

shades in which notes are effectively used and their characteristic movements (*calan*). Normally he conforms to certain more or less fixed formulas and to the sequence in which basic patterns of elaboration are used, as also to many other techniques of style and ornamentation. His education sharpens his awareness and he starts to evaluate effective phrases as well as meaningful approaches to a *rāga* crystallised by his contemporaries and by the great masters of the past. With this rigorous training complemented by a rich heritage, a classical Indian musician begins his career. It is only after he has mastered the formal or fixed elements in a *rāga*, that he feels confident to handle those that are flexible and spontaneous. The insight of a great master, which adds new features to the elaboration of a *rāga*, tends to become an established rule for his pupils and for many of his contemporaries. This phenomenon gives birth to a specific school or *gharanā* as it is called. A great musician is in this sense somewhat like a master craftsman who, while belonging to a tradition, simultaneously moulds it according to his genius. He not only imparts his peculiar sensitivity to the already existing patterns but also presents his own vision of them. And if his vision be original, intense and comprehensive enough, a great musician can create radically new styles. This was the case for styles of singing called *khyāl*, *thumri*, *ṭappā*, etc., developed between the seventeenth and the nineteenth century, and which are considered more brilliant than the older and more solemn *dhrupad*.

To obtain a clearer picture of what may be called "improvisation" in northern Indian Music, we shall try to sketch, though in their barest outlines, some of the methods adopted in the elaboration of a *rāga*. In typical *dhrupad* singing, for example, where the rules are comparatively rigid, the basic structural plan proceeds from the establishment of the scale and mood of a *rāga* in a slow non-rhythmic development. This long prelude is called the *alāpa*. The entire structure of the *rāga* is virtually established through the *alāpa*. In *dhrupad* singing the *alāpa* is without words, utilizing conventional syllables which have no meaning. The *alāpa* is followed by the singing of a

poetic text of a few words — usually four lines — in rhythmic cycles of measured beats. *dhrupad*, properly speaking, is this part, which is elaborated by means of various patterns improvised upon the note structure in different tempos. This, naturally, leaves ample scope for a musician to display his virtuosity. The *dhrupad* is usually followed by a lighter composition called *dhamār* built on a rhythm of 14 time-units (divided into 3+2+3+2+2+2). This provides the musician with another occasion to display his virtuosity in rhythmic forms. The unfoldment, in all the three stages, moves from the severe to the joyful, from sheerness to richness and from a slow to a gradually increasing tempo.

The *alāpa* begins with a sober movement revealing the elemental form (*rūpa*) and establishing the basic mood (*rasa*) of a *rāga*.² It is first treated with a few essential notes around the middle tonic (the *madhyama sā*) unless the structure of the *rāga*, for example Bahār, Sohini or Deshkār, demands a different treatment. The musician then develops the *alāpa* in the lower octave which brings out the more solemn aspects of the *rāga*. With each step a new facet of the *rāga* emerges, opening up new possibilities of expression and nuance. Seizing upon these possibilities, the musician freely plays with them, yet without ever disfiguring either the process of unfoldment or the basic form of a *rāga*. The logic of unfoldment leads him to the next higher note or step in a *rāga* till the musician reaches the higher tonic (*tāra sā*). This marks the completion of one stage which according to some schools is termed the *alāpa* of the basic development. Next he, or she, explores the inherent possibilities of the higher octave. This is the *alāpa* in the second development. After he has established the widest possible uses of the notes (*svaras*) in the three octaves he then begins to play with the structure as a whole. All this takes place without definite

²For a critical discussion of the cogency of the concept of *rasa* to music, see my Hindi article in volume two, entitled, 'Saṅgīta aur Rasa-siddhānta: ek Samasyā.' The article is also included in *Bhāratīya Kalā-dṛṣṭi*, ed. Sachhidanand Vatsyayan, Prabhat Prakashan, Delhi, 1985.

rhythm patterns, in a free and flowing tempo undergoing a subtle and gradual acceleration. The rhythm becomes distinctly marked, assuming the form of a *tāla*, or a patterned cycle of beats, after the unfoldment reaches a climax encompassing all the movements of the low, the middle and the high octaves. When the musician feels that he has brought the *rāga* to an apex, he ends it usually by singing a characteristic phrase in slow tempo ending on the middle tonic, thus bringing back the *rāga* to the place from where its unfoldment had started.

The *alāpa* is followed by the *dhrupad*. *Dhrupad* is a composed song developed in four distinct musical parts: a basic form (*sthāyi*), a development in the higher octave (*antarā*), an overall movement (*sañcārī*) and the final section (*ābhoga*). There have been many celebrated *dhrupad* composers in north India; among the earliest whose compositions are still available, although with changes and modifications made by numerous later generations, is Nāyak Baiju (C. 14th century AD). A composition or *bandish* as it is called, is an aesthetic epitome of a *rāga*, with all its salient features as captured by the vision of a master musician. It is set to a particular rhythm-structure (*tāla*) and is first rendered in its basic tempo (*laya*) which may differ from one school to another or from musician to musician. The role of *tāla* in a *bandish* is equally important, for a *rāga* moulded to the form of a specific *tāla*, acquires the distinct movements of that *tāla*, which affect the mood and the complexion of the *rāga*. This obviously is the reason why no one ever thinks of rendering a comparatively serene *rāga* like Mālakosha in the lively *dādṛā* rhythm (3+3), though theoretically speaking such a feat would not be impossible.³

The development of the melodic form and of the rhythmic variations begins after the *bandish* has been rendered in its basic tempo. With the basic tempo as the background, returning to it from time to time after an important new movement, the

³ See, however, the essay in this collection entitled, 'Transformation As Creation,' pp. 33-34.

artist now takes the liberty of creating new patterns in rhythm and new melodic variation. Only through this freedom can he reveal different shapes and undertones of feelings latent in the mood of a *rāga*.

This, in brief, is the usual plan of elaboration of a *rāga* in the *dhrupad* style, yet is not compulsory. The "step-like" plan of elaboration, though considered to be a more elegant and complete way of unfoldment, is by no means a binding rule. Many artists, especially in the *khyaḷ* style, follow a different plan. Bade Ghulam Ali, for example, often chooses to sketch out a *rāga*,⁴ first in its broad outlines with a few grouped and well measured melodic figures. The details, the colours, the improvised elaborations are filled in gradually. There are certain *rāgas*, such as Bahār, Deshī Todi, Kāmod, Paraj, Vasanta, etc., where to create the individual form and flavour of the *rāga* this more condensed treatment is far more necessary. The plan in such cases has only two phases: the development in the *sthāyi* and that in the *antarā*. All the other elements are absorbed and integrated within these two.

Thus we see that a North Indian musician while rendering a *rāga* constructs or builds it. Such a construction necessarily involves techniques of which we could only indicate the barest outline. A musician sets himself a general plan and follows it, yet at each step he puts in his own creative interpretation in formulating, enriching and giving meaning to the patterns he employs. An artist, though confined to adhere to the accepted forms of *rāgas*, is still free to exercise his creative insight and imagination, improvising — if this can be called improvisation — at every step of the elaboration. It was once pointedly expressed by a traditional musician that an artist's individual imagination and the rigid laws to which he has to conform are like the two wheels of a chariot, both of them being equally indispensable for its movement.

⁴ Bade Ghulam Ali was alive when this essay was written (in the mid sixties).

CHAPTER – EIGHT

Bharata and the Fine Art of
Mixing Structures

Bharata, with whose work I shall be concerned in the present paper, is the purported author of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, an ancient text on dramatics. I speak of him as “the purported author” because modern scholarship doubts his authorship of the text. It questions whether this huge tome of about 6000 verses was written by a single author. What I have to say about the text may tend to favour the traditional belief that the *Nāṭyaśāstra* does, indeed, have a single author. Tradition calls this author, Bharata.

My purpose here is not to discuss the authorship of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, though my discussion may be seen to have a tacit bearing on the question. What I propose to do in this paper is to study the *Nāṭyaśāstra* in the light of the three concepts we have decided to reflect upon,¹ namely, “system”, “structure”, and “discourse.” A significant way of doing this, I think, would be to try and understand Bharata’s enterprise as an interesting answer to two related questions. One, “What happens to structures which are parts of different, distinct wholes — we could say systems — when these structures are amalgamated to form quite another whole or system?” And secondly, “How to formulate a *śāstra*, that is a theoretical scheme of discourse, for this new resultant whole, given a context where the different structures transposed into this new whole are already formulated into systems with well-defined *śāstras* of their own?” These somewhat long-winded, obscure-sounding questions will, I hope, become clear as I proceed to discuss the answers to them that we can deduce from Bharata: as we begin to discern, that is, Bharata’s formal and conceptual moves towards formulating a

¹ The essay began as a paper written for a seminar devoted to these three concepts. It was subsequently enlarged and modified.

śāstra concerning *nāṭya* or theatre, and the framework of ideas and forms within which he makes his moves.

Let me begin with *rasa* — with which all aesthetics in India ends. We have become used to thinking of *rasa* as a master concept which demarcates the field of all aesthetic experience and discourse. This was a later understanding of *rasa*, which though founded on Bharata, who was the first man to use the term for aesthetic discourse,² differed markedly from his use of the notion. *Rasa* for Bharata, was not a conceptual tool for demarcating and discoursing about aesthetics as a sphere of experience distinct from others. This was a move made a thousand years after him by Ānandavardhana and especially Abhinavagupta. For Bharata, *rasa* was a principle through which different, discrete fields of aesthetic activity, each with its own separate canons, goals and conceptual schemes of discourse, could be combined into a single composite, unified whole. *Rasa*, moreover, was not one but many — Bharata always speaks of *rasas*, in the plural — meaning that different fields could be differently combined to form different wholes with distinct flavours, that is, distinct *rasas*. A *rasa* was what made a whole hang together as a composite body combining disparate parts, and this could be successfully done in more than one way, hence the many *rasas*.

The task Bharata set himself was unusual. The modern analogy that comes to my mind is to think of his task as an

² The *Nāṭyaśāstra* speaks of *rasas* in terms that seem to indicate that the idea of *rasa* and of the various distinct *rasas* was an already established one. See *Nāṭyaśāstra* (henceforth also sometimes referred to as N.S.) 6, 15-16: all our references to the N.S. will be to the Gaekwad Oriental Series, Baroda, edition of the text with the only extant commentary on it, the *Abhinavabhāratī* of Abhinavagupta. The *rasas*, this passage says, were taught by Druhiṇa. This could be the name of a pre-Bharata *ācārya*, but is in some likelihood used as a synonym for ‘Brahmā’, the creator, who is also the creator of *nāṭya*. The name Druhiṇa is used for Brahmā in the N.S. more than once: see, for example, N.S. 1, 81-82 and 1, 127.

Yet, even though Bharata may have inherited the idea of *rasa* from predecessors, all later thinkers consider him the first *ācārya* in this matter, taking his formulations as the basis for their own theorising.

endeavour to discourse on the film as an art. Most of us would grant that the film is a distinct art-form. Yet, it is obviously a composite art. It has carved a separate niche for itself by combining different arts, skills and techniques into a single separate whole. And, importantly, it is a *new* art that combines arts and skills, such as music, literature, acting, which not only constitute independent arts with established aesthetic fields of their own, but they are also arts with their own distinct frameworks of consciously articulated discourse and aesthetic canons. The film, for these reasons, provides a better analogy for understanding Bharata's task than does drama. We have become used to taking the script of the drama for the drama itself, as we constantly do, for example, in the class-room. Aristotle, the prime guru of western aesthetics may be regarded as partly responsible for this. He considered the plot as the main element of a drama. The various aspects of performance were, for him dispensable.³ The plot can be expressed in a script, not the performance. For Bharata *nāṭya* without *prayoga* — performance — would have been *kāvya* or literature, not drama. This, for us, is true of the film, which we hardly ever confuse with its script. Furthermore, Bharata was writing of theatre as a *new* art, created by combining already existing art such as the film palpably is.

For anyone who might want to construct a distinct framework of concepts for discoursing on film, both its newness and its palpable composite quality, will present special problems, and he can, I think, benefit from Bharata's model. For Bharata, too, was talking of a composite art, newly created, and in a

³ Although Aristotle speaks of six distinct constituents of tragic drama - plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle and song - he picks out one element as the central element, plot. And so he could say: "the power of tragedy is independent both of performance and of actors, and besides, the production of spectacular effects is more the province of the property-man than the playwright". (On *the Art of Poetry*, tr. T.S. Dorsch in Penguin Books, 1965, p. 41). Indeed, Aristotle treats drama chiefly as a playwright's art and thus could assert: "tragedy fulfils its own special function even without the help of action, and just in the same way as epic, for its quality can be seen from reading it" (ibid, p. 74).

context where the different arts that his *nāṭya* combined were sophisticated arts in their own right, accorded independent aesthetic status and formulated through independent analytical frameworks. This posed for Bharata a special set of problems and gave a special texture to his conceptual framework suited to a truly new and composite art.

Rasa, we have seen, was for Bharata the principle through which different arts could be successfully combined into a single whole. Another comparison with Aristotle might throw more light on the nature of *rasa* and its aesthetic intent. Like Bharata, Aristotle's major concern in his *Poetics* is with drama. Aristotle also talks of drama, mainly tragedy, as a composite art, speaking of the different media it combines. Mark, further, the parallel in Aristotle's concept of "mimesis" - imitation - and Bharata's concept of "*anukarāṇa*" which may also be translated as "imitation." But Aristotle has nothing parallel to *rasa*. The reason is that for Aristotle all art, and not just drama, is imitation — imitation of human action. Thus, though drama is composite, it is composed of similar entities, all aiming at imitation. This is also the reason why Aristotle could pick one of the elements — the plot in the case of drama — as the most characteristic, the most "essential" part of drama. For Bharata, however, not all art was *anukarāṇa*. The most prestigious forms of dance and music that he had inherited, structures from which he transposed into his theatre, were acknowledgedly non-representational arts; they did not aim at *anukarāṇa* of *lokasvabhāva* (the human condition). The problem for Bharata rather was, how were different arts, which do not share the goal of *anukarāṇa* with drama, to be so associated with it as to become an integral part of it — to become *uparañjaka* (aesthetic aid) to it, to use Abhinavagupta's expressive term. *Rasa* was the principle for constructing and judging the 'rightness' of such associations.

Consider the metaphor Bharata uses for explicating the notion of *rasa*. "How can one suitably illustrate the concept of *rasa* through an example?", he asks. And then answers: "*rasa* should be compared to drinks like *śāḍava* (literally, "a mixture

of six") produced by combining *gūḍa* with different *vyañjanas* and spices." *Rasa* for Bharata was clearly an art of making a good mixture, a smooth cocktail, mixing different drinks — as the word *vyañjana*, translated by Abhinavagupta as "liquid," clearly suggests. In his gloss on the word *śāḍava*, Abhinava points out that its flavour is quite distinct from the flavours it combines, *madhura* (sweet), *tikta* (sharp), *amla* (sour), *lavaṇa* (salt), *kaṭu* (bitter) and *kaṣāya* (astringent), taken singly or in a mechanical mixture.⁴

Bharata repeatedly speaks of the mixed character of *nāṭya*. The very first chapter contains the following statement: "There is no field of knowledge, no craft, no art, no application, no activity which is not to be seen in *nāṭya*."⁵ He voices the same idea towards the end of his work, just before he begins to speak of music and the forms it takes in theatre. He speaks here of *nāṭya* as *vividhāśraya*, "that which depends on many." The whole verse where this phrase occurs is pertinent to his notion of theatre as a composite art. He says: "Song, instrumental playing and *nāṭya* which is

⁴ *ko dṛṣṭāntaḥ. atrāha – yathā hi nānāvyañjanauśadhidravyasaṃyogā-drasanisṭāṭiḥ. yathā hi – guḍāḍibhirdravyairvyañjanairauśadhībhiḥśca śāḍāvādayo rasā nirvartyante tathā nānābhāvopagatā api sthāyino bhāvā rasatvamāpnuvantīti* : N.S. 6, prose passage following verse 31. Abhinava commenting on the word 'śāḍava', remarks, "śāḍāvādayā iti lokaprasiddhebhyaḥ parasparavivikṭebhyo madhuratiktāmlalavaṇakaṭuka-ṣāyebhyo miśrebhyaśca vilakṣaṇaḥ śāḍavaśabdavācyāḥ".

In this passage Bharata speaks of *rasa* as an admixture of *bhāvas* alone, but *nāṭya* was a much more varied mixture, a combination of different objects not only of the same kind but of different categories altogether. In a later passage, as we shall see, Bharata uses the metaphor of an *alāta-cakra* (a firebrand) to speak of *nāṭya* as a combination of objects very different in nature. The present metaphor can also serve the same purpose, perhaps more aptly.

⁵ *na tajjñānaṃ na tacchilpaṃ na sāvīdyā na sākālā nasau yogo na tatkarma nāṭyesmīn yanna dṛśyate!* N.S. 1, 116. We translate 'yoga' as 'application', following Abhinava who cogently explains 'yoga' in this passage as 'yojanā', that is, 'application'. The various skills and knowledges, he adds, are to be applied in *nāṭya* in various combinations. The combination can be simple, as of different things from the same field (of *bhāvas*, for example: see footnote above) or complex, that is of different things from distinct fields of activity and knowledge: "yogo yojanaṃ teṣāmeva jñānādīnāṃ kalāntānaṃ svabhedairan-yonyasvabhedaiḥ".

vividhāśraya should be rendered like an *alāta-cakra* (a flaming torch so rotated as to appear like an unbroken circle of fire)."⁶

Abhinava again has an interesting gloss. "To call *nāṭya* *vividhāśraya* — depending on many — he says, is to say that *nāṭya* is a mixture of many distinct activities so distinct that they need to be apprehended through different sense-organs.⁷ These have to be carefully combined into a single whole so that to the mind of the audience they appear as one single object. The flame of a torch in an *alāta-cakra* does not simultaneously appear at different points of space: skill alone makes it appear so through the achievement of an equilibrium. Similarly a theatrical performance consists of different activities that have to be skillfully brought together into a single equilibrium (*sāmyāpādana*)."⁸

Bharata was aware that the different activities he was combining into a single *alāta-cakra* was each a world in itself with a distinct universe of discourse. He begins talking about the *nāṭya* proper in the sixth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Earlier chapters were introductory, both to the idea of the *nāṭya* and the

⁶ *evaṃ gānaṃ ca vādyam ca nāṭyam ca vividhāśrayam!*

alātacakrapratimāṃ kartavyam nāṭyayoktrbhiḥ! N.S. 28, 7.

Here the use of 'nāṭya' as distinct from 'gāna' and 'vādyā' implies that in the admixture of things that produced *nāṭya*, song and music could be dispensed with: there could be *nāṭya* without them. Some theorists, as Abhinava points out, had on the strength of this passage opined that *nāṭya* could be viably formed without song and dance: 'anye tu manyante – gitātodyavihinādapi prayogādpāthyamānādapi daśarūpakād bhavati siddhirityanena sūcitam.' This seems a reasonable interpretation. Yet Bharata gave great importance to song and music in his scheme, treating them at an extensive length. This justifies Abhinava in commenting that *nāṭya* in Bharata's scheme remains incomplete without song and music: "tāvai hyaparipūrṇatā nāṭyasya paripūrṇam ca sarvānugrāhi nāṭyasvarūpamabhidhīsitam muneh" (on the N.S. passage quoted above).

⁷ *yasmādvividhāśrayam bhinnendriyagrāhyavividhakriyārūpaṃ tasmā-dyatnenāsyaiikatātatsampādyā yenaikabuddhiviśayatā sāmājikasya gacchet.* Abhinava on N.S. 28, 7.

⁸ *alātatejāḥkaṇo na hi vastuto yugapadanekadeśasambandhi lāghavayatnena tu tathā sāmyamāpāditam:*

actual *nāṭya*, which began with a ritual-like *pūrvaraṅga* (literally, “that which precedes the staging”), described in chapters four and five. With the sixth chapter begins the formal *śāstra* of the *nāṭya*. A *śāstra* formally began with a catalogue of the major concepts and categories that together described and articulated the field to be surveyed. Such a catalogue, a conceptual itinerary of what was to follow, was often termed ‘*uddeśa*’. Bharata calls it *saṅgraha* – “a collection.” Introducing the *saṅgraha*, he says: “It is difficult to say every thing about *nāṭya* in its entirety. Why? Because it consists of many fields of knowledge (*jñāna*) and an infinite variety of skills (*śilpa*). Even a single field of knowledge is like an ocean in itself, difficult to cover in all its essentials (*arthatattvataḥ*), what to speak of many.⁹ Not only was Bharata aware of different “oceans of knowledge,” to use his own phrase, he was also aware of their theoretical formulations. He deals at various lengths with a great variety of subjects all of which were together needed to build up *nāṭya*.

He begins with architecture, in the sense that the second chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* contains an expert description of the *nāṭya-grha*, the theatre-hall. I have called it an expert description because it is couched in technical language and shows awareness of architecture as a *śāstra*, an organised scheme of discourse.¹⁰ He describes a number of possible structures of various sizes and shapes, recommending those with the best acoustics and the best view of the stage for all viewers.¹¹ More integral to the theatre

⁹ *na śakyamasya nāṭyasya gantumantaṁ kathaṅcana/
kasmādbahutvājñānānāṁ śilpanāṁ vāpyanantataḥ/
ekasyāpi na vai śakyastvanto jñānārṇavasya hi/
gantum kiṁ punaranyeṣāṁ jñānānāmarthatattvataḥ//*

N.S. 6, 6-7.

¹⁰ Thus Bharata speaks of ‘three different out-lays for the theatre hall conceived in accordance with the *śāstra*’: *trividhaḥ sanniveśaśca śāstrataḥ parikalpitaḥ*. *Śāstra* here obviously refers to *vastuśāstra*, the science of architecture. His entire treatment of the subject shows his knowledge of the science.

¹¹ *prekṣāgrhāṇāṁ sarveṣāṁ tasmānmadhyamamiṣyate/
yāvātpāṭhyāṁ ca geyaṁ ca tatra śravyataraṁ bhavet//*

N.S. 2, 21.

itself was the division of the stage-space into separate sections, known as the *kakṣyā-vibhāga* (described in chapter 13). *Nāṭya* for Bharata was a representation of *triloka*: all three worlds, of gods, men and demons. The *kakṣyā-vibhāga* divisions symbolically transformed the stage into the cosmos, allotting separate space to separate *lokas*; and since it was the world of men that was to be mostly represented, the *kakṣyā-vibhāga* divided the stage into different geographic categories such as the city, the village, the forest, the mountain, the river and the like.

More interesting for my purpose, however, are the transformations that were needed to make the arts of performance, music, dance and the arts of language, — speech, poetry, narrative, — integral to *nāṭya* and how these transformations have been conceptualised. Let me take up three of these to illustrate three different ways in which Bharata orchestrates the given material into forming the *nāṭya* and the conceptual tools he uses for the purpose.

I will begin with what Bharata calls the *pāṭhya*. *Pāṭhya* may be translated as “dramatic speech.” Bharata includes it in his *saṅgraha* list as an essential element and concept in theatre,¹² which it obviously is. The literal meaning of *pāṭhya* is “that which is to be

¹² Bharata’s *saṅgraha* is contained in the following
*kārikā: rasā bhāvā hyabhinayāḥ dharmī vṛttipravṛttayaḥ/
siddhiḥ svarastathātodyaṁ gānaṁ raṅgaśca saṅgrahaḥ//*

N.S. 6, 10.

