity on the *sitar* is unsurpassed as are his vision and choices of musicians to play with. Beginning in the late 1950s, recordings by Shankar began to appear in the United

Continued on page 32



Raga partners
Alla Rakha and
Ravi Shankar
face off during
sawal jabab.



A WHIRLWIND TOUR OF INDIAN MUSIC *Continued from page 31*

States and Europe, with the most popular ones available on the long-demised World Pacific label. Some great music of that era is still available on budget Columbia recordings. These classical recordings became one of the hallmarks of coolness among beatniks and subsequent versions of hipsters, especially after George Harrison introduced sitar playing on several Beatles records.

The lure of the exotic resulted in Shankar appearing at rock festivals with some regularity, and Indian music briefly enjoyed a surge of Western interest. Some of that appreciation was superficial, as shown at concerts where the audience applauded wildly after the musicians finished tuning up but before any music had been played. Shankar was understanding about this, and on the recording of Harrison's *Concert for Bangladesh* (Apple), Shankar wryly responds, "Thank you, if you appreciate the tuning so much, I hope you will enjoy the playing more," and then launches into a wonderfully melodic and rhythmic performance.

The Indian music "fad" faded with the 1970s, but Shankar continued releasing many classical albums and crossing musical borders. He recorded well-received collaborations with such famous Western classical masters as Jean-Pierre Rampal and Yehudi Menuhin. In the 1980s he really took major strides into new realms. *Tana Mana* (Private Music) is a beautiful and accessible collection of shorter pieces played with a small multicultural ensemble and shows influences from several continents. *Inside the Kremlin* (Private Music) presents a monumental orchestral work showcasing the majesties of both Western and Indian classical traditions. *Passages* (CBS), with minimalist composer Philip Glass, is a mostly successful melding of two very divergent genres, with Shankar's stately themes played off against Glass' edgy orchestral patterns.

Probably the only other sitarist of equal renown is Vilayat Khan, who developed his own signature style of playing based on the human voice. He also sometimes lends his own voice in accompaniment to his playing. The recipient of many of India's and Europe's highest musical awards and accolades, Vilayat remains a simple and devout man. His latest recording is a stately and impassioned performance of the standard *Raga Bhairavi* (India Archive Music).

Shankar's most steady and famed accompanist has been tabla master Alla Rakha. Rakha's son Zakir Hussain is a tabla virtuoso in his own right and probably the next most prominent bearer of

Indian music to the West. Hussain still devotes most of his playing to classical forms, and his new Moment! label presents live recordings of Indian classical music at its best, played by Hussain and others.

[For reviews of two of Moment's first releases, see the vol. 11#1 issue of *The Beat*.] He is also heard in some classical and more modern settings on some excellent cassettes from Eternal Music, including one under his own name titled *Magical Moments of Rhythm*, and on veteran world-music unit Ancient Future's *World without Walls* (Sona Gaia/MCA). More recorded highlights of his border-blurring career include *A Handful of Beauty* (Columbia) and the recently reissued *Shakti*, with John McLaughlin (Columbia/Legacy) from Indi-jazz fusion group Shakti, *Diga* (Rykodisc) with the megapercussional Diga Rhythm Band and his own *Making Music* (ECM), a particularly beautiful collection of tunes and improvisations with



Simple beauty:
Hariprasad
Chaurasia brings
his bamboo
bansuri to life.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NIMBUS RECORDS

an all-star small group.

One of the stars in that group is Hariprasad Chaurasia, an unmatched master of the bamboo flute, a simple instrument converted into a sorcerer's wand in Chaurasia's hands. *Venu* (Rykodisc) is a live recording of an hour-plus long raga—accompanied by the ubiquitous Zakir Hussain—which unfolds leisurely and spell-bindingly. Perhaps even more enthralling is a Chaurasia tape simply titled *Classic and Devotional Flute* (Ravi Shankar Music Circle) since it features

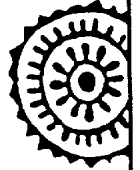
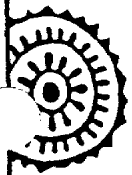
Double-violinist
Shankar:
Classical and
crossover.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSIC CIRCLE

not one but two master flutists trading endlessly varied riffs in another extended performance. His latest effort, with tablist Fazal Qureshi, is *Rag Bhipalasi* (Nimbus).

An intensely meditative journey is taken by sarodist K. Sridhar and violinist K. Shivakumar on *Shringar* (Real World/Virgin), a live recording of "Raga Bageshri" and "Raga Rhairavi" from the 1988 WOMAD world music festival.



This disc is quietly explorative all the way through. Violinist L. Shankar, a veteran of both Indian and Western ensembles, blends instruments and players from both traditions on *Soul Searcher* (Axiom), coming up with one of the few successful meldings of synthesizers into Indian music. He also has two recent classical outings on ECM, *Nobody Told Me* and *Pancha Nadai Pallavi*, as well as a newer crossover release, *M.R.C.S.*, on the same label. Another famous Indian violinist is Dr. L. Subramaniam, who has released many

classical and crossover records and whose most recent offerings are *Distant Visions* (Audiodisc), *Three Ragas for Solo Violin* (Nimbus) and the *Mississippi Masala* soundtrack on JRS. The two violinists are sons of the late V. Lakshminarayana, a pioneer of the instrument in Indian classical circles.

Ali Akbar Khan is a world-renowned sarod player who has long worked to have Indian music more widely heard in the West, and who has received awards for both recording and film soundtracks. The music college he founded, the Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael, CA, is one of the most important centers of learning about the Hindustani classical school outside of India. His latest recording, *Journey* (Triloka), is a particularly inviting melding of Indian and Western instrumentation. The melodies are based on Indian ragas and folk tunes and are alternately uplifting or meditative but always devotional. It's hard to imagine any listener with open ears not enjoying this music.

One of the Western musicians on Khan's disc is multi-instrumentalist Jai Uttal, whose own *Footprints* (Triloka) takes the music a little further west, or skyward, with a guest appearance by jazz trumpeter Don Cherry and a more electric approach that still retains distinctly Asian flavors. Khan also teamed up with jazz saxist John Handy and violinist Subramaniam on *Rainbow* (Verve), a delightful and uncharacterizable meeting of seemingly disparate musical worlds.

Sitarist Ashwin Batish has taken Indian ragas even further west with an album called *Sitar Power* (Batish, also Shanachie), a striking and stirring grafting of Indian instruments and melodies onto more standard rock rhythms. A potentially disastrous recipe, yet Batish makes it work with energy and humor on such cuts as "Bombay Boogie" and "Casbah Shuffle." "Sometimes there's too much mysticism and seriousness in Indian music," says the often irreverent sitarist. "Sometimes we have to lighten up." But Batish is also a serious and accomplished enough instrumentalist to record classical ragas with Zakir Hussain, as he does on *In Concert* (Batish), and to

Continued on page 35



L. Subramaniam has explored jazz, soundtrack music and Carnatic classical tradition.

Ashwin Batish, a formally trained sitarist who is not above irreverent experimentation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSIC CIRCLE



A WHIRLWIND TOUR OF INDIAN MUSIC *Continued from page 33*

accompany his famous vocalist father Pandit Shiv Dayal Batish on *Ram Bhajans* (Batish), a collection of devotional songs to various Hindu religious figures sung with great passion and melodic sense. Like Ravi Shankar, Pandit Batish had a connection with the Beatles, performing on the soundtrack to *Help*. This vocal music is extremely evocative of its place of origin.

The vocal music of the subcontinent is an entire musical world of its own, requiring another article to do it justice. In fact, much of India's instrumental music, and the intonations of Indian instruments themselves, is rooted in vocal music. There are many renowned vocalists in the Indian tradition, but I'll mention only a couple more artists already achieving some notoriety in the West.

Pakistan's Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is the king of *qawwali*, the devotional music of his Sufi Moslem faith, which entails some of the most impassioned and longest musical performances known to humanity. Khan's voice is a marvel and his concerts and recordings are the closest thing you'll find to a transformational experience in sound. Of his many recordings, *Shahen-Shah* and *Shahbazz* (both Real World/Virgin) are representative samples of what he and his group can conjure, and *Musst Musst* (Real World/Virgin) is an interesting venture into modern electric instrumentation. Much more worldly but also beautiful are the *ghazals* or romantic South Indian songs as rendered by the expatriate Indian-U.K. songbird Najma. *Jareeb* and *Atish* (both Shanachie) present her soaring vocals over backing that sometimes approaches outright funkiness.

And finally, yes, there is an Indian-reggae connection. "The link between the Indian raga system and the original beginnings of reggae—as in Rasta drumming and chants—is that they are both spiritual ceremonial music," maintains Michael Wadada, leader of the England-based *Suns of Arqa*, a kind of rotating multinational Rastavishnu orchestra. The *Arqans* have released about 10 albums, and of those, *India* (Rocksteady) and *Jaggernaut* (Antler) are prime examples of their dub/raga blend, where tablas and sitars meet drum and bass with assistance from a dizzying cast of characters and instruments. More recently,

Apache Indian's 12" platters have been garnering rave reviews in these pages and elsewhere, and English producer Adrian Sherwood's newest collection by the Dub Syndicate, *The Precinct of System* (On-U), features a haunting track explicitly entitled "Reggae Raga"—not the first such mix for this group, as the deep dub tune "Ravi Shankar" appeared on their classic *Tunes from the Missing Channel* (On-U).

All in all, Indian music is enjoying a level of popularity in the West unequalled since the

hazy days of the 1960s. In addition to the artists mentioned above, *filmi* music from the huge Indian moviemaking and soundtrack industry has enjoyed a recent upsurge of interest outside of the subcontinent, and on the cutting tip, the newest beats of *bhangra*—a hybrid music of young Eurasians—have been insinuating themselves into extended dance tracks to challenge the ears and feet of clubgoers worldwide. East may be East and West may be West, but the twain appear to be meeting right between our ears. ♦

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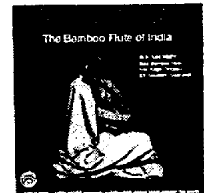
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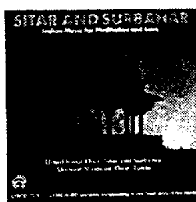
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DAVE PEABODY

Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan: Pakistani singer makes contact with the divine.

differentiated more by the nature of the improvisation associated with each than by the structure of their brief compositions.

Dhrupad is the oldest of the Hindustāni classical vocal genres heard today. Its direct forbear is thought to have been the *prabandha*, but there is no agreement on this—or on the components of the *prabandha*. Depending upon the time period or upon the source of information, *prabandhas* are thought to have consisted of several parts or just a few. Many classical treatises mention this ancient form of composition, but Indian musicologists and musicians do not know what *prabandhas* sounded like. The most common descriptions of them indicate that they consisted of four parts: an *udgrāha*, a *melāpaka*, a *dhruva*, and an *ābhoga*—in essence, a beginning section, a development and exposition-of-scale section, a fixed form, and an ending section. It is the *dhruva* that is supposed to be at the base of the development of *dhrupad*.

In the twelfth century, the last recorded exponent of the Gita music, the great poet Jayadeva, composed his Gita-Govinda in *prabandha* with just the *dhruva* and *ābhoga* sections, presumably because the first two sections of *prabandhas* had no text. Jayadeva has left compositions illustrating the *rāga* and *tāla* of each piece, but they are unintelligible to us today. Although there are no continuities that can be established, musicologists generally agree that *prabandhas* were at first sung in the temples but later evolved into *dhrupad* in the North and *kritis* and *kirtanas* in the South. Further, they note that another development of the *prabandha* style occurred among the Vaishnavite poets of Bengal in North India, who wrote *kirtans* that were sung in accompaniment to dance in the temples. In *kirtans* the stress was on the emotional content of the songs.

Dhrupad was and still is performed by one or two male soloists, accompanied on *tāmbūra* and *pakhāvāj*. (Formerly, accompaniment was also provided by a bin player.) Dhrupad is said to have been either a common type of temple music in the late fourteenth century or a regional variety of song associated with beggar minstrels.¹ It is also said to have been adapted for court performance in the reign of Rāja Man Singh Tomar (1496–1525), potentate of Gwalior (which is still a major musical center).

The majestic, dignified style of *dhrupad* appears to have been appropriate to the style of life in Mughal courts, where grandeur prevailed, martial heroes and loyalty were extolled, and prescribed rules of decorum and discipline were strictly observed. Mastery of *dhrupad* singing calls for developed breath control, strict adherence to rules of the *rāgas*, and meticulous rhythmic manipulation. Dhrupad texts blend noble sentiments with devo-

¹B. R. Deodhar, "Evolution in Indian Music," *Music East and West* (New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1966), p. 17; and O. Gosvami, *The Story of Indian Music* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1957), p. 124.

BONNIE WADE "The"
"Music in India: The"
Classical Tradition

SEVEN

PERFORMANCE GENRES OF HINDUSTĀNĪ MUSIC

The question that now arises is how the performers in their respective roles, the melodic and metric concepts, and the performing mediums are put together in the creation of music. Part of the answer lies in what type of music is sung, what type of music is played, and on what instrument and by whom music is played. This chapter is devoted to the genres of Hindustāni classical music that can be heard on recordings readily available in the West.

VOCAL GENRES

Following the Indian order of priority, and also historical succession, let us discuss vocal music first. In North Indian classical music, three genres of vocal music are especially important: *dhrupad*, *khyāl*, and *thumrī*. Each consists of a brief composition and a great deal of improvisation. They are

tional feeling, eulogy of patrons with praise of deities. By the reign of the great Mughal emperor Akbar, the dhrupad had become the most important genre of music performed in the North and was sung in both Hindu and Muslim courts by both Hindu and Muslim musicians. The genre retained its preeminent position until the eighteenth century, when its popularity declined noticeably.

The name dhrupad is given to a type of song that, like other types of Hindustāni songs, is composed in a rāga and tāla and has a text, but is longer than other types of songs. A dhrupad is composed with four sections: *sthāi*, *āntarā*, *sanchāri*, and *ābhog*. In contemporary practice, however, the *sanchāri* and *ābhog* are rarely sung, so the composition is reduced to two parts—*sthāi* (“permanent, steady”) and *āntarā* (“intermediate”). Today, a dhrupad is performed in a *sthāi-āntarā-sthāi* sequence.

The *āntarā* is composed so that melodically and rhythmically it can lead smoothly back to the *sthāi*. Example 7-1² is a dhrupad composition in a tāla that is particularly associated with dhrupad compositions. Chautāl has a cycle of 12 counts (2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2 + 2), as explained in Chapter Six. In Example 7-1, both the *sthāi* and the *āntarā* take four cycles of the tāla; the final cycle is the return to the *sthāi*. The *sthāi* of this dhrupad begins on count 1 and ends on count 12 in order to connect smoothly with the *āntarā*, which also begins on count 1.

Dhrupad is also the name given to a performance that includes improvisation as well as the dhrupad composition. The sequence of the performance is as follows:

improvisation—dhrupad—improvisation
(*sthāi-āntarā-sthāi*)

The improvisation that precedes the dhrupad is related to it only by choice of rāga. Tāla and text become part of the performance when the dhrupad composition is sung, and they continue to be vital in the final improvisation. Accordingly, there is a progression in the performance from no meter to meter, and from no text to text.

The improvisation that precedes the dhrupad is called *ālāp*. *Ālāp* is an intense re-creation of all the things a rāga is, specifically the rāga in which the dhrupad is composed. The performance begins with the quiet sound of the *tāmbūra* intoning the drone. Then a prolonged *madhya Sa* by the vocalist focuses concentration at the beginning of the *ālāp*. Progressing very slowly, the singer gives thoughtful attention to each pitch, each turn of melody associated with the rāga, and establishes the mood of the rāga

²Transcribed by the author from Philips recording 6586003, *North India: Vocal Music: Dhrupad and Khyāl*. The dhrupad was sung by Ustad Mohinuddin and Aminuddin Dagar. Example 7-2 was also transcribed from this performance. Rhythmic durations notated in Example 7-2 are only relative, and are given the values ♪ ♪ ♪ .

EXAMPLE 7-1 Dhrupad: “Manusha ho to vohi”

Rāg Kāmbhōji

Sthāi *Very slowly and legato*

Ma - a - nu - sha ho to vo -
hī - ī Ra - sa - khā - na ba -
sū Bra - ja Go - ku - la -
gā va ke gvā - la na /
Ahtarā
Jo pa - sū ho to ka -
hā ba - sa me - ro ca -
rū ni - ta Na nda yī
dhe nu ma - ja hā - ra na //
Ma - a - nu - sha ho to vo hī etc.

accordingly. The rhythm is free, ever changing, floating, gliding on the syllables na, re, de, ri, and so on. From Sa the few pitches around Sa, mostly down into the tetrachord below, are emphasized as the singer explores the low register (mañdra saptak) and the descent of the rāga, as shown in Example 7-2. When the singer tires of the lower register and wants to dwell more in the middle register (madhya saptak), he finishes the segment with a brief melodic phrase called a mohrā (bracketed in Example 7-2), and then begins to add pitches higher and higher. The ascent of the rāga is thereby made clear.