Pāṭhya is not named here but indicated by the term *svara*. Earlier, in chapter one, Bharata names *pāṭhya* as an essential element in *nāṭya*: *jaṅgraha pāṭhyamṛvedāt*. (N.S. 1, 17). Later in chapter 17, where the matter is taken up for detailed description, it is indeed, described under *pāṭhya*. This makes the use of another term for it in the *saṅgraha* puzzling and incongruous, a serious fault in a *śāstric* treatise. Such faults in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* are not uncommon, — the *Nāṭyaśāstra* was not only a *śāstra* but also a canon and Abhinava who tries to justify them in many cases sometimes gives up exasperatingly. In this case the use of *svara* for *pāṭhya* in the *saṅgraha* though not justified and even confusing — for *svara* would more naturally point at music rather than speech — yet seems significant. *Svara* distinguished ordinary *pāṭhya* from dramatic *pāṭhya*. The notion of *kāku*, central to understanding *pāṭhya* as dramatic speech, cannot be understood without bringing in *svara*, as Abhinava points out: *iha kākuṣu svarā eva vastutaḥ upakāriṇaḥ* (Abhinava on N.S. 17, prose passage following verse 102 a).

gāndharva into *gāna* or *dhruvā* - terms in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* for theatrical songs - Bharata, in a manner of speaking, stands it on its head, that is, inverts it. *Gāndharva* was defined as: *svara-tāla-padātmakam* - "consisting of patterns of *svara*, associated with *tāla* and *sung* to *padas*, words." *Pada* was, in this group, a partner only in name. It could be dispensed with, as in the instrumental playing of *gāndharva* or become a string of nonsense syllables - such as *jhaṅṭum*, *dingle*, *titijhala*, *kucajhala*, parallel to the modern *nom-tom*.¹⁶ Even meaningful words, were in *gāndharva*, mere pegs to hang the music on. *Gāndharva* was, obviously, analogous to modern *dhruvā* or *dhruvā*. It could not be used in *nāṭya* as such. Imagine a Hindi film hero singing a love song to his beloved in *dhruvā*. Bharata's theatre did, indeed, use song in ways that the Hindi film uses them. The genealogy of Hindi films, in fact, goes back to Bharata in more ways than this. However, to return to *gāndharva*, it was used in *nāṭya* through *dhruvā*, Bharata's name for *nāṭya*-songs. *Dhruvā* transmuted *gāndharva* totally, in spirit and form.

This could only be done by letting *svara* and *tāla* be dominated by *pada*, that is, the sung text. This, in fact, is how Bharata defines *dhruvā*: "A *dhruvā*," he says, "should be so composed that its music has an affinity with the meaning (of the sung text); it should be able to project the meaning".¹⁷ In *dhruvā*, as opposed to *gāndharva*, *svara* and *tāla* were at the service of *pada*, they were there to lend the power of melody and rhythm to the sentiments expressed in the sung text. To change the independent spirit of *gāndharva* in this manner, and make it an *uparañjaka* of *nāṭya*, called for basic structural changes in *gāndharva*; it called for an entirely different approach to form. Bharata has a fairly long section on how

¹⁶ Bharata notes the following 'words' for *gāndharva* with the remark that they were sung by Brahmā himself:

tānyakṣarāṇi vakṣye yāni purā brahmagītāni /
jhaṅṭum jagatiya diginigi jhaṅṭum prathame layāntare cāpi /
titijhala kucajhala madhye titikucavṛddham bhavajjyesthe //

N.S. 31, 104.

¹⁷ *yasmādarthānūrūpā hi dhruvā kāryārthadarśikā /*

N.S. 29, 29.

gāndharva forms are to be converted to *dhruvā*.¹⁸ He gives us certain rules to be followed. I will speak of the more important ones that reveal his approach. There were, to begin with, two important negative rules: one, *varṇa-prakarṣa* was to be avoided in *dhruvā*. two, certain *alaṅkāras* were not to be used.¹⁹ Let me explain: *varṇa-prakarṣa* means, "stretching a syllable inordinately." This is common enough in *dhruvā* and *dhruvā* and was evidently, common in *gāndharva*, too. It is a typically music-oriented approach to a sung text. In singing a word, say "rāma", the singer will often start weaving a melodic pattern on the vowel "ā," thus stretching it, prologing its duration to an inordinate extent before coming to "ma" - the dominant impression on the listener's ears, resultingly, is that of a musical movement and not of the word "rāma". If this process is repeated on many syllables of longer passages, such as, to take a random example, "*ban calat rāma raghurāi*" ("Rāma, the king of the dynasty of Raghu, goes to the forest"), the musical content will tend to overpower the linguistic purport totally. This is not usually to be desired in songs which are embedded within a dramatic action, whose main intent is to convey evocative meanings.

Another thing that could "distort" a syllable was the use of certain kinds of melodic figures - *alaṅkāras*. Bharata names those *alaṅkāras* which were not to be used in *dhruvā*, or at least, not to be used with their full force.²⁰ Besides these negative rules - they were clearly more like rules of the thumb - Bharata also hints at certain positive ones. One such was that *gāndharva svara*-forms (which were strict, inflexible, hieratic forms known as *jātis*) were to be used only through their more popular, more flexible derivatives (such as

¹⁸ N.S. 32, 1-46.

¹⁹ *saptarūpagatā jñeyā alaṅkāra budhaistvime /*
naite (sarve) dhruvāsviṣṭāḥ śruti (śrotr) varṇaprakarṣaṇāt /
na hi varṇaprakarṣastu dhruvānām siddhirisyate /

N.S. 29, 26-27.

The readings in brackets are suggested by the editor, apparently, on the basis of Abhinava's comments.

²⁰ *śyeno vāpyathavā bindurye cānye'ti (tu) prakarṣinah /*
te dhruvānām prayogeṣu na kāryā svapramāṇatah /

N.S. 29, 27-28.

the *grāma-rāgas*, to which are own *rāgas* are historically related). Another was that *gāndharva-tālas* which were as strict and inflexible, and as purely “musical” as the *gāndharva svara*-forms, were to be so moulded for the purposes of *dhruvā*, that the contours of *tāla* were to follow the *chanda* – the metre – of a sung poem.²¹ All the rules, in fact, boiled down to a single principle: to get the right tune to suit the song in the given context; or in other words, to use the phrase Bharata himself uses in many contexts about different arts, to compose “*yathā-rasa*”, as the *rasa* dictates.²² To make music, in Abhinava’s words, *uparañjaka* to the theatrical whole.

In *dhruvā* or *gāna* we have a small composite unit where two different arts, in this case poetry and music, become fused into one, in order to form what might be called a sub-system within the totality of *nāṭya*. I call *dhruvā* a sub-system because it was geared towards a larger totality. All fusions of music and poetry where both these arts yet retain their individuality (unlike *gāndharva* or *khyāl* or *dhruvā*) as in certain *ghazal* forms (here Begum Akhtar comes to my mind) or the great *Vaiṣṇava paḍāvali kīrtan* of Bengal are not sub-systems but wholes in their own right. Abhinava, indeed, remarks that a *dhruvā* was not quite satisfactory outside the *nāṭya*.²³

²¹ The *tāla*-structure of *gāndharva* was based on an extraordinarily large time unit. Its forms had, besides, little in common with metres of popular verses, which were sung as *dhruvās*. Thus both the *gāndharva tāla*-measure and its *tāla*-structure had to be modified and moulded to current metrics for the purpose of *dhruvā*:

yānyaṅāni kalāścaiva gītakāntaragaṇāni tu / tāni chandogatairvṛttairvibhāvyaṅyante dhruvāsvathā // N.S. 29, 14.

²² He says this about *dhruvā*, for example:

tathā rasakṛtā nityam dhruvāḥ prakaraṇāśrūtāḥ / nakṣatrāniva gaganam nāṭyamudyotayanti tāḥ // N.S. 32, 430.

Meaning: “*Dhruvās* designed according to *rasa* in dramas and depending upon them, make them resplendent like the stars make the sky”. See also N.S. 32, 427; N.S. 34, 65, which says about *vādyā*:

rasasāvabhāva (bhāvasatva) yogān (gaṇi) dr̥ṣṭvābhīnayaṇ gatipracāraṇāśca / vādyān nityaṇ kāryaṇ yathākramaṇ (yatham) vādyā (vṛtta) yogajñāih //

²³ *na hi nāṭyadbahīrayabhaṅga (ṅgyā)pi dhruvāgānaṇ giyamānasukhamu-tpādayati* Abhinava on N.S. 33, 1. The printed edition has ‘*giyamānamukham*’ instead of ‘*giyamānṇ sukham*’, a meaningless reading which we have amended. Abhinava says: “Outside the context of drama a *dhruvā* song gives

A contemporary example may bring the point home better. Take a Hindi film song. We may like it on its own, but if we watch it on the T.V. with the film-scene into which it was woven we do feel that something is “added” to it, making it richer. Hence the popularity of T.V. programmes such as *Citrahāra*. A good Begum Akhtar *ghazal*, however, forms a fused whole in itself, not needing anything more to enrich or “complete” it.

Dance was another important ingredient in *nāṭya*. It was so in the form of *nṛtta*, an ancient well-schematised art, similar in this respect to *gāndharva*. Also like *gāndharva*, it was a formal, non-representational art. It presented the same problem to Bharata: How was it to be made integral to *nāṭya* which, unlike it, was *anukarāṇa*-oriented? Indeed, in the case of *nṛtta*, Bharata is more articulately aware of this basic aesthetic problem. We find him expressing the problem at the end of a charming little story, a myth, related at the beginning of the fourth chapter. Bharata having created a specific *nāṭya*, a *samavakāra* called *Amṛtamanthana*, showed it to the gods and demons who enjoyed it greatly (partly because it was an enactment of a great deed of their own doing). Satisfied, Brahmā proposed that a *nāṭya* should now be shown to Śiva, the great critic. So Brahmā, Bharata and his troupe, all went to the beautiful Himalayas where Śiva has his home. A *ḍima*, another form of *nāṭya*, called *Tripuradāha* (with a story from Śiva’s own deeds) was presented before him. Śiva was pleased. But he made a suggestion. He said that he had created a dance which should be incorporated into *nāṭya* as part of its prologue called *pūrvaraṅga* where it could be associated with *gītaka*-songs.²⁴ This would, he adds, lend colour

no pleasure even through sung in style”. He compares it to a spoilt child (*līlita*) away from the company of his doting kin and elders about whom no one is any longer bothered when the parents are not there: *so’yamatra līlita iva gurusaṅghasevāvaikalyādanusandhivarjastathāpi na smaryate*. *Dhruvā* then appeals only to immature minds (*sukumāra-mati*): *sukumāramatimeva hi prati prāya idam pravṛtāt*. Abhinava on N.S. 33, 1.

²⁴ *mayapīdam smṛtaṇ nṛtyaṇ sandhyākāleṣu nṛtyatā / nānākaraṇasamyuktairāṅghārairvibhūṣitam // pūrvaraṅgavidhāvasmīnsvayā samyakprayojyatām /*

to the proceedings and the meanings of the songs, too, could thus be represented through *abhinaya* gesture and mime.²⁵ He then asks his disciple Taṇḍu to describe this dance and teach it to Bharata. A long manual on this dance, termed *nṛtta* and also *tāṇḍava* (since it was taught by Taṇḍu), follows — Chapter 4, verses 19 to 260. At the end of the description, from which it is clear that what is being described is a pure, non-representational art form, the ṛṣis to whom Bharata was relating his *sāstra*, put to him these questions: “*Abhinaya* was created by the wise so that meanings may be grasped; why was the *nṛtta* created? what condition does it depend upon? For it has no connection with the meaning of a *gītaka*-song nor does it evoke or represent (*bhāvayati*) any meaning whatsoever.”²⁶ The ṛṣis were quick to discern that *abhinaya* and *nṛtta* were quite different in intent and this for two reasons. Firstly, *abhinaya* was intimately connected with meanings, that is, textual meanings of a song (or a script) which it conveyed or rendered through gestures and mime; *nṛtta* had no such connections with any text, it created an independent aesthetic world through body-movements and gestures. Secondly, *abhinaya*, like *nāṭya* itself, was an *anukaraṇa*, it imitated *lokasvabhāva*, the human condition; it depended on this *anukaraṇa*, for without *anukaraṇa* there could be no such category as *abhinaya*. What condition, what *svabhāva*, the ṛṣis ask, does *nṛtta* depend upon? The implication is clear: *nṛtta* creates its own “condition,” it does not depend upon any other.

The ṛṣis had asked these questions in the context of the *purvaraṅga* where the aim of the performance was ritualistic, not *anukaraṇa*- oriented. The forms employed were *gāndharva* and *nṛtta*. *Nṛtta*, as the story we have related earlier suggests, was introduced later: Śiva asked Bharata to *add* it to the *pūrvaraṅga*.

²⁵ *vardhamānakayogeṣu gīteṣvāsāriteṣu ca // mahāgīteṣu caivārthānsamyagevābhineṣyasi/*

N.S. 4, 15.

²⁶ *ṛṣaya ūcuḥ: yadā prāptyarthamarthānām tajjñairabhinayaḥ kṛtaḥ // kasmānnṛttaṁ kṛtaṁ hyetatkaṁ svabhāvamapekṣate/ na gītakarthaśambaddhaṁ na cāpyarthasya bhāvakaṁ //*

N.S. 4, 261-262.

The ṛṣis failed to see the logic of this addition. How was *nṛtta*, an art as independent and non-representational as *gāndharva* to be associated integrally with *gāndharva*? Bharata really gives no answer to this question. *Abhinava* denies any integral relation. He speaks of the association of these two independent arts through an interesting metaphor: They are, he says, like two kings who happen to march together, with their independent armies towards a common enemy.²⁷

Nṛtta, then could not even be fused with *gāndharva*, another purely formal art like itself. How was it, then, to be orchestrated into *nāṭya*? In order to understand how *nṛtta* became *nāṭya-sāmagrī*, a part of the dramatic whole, it would, I think, be helpful to become acquainted with Bharata's concept of the *nāṭya-dharmī*. *Nāṭya* was an *anukaraṇa* of the world, especially, the human condition, *lokasvabhāva*.²⁸ But it made no attempt to replicate the world. What it presented was a world transformed through imagination, the artistry and devices that playwrights and directors of plays could command. This transformed world, and the means by which the transformation was made, were both called *nāṭya-dharmī*, “having traits peculiar to *nāṭya*”. *Nāṭya-dharmī* was based on *loka-dharma*, “traits belonging to the world of men,” yet it created a world of its own.²⁹

²⁷ *svapraṭiṣṭhite'pi dvaye yena yatsammelanayogyam tattatra prayujyate ityetāvānāṅgāṅgibhāvah. evaṁ śatrujvalanapravṛttimārṣā(itasā)bhūmānanarapatidvīṭayavat - Abhinava on N.S. 4, 252. (Volume 1, page 126 of the edition we are quoting).*

²⁸ *nānābhāvopasampannaṁ nānāvasthāntarātmakam/ lokavṛttīanukaraṇaṁ nāṭyametaimayā kṛtam//*

N.S. 1, 112.

This idea is repeated many times in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

²⁹ *yo'yam svabhāvo lokasya sukhaduḥkḥakriyātmakah/ so'ngābhinayasanyukto nāṭyadharmī prakṛtitaḥ//*

N.S. 13, 81.

For a more detailed exposition of this important concept, see my article entitled ‘The *Nāṭya* as Conceived by Bharata’, the *New Quest*, March-April, 1984. Also, published in *Indias Intellectual Traditions*, ed. Prof. Daya Krishna, ICPR and Motilal Banarasisidass, 1987, pp. 104-114. Bharata's drama was an imaginative recreation of reality. Music and dance were integral to it. The action shown had to be designed in a particular way, leading always to success in

It was an idealised world presented in a stylised form. Ordinary gestures were heightened and rendered with the grace of dance.³⁰ This opened the door for *nṛtta* to enter into the realm of *abhinaya*. Bharata counts *nṛtta* as one of the three elements (*vastus*) of *abhinaya*.³¹ *Nṛtta* was amalgamated into *abhinaya* not only indirectly, by imparting extra grace to the bodily actions and expressions needed by actors on the stage, thus making the whole *abhinaya*, the entire tone of presentation *nāṭyadharmī*. It was also used to enrich what might be termed the “language of gestures”, used as part of *abhinaya*. *Abhinaya* has many aspects. Some are more strictly *anukarāṇa*-based than others. Projecting human feelings, emotions, states of mind, through the exacting art of reproducing the physical signs, facial expressions, almost involuntary bodily movements or gestures that normally accompany them, is a major part of *abhinaya*, and is patently *anukarāṇa*-based. So is the art of the mime, the reproduction of the actions of specific characters or types of characters. Apart from these, *abhinaya* also includes that gamut of gestures, borrowed or reproduced from *loka*, that are like language, fixed conventional symbols given a certain meaning. Raising the thumb as an indication of victory for example. This is a *conventional* gesture, rooted in a particular culture, and is symbolic of victory; it *means* “victory.” It may mean nothing in another culture or might convey quite another meaning. In many parts of India, thus, the same raised thumb, especially if also moved from left to right, might mean “look how I have duped you.” Such gestures are, obviously, very different from those that

an undertaking and a happy consummation. In this way Bharata’s idealised world was *nāṭyadharmī* in a specific sense peculiar to it. Bharata was aware of this but he was also aware that all theatre, in as much as it is a recreation of the world and not its replica, was bound to be *nāṭyadharmī* in some essential way.

³⁰ *ativākyakriyopetamatisatvātibhāvakan/
lilāṅgahārābhīnayaṁ nāṭyalakṣaṇalakṣitam/*

N.S. 13, 73.

³¹ *asya śākhā ca nṛttaṁ ca tathāivāṅkura eva ca/
vastūnyabhinayasyeḥa vijñeyāni prayoktṛbhīḥ/*

N.S. 8, 15.

imitate an *action* or those that imitate *signs* of mental states. All *abhinaya* uses such gestures in the form that they are available from *loka*. Bharata’s *abhinaya* added to the available vocabulary of the language of gestures by incorporating into it many *nṛtta*-gestures and assigning them meanings.³² We are familiar with such usages from the Bharata-inspired *abhinaya* of *Bharata Nāṭyam* or *Oḍḍisi*. In fact, in these styles of dance, we may see the same gestures in a purely *nṛtta* context as well as in *abhinaya*, where they are used to project the meanings of words in a song. Such a usage should be regarded as a part of the *nāṭya-dharmī*, since the function of *nāṭya-dharmī* was not only to idealise and stylise, but also to incorporate all such devices and conventions which any theatre must use, if it aims at representing the *loka* on a stage. Thus the *nāṭya-dharmī*

³² Compare *Abhinava: abhinayasya dvividhā itikartavyatā lokadharmī nāṭyadharmī ca ādyā dvividhā – cittavṛtyarpakatvenānubhāvasya, yathā – “garve’pyahamīti tajjñair-lalāṭadeśocchritā” (N.S. 9, 19) iti. kevalabāhyāvayavarūpa vā yathā padmakōśasya kamapi nīrūpane. nāṭyadharmīyapi dvividhā – nāṭyopayogamūlabhūtakaiśikisampādanoc-italaukikasobhāhetuḥ yathā – āveṣṭitādicaturvidhakaraṇarūpā. kācittvaṁśena lokamupajivati yathā varṇātureṇa hastena tatra vyavahītena loka upajiviyate. loka hyanirdeśyātāśeṣaṁ vastu nīrdidkṣuridrṣaṁ tādrśamīthambhūtāmityavasare prayukta-meva caturaiḥ. evaṁ janāntikādaḥ vācyam. nāṭasamayamātrarūpā nāṭyadharmī samayasākīñcīkarasya kalpane prayojanābhāvāt.*

This remarkable passage may be rendered as following:
“*Abhinaya* may be accomplished in two different modes, *lokadharmī* and *nāṭyadharmī*. *Lokadharmī* is of two kinds. The first consists of *anubhāvās* – bodily positions, gestures or actions – that indicate a state of mind: like the lifting up one’s head in pride (N.S. 9, 19). The second consists of only an outward showing, as when one indicates a lotus flower (through one’s palms and fingers). *Nāṭyadharmī* is also of two kinds. The first consists of movements of pure dance such as the *āveṣṭita*, movements which are used to impart an ethos of more than ordinary beauty and joy in rendering the *kaiśikī vṛtti*. Some (stylised gestures) depend partly upon *loka*, such as the use of the hand gesture called the *varṇātura* which depends indirectly upon *loka*: for in real life, too, a similar gesture is used when one has not been able to explain something quite fully and wants to show what it is like exactly (*tādrśamīthambhūtām*). The same (kind of part-dependence on *loka*) is to be found in conventions such as the *janāntika* (the aside). The *nāṭyadharmī* here is nothing but the set of conventions (*samaya*) used by actors, and these certainly serve a useful purpose (in *nāṭya*), for there is no point in having a convention that is redundant.”

comprised the use of "theatrical" devices such as *svagata* (something said loudly to oneself which other characters do not hear but the audience does); *ākāśabhāṣita* (in which a character speaks to someone off the stage, speaking both his own words and that of the other); *kakṣyāvibhāga* which we have described earlier and the like. To these were *added* conventional meanings imparted to certain *nṛtta*-gestures which otherwise had no meaning of their own. This was done sometimes on the basis of a slight similarity with something in the *loka*.

In *nṛtta*, body movements had nothing to *say*. Incorporated in *abhinaya*, which is essentially *anukaraṇa*-dependent, they acquired or were given a meaning beyond themselves. *Nṛtta* thus became an *uparañjaka* of *nāṭya*, helping to render it *nāṭya-dharmī*, acquiring, in the process, a new, transformed significance.