The mohrā is the only element in the ālāp that makes one mindful of periodic temporal proportions. Although the rhythm of the melody is free, the melody as a whole is never aimless, and the return to the mohrā provides a structure of a cadential sort.³ Occasionally during the ālāp, the pakḥāvāj player will quietly tap his drum just at the moment that Sa occurs in the mohrā, thus inconspicuously underlining the periodicity. This action is called sam-ālāp. Since the drum is tuned to Sa and the tap is quiet, it is very subtle indeed. Otherwise, the drummer remains still in his place at the side of the singer, and listens to the music intently along with the audience.

EXAMPLE 7-2 Ālāp in Rāg Kāmbhojī

³In a recent study of the temporal units in ālāp, Shirish Korde of Brown University found more regular periodization between mohrā than the free-floating rhythm of the melody would suggest. The study was based on his transcriptions, completed as part of an Independent Study with me at Brown University, 1974-75.

EXAMPLE 7-2 (Cont.)

The singer's goal in ālāp is to reach Sa of the upper register (tār Sa), then to go even beyond that into tār saptak. He prolongs his attainment of the goal by flirting with dha or ni, then withdraws, tantalizing the audience (who know what he is doing). At the finish of each melodic "thought" comes the mohrā. If the artist is very good, his arrival at tār Sa can be extremely climactic.

Very gradually, the speed of the singing has been increasing, the melodic units becoming more extensive and including more pitches in a sweep. Then we realize that free melody is beginning to give way to melody with a more purposeful rhythm. By that time the rāga is firmly in our mind, if we have been listening carefully.

When the singer feels that the rāga has been explored sufficiently, he eases without pause into the second portion of the ālāp, called *nom-tom-ālāp*. Here, he initiates a definite rhythm by enunciating repeated pitches along with repeated vocables. Nom-tom-ālāp is demonstrated in Example 7-3, which is transcribed from a performance by Ustads Mohinuddin and Aminuddin Dagar on Bärenreiter BM 30L 2018.

EXAMPLE 7-3 Nom-Tom-Ālāp

Rāg Āśāvārī

(Ālāp →) Nom-Tom Ālāp (→ Dhruvad)

EXAMPLE 7-3 (Cont.)

de ne ne de ne de ne de ne de ne na
de ne ne de ne de ne de ne de ne de ne de ne na
de ne ne de ne de ne de ne de ne de ne de ne de ne de ne de ne de ne de ne etc.

Following the nom-tom-ālāp is the dhrupad. The drummer enters the performance now, since the dhrupad is metered. Example 7-4 is a partial transcription of a dhrupad composition in Rāg Bhairavī. This composition would be referred to by the first few words of the text—"Jagata janani." The complete sthāi and āntarā texts are as follows:

Sthāi:

Jagata janani jvāla mukhī
Mata Sarasvatī sharada vīdya
Deni dayānī dukha haranī/

O thou, who created the world, our
mother with a face of light, Sarasvatī,
from whom all knowledge flows, the
bestower of gifts, our shelter,
Thou takest away all our pain.

Āntarā:

Jo hi jo hi mangata sohi
Phala pavata mana ichha
Purana karani dukha harani/
Everyone obtains from thee the fruits
he asks for. Thou fulfillst the desires
of our mind. Thou takest away all our
pain.

BAIJU BHAVARE (16th. c.)

"Jagata janani" is in tivra tāl of 7 counts—3 + 2 + 2 ($\overset{x}{\underset{3}{\text{J}}}$ $\overset{x}{\underset{2}{\text{J}}}$ $\overset{x}{\underset{2}{\text{J}}}$). Tivra tāl differs from rūpak tāl in that it begins with a tāli rather than a khāli. The portion of the performance transcribed in Example 7-4 includes sixteen cycles of sthāi and twenty-one cycles of āntarā. In the last cycle of Example 7-4, the singer returns to the sthāi. (This performance is on Bärenreiter Musicaphon 30L 2018.)

EXAMPLE 7-4 Dhrupad: "Jagata Janani"

Hindustānt Rāg Bhairavī, Tivra tāl
Sthāi Nī Sa Gab Ma Pa Dha Pa $\underset{3}{\text{L}}$
Ja - ga - ta ja - na - nī jvā - la - - a mu -
x (1st phrase repeated) $\underset{3}{\text{L}}$
khī / Ja - ga - ta ja - na - nī jvā - la - - a mu -
x (1st phrase repeated) $\underset{3}{\text{L}}$
kkē ja - ga - ta ja - na - nī jvā - la - - a mu -
x (Remainder of Sthāi presented) x $\underset{3}{\text{L}}$
khī Ma - - ta Sa - ra - sva - tī sha - -
x ra - da vi - - dya - - a de - -
x ni da - yā - - nī du - kha ha - ra - nī
x [Cadence $\underset{3}{\text{L}}$] (Improvisation on Sthāi text)
/ Ja - ga - ta ja - na - nī Ma - ta Ma -
x [Cadence $\underset{3}{\text{L}}$] Further improvisation
a / Ja - ga - ta ja - na - nī/
x [Cadence $\underset{3}{\text{L}}$] on Sthāi text:
Sa - ra - sva - tī sha - - ra - da

EXAMPLE 7-4 (Cont.)

Mata Sarasvatī sharada
 sharada jagata janani/
 Mata Sarasvatī sharada jagata jana
 Mata Sarasvatī sharada jagata janani/
 Mata Sarasvatī sharada
 sharada (3 times)
 Mata Sarasvatī sharada
 sharada (2 times)
 sharada jagata jana (to Āntarā.)

Āntarā
 Ma 2 Dhab 3 Nib Sa
 Jo - - hi Jo - - hi man man - ga - ta /
 (Improvisation on Āntarā 1st phrase)
 Jo - - hi Jo - - hi man - - a -
 - - ga - ta man man -
 (Āntarā cadence phrase)
 - - ga - ta man - ga - ta / Jo - hi Jo - hi -
 [x] man / a man - - ga man - - ga - ta man - ga - ta/
 (Āntarā 1st phrase repeated)
 Jo - hi Jo - hi man / a man - ga - ta so - hi pha -
 la - a pa - - va - - va - ta
 ma - na pa - va - ta ma - - na pa - va -
 ta (Ēntire Āntarā presented) x
 Jo - hi Jo - hi man - - ga - ta

EXAMPLE 7-4 (Cont.)

so - - hi pha - la pa - - va - ta
 ma - na - a ich - ha pu - ra - na ka - ra - ni
 du - kha - ha - ra - ni / Ja - ga - ta ja - na - ni.
 (Improvisation x would continue)

Rāg Bhairavī is an old rāga that was formerly a favorite for dhruvad compositions. It is now considered a “light” rāga, appropriate for thumrī compositions, and a good one with which to end a concert. Tradition classifies it as a late-morning rāga, but as it is sung to end concerts, it has become acceptable at night, too. Bhairavī is a sampūrṇa rāga, having seven pitches in ascent and descent, the same pitches, of course, as those of the thāt by that name: Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, and Ni. Pitches Ma and Sa are said to be vādīs, but in this composition Pa seems much more a focal point than Ma. Two phrases that are particularly characteristic of Rāg Bhairavī and that enter into this dhruvad are Ni Sa Ga Ma Pa Dha Pa (see the beginning of the song) and Ga Ma Dha Ni Sa (with which the āntarā begins).

Most dhruvad compositions begin not on count one of the tāla cycle, but several counts before. The singer starts the sthāi at the speed he wants, and the drummer joins him at count one. That first phrase of the sthāi up to and including count one is used as a cadence phrase as long as the artist remains in the sthāi. In Example 7-4, that cadence phrase is “Jagata janani,” which also happens to be set to a characteristic Bhairavī melodic phrase. Since the cadence phrase recurs many times, a characteristic phrase of the rāga will be reiterated.

The artist(s) presents the entire composed sthāi and then, using the sthāi text, improvises melody. To say, “the artist is singing sthāi” in the process of improvisation does not mean that he is singing the composed sthāi melody; it means he is improvising, using the text of the composed sthāi.

After improvising in sthāi, the artist presents the second segment of the composition—the āntarā (as indicated in Example 7-4). The beginning of an āntarā is noticeable because it is a direct ascent from Ma or Pa to lār Sa (following, however, the pitches and shape of the particular rāga, as this āntarā does). While the āntarā is being presented and its text manipulated in improvised melody, the first phrase of that section is used as a temporary

cadence—in Example 7-4, “Jo hi jo hi man.” When the *āntarā* is finished, the first phrase of the *sthāi* resumes its role.

After the return to the *sthāi*, improvisation remains for the most part in the *sthāi*. It is rhythmically oriented, featuring mathematical subdivisions of the beats as well as subtle cross-rhythms. Acceleration usually does not take place except through increased rhythmic density. The text is stated clearly throughout the improvisation. The types of improvisation are called *bolbant*, “playing with the words,” and *bolāns* (creating *lāns*, using the words for rhythmic purposes). Throughout, the rules of the *rāga* are strictly observed. On phonograph recordings, the *ālāp*-*dhruvad* sequence is usually allotted only the time of one side of a disc, but in live performance it lasts an hour or more. (The improvisation in the *dhruvad* recording transcribed in Example 7-4 scarcely gets under way, and little rhythmic manipulation is done.)

A genre very similar to *dhruvad* is *dhāmār*.⁴ Like *dhruvad*, *dhāmār* is invariably preceded by a lengthy *ālāp*. *Dhāmār* are songs about the playful Lord Krishna that are heard mostly at Holi Festival time, when spring is in the air. In the following text, “the dark skinned boy” is Krishna, the King of Vraja (Braj), the area where Krishna was born.⁵

Come, my love, we are going to
the King of Vraja!

What are these rumoring voices to you?

Someone will say, she has gone to
the dark skinned boy,

But that will be all they can say.

Dhāmār are almost all in *dhāmār tāl*, a cycle of 14 beats with irregular subdivisions—5 + 2 + 3 + 4—that lend the songs a rhythmic lilt.

Through the influence of Tansen, the great *dhruvad* *gāyak* (*dhruvadīyā*) who sang in Akbar's court, the *dhruvad* traditions were first associated with the area of Agra-Delhi. By the end of the eighteenth century, when the Mughal court was in decline, many musicians had left Delhi for the courts of other princes to the west and east. One *dhruvad* tradition came to be associated with a region in Southwest Bengal, and the other—that of the

⁴One other form, which I do not discuss here—mainly because it is seldom heard, especially outside of India—is a style of singing known as *tappā*. It is considered a rather difficult song style, and has been called a form akin to *dhruvad*. *Tappā* is supposed to have originated in a type of song sung by camel drivers. A fine—and rare—recording of a *tappā* sung by the famous Hindustāni vocalist Siddeshwari Devi can be heard on Bärenreiter-Musicaphone recording BM 30SL 2052, *An Anthology of North Indian Classical Music*, Vol. II.

⁵Krishna is often depicted as being blue. Scholars have suggested that he was a god of one of the pre-Aryan (possibly Dravidian) peoples. The *dhāmār* whose text I have reproduced can be heard on (and read from the notes of) Bärenreiter-Musicaphone recording BM 30SL 2051, *An Anthology of North Indian Classical Music*, Vol. I.

Dagar family—with Rājasthān. Also, since the time of Tansen in the sixteenth century, most traditions of classical music in North India have been maintained by families of professional musicians, such as the Dagar family. These musicians are now frequently referred to as members of a *gharānā*.⁶

Members of the Dagar family are now the most prominent *dhruvad* singers. In recent decades, two sets of brothers have maintained the family traditions. Moinuddin and his younger brother Aminuddin first studied with their father, then with their mother's brother, then with their father's brother. They became inseparable and always performed together. In 1964, Moinuddin and Aminuddin toured Europe for UNESCO, and recordings of their singing have been released gradually by that organization. During that tour Moinuddin suffered a heart attack; he died two years later. Since then, his brother has lived in Calcutta and has concertized alone. The younger set of Dagar brothers, Nasiruddin and Faiyazuddin, also perform together. They live and teach in Delhi.

The second major genre of North Indian classical vocal music is *khayāl*, the most prominent vocal genre of Hindustāni classical music for the past two hundred years or so. The musical traditions that contributed to its evolution in the Mughal courts are somewhat of a mystery. It has been claimed that *khayāl* was a combination of *qawwālī* (a florid style of Muslim religious song) and *dhruvad*.⁷ *Khayāl* found official acceptance at the eighteenth-century court of Muhammad Shah in Delhi. Legend relates that a *bin player* at that court, Nyamat Khan, had rebelled against his subordinate position as an instrumentalist (which relegated him to sitting behind the vocalists at court) and had left his post. Nyamat Khan began training two young boys to sing an improvised type of *khayāl* that he had conceived. In time, the boys became master artists and sang the *khayāls* to numerous audiences. So artistically did they perform and so appealing were their voices that praise for their singing gradually filtered into the court of Muhammad Shah. The shah invited them to sing, and was so impressed that he asked them to be court musicians. Only later did he learn that the new musical creation the boys had rendered so beautifully was an innovation of Nyamat Khan. The reaction of the shah was to offer Nyamat a seat of honor and to relieve him from his subordinate position as an accompanist. Thereafter,

⁶A *gharānā* refers to a particular “house” or school of classical performance practice, as well as to a particular family of musicians. As we noted in Chapter Six, another term, *bāji*, refers to the manner of playing the instrument. To many Indian musicians, the two terms are interchangeable. Understandably, considerable confusion results. For a study of the *gharānā* as it is embodied in the family, see Daniel Neuman, *The Cultural Structure and Social Organization of Musicians in India* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1974).

⁷*Qawwālī* is a song style that has existed in India since the earliest days of Muslim rule. It is characterized by rapid, florid, and lengthy passages up and down a male singer's range (similar to *tāns*) and male-chorus refrains repeating the main theme of the song. *Qawwālī* is sung particularly at tombs of Muslim saints, but it also enjoys widespread popularity today in North India, and particularly in Pakistan.

Nyamat played solos and for the first time gave the bin a place of its own in court. He was given the honorific Sadarang, "ever gay."

The topics of khyāl texts range from praise of kings and praise or description of the seasons to the pranks of Lord Krishna, divine love, and sorrow caused by the absence of a beloved. The brief text lines contain rhyme, alliteration, and frequent plays on words. The most surprising thing about khyāl is that although it was developed by Muslim musicians in Mughal courts, most of its texts are on Hindu subjects, primarily Krishna. Khyāl offers proof that, at least in this musical instance, relations between the two communities were being ameliorated.

There are two types of khyāl performances: *barā* ("large") and *chhotā* ("small"). In either case, a khyāl consists of a composition (*chiz*) of two sections—*sthāi* and *āntarā*—and extensive improvisation. It differs from *dhruvad* in one significant way: no lengthy unmetered *ālāp* precedes the singing of the composition, except in the Agra gharānā. Singers introduce the *rāga* for a few seconds, and occasionally, for as long as five minutes but the exposition of the pitches rarely exceeds pitch Pa of the middle octave and is often merely an anticipation of the melody of the *chiz*. Since the *chiz* is sung immediately, and since all *chiz* are metered songs, all of the improvisation in khyāl is metered and accompanied on *tablā*.

The two types of khyāl performance are distinguished primarily by the basic level of speed at which they are sung and by the type of improvisation that follows the *chiz*. *Barā* khyāl is sung in slow speed (*vilambit laya*) or medium speed (*madhya laya*). In slow speed, each count of the *tālā* is divided into four beats; this can be heard clearly in the *tablā* part.⁸ In medium speed, each count of the *tālā* is either subdivided into two beats or receives one beat. *Chhotā* khyāl is always in fast speed. It receives one beat per *tālā* count but moves at a much faster clip than medium speed. *Barā* khyāl is usually in *tintāl*, *tilwārā tāl*, *ektāl*, *jhūmrā tāl*, or *jhaptāl*; *chhotā* khyāl are almost invariably in *ūntāl* or *ektāl*.

Before discussing the differences in improvisation, between *barā* and *chhotā* khyāl, let us look more closely at the *chiz*. Example 7-5 is a *chiz* in *madhya laya*. The *chiz* is very short. It presents in song form the characteristics of the *rāga* and *tālā* in which it is composed. In particular, the first section of the *chiz*, the *sthāi*, states the melodic bundle of the *rāga*. The second section of most *chiz*, the *āntarā*, are very similar in shape, ascending to *tār Sa* in a manner peculiar to the *rāga*, going higher into the upper octave, then descending to link with the *sthāi* again.

⁸The khyāl *chiz* in Example 3-2 is in slow speed. For readability in Chapter Three, I inserted a barline halfway through it, but the melody as transcribed there should all be in one *tālā* cycle. Each of the 12 counts in *ektāl* is divided into 4 counts, so a complete cycle is 48 pulses (each a J there). This extremely slow speed is heard only in *barā* khyāl, and is a fairly recent phenomenon. Medium-speed performances of *barā* khyāl more closely resemble the old style. See the author's "Chiz in Khyāl: The Traditional Composition in the Improvised Performance," in *Ethnomusicology*, XVII, 3 (Sept. 1973), pp. 443-459.