Nāṭya-dharmī in theatre employed not only *nṛtta*, but, understandably, also music. Music, indeed, is a normally accepted *uparañjaka* of all theatre, even the most *loka-dharmī*, such as the "realistic" theatre of the modern west. In Bharata's theatre, music was employed in the form of *dhruvā* or *gāna* and *vādyā* - terms Bharata uses in his *saṅgraha*. *Dhruvā*, or *gāna*, we have already discussed. It was something we might today consider as extremely *nāṭya-dharmī*, oriented as we are to western theatric practice. *Vādyā* was instrumental music played as back-ground accompaniment.³³ We have seen how *dhruvā* could be considered a sub-whole within the

³³ One of the first things that the stage director did in making the stage ready for a show was to seat the musicians on it. This is a practice still followed in classical dancing. Bharata calls it *kutapa-vinyāsa*. The instruments used, besides the voice, were flutes, harps and drums. Music was used to accompany *dhruvā*, some modes of accompaniment being very different from what we today know as *saṅgat* (for details see, *A Study of Dattilam*, p. 257-259). Music also served as accompaniment to *nāṭya* itself, independent of *dhruvā* songs. It was in itself a major *nāṭya-sāmagrī*, and it was expected of musicians that they would mould it and flex it to suit the ethos of the moment. Some rules of the thumb were established for the purpose, and a list made of which *rāga* to use when; these lists grew to great lengths with post-Bharata *ācāryas*.

nāṭya totality. Another sub-whole was *abhinaya*. *Abhinaya* included *nṛtta* as well as *pāṭhya*, which we discussed when speaking of Bharata's notion of *kāku*. *Abhinaya*, *dhruvā*, *vādyā* and *pāṭhya* together formed a larger whole for which Bharata uses the term *vr̥tti*.³⁴

Vr̥tti (literally, "the manner of being or doing") is thus a central concept in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The word *vr̥tti*, indeed, is as difficult to translate as *rasa*. There is no equivalent term in western languages for this important concept. There was a large collection of organically associated forms which together comprised the *performance* of a play, the total manner and style of stage presentation, its overall weave and texture. Bharata, unlike Aristotle, considered performance, or *prayoga* as he called it, essential to drama. Achieving the right *vr̥tti* was the soul of *prayoga*. Bharata recognises four distinct *vr̥ttis*, relating each to appropriate *rasas*. Though clearly a mix, a *vr̥tti* had a character, a temper, a savour of its own. Like all good aesthetic wholes, it was not just a sum of its parts but something

³⁴ A concept seemingly related to *vr̥tti* is that of *pravṛtti*, which Bharata treats at some length (N.S. 13, 36-86). *Pravṛtti* meant the different usages regarding language, dress, custom, behaviour and the like of people from different regions of India. Bharata also speaks of their differences in terms of temper and taste. These had to be borne in mind while representing different regional types. *Vr̥tti*, however, is a more universal notion. It is not concerned with representing regional life-styles but the human condition as such. It is also, clearly, more intimately related to theatre as an art: it is a *nāṭya-dharmī* concept being central to the very idea of *nāṭya*. *Vr̥tti* can be formed only in *nāṭya* with the various means at the disposal of the *prayokṭr* (the stage director). It is something to be imaginatively created, while *pravṛtti* is something out there in the *loka*, a raw material for *anukaraṇa*, which *vr̥tti* uses and puts together with other things to create theatre. Thus we find that the *pravṛttis* have been subsumed by Bharata himself under *vr̥tti*: *nānādeśaveśabhāṣācāro loka itī kṛtvā lokānumatena vr̥ttisamsṛitasya nāṭyasya mayā cāturvidhatvamabhihitam bhāratyārabhaṭī sātṛvati kaiśiki ceti* (N.S. 13, prose passage following verse 37). Bharata says, "People live in different lands and follow different usages of language, dress and customary behaviour, and, therefore, in conformity with *loka* itself, I have spoken of *nāṭya*, which however depends on *vr̥tti*, as being of four kinds, *bhāratī*, *ārabhaṭī*, *sātṛvati* and *kaiśiki* (these being the names of the four *vr̥ttis* described by Bharata)".

more, something quite magically more. No wonder then that Bharata has a myth about how *vr̥ttis* were created in divine action and *lilā*.³⁵

Let me give you an example of *vr̥tti*, for, fortunately, we can still experience a Bharata-like *vr̥tti* in performance. A *Bharata Nāṭyam* or an *Oḍḍisi* piece in the *abhinaya*-form displays a composite art parallel to *vr̥tti*. It is a mix containing music, song, *nr̥tta*, mime, gestures and its aim is to depict *lokasvabhāva*, human sentiment and emotion. Witness, for example, an *Oḍḍisi* piece rendered to a Jayadeva *aṣṭapadi*, the one, let us say which sings of Radha's tryst with *Kṛṣṇa*, her futile, frustrating wait, her anger, her *viraha*, and what we have in the total presentation is a *vr̥tti*. But we still do not have *nāṭya* as conceived in Bharata's scheme. What is lacking is an adequate plot, a story depicting human *action*, not just human sentiment. *Vr̥tti*, in Bharata's vision, though conceivable without a proper story, needs the backbone of *itivr̥tta* for completion.

Itivr̥tta, literally, "this is what happened", was Bharata's

³⁵ It is noteworthy that after giving us a myth about the origin of *nāṭya* as a whole, right at the beginning of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharata gives us a separate myth about the origin of *vr̥tti* in the 20th chapter of his work as he takes the topic up for a detailed treatment. The *vr̥ttis*, according to Bharata's story, were inspired by the very first deed that Lord Viṣṇu Himself undertook when he awoke from his divine sleep. After having taken creation back into himself (during *pralaya*), the Lord slept on the primal serpent Śeṣa, floating on the undifferentiated Cosmic Ocean (*ekārnava*). He was rudely awakened by two demons, Madhu and Kaiṭabha who wanted a battle with him. A fierce fight ensued, and as the three fought, they exchanged rude and angry words, their bodies quickened with a turmoil of fierce and frenzied emotions. Thus were born the three *vr̥ttis*, *bhārati*, *ārabhaṇi* and *sātvati* dominated respectively by speech, physical action and a display of emotion. The graceful, *śṛṅgāra*-oriented *kaiśiki* was born of the movement of Lakṣmī as she looked on at her husband Viṣṇu, and began to tie her loosened hair with delicate dance-like movements. N.S. 20, 1-24.

The *Nāṭya*, Bharata says in chapter one, was created out of the four Vedas. The *vr̥ttis*, too, were important enough to have been provided a similar origin independently of *nāṭya*:

*rgvedādbhārati kṣiptā yajurvedācca sātvati/
kaiśiki sāmavedācca śeṣa cātharvaṇādapi//*

N.S. 20, 25.

name for the dramatic plot, which was to be enacted through one or more *vr̥ttis*. The final success of a *prayoga* – a performance – lay in the achievement of the adequate *vr̥tti*, which would suit an *itivr̥tta*.

An adequate *itivr̥tta* demanded adequate action. It had to be conceived as a story of human effort directed towards a desirable goal.³⁶ In the best of plays, namely, in the types known as *nāṭaka* and *prakaraṇa*, in which the *nāṭya* of Bharata revealed its full powers, displaying all its various elements, the action progressed from seed to fruition in five stages growing from small beginnings to great results as in the *Śākuntalam*, where the casual love and dalliance of a king matures into a profound inner awakening and the birth of a great emperor who ruled over the whole of India, and gave it its name, Bharata. The *itivr̥tta* was as *nāṭya-dharmī* as its *prayoga*. One major *nāṭyadharmī* element in *itivr̥tta* was the rule that an action must end with the attainment of its goal. All plots were to be success stories. There could be hurdles, sorrow and pain, but no failures; tragedy was not accepted as a form of *itivr̥tta*.

Plotting an action was central to *nāṭya*, but *nāṭya* was also affective *evocation* of *lokasvabhāva*, not merely its depiction through action. It aimed at producing *rasa*. In this the *vr̥ttis*, as pure *prayoga*, were more important than the action and plot, though naturally the *vr̥ttis* had to function with the plot, as related to it. The *vr̥ttis* could, yet, be sufficient in themselves to evoke *rasa*. The *Oḍḍisi abhinaya*-piece, danced to Jayadeva's *aṣṭapadi* that I mentioned earlier, clearly evokes *rasa*; *śṛṅgāra* in this case, but it is not *nāṭya*. For it is miserably lacking in action and plot. The *Bharata Nāṭyam*, too, is for the same reason not Bharata's *nāṭya*, though it similarly employs *vr̥tti* and evokes *rasa*. *Rasa*, therefore, cannot be really said to be definitive of Bharata's *nāṭya*; a *nāṭaka* or a *prakaraṇa* or a similar form (Bharata names ten types) rich both in *prayoga* and *itivr̥tta* was what Bharata truly meant by *nāṭya*.

³⁶ S.N. 19, 1-20.

Yet *vṛtti*, though insufficient by itself, singly or in combination, to form *nāṭya* was sufficient to evoke *rasa*. It was the smallest unit into which *nāṭya* — in its *prayoga* aspect — could be analysed. It also fulfilled the other requirement essential for *nāṭya*, namely, a *nāṭya-dharmī* recreation of the human condition. Consequently, a major part of Bharata's effort in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* concentrates on the making of *vṛttis*: he first describes its discrete building-blocks, the various arts with which it was built up, and the aesthetic and affective principles for putting them together into the composite whole that constituted a *vṛtti*.³⁷ Indeed Bharata's *śāstra* as a *prayoga-śāstra* may be characterised as a system for putting together different arts in order to form viable *vṛttis*.

Bharata speaks of only four *vṛttis*, but this was a prescriptive limitation, almost a fiat. The theatric usage he had in mind evidently did not need any more *vṛttis*. His system, however, is a system of infinite possibilities. He does not give us specific forms but general ways of achieving them. He explores rules and principles for forming *vṛttis*. Instructively, even the four *vṛttis* he describes in some detail, are described in general terms. Concrete formations were left to the judgement and creative skill of the *prayokṭṛ*, the director: though in this process, actually crystallised forms handed down from tradition must have played a great formative role, as they do in classical music today. But as in classical music to-day, the *system* within which forms are made and understood is, essentially, a system of possibilities. However, the various arts with which a *vṛtti* was built up were each, as we have seen, a realm into itself. Many of these were not *anukarāṇa*-oriented, in fact, they had no relation to

³⁷ The affective principle is described by Bharata in what can be meaningfully termed his theory of *bhāvas*, which is an essential part of his *rasa*-theory. I, too, have described the theory in my own way in my, 'The Path that Bharata did not take' an article to be published by the Saṅgita Nāṭaka Akademi, New Delhi; see also my review article, 'Sanskrit Criticism, by V.K. Chari, published in the *Journal of the Indian Council for Philosophical Research*, Vol. X, no. 3, 123-138.

lokasvābhava, and thus, as we have argued above, they could not aim at evoking *rasa*, because *rasa*, in Bharata's definition, cannot be aroused by a non-representational art form. Hence the occasion for the question asked by the *ṛṣis* concerning the relevance of *ṛtta* to *nāṭya*. And hence, also, Bharata's efforts at incorporating the non-representational *within* a representational scheme.

Significantly, the analytical approach Bharata adopts in describing *ṛtta* is, in a crucial sense, very different from the one adopted in describing *nāṭya*. The approach to the analysis of *nāṭya* is fundamentally "holistic": *Vṛtti*, the smallest viable structural unit constituting *nāṭya*, was itself a whole composed of smaller wholes such as the *dhruvā*; *vṛtti* was a composite structure *made up* of structures borrowed from different 'independent' realms. Also, a *vṛtti* was outward-looking in the sense that it could not be viable, could not even be comprehended as a *vṛtti*, unless it could be related to *rasa* and the *anukarāṇa* of *lokasvābhava*. *Ṛtta*, on the other hand, has been analysed by Bharata through, what may be characterised as a *mātrkā* approach. A *ṛtta-mātrkā*, a term Bharata himself uses, was the name given to the smallest "atomic" structure to which *ṛtta* forms could be analytically reduced. Bharata delineates a repertoire of such atomic structures which could be combined to form larger formations known as *karāṇa* and *aṅgahāra*. *Aṅgahāras* were formed with *karāṇas* and were more "complete" forms, which in combinations produced *ṛtta* wholes. Various such wholes were possible, since *ṛtta*, as much as *nāṭya*, was a system of possibilities. This idea comes out explicitly in Abhinava who comments that *karāṇas* could, in principles, be infinite, even though Bharata deliberately restricted their number to 108 as he wanted to describe only certain specific *aṅgahāras*.³⁸ These were the

³⁸ *ayaṁ bhāvah-aṣṭottare karāṇasate catuṣṣaṣṭīkarāṇayojanayā trutitāṅgagatyā (ṅgagataritya) yadyapyānantyamaṅgahārāṇām tathāpi pradhānādṛṣṭa phalaṁ pratyadhikoparaktatayā dvātriṁśannāmato nirdiṣṭāḥ*. Abhinava on N.S. 19-27. For a more detailed description and discussion of this matter, see the essay, 'Tanḍu: The First Theoretician of Dance', in this collection.

aṅgahāras necessary for the *ṛtta* rendered in the *pūrvaraṅga*, which was both a dance and a ritual, and as ritual its forms were fixed and determinate.

Vṛtti, being a representational device, could not be understood without being related to *rasa* and *anukarāṇa*. But *ṛtta* was non-representational, it needed no reference outside of itself in order to be viable, and to make artistic "sense". A *ṛtta-mātrkā*, therefore, had to be understood as a self-contained atomic structure, a unit of significance in itself. Consequently this is how Abhinava defines a *karāṇa*, another term for the *ṛtta-mātrkā*:³⁹ "Karāṇa is an act. But of what is it an act? It is an act of *ṛtta*, of the body in movements executed gracefully (*vilāsakṣepa*). (Hence) *karāṇa* is an act different from those made with the utilitarian intention to acquire something beneficial or discard something harmful.... One unitary act (*ekā kriyā*) executed from one point of space to another "appropriate" (*samucita*) point, is a *karāṇa*."⁴⁰ We clearly have here the concept of an atomic *ṛtta* movement which, being a non-utilitarian "dance" movement, has no reference

³⁹ There is confusion in the use of the terms *karāṇa* and *ṛttamātrkā*. Bharata says, in a passage, that *aṅgahāras* - complex *ṛtta* wholes - are made up of *karāṇa* units: *sarveṣāmaṅgahārāṇāṃ niṣpattiḥ karāṇairyataḥ* (N.S. 4, 29). In a later passage he says: *yāni sthānāni yāścārya ṛttahastās tathaiva ca/ sāmātrketi vijñeyā tadyogātkarāṇāṃ bhavet/* (N.S. 4, 59-60).

This suggests that *karāṇas* themselves were made up of *mātrkās*, which, one would suppose, were still smaller units. And, yet Bharata emphatically states that the *ṛtta-mātrkā* was a relatively complex unit consisting of two *karāṇas*: *dve ṛttakarāṇe caiva bhavato ṛttamātrkā* (N.S. 4, 31).

This is a confusion concerning the proper use and definition of terms. The *Nāṭya-śāstra* does sometimes make such a confusion. The text as we have it has not passed through a very clean and clear process of transmission. However, the concept of an atomic *ṛtta* unit is clear enough, whatever we may choose to call it, *karāṇa* or *ṛtta-mātrkā*. The issue is discussed at some length in the earlier essay, "Tanḍu: The First Theoretician of Dance."

⁴⁰ *kriyā karāṇam. kasya kriyā? ṛttasya. gātrāṇāṃ vilāsakṣepasya. heyopādēyaviṣay-akriyādibhyo vyatirikṭā yā tatkriyā karāṇamityarthah... pūrvakṣetrasaṃyogatyāgena samucitakṣetrāntaraprāptiparyantatayā ekā kriyā tatkaraṇamityarthah.*

Abhinava on N.S. 4, 28-30.

outside of itself. Unlike *abhinaya*, it has no reference to *lokasvabhāva*.

The *mātrkā* or *karāṇa* - approach to analysing structure within a system was not limited to *ṛtta*. It was also used in phonetics, which analysed all speech sounds into a finite number of atomic phonemes, the *varṇa-mātrkā*, capable, in principle, of infinite combinations. A similar analysis was made by Bharata (and his is the earliest example we have) of percussion playing (*puṣkara vādyā*), an art which, apparently, was as sophisticated and as "independent" an art in Bharata's days as it is today. Bharata speaks of sixteen *vāk-karāṇas* - *bols* we call them in Hindustani music today - which are "basic" sounds indicative of sounds played on drums: *ka kha ga gha ta tha da dha ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha ma ra la ha*, these in various combinations, on the basis of *tāla*, *laya*, *yati* resulted in infinite patterns.⁴¹

I must now end; yet I can not resist the temptation to add a few remarks, make some brief reflections and raise a question or two inspired by Bharata's endeavour. His formulation of *nāṭya*, or rather *nāṭyas* - since his conception has ample room for alternate formations - is itself an example of the *vṛtti* approach practised in a grand manner. Whatever he describes, he relates integrally to *nāṭya*. We have discussed a few examples, but there are others: imaginative literature and psychology, to speak of two more. In discussing *kāvya* - imaginative writing - used in composing the script of a play, Bharata keeps constantly advising the *kavi*, the poet, to design his narrative, plot, style, diction even his versification in such a way as to make it appropriate for *nāṭya*. He did not want the poet to be carried away by the demands of his own art. He tells him to beware of getting lost in the play of language or

⁴¹ These sounds could themselves have various formulations, apparently through different ways of producing them on a drum. Thus 'ka' could have the forms 'ke' 'ko' 'kam' as well as 'kra' 'kla' 'kle' and 'klam'. Other "basic" sounds had similar multiple formulations as Bharata notes at N.S. 34, 43-44. Bharata speaks of various combinations of these sounds made not only on the basis of *laya*, *tāla* and *yati* but also *mārga*, *lepa*, *pracāra* etc. (N.S. 34, 40).

imagery or *alaṅkāras*, for their own sake.⁴² His interesting thoughts on psychology, as reflected in his discussion of *bhāvas* and their role in *rasas*, deserve close attention on their own. But, significantly, in his description, *bhāva* is inseparable from *abhinaya* (and thus *nāṭya*). Even his explanation of the meaning of the word *bhāva* (otherwise meaning, “feeling”, “emotion”, “sentiment” and the like) reflects this dual understanding. He explains *bhāva* less as a manner of *being* than a manner of *showing* or representation. In fact, his definition of *bhāva* could also be a definition of *abhinaya*.⁴³

⁴² Bharata says: *susliṣṭasandhisamyogaṁ suprayogaṁ sukhāśrayaṁ/ mṛduśabdābhīdhānaṁ ca kavīḥ kuryāstu nāṭakam!*

N.S. 19, 141.

Meaning: “A poet should take care to compose a *nāṭaka* in such a way as to properly knit its various *dramatic* sequences together (the *sandhis*) so that it can result in a good stage-production (*suprayoga*). It should use a lucid language so that it is easy to perform.’ Elsewhere he reiterates:

*Cekṛḍitaprabhīrtibhīrvikṛtāiṣca śabdairiyuktā
na bhānti lalitā bhārataprayogāḥ/
yajñakriyeva rurucarmadharairghṛtāktairveśyā
dvijairiva kamaṇḍaludaṇḍahastaiḥ!*

N.S. 16, 127.

It is often forgotten, that Bharata’s entire treatment of *kāvya* is geared, like his treatment of all else, towards *nāṭya*. His work is, by historical accident, the earliest available *śāstric* work on *alaṅkāra*, but it is not perhaps representative of the state of the *śāstra* as such during his days as modern historians of *alaṅkāra śāstra* tend to think of it. His whole treatment is so plainly *nāṭya*-oriented that many of his rhetorical categories do not make sense without keeping *nāṭya* in mind: his scheme of 36 *kāvya-guṇas* (chapter 16) are palpably related to *kāvya* as designed for theatre. He has obviously made a *selection* from available categories, inventing new ones for his own specific purpose.

⁴³ N.S. chapter 7 begins thus: *bhāvānidāniṁ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ. atrāha bhāvā
iti kasmāt. kim bhavantīti bhāvā, kim vā bhāvayantīti bhāvāḥ? ucyate-
vāgaṅgasattva-petān kāvyārthān bhāvayantīti bhāvāḥ.*

That is to say: “Now we shall delineate *bhāvas*. Here it may be asked: how are they *bhāvas*? Are they *bhāvas* because they *are* or are they *bhāvas* because they *reveal* (what is)? The answer is, they are *bhāvas* because they *reveal* (or project) the plot and sentiments (*arthāḥ*) of a *kāvya* through such modes of (*abhinaya*) as the *vācika* (speech), the *aṅga* (body movements and gestures) and the *sattva* (‘involuntary’ physical states indicative of emotion where there is no movement or gesture, but conditions such as sweating, flow of tears, horripilation or ‘goose flesh’ and the like are projected by the actor in order to reveal a conscious state).

Nāṭya, formulated as a grand *vr̥tti* was also a grand *anukaraṇa*, the grandest possible representation of the world in art, providing in its own *nāṭya-dharmi* way an experience almost as direct as of the world itself (Abhinava therefore calls *sākṣātkalpa* “direct-like”). Yet, in this representation were orchestrated many arts which were non-representational. They acquired a representational meaning only as part of a *vr̥tti*. Structures of pure music and dance, woven into systems of their own, had not only to be carefully selected, but even transformed before they could become parts of a *vr̥tti*-whole. Bharata tells us how “pure” structures were transformed for this purpose. He describes only one side of what must have been a two-way process as we know, for example, from the history of music. A structural transformation in art, though made for the sake of transference into quite another art with a different aesthetic goal, is yet bound to have a moulding effect on the original art itself, even if it does not effect its non-representational intent. The addition of new “*deśī*” *kaṛaṇas* and *mudrās* to the pure *tāṇḍava*, as reported in later texts such as the *Saṅgītaratnākara* of the 13th century, appear to have followed this path.

The very possibility of the transference of a structure from a system of pure art into an *anukaraṇa*-oriented *vr̥tti* might, however, accost us with a fundamental question: “how can pure non-representational structures acquire any representational meaning at all?” True, the same structure as part of a different *vr̥tti* could acquire different “meanings”, since different *vr̥ttis* were connected with different *rasas*, yet even allowing room for such ambiguity, the question we have posed still remains relevant, for not any structure could become part of any *vr̥tti*. A

In this passage the word ‘*abhinaya*’ is not actually used, but immediately after it, having stated that the verb ‘*bhū*’ in his use of *bhāva* is to be understood as used in an instrumental sense, Bharata defines *bhāva* more unambiguously as:

*vibhāvenāḥṛto yo’rtho hyanubhāvaistu gamyate/
vāgaṅgasattvābhīnayaiḥ sa bhāva iti saṁjñitāḥ!
vāgaṅgamukharāgeṇa sattvenābhīnayena ca/
kaverantaragataṁ bhāvāṁ bhāvayan bhāva ucyate!*

N.S. 7, 1-2.

structure, clearly, had to have some "affinity" with the *vr̥tti* into which it was transposed or else there could be no justification for choosing one structure rather than another as more "appropriate." But on what principle can one gauge the "affinity" between forms of very different character? Bharata forces us to ask this question without suggesting an answer. I too, shall not attempt any answer here (which, of course, is not to say that I can).

I must remark, though, that the question is not limited to the attempt made in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* — which, however must be thanked for suggesting it clearly — or even to aesthetics in general. It has larger ramifications. Many of our own modern *śāstras* also aim at a *vr̥tti*-like approach: such disciplines from the social sciences as history, sociology or anthropology for example. These are meaning-oriented "human" disciplines that amalgamate the results of many others, pressing them to their own cognitive aims. A historian takes pride in being the master *sūtradhāra* who can envision the whole range of disparate human activities within a single *vr̥tti*-like amalgamated meaningful whole.

He speaks, for example, of the 'spirit of an age'. An 'age', in his notion, is a *vr̥tti*-like whole produced by the combination of multifarious human activities and pursuits. The 'spirit' of an 'age' like the *rasa* of a *vr̥tti*, ties different realms together into a meaningful whole, infusing into each part the character of the whole.

Yet though analogous to *rasa* and *vr̥tti*, the idea of the spirit of an age is much more ambitious. An age is an all-subsuming whole engulfing every single human activity in every detail, without, ideally, a residue. The spirit of an age should be perceivable in every limb of this cosmic entity, and, if, perchance, something is admitted to have remained untouched by this omnipresent 'spirit', it also remains unexplained and not quite understood in a historian's scheme of things, an embarrassment to his vision. The question of the basic affinity between different realms is not really raised. Affinity is taken for granted before it is discovered with the assumption that if things are together they must have an affinity.

Rasa in Bharata's framework is in an important sense different from such a conception of 'spirit'. And this is because *vr̥tti* is not an all-subsuming whole like 'age'. The different, discrete activities with which a *vr̥tti* is constructed do not lose themselves entirely in a *vr̥tti*. In order to fit into a *vr̥tti*, an activity, in Bharata's scheme, has to be transformed in significant ways, thus creating a new entity out of the old, a new entity with a new goal, modified rules of formation, and a new "affinity": something designed not as an independent activity, but as a part of another, in many ways, an alien thing. Meaningful discourse about this new entity needs new concepts that must focus upon it as part of an alien whole. Activities that merge into a *vr̥tti* thus yet retain their separate identity. What merges into a *vr̥tti* is something carved out of an autonomous realm which continues to have its independent existence, with its own, independent structures and its own separate world of discourse. Thus, for example, when *dhruvā* is carved out of *gāndharva* and moulded to fit the *nāṭya*, *gāndharva* continues in its own character, holding its own distinct sway. Bharata never lets us forget this. Therefore, the universality of *rasa* in his framework is something confined and limited, because the territory of *vr̥tti*, too, is limited. The idea of *rasa* can apply to an activity only in as much as it is part of a *vr̥tti*. It can, thus, be used to understand *dhruvā* but not *gāndharva* (or music as such). Later theorists made *rasa* into a much more cosmic concept, a defining trait of the entire realm of the aesthetic, embracing all the arts equally in this entirety. Constructing unifying concepts that embrace whole gamuts of human activities or entire realms of knowledge is a natural temptation. A concept, after all, has to be general in essence. One tends to make it more and more so, weaving a totally universal system around it. There is no denying the appeal of such universal concepts and systems that tie up a whole range of diversity into a single monolithic bundle. But this does injustice to the complexity of phenomena, glossing over what does not fit, and distorting others to squeeze them into a straitjacket. Such system-building is a great temptation for

thinkers today, not only in science but also the 'human' disciplines.

Bharata's approach is refreshingly distinct in this respect. In amalgamating different realms he remained aware that what was achieved was just another realm, a *vr̥tti*, which though seeking to envision human reality in a 'holistic' manner, yet did not unify different realms into a larger all-inclusive whole but only created one more realm among others. Therefore, he conceived of a multiplicity of such combinations: *vr̥tti* is not one but many. Reality could be recreated in many ways. Moreover, the *vr̥tti*-scheme of forming new wholes and discoursing about them was relevant only to realms carved out of other realms combined into a *vr̥tti*. There remained other realms where a *mātr̥kā* scheme of discourse was more germane. These were 'formal' realms that could be significantly analysed into 'atomic' units. These were realms that did not reflect the world, they were not meant to recreate reality; and thus they resisted assimilation into another realm. It is possible for a *vr̥tti*, in Bharata's scheme, to assimilate *mātr̥kā*-oriented structures, but never an entire *mātr̥kā*-oriented realm, that is, a formal realm, where the analytical *mātr̥kā* approach is significant to discourse.

CHAPTER - NINE

Bharata Muni and Hindi Films¹

Seeing films is certainly one of the most popular pastimes in India. Consequently, films-making is one of our largest industries. Scores of films are produced every year in all the major Indian languages. By far the largest number of films produced are Hindi films. These have a magnetic mass-appeal even in non-Hindi-speaking regions. Hindi films can, indeed, be said to typify all popular films made in any Indian language. General observations about their form or content will apply, on the whole, to all Indian films.

My endeavour here will be to make some observations regarding one of the most noticeable formal peculiarity of the Hindi film: the preponderance of song and dance interludes in its narratives. I will attempt to show that the roots of this practice lie in the centuries-old theatrical traditions of India. This will also throw some light on the rationale of the practice.

Songs and dances in Hindi films are so woven into the story as to be integral to its development. They are as important to the totality of the film-narrative as the plot, and the skills and techniques of cinematography and character-acting.

On the popular Hindi screen, it is not an occasional film or any specific narrative genre that employs songs and dances; they are part of every film, whatever the narrative. Songs and dances are put in as a rule; it is the exceptional film that does not employ them.

Hindi films have a rich gamut of stories. Many genres or narrative-types can be distinguished. Distinctions, no doubt, tend to merge into each other, yet one can meaningfully classify and talk of them. Two broad divisions are obvious: we have, firstly,

¹ An essay in investigating some formal continuities from ancient Indian theatre to the popular modern medium.

what are called 'mythological' films in which the narratives are based on popular versions of tales from the *Purāṇas*, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*, as well as currently popular mythic legends. Secondly, there is the broad category of what may be termed 'human drama'. This includes narratives of a great variety, ranging from love-stories, tales of patriotism, humour, issues relating social rights, to crime-thrillers and 'westerns'. Many of these stories are certainly cliché-ridden, making 'formula' films. But there are also simple human tales told in a convincing, simple human manner.

But whatever the film's narrative, whether 'mythological, or 'human', it is certain to contain a good amount of songs and dances. This is quite unlike the practice in the west where only the 'musical' integrally incorporates songs into the plot. In a Hindi film, songs and dances are an inevitable part of the aesthetic means employed, whether the film is an intense human drama or a pure fantasy. Songs and dances are not something superimposed upon a film's narrative: something appended from time to time in order to lend colour or spectacle to the show. They are inseparable from the Hindi film's very mode of storytelling. The principal characters themselves make use of songs and dances at crucial moments in the film.

To many of us, who have acquired a taste for films from the west, the effect of such song-dance interludes, boxed within the action as part of the action, can often seem to be very unsettling and incongruous. All the more, because when not dancing or singing, the characters usually behave in a natural, normal enough manner. Whole scenes can take place as if in real life amidst natural situations and surroundings, with the characters acting in a realistic, more or less unaffected style. But, then, suddenly, a transformation occurs, and the spectacle turns into something like a ballet or an opera. Characters who had been behaving in a natural way break into a song or a dance or both. And after this sudden song-dance interlude is over, they revert back to normal, till such a time when a similar interlude may follow again.

Many of us feel bewildered at these transformations. We never quite understand the rationale behind the odd coupling of such disparate modes. It is, I think, a combination which is not consciously produced. We cannot understand it in terms of any properly thought-out aesthetic principles. Formal influences dominating the Hindi film remain at a largely unconscious level or at least at a level where they are not resolved into a well-assimilated and self-aware scheme or design.

The roots of this curious mixture of two different modes of narration or theatric presentation found in the Hindi films can, I think, be traced to the influence of two quite disparate traditions. One is the cinema of the west and its dominant trends of natural presentations. The other is indigenous Indian theatre where stylized presentation was the rule.

The cinema as a medium was developed in the west, where, from its inception, it fostered the goal of recording events as they occur. The very first films to be made were short, one minute documentaries recording every-day occurrences.² Early narrative feature films, too, had a strong realistic intent, though other influences, mainly of various kinds of popular theatre and shows were also at work. Yet, in spite of other influences, realism — an attempt at recording the feel of lived life — has always been a major thrust in all cinema making. The medium itself has a built-in propensity for such a naturalism. More than any other method of representation, the cinema has the potential to give us an illusion of happenings actually taking place before us in the panoramic surroundings of life. It is the only medium in which the making of a documentary — an audio-visual record of actual events — is possible. The movie camera, in truth, acts as a documenting instrument even when filming a fantasy.

Film-making in India came from the west. Indian film

² Roy Armes, *Film and Reality*, p. 23 (Pelican Books, 1974). The first films to be shown, records Armes, were made by the Frenchman Lumiere who gave his premier show in December 1895. Earlier, Edison had commercially exploited what he called the kinetoscope, but this equipment could not project an image on a screen; only one viewer could see a film at a time *op.cit.*, pp. 90-92.

makers borrowed their technique and much of their cinematic style from the west. They still keep doing so. A strongly naturalistic mode of representation thus is a part of their approach. Consequently, the narrative in a Hindi film often moves as if the viewer was conducted through scenes taking place in real life. The plot unfolds amidst surroundings containing all the signs of actuality. Much of the film is, indeed, shot on actual locales. A Hindi film, even when a fantasy at its core, has a surface aura of actuality, except, perhaps, in purely mythological films.

The other major influence in moulding narrative feature films has been the indigenous theatre. The very first ambitious narrative feature films to be made in India were, in fact, filmed theatre shows. In May 1912, R.G. Torane released his *Puṇḍalika*, a film on the famous saint from Maharashtra. *Puṇḍalika* was based on a Marathi drama of the same name.³ The film was an immediate success. In 1913, the famous film *Rājā Hariścandra* by D.G. Falke was released. This, too, was influenced by the theatre of the day. In 1917, J.F. Madan produced and released a film called *Satyavādī Rājā Hariścandra* in Calcutta. The Victoria Theatrical Company which staged Hindi and Urdu plays was actively associated with its production.⁴

In the thirties, sound was introduced into Indian films. Theatre, with its songs, dances and music, now came into full play in the cinema. Many stage hits were made into films, popular songs from the stage became film hits, stage actors became film heroes and stage producers became film directors.⁵ Thus songs and dances came into the films from popular theatre, and have since remained a constant feature through changing modes and fashions of narrative genres, motifs and cinematic styles.

It is a well-known aesthetic maxim that a suspension of

³ Feroz Rangoonwala, *Bhāratiya Calacitra kā Itihāsa*, pp. 26-27. (Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi. 1975).

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 29-36.

⁵ Feroz Rangoonwala, *op. cit.*, See chapter 5, where the facts noted above are borne out.

disbelief is necessary in the viewer for him to establish a rapport with the narrative being unfolded. Abhinava Gupta, the renowned aesthete (writing in the 10th-11th centuries), has remarked that if an action being staged lacks in plausibility, the mind of the spectator will never be able to immerse itself in it.⁶ And certainly if one begins to question or doubt the plausibility of any major aspect of the action being shown one's emotional involvement with the narrative is bound to be hampered.

In Hindi films, the disturbing yet inveterate habit of characters to transform themselves, as if by magic, into songsters or dancers at regular intervals, is surely a feature that may tax one's sense of plausibility. But, curiously enough, the general Indian viewer faces no credibility problems. He finds nothing odd or unnatural in characters suddenly taking to a song or moving into a dance amidst otherwise normal action. The truth, on the contrary, is that in certain situations and emotional contexts, the viewer actually expects a song or a dance. He considers these to be appropriate means of dramatic expression at the right moment. He considers them as appropriate not only in situations where they might be plausibly expected in real life but also in contexts where people do not normally give vent to feelings through such means.

There are critics like Dilip Padgaonkar, who have looked for a naturalistic explanation for songs and dances on the Hindi screen. Padgaonkar, in one of his columns contributed to the *Times of India*, remarks that Hindi films are full of song and dance because life in India is itself full of song and dance.⁷ Such a view is taken by many who would like to seek a convincing 'naturalistic' justification for the practice. But this explanation is not really convincing. In reply to it, it may be observed that India may well be full of song and dance — and, indeed which country or culture lacks them? — but songs or dances certainly do not occur in situations where

⁶ 'samvedyamasambhāvyaṃ mānāḥ samvedye samvidarṇ viniveśayantumeva na saknoti', *Abhinavava Bhārati* on ch. 6, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, p. 280. (All reference are to the Gaekwad Oriental Series edition of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, unless otherwise stated).

⁷ I am unable to recollect the date on which this column was published.

they are common in films. Where in real life do we find jilted lovers singing away songs such as 'Jāyen to jāyen kahān' on a footpath in front of their beloved's house? Such a scene, if it were to occur in real life, would create bathos instead of pathos.⁸ Yet, similar scenes are quite common in the films. Courtship in a Hindi film can rarely progress without the boy and the girl singing and dancing away to glory. But how many couples can we think of who court in the manner of the films? In fact, dance along with music plays a much larger part in western courtship: though films made in the west hardly ever make use of songs or dances to depict love. In parenthesis it may also be added that on the Hindi screen couples dancing western style to western music are usually shown as dissipating, not expressing sincere love.⁹

The use of song and dance interludes cannot, I think, be explained on the premise of naturalism. The key to the matter

⁸ Apparently, in ancient times, too, there were critics who thought on the same lines as Padgaonkar. Music played a major part in ancient drama. A school of critics argued that this was in imitation of real life. Abhinava has combated this idea. He observes that drama is not a replica (*anukarana*) of real life. True, he says, critics of the imitation school may argue that in real life, too, music accompanies such common and diverse activities as dining, bathing, being put to sleep, being woken up and the like (as was not uncommon with those who could afford it), but such a use of music did not take the same form nor did it have the same purpose as music in theatre. In theatre, Abhinava remarks, songs of a specific kind were used. They were not replicas or reproductions of music used in common situations of life. Theatric music was, moreover, used as integral to drama, whereas music in real life when accompanying the activities mentioned above, was only something that imparted a kind of auspiciousness to the occasion; it was nothing more.

ataścedam nānukaraṇam tato yātkaiściccoditam tadanavakāśam. na ca gītavādyayuktā sarvāvasthāsu kaścidanukārya iti, na tvanukāryatvena gītādāya ityuktam. pariharō'pi ya uktā aśanagamanasnānasvāpapatibodhabhojanādāyāsu gītavādyam ceṣṭāsvatiprathitam ityādi tadāpyanupannam. na hi gamanādautadhruvātālādirūpeṇa gītādi loke'sti maṅgalamāstravādṛte. (Abhinava on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 1, 107).

Dhruvā, it should be borne in mind here, was the name given to specially designed theatric songs. See Abhinava's introduction chapter 33 of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Abhinava calls *dhruvā*: *nāṭyāmagrīmadhyanimajjitanijasvara*: in other words, integral to drama as an art.

⁹ This was true of films which the author was familiar with when he wrote this piece in the mid-seventies. Things seem to have changed.

will be found elsewhere. Songs and dances in Hindi films are used as theatric devices for narration; their source should be looked for in the established conventions of the dramatic art in India.

Any film which aims at narrating a story, has to do much more than merely record surface events. It has to transcend the simple documentary and reveal not only how people move and behave but also what they feel and think. The narrative film has to convey the inner felt aspect of human situations, and convey it in an aesthetically evocative and acceptable manner. The art of the theatre has developed with just such a goal. It has perfected many techniques, devices and stylistic motifs for communicating the unseen, inner life of men.

The film as a medium has grown by exploring the immense possibilities of its own specific form. But it has also adapted — in however transformed a manner — many *mores* of artistic expression developed in the theatre.

Like other arts, theatre has developed differently in different cultures. In different traditions, drama has come to acquire certain distinct sets of aesthetic conventions and devices. The conventions of any dramatic culture appear as 'natural' to viewers belonging to that culture; their responses become conditioned to accept them as *normal in drama*.

Films in India have, perhaps, greater ties with the theatre than films made in other countries. The Hindi movie has direct links with popular Marathi, Bengali and 'Parasi' theatre, and with traditional Indian theatre in general. In fact, the Hindi film is basically a theatric show, albeit presented on an immense stage as large as life itself, thanks to the possibilities of the cinematic medium. It has, however, few touches of the pure cinema that we find in the work of great western directors or their Indian counterparts.

The use of song and dance as an integral formal element in theatric presentation is a factor running through all traditional Indian dramatic shows. The roots of this theatre go back to a remote period. Many characteristic elements of this theatre, and through it of Hindi films, reach back to Bharata, the Master of dramaturgy. Hindi films follow the footsteps of that ancient

ācārya in many matters of form and spirit.

Bharata composed his epitome on theatre, the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, almost two millenium ago. Bharata himself was the spokesman of a theatric tradition which had become well-entrenched by his age and antedates him by at least a few centuries. This tradition continues in popular indigenous theatre.

It continues also in the films, although few of us are conscious of the roots of our film-making in Bharata, least of all the film-makers.

Though an unconscious influence, Bharata yet remains a potent influence. The dramatic tradition of Bharata has entered deep into our culture and still unconsciously shapes and conditions the theatric responses of our audiences. It also shapes and conditions many formal elements in the so-called 'formula' films of Bombay.

Bharata's own theatre was a consciously and meticulously cultivated art. He analyses every factor and technique of this art in detail. What is more important, he also discusses the rationale of his theatre-making. Bharata's theatre was cultivated as a demanding and refined art for centuries after the Master, before passing into popular vernacular theatre as a moulding influence.

The principles of Bharata's theatre were further analysed by commentators on the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and later writers on the art of drama. No commentaries survive except that of Abhinavagupta. His is a significant and stimulating work. Abhinava was alive to the subtleties of the theatre, and speaks as one who had a direct and vital experience of the art. He was also a great theorist, alive to the nuances of significant analysis. We can take him as our guide.

Two concepts of Bharata are especially pertinent in this context: the concepts of *lokadharmī* and *nāṭyadharmī*. These are related to the mode of translating human reality into theatre. They denote the two elements of the natural and the theatrical (the latter including conventions and devices adopted by theatre as an art) which are present in all dramatic representations. *Lokadharmī* means 'taken from the actual behaviour of people'. *Nāṭyadharmī* means 'factors or elements peculiar to drama, and which drama uses to translate human reality into theatre'.

The purpose of drama, says Bharata, is to recreate the human condition in all its complexities and richness of experience.¹⁰ But the recreation of human situations through the medium of theatre

¹⁰ *nānābhāvopasampannam nānāvastvantarātmakam/lokavṛttānukaraṇam nāṭyametaramayā kṛtam. Nāṭyaśāstra* 1, 112. The following is also worthy of note: *yo 'yam syabhāvo lokasya sukhaduḥkhasamanvitah/so' ngābhinayopeto nāṭyamityabhi dhiyate. Nāṭyaśāstra* 1, 119.

Bharata conceives of drama as aiming to represent not merely the human condition, but also the trans-human actions of gods and titanic demons (see *Nāṭyaśāstra* 1, 118). However, the main dramatic forms, *nāṭaka*, *prakaraṇa*, *nāṭikā*, *prahasana*, *bhāṇa* — dealt mainly with a human story, though gods could enter as minor characters. Abhinava speaking of *nāṭaka*, the paradigmatic form of all drama, brings this point out when he says: '*na ca sarvathā devacaritam tathā' varṇaniyam kintu divyānāmāśrayatvena prakariapatā-kānyakādirupeṇa...*' (on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 18, 10).

In certain dramatic forms, such as the *samavakāra*, *iḥāmr̥ga* and *ḍima*, gods and titans predominated. But these were minor dramatic forms, being mainly spectacular shows.

Bharata, significantly enough, says that drama acquires interest and intensity only through a human narrative depicting both joy and sorrows (*Nāṭyaśāstra* 18, 12). Gods, by nature, are incapable of sorrow. They could not be leading characters in the true dramatic sense. In presenting them as dramatic characters it was necessary to humanise them. But this, if carried too far, could controvert the divine character of a god, and adversely effect a spectator's sense of credulity. One had thus to be careful when introducing a god as a dramatic character. Abhinava remarks: *yadi tu mukhyatvenaiva devacaritam varṇyate tattāvadvipralambhakarūṇādbhutabhayānakarasocitam cennibadhyate tanmānuṣacaritameva sampadyate pratyuta devānambhidhayādhānam prasiddhivi-ghātakam. tatra cōkto doṣah; vipralambhādyabhāve tu tatra kā vicitratā rañjanāyā etatpramāṇavūt. ata eva hrdayasamvādo'pi devacarite durlabham na ca teṣām duḥkhamasti.* (Abhinava on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 18, 10). This may be translated as: "If one were to present a god as the chief character [in a play], and if he were to be shown in situations evolving the *rasas*, (the emotional ethos) of love in separation, pathos (felt for the character), wonder (at his deeds) or fear (for him), then this will amount to turning the god into a human being, resulting in incredulity and thus hampering the desired effect, especially if the god is also given a well-known name. This is indeed, the reason why a god as a [dramatic] character fails to arouse sympathy in a viewer, since the gods do not suffer." It is here also worth quoting Bhārata's seemingly strange maxim that, gods when shown were to be shown in the background of the land of Bhārata and not in their own godly abodes. The reason Bharata gives is that in celestial abodes there is no sorrow or unhappiness (*Nāṭyaśāstra* 18, 98-99). Bharata obviously aimed at giving some semblance of suffering humanity to gods when presenting them on the stage.

obviously poses many problems at both the technical as well as aesthetic levels. There is, firstly, the problem of space: the panoramic human world has to be staged on a very much reduced area, a tiny platform. There is also the problem of time: years have to be shown within hours. There is, above all, the problem of recreating emotions and feelings, the inner life of man which is the greater part of the human condition.

Drama attempts to solve these problems in different ways. Some of the more tricky problems involve the use of theatric devices and conventions. These Bharata includes within the *nāṭyadharmī*. *Nāṭyadharmī* in Bharata thus embraces a host of things. It is the name given to the proper deployment of stage space, the use of stage props, of costume and make-up, and the like. It also denotes such stage conventions as the 'aside' (*svagata*), the stage whisper (*janāntika*) and what was known in Sanskrit drama as the *akāśa-bhāṣita*: this was used by a character when conversing with someone not present on the stage. The character in such a situation, uttered both parts of the dialogue himself.

Theatre is a composite art. It uses for a dramatic purpose many arts which are in themselves quite independent. It makes use of poetry or poetic speech (apart from the more normal prose dialogue), dance or stylised dance-like gestures and music. These are deployed in drama to express feelings and to create the intended atmosphere, mood or ethos. Their use is also *nāṭyadharmī*, and may be called the more 'inner' aspect of the *nāṭyadharmī*.

Bharata gives a long list of items that he calls *nāṭyadharmī* (*Nāṭyaśāstra* 13, 70-86). I quote a few verses from a passage where he speaks of the use of music, poetry and dance:

"When characters, utterances and feelings are shown as over-reaching the normal, when the mode of acting breaks out into graceful dance-like movements... then we have the characteristics of *nāṭyadharmā*.¹¹

"When speech is intoned in a song-like manner, when

¹¹ *ativākryakriyopetamatīsattvātibhāvakam/lilāṅgahārābhīnayaṃ nāṭyalakṣaṇalakṣitam (Nāṭyaśāstra 13/73).*

language adopts poetic graces and when a man does not appear as himself, then we have the *nāṭyadharmī* mode.¹²

"When the natural condition of man in sorrow or in joy is expressed through the use of music (*aṅga*) and (heightened) acting, then we have *nāṭyadharmī*. A drama should always be performed in the *nāṭyadharmī* mode because the desired evocative effect cannot be achieved without music and (heightened) acting".¹³

In introducing the notions of *lokadharmī* and *nāṭyadharmī*, Abhinava makes interesting observations: Drama, he says, employs both these modes of representation with the aim to recreate human condition and experience (*lokasvabhāvamevānuvartamānaṃ dharmīdvayam*). Man is variously motivated and to show him as he is on the stage is the equal concern of both *lokadharmī* and *nāṭyadharmī*. That is why, says Abhinava, Bharata speaks of them in context of play-acting. There is, he adds, nothing in drama that is outside the scope of the human mode of being (*laukikadharmā*); *nāṭyadharmī* occurs wherever

¹² *svarālaṅkārasaṃyuktamasvasthāpuruṣāśrayaṃ yadīdṛśaṃ bhavennāṭyaṃ nāṭyadharmī tu sā smṛtā* ibid 13, 74.

In using the phrase '*asvathāpuruṣāśrayam*' Bharata may have been referring to the transfiguration of a character in certain situations — as of Vikrama in the fourth act of *Vikramavarśyam* — and the resulting change in the mode of acting, which then becomes more dominated by song and dance. Abhinava says that the phrase refers to women assuming the garb of men: '*yatra puruṣo na svarūpe tiṣṭhati api tu sribalamāśritya; prayojyaḥ puruṣa yatra na svarūpasthaḥ api tu striyā prayuyate tannāṭyadharmī*'. In ancient drama men characters were sometimes acted by women. The *Kuṭṭanimatam* for example, speaks of an all-women performance of *Ratnāvali* (see verse 801, where women are said to have assumed the role of the hero and his friend). This was *nāṭyadharmī*, also in the sense of being a theatrical conversion, for the audience was aware of the male characters being actually women.

¹³ *yo 'yaṃ svabhāvo lokasya sukhaduḥkhakriyātmakaḥ/so 'ṅgābhīnaya-saṃyukto nāṭyadharmī prakīrtitā// nāṭyadharmī pravṛttāḥ hi sadā nāṭyaṃ prayojayet/na hi aṅgābhīnayaṭkiñcidṛte rāgaḥ pravartate// Nāṭyaśāstra 13, 81 and 84.*

In the first verse above Abhinava explains *aṅga* as: *aṅgairātodyādibīḥ*. Commenting on the second verse, he makes a similar statement: *aṅgāni ca gītātodyāni*. *Aṅga* clearly refers to the musical content of a dramatic performance.

ordinary human behaviour is raised to a higher pitch for producing greater dramatic effect (*rañjanādhikyaprādhānyama-dhirohayitum*) through the multifarious artistry of the poet and the actor.¹⁴ However, though dependent on *loka*, and employing the 'natural' mode of representation, the space created by *nāṭya*, or drama, is, in a basic sense, *nāṭyadharmī*. Abhinava explains the relation between the *lokadharmī* and the *nāṭyadharmī* through the analogy of a sculptural frieze: *lokadharmī* is the ground, the well (*bhitti*) upon which the *nāṭyadharmī* is chiselled like a frieze.¹⁵

From what has been said of the *nāṭyadharmī*, it should, I think, be evident that this is not an element peculiar to Bharata's theatre alone. All theatre empolys it in some form or the other. It is also employed in films in ways analogous to theatre, and, indeed, in ways borrowed from the theatre.