"Bāje jhanana," the *chiz* transcribed in Example 7-5, is in *Rāg Jaunpuri*, which was supposedly named after the town Jaunpur (whose Sultan tried to popularize khyāl many years before it was accepted at other courts), and is particularly associated with khyāl.⁹ Most *chiz* composed in Jaunpuri start with an initial rise to high in the middle octave—many to *tār Sa*, as this one does—and then descend. Pitch *Ga* is avoided in ascent, so the *āroha* and *avāroha* are as follows:

Sa Re Ma Pa Dha Ni Sā
Sā Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Re Sa.

This can be seen by tracing *Ga* through the *chiz* in Example 7-5. *Ga* descends on beat thirteen (notated 3) of the first cycle of *tintāl*, and again on sam (X) of the second cycle. It is avoided in the second segment of the second cycle (counts 5 to 8), in the ascent Sa Re Ma Pa Dha. It does not occur again until the next-to-last count of the third cycle. Here, it might appear to be in ascent *Sā Rē Gā*, but when a pitch is at the pinnacle of an ascent, followed by descending melody, it is considered descending. *Ga* is in descent in the remaining two *tālā* cycles in Example 7-5.

Rāg Jaunpuri is a late-morning *rāga* that is classified with *Āsavari* *thāt*: Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni. The *vādīs* of Jaunpuri are said to be *Dha* (and *Ga*), and in Example 7-5 *Dha* is indeed prominent. The role of *Sa* is also strong in this *chiz*, even though it is not strong theoretically. This is an example of the theoretical ambiguity surrounding pitch *Sa* in Hindustāni music.

Although pitch *Ni* is considered to be in the ascent of *Rāg Jaunpuri*, its treatment is particularized. As shown in Example 7-5, it does not occur in the ascent directly to *tār Sa* from below; rather, the melody goes directly from Pa to *Sā* (as in the *mukhṛā*), or from *Dha* to *Sa* (see text "dore" in the second *tālā* cycle). The usual occurrence is for *Ni* *Sa* to follow the ascent from Pa or *Dha* to *Sa*, as follows: (Pa) Dha Sa Ni Sā, with *Ni* a lower neighbor tone to *Sa*. It also recurs in the ascent *Ni* Sā Ri. In this *chiz* melody, the phrases that avoid *Ni* in ascent lend melodic contour. The first phrase of *sthāi* Pa Sā Dha is parallel to the frequent progression in the lower tetrachord *Ri* Pa Ga, but the ascent Ma Pa Dha Sā is not parallel to the lower tetrachord Sa Ri Ma Pa.¹⁰ This *chiz* is constructed with considerable melodic interest.

In the performance transcribed in Example 7-5, the artist sang the *sthāi*, followed it immediately with the *āntarā*, then returned to the *sthāi* for improvisation. Other artists might present the *chiz* in a different format:

⁹Transcribed by the author from a tape in a private collection.

¹⁰For an important theoretical idea concerning balanced and unbalanced tetrachordal structure in *rāga*, see Nazir Jairazbhoy, *The Rāgs of North Indian Music* (Middle-town, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1971). His example of Jaunpuri (p. 170) shows similar treatment of *Ni* in ascent.

EXAMPLE 7-5 Barā Khyāl Chiz

Hindustāni Rāg Jaunpurī, Tintāl (Madhya Laya)

The musical score for Example 7-5 is presented in seven staves. The lyrics are written in Devanagari script below the notes. The score includes various musical notations such as 'x' for accents, '3' for triplets, and 'a' for a specific note. There are also bracketed sections labeled 'Mukhṛā x' and 'Añtarā'. The lyrics are: Bā - je jha - na - na jha - na - na na - na ba . . . je pa . . . ya mo . . . re ra - ja - du - la - ri [Mukhṛā x] Añtarā do-re an - ga - nā - vā / Bā - je jha - na ma - na ma . . . ma . . . tah . . . ga ma - t vā . . . ro hi do . . . re i . . . na nai - na - na chha . . . vi a - ta hi [Mukhṛā x] (Return to Shāi) chhā - t / Bā - je jha - na / [Mukhṛā x] Bā - je jha - na / begins) a

they might sing the *sthāi*, then improvise on it; sing the *añtarā*, then improvise on it; and return to the *sthāi* and begin the lengthy improvisation. The *añtarā* section of a *chiz* is frequently omitted altogether, which reduces the composed portion of the performance to one or two *tāla* cycles of *sthāi*. The entire presentation of the *chiz* takes a very small amount of time, usually no more than five minutes of the half-hour to forty minutes of performance time.

The text of this *chiz* follows:¹¹

Shāi:

Bāje jhananajhanana bāje
pāyalīyā rājūlārī dole [dore]
anganāvā men //

The princess is moving
about in the courtyard,
her anklets jingling.

¹¹ Translation by B. D. Yadav. "Rājūlārī" ("princess") is an affectionate term for a young bride-to-be.

Añtarā:

Man mataṅ matvāro hī dore
in nainan chhavi ati hī chhāi //

The mind is unstable like
a love-mad elephant after
seeing her; she is lovely
to behold.

The first phrase of the *sthāi*, which is called the *mukhṛā*, is the most vital phrase in the *chiz*, it remains intact throughout the improvisation on the *sthāi* text, and is used at cadences. The *sthāi mukhṛā* in Example 7-5 is "Bāje jhana." When it occurs, the syllable "jha" falls on sam of the next cycle. When the *añtarā* text is referred to, the *mukhṛā* of that section serves as cadence, but less time is devoted to the *añtarā* than to the *sthāi*. The *barā khyāl chiz* melody is relatively unimportant after the initial statement; the most important contribution of the *chiz* to the total performance is the text, the *tāla*, and the *mukhṛā*.

Barā khyāl improvisation resembles the *ālāp* that precedes *dhrupad*: it begins slowly, explores the *rāga* in low register first, then moves upward. Although the *tāla* is kept by the *tablā* player, who repeats and repeats the *theka*, and although the singer certainly knows where (s)he is in the *tāla* cycle, the rhythm seems free and floating, as in unmetered *ālāp*. The recurrence of the *mukhṛā* functions as the *mohṛā* does in *predhrupad ālāp*. Rather than singing vocable syllables, as in *dhrupad ālāp*, the singer uses the *chiz* text (the improvisation using the text is then called *bolālāp* or *bolbant*) or vowels. (S)he is usually careful not to use the text rhythmically, however, so (s)he changes syllables off the counts, says the words indistinctly, and sings many pitches to a single syllable. As the performance progresses, (s)he begins to lean to rhythm by interspersing in the improvisation passages of *bolān*, *tāns*, and occasionally *sargam*.

Passages of *sargam* use the soft *ṣe* syllables as text. As a pitch is sung, it is named, as in Example 7-6. The text enunciation emphasizes rhythm. Example 7-6 is in *ektāl*, the *tablā tāla* of twelve counts that is the same, structurally, as the *pakhāvaj tāla*, *chautāl*, in Example 7-1. It is in slow speed, and each count is subdivided, so each *tāla* count in this example is notated as one count.

Bolbānt is considered a carry-over into *khyāl* from *dhrupad*. It consists of a long phrase or sentence from the *chiz* text that is played upon to primarily rhythmic effect. The emphasis on the text in *bolbānt* provides marked contrast with the wide use of vowels only (*ākār*), in much *khyāl* improvisation. The transcription in Example 7-7 is one minute of a medium-speed performance of "Mhāre dere āo" in *Rāg Desi* by a musician of the Gwalior *gharanā*. In this example, *ākār* is contrasted with *bolbānt*.¹² Most

¹² If the slow improvisation in Example 7-7, which is sung to vowels, were sung to the text, it would be called *bolālāp*. *Bolālāp* differs from *bolbānt* in that it does not stress rhythm.

EXAMPLE 7-6 Sargam

Hindustāni Rāg: Miṡān ki Todī, Vilāmbit Laya Ektāl
o ♩ = 84 MM Baṡā Khyāl Sargam

khyāl singers avoid enunciating the words clearly, except in bolbānt. This is often cited as a major difference between khyāl and dhrupad, in which every syllable must be clear. It can be frustrating to a Western listener not to be able to follow the text in a khyāl performance, but even Indian listeners experience this difficulty. This characteristic, and perhaps others, tends to make khyāl the most difficult classical vocal medium to interpret.

As a barā khyāl performance progresses, more and more tāns are sung. Tāns are very fast melodic figures that may (or may not) touch pitches not in the particular rāg. They are borne on the vowels of text syllables or on independent vowels, usually ā. Tāns are demonstrated in Examples 7-7 and 7-8.

Rāg Desī, shown in Examples 7-7 and 7-8, is a very popular rāg. It is sung with different characteristics by different artists. The materials used are Sa Re Ma Pa Ni [Ni] Śā, Śā Ni Dha [Dha] Pa Ma Ga Re Sa. It is classified in Āśāvārī thāt: Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni. The vādīs are said to be Pa and Re; in Examples 7-7 and 7-8, Re stands out because it comes in the mukhrā on sam. Ga comes in descent and frequently in the pakaḡ Ga Sa Re Ni [Ni] Sa, as in the second tāla cycle in Example 7-7. Dha comes between two Pās: Pa Dha Pa. In Example 7-8, Dha occurs only in descent.

Chhotā khyāl is rarely performed as a distinct entity. Usually, it follows a barā khyāl, in the same rāg but often in a different tāla, without break as a continuation of the acceleration of the barā khyāl. The chhotā khyāl chiz is presented quickly, and improvisation continues. Ālāp-type exploration of the rāg can be dispensed with since it was present in the barā khyāl. Chhotā khyāl improvisation is characterized by rapid passage work (tāns), many repetitions of the first phrase of the śthāī, a generally rhythmic orientation, and constant acceleration.

EXAMPLE 7-7 Baṡā Khyāl Ākār Improvisation and Bolbānt

Hindustāni Rāg: Desī, Madhya Laya Tintāl
[4 Mukhrā x] ♩ = 88 legāto Ākār improv. o
Mha hā-re de-re āo /
a a a a a
[Mukhrā x] [Tān & Mukhrā x]
de-re ā-vo - ji ma -hā-rā - ja de-re ke bī-na/Mhā de-re āo /
a a a [Mukhrā x]
3 Bolbānt o 3 [Mukhrā x]
de-re ā-vo - ji ma -hā-rā - ja de-re ke bī-na/Mhā de-re āo /

EXAMPLE 7-8 Baṡā Khyāl Improvisation, Including Ākār Tān and Bolbānt

"Mhiāre dere āo" (continued)
x ♩ = 116
Ba - jā - vo - jī (men) ma - hā - rā - ja / Mhā
mihā Mhā - re de-re āo / Mhā-re de-re ā - vo -
[Mukhrā x] [Mukhrā x] etc. o
jī /Mhā-re de-re āo / Mhā - re de - re ā - vo - jī ma -
[Mukhrā x] Bolbānt 3
hā - rā - ja / Mhā-re de-re āo / Mhā - re de-re āo / Bā-je
[Mukhrā x]
ma - hā - rā - ja de-re ke bī-na ba - jā - vo/Mhā-re de-re āo
ritard. after last tabla stroke on sam

Most khyāl singers are "of a gharānā," and there are numerous khyāl gharānās. Gharānās are customarily named after a place where the family of musicians originated or where they developed their style—for example, Kirāna, Agra, Jaipur, and Gwalior. A musical tradition is generally considered "of a gharānā" when at least three successive generations of able musicians have pursued a distinctive style of singing.¹³ Part of the style is the quality of voice that is cultivated. Consequently, vocal training is developed to help successive members of the gharānā cultivate that vocal quality. Thus, "in Kirāna the voice emerges from a deliberately constricted throat and has a nasal twang. An Agra voice is also nasal (*naḥkī*); in addition it has a gruff, grating quality. . . . On the other hand the Jaipur tradition emphasizes a natural, free and full-throated voice."¹⁴

Most performances of vocal music in North India today feature khyāl singing. If you were to attend a concert of dhrupad singing in India, chances are that you would say, "I'm going to hear dhrupad," or, "I'm going to hear the Dagar brothers," which would mean that you are going to hear dhrupad. But if you hear someone say "I'm going to a concert of vocal music," you can assume that the fare will consist of several khyāls, and a thumrī to end the program. If the concert is to consist of thumrī, that is specified, as dhrupad is. Such statements demonstrate how prominent khyāl is today in Hindustāni classical vocal music.

Occasionally, a khyāl singer will substitute another form for the chhotā khyāl; the sequence will be *baṛā khyāl* to *tārānā*. The major difference between *chhotā khyāl* and *tārānā* lies not in the composition, nor in the performance treatment, but in the text. Vocables are the major text rather than verse or prose, as in *chiz*. In the *tārānā* featured on Odeon MOAE 143 (sung by the Pakistani brothers Salamat Ali and Nakazat Ali Khan), the vocal phrase that constitutes much of the text is "Ta re da ni ta da ni." The initial syllable "ta" occurs on count 1 of a fast-speed cycle of *tintāl*. The entire phrase takes one cycle of the *tāla*.

Having said that there is no verse in *tārānā*, I must make a retraction. Sometimes a *tārānā* will include a Persian couplet, but the couplet does not function as a *chiz* functions in khyāl. In the Odeon performance mentioned above, a couplet follows improvisation on the *tārānā* phrase, but the *tārānā* phrase is used at cadences, thus functioning as a *chiz* would.

One school of thought holds that the various combinations of vocables in *tārānā* are not just meaningless vocables but are Persian words. A sample of these words follows. Such poetry is said to be representative of the mystic school of poets, in which the beloved is the Almighty and the devotee is his lover. Thus, the poetry of *tārānā* is spiritual, though romantic.¹⁵

¹³Vamanrao H. Deshpande, *Indian Musical Traditions: An Aesthetic Study of the Gharānas in Hindustāni Music* (Bombay: V. P. Bhagvat, 1973), p. 11.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁵Amir Khan, "The Tarana Style of Singing," in *Music East and West*, pp. 22-23.

Taran dar ā	Enter my body.
O dani	He knows.
Tu dani	You know.
Ni dir dani	You are the complete wisdom.
Tom	I am yours, I belong to you.

Some sources on Indian music say that *pakhāvaj* bols are introduced into *tārānā* as text, and indeed that does happen, but not in this Odeon performance. The other vehicle for melody here is *sargam* (solifège syllables). The types of text in that performance, in the order they occur, are as follows:

Vocables:	ta re da ni ta da ni
	Couplet of poetry
Vocables:	ta re da ni ta da ni
	Sargam
Vocables:	ta re da ni ta da ni
	Sargam
Vocables:	ta re da ni ta da ni

In a different Odeon recording, MOAE 107, featuring music for Kathak dance, a *tārānā* begins with a sung verse (unmetered), and then the dancer enters. The main *tārānā* phrase of vocables is *ta re dim*. *Tablā* bols and *sargam* are also used as text in that performance. *Tārānā* is thus both a vocal solo and dance genre.

Tārānā are usually performed by artists who specialize in them. Nissar Hussain Khan, the late Amir Khan, and Krishna Rao Shankar Pandit are particularly well known for performance of *tārānā*. To sing *tārānā* requires skill in rhythmic manipulation (*layakārī*) and the ability to sing syllables rapidly. The Karnatak version of *tārānā*, which is called *tīlānā*, is very similar and is said to have developed at about the same time.

Thumrī is the most important "light classical" genre of North Indian music. It is performed in many contexts, from the sphere of dance, to the vocal concert stage, to performance on instruments. Thumrī is called "light classical," but the reasons for this are difficult to discover from Indian books on music. Possibly it is because the melodies are not always composed in a *rāga*, or because performers may break the rules in singing those that are. It has also been suggested that simpler *tālas* and less weighty *rāgas* are used for thumrī.¹⁶ Yet another likely reason is that *ālap*-type improvisation is not cultivated in thumrī, and *ālap* is the real test of good musicianship. In addition, thumrī is traditionally accompanied by a harmonium, a small portable organ introduced by the British and referred to by Deva as "the bane" of

¹⁶The use of Bhairavī for dhrupad and thumrī throws this into question. Bhairavī, curiously enough, is rarely used for khyāl.

Indian classical music.¹⁷ As the artist sings, he pumps a bellows at the back of the harmonium and reproduces the vocal melody on the keyboard with the other hand (see Plate 26). The fixed pitches that the harmonium is restricted to are considered a serious threat to traditional melodic flexibility. Whatever the reason, *thumrī* provides light, enjoyable music with which to end a vocal or instrumental concert.



Plate 26
Harmonium (left corner) Seen in Concert

Thumrī was cultivated primarily in Lucknow and Benares in the nineteenth century, and it is possible to pinpoint differences between the styles of *thumrī* from those two places. Other regional styles have developed as well—for example, that of Punjab. Nowadays, audiences prefer to hear female vocalists sing *thumrī*. A full performing ensemble includes harmonium, usually played by the vocalist, *tāmbūra*, *tablā*, and probably a *sārāngī*.

The texts of *thumrī* are romantic. They refer perhaps to Krishna and his amorous pranks, or to “the beloved,” who may (or may not) be Krishna. Other texts are unequivocally romantic: they contain no allegorical suggestions. The text translated below is “*Sāwana bit jāye*” as performed on Odeon MOCE 1084 by two female artists, Lakshmi Shankar and Nirmala Devi. One of the main tenets concerning *thumrī* is that the text is most important. Each word is pronounced clearly, and every bit of feeling the text might express is brought out musically. This is a major difference between *thumrī* and *khyāl*.