Music has always been one of the chief *nāṭyadharmī* elements in all theatre and dramatic tradition everywhere. It plays a large part in films, too, and pervades even the most realistic film in the form of background music. In India it is introduced *within* the dramatic action itself and made integral to the plot and narrative. This is, so to say, taking a kind of logical step and bringing that which is evocative in the background into the foreground.

Ancient Indian theatre made use of music, both as background accompaniment as well as in the form of songs

¹⁴ *tathā hi loksvabhāvamevānuvartamānaṁ dharmidvayam, loko nāma janapadavāsi janah. sa ca pravṛtīkrameṇa prapañcītaḥ. tatprasahgenaiva tāvaddharmyāyātā, sā cāṅgikaśeṣatayā vaktavyā... sā ca dvedhā. yadyapi laukikadharmavyatirekeṇa nāṭye na kaściddharmo'sti tathāpi sa yatra lokagataprakriyākramo rañjanādhikyaprādhānyama-dhirohayitum kavina-tavyāpāre vaicitryaṁ svikurvan nāṭyadharmīyucyate.* Abhinava on *Nāṭya-sāstra* 13, 70.

¹⁵ *laukikasya dharmasya mūlabhūtatvānnāṭyadharmāṁ vaicitrollekhyabhittisthānat-vāditi.* Abhinava. *ibid.*

The word *ullekhyā* in this passage has clearly been used in the sense of a frieze. The verb *ullikh* has the sense of 'to chisel', 'to chip' and the like, besides other denotations: see Monier-Williams' *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

within the plot itself. Theatric songs were called *dhruvā*. Abhinava, in an expressive phrase, describes the *dhruvā* as: *nāṭyasāmagrīmadhyanimajjitānijasvaram*,¹⁶ meaning that the *dhruvā* had a distinct voice in the totality of the diverse elements that together created a dramatic whole.

Bharata observes that drama without songs is bound to remain ineffective and unevocative just as a painting devoid of colour.¹⁷ He further says that songs should be used not only to lend colour to a dramatic show, they should rather be interwoven into the very fabric of the drama. Commencing his section on music, Bharata begins by speaking of the integral relation between song and drama. He conveys this point through a metaphor: "song, instrumental music and *nāṭya* (i.e. such elements of theatre as play-acting) are disparate factors which are produced through quite different skills. But they should be so brought together as to create a single, undivided *alātacakra*"¹⁸ *Alāta* means a torch, a fire-brand. An *alātacakra*, was a fiery circle, produced when a fire-brand was skilfully rotated.

Abhinava, too, speaks of the intimate relation between songs and drama as a whole. He explains the relation as that obtaining between the *uparañjaka* and the *uparañjaniya*. Drama was the aesthetic whole, the *uparañjaniya*, to which songs provided

¹⁶ Abhinava uses this phrase for characterising the function of the *dhruvā*, in his introductory comments on chapter 33 of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

¹⁷ *yathā varṇādṛte citraṁ na shobhotpādanam bhavet/evameva vinā gānaṁ nāṭyaṁ na gacchati sukham//Nāṭyaśāstra 32, 425.*

¹⁸ *evam gānaṁ ca vādyam ca nāṭyaṁ ca vividhāśrayam/alātacakrapratīmaṁ kartavyam nāṭyayoktrbhiḥ//. Nāṭyaśāstra 28, 7.*

Commenting on the phrase *vividhāśrayam*, Abhinava observes that various different skills need to be combined to produce a drama through quite distinct artistic endeavours. Moreover, they were apprehended differently, through different sense organs. They were to be carefully brought together to form a whole: *yasmādvividhāśrayam bhinnendriyagrāhyavividhakriyārūpaṁ tasmādyatnenāsyaikaṭā tatsampādyā, yenaikabudhiviśayātā sāmājikasya gacchet.* For a more detailed discussion concerning this important insight of Bharata, the reader may like to see, 'Bharata and the Art of Mixing Structures', an earlier essay in this collection. The essay was actually written much later than the present one.

aesthetic aid, *uparañjana*.¹⁹

Occasions for the use of theatric songs, or *dhruvā*, were numerous in ancient drama. They had as many occasions as there are human moods and emotions. *Dhruvās* were, however, categorised into five types on the basis of their role and function in the theatre. These types were: *prāveśiki*, *niṣkrāmiki*, *prāsādiki*, *ākṣepiki* and *antarā*.

Ancient theatre was saturated with *dhruvās*. Even exits and entrances of characters were heralded through a *dhruvā*: *prāveśiki*, as the name indicates, announced an entrance; *niṣkrāmiki* announced exits. *Prāsādiki* and *ākṣepiki* were more integrated within the dramatic action and were deployed to depict ethos and sentiment essential to the plot.

Bharata lays down that appropriate *dhruvās* should be sung

¹⁹ *evam gānam ceti nāṭyam tāvaduparañjanīyam... ata eva hi gitavādyanāṭyakṛta-siddhirityukteti kiṃ pradhānam kimaṅgami bhāge saṃśayate. pūrvaṃ tu siddhinirūpaṇe etāvataḥ prayogavimūḥ pariñātam. tasyoparañjanīyatoktā bhavati madhyāvasthitena ca siddhinirūpaṇe ākāṅkṣivaduparañjakvargo'pi spaṣṭa eva bhavati.. kiṃ caivaṃ sati siddhyādhyāye gitavādyavaiśamyādi kimartha-mucyate. prāktana eva samādhānavargo yuktaḥ. uparañjakopaskṛtasya nāṭyasya nāṭyateti bhedyatvātapaścā-dupāttam.* This may be translated as: 'And thus should music function, (acting as an aid) to theatre, which is intended as the main aesthetic goal (*uparañjanīya*). With this in mind, the success of a performance (*siddhi*) has been seen as a (mixed) rendering of song, instrumental music and *nāṭya* (the actor's art in rendering a script). A question (however,) could arise as to which of these three is really the main aesthetic goal (intended by Bharata). This has been made clear in the preceding chapter (no. 27) concerning 'siddhi' ('success'), where the nature of how a performance (should fit together) has been spoken of. There (in that chapter) its (i.e. *nāṭya*) being the main aesthetic goal (*uparañjanīya*) has been articulated; (*nāṭya*) occupies the centre of attention. What is required as aesthetic aid in order to complete a (*nāṭya*) performance (*ākāṅkṣivat*), has also been clearly spoken of there. But if this is so (one might ask,) why does the chapter on *siddhi* include a (separate) description of what makes for error, disorder or disharmony (*vaiśamyā*) in the use of song and instruments? The answer to this has already been given (in what is said above). A *nāṭya*, indeed, becomes a *nāṭya* only in association with its aesthetic aids (such as music); this is the reason why (music) is spoken of afterwards (in chapter 28 and the following chapters); this is done in order to distinguish its (function, which is a subsidiary one).' Abhinava on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 28, 7.

during a performance with an eye to dramatic intention (*arthavidhi*): time, place, season, character and the sentiment that is to be conveyed.²⁰ He lists a whole gamut of emotions, moods and situations where appropriate *dhruvās* could be sung. There seems to be hardly any shade of human feeling or nuance of a sentiment where a *dhruvā* could not be used. An appropriate *dhruvā* could be employed in situations of anxiety, zeal or longing (*outsukya*), or even in situations where a character dissimulated his real feelings (*avahittha*). *Dhruvās* could express moods of reflection (*cintā*), lamentation (*paridevita*), dejection (*dainya*) or misery (*viṣāda*). They could be sung in situations pregnant with turbulent emotions, whether of the pleasant or unpleasant sort: they could be used to express extreme joy or feeling of awe and wonder as well as violent anger, agitation (*āvega*) or perplexity (*sambhrama*). They could be sung in a mood of quiet happiness (*prasāda*) or one of remembering things past (*anusmaraṇa*) or at the first joyful meeting of lovers (*navasaṅgama*), or, indeed, in any mood of love (*śṛṅgāra*).²¹

The parallel with Hindi films is, I think, palpable. Any lover of film music will be able to name a number of song-hits expressive of the different moods listed in Bharata's prescription. The prescription, clearly, continues to hold sway.

Hindi film-makers are, however, hardly aware of their roots in Bharata. They do not expend much thought on why they use songs. They do not seek aesthetic explanations or vindications. Songs are used because they make a hit both on the screen and off it. The more thoughtful of the film directors who are busy making popular films perhaps consider songs as an anomaly, but for them, too, it is an anomaly which has yet to be made use of to please the masses

²⁰ *evamarthavidhiṃ jñātvā deśakālamṛtum tathāprakṛtiṃ bhāvāliṅgaṃ tu tayo joyyā dhruvā budhaiḥ// Nāṭyaśāstra* 32, 328.

²¹ *Nāṭyaśāstra* 32, 319-329.

Abhinava, commenting on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 29, 13, quotes a fairly long passage from a treatise attributed by him to Kaśyapa who has given a much longer list than Bharata of sentiments and situations where a *dhruvā* could be effective. Kaśyapa also names the melodic forms appropriate for *dhruvās* expressing different feelings.

(film's ultimate justification for everything). Better directors try to make use of songs with greater dramatic sensitivity. Still, I feel that they are never really happy with the idea of inserting songs in every film. The ordinary viewer has no such qualms; he thinks of the songs as natural and essential.

In ancient times songs were accepted as a part of drama not only by ordinary viewers but also by the thoughtful and the aesthetically discerning. Ancient theorists have not only prescribed the use of songs they have also tried to formulate an aesthetic rationale for this convention.

Kaśyapa, an old theorist, quoted by Abhinava, makes an elucidating remark: "The impact of the *dhruvā* song", he says "frees the viewers from their normal egotistic preoccupations (*nijāveśa*) and produces a state of consciousness devoid of the dross of self-interest upon which the dramatic ethos of the moment (*prastuto rasah*) can be readily stamped".²² Abhinava himself makes a similar observation in commenting upon the dramatic effect of the *prāsādiki dhruvā* upon the viewer. He says that the poetic impact of a lyric blended with the spell of subtle and graceful melody brings the audience round to a receptive state of mind in which a rapport with the dramatic mood is quickly established.²³

That music has great powers for creating a desired ethos or mood, is realised by all theatre producers and their counterparts, the movie-makers. We see that music is a potent tool in the hands of a skilful stage director or a modern movie-maker. He makes use of music not only within the play or the film-narrative proper, but even before the play begins. The aim is to create the right atmosphere and transport the audience away from their normal every-day concerns. We thus have music even when the film titles are being shown; indeed, music of some kind is played to us right from the moment we enter the cinema hall, even before any image is projected on

²² *dhruvāgānānnijāveśe tyakte niṣkaladhijuṣām/sāmājikānām hrdaye niṣkrāmet prastuto rasah*// See Abhinava Bhārati on Nāṭyaśāstra 29, 13.

²³ *Kāvyaगतोत्कर्षेण रāgaprasādasya jātyamśakagītivarṇālaṅkārasya saubhāgya-krtasya sāmājikaḥṛdayam tanmayibhāvāpattiyogyatāmātmano jananamiti gītisobhayaṁ vā prasādajanaḥ*. Abhinava Bhārati on Nāṭyaśāstra 32, 314.

the screen. Ancient stage directors, too, realized the importance of music in this respect. Kālidāsa has noted the effectiveness of music in winning over the attentiveness of the audience to the play being staged. In the staged prelude (*āmukha*) to his *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam*, the stage manager (*sūtradhāra*) asks his wife, the *naṭī* to entertain the audience with a song and after her song remarks: "Well sung, Lady. Your melody has so enrapt and stilled the audience that they seem like people painted on a canvas. Tell me now which play should we entertain them with."²⁴

Abhinava speaks of the same effect in more general terms. In the context of discussing the aesthetic process through which theatre creates *rasa* (relish), Abhinava talks of the ancient auditorium and the atmosphere pervading the auditorium before the play began. The auditorium, says Abhinava, is full of delightful objects, of beautiful sights, sounds, smells and lovely sophisticated women. This was enough to charm the mind of even the aesthetically untutored (*ahṛdaya*) viewers away from their usual preoccupations and prepare them for the dramatic spectacle. Music and songs were two major factors responsible for creating this 'trans-normal' atmosphere of the auditorium.²⁵

Songs employed within the play proper were *dhruvā* songs. Two of these, *prāsādiki* and *ākṣepikī*, we have said, played a great dramatic role within the plot.

The purpose of the *prāsādiki* (from *prasāda*, to clarify, make glow or brighten) was to heighten or intensify the ethos of a situation or a sentiment. Abhinava gives an illustration from a typical scene. Rāma's sorrow after the abduction of Sītā could be expressed through a *prāsādiki*, which would deepen the pathos of the moment. *Prāsādiki* could be used in any similar

²⁴ *sūtradhārah: ārye, sādhu gitam. aho rāgabaddhacitavṛttirālikhita iva sarvato raṅgaḥ. tadidāniṁ katamatprakaraṇamāśrityainamārādhyamaḥ*. *Abhijñāna Śākuntalam*, Act. 1.

²⁵ *nijasukhādivivaśtibhūtasya katham vastvantare samvidam viśramayediti tatpratyūhavyapohanāya pratipadārthanīṣṭhaiḥ sādharanyamahimnā sakala bhogyatvasahiṣṭubhiḥ śabdādiviśayamayimi (mayai) rātodyagānavicitramāṇḍapapadavidagdhagankādibhiruparañjanam samāśritam. yenāhrdayo'pi hrdayavaimalyaprāptiā sahrdayikṛyate*. Abhinava Bhārati on Nāṭyaśāstra 6, 31.

situation.²⁶ It could also be used to re-establish a mood which had become disturbed through the introduction of an adverse element.²⁷

The function of *ākṣepikī* was more complex and dramatic. Through *ākṣepikī* a prevalent mood or sentiment could be abruptly and violently altered by the '*ākṣepa*' or sudden intrusion of a contrary element. Abhinava gives two telling examples. One is from a play called *Udāttarāghava*. The play is not available but the script was based on the familiar Rāma-story and Abhinava's point can be understood without difficulty. There was a scene in the play where Rāma and Sitā were shown in a tender loving mood; suddenly an angry Rāvaṇa enters, and sings a song expressing his anger and violent design towards Rāma who had disfigured his sister and killed his kinsmen. He sings:

"Stop, wretched hermit,
where are you off to ?
you have humiliated my sister,
and given me extreme pain.
The fire of my fury
is further fanned by yet another tormenting wind:
for you have destroyed
my kinsmen, such as Khara.
I will quench this fire now
through the torrent of blood
gushing from your mutilated body
and your cleaved heart."

This song, Abhinava aptly adds, was to be sung in a fast turbulent tempo. The prevalent soft mood of the scene was thus utterly shattered by this sudden intrusion of impending violence.²⁸

²⁶ cf. *Abhinava Bhāratī* on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 32, 31.

²⁷ *yā ca rasāntaramupagatamākṣepavaśāt kṛtā prasādayati. rāga-prasādayanānīm vidyāt prāsādikīm tām tu. Nāṭyaśāstra*, 32, 314.

²⁸ *tatrākṣipyamānaraśā yā dīptatayā druiā. tathā udāttarāghave rāmasya prastuāśṛṅgārakramolaṅghanena: "are tāpasa sīhī(ri) bhava kvedānīm gamyate. svasurmama parābhavaprasava ekadattavyathā. kharaprabhṛi-bāndhavodvalanavāta-sandhukṣitāḥ. taveha vidarībhavattanusanucalacchoṇi-takṣarācchurītavakṣasah prasamametu kopānalaḥ." ityādīnā (rāvaṇavākyaena). Abhinava Bhāratī on. Nāṭyaśāstra* 32, 313.

The second example of the *ākṣepikī* is from the *Veniśamhāra* by Bhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa. Aṣvatthāmā, the son of Droṇa, is ready for battle. He hears a great uproar from the battlefield and imagines that this is the outcome of his father's war-like deeds. He is full of elation and sets out to meet his father. Suddenly from the background someone sings a plaintive song in an appropriately slow, pensive tempo: 'O where now is your father'. Aṣvatthāmā was thus being told of the death of his father. The prevailing mood is controverted totally.²⁹

These instances are interesting in themselves. But what is more interesting is that they reveal how even in matters of detail, the tradition of using song in theatre, and thence into films, has continued almost intact. Like Bharata's theatre, Hindi films too, have their *prāsādikī* and their *ākṣepikī dhruvās*. Instances of *prāsādikī*, where the ethos of the moment is intensified through song are so numerous and obvious that they need not be exemplified: lovers sing of their joys or sorrows; brothers and sisters express their mutual love through songs; mothers, daughters and sons do likewise, and so on and on. There is hardly any sentiment which cannot be accentuated through a song.

The use of *ākṣepikī*, too, is common enough. An example or two might bring the point home. In an early episode of the film *Johny Merā Nām* we are shown a scene where a man (played by Devanand) clandestinely meets a woman (played by Hemā Mālinī) for the purpose of exchanging stolen valuables. The meeting takes place at the small railway station of Nalanda, and an atmosphere of suspense and mystery pervades the whole scene. Police officers on the trail of the girl suddenly appear and advance towards her. For a moment the girl and her companion can see no way of escape; tension mounts, when with an unexpected abruptness, the man and the girl start singing a love song ('*vādā to nibhāyā*'), pretending that they are lovers on a

²⁹ *yathā vākyākāraṇanena mūlarasasyāyākṣepyaśya tu raysya māśṛṅye. sthiteti vilambitā, yathāśvatthāmno yuddhavire kramolaṅghanena: 'kuto' dyāpi te tātaḥ' itī nepathyaśra-vaṇādi tasya karuṇarasasya. Abhinava Bhāratī on. Nāṭyaśāstra* 32, 313.

rendezvous. The tense mood falls apart and is superseded by a mood of playful love.

In another recent film, *Bobby*, we again come across an *ākṣepikā* like use of song. An estrangement occurs between the young lovers, around whom the story is woven, in the second part of the film. The girl is angry with the boy who pursues her to Kashmir. She is irreconcilable and the boy suffers mental and physical torments. At last when the boy is about to give up and go away after making a final attempt at bringing her around, we see him moving away from her tent. Suddenly, the silence of the night is broken by a group of Kashmiris singing a *sūfi*-like song about the greatness of love (*dholnā main ni bolnā*). The hero stops in his steps; the girl, too, comes out of her tent and slowly, as the effect of the song seeps in, we see her mood changing from that of sultriness into tenderness.

There is also the famous scene in the film *Tere Mere Sapne*, where we see the hero going away dejected from the home of the heroine after she has rejected his proposal of marriage. Suddenly the heroine sings a song of love and acceptance to him through a window (*jaise rādhā ne mātā japi*) and slowly but surely the whole mood changes.³⁰ Film goes will, we are sure, recall many similar episodes where a song plays a decisive role in effecting a dramatic transition from one mood to another.

Another remarkable parallel shows that the link between Bharata's drama and Hindi films is even more intimate. A *dhruvā*, Bharata says, could be either *ātmasaṁstha* (sung by one self) or *para-saṁstha* (sung by another).³¹ Abhinava explains the difference through an example. Rāma's sorrow at Sitā's abduction could be expressed through a song in two ways: either Rāma could himself sing of his sorrow: this would be *ātmasaṁstha*, or Lakṣmaṇa could sing a song expressing the

³⁰ I owe a note of gratitude to friends and colleagues in the Department of History And Indian Culture, University of Rajasthan, especially to Dr. G.S.P. Misra, for suggesting these examples.

³¹ *dvidvidham tu smṛtaṁ sthānaṁ parasāṁsthaṁ saṁsthaṁ. Nāṭyaśāstra* 32, 317.

pathos of the situation: this was *para-saṁstha*. The aim in either case was to express Rāma's feeling.³²

We come across the *ātma-saṁstha* and *para-saṁstha* in Hindi films also. The *ātma-saṁstha* is common enough. The instance quoted above from *Bobby* provides an example of *para-saṁstha*. The *para-saṁstha* sometimes assumes strange modern disguises. For example a heroine may not sing of her sorrow herself, but might switch on the radio where a song will express her feelings. Songs sung by wandering *sādhus*, or by boatmen often serve a similar purpose. The song *sun mere bandhu re* in *Sujātā*, sung by a boatman, for instance, is employed to express the unexpressed longings of the heroine.

Music in film-songs has certain marked characteristics. One basic principle of composition followed is that the musical content should remain subservient to the dramatic purpose. This entails some limitations upon music making. The poetic content of a film song (except in some rare cases) is its primary content. The aim of the song's musical content is to play up or highlight the poetic content and give it additional effectivity. The musical content cannot break loose of the poem as it does in classical music where the musical form dominates. Therefore in film music great care is taken to keep the words of a song undistorted in order that the meaning is not lost in the intricacies of pure music as often happens in classical forms. This is quite natural, for music here is a tool serving dramatic ends.

Bharata has articulated this point in terms of a rule: 'melodic

³² *yathā rāmasya sitādīprayuktavipralambhe tadāśrayameva kadācit pātrāntarāśra-yaṇena. yathā tasyaiva vipralambhe lakṣamanāśraye nitarāmaḥurīyatā, tadāha. paras-āṁsthātmasaṁsthaṁ. parasthagataṁ lakṣamaṇasya. ātmāśrayaṁ rāmasya. nanu vā parasāśrau karuṇa eva bhavati. na hi rāme vipralambhe lakṣamaṇasya vipralambhaḥ. kevalaṁ tadduḥkha-duḥkhitasyāśra karuṇa... etaduktaṁ bhavati. lakṣamaṇasya karuṇe vinayocite maśṛṇa manthare gāne prayuktepi tu rāma vipralambha eva prayojakā bhavati. Abhinava Bhārati on Nāṭyaśāstra 32, 317. The point Abhinava is making is that although the *rasa* evoked by Lakṣmaṇa's singing is *karuṇa* and not *viraha śṛṅgāra*, the *karuṇa* in such an instance is occasioned by *viraha* and helps to heighten it.*

figures which tend to put too great a distance between sung syllables should be avoided in a *dhruvā*, or else the meaning of the song will be lost to the audience and the very purpose of a *dhruvā* will be defeated".³³ This rule holds good in films too.

We notice, that music in films is quite unrestricted by many of the rules of melodic formation that the high-art forms of classical music have come to acquire. Film songs aim to create a programmatic, theatric effect rather than a sustained musical one. Composers feel free to use and mould any form into any shape provided they can produce the desired effect and elicit audience response.

Ancient composers, too, were similarly given a relatively free-hand in composing music for *dhruvā* songs: the true measure of success for a *dhruvā* was its dramatic effectiveness (though *dhruvās* had come to acquire certain formal rules or guiding patterns which Bharata and other theorists have noted). Abhinava has, in a long passage, given a list of formal rules that were binding in the ancient high-art form of classical liturgic music called *gāndharva*; these were either flaunted or loosely handled in the *dhruvā*.³⁴

Dance too was an essential element in Bharata's theatre. Much of the acting itself was stylized, hence dance-like. Dance-proper also had its recognised dramatic use. A significant section of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* is, therefore, devoted to dance-techniques.