¹⁷B. Chaitanya Deva, *Indian Music* (New Delhi: Indian Council on Cultural Affairs, 1974), p. 285.

THUMRĪ TEXT

Hindi	English
Sajan wa	My husband. . . .
Sāwana bita jāye	The rainy season has gone [and you didn't come to me].
Sthāi:	
Añtarā 1: Pīta ka rōta re	You don't know how to love.
Karahūn na jāne	
Muraka pīta na jāne	An insensitive heart doesn't know.
Añtarā 2: Jaisi kara ni	Whatever you do, you shall reap.
Esi barani	
Ab kahe pacch tāye	Why are you now upset?

A *thumrī* is a brief composition consisting of *sthāi* and one or more *añtarās* with improvisation. Usually, the “more *añtarās*” are additional text, which is sung to approximately the same *añtarā* melody. Most *thumrī*, however, have only *sthāi* and *añtarā*. This structure can be seen in the transcription and description of “*Sāwana bit jāye*” in Example 7-9. Since this is a performance by two singers (*jugalbandī*), this description provides an example of a *jugalbandī* type of performance as well.

The *sthāi* text in Example 7-9 is elongated in performance to “*sajana wa sajana bita jā [ye]*.” The *sthāi* phrase proper is used at cadences to close each singer's turn. After the several repetitions of the *sthāi* in variant forms, the amount of improvisation on the *sthāi* text increases gradually and the middle and upper registers are explored. In that respect, this performance is very similar to medium-speed *khyāl*. The *añtarā* is sung when the upper register has already been introduced in the improvisation, and it is presented partially at first, as a *khyāl añtarā* is likely to be.

After that point, the performance goes into a section that belongs specifically to *thumrī*. The singing stops, and melody making is left to the accompanying harmonium. The drummer takes the spotlight in a section called *laggi*. In *laggi*, the count will always be duple (4 or 8), no matter what the *tāla* cycle has been. The drummer doubles or quadruples the speed with a sudden splash of virtuosity.

Then the singing begins again, at the same speed (approximately) where it was before and in the old *tāla*. In this performance, the *sthāi* is heard for a short time, then a second *añtarā* is sung. (No *khyāl* has a second *añtarā* or *laggi*.) After a return to the *sthāi* and then another brief *laggi*, the performance ends with the *sthāi*.

The speed of this *thumrī* performance never increases beyond $\text{♩} = 100$. The gradual acceleration to a furious climax that marks *khyāl* is not usually a performance trait of *thumrī*.

EXAMPLE 7-9 Thumrī: "Sāwana Bī Jāye"

Two singers together, unmetered

Analysis of the performance beyond the portion notated above:

Change of singer (The two soloists sing in alternation.)

4 cycles of the tāla

Change of singer

9 cycles of the tāla (to 1 minute 48 seconds into the performance)

Improvisation remains fairly close to the thumrī sthāi

Change of singer M.M. ♩ = 92

11 cycles of the tāla (to 2 minutes, 30 seconds)

Example of text treatment (slash indicates break for breath):

sajan/ sajan/sajana wa/ sajan wa/sajan wa/ sajana bīta jā/

Melody dwells between madhya Sa and Ma, then moves to madhya Ma to tār Sa.

Change of singer M.M. ♩ = 92-96

10 cycles of the tāla (to 3 minutes, 8 seconds)

Melody dwells between madhya Sa and Ma, then madhya Ma and Dha

Change of singer M.M. ♩ = 92

13 cycles of the tāla (to 3 minutes, 57 seconds)

Melody dwells between madhya Sa and Dha

Change of singer M.M. ♩ = 96

10½ cycles of the tāla (to 4 minutes, 40 seconds)

Melody dwells between madhya Ma and tār Sa. The artist plays with pitches Ni and Ni, which are not stressed otherwise.

Change of singer M.M. ♩ = 96

13 cycles of the tāla (to 5 minutes, 28.5 seconds)

Melody dwells between madhya Ma and tār Ma, and stresses tār Sa.

Change of singer

Presentation of the first aītarā:

Followed by 11 cycles of the tāla

Improvisation mostly in upper register, on aītarā text.

Singers alternate

12 cycles of the tāla

Improvisation on aītarā text; then singer adds to the aītarā:

Sung four times, slightly varied

24 further cycles of the tāla

Laggi, with melody kept on harmonium

12 cycles of sung improvisation on sthāi text: sajana wa/sajana/ etc.

Second aītarā, given here in skeleton form:

Followed by 23 cycles of the tāla, including the second antarā and subsequent improvisation.

19 cycles of the tāla
Return to sthāi text.

Laggi

6 cycles of further improvisation; the performance then ends with sthāi.

The tāla most frequently used for thumrī are dīpchandī (14 counts), jat (16 counts), Panjābī (16 counts), kaharvā (8 counts), and dādra (6 counts). (Dādra tāl is usually associated with a light classical genre that is also called dādra.) The 16-count tālas jat and Panjābī have the same structural subdivisions as 16-count tintāl, but the thekas with which they are drummed are very different. They can easily be distinguished in performance because the drummer keeps primarily to the theka. The three 16-count thekas are given in Example 7-10. Dīpchandī of 14 counts is the same as jat tāl, with one count removed in each half of the cycle (as indicated by the boxes in Example 7-10) so that the structure is 3 + 4 + 3 + 4. Bracketed strokes are played in one count.

EXAMPLE 7-10 Tintāl, Jat Tāl, and Panjābī Tāl Thekas

<i>Tintāl</i>			
x	Dha	dhin	dha
o	Dha	tin	ta
	3	4	3
	Dha	dhin	dha
<i>Jat</i>			
x	Dha	[]	dhin S
o	Ta	[]	tin S
	3	4	3
	Dha	dhin	dha
<i>Panjābī</i>			
x	Dha	gadhi	S ga dha
o	Dha	kati	S ka ta
	3	4	3
	Dha	gadhi	S ga dha
	Dha	kadhi	S ga dha

The transcribed performance of "Sāwana bita jāye" (Example 7-9) is in dādra tāla of 6 counts: 1 2 3 4 5 6. Since this tāla has such a brief cycle, the singers go through several cycles of it before singing a cadence. The

principle of keeping the text at the same points in the tāla cycle and singing the full sthāi phrase for cadences is kept more consistently than it is in khyāl mukhrā.

Dādra, another Hindustāni "light classical form," is very similar to thumrī in most respects. Its texts are equally amorous, and the text is sung clearly. It may be sung madhya laya or even faster. Frequently, singers follow a thumrī with a dādra, in a sequence like bafā khyāl being followed by a chhotā khyāl. Dādra tāl is associated primarily with dādra singing. Theoretically, therefore, it is distinguished from thumrī by tāla. On occasion, kaharvā tāla of 8 counts is also used for dādra.

The same group of singers who cultivate thumrī as a specialty cultivate dādra as well. Among these performers, two particularly famous ones are Begum Akhtar and Rasoolan Bai.

With this discussion of thumrī and dādra, we can put "Sāwana bita jāye" into proper perspective. The record says that this composition is a thumrī (and the singers noted that they were singing thumrī). Most Indians would know the performance as thumrī. However, it has two antarās, which is characteristic of dādra, not of thumrī. It is in dādra tāla, which, theoretically, makes it a dādra. One explanation for this mixture of traits is that the piece was composed by Abdul Rehman Khan, who tends to compose his songs in this fashion. "Sāwana bita jāye" is thus another example of the acceptable flexibility in Indian classical music.

One other light classical form flourishes throughout North India: ghazal. The poetry that is the heart of ghazal is distinct from that of the other light classical forms in one very obvious respect: it is in Urdu, the poetic language of Muslims in North India. Ghazal came into vogue in the nineteenth century in Lucknow. It carries the associations and romantic charm of the dancing girl tradition. The tālas used in singing ghazal are pushto and dīpchandī,¹⁸ and laggi is featured in it. Accompaniment is provided on tablā, tāmbūra, harmonium, and/or sārangi. An example of a ghazal text follows:

What can we expect of faithfulness,
who do not know what faith is?
What has happened to you?
What is the remedy of this?
And what is this all about?

Translated by B. D. YADAV

¹⁸Viney K. Agarwala, *Traditions and Trends in Indian Music* (Meerut, Uttar Pradesh: Rastogi and Co., 1966), p. 56.

One tāla closely associated with ghazal is dhumāli tāl, of 8 counts. It is essentially the same tāla as kaharvā of ṭhumrī, but the theka is slightly different:

<i>Kaharvā tāl</i>	<i>Dhumāli tāl</i>
x Dha ge na ti	x Dha trika tin tin
o Na ka dhi na/	o Ta trika dhin dhin/

Ghazals in dhumāli tāl sung by Begum Akhtar can be heard on Odeon S-MOCE 1153. The "trika" strokes in counts 2 and 6 are particularly clear in the performance of "Dard minnat kash-e-na hua." (On the same record are two ghazals in dādra tāl. Clearly, dādra tāl is not used only for dādra songs.)

INSTRUMENTAL GENRES

Several of the musical principles developed in ālap, dhruvad, and khyāl are encapsulated in the ālap-jor-jhālā-gat sequence of instrumental performance. The instrumental ālap is much like the ālap that precedes a dhruvad—unmetered, slow, and searching out the chosen rāga. Slight differences can be attributed to the differences in the performing medium. On a stringed instrument in particular, the prolonged, intense Sa with which a dhruvad ālap begins cannot be produced because the string too quickly ceases to vibrate. Many instrumentalists begin their ālap by running a finger down the sympathetic strings in glissando. They then play a couple of phrases in the middle and upper registers to show off the outlines of the rāga before settling into the traditional ālap (see Example 7-11).

In addition, the exploration of the lower register is sometimes more prolonged in an instrumental performance than in a vocal one, again because of the nature of the medium. The ideal three-octave range of a vocalist is considerably easier to attain on sitār and sarod, where the range is provided on the strings. As in vocal ālap, a single melodic figure functions cadentially to mark off segments in the melodic development.

The point in the instrumental ālap where the performance begins to be more rhythm-oriented and where the speed accelerates noticeably is the *jor*. A pulsation becomes obvious, too, although it does not remain consistent. Later, toward the end of the unmetered portion of the performance, the artist refers constantly to the drone pitch (by using the drone/rhythm strings on stringed instruments) and maintains a rapid, constant pulsation by plucking (or tonguing, on a wind instrument) each pitch separately. This articulation and this section of the performance are called *jhālā*. The melody

of the gat to follow is frequently foreshadowed in this jhālā, as melody pitches stand out from the drone pitches in the rhythmic drive. With a tremendous climax of speed and virtuosity, the performer brings the unmetered portion of the performance to an end with jhālā.¹⁹

Often, there is a short break between jhālā and the gat as the drummer and instrumentalist check their tuning. When all is ready, the instrumental soloist begins a composition, called a *gat*. Like the other types of Hindustāni compositions, most gats begin not on count 1 but on some previous count—perhaps at khāli, or on count 12 if in tūtāl. (Other gats begin right on count 1). When the drummer hears the gat beginning, he plays a fast flourish, which he times perfectly to meet the soloist at count 1. The metered portion of the performance has begun.

Occasionally, the soloist challenges his tablā player at this moment by refraining from telling him in advance which tāla the gat will be played in. Furthermore, the soloist has probably chosen a difficult or rare tāla, such as one with 11½ counts or one with 13½ counts. Challenges such as these are part of performance practice in Hindustāni instrumental music.

EXAMPLE 7-11 Beginning of Sitār Ālap

Hindustāni Rāg Jog
Ālap (→)or, Jhālā→Gat

World Pacific WPS 21438
Ravi Shankar, sitārīst

(Drone strings have stems down)

(Ālap proper begins)

There are two basic types of instrumental gats: Masit Khani gats and Reza Khani gats. Masit Khani gats are in slow or medium speed, and Reza Khani gats are in medium or fast speed. In performances, they are often linked as a pair—slow to fast—as the two types of khyāl are linked. Most

¹⁹The jhālā section is frequently shortened or omitted on recordings. A second jhālā section at the end of the performance seems to take precedence over this one at the end of the ālap.

gats are only one tāla cycle long and function both melodically and metrically in the performance. A gat's melodic shape is determined partly by the structure of the particular rāga being played, but various compositional means are employed to show off the structure of the tāla cycle, as well. One of the compositional elements of sarod and sitār gats is stroking patterns—patterns of inward strokes (called *da*), outward strokes (*ra*), and a quick succession of in and out (*dira*). The ideal Masit Khani gat, for example, has the following basic pattern:

13 3 5 9
 3 Di ra da di ra da ra / da da ra di ra da dira da ra da da ra

da di ra dara

The stroking pattern divides the tāla cycle into two equal parts: counts 12 to 3 (past *sam*) and counts 4 to 11.

Other sitār gats with other stroking patterns are shown in Example 7-12. The rāgas are Āsāvārī, Bhairavī, and Mālkauns (or Mālkośh), which was discussed in Chapter Three. Each begins at a different place in the *tintāl* cycle.²⁰

The rhythm and melodic contour of a gat are additional compositional elements that may be used to delineate the tāla structure. In each of the gats in Example 7-12, the pitch on *sam* is the longest held pitch in the gat. In (b) and (d), a slight rhythmic displacement leads up to *sam*, and that is the only place in either gat where such rhythmic displacement occurs. Melodic contours in (c) and (d) are an especially important factor, because the subdivisions of the tāla have quite different pitch registers. Note the means by which the two gats in Rāg Mālkauns are made similar, and yet very different.

Beyond the initial playing of the gat melody that begins the gat portion of the performance, the artists proceed quickly to improvisation. The improvisation resembles a combination of that portion of *baṛā khyāl* beyond the slow, searching *ālāp* and *chhoṭā khyāl* improvisation: *ālāp* and *tān* for melodic invention, and rhythmic elaborations like *bolbānt* of vocal music, which are called *toṛa* (or *toḍā*) here. The gat returns in part or in full at cadences.

A striking difference between a sarod or sitār gat performance and a *khyāl* performance is the amount of interplay between the melody soloist and the drummer. In one possible relationship, they alternate between the

EXAMPLE 7-12 Sitār Gats

Rāg Āsāvārī
(a) Da di-ra da ra da ra da da di-ra di-ra di-ra da ra da ra da

Rāg Bhairavī
(b) Da di-ra da ra da ra da da da ra da da ra da ra

Rāg Mālkauns
(c) Da di-ra di-ra di-ra da ra da ra da Da di-ra da ra da da ra

Rāg Mālkauns
(d) Da da ra da ra da ra da di-ra di-ra di-ra da ra da ra da

roles of soloist and timekeeper: either the drummer plays *theka* while the melody soloist improvises, or the melody soloist plays the gat while the drummer takes the spotlight. The melody soloist initiates the relationship.

In the gat portion of a performance, Western audiences in particular are likely to hear an exchange between drummer and melody soloist that is a challenge to imitation. This exchange is called *ṛawāḅ-sawāḅ* (“question-answer”). The melody soloist will play a phrase and challenge the drummer to reproduce it rhythmically and even melodically to some extent. (This is different from the exchange mentioned in the previous paragraph.) During this type of relationship, both musicians keep *tāla* in their head. The amount of attention that will be focused on the drummer depends on the performance custom of the melody soloist. Some prefer an accompanist-soloist relationship; others prefer a more equal partnership.

The speed accelerates throughout the gat improvisation, and the performance arrives finally at a breathtaking *jhālā* section for the ending. The *jhālā* is metered on this occasion, but the same driving rhythm heard in unmeasured *jhālā* is obtained by constant articulation of pitch Sa.

This type of instrumental sitār and sarod *ālāp-jōḷ-jhālā*-gat sequence is probably the best known of all Indian music to Western audiences, due to the popularity of some of India’s finest instrumentalists: sitārist Pandit Ravi Shankar, sarodist Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, and drummers Alla Rakha and Chatur Lal. Sitārist Vilayat Khan is known for a somewhat different style of this type of performance. His style is said to be *gāyākī* (“vocal”) style.

²⁰Phagvat Sharan Sharma and Ravi Shankar, *Sitār Mālīka* (Hathras: Sangit Karyalaya, 1966), pp. 88, 87, 85, 84.

That is, he tries to reproduce on sitār the legato style of vocal music. This is difficult when one considers the idiom: strings from which sound decays quickly and on which the sharp attack of a stroke is unavoidable.²¹

The reason Nazir Jairazbhoy gives for this development of vocal style on a stringed instrument is a point that we noted in Chapter Four: "The voice is regarded in India as the most versatile of instruments and virtually without limitations, while all other instruments are restrictive."²² Flute performances too are usually in gāyaki style. The difficulties of change of medium are perhaps not as great with flute as with stringed instruments because both flute and the voice are wind instruments.

The three major Hindustāni performance structures may be compared in Chart 13. The capitalized segments are unmetered; "imp" indicates improvisation; and dots separate the segments of a performance sequence.