A major use of dance was in the *kaiśiki* *vr̥tti*. The notion of *vr̥tti* is an important notion in Bharata's concept of the theatre. The term is often roughly translated as 'a mode of acting'. But it denoted more, for it signified the over-all dramatic tenor of a particular situation, of which the mode of acting was just one

³³ *saptarūpagatā jñeyā alaṅkāṛā budhaistvime/ naite sarve dhruvāsvisṭāḥ śruti (śrotṛ) varṇaprakarṣaṇāt. na hi varṇaprakarṣastu dhruvāṅām siddhirīṣyāte... yasmādarthānu-rūpā hi dhruvā kāryārthadarśibhiḥ. Nāṭyaśāstra 29, 26-27 and 29. Abhinava comments: 'nanu vā(cā) rihasyaiva hi tatra prādhānyam. varṇe vā (cā)laṅkārabalena prakalpyamānārthapratitivigrahaite' pyatītesvaksareśvanusandhānamasambhāvi.*

³⁴ Abhinava Bhārati on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 33, 1.

constituent, though a major one. Bharata speaks of four *vr̥ttis*. *Kaiśiki* was one of these. It has been described as a mode of presentation where actors and actresses appear on the stage in pleasing and colourful dresses, women predominate, and the atmosphere is full of song and dance: the whole mood and action is such as to arouse feelings of love and eros.³⁵ *Kaiśiki* was, in general, the name given to any dramatic action that had grace, colour or softness.³⁶ The aim was to create an atmosphere of flirtation and light-hearted gaiety. Conversation was dominated by playful banter or *narma*; and dance with music helped to set the right dramatic tone. *Kaiśiki* often served as the setting in which love was born and grew. The *Kaiśiki* mode was thus important in any play with love as a major theme.³⁷

The opening scene of Harṣa's *Ratnāvali* provides a good example of *kaiśiki*. King Udayana, the hero, is shown in a care-free mood; it is spring and the whole town rejoices in the festivities of the season. People dance and sing on the streets. The king watches from atop his palace with his friend, the jester (*vidūṣaka*). Two young maid-servants approach him, dancing a mirthful dance and singing a song of spring and love. Playfully, the jester, too, joins them in the dance. His comical artlessness adds broad humour to the spirit of mirth. The stage is set for the unfolding of the story of love between Udayana and Ratnāvali.

Damodara Gupta (8th century AD) in his *Kuṭṭanimatam* describes the above scene from *Ratnāvali* as it was actually rendered in performance. The scene opens with Udayana

³⁵ *yā ślakṣṇanaiṣaṅgaviśeṣacitrā strisamyutā yā bahurṅgitā/ kāmapahogapra-bhavopacārā tān kaiśikim vr̥ttimudāharanti. Nāṭyaśāstra 20, 53. For a more detailed discussion of the concept of *vr̥tti* see, 'Bharata And The Fine Art of Mixing Structures', in this collection.*

³⁶ Cf.: *raudrādīrasābhivyaktāvapi kartavyam yo'bhinaya upādiyate so'pyanuprā-savalanāvartanādyātmakasundaravaicitryasyāśraṇayā, duḥśliṣṭo 'śliṣṭa eva vā na rasābhivyaktiheturbhavatīti sarvatraiva kaiśiki prāṇāḥ. Abhinava Bhārati on Nāṭya-śāstra 1, 44.*

³⁷ Commenting on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 1, 44 where *kaiśiki* is described as: *"nr̥tāṅgahārasampannā rasabhāvakriyātmikā*; Abhinava makes the following general remarks about this *vr̥tti*: *"sr̥ṅgārarasasya tu nāmagrahaṇamapi na tayā vinā śakyam."*

watching the townsfolk, men and women, young and old, all dancing the joyous, erotic dances of spring and singing songs to match the bacchic mood. They dance uninhibitedly to the accompaniment of music and revel in an exchange of coarse, bawdy remarks.³⁸ They sing festive songs, their breath short with the exertion of the dance.³⁹ An old man breaks into a solo dance to the accompaniment of loud music, clapping his hands to the rhythm.⁴⁰ A young woman, intoxicated with wine, sings: 'May it ever be spring, when one can freely embrace the man one desires', and she proceeds to do so.⁴¹

These details of bacchic revelry that were shown on stage are missing from the script of the play. Harṣa only hints at them without giving any detailed stage-directions for their performance. From his script one could even get the impression that the revelry was not to be actually performed but only suggested poetically. But actual productions evidently deployed stage actions as described by Dāmodara. It was through such action, exuding an atmosphere of mirth, song, dance and eros, that the *kaiśiki* mode was realized.

The scene as drawn by Dāmodara Gupta, reminds us of scenes similar in intent (though perhaps not quite as broad in tone) which are common enough on the Hindi screen. One can think of a number of films where the action opens with a picnic scene: where the mood is playful, mirth and music rule the day and, inevitably, there is song and dance. The stage is set for love; and, indeed, the picnic scene is often the scene where boy meets girl and the two become enamoured of each other. Besides a picnic-setting for song and dance and love, we have other similar settings in village-fairs or rustic dances or even (as in the

³⁸ *nṛtyati pauraṅgaughe provāca vayasya paśya paśyeti/ tulya-śiśutaruṇavṛddhaṃ samagupṭāguptayuvatipraceṣṭam/agaṇitavācyāvācyam kṛidanti janāḥ pravṛddhaharṣāḥ. Kuṭṭanimitam, 882-883.*

³⁹ *gātrāyāsasamutthibahuniḥśvāsaprakirṇapadagitam. ibid. 889.*

⁴⁰ *tūryaravavyāmiśritakaratalatāloddhūtam pranṛtyantam/muhurupi jātaskhalanam sandarśitadardhyasaṣṭhave sthāviram. ibid., 890.*

⁴¹ *astu vasantaḥ satatam svādhinābhiṣṭajanasamāśleṣaḥ iti/gāyanti rabhasādāliṅgati madavaśāttaruṇi ibid. 891.*

Ratnāvali) the festivities of spring itself. These certainly provide examples of the *kaiśiki* as presented on the Hindi screen. Their occurrence is not due to any conscious adaptation of old forms, but as in the case of songs, these modern versions of ancient forms are informed and moulded by a continuing tradition which works at a level beyond conscious design.

Besides serving to create a prelude for love, *kaiśiki* was also employed to express love itself. Sequences in films where lovers express their love, singing and dancing with much mirth and gusto should, I think, be also counted among examples of *kaiśiki*. Bharata indeed, seems to prescribe such expressions of love in enjoining that 'joyful dance should be used to express love between man and woman'.⁴²

Indeed, in Hindi films, lovers dance only when expressing a joyous, triumphant love. Separated lovers or lovers who have fallen apart do not dance, though they may sing. Curiously enough, Bharata has a dictum: 'dance should not be employed in situations showing a girl who has been jilted by her lover or is away from him or has quarrelled with him'.⁴³

In movies dance is also presented as a kind of show within the show. Often the heroine is an accomplished dancer, and she is made to appear in a stage show. The hero is among the viewers and love dawns. Such scenes also have their prototypes in ancient plays. The most well-known instance is Mālavikā's dance before Agnimitra in the second Act of Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitram*.

⁴² *yattu samdrśyate kiñciddāptyarmadanāśrayam/nṛttam tatra prayoktavayam praharṣārthagumodbhavam. Nāṭyaśāstra 4, 306.*

⁴³ *khaṇḍitā vipralabdā vā kalahāntaritāpi vā/ yasminnaṅge tu yuvatirna nṛttam tatra yojayet. Nāṭyaśāstra 4, 308.*

It must be noted, however, that the purport of this verse- and of the one quoted in the last footnote - within the context of dramatic action is not clear. Only *nṛtta*, pure dance, is forbidden unless the situation is one of joy. This does not rule out *nṛtya* or dance with *abhinaya* which seeks to express poetic meanings though dance-gestures. Dance in an ancient play was certainly not always expressive of a joyous mood. The fourth act of *Vikramorvāṣīyam* is an obvious instance. A similar use of dance must have been made in other plays, too.

Such a show within a show was technically known as *nāṭyāyita*. Abhinava Gupta explains *nāṭyāyita* as an occasion in the play where some of the protagonists themselves become audience to some action or spectacle within the play itself, The analogy Abhinava gives is that of a dream within a dream.⁴⁴

Nāṭyāyita, thus defined, is a broad category. Mālavikā's dance in the *Mālavikāgnimitram* or the staged dances shown in Hindi films clearly form one class of *nāṭyāyita*. The scene in *Ratnāvali*, described above, with Udayana watching the festivities of the townsfolk, also falls within the definition of *nāṭyāyita*.

In Hindi films dance performances also assume other forms of *nāṭyāyita*. Because dances presented as shows in films are not always stage dances, they are presented in other ways, too. We have street dances or group dances or festive dances or just *impromptu* dances, with one or more of the main protagonists dancing, others watching, or in an inversion of this theme, with one or more of the main characters dancing to an audience of casual observers, not otherwise figuring in the story. These are all dances that may be said to fall within the category of the *nāṭyāyita*.

Dances presented in this manner are sometimes nothing more than spectacles, their connection with the narrative being extremely thin. Often, however, they are integral to the action. Cabaret shows, for instance, are almost a must in Hindi films. They are brought in whether they fit in or not. But at times they serve a dramatic function. They help lure the 'good' hero into a life of crime and dissipation. Dance as seduction, which such a dance may be called, is sometimes woven even more firmly into

⁴⁴ *tasmādīthametad vyākhyātvayam: iha yadā svapnopyekaghano dṛśyate tanmadhyata eva ca kiṃ dṛśyamānam parasya svapna eva jāgradrūpatāmāpādīte svapno'yaṃ mayā dṛṣṭa iti varṇayate, tadā jāgradapekṣayā svapnavyavahārāḥ, na tatra pāramārthika ityaupacārikam tadapekṣam tasya svapnatvamiti tasya svapnāyitavyavaharo dṛṣṭaḥ. evamihāpi nāṭya ekaghanasvabhāve hi sthite tatraivāsatyānāṭyānupraveśānnāṭyapātreṣu sāmājīkībhūteṣu tadapekṣayā yadanyaṃ nāṭyaṃ tasya tadapekṣayā nāṭyarūpaṃ pāramārthikamiti nāṭyāyitamucyate. tacca dvidham nāṭyarūpakaniṣṭhameva vā kāryāntaraniṣṭham vā. Abhinava Bhārati on Nāṭyaśāstra, 22, 48.*

the fabric of the plot. The scene in *Victoria No. 203* where the heroine (acted by Saira Bano), playing for time, dances an erotically suggestive dance, wearing nothing more than a towel — to the one-man audience of the villain (played by Ranjit), is one instance of such a use of the dance. Here the dance is clearly an integral part of the action, for without it the heroine would not have been saved from the prurient intentions of the villain and the story could not have taken the turn it did. A similar scene is the scene in *Johnny Merā Nām* where the well-meaning lady-friend (Padmā Khannā) of the hero (Devanand), dances a seductive dance in the villain's (Premnath's) hideout in order to save the hero. In the film *Loafer* there is a scene where the heroine (Mumtaz), who has been forced to act as a ploy for a gang of criminals, walks coolly into the hero's (Dharmendra's) room, and without wasting a single word, begins a dance soliciting his love. She succeeds, the hero falls in love with her, and this is a crucial event in the narrative. Instances of this sort can be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

It is difficult to say whether such a use of the dance was made in ancient theatre, too. Surviving scripts do not provide examples. Yet it is not difficult to see that the use of *nāṭyāyita* as integral to the plot was not totally absent. Consider Mālavikā's dance in the *Mālavikāgnimitram*. It was the dance of a girl offering herself in love to her lover (the accompanying song has the phrase 'I pine for you my lord'). Agnimitra's friend, the *vidūṣaka*, rightly, interprets the dance as Mālavikā's offer of love to the king.⁴⁵

We see thus that Hindi films use song and dance in a manner analogous to ancient theatric practice. We usually do not think of *Johnny Merā Nām* and *Mālavikāgnimitram* as being connected in any way. But once we begin to see the connections, we can have a better understanding of much that strikes us as incongruous in Hindi films.

⁴⁵ 'bho vayasya catuṣpadavastukam dvārikṛtya apyupasthāpita ātmā tatrabhavatyā' *Mālavikāgnimitram*, Act II.

CHAPTER – TEN

Bharata and the Hindi Film Revisited

I had argued in an earlier paper¹ that the so-called popular formula-oriented or *masāla* Hindi film uses — though perhaps without conscious purport — theatric devices, which may be understood as constituting a kind of culturally-rooted narrative grammar, articulated much more self-consciously in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*. My concern in that paper was to demonstrate, through examples from various films, that the use of song and dance as an integral element in a film — both in unfolding its action as well as its sentiment or ethos (*rasa*) — was part of an ancient practice, the roots of which could, in fact, be traced back to Bharata's famous treatise on theatre.

The present paper seeks to re-examine the earlier paper: to extend its scope, criticise it, question it, offer comments on it, in short to reformulate it in the light of what I have thought on the subject since I wrote it. But before I do that, let me sum it up in brief. The paper begins by asking a question which was born of an uneasy, unsettling feeling I have had — and I presume other have had it too — watching certain kinds of scenes in a typical Hindi film, where the mode of narration undergoes a strange and sudden change, and as we move through an action which is realistic enough, flowing naturally in surroundings presented in a natural, lifelike mode, when suddenly as through the force of a magic mantra, the whole thing is transported to another plane. The characters who had been behaving naturally suddenly swing into a song and dance, the language of speech changes from prose to poetry, the whole action seems to move out of reality

¹ "Bharata Muni and Hindi Films" published in *Jijñāsā: A Journal of the History of Ideas and Culture*, the University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, vol. 2, No. 2, April 1975, pp. 84-106. The essay has been printed here just before the present one.

into a kind of trance-like, dream-world. And there it remains suspended till the song and dance sequence ends, and we switch back again to a natural mode.

The transformation from the natural to the dream-like song and dance mode, was what appeared as strange and unsettling to me. But most Indian viewers take it in their stride. To them there is nothing strange about such a switch in the narrative mode from the natural to the dream-like. In fact, such switches are quite expected, and people would readily point out when they are appropriate. Their nonoccurrence when they should have been there, is what might strike the ordinary viewer as strange. How does this happen, and why do Indian viewers accept such switches in the very flow of the story as quite in order? This was the question I had asked myself. The answer, I thought, lay in the ancient roots of the Indian theatrical tradition, roots which still sustain the popular Indian theatre, of which the film is in its central intent only a modified form. This led me to Bharata and his *Nāṭyaśāstra*.

Drama, Bharata says, imitates the world, But this imitation, he adds, is a *nāṭyadharmī* imitation; that is to say, it is essentially theatrical in nature. It transforms as it imitates. Because it must. It is just not possible to imitate the world on the stage without filtering it, mediating it, hence modifying it, through the use of certain conventions and devices which belong not to the world but to theatre as a medium of representing the world. Creating this 'imitation' world, — or perhaps a more appropriate description would be a 'virtual' world — moreover, is not an arbitrary activity. It must be communicated to a large audience, making them feel that what is being represented is indeed an evocative spectacle drawn from the world. This is patently not possible unless the devices which theatre uses to project the world on the stage are accepted as 'natural', that is, 'natural' to the world of theatre.

Translating reality on to the stage presents many problems. First, there is the problem of framing: the vast, literally limitless world has to be imitated on a stage, infinitesimally small by

comparison. Different theatrical traditions adopt somewhat different conventions to overcome this problem. Bharata's stage used the device of *kakṣyā-vibhāga* for the purpose. The stage was divided into different sections or segments representing different parts of the world, land, water, forest, city and the like. Another device, that of the *janāntika* was necessary because the theatre not only imitates the world but seeks to communicate this 'imitation' to others. *Janāntika* was the 'aside', where two persons converse without being heard by others present on the stage, but, of course, by every one in the audience. This a device found not only in the Indian but also the western theatrical tradition. Other devices included the use of props', costumes, make-up and the like which Bharata's theatre — indeed most theatre — uses for the purpose of recreating the world on the stage.

Such devices, in Bharata's conceptual scheme, were included under what he called the *nāṭyadharmī*, the mode of presentation peculiar to theatre as theatre. Such devices are an essential part of what can be meaningfully called the formal grammar of theatre, which like the grammar of a language that we converse in, must become second nature to us, in order that we may use it with spontaneous ease. *Nāṭyadharmī* devices must, in other words, become accepted *samayas*, or in other words conventions internalised by author, producer and audience alike, if they are to work at all.

The *nāṭyadharmī* devices, noted above, were geared towards the imitation of the outer world. It is more difficult, and also more important for theatre to represent the inner world of feeling and thought. For this is what theatre is really about. Bharata includes devices and conventions under the *nāṭyadharmī* which aim at representing the inner world of feeling and thought on the stage. The *nāṭyadharmī* for this purpose takes recourse to music, dance and what Bharata has called the 'heightened' language of poetry. Most theatrical traditions use such *nāṭyadharmīs*. But the mode of employ is not always the same. The theatre of the west and following it the film — uses music as a *nāṭyadharmī*;

but it uses it in the background, except for such, special productions as the 'opera' and the 'musical'. In traditional Indian theatre — and following it in the Hindi film — music is used not only in the background, but also in the foreground, as song, and this is done not in a special genre but in all films whatever its theme: mythological, fantastic or realistic.

The use of song and dance as a part of the very fabric of theatric representation has been accepted as an internalised *samaya* — convention — in the Indian tradition. It has even been canonised by Bharata who was revered as a more than a human authority. It has thus become part of the very grammar of theatric form for centuries, through Bharata to modern times, being employed in both classical and folk forms. It is internalised as part of the *natural* language of theatre, and hence of the Hindi film. Its use, therefore, causes no unease, except to those of us who have become alienated from the tradition, and to whom the traditional theatric language seems 'unrealistic'. We are ready to accept music in the background — since the west accepts this, though this is hardly realism — but music as song in the foreground, as a part of the action itself, seems to us unnatural and upsetting.

This was the thrust of my argument in the paper which I propose to revisit here. In order to demonstrate how rooted in Bharata the use of song and dance is as a *nāṭyadharmī*, I had put forward examples from the film that matched Bharata's precepts not only in principle but also in the details of theatric usage. The examples were meant to illustrate two ways in which songs and dances are, I think, integral to the narratives presented in Hindi films : (1) as means for expressing emotions and (2) as an essential part of the action itself, forming a crucial element in its very narrative movement.

Examples illustrating the use of song and dance for illustrating emotions or sentiments are so common and pervasive in the Hindi films that it should not be necessary to cite examples. There are hardly any emotions for which one cannot find a number of songs, or song and dance sequences, though

some emotions, as is only to be expected, engage greater attention than others. One might even be able to work out an interesting history of the changing taste in emotions and sentiments over the last few decades as reflected in the films — a reliable mirror for the popular psyche — if one were to take the trouble.

Examples of songs and dances as integral to the action itself do perhaps need to be illustrated. I had given some illustrations in my earlier article. But I would like to give here a few new ones to show that the practice is deeply ingrained, and by no means given up in more recent films. I do not think that I need to give more than two or three examples, for these should be indicators enough and suggest others to the reader, who might be able to think of even more telling ones. My first example is from *Namak Halāl*, quite a box office hit in the recent years.

A cabaret dancer (Parveen Babi) is hired to kill a rich hotel owner (Shashi Kapoor). But being a Hindi film heroine and so essentially good by nature, she undergoes a change of heart, helped in the change by the attraction she feels for the hero, Shashi Kapoor. Her change of heart is obviously important for the story, and is projected through a song which she sings to the accompaniment of a dance she performs in Shashi's hotel. "The hunter has fallen in love with the prey, a target of her own arrow", she sings² and the viewer can now be assured, that despite all appearance to the contrary, no harm can come to Shashi from her. Later in the story, we have another song and dance by her, even more intimately woven into the action. After Parveen's feelings for Shashi - and his for her - have been more overtly established in the story, she invites him to a party on her yacht where she is celebrating her birthday. She sings and dances for his benefit when he arrives, but the performance is being used by the villain as a cover for a plot to kill him, a plot in which she is forced to become a party. Her purported object is to

² *shikārī khud yahām shikār ho gayā/calāyā tīr jo mujhī pe cal gayā/saiyyād ko bulbul se pyār ho gayā.*

lure him to a spot where a latch will open by the weight of his body and swallow him into the sea where a killer, impressively dressed up in a scuba diver's costume, awaits him. The plot goes awry because of the timely intervention of Amitabh Bachchan, the other hero in the film, but the moot point is that the song and dance are a *part* of the plot.

Let me give you yet another example, this time from a film named *Pyāri Behnā*. There is a scene in the film, a typical enough scene, where the hero (Mithun Chakravarti) and the heroine (Padmini Kolhapure) — a poor but good looking, and rather earthy, girl whom Mithun's sister, dearer to him than his life (the *pyāri behnā*), had invited to live with them — express their love for each other for the first time. The scene is set in a charmingly green, inviting landscape, traditionally considered the best suited for such activity, as part of the *uddipana vibhāva*, a condition for the arousal of the mood of love, *śṛṅgāra rasa*. Mithun, an electrician with the Railways, is sitting idle in a trolley, when Padmini comes and joins him. They had obviously been in love for some time, but it is now that they express it, singing and dancing and frolicking in the love-arousing landscape, leaving the trolley unattended. Suddenly, there is an emergency somewhere along the railway track. Mithun is needed immediately. A bell begins to ring insistently in the trolley. But Mithun is busy making a louder noise nearby, singing, the now famous song, 'tum na batāo' with his beloved. He cannot hear the bell. His failure to do so is a turning point in the story, resulting in all kinds of disasters and complications.

These examples should be enough, but here is another, this time from a farce entitled *Biwī O Biwī*. The story is a comedy of errors with two look-alikes, both played by Sanjiv Kumar. One of the two Sanjivs is a retired army officer, a widowed middle-aged man with an only daughter. He is played as an exaggeratedly comical disciplinarian, a civilian-hating officer, who is yet afraid of his mother like an over-grown child. The other Sanjiv is a rogue, a cheat living by his wits. The hero, a young civilian (Randhir Kapoor), falls in love with colonel

Sanjiv's daughter, and she, as is to be expected, with him. The marriage is fiercely opposed by her father, who will have nothing to do with a civilian, but it has the blessings of the girl's domineering grandmother. Meanwhile, Sanjiv, the cheat, an expert in impersonation, comes to know about the colonel, who is a rich man, and being a look-alike, should be easy to impersonate. He enters the colonel's house dressed as the colonel, and asks for the keys of the safe from the colonel's mother, and then proceeds to rob his look-alike, making away with a big loot. A curious and startled Randhir Kapoor spies Sanjiv during the act. It strikes him as not being quite in character, and secretly follows the false colonel to the park where the cheat has a tryst with his 'Molly'. The false colonel proceeds to sing and dance with her with great gusto, happy over his success. This song and dance also acts as the trigger for a series of the kind of confusions we associate with a comedy of errors that the film is. It forms an important link in the narrative. For the now completely baffled, astounded and enraged Randhir Kapoor, not knowing that the cheat is not the colonel himself, takes the colonel to be a double-dealer with a concealed personality quite at odds with the one he assumes in public. Randhir denounces the colonel to his mother, initiating a series of humorous confusions.

These examples, from different kinds of films, will, I hope, suffice to illustrate that song and dance play an important role in the action itself. I will, however, also like to add here quite another use of song and dance strongly reminiscent of Bharata's usage. I had not spoken of it in my earlier paper, since I had not been able to see the parallel then. But recently, on watching an old movie, *Boy Friend* (made perhaps in the fifties with Shammi Kapoor and Madhubala in the lead), and half a dozen new ones, I could not miss it.