1. ĀLĀP. NOM TOM ĀLĀP. dhrupad . . . imp with bolbānt
2. baṛa khyāl chīz . . . ālāp imp with

bolbānt	. chhotā khyāl . . . imp
tāns	. sargam
3. ĀLĀP. JOR. JHĀLĀ medium gat. imp with

tāns	. . . fast gat . . . imp
[toda]	

CHART 13. The Three Major Hindustāni Performance Structures

Ṭhumrī, dādra, and dhun are "light classical" forms played by instrumentalists in North India. Instrumental ṭhumrīs are supposedly based on vocal ṭhumrīs, although the derivation is often difficult to trace. If the ṭhumrī is well known, the melody reminds listeners of the sentiments of the texts. Ṭhumrī and dādra have both been discussed at length in the section on vocal genres. As ṭhumrīs are supposed to be based on vocal versions of ṭhumrīs, so are instrumental dādras supposed to resemble their vocal versions. In each case, the relationship of instrumental ṭhumrī and dādra to vocal ṭhumrī and dādra has not been explored definitively. *Dhun* is the "lightest classical" of the Hindustāni instrumental forms. It is similar to ṭhumrī but is based on folk or popular tunes. The performer of dhun is at liberty to mix rāgas or to play in whatever way he feels will appeal to his audience. Either a ṭhumrī or a dhun is performed as the last item on a program in order to end a concert in a light, pleasant mood.

²¹ For a more detailed discussion of this style, see Jairazbhoy, *Rāgs of North Indian Music*, pp. 186-89.

²² Jairazbhoy, *Rāgs of North Indian Music*, p. 187.

EIGHT

PERFORMANCE GENRES OF KARNATAK MUSIC

In genres of Karnatak music, some of the same principles come into play that characterize Hindustāni genres: the contrast of unmetered with metered, the progression in some types of performances from free rāga to emphasis on rhythm, and the fusion of traditional compositions (generically called *kalpita saṅgīta*) with improvisation (*manodharma saṅgīta*). The structures within which these principles are carried out and the degree to which each is developed in the two traditions are quite different, however. One major difference is that dance concerts are frequent in South Indian cultural life. Consequently, several of the Karnatak genres have developed in variant forms appropriate for a dance or a musical concert. We shall give more attention to the concert versions, but shall briefly consider the dance versions as well.

The Classical Approach



THERE appears to be a crisis looming over Hindustani classical music today. A full season of concerts will make it clear that somehow the fire has died down. And this, we must remember, is in spite of the fact that Hindustani musicians have never had it so good as in the past decade or more. Concert fees are not exactly a pittance, though travel and performances abroad are less rare, so that at least a small number jet and train about as often as Luciano Pavarotti or Zubin Mehta, although perhaps not quite as luxuriously. Foreign students—the Peters, the Richards and the Cindys—carry tanpuras and sitars about with them; and if they have a violin or a cello, even manage to tune them without causing raised eyebrows.

Not very long ago, you could go to a concert and listen with rapt attention to men like Abdul Karim Khan, Faiyaz Khan, the great Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, or women like Kesarbai Kelkar, Hirabai Barodekar or Siddheshwari Devi. The list is a long one, yet hardly complete. Their styles were various, their talents dissimilar, but all of them had a certain characteristic in common: They were all intense and hypnotically alive. Their ragas seemed to flow not so much from their uncommonly honed swaras but from their very gut; and all of them in their different ways had a quality of untrammelled freedom and independence of spirit. They seemed to live beyond the niggling economies of the world outside, the stoop-shouldered bureaucracies of systems and institutions. This fact made their concerts carry a precious weight of immanence and beauty, a *frisson* of delicious expectation which was larger than

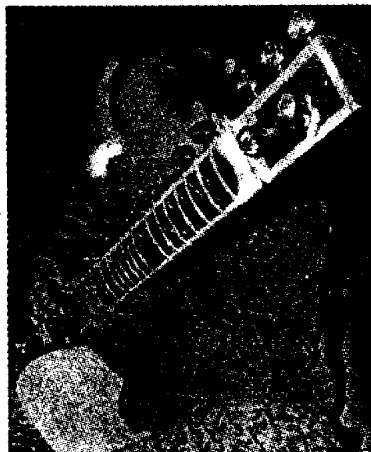
the specifics of their art—a subtle voltage that sparked and arced in their music.

Vanishing Quality: This *frisson*, this feeling of hovering static, like the charged air before a thunderstorm, seems to be rapidly diminishing in Hindustani classical music concerts. This quality is apparently not something which can be produced by choreography from the outside, but is the result of

an inner quality, the way the art has been realised in the performer. The light, to my mind, is turning amber in Hindustani music. It is not red yet. It may soon be if something both wise and perceptive is not done to it, very soon, to put it back where it has always belonged.

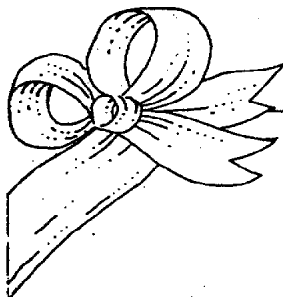
Many musicians in India lament this situation and feel that this has happened on account of the tearing hurry which students of music seem to be in, to get a platform for a public performance. This precludes the kind of teaching ambience which in the old days used to be called *sadhana* (dedication). Describing this as an essential condition for true and significant creativity in raga music Kumar Gandharva says, "The absence of *sadhana* is like looking at the world with only one eye. If you close one eye and look about the room, the chairs and the windows, the glasses on the table, all shed a dimension. Things are so flat that there is nothing further to be said about them. It is the same world without the roundness of significance. Without *sadhana* music can only be clever or competent or sweet, but will have no true significance." Pir Vilayat Khan in a seminar in Paris in 1974 called the effort to sidetrack the need for a valid connection with a guru as a form of cowardice. "You cannot have a guru on a three-hour-a-week, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays basis. And if you have never had a guru your music will have an empty centre."

Basic Difference: In this respect, Carnatic music fares much better than Hindustani music. For there is between them a basic difference in their approach to *raga*, *sahitya* and inspiration. The Carnatic style is based on the luminous genius of the great saint-composers of the southern tradition, fully calibrated utterances of poetic



(Clockwise from top left) Amjad Ali Khan, Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan and Vilayat Khan: lifelong dedication

It is this *sadhana* that has always been a pivotal issue in Hindustani music; a technique of musical awakening that has been hitherto hidden in the recesses of the *guru shishya parampara*... If the music is gathered through any other means it shows through all artifices, joss sticks and pashmina shawls.



vision and musical virtuosity. Even the bhavas permitted in it have been gently, unobtrusively formalised. On the other hand, Hindustani classical music is a wide open prairie, a kind of Apache land without a sheriff. Today in this *laissez-faire* economy practically anything goes—and what goes is invariably the ubiquitous *ghazal*, full of sweetness and syrup in the place of forthright musical nutrition.

A simple experiment would make clear the difference between the predicaments of these two major systems of Indian music. Take two children from the same family and teach one of them the Hindustani system and the other the Carnatic. In three years, assuming that the children are equally gifted, the Carnatic student would be chirruping away with several *varnams* under his belt, and if he were also audacious and fun-loving he would even have taken a crack at the *kritis*. Nothing dramatic or significant yet (unless the child is also eerily gifted as many are), but adequate and full of promise. At least some part of the Carnatic student's repertoire could be reci-

In Carnatic music the student is free from racking doubt and conflict and what is even more important, free from the agony of having to find oneself through liberating *sadhana*.

ted by him without a hitch. He would thus escape ignominy.

The student of Hindustani music after three years would, like as not, be wobbling around, still going off-key sometimes, sounding rote and arthritic; and as for any creativity or originality the less said about these the better. Before the Hindustani music student is ready to make a statement for himself through his music, some decades have to pass. In the Carnatic school this responsibility has been transferred to the saints. In Carnatic music the student is free from racking doubt and conflict and what is even more important, free from the agony of having to find oneself through liberating *sadhana*.

IT IS this *sadhana* that has always been a pivotal issue in Hindustani music; a technique of musical awakening that has been hitherto hidden in the recesses of the *guru-shishya parampara*. It is *sadhana* that produces people like Kumar Gandharva, a Ravi Shankar, a young Amjad Ali Khan, the Ali Akbars and Vilayat Khans of our recent

tradition. If the music is gathered through any other means it shows, through all artifices, joss sticks and pashmina shawls! It is possible in Carnatic music with some fancy footwork to skirt the issue of a guru in the Hindustani sense, and to let a classroom curriculum take the sting off the tragic need for an ennobling connection with one. Not still the best way, perhaps, but still good enough not to make too material a difference to the end-product—except to the most fastidious.

Indispensable Factor: The Hindustani school is aware of this problem, this awkward need for a valid relationship with a guru, and has been trying desperately to develop alternative methods. These efforts have not been notably successful. Have a Walkman or a Ravox, take over from a living presence: hypnopaedic teaching techniques that try to internalise, for example, Marwa's sad and forlorn rishabh, or to inveigle Darbari's solemn gandhar into the subconscious through speakers that whisper while your conscious mind is asleep. Several hours of Bade Ghulam Ali Khan slowly unspool on stainless steel decks, trying to forge a path into the lunar clarity and sombre focus of his style.

The young Amjad Ali Khan, son of the legendary Ustad Hafiz Ali Khan, one of our foremost sarodiyas, feels that "the opportunity for gaining *taaleem* (learning) is ignored by the young in their hurry to reach a concert platform. A true *taaleem* cannot be usurped by technique and flair alone and cannot be transmitted by charging fees by the hour in advance. What is called *sadhana* is an attitude of mind, a manner of approach to life and work that goes beyond mere learning into a realm which our forefathers called spiritual."

The brothers Dagar of the distinguished gharana of Dhrupadiyas feel the same. "Aspirants want quick results. The process of musical education is an unfolding, not a mechanical skill or mere knowledge. This comes from *shraddha* (devotion)" Ravi Shankar in his autobiography makes a passionate plea for the kind of devotion and one-pointedness which transforms. He himself has passed through the stage of a long-haired man-about-town to the final figure that straddles cultures and continents.

It is possible to see a glory in the performances of these great men and women of our tradition which reflects a glory in the performers. It is *sadhana* that, on all counts, makes this difference. Its presence produces power, and an authority that transcends analysis. And *sadhana* is possible only through the *guru-shishya parampara*. It is the result of a total relationship, however brief or varied. It is difficult to substitute this relationship by buying a Uher however high the wattage.



ROBERT TAYLOR

The master of the sitar

The fingertips of Imrat Khan are slashed and scored. When he places the palms of his hands together, the index and middle fingers of his right hand are callused one-half inch higher than the fingers of his left hand - the result of performing on a 12-stringed Indian instrument called the surbahar, or bass sitar. Acknowledged as the world's supreme player of this instrument, 45-year-old Imrat Khan is the Pablo Casals of Indian classical music, though in concert he also plays sitar, which is the equivalent of Casals, master of the cello, switching in the middle of a recital to demonstrate his love of the violin.

During the '60s, of course, Indian music became a Western fad. The Beatles sat at the feet of the Maharaji, and through



the portals of music schools trudged long-haired young men lugging gourd-shaped cases. On the whole, Imrat Khan, who is here to give one of his rare American recitals at Sanders Theater tomorrow night, is glad this era is over:

IMRAT KHAN "Indian music was all mixed up with fashion. Five to 10,000 people at a concert. It was temporary, but the cult aspect has given way to genuine understanding. We are living by the grace of God in a beautiful era in which Indian classical music is becoming an international music. Bach is no longer the composer of Germans; jazz is no longer exclusively the music of black people; so, too, Indian music is developing into an international expression."

Like Casals, Imrat Khan speaks of music as spiritual experience. In a country where heritage is revered, his family holds a unique position, tracing its origins through an unbroken line of celebrated musicians to the court of the Mughal emperor Akbar in the 16th century. His father, Ustad (a word which blends the meanings of "maestro" and "guru") Inayet Khan, was one of the greatest sitar players who ever lived, and his elder brother, Vilayet Khan, is an equally famous classical sitarist. But it was Imrat's great-grandfather, Ustad Sahabat Khan, who is credited with inventing the long-necked surbahar with its batteries of frets and characteristic pear-shaped body.

To be more exact, Sabahat Khan developed the surbahar, rather than invented it. "We have a long tradition in which instruments evolve from one shape to another," explained Imrat Khan. "My great-grandfather modified elements of the veena, adding strings and balancing the sound. The word 'surbahar' means 'the fountain of music.' 'Bahar' also has overtones signifying the blossoming of flowers. The strings are at a high degree of tension and you have to work hard to control them. With guitar you play on the frets; with surbahar you also pull the string downward. This gives the instrument its slurring effects and enables it to reflect the fluidity of the human voice, not normally possible with plucked instruments. The student will have at first fingers cut and bleeding.

"I have played for the films. In 'The Music Room,' directed by Satyajit Ray, I played sitar and surbahar. I could have continued in the films, but it would have led to the cheapening and coarsening of my style. By the grace of God I have been able to have my music convey a full range of feelings. When I am feeling hilarity it is comic; when I am romantic, it is romantic; when I am devotional, it is serene. Five percent of what I play is composed; the other 95 percent improvisational, entirely in the traditional way.

"Therefore, I can never announce what I am going to play on any given evening. It will depend on how I feel at that time. Indian music is, you see, not written down, though there are fixed forms, like ragas, for morning and evening. How shall I put it? We are like a Western poet who is composing a sonnet. A sonnet has 14 lines and certain rules, but the poet is free to choose his words. In Indian music, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony might begin with the tune of Beethoven's Ode to Joy played first for 15 or 20 minutes, then there would be variations and developments and finally the culmination of the music. It would be so much of the moment. The listener would never hear it twice.

"When my father was playing, his audience consisted of rajas and maharajas, but I am a musician of the age of independence. When independence came in, I couldn't find serious listeners - everyone wanted to hear the popular music of the cinema and wireless. Then a man named Leonard Elmhurst heard me. 'You are the Casals of the surbahar' he said, and invited me to give lectures and concerts in England. So it was through the West that I became known, though the serious audience has greatly expanded in India as well. Blessed are those who are touched by this music and rewarded."

Rāga and Tāla: A Western View

Lyon Leifer

This article is an attempt at familiarizing the reader — especially a non-Indian reader — with the broad format of Hindustāni music. The complex comprising *rāga*, *tāla* and *bandish* along with its ample scope for improvisation and creativity has been explained. The principal theoretical concepts of *rāga*-formation and various technical devices including ornamentation have been laid out.

The materials for this article are derived almost entirely from my study of the Hindustani *rāga* system under the magnificent tutelage of my Guru, Devendra Murdeshwar. No presentation of these materials in the condensed form of an article could begin to convey the depths of the system as he and other master musician/teachers of India have manifested it. Some speculative ideas given here about the historical evolution of the *rāgas* are my own responsibility, as are any shortcomings in the article.

My hope in writing is to give the listener a set of basic concepts which may enable a *more aware* sort of listening than may be possible without them.

What is a *rāga*?

A Hindustāni *rāga* can be described as a modal melody-type which gives rise to a particular range of possibilities for communication of emotion and evocation of mood. Each *rāga* also gives rise to a range of possibilities for structural development. A *rāga* is modal because it comprises a certain number of notes which are not altered during the rendition and which are classified according to their positions in a set of scalar modes. It is a melody-type because it has a given, historically determined melodic shape. Within that shape and in accordance with a set of operational rules, the performer is free to develop the *rāga* as he or she sees fit.

What is called the Hindustāni *rāga* system (prevalent in northern India) could be described as all the *rāgas* which are in use; and the songs (compositions), methods of development and styles of presentation which are used in the performance of these *rāgas*.

Rāga music and Western classical music hold in common their most basic musical building blocks — the twelve-note octave, the recognition of the diatonic scales of scalar modes generated from its successive degrees, and the temporal organization of notes into regular metre. But where Western music, treating notes as discrete entities to be combined with each other in shifting alignments (harmonies) has created a great body of harmonic and contrapuntal resources, Indian music has treated notes as stopping points along an aural continuum, giving rise to a wealth of expressive possibilities through microtonalism. Western music, at least since 1600, has used shifting harmonies as a ground for melody which must fit into the harmonic scheme.

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This led, over the course of time, to focussing mainly on the major and minor modes. *Rāgas* use a fixed ground or drone which simply defines the aural continuum. This frees melody not only to explore the 'space between the notes', but also to utilize systematically an entire range of modes.

A *rāga* performance can be enjoyed both as deep emotional communication and as tonal structuring of a very high order. However, in order to gain these enjoyments, it is necessary to meet the system on its own terms. For the Western listener, the first requirement is generally to cease expecting to hear harmony and polyphony. Hindustāni music makes its statements and achieves its effects on the basis of a highly refined and systematic approach to melody and to rhythm.

Hindustāni music depends (as does Western music) for its deepest effects on a high degree of structural coherence and on substantial listener awareness of that structure. Most highly prized are purity and elegance of proportion in developing a *rāga*; subtlety and imagination in detail, shading and elaboration; and vividness and spontaneity of presentation within its highly defined parameters (which are well known to informed listeners).