Every important character on Bharata's stage was introduced with a song called the *prāveśikī dhruvā*, an 'entrance song'. The song served the purpose of letting the audience know the kind of person who is being introduced into the story. The character

came on the stage accompanied by appropriate words set to suitable music, as he moved and danced around the stage with befitting gestures and gait, before entering into the story and the action. In Hindi films not every important character is introduced to us with such a song. But the hero very often is. I will give a few examples. Let me begin with the old movie *Boy Friend*. The story opens with Shammi Kapoor, the personable hero, the good man at heart, imprisoned for petty theft, coming out of jail. And then with a song we get to know him, his temperament, his desires, as he sings and prances and dances atop a moving train, travelling to Bombay. The song he sings reveals his heart for us. He is clearly not a thief. Circumstances have made him wayward, but if he can find the right girl who will love him and cherish him, he will return to the 'world', the social world of upright people, a good and worthy citizen (*mujhe apnā yār banā le, main ho jāūn sansār kā*). The song, and especially the dance, also introduce to us his likeable, but impetuous, non-chalant, devil-may-care character. Immediately after the song, we find the stage set for the hero to meet the woman (Madhubala) who will turn him to the path of virtue. After a series of misadventures, this, as expected, is exactly what happens.

This is neither an isolated nor a dated example. Such *prāveśikī dhruvās* still continue to be an important element in many Hindi films. Consider *Namak Halāl* of which we had spoken earlier, too. Amitabh Bacchan is the real leading character. He grows up in the village with his grandfather, becoming as a young man, a stupid, country bumpkin. His disappointed grandfather sends him off to Bombay so that experience might teach him a thing or two about life, and also to stand on his own two feet (as the old man puts it). In Bombay, a friend takes him to a very urbane and posh hotel, hoping to get him a job there. It is with this incongruous event that the action really begins. We see Amitabh now in his true colours. We get to know him as he really is, and as he is going to be throughout the movie. In the very 'modern' and rich surroundings of the hotel, he sings the immensely popular song, *pag ghunghrū bāndh mirā*

nāci thī, and good-naturedly dances to it with great gusto like a dizzy *bhānda*. We get to know his clownish character, his commitment to an 'old-world' sense of moral values and his yearning for love and life. This prepares us for what to expect of him in the action to follow. We find Smita Patil eying him with fond indulgence, he dances, as and moves into one odd antic after another, and we know who the heroine is; expectations are aroused in us of pleasant love encounters, again, of course, through song and dance. And as the narrative moves our expectations are fulfilled.

In *Biwī O Biwī* we are introduced to the hero, Randhir Kapoor, in the very first scene as the movie opens, and he is seen dancing and singing on the steps of a temple. He is desperate in his desire to get married, and pleads to God to find him a wife, just any girl, so desperate is he (*biwī dilā do gorī ho kālī ho* and so forth). This, as it turns out, is an introduction both to him and his story. In *Sharābī*, where Amitabh is again in the lead, an altruistic young man, addicted to alcohol (to which he was introduced almost in his cradle by his own widowed, extremely pre-occupied father), we are introduced to him through a song and a drunken dance. It gives us a glimpse into his friendly, philanthropic soul and his yearning for an all-consuming true love which will rid him of his unwanted addiction to alcohol (*pyār agar mile to har nashā hai bekār*). One is reminded of Shammi Kapoor's opening song in *Boy Friend*.

The *prāvesikī* is sometimes sung by two characters if both are in the lead. In an old film, *Victoria Number 203*, Ashok Kumar and Pran play two thieves with hearts of gold, and are virtually the heroes of the film. They are also introduced with a song, which sets the theme for the plot. In a more recent film, *Īmān Dharam*, two young men, Amitabh Bachchan and Shashi Kapoor, who too are well-meaning rogues, appear for the first time singing a song, *ham jhuth bolte hain, mānate hain/ log jhuth bolte hain, mānate nahīn* (We are liars but we accept that we are liars, other people lie, but they do not accept that they lie).

I had argued in the earlier paper that the reason why the effect of the song and dance sequences jar on our sensibilities is because the Hindi film juxtaposes a stylised, theatrical, *nātyadharmī* mode with scenes which are more natural and realistic. This is, I had said, an unconvincing and odd mixture of two disparate traditions which does not quite succeed with a more sophisticated audience, and, further, the juxtaposition is made rather crudely and mechanically. The reason for this, I had argued, was that the Hindi film works consciously with western realism and unconsciously with Bharatan stylisation without the vision to fuse them into a single satisfactory whole. The camera as a medium, I had stressed is geared to realism by its very nature. It is the most efficient instrument ever invented for recording life in its panoramic setting. No other medium approaches it in this. This gives the film a greater capacity to imitate life, at least in its outer appearances than theatre ever could. In Hindi films, too, the camera works as an instrument for realism. And this makes the dream-like song and dance sequences even more unsettling.

But I now have misgivings about this view. It seems to me to be too facile. If the Hindi film really combines two radically different modes of theatre in a mechanical manner, then it should jar on most of its viewers. But a question remains. If to explain why an average Indian viewer accepts the film mode of presentation as natural, we must look into the tradition, where in the tradition do we find the kind of clashing juxtaposition that we find in the films?

What I have just said can be put in Bharata's words also. How can a Hindi film succeed if it fails to build up a *vr̥tti*? The term *vr̥tti*, in Bharata's conceptual scheme, was the term used for a total theatrical whole, a right, aesthetically satisfactory combination of the various elements that theatre as an art puts together, into a distinct whole: acting, music, dance, language and narrative be mutually complementary and compatible. *Vr̥tti* is obviously multiple in principle, and each can be achieved in many ways. But surely one way to spoil a *vr̥tti* would be to mix

two entirely disparate modes of presentations : the realistic and the stylised. And to spoil a *vr̥tti* is to spoil ones chance for *siddhi*, the success of a play with its viewers. But the Hindi film does succeed.

The truth, I think, is that the Hindi film does not aim at realism at all, except very superficially. It aims at creating a world of its own, a narrow, simplistic world painted only in certain primary colours, eschewing all mixed hues, the complexities of real life. The narrative and the action of the film moves entirely within this specially created hot-house world. It is an ideal moral world governed by elemental, wish-fulfilling laws. No character oversteps the boundaries of this confined world. What appear as switches in the mode of presentation from the realistic to the stylised are not really switches at all. They follow and fit into the motif-governed character of this world. They make theatrically appropriate sense within it. A character swinging into song and dance is not being suddenly transported into a new dream-world. He is already within one. All he is doing is adopting a more appropriate mode for properly expressing feelings and emotions. Within the world in which he moves, this, indeed, is expected of him. The audience can predict such switches in modes. It is no sudden, startling or jarring affair.

It is not right to say that the Hindi film *juxtaposes* some *nāṭyadharmī* elements which are a heritage from traditional Bharatan theatre and mixes it incongruously with elements from quite a different way of doing theatre. Indeed, the Hindi film has much more of Bharata than a peculiar use of song and dance. Its entire narrative or plot is also Bharatan in spirit. It is out and out *nāṭyadharmī* in intent and design, reflecting old Bharatan narrative ideals as much as the mode of presentation. The *itivr̥tta*, Bharata's term for a plot or narrative, was fable-like, it was invariably conceived as a success story. In Bharata's organic metaphor, the *itivr̥tta* was to grow from seed to fruition, the final fruit being moral and desirable. The goal-oriented movement of the story was, however, not to follow a straight forward path for

that would make it dull. The path was made purposely crooked. It swerves away from the goal in order to make its realisation all the more exciting and wonder-arousing. But this is merely to add spice to the fable, and not to introduce real conflict or evil in it. Right in the middle of the story, says Bharata, the seed that has taken roots and is growing should disappear from our view, there should be an attempt to put things right again, the end should seem to be in sight only to elude us, and it is only in the end that things should work out satisfactorily, and, of course wonderously.³ It was in the carving of this deliciously circuitous route, and bringing it to life that the genius of the writers and producers of plays lay. The attempt of the writers and producers of the typical Hindi film is patently similar. The world they create may be poorer and less sophisticated in many ways than that of Bharata, but it certainly reflects the same theatric spirit, not only in parts, but as a whole. Let me quote Bharata to end with : "(The first stage in the *itivr̥tta*, the plot) is *mukha* where a seed is sown and it takes roots; along with it arise a variety of (suitable) *rasas* (moods, sentiments), and meaningful situations. This is how the *mukha* is to be presented (on the stage) in a narrative. *Pratimukha* in all plays (is the second stage) where the seed sown in the *mukha* becomes manifest. But as it appears it also disappears. (In the third stage), namely, *garbha*, the seed grows. It attains its end, and yet it does not. It has to be ferreted out again. (In the fourth stage) *vimarśa*, temptation or anger or a calamity (seems) to uproot whatever had been attained upto the *garbha*. (But in the final stage) *nirvahaṇa*, the meaningful events of the *mukha*, where the seeds of the action were sown, and

³ This is my own summary of what Bharata says in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, 19, 39-43: I give the original:

yatra bijasamutpattir̥nānārasārthasambhavā / kāvyē śarirānugaiā tanmukhaṃ parikīrtitam // bijasyodghāṇanam yatra dṛṣṭanaṣṭamivakvacit / mukhanyastasya sarvatra tadvai pratimukhaṃ smṛtam // udbhedastasya bijasya prāptir̥apṛāptireva vā / punascānveṣaṇam yatra sa garbha itī samjñitam // garbhanirabhinnabijārtho vilobhanakṛto' thavā / krodhavyasanaṣṭo vāpi sa vimarśa itī smṛtaḥ // samānayanamarthānām mukhādyanām sabijinām / nānābhāvottarāṇām yadbhavennirvahaṇam tu tat//

which had given rise to different situations and moods (*bhāva*) are brought to (fruition).”

The ideal here is the creation of an emotionally satisfactory world of fulfilment; adversity due to negative sentiments or deeds was so arranged as to *add* to the ultimate sense of flowering and fruition, without detracting from it.

It is not difficult to see why the dominating *rasa* in the *nirvahana*, the finale, was *adbhuta*, wonder: *nirvahane, kartavyo nityam hi raso'adbhutaḥ* (N.S.18,43). Events leading towards a negative or tragic end were somehow to be brought around to a satisfactory consummation, through 'strange' turns or quirks in the plot, or the help of gods. This was what created the *adbhuta* of which Bharata speaks.

CHAPTER – ELEVEN

An Enquiry into the *Rāga*-Time Association in the Light of History

Every Indian, at least every north Indian, whether he is a lover of classical music or not, believes that the hoary forms he is heir to, namely the *rāgas*, have important esoteric aspects besides the musical. I would like to discuss in this essay one such aspect, viewing it in the perspective of history. I refer to what may be called the time aspect of a *rāga*. Each *rāga*, it is commonly held, in order to be truly efficacious has to be sung or played only at a particular hour of the day or night. A more informed listener will even assert that belonging to a specific part of the day or night is as essential a property of a *rāga*, as its tonal structure. He might then proceed to enumerate morning-*rāgas*, noon *rāgas*, evening *rāgas*, late-at-night *rāgas* and just-before-morning *rāgas*.

All of us, I am sure, have come across persons, obviously not very musical, not quite capable of distinguishing one *rāga* from another, who yet are deeply convinced that a *rāga* sung outside of its assigned hour creates a grating effect. Clearly, the notion that a *rāga* has inherent affinity with a certain part of the day is very deeply ingrained in our culture.

If you ask, 'how does one know which *rāga* belongs to what hour?', the answer will be unanimous: the scheme has been fixed by a tradition reaching back to time immemorial. And, it would be added, it is not a meaningless conventional scheme but a living tradition which finds renewed sanction in the musical experience of every fresh generation.

But one might then put a further question: if the matter is one of direct musical experience, then the tonal or other more palpable features that are felt to be associated with the 'morning' or 'evening' quality of a *rāga* can surely be identified and distinguished. This seems an obvious question to ask and one

would expect to find an answer to it in the older musical texts, but curiously enough, the first person to have asked it was a comparatively recent musician and scholar of music, Pandit Bhatkhande, whose works belong to the early years of our own century. He was also the first person who attempted to provide empirical tonal cognates for the 'morning', 'noon', 'evening' and similar time-related properties of *rāgas*. The generalisations he arrived at, found common acceptance and still remain without any serious rival. His might almost be termed the 'official' theory in the matter, despite doubts and reservations felt in many circles — reservations which, however, do not go beyond matters of detail.

Whatever the merits of Bhatkhande's analysis, the very fact that he considered it an important enterprise in understanding and delineating Hindustani music is of great significance. He strongly felt that the notion of assigning a specific hour to every *rāga* was an essential element of Hindustani music, a major distinguishing mark. And this feeling, plainly, was the guiding motive behind his search for those patterns in *rāgas* which marked them as 'morning' or 'evening', and the like. In a, now historic, speech made at the first All India Music Conference in Baroda in 1916, he enumerated twenty significant features which, in his view, distinguished the Hindustani system, making it, in his words, as a 'system perfectly independent of the Southern or Karnatic'.¹ He set these features out in twenty separate and individually numbered clauses, of which as many as six, that is, numbers 5-10 are concerned with the time aspect of *rāgas*.

In clause number five he remarks:

"Stated times of the night and day are assigned to particular *rāgas*, according to a design which might suggest a psycho-physiological basis".

The next five clauses set-out certain specific features which 'enable a singer or listener to approximately determine the time

¹ The speech has been reproduced as 'A Short Historical Survey of the Music of Upper India', Bombay, 1934. See pages 41-42.

of the *rāga*'. He draws our attention to the crucial importance in this matter of the *tivra ma*, the combinations *komala re-dha, ga-ni* and so forth — features which now form part of general musical knowledge and standard musical theory.

Pandit Bhatkhande, as he himself stresses, spoke of the notion of *rāgas* and their assigned hours with a specific purpose in mind: namely, to distinguish the Hindustani system from the Karnatic system of music. Thus in his days it was only the north Indian singers and listeners who felt that particular *rāgas* belong to particular hours of the night or day. South Indians, in contrast, did not share a similar feeling about their *rāgas*. Yet, though the southerner's music might be recognisably different from that of the northerner, there is an equally recognisable affinity and kinship between the two approaches to the art especially in their delineation of *rāgas*. *Rāga*-patterns, both in the south and the north, are based on formal principles that stem from an identical source and follow parallel streams of inspiration and development, interacting with each other to a no mean degree. Many *rāgas* of north India have such close counterparts in the South that even non-specialist listeners can recognise them as almost identical forms. This obvious feeling of consanguinity is, indeed, the inspiration behind a popular Vividha Bhārati programme where north Indian *rāgas* are presented along with their south Indian siblings to reveal close kinship. But if many *rāga* patterns in the south and north are so conspicuously similar then they are bound to have formal features which are also essentially alike: features such as the dominant or exclusive presence of the *tivra ma*, or the combination *komala re-dha, ga-ni* and the like, for these are tonal features as characteristic of Karnatic *rāgas* as of their Hindustani analogues. Yet Karnatic music knows of no 'morning', 'evening' or 'noon' *rāgas*.

The fact that there is in north India a definite design or scheme within which different *rāgas* have been assigned to different hours of the day suggests, according to Pandit Bhatkhande, a psycho-physiological basis for making such an assignment. He never, so far as I know, spelled out what he

wished to indicate by speaking of such a basis. But if this basis is in any sense psychological or physiological then it must certainly be also a universal phenomenon common to both north Indians and south Indians, in fact, all mankind. Any sensitive listener, in other words, should be able to feel the 'morning' or 'evening' quality of a *rāga*. But no one except a north Indian, or a person duly initiated into the esoteric lore and conventions of Hindustani music, really responds to this quality in *rāgas*.

It is thus evidently a response which has to be learned. It is the product of a specific culture. If it seems natural and spontaneous to the Hindustani musician and listener, the reason lies in the fact that it has been so deeply ingrained through centuries of persuasive suggestion and habitual observance as to have become a reflex, almost a second nature. But the truth that it is a trained and not a natural response often shines forth in the untutored reaction of listeners from alien musical cultures, who though moved by a *rāga*, fail to detect its affinity with a particular time of the day or night. The perception of this affinity has to be taught to them, and, of course, many of them prove very dutiful students. But being a learned response it can also be unlearned. In truth, as a purely musical experience gains roots, and one begins to know and love a *rāga* for itself, one is quite able to detach it from such external associations as its relation with a particular hour of the day. This is especially true of practising musicians, who of all people are closest to the *rāgas*. Fox Strangways, writing almost contemporaneously with Bhatkhande — *The Music of Hindustan* by him was published in 1914 — speaks of 'advanced' musicians who found no meaning in ascribing hours of the day or seasons of the years to *rāgas*.² *Rāgas*, traditionally, belong not only to certain times of the day but also to particular seasons. The traditions behind the two ascriptions, seasonal and hourly, are equally old. The seasonal

² A.H. Fox Strangways, *The Music of Hindustan*, p. 153. Interestingly, Fox Strangways had his own peculiar theory regarding structural properties that mark a *rāga* as 'morning' or 'evening'. He believed that morning *rāgas* had *amśas* ranging about G and the evening, about E. (Ibid).

ascription, indeed, as we shall see, is perhaps the more ancient one. The seasonal aspect of *rāgas* is no longer taken seriously even in the north except in the case of a few rain or spring *rāgas*, such as the various *malhāras*, *basanta* and *bahāra*, and these, too, are no longer kept tied down to their ascribed seasons, they are much too beloved for that. Yet, we still believe in keeping them confined to the boundaries of the hours within which they have been restricted by convention. There is plainly an inconsistency here: for if a *rāga* is just as sweet out of its assigned season, why should it not be equally sweet out of its ascribed hour? The psycho-physiological basis, if any, is certainly the same in both cases. *Bhairavī* was allowed to break its bounds restricting it to the early morning, without any adverse effect being felt in its ethos. Who knows other *rāgas* may follow suit.

Musicians, in any case, cannot strictly observe the time rule, at least on the A.I.R., where they often sing 'morning', 'noon', 'evening', *rāgas* together in a single sitting. There are even signs of unrest concerning this limitation among concert goers. People have begun to miss morning *rāgas* in concerts, for most concerts are evening affairs. The south Indians too, once connected the *rāgas* to specific hours, as we know from the testimony of Rāmāmātya, who wrote his *Svaramelakalānidhi* in the 16th century, and is one of the oldest and most honoured authorities in the south.³ They have given up the notion without any sense of loss.

It would be instructive to examine the history of the *rāga*-time tradition in the north, the weight of whose authority guides us in associating different *rāgas* with different hours of the day.

Most of us have a quite dim and shadowy notion of the antiquity and history of this tradition. If pressed we might say it is as old as the *rāgas* themselves which are very very old. Bhatkhande who was otherwise a very historically alert scholar, calls it a centuries old notion, without being interested in tracing its history in detail. He was of the opinion that though there have been changes in the time of the day assigned to different *rāgas*,

³ *Svaramelakalānidhi*, See 'rāga prakaraṇa.'

yet the concept that particular *rāga* belongs to particular hours has remained unchanged over the centuries. It was therefore to be honoured.⁴

Looking up the old texts we find that the *rāga*-time theory is certainly not as old as the *rāgas* themselves. The oldest *rāgas* that we know of are older than Bharata (2nd century BC to 2nd century AD), who has left behind instructions concerning the use of the *grāma-rāgas* in dramas. He makes no connection between them and the hours of the day. The first major available text written mainly about *rāgas* is the *Bṛihaddeśi* of Mataṅga. It belongs to the Gupta period or somewhat after, and is usually placed in the 7th or 8th century AD. The *rāgas* in Mataṅga's days, comprised a rich body of forms including *bhāṣā*, *vibhāṣā*, *antarabhāṣā*, besides *grāma-rāgas* and *rāgas* proper. This was already an old, well-entrenched corpus of music. Mataṅga speaks of various *gītis* or styles of *rāga* singing and of regional *rāgas* — *rāgas* born in or popular in specific regions⁵ — but there are no traces in him of a time theory, as we know it today.

Abhinava Gupta writing towards the end of tenth and beginning of the eleventh century quotes an earlier authority called Kaśyapa, an ancient theorist whose date is unknown.

⁴ B.N. Bhatkhande, *Ādhunika Hindustāni Rāga-paddhati evaṁ uske Adhyayana karne kī Saralātama Vidhī* — a speech published in *Bhatkhande Smṛti Grantha*. Khairagarh, 1966; see, p.439. Surprisingly, this does not seem to have led him to ask certain disturbing questions which such a realisation ought naturally to pose. One: Did the different *rāgas* assigned to the same hours of the day at different points in history, share certain tonal patterns in common? This seems unlikely, and I believe Bhatkhande would have agreed. Even if he were not to agree, another question arises: Were the tonal patterns which affiliated these *rāgas* to certain hours of the day, the same as those discovered by Bhatkhande? Again a difficult question to answer, but again the answer probably would be 'presumably not'. What then are we to make of Bhatkhande's tonal affinities and their supposedly psycho-physical basis? This basis has certainly not changed over the last few hundred years, but tonal patterns corresponding to a particular time of the day appear to have done so. How is one to explain this change?

⁵ cf. '*vangādeśa sambhūtā vaṅgālī divyārūpiṇī/eṣā hyantarabhāṣā vai kālīnge sū tu giyate: Bṛhaddeśi*, p. 127 (Trivendrum edition). The second *rāga*, an *antarabhāṣā*, belonging to, or popular in, Orissa was named *Kāṇḍi*.

Kaśyapa speaks of the seasonal aspect of *rāgas*:

"(*Rāga*) *preṅkholita* should be sung in spring, so should *mālavapañ-cama*. *Takkarāga*, *gaudakakubha*, *bhinnaṣaḍaja*, *kaiśika* and *bhin-napañcama* are favoured in summer and the subsequent seasons."⁶

Later *saṅgīta* texts bracket Kaśyapa with Mataṅga and Yāṣṭika and others as hoary teachers, Kaśyapa perhaps may be placed in the same period as Mataṅga, that is the 7th or the 8th century AD or perhaps, still earlier.

Nānyabhūpāla, a king of Mithilā, writing a century after Abhinava Gupta, is the first person, I have been able to discover, who speaks of a connection between musical forms and an assigned hour of rendering them. Beginning his chapter on *rāgas*, (chapter seven) in his *Bharata-bhāṣya*, he connects different *gītis* to different hours (*yāmas*) of the day. The two *gītis*, *śuddhā* and *bhinnā* are assigned to the first *yāma* or *prahara* (a three-hour period) of the day. The *gīti*, *gaudī* is placed at mid-day, *vesarā* in the first part of the day and *sādharaṇā* is said to be '*sādharaṇa*' or 'common to all hours of the day'.

These *gītis*, as is well-known, were not *rāgas* or similar forms, but various styles of rendering *rāgas*, akin to the *bānis* of *dhrupada* and the different *gāyakis* of present-day music. Immediately after speaking of *gītis* and their appropriate hours of singing, Nānya proceeds to proclaim:

"The *bhāṣās* of different *rāgas* fall within the same time bracket (*kāla*) as the *rāgas* to which they are attached".