Consequently, what is most important to *teach* to enable appreciation is precisely those parameters: the melodic and rhythmic materials out of which *rāga* performances are developed. What comes out of this is aural *recognition* of the basic *rāgas* and *tālas*, of the stages of development in a *rāga* performance and of the various devices being utilized. This, then, provides standards for further appreciation of the range, diversity and expressive characteristics of the art.

The six modes, generated from the first six notes of the diatonic scale, provide a theoretical basis for the analysis and classification of a great percentage of the *rāgas* used in north India. In addition, the north Indian system includes four modes (or *thāts*) not so derived, which contain one or more augmented intervals (see modes 1-10 on Chart I). This system of ten *thāts* was only developed into its full and current form by Pandit V.N. Bhātkhande (1860-1936), the great collector and theorist of Hindustāni music. Although it is a relatively new system, it is a convincing one, in that it pulls together elements of previous theoretical attempts going back quite far in history, seems to successfully describe what happens in the process of *rāga* generation and differentiation, and enables a clearer understanding of the system's general scope.

The principal *rāga* of *Kalyān thāt* (equivalent to the Lydian mode) is *Rāga Yaman*. This is generally the first *rāga* taught to Indian music students. We will now proceed to show the process of generating *rāgas* from scales, using *Rāga Yaman* as our first example.

The problem here is to show how a particular *rāga Yaman*, arises out of *Kalyān thāt*. Any or all of its notes could be used, but the thrust of the *rāga* system is to create a certain order, shape and resulting mood, so that others can exist within the same mode.

Thus, the melodic figure:

Tonic: C \sharp ♩ = 40 ↗ = glissandro

Sa Ni Ga Re Ga—Ma Re Ga Re Sa Sa

which is probably an old folk idea, can be put into *Kalyān thāt* and a condition can be derived from it, namely, not allowing the tonic to be followed by the second degree. That figure is matched in the upper tetrachord with the response:

Pa Ma Dha Ni Sa Dha Ni Dha Pa Pa

(and a like prohibition against a move from the fifth to the sixth degree). Proceeding from there to the upper tonic and back down the mode as follows:

Ma Dha Ni Sa Ni Dha Pa Ma Pa Ma Ga Re Ga Ga Re Sa Sa

we get a simple statement of the *rāga*. These are the basic *svara vistāra*, or melodic figures, of *rāga Yaman*.

In a *rāga* all the notes are not equal in emphasis. By dint of placement and length, certain notes take prominent positions, most notably the third and seventh degrees. This is in accordance with the principle of assigning to every *rāga* a most prominent note, *vādi*, and a second-most prominent note, *samvādi*. These notes are generally in a perfect fourth/fifth relationship to each other. In the case of *rāga Yaman*, a great number of its melodic figures end on the third degree (*ga* in Indian terminology), causing the major triad to sound — heard — as the melody note third (*ga*) against the sounding drone tonic (*sa*) and fifth (*pa*). This prominence of the third degree gives the *rāga* a sweet and reposeful character. The mood of this *rāga* is considered to be blissful, and it is thought of as one of the most beautiful of *rāgas*. In particular, the resolution of the raised fourth (*ma*) to the third (*ga*), carried out in a slow glissando effect called *meend*, creates an effect of release of tension. What is key is the overall melodic shape on the one hand and the evocation of the mood of the *rāga* on the other.

Each of the ten *thāts*, or scales, on Bhatkhande's system similarly gives rise to a principal *rāga* and subsidiary *rāgas*. This is done through varying patterns of ascent and descent, introduction of particular melodic twists (*vakra*) and determination of *vādi* and

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samvādi. Key to appreciating the system as a system is to learn the features of the major *rāgas* and see how particular applications give rise to the *svara-vistāra* (melodic figures) which characterize each *rāga*.

I now attempt to give an idea of another level of complexity in *rāga* formation, namely transposed and mixed *rāgas*.

A very good example of *rāga* transposition is *rāga Lalit*, which has the pattern of *rāga Todi* taken from the note *shuddha ma* (perfect fourth above the tonic).

Since *rāgas* like *Lalit* are long established *rāgas*, it is clear that the device of transposing *rāgas* to create other *rāgas* is not new. New *rāgas* are also being created in this way.

Another method of what might be called second-order *rāga* creation involves mixing characteristics of two different *rāgas*. An example is *rāga Puriyā-Kalyān*, a mixture of *Puriyā* and *Yaman*. This *rāga* could most simply be described as *rāga Yaman* with a flattened second (*komal re*). Another way of looking at it is to say that the lower half of the scale (1 – 4) is from *Puriyā* and the upper half is *Kalyān*. Both *rāgas* share *vādi* and *samvādi*, namely, the third and seventh degrees. For all these reasons, the two *rāgas* are rather easy to mix together. In fact, phrases of both *Puriyā* and *Yaman* can be played in each half-octave. By temporarily leaving out the fifth (*pa*), one can play pure *Puriyā*. By staying away from the flattened second (*komal re*) one can play nearly all of *Rāga Yaman*. So the musician has in *Puriyā-Kalyān* the possibility of weaving substantial strands of two *rāgas* together into a mixture which, at the same time, has a particular character of its own.

Microtonalism is a major aspect of Hindustāni music — an area opened up for exploration by Hindustāni music focusing on the purely melodic aspect. At this point, it should prove useful to discuss the principal microtonal devices found in the music and to illustrate them.

Probably most obvious to the listener is the extensive use of *meend* (glissando). While glissando is, of course, not unknown to Western classical music, it tends to fall into the category of a rarely used device, reserved mainly for special effects. *Meend*, however, is part and parcel of *rāga* music. This is so much the case that, in the slow presentation and elaboration of a *rāga*, separate notes can often hardly be said to exist, except as the momentarily touched limitations in a curvilinear motion and the starting and ending points in a phrase.

Another such device is *āndolan* or rocking back and forth in pitch within a microtonal compass. *Āndolan* is found in some *rāgas* more than others and is a particular identifying feature of the scale degrees of certain *rāgas*. In the case of *rāga Darbāri*, for instance, it is the third and sixth degrees whose *āndolit* treatment lends so much of the specific character of *rāga Darbāri*. *Āndolit* also seems to be more used by some *gharānās* (schools of performance) than others, and so is also a matter of stylistic approach.

Gamak, or rocking in glissando between one scale step and another, has already been mentioned as characteristic of the stage of rendition after slow elaboration, when the tempo begins to rise. A wide range of different types of *gamak* exists, characterized by speed, number of repetitions of a given note, intensity of attack, etc. (These points

should best be demonstrated live in a lecture.) Other microtonal devices are combinations of two or more of the above. For example, *zamzamā* is a kind of quick double-*gamak* followed by a turn.

A very important aspect of the music's microtonalism is the fact that the placement of a given scale step will vary from *rāga* to *rāga* (and performer to performer to a certain extent). Thus, in three night-time *rāgas*, all of which share the use of the flattened third degree, namely, *Bāgeshri*, *Mālkauns* and *Darbāri-Kānarā*, each has its own specific treatment of the flattened third. Of the three, *Mālkauns* has the highest third degree; it is usually heard from above or in connection with the fourth step, taken as a grace note or as a *gamak* of 4-3, 4-3. *Bāgeshri*'s flattened third also usually emerges as a descent from 4. But the descent is a slow *meend* ending with a touch of *āndolan* and the pitch is lower than that of *Mālkauns*. *Darbāri-Kānarā*'s third degree is the lowest of all three. It emerges in ascent from the second, and has heavy *āndolan* whose lower limit is practically the second degree itself.

The Hindustāni *tāla* system parallels Western metre in that it strings together regular repetitions of sets of strong and weak beats. We must now look at (i) what principally differentiates the *tālas* from Western measures; (ii) the kinds of metric and rhythmic possibilities the Hindustāni approach creates; and (iii) how these possibilities have been concretely applied in both *rāga* performance and in solo drumming.

I would say that there are two main points differentiating the Hindustāni approach from the Western. First is the elevated role given to percussion as a performance element in general and in conveying metre in particular. A *rāga* performance is not truly complete without a composition set in a *tāla* and accompanied by drums. The *tāla* is embodied in the melody and the melodist must be aware of where he or she is in the *tāla*. But the *tāla* is presented by the drummer and the audience orients itself to the *tāla* through following the strokes of the drums. In fact, it is the particular arrangement of drum strokes for each *tāla*, called the *thekā*, which defines the *tāla*. Thus, percussion exists on an entirely higher plane than in Western classical music, where its role has been essentially one of punctuation or accentuation of rhythm and metre. For an example of this, consider the Scherzo of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, with its relatively prominent tympanic part.

The second important difference lies in the fact that the *tālas* are broader-based in time than Western measures. They extend over (generally) larger numbers of beats and have particular rhythmical shapes — patterns of rise and fall — which are consequently broader than those of Western measures. Thus, a cycle of *teen tāla* (16 beats — roughly analagous to 4 measures of 4/4 time) has a distinct rise at the tenth beat and fall at the 14th. The main function of this is to differentiate the second half of the cycle from the first half, thus maintaining the broad base of the metre. Once the *tāla* has been introduced, it must be rigorously maintained until the composition being performed has been completely developed. Thus, renditions in *tāla* are cyclical in character. Further the conception of rhythmical development, once the composition has begun, is cyclical. *Sam*, the first beat of the cycle, serves both as the point of arrival for a concluded variation as well as the new beginning of a subsequent development.

The shape of the *tāla* is defined by a given arrangement of strokes on the drums, known as the *thekā*. The *Tablā*, which is the principal accompanying drum-set used for providing accompaniment to *khayal* and some other forms of Hindustāni music, is capable of numerous *bols* (specific sounds produced by particular strokes). The two drums, extremely ingenious in construction, each produce both resonating and damped tones of either determined or indeterminate pitch. The right-hand drum (*tablā*) is tuned to the melodist's tonic while the left-hand drum (*bāyā*) plays in the bass over a wide range of both determined and indeterminate pitches. Various *bols* (each of which has a name) are then arranged to make the *thekā*s of the different *tālas* (see Chart 2). These become the metrical framework for both melodic and rhythmic elaboration in performance.

In *rāga* performance, the *tablā* player will maintain the *thekā* (or some variation of it) throughout the rendition. Elaboration may be done by filling in various combinations of strokes between the basic strokes of the *thekā*. Or, a varying arrangement of strokes, called a *tukrā*, may be substituted for some number of beats in the *thekā* (providing that this substitution does not distort the basic shape of the *tāla*). A common form of substitution is the *tihāi* which consists of a given pattern of strokes played a total of three times and done in such a way that it ends on *sam*, the first beat of the cycle. The *tihāi* is also a melodic device. In fact, the two performers are often able to match melodic and percussive *tihāis* spontaneously.

When judiciously utilized, the various techniques of percussive elaboration enable the accompanist not only to provide the metrical framework for the melody but also to complement, accentuate and heighten its impact. Thus the accompanist should be highly conscious of *rāgas* in general and of the particular composition being used, as well as very quick to match the melodist's rhythm patterns or comment upon them. In this way, the performance achieves a highly unified character.

In solo drumming, the added aspects of systematic presentation of the *Tablā*'s possibilities and systematic development of various types of rhythmic patterns also come into play. It should be said that, in solo drumming, the *Tablā* really comes into its own, displaying immense capabilities for rhythmical development and sparkling virtuosity. There are various schools of *Tablā* playing, each with its own particular approach to technique and composition. Some types of *Tablā* soloizing include *kāidā* (a pattern of strokes which is then systematically developed), *raillā* (a virtuosic kind of display pattern which can also be varied somewhat), *gat-tukrā* (fixed compositions of particular interest in the arrangements of strokes) and *chakkardār* (triple *tihāi* patterns, also arranged in advance).

The first essential in a *rāga* performance is to create the *bhāva* or mood of the *rāga* through exposing its *svara-vistāra* effectively and affectively. Having done this, one elaborates upon the figurations developmentally, following one or another traditional pattern, and aiming to develop and deepen the mood of the *rāga*. The skill and creativity of the artist in carrying out the development are the main factors determining the interest or lack of it in a given rendition. Another crucial factor is the quality of the composition which is utilized in the rendition. The composition is a metred song,

CHART 1 SCALES

a) Generation of modes from the natural diatonic (major) scale:

Each mode can be produced by playing only white notes on the piano, going as shown above. Note that the Lokrian mode (B to B) which is not in use in Hindusthani music also found no use in the development of western music.

b) The ten thaats of Bhatkande's System, with corresponding church mode names, shown from a common Sa (C)

<p>Kalyan (Lydian)</p> <p>Sa Re Ga Ma^b Pa Dha Ri Sa</p>	<p>Bilawal (Ionian -major)</p> <p>Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa</p>
<p>Khamaj (Mixolydian)</p> <p>Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni^b Sa</p>	<p>Kafi (Dorian)</p> <p>Sa Re Ga^b Ma Pa Dha Ni^b Sa</p>
<p>Aswari (Aeolian-minor)</p> <p>Sa Re Ga^b Ma Pa Dha^b Ni^b Sa</p>	<p>Bhairavi (Phrygian)</p> <p>Sa Re Ga^b Ma Pa Dha^b Ni^b Sa</p>
<p>Todi</p> <p>Sa Re^b Ga^b Ma^b Pa Dha^b Ni Sa</p>	<p>Bhairav</p> <p>Sa Re^b Ga Ma Pa Dha^b Ni Sa</p>
<p>Purvi</p> <p>Sa Re^b Ga Ma^b Pa Dha^b Ni Sa</p>	<p>Marwa</p> <p>Sa Re^b Ga Ma^b Pa Dha Ni Sa</p>

CHART 2

THEKAS OR "TAL FRAMEWORKS"

In this chart the following symbols are used:

- x - sam, the 1st beat
- o - khali, a point or points in a tal characterized by rhythmic rise and indicated, when showing tal, by a wave of the hand.
- | - shows the vibhag or divisions of the tal

The syllables above the numbers of the beats are the names of the bols or drum strokes. It is advised that listeners learn to recognize the sound of each stroke and associate it with that stroke's name.

1. Teen Tal - 16 beats

x				2				0				3			x								
	Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha		Dha	Dhin	Dhin	Dha		Dha	Tin	Tin	Ta		Ta	Dhin	Dhin	Dha		(Dha)	x	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	1							1

This is the most common tal in Hindustani music. It is used by vocalists and instrumentalists in tempi varying from quite slow to moderate to exceptionally fast.

2. Ek Tal - 12 beats

x			0			2			0			3			4		x											
	Dhin	Dhin		Dha	ge	Te	re	ka	te		Tun	Na		Ka	Te		Dha	ge	Te	re	ka	te		Dhi	Na		(Dha)	x
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1					1							1				1

This tal is generally used for slow exposition of raga alap in vocal music.

3. Rupak Tal - 7 beats

0			1		2		0					
	Tin	Tin	Na		Dhi	Na		Dhi	Na		(Tin)	0
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1					1

Generally used in madhya jaya, moderate tempo, this tal's asymmetry and the fact that khali comes on the first beat give it its particular character.

4. Jhap Tal - 10 beats

x		2			0			3		x					
	Dhi	Na		Dhi	Dhi	Na		Ti	Na		Dhi	Dhi	Na	(Dhi)	x
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1					1

5. Kherva - 8 beats

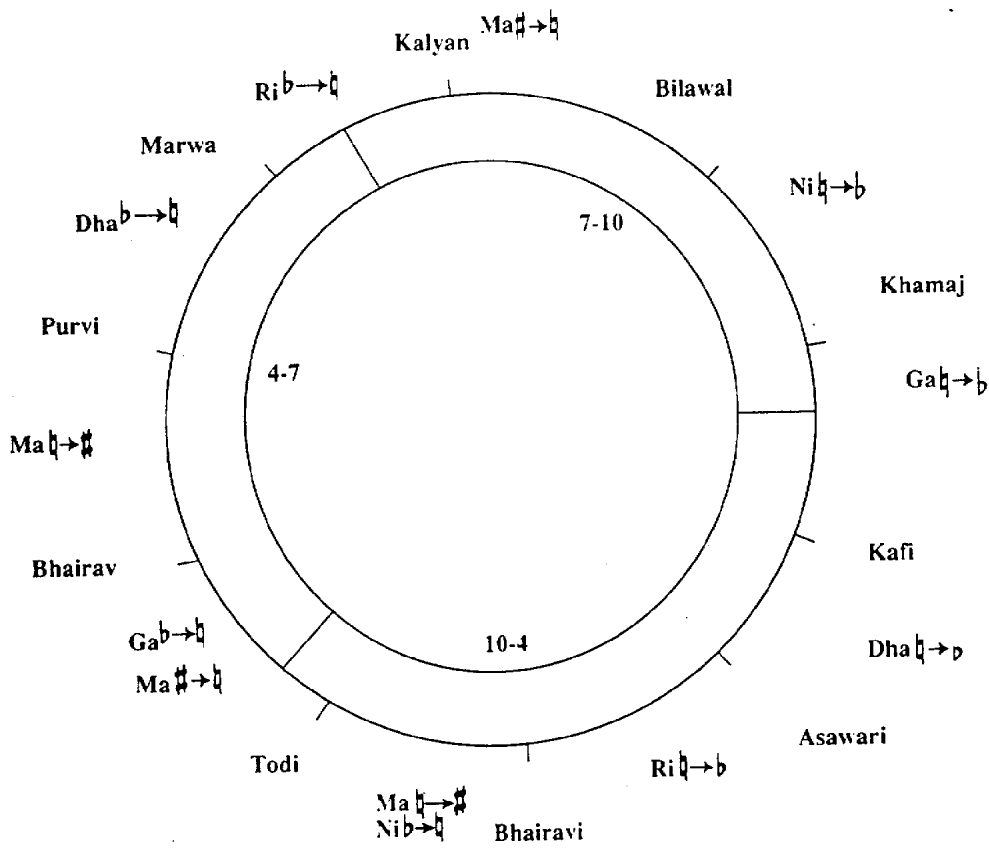
Dha	Ge	Na	Ka	Na	Ka	Dhi	Na
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

6. Dadra - 6 beats

x			0				
	Dha	Dhi	Dha		Dha	tin	Dha
1	2	3	4	5	6		

CHART 3
THE TIME THEORY OF PERFORMANCE

This chart is derived from N.A. Jairazbhoy's *The Ragas of North Indian Music*, k971, Faber and Faber, London. p.63



Between each scale name I have added the name of the note or notes which change and the change which takes place.

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varying in length from two to several lines, and composed within the conditions of the *rāga* being performed. In a vocal rendition, the song will, of course, have a lyric. Traditionally, the songs are divided into two sections, *sthāyi* and *antarā*. In these, the first section is composed primarily in a range extending from about a fourth or fifth below the performer's home *sa* (tonic) to about *ni* (theseventhstepabove t). The *antarā*, or second section, focuses on the *sa* an octave above the home note, and is usually composed so as to descend at its completion to the finishing phrases of the first section, *sthāyi*.

The stringed instrumental format of *rāga* development is somewhat different from the vocal one. In it, the instrumentalist will generally do extensive *ālāp* (slow, unmetred reexposition consisting mainly of elaboration in *gamak*), and *jhālā* (a way of weaving the *rāga* melody into complex rhythm patterns heard against percussively struck drone strings—*chikari*), all occurring without accompaniment. After this extensive treatment, the *Tablā* will join in the rendition of a *gat*, a composition in the *rāga* meant for the string instrument. The *gat* is similar to the vocal compositions described previously in that it also has a *mukhdā*, or catch phrase, consists of *sthāyi* and *antarā*, and is rendered in connection with the presentation of *tānas* and *tihāis*.

A somewhat controversial aspect of Hindustāni music is the traditional view-point that associates given *rāgas* with particular times of day. Pandit Bhātkhande has proposed a grouping of the scales and their associated *rāgas* which both reflects the traditional performance times of most *rāgas* and also develops a succession of note alterations, going from scale to scale as the sun rises, sets, etc. (see Chart 3). There is no doubt in my mind that, if nothing else, the weight of performance tradition for centuries has made certain *rāgas* seem more acceptable or fitting at their proper times of day. *Rāga Bhairava*, for instance, considered to have a serene and contemplative mood, is associated with the time of early morning and is the principle *rāga* of *Bhairava thāt* (Chart I). It is a *sampurna rāga*, meaning that all the seven notes are used. Similarly, *Todi*, a major *rāga* of mid-morning and the present *rāga* of *Todi thāt*, is also a *sampurna rāga*.

Jairazbhoy says: "The time specified for the performance of *rāgas* are only approximate and in practice there is considerable latitude. It does appear that this theory (Bhātkhande's) conforms in a large number of instances to the traditional time of performance of *rāgas*."

An interesting aspect of the time theory of performance was brought out to me in discussion with my guru, Devendra Murdheshwar, who always emphasizes the imagery of notes rising and setting with the sun. Thus, the transition between *rāgas* with a major and those with a minor third (and sharing their remaining scale steps) occurs as the evening deepens into night. This progression continues with the *rāgas* of *Asāvari thāt*, having the flattened sixth, coming next, then of *Bhairavi thāt*, with the flattened second, coming after that. Towards dawn, the direction reverses, as in *Bhairav*, where the third and seventh are again raised, following the imagery of the approaching dawn. This is certainly the most charming way of looking at the question, putting one in mind of wonderful all-night concerts where, indeed, one can hear the succession of melodies according to this scheme. The main difficulty presented by the time theory seems to be

ASPECTS OF INDIAN MUSIC

practical, in that concerts usually can't be organized at enough different times of day and night to enable one to hear all the *rāgas* at their proper times. Considerable latitude and adjustment in this regard while retaining the broad format of the time theory is a convenient solution to this problem which is acceptable both to musicians as well as listeners. □

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Lalit kee khairaat bat rahee hai :

A moving statement of praise which has almost become proverbial today is 'Lalit kee khairaat bat rahee hai'. Once Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan (Of Kirana) was performing Lalit (one of his favourite ragas) at the *dargaah* in Ajmer Sharif. It was such a soulful rendering that the Pir Sahib said to the people, 'Lalit kee khairaat bat rahee hai': 'Lalit is being 'donated' by Wahid Khan Sahib. Please accept it.'

Munh mein zahar kee pudyaa rakh kar gaanaa :

This is a proverbial expression in praise of the musician who can sing a very difficult raga, with the most sensitive phrases, with ease and flawless mastery. The expression literally means 'to sing with poison in the mouth': a little mistake and the poison would go down his throat.

Potaa badaa sur mein hai :

A form of praise, used when a musician's fingertip work flows with maximum ease on his instrument, equalling the flight of his imagination (see also *Potaa*).

Daag-daadhaa :

A *mizraab* stroke on the sitar by the first finger of the right hand; *daa* is produced by an inward stroke, and *daadhaa* by inward-outward strokes.

Daadar kanthee :

Daadar means frog; *kanth* is throat. Refers to a musician with a loud and strained, frog-like voice.

Daadraa :

A light-classical style of singing, even lighter than the *thumree*. Any *dhun* (tune) or *lore* is improvised in the *thumree* style to sing a *daadraa*. It is not essential that a *daadraa* be sung in *daadraa taal* — it can be in any small *taal*: *roopak*, *keherwaa*, *khemtaa* or *daadraa*.

Daadraa taal :

See *Taal*.

Daagar :

A family of *dhrupad* singers, originally from Jaipur (See *Daagar haanee*).

Daab gaans :

Daab is to press, *gaans* is to attain a result. Refers to tonal weight of each *bol* on the *tablaa*.

Daab gaanth :

A phrase used in praise of the heavy and rich as well as correct pressure of the hands on the *tablaa*.

Daad :

A Persian word, meaning praise, especially learned praise, particularly from one master to another.

The most common *daad* heard in the *mehfil* is the spontaneous 'Subhaan Allah'. Speaking highly for the artist, *Subhaan Allah* means 'praise be to God' (crediting Him with the achievement). *Maashaa Allah*, meaning 'with the blessings of God', is another popular manner of communicating *daad*. Others are:

Ghandee choomnaa :

This was a custom among vocalists of earlier times, to praise each other by kissing the part of the neck that covered the gullet.

Jawaab naheen :

Jawaab naheen is again a common term of praise. *Jawaab* is reply; to reply is to convey a sense of comparison and equality. Thus *jawaab naheen* means 'that which holds no comparison.' *Joraa naheen* is also used in the same context.

PHOTO ESSAY BY RAGHU RAI

The Beats of Ecstasy

For nearly five decades Alla Rakha has mesmerised audiences the world over with his consummate mastery of rhythms and beats. And he has raised table-playing to a rare level of artistic expression. His son, Zakir Hussain, a child prodigy, is now walking tall in his father's footsteps. The special relationship between father and son, who now give recitals to packed audiences across the globe, and their artistic yearnings are explored in this article by Features Editor INDEBJIT BADHWAR. It is part of the continuing series on the great masters of Indian art and music.



PHOTO ESSAY

NOW with sudden spleen, now with a quick fresher of anger in their blood, now with infinite pleasure, now with unending wit they spin their entire beings into iridescent threads of beats and rhythms. A sea breeze with the strength of a squall buffets the terrace of the second floor Bombay apartment where the two artists sit facing each other producing sounds that concatenate with magic. Alla Rakha's shoulder-length ringlets that sprout deep in the back of a head nearly bald dance in the breeze. His upper lip hangs like a crescent moon over his open mouth. The nostrils are flared like those of a racehorse. And the kindly, quizzical scowl he usually wears on his face is changing into an expression of beatific fulfillment as he contemplates his son.

Point, counterpoint. In garde, Parry, Thrust. Withdraw. Father and son duel and caress. Zakir Hussain's head of curls rises and falls with the beat and with the breeze. He has the demeanour and raw power of an untamed stallion. Then the expressions on both their faces begin to take on a rhythmic similarity. There is wonderment with a new and mysterious

pattern. Then the beginning of a smile. The smile widens. The eyes widen. The eyebrows rise making furrows in the forehead. The rhythm, after a complicated pattern of improvisation, is about to come full cycle. It has to end, within a fraction of a second, on just the right beat. The heads tilt back. The pattern is completed with mathematical precision. They both nod vigorously at each other as if signalling the end of an artistically cathartic journey. Then, they're off again.

Their expressions simply melt into each other's. Ages are obliterated. It is now just a single being with four hands. A whirlwind of sound and motion. The tablas chatter, they sing, they resound. Now Zakir introduces a theme and Alla Rakha picks it up effortlessly, changes it and throws it right back at his son who picks it up eagerly and tosses it back. They reach out to one another, playfully, mischievously. It is symbiosis in its most poetic expression.

"Yes, it is mischief," says Zakir. "I'm really teasing my father. I'm deliberately falling into puddles. He propounds an idea and takes it along and passes it to me, like in a relay. I take it and do

things with it until it flounders, then he takes it back and sets it in the right pattern. Then I ask him, how could it not be this? And the answers, yes, it can be this. Then I ask, can it be this? It's endless. I really enjoy being a kid in front of him.

"I am sure," says Alla Rakha, "that Zakir heard the tabla and knew what it was when he was in his mother's womb." Zakir has no such pre-natal memories. But he is aware of "the sound of my father at perhaps the age of two or three. I remember sitting behind him on stage and hearing him play and throwing tantrums if I were not allowed to accompany him to concerts. I remember waiting up for him night after night when he was on tour. He'd come back late at night. He'd eat. And then we'd start reciting the tabla syllables or start playing until we dozed off together. I slept in my father's bed until I was seven years old."

"I knew he'd play the tabla even before he was born," says Alla Rakha. "His mother always insisted that he should be a doctor or something, but I knew exactly what he'd do. When he was a baby I tied little toy tablas to his crib and even at that age he would reach out eagerly for them. And often I would put his

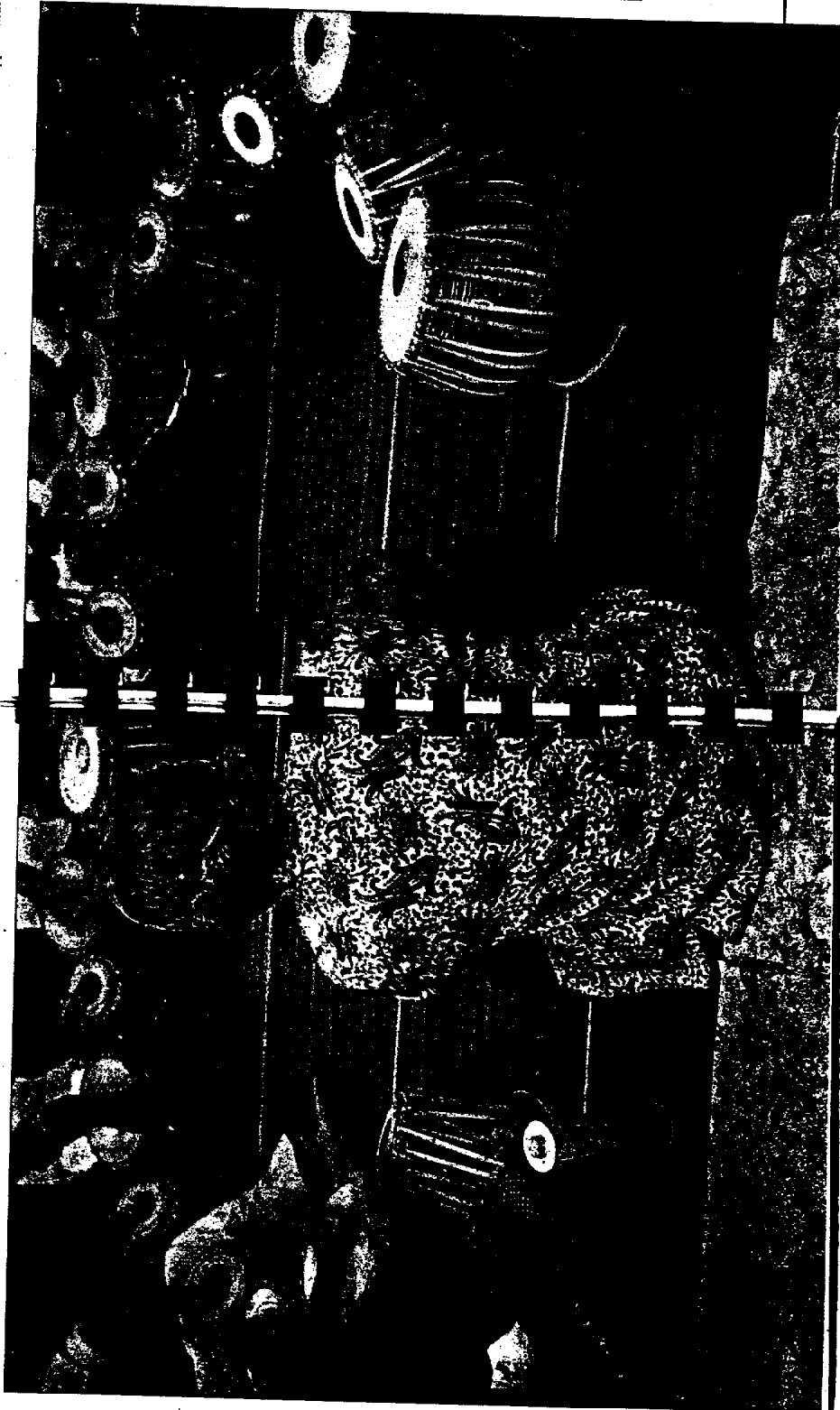
naked little body on my chest and whisper tabla syllables into his ear and play a rhythm gently on his back."

"You couldn't task for a more loving guru," adds Zakir. "Even before I first touched the tabla, I knew its language and I just had to make it respond. I never consciously learned and I had had

then 30 years old, was dying. He had been sick of some unknown ailment for nearly a year. His friends and relatives had even come to take their last glimpse of him. He sat in one place, not moving, not even lifting his head. When Zakir was barely a few minutes old he was taken to his father. For the first time, Alla Rakha moved his head, took his newborn into his arms, nuzzled him and whispered tabla syllables, *la tin la*, into his ears. Zakir's mother did not devote as much attention to him at first because of her concern for her husband. But a sadhu who came to the household that month, told the mother to take special care of the boy because he would ultimately save the husband.

The father prefers not to speak about that period in his life. But Zakir intones: "I suppose that was when some strange and

Alla Rakha's shagirds follow the master. He keeps time and watches in rept attention as the tablas belt out the syllabic chords.



"You couldn't ask for a more loving guru," says Zakir. "Even before I first touched the tabla, I knew I just had to make it respond."



PHOTO ESSAY

powerful bond developed between us. I was a very sickly child, I'd keep getting sick, and the sickler got the better my father became until he blossomed again with good health and creativity."

Alla Rakha had already made it as a musician and was widely recognised as the foremost exponent of the Punjabi *gharana* founded by Lala Bihari Das, one of Emperor Akbar's court musicians. He had done solos for All India Radio, played with every renowned artist, been music director for more than a dozen films including *Mehnaz/Aansu* for which he even sang. But he had not yet begun his foreign concerts which made him, Ravi Shanker and All Akbar Khan near cult figures on American and European college campuses. Says Alla Rakha, nodding in the direction of Zakir: "For them it was easier. Their art was right

here. It was at home. All they had to do was to ask for it. In my time it was different. I had to chase all over for it and live sometimes for days without food. And whatever I earned I had to share with my guru as *dakshina*."

BORN in Pragwal, a village in Jammu, Alla Rakha still feels most comfortable when speaking his native Dogri. His Hindi is heavily accented and when he speaks it he sounds like actor Om Prakash. One of seven children in a poor family, he was about eight when he first heard an exponent of the Punjabi *gharana* play the tabla with some touring performers. Alla Rakha made up his mind. This is what he must do. His parents exhorted him to join the army but Alla Rakha remained adamant, playing

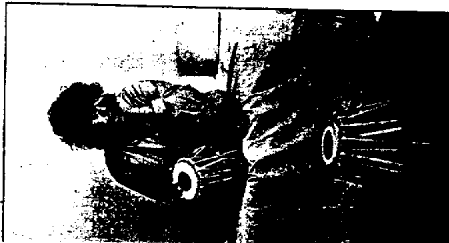
the tabla on his own and learning from whomever he could. And then, as has been the spiritual experience of other artistes like Bismillah Khan, and Balachander, Alla Rakha received the signal. He was perhaps 11 then. It was a voice that commanded him to go to a nearby seasonal stream and wait for something to happen. "I went there every evening and stood near the water for hours. Nothing happened. Then, one day, after several hours, I felt a peculiar sensation. Something seemed about to happen. Suddenly, I saw this light. It was descending slowly. It entered the water and disappeared. I closed my eyes in fear. The same voice I had heard earlier said, go, you have found it."

"Almost immediately after, I sensed a surge of power, of shakti within me that I had never before experienced. My resolve

to master the tabla and to bring it to the centre stage of Indian classical music was never as strong." Two years later, at the end of his 13th year, Alla Rakha ran away from home in search of his guru, uncertain that he would ever be accepted. The man he sought was Mian Qadir Baksh who lived in Lahore. En route, he earned something of a living by playing for various troupes, and even renting rooms in wayside inns to coach aspiring tabla players. At one time in Gurdaspur, Alla Rakha managed to find enough students to be able to make a living just by teaching.

"But I didn't really want to be a teacher and I had a lot of learning to do myself. And I was still in search of my guru." After Alla Rakha reached Lahore—he was barely 15 years old—he managed to play in a small musical fair and drummed out a

Eight to 12 hours of *riaz* every day for nearly five years was how Alla Rakha learned. "Sometimes I played non-stop for hours....I had to perfect the *taqeen* (improvisation) and the *tajra* (tempo)."



Zakir remembers always being jealous of his father's playing. "He could produce this thick, fat, round, strong sound. I could never get the same fatness. What he'd do with one finger, I'd do with a full hand."



PHOTO ESSAY

highly competent piece of technical wizardry in which, through perfectly timed fractions, he managed to divide a 17-beat rhythm in three parts. And the mountain came to Mohammed. Mian Qadir Baksh, having heard of Alla Rakha's feat, came to see him. "Whose *shagird* (disciple) are you?" Baksh asked. "Yours," replied Rakha. "But I've never seen you," said Baksh. "But I've seen you, you've put my hands on the tabla," replied Alla Rakha. "Learn, but learn properly," said Baksh. "I'm at your feet," replied Alla Rakha.

Eight to 12 hours of *riaz* every day for nearly five years was how Alla Rakha learned. "Sometimes I played non-stop for eight hours wearing a cotton vest and a lungi which used to get wet with perspiration. I knew the mathematics but what I needed to

learn was the alphabet and the grammar, to perfect the *tashkeel* (improvisation) and the *laya* (tempo)." He was to learn and become the masterful exponent of complicated rhythms such as the *Indra Lail* with its 19 *mavzas* (beats), the *Shikhar Lail* with its 17 beats, the *Laxmi* and *Sad-wart Lails* with their 18 beats.

There are 360 known tabla rhythms (*lails*) based on four beats to 118 beats. "The *laya* is the pulse, the tempo," explains Alla Rakha. "This is what you follow. You play in and out of it, you play around it. You take each beat and create patterns. The ideal way to play 16 beats might be in a combination of 4-4-4-4. But you can also do it in 5-3-5-3 patterns. You can take a beat and extend it or shorten it."

The tabla is widely recognised, as the most precise, sophisti-

cated percussion instrument in the world. The western drum, explains Alla Rakha, "basically has one rhythm, 1-2-3-4-1-2-3-4, bum, bum, bum. There's no *lail*, only timing. Our improvisation has to be completed on a given mathematical sum but western drummers can end wherever they like."

THE beauty and the artistry, "the creativity in tabla," says Zakir, "is not just technical dexterity and the ability to do complex divisions and subdivisions but in simplifying the complicated flourishes. It comes from the notes, the balance of the two instruments, the creation of melodies, the ability to talk to an audience through the tabla. This is what my father achieved and took before the entire world."

"I refuse to believe this is work," says Zakir. "I have so much fun. I was playing concerts even before I knew I could play concerts. I was playing professionally without knowing it."



"I am sure," says Alla Rakha, "that Zakir heard the tabla and knew what it was when he was in his mother's womb. When he was a baby I would whisper tabla syllables into his ear."



Until the advent of giants like Alla Rakha, Kishan Maharaj, Shanta Prasad, the tabla usually played second fiddle to the musical instrument. It was simply an instrument of accompaniment. The strange, looking drums made of wood and leather straps pulled over what look like cricket balls came into existence only about 400 years ago as an improvement on the pakhawaj, the dholak-like single drum beaten on each side with open palms. The pakhawaj, Alla Rakha explains, was more suited to accompany *dirupad* and *tarana* which are sung with a full-throated voice. But with the development of *kingdud* music the need arose for a subtler instrument that could be played faster and yet one that did not overpower the singer. The tabla was developed in response.

PHOTO ESSAY

And just as Bismillah Khan brought the shehnai out of the aisles to centre stage so too did Alla Rakha, Kishan Maharaj and Shamta Prasad give the tabla its own creative edge of distinction. And in this, the tabla artists were given tremendous encouragement by Vilayat Khan, Ravi Shankar, and Ali Akbar Khan who let them get out of the rut of simply being accompanists and demonstrate their virtuosity and art. Today, of the 35 Alla Rakha LPs on the market, some eight are solos. And most of his concert tours—he still travels abroad four months a year—are either solos or duets with Zakir. In a forthcoming tour of Europe, Alla Rakha and Zakir are expected to give 21 concerts in 20 days in West Germany alone before they take off again for another tour of the U.S. Zakir, who now lives in California with his American wife Antonia and two daughters, already has four solo records to his credit apart from several others which he has made with his

Now Zakir introduces a theme and Alla Rakha picks it up effortlessly, changes it and throws it right back at his son who picks it up eagerly and tosses it back like in a relay.



American-based fusion music group—Shakti. Alla Rakha finds records and awards satisfying, even necessary. But what he finds as true nourishment for his soul, he says, "are those moments when you realise that somehow you have been chosen to receive *vidya* and that you are simply doing your duty by attaining more and more *vidya* and then spreading it everywhere. I have never looked back. I have never doubted myself, I have never doubted my art," he says simply. The "moments," he says, are inexplicable.

TEN years ago he was playing a solo a day at the famous Baba Harballah *maid* in Jalandhar. "When I play it is almost as if I am giving *hazri* for the *malik*. I always pray in my heart for my *malik* to keep my *izzat*. Please, *malik*, you've done so much, I pray, keep giving me strength. That day it was as if the people were

seeing the *baba* through my playing. Please, God, look after me, I was praying, as played, utterly lost. Suddenly, as if from under my armpits, there was a gush of turbulent air that shook the tent under which I was playing, and knocked the bamboo supports off their foundation. People in the audience had to hold up the tent. Within 10 seconds all was quiet. There was not a cloud in the sky, not a hint of where such turbulence had come from."

Alla Rakha still has a massive following in Punjab where the *ravai* and *dhadis* who sing and play *tablas* in *gurdwaras* are students of the Punjab *gharanas*. Narmdhar Sikhs still send their youngsters to study under him in Bombay. For when he is not touring, or absent-mindedly working out a new mathematical rhythmic permutation under his breath, he is teaching students in a sparsely furnished room in an old government building opposite Shivaji Park. He is often accompanied by his two other

sons, Fazal, 26, and Taufiq, 24, both accomplished performers. Fazal, with his own fusion group, *Dhwa*, does tours abroad, and Taufiq composes music for plays.

His *shagirds*, ages ranging from nine to 20, touch Alla Rakha's feet in reverence as he enters the room. Lovingly, he tunes each one's *tabla*. He starts with a group of three early beginners. "I want you to start together. All right, one, two, three, four: *dha!*" The students watch the master's hands on his own *tabla*. "*Dha dhin din dha, ta tin, tin ta. Dhin, dhin dha dha*. He keeps time and watches in rapt attention as the *tabla* belt out the syllabic chords. "Again, one, two, three, four: *ti da da di da da dhina*. To get the proper *dha* sound here is how you press your finger on the bass drum." He looks at a 14-year-old: "Change your sound. Come on, keep up the beat." He then shows how much to raise an index finger for a certain sound, and how to let it drop in

They reach out to one another, playfully, mischievously. "I'm really teasing my father," says Zakir. "I'm deliberately falling into puddles. I enjoy being a kid in front of him."





For Alla Rakha there is no difference between intense religiosity and his art. "There's a rustic simplicity about him," said Zakir. "A wisened innocence. He is always *him* and knows where he is going."

the place desired. "Watch out, you're increasing the beat. Never lose faith. All right now, play with me," he tells a group of slightly advanced students. They play together and it looks as if he's drawn the thumping and vibrating fingers of his pupils into his own two hands.

The drums talk, dance, even sing: *ta ta tinna ta ta. Dha dhathi dhagena, Dhathi dhagena tinna gena, ta tati tagena, dhathi dhagena dhinna gena....*"

ZAKIR remembers always being jealous of his father's playing. "He could always produce this thick, fat, strong, round sound. I could never get the same fatness. So I had to improvise my own movements. What he'd do with one finger, I'd do with a full hand. If he'd use his index finger to get more base, I'd use two. But just by emulating him I began to produce new sounds. And this is still what really excites me now." Zakir has just finished a course in Chinese, African, Indonesian music at the University of Washington in Seattle.

"All this has exposed me to different tones and sounds and this helps me to develop the tabla not just rhythmically, but melodiously. I can now put more emphasis on the base drum and create musical notes. The sarod and sitar are more versatile and interesting now than they were 40 years ago thanks to Ravi Shankar and Ustad Ali Akbar. So can the tabla."

In his home in Bombay after a nearly non-stop tour that took him to Poona, Madras, Bangalore, Mysore, Calcutta, Ambala, where he played with Hari Prasad Chaurasia, Shiv Kumar Sharma, Bhim Sen Joshi, Pandit Jasraj, and Pandit Ravi Shankar, Zakir is being spoiled silly by his sisters, Khursheid and Razia, his brothers, his mother and dotting nieces and nephews who call him *ta din mamu*. And he loves every minute of it, exuding a cocky self-assurance that comes only to those who know they've made it big—and without too much struggle. "I refuse to believe this is work. I have so much fun at it. I just slipped into it. I was playing concerts even before I knew I could play concerts. I was playing professionally without being conscious of it or knowing it."

At the age of seven, he had already given his first public performance by playing with no less a giant than Ali Akbar Khan. There was no looking back. At 17, Zakir went to the US. "He was competent," says his father. "I blessed him to go there and spread our art. He was already an artist." There Zakir taught tabla and music at the school started by Ali Akbar Khan before starting his own production company. "I still remember the advice that Pandit Ravi Shankar gave. 'It is okay to go abroad but be sure you get accepted in your own country. Always water your own roots'."

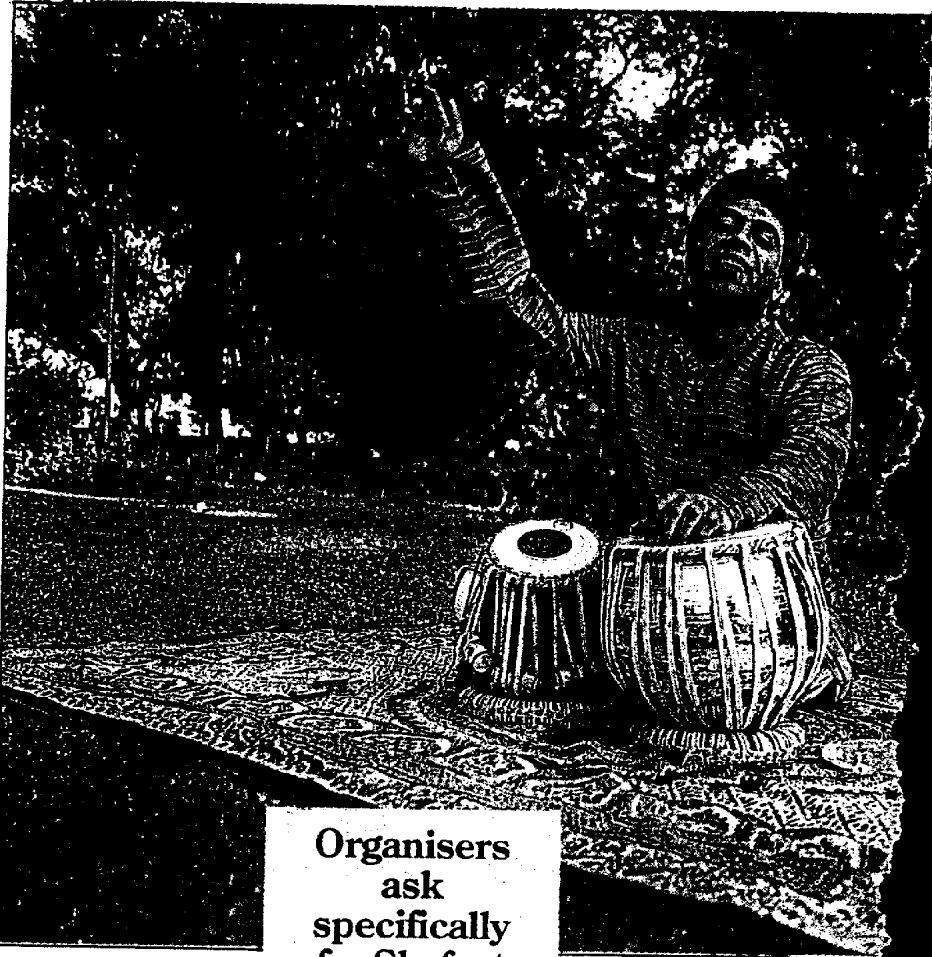
And last month this acceptance came in the form of a Padma Shree award, something his father had earned nearly two decades ago. Zakir was playing a concert with Ravi Shankar in Bombay. Suddenly Alla Rakha, tears in his eyes, whispered something to Ravi Shankar, who announced from the stage that the Padma Shree had been awarded to *ustad* Zakir Hussain. Zakir arose and touched both the elders' feet. "The happiness I felt was really because my father felt happy and proud," Zakir said.

Though cast in the same mould there is a fundamental difference between the two artists. For Alla Rakha there is no difference between intense religiosity and his art. Zakir's intensity springs from his involvement in what he is doing. When a musician is soaring during a performance, sometimes he seems to be commanding the instrument and sometimes the instrument appears to be in total command of him. "When my father is taken over by the instrument, when it sings through him, he has this glazed look on his face. But I've never had that feeling of being taken over. When I play it is like sadness, hunger, anger, love, orgasm.

"But that special feeling is still not there. To achieve that I need to do much more. To drop everything as my father did and plunge myself into *riyaz*. But I don't know if I have the strength or courage to do this. After all this, my father doesn't even know what he's achieved. There's a rustic simplicity about him, a wisened innocence. He is always *him* and always knows where he is going. I'd like to be like him."

THE BEAT GOES ON

Tabla player Ustad Shafaat Ahmad Khan is the most sought-after accompanist in Indian music recitals



Organisers ask specifically for Shafaat when they plan music concerts. And fans recognise and stop him on the streets

because he himself is guided by the mood of the audience."

But a lot of hard work goes, all the same, into making the long evening a success. "That is an ongoing process," explains Shafaat. "I might practise what I play on stage but I have to build up my stamina also.

The idea is to take a particular *lai* (tune) and play at such a speed hours at a stretch — without a single drop of sweat on my brow."

And there is also the mastering of the art of placing the fingers correctly on the tabla, an art that the Delhi *gharana* is known for. "It is the most important thing for my *gharana*," says Shafaat. "Placed on the tabla, the fingers should look beautiful. Along with the beauty of what you are playing, the beauty of the way in which it is being played should also come across."

Style came early to Shafaat Ahmad

A santoor recital by Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma takes place for a private gathering in New Zealand.

Ustad Amjad Ali Khan plays the sarod for a packed gathering in Delhi's Sirifort auditorium.

Pandit Jasraj delivers a vocal recital for a Spic-Macay audience in Gwalior.

Three different experts. Three different forms of classical music. Three different places in the world. But they have, like many musical happenings, one thing in common. The tabla player. Ustad Shafaat Ahmad Khan.

An exponent of the Delhi *gharana*, Shafaat Ahmad Khan has succeeded in doing what others could not — become the most sought-after accompanist in Indian music recitals both in India and abroad. Shafaat spends half the year travelling around the world. Organisers in India ask specifically for him when they plan music concerts. They also give him the option of deciding which artiste he wants to perform with. And he is stopped on the streets of Delhi by his fans wanting to know where they can buy his cassettes.

Being an accompanist does not strike Shafaat as being any less important

than the artistes he plays with. If anything, sharing the platform with them poses for him a kind of musical challenge. "The tabla may be a *sangat* instrument and therefore always secondary in a musical evening," he says, "but it provides the player with a great feeling of being able to understand the mood of the artiste and to adapt to his style there and then. There is also this feeling of doing something different the next time, of improvising and adding to what you have already played, and still have it in harmony with what the artiste is playing."

According to Shafaat, who has played with artistes ranging from Pandit Ravi Shankar to Kishori Amonkar to Birju Maharaj, no planning is ever done in the green room before the concert. "Everything starts and ends on the stage," he says. "There are no discussions about what the artiste is going to play simply