He does not give details regarding the time of the day to which specific *rāgas* were to be rendered. He speaks only of the *gītis* and their time. However, different groups of *rāgas* were assigned to different *gītis*. The time of a *rāga* was presumably to be known through its *gīti*. What is more remarkable in this context is that Nānya assigns *gītis* or *rāgas* to specific hours

⁶ Verses 74-75 of *Nāṭyaśāstra* with the *Abhinava Bhārati*, G.O.S edition, Vol. IV, p. 78.

not because of aesthetic, but religious reasons. Unlike the listeners of today, he does not seem to have felt an affinity of 'mood' or 'ethos' between a specific hour and a specific *rāga*; what he said was that it is more 'auspicious' to sing a particular *rāga*, or a *rāga*-like form such as *bhāṣā*, at a particular hour. With this, too, he adds a rider: "All these (*bhāṣās*) are equally meritorious and result in eternal merit whenever they are sung; the rule concerning special hours of singing them is meant only for added religious merit (*śreyoviśeṣāya*)."⁷

For two or three centuries after Nānyadeva we have texts which, for our purposes, may be divided into two categories: those that speak of a connection between *rāgas* and their hour of singing and those that do not. Someśvara III, another king and a contemporary of Nānyadeva, who ruled in the Deccan in the beginning of the twelfth century, has a big section on music in his *Mānasollāsa*. He speaks of no connection between *rāgas* and hours of the day. The reason perhaps was that he was chiefly interested in music as a *vinoda*, a source of aesthetic pleasure: he is silent concerning the extramusical 'auspicious' qualities of *rāgas*.⁸ This is not to imply that Someśvara was an irreligious man. Indeed, his section on song contains many hymns and ends with the exhortation that the *prabandhas* (musical compositions) he has spoken of, should be sung before the gods with due devotion.⁹ But he evidently saw no merit, religious or other, in associating *rāgas* with particular hours. His son Jagadekamalla, too, wrote on music. Jagadekamalla's *Saṅgīta Cūḍāmaṇi* is also silent concerning *rāgas* and their specific hour of singing;

⁷ *apām śreyoviśeṣāya kālasya niyamaḥ smṛtaḥ/ḡiyate sarvakāle tu sarvā nityārtha-siddhaye*, Ch.VII verse 7. The First word in this verse, *apām*, is clearly a scribal error; it makes no sense. Nānyadeva had written *āsām*, referring to the *bhāṣās*. The edition of the *Bharatabhāṣya*, to which I refer is edited by Chaitanya P. Desai, pub. Indira Kalā Saṅgīta Vishvavidyālaya, Khairāgarh.

⁸ His section on music, Chap.16, *vimśati* 4, of *Mānasollāsa*, is titled, '*Gita-Vinoda*'.

⁹ *Ibid*, verses 559-560, p. 81, Vol.III of the G.O.S edition of the *Mānasollāsa*.

though it does, at least on one occasion, speak of a seasonal connection, calling *deśihindola* a spring-*rāga*.¹⁰

The two important texts after those of Nānyadeva and Someśvara are the *Saṅgīta-samayasāra*, of Pārśvadeva and the *Saṅgīta-ratnākara* of Śārṅgadeva. Śārṅgadeva wrote early in the 13th century. Pārśvadeva's date is not certain. Many believe him to have been slightly earlier. Pārśvadeva does not speak of any connection between *rāgas* and a prescribed time of singing, though he speaks of *rāgas* in detail. Śārṅgadeva, however, diligently notes the hour of the day against every *rāga* that he describes, using phrases like *geyo'hnaḥ prathame yāme* (to be sung during the first *yāma* or *prahara* of the day), *madhyame'hno geyaḥ* (to be sung during mid-day) and the like.¹¹ Śārṅgadeva connects *rāgas* to seasons also.

Śārṅgadeva had avowedly based his description of *rāgas* on earlier authorities, which he copiously names. We do not know, however, his source for the ascription of hours to *rāgas*. Earlier works available to us, we have seen, do not make such ascriptions. Nānyadeva makes a connection between *gītis* and hours of the days, but his ruling is made very half-heartedly. The time factor in his view did not do more than to add a little more auspiciousness (*śreyo-viśeṣa*) to the rendering of a *rāga*. Perhaps the ascriptions noted by Śārṅgadeva were also made in the same spirit. Śārṅgadeva speaks of no aesthetic affinity, a kinship of ethos, between *rāgas* and hours of the day. And it would not be unreasonable to conjecture that he, too, like Nānyadeva, believed that to sing a *rāga* at a particular time made it more auspicious. He may have been guided in this by Nānyadeva whose work he perhaps knew, for he was a very erudite scholar in *saṅgīta* texts.

In any case, neither he nor the tradition before him provides any basis for supposing that an intimate connection of 'ethos' or 'character' was felt by musicians or listeners between a *rāga* and

¹⁰ See fn. on p. 75 of the G.O.S. edition of the *Saṅgīta-Cūḍāmaṇi*.

¹¹ See *Saṅgītaratnākara*, Chapter II, the '*rāgavivekādhāya*', where such instructions are appended with every *rāga*.

its hour of singing or playing. That was to come later.

A rule which is believed to lead to greater auspiciousness, hence religious merit, tends to become a ritual and turns easily into established convention or customary practice; it thus becomes an ingrained habit; we keep following it even after religious connections are forgotten. This is what seems to have happened in the case of the *rāgas* and their connection with specific hours of the day.

Śārṅgadeva was greatly revered by authors who followed him. His work was accorded an almost canonic authority. The connection he made between individual *rāgas* and specific hours of the day became a convention with later authors, even though the *rāgas* themselves changed and the specific hours to which *rāgas* were connected also did not remain the same.

In the beginning, the *rāga*-time rule seems to have been only loosely observed and allowed flexibility. Pandit Bhatkhande quotes an old dictum to the effect that after ten *daṇḍas* of the night have passed any *rāga* can be sung.¹² Another dictum quoted in the *Saṅgīta Darpaṇa* is that if a king so orders any *rāga* can be sung at any time.¹³

Gradually, as the habit of singing particular *rāgas* at particular hours sunk in, it began to be thought that *rāgas* please only at their allotted hours — ‘*yathākāle samarābdham gītām bhavati rañjakam*’, as Dāmodara puts it. An aesthetic connection was thus made between a *rāga* and the time to which it had been allotted. Listeners and musicians began to feel that a *rāga* was deeply associated with an hour and so began to perceive an affinity of ‘ethos’ between the two. The category of the aesthetic was confused with that of the auspicious.

But it was only in modern times with Bhatkhande that an attempt was made to discover structural denominators common to *rāgas* placed in the same time-bracket. Bhatkhande succeeded in making a few generalizations which found great acceptance.

¹² *yathākāle samarābdham gītām bhavati rañjakam/ daśadaṇḍāt param rātrau kāla-doṣo na vidyate//* quoted on p. 439. Bhatkhande *Smṛti Grantha*.

¹³ *rājñādeśātsadā geyā na tu kālam vichārayet-Saṅgīta Darpaṇa* 2, 26.

Modern Hindustani musical theory as well as practice have been greatly influenced by his views and teachings in other ways too.

Yet people have found faults with his generalisations, pointing out notable exceptions. And in any case, as I said earlier, no one has ever tried to display and work out in proper empirical detail the psycho-physiological basis which he believed was the ground for the *rāga*-time connection. It is one thing to find common features in *rāgas* that have been placed in a single time bracket but quite another to show that this points at a deeper psycho-physiological basis for the phenomenon. As will have been clear from the burden of my argument, I think that the association made between a *rāga* and its allotted time is an arbitrary association: it is not embedded in any universal human response, but is culturally conditioned. This I have tried to show through the brief survey of its history. This notion remains localised in the north — the reasons for which I would like to go into in another paper — and has been given up without any adverse consequences in the sister system of the south. Even a culturally-conditioned response may be valuable, but as I have pointed earlier, a deeper musical response tends to undermine rather than support the *rāga*-time association.

CHAPTER – TWELVE

Some Thoughts on the Early History
of Rāgamālā Paintings

The history of *rāga* paintings shows two distinct phases. In the earlier phase *rāgas* and *rāginis* were conceived and painted as sculpturesque icons of deities. Very few paintings from this phase survive. In the middle of the sixteenth century we witness a transformation in *rāga*-portraiture: *rāga*-images acquire movement; they become dramatic, situational and poetic. *Rāga-mālās* from this later phase are plentiful. When thinking of *rāga-mālā*, it is these paintings that we generally have in mind. What I have to say here has mostly to do with the earlier phase of *rāga* paintings.

Since Sarabhai Nawab's publication of the *Masterpieces of Jain Kalpasūtra Painting* (1956), it has become generally known, that *rāga* miniatures had already come into vogue among Jain circles in the last quarter of the 15th century. Nawab has also pointed out the relation between the early *rāga* paintings and the descriptive *rāga-dhyānas* given by the Jain author Sudhākalaśa, in his 14th century text on music, the *Saṅgītopaniṣatsāroddhāra*.

Saṅgītopaniṣatsāroddhāra is believed to contain the earliest known *rāga-dhyānas*. These *rāga-dhyānas*, unlike the later, more commonly known *rāga*-portraits and descriptive verses, are conceived in the manner of iconic delineations of gods and goddesses.

Ebeling in his recent *Rāgamālā Paintings* has mentioned what he believes to be an earlier text on the subject, namely, the *Rāgasāgara*. This text passes under the hoary names of Dattila and Nārada. Perhaps for this reason Ebeling places the text in either the second or the eighth century AD¹ This conclusion does not seem to have been reached by Ebeling on his own, for on this point he quotes the authority of W. Kauffmann, who in his *Rāgas of North India* has dated the *Rāgasāgara* to the period noted above, and has

¹ 'Many believe that Nārada belonged to the second century AD, and Dattila to the eighth'.

also quoted *rāga-dhyānas* from it.

The *Rāgasāgara* is, however, not as early as Ebeling thinks. The reason why the text is sometimes attributed to Dattila or to Nārada is that it is written as a dialogue between Dattila and Nārada in the apocryphal manner of the *Purānas*. But apart from the names of the two 'munis', partaking in the dialogue, there is nothing early about the *Rāgasāgara*. It is an eclectically put together text containing diverse and sometimes not quite well organised matter on various aspects of music. Verse 14 of its second *tarāṅga* names the 13th century text *Saṅgītaratnākāra* and its author Śārṅgadeva. So the work was certainly written after him.² In classifying *svaras*, it speaks of *cyuta svaras*; and, moreover, it gives a detailed time-scheme for rendering various *rāgas*. Its *rāga-dhyānas* do not always depict the melody in the manner of the icon of a deity, but include dramatic or situational elements characteristic of later *rāga-mālās*. These are all factors which prove the work to be late. Its attribution to Dattila or Nārada is spurious.

In truth, it is unlikely that the notion of a *rāga*-picture, and the related idea of versified *rāga-dhyānas* (word-portraits of a *rāga*), goes back to a period earlier than the 13th century. The *Saṅgītaratnākāra* written early in the 13th century has no *rāga-dhyānas* although it is a comprehensive work dealing in detail with all salient aspects of contemporary as well as ancient musical forms. *Saṅgītasamayāsāra* by the Jain author Pārśvadeva may perhaps be of almost the same period as the *Saṅgītaratnākāra*: this work, too, has no *rāga-dhyānas*. The earliest dated *rāga-dhyānas* are indeed to be found in the *Saṅgītopaniṣatsāroddhāra* written in 1350. This work, as the name suggests, was an abridgement of the author's own, *Saṅgītopaniṣat*, written in 1324.³ We can surely assume that

² *nanu ratnākare śārṅgadevena vikṛtāḥ svarāḥ dvādaśoktāḥ kathāḥ te tu saptaiva kathitāḥ svarāḥ. Rāgasāgara-2, 14. (MS 15015 of the Madras Govt. MSS Library. Copy with the author).*

³ See Introduction to the G.O.S. edition of the *Saṅgītopaniṣatsāroddhāra*. A seemingly earlier *rāga-dhyāna* also needs to be discussed here. Ram Krishna Kavi in his encyclopaedic, *Bharatakośa* quotes a single *rāga-dhyāna* from Jagadekamalla (1134-1150). The authenticity of this *dhyāna* is, in our view, extremely doubtful. Kavi says that for quotations from Jagadeka he had

this too recorded *rāga-dhyānas*.

There is another significant pointer towards the fact that *rāga-dhyānas* are a comparatively later phenomena. Rāṇā Kumbha of Mewar wrote a comprehensive treatise on music, the *Saṅgitarāja*, in the 15th century; like the *Saṅgitaratnākara* it is a detailed and thorough study of both ancient and contemporary music. Unlike the *Saṅgitaratnākara*, it does have *rāga-dhyānas*. Many of these *rāga-dhyānas*, with negligible modifications, are the same as those given by Sudhākalaśa.

consulted a MS of Jagadeka's *Saṅgitacūḍāmaṇi* which was incomplete and contained only the chapters on *rāga*, *rāga* and *nṛtya*. A *Saṅgitacūḍāmaṇi* has now been published by the Gaekwad Oriental Series (Baroda, 1958). The MS. which Kavi may have consulted was not available to the editor of this edition. The printed edition, too, has an incomplete text. Its section on *rāga* does not have many of the verses quoted by Kavi under the name of Jagadeka. Kavi quotes the descriptions of many *rāgas* from Jagadeka but, significantly enough, only one *rāga-dhyāna*. This is curious and unless the MS utilised by Kavi is examined, the authenticity of this single *rāga-dhyāna* is bound to remain questionable. Kavi has remarked: "There is a work in Malabar called *Sāra* which is only a recast of Jagadeka's work with later additions". He adds, "Pārśvadeva (author of *Saṅgitasamayāsāra*) has incorporated Jagadeka's work seemingly as his own" (*Bharatakośa*, Introduction, p. iv). Pārśvadeva, we observe, gives no *rāga-dhyānas*. Further, Someśvara, the father of Jagadeka, and the author of *Mānasollāsa*, which contains a large section on music and describes many *rāgas*, also gives no *rāga-dhyānas*. All this casts great doubt upon the authenticity of the lone *rāga-dhyāna* quoted by Kavi from Jagadeka. We think that the quotation is really from the Malabar work cited by Kavi as *Sāra*: the work which Kavi calls a recast of Jagadeka's treatise and which also has much 'later additions'. It is not unlikely that Kavi has half-unthinkingly quoted a *dhyāna* from this work under the name of Jagadeka although the *dhyāna* was a later addition.

Another circumstance which points at the spuriousness of the alleged *dhyāna* from Jagadeka is the fact that Kavi also quotes *jāti-dhyānas* from him. *Jātis* were ancient melodies, pre-dating *rāgas*. In ancient works like the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and *Dattilam* which describe these melodies, no *dhyānas* are given. The idea of a *jāti-dhyāna* is indeed, entirely absent in subsequent works on music, too, where *jātis* are carefully described on the basis of ancient works. Authors like Abhinava (10th-11th centuries AD), Nānyadeva (11th century AD), Śārṅgadeva (13th century AD) and even Rāṇā Kumbha (15th century AD) describe *jātis* with a great wealth of detail, but they do not speak of *dhyāna* for these ancient forms. *Dhyānas* for *jātis* were, evidently, composed late in an age when the idea that every melody should have a *dhyāna* had become well-entrenched.

It is interesting to note that Kumbha does not give *rāga-dhyānas* for all the *rāgas* that he delineates. He gives *dhyānas* for only a group of comparatively later *rāgas*. Evidently, *rāga-dhyānas* had come into vogue only lately and it was not yet thought that every *rāga* should have a *dhyāna*.

The evidence leads us to infer that Sudhākalaśa, the Jain from Western India, is the earliest known author who gives us *rāga-dhyānas*. But certainly it would be hasty to assert that he was the first to compose *rāga-dhyānas*. This, however, would raise the question: Can we trace *rāga-dhyānas* which antedate him? We shall attempt an answer to this question. Our answer has no claim to be conclusive, but we hope that it will throw an interesting light on the subject.

Introducing his section on *rāga-dhyānas*, Sudhākalaśa says that the number of *rāgas* is as great as sixteen thousand, for each of Kṛṣṇa's gopis had created a *rāga*. It was, he adds, impossible to know so many *rāgas* and only some had retained a well-defined form.⁴

This seems to point at the fact that the notion of *rāga*-forms had Vaiṣṇava connections in Sudhākalaśa's mind. His remarks indeed, lead us to interesting thoughts. Many of us are familiar with the old story in the Vaiṣṇava tradition of how *rāgas* and *rāginis*, personified as human beings, became deformed due to Nārada's faulty singing.⁵ This story is revealing for our purpose in several ways. It occurs, what appears for the first time, in the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*, a work of the *Upa-purāṇa* literature, which is perhaps earlier than the *Saṅgitopaniṣatsāroddhāra* of Sudhākalaśa.

It would be worthwhile here to recount the Nārada story as given in the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* in some detail: Nārada had once called upon Nārāyaṇa in his heavenly abode, Vaikuṅṭha, where

⁴ *Saṅgitopaniṣatsāroddhāra* 3. 72-73.

⁵ Fox Strangways writing on Indian music in the early twentieth century, mentions this story. But he does not mention the source of the story. Fox Strangways, A.H., *The Music of Hindostan*, p. 75; (Oxford 1975, reprint from the first edition, 1914).

Nārāyaṇa was sitting with the goddesses Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. Nārāyaṇa requested Nārada to sing. Nārada questioned him about the theory of music. Nārāyaṇa spoke to Nārada about *nāda* and *svara*, and also *rāgas* and *rāginis*. He spoke of six *rāgas*, each of whom had six *rāginis* as his wives. Every *rāga*, he said, had also a male attendant and each of the *rāginis*, a serving maid.

After Nārāyaṇa's instructions, Nārada began to sing. His rendering of *rāgas* was not what it should have been, and Sarasvatī derisively laughed at him. Nārada became dejected. To cheer him up, Nārāyaṇa took him around Vaikuṅṭha. Nārada saw at one place a number of deformed beings and wanted to know who they were. Nārāyaṇa told him that they were the *rāgas* and *rāginis* who had suffered mutilation due to Nārada's mishandling.

Nārāyaṇa then called upon Śiva to sing. Śiva sang a hymn to Kṛṣṇa in the *rāga gāndhāra*. The *rāga* himself appeared before those present. Another song was sung by one of Kṛṣṇa's female messengers. Śiva then sang again. His singing caused one of the wives of *gāndhāra rāga*, the *rāginī śrī* to present herself. *Gāndhārarāga* and *rāginī śrī* have been described as they appear. The descriptions bear definite and unmistakable characteristics of *rāga-dhyānas*; they are also similar in spirit to those of Sudhākalaśa. *Gāndhāra* is described in the following terms:

Resplendent in ornaments of gold,

Beautiful beyond compare

With a hue like that of a fresh rain-cloud

He wears a yellow dress

And holds in his hands a pair of lotus-flowers.⁶

Rāginī śrī has a description similar in spirit:

She has an unstained body like fired gold

In her two hands she holds a pair of lotuses.

Wearing ornaments of a great variety

and a bright dress

⁶ *lasatsuhemābharaṇaṁ samujjvalannavāmbudabhāsamapūrvasundaraṁ grhītapitāmbarapaṅkajadvayam...*

Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa, madhyakhaṇḍa, 14, 86.

śrī rāginī shines with a smiling face.⁷

R.C. Hazra has analysed the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* in his *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*. He opines that the *Purāṇa* was composed towards the end of the 13th century. Unlike many other *Purāṇas*, the *Bṛhaddharma* forms a single unitary whole, and it seems that unlike many other *Purāṇas* all of it was composed at the same period.⁸ If Hazra is right, then we have here *rāga-dhyānas* which antedate Sudhākalaśa.

Hazra's main arguments for dating the *Bṛhaddharma*, which, he says, was composed in Bengal, are therefore worth noting. The *Bṛhaddharma*, he argues, is post-Jayadeva, because Jayadeva's style is copied in the songs sung by Śiva and by Kṛṣṇa's *dūtī*.⁹ The work, he further says, is pre-Caitanya, for its Vaiṣṇavism shows no Caitanya influence. Hazra further argues that the picture of Bengal reflected in the *Purāṇa* is of an age when Muslim rule in Bengal was yet quite recent and not yet total, since Hindu kings were evidently important and still held some power. There are, moreover, verses in the *Purāṇa* which, Hazra believes, exhort these Hindu rulers to muster arms in order to oppose the aliens.¹⁰ This he says could have been meaningful only in the early period of Muslim conquest. These are the arguments which lead Hazra to place the *Purāṇa* late in the thirteenth century.

If the arguments are not clinching, they are surely suggestive. Swami Prajñānānanda, however, thinks that the *Purāṇa* was composed in the fourteenth or early fifteenth century.¹¹ He feels that the system of music reflected in the *Purāṇa* is a late system

⁷ *jvalatsuvārṇāmalacārukāyikā karadvaye padmayugañca bibhrati vicitrabhūṣābharaṇaṁojjvalāṁśukā śrīrāginī rājatasasmitānā...*

Ibid, madhyakhaṇḍa, 14.93.

⁸ Hazra, R.C., *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, vol. II, p. 461 (Sanskrit College, Calcutta, 1963).

⁹ The *dhruva* or refrain from the *dūtī*'s song, in *rāginī śrī*, is as follows:

keśava kamalamukhīmukhakamalam

kamalanayanakalayātulamamalam

kuñjagehe vijanativimalam.

¹⁰ Hazra, R.C., *op. cit.*, p. 460.

¹¹ Prajñānānanda, *Rāga O Rūpa* (Bengali) p. 70, (Darjeeling, 1977).

belonging to these later centuries. Now, it is certainly true that the *rāga-rāginī* classification of musical forms recorded in the *Purāna* is of a comparatively later date, but there is no reason to believe that this system was unknown in the late thirteenth century. *Saṅgītamakaranda*, attributed to Nārada, contains such a classification and it is perhaps a text of this period. *Aparājitapṛcchā*, a text which can be dated much more securely to the middle of the 12th century,¹² already contains a *rāga-rāginī* classification. This text speaks of six *rāgas* and thirty-six *rāginīs*: each *rāga* being associated with six *rāginīs*, as in much of later classifications. The *rāginīs* are spoken of as having emerged from the *rāga* with which they are associated.¹³ Yet a man-wife relation is also implied between a *rāga* and its associated *rāginīs*: a *rāginī*, it is said, should be sung only with the *rāga* from which it has emerged, for making any other association would be like committing adultery.¹⁴

Though the *Bṛhaddharma* cannot be placed in a period antedating the *Saṅgītopaniṣatsāroddhāra* with absolute certainty, there is a strong likelihood that the *Purāna* is an earlier work. And, what is more significant, like other *Purānas*, it certainly contains myths and legends which were formulated before the period when the *Purāna* was actually written down.

To my mind, one myth which shows a tell-tale sign of belonging to a period prior to the *Saṅgītopaniṣatsāroddhāra* is

¹² M.P. Vohra and M.A. Dhaky: 'The date of the *Aparājitapṛcchā*', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, vol. IX., 1960.

¹³ The six *rāgas* listed are: *Śrī-rāga*, *Vasanta*, *Pañcama*, *Bhairava*, *Megharāga* and *Nāṭtanārāyaṇa*. Each has the following *rāginīs*:
śrī-rāga: *gauri*, *kolā*, *gāndhārī*, *drāviḍī*, *mālakoṣikā*, *devagāndhārī*.
vasanta: *hiṇḍolā*, *koṣikā*, *rāmagiri*, *padmamañjarī*, *guḍagrivā*, *deśākhyā*.
bhairava: *bhairavi*, *gurjari*, *bhāṣā*, *velāvali*, *karṇāṭī*, *kalahaṁsā*.
pañcama: *triguṇā*, *khambhāvati*, *ābherī*, *kakubhā*, *virāṭī*, *sāverī*.
megharāga: *baṅgālī*, *mādhurī*, *kāmodā*, *sādhakā*, *devaśrī*, *devamālā*.
nāṭtanārāyaṇa: *troṭaki*, *moṭaki*, *dumbinaṭṭā*, *varāṭakā*, *gāndhārī*, *sindhūmalhārī*.

Aparājitapṛcchā, *sūtra* 238, 15-21.

¹⁴ *yadrāgadyāḥ samutpannāḥ giyate tena tāḥ saha/ yadanyathāmiśritam tadduṣyate paradāravat/*

Ibid. *sūtra* 238, 22.

the Nārada myth we have just related. The reason why I think it to be older is that here in this story we seem to see the idea of *rāga-dhyānas* taking shape in a seminal form as it were. The story, I think, presents us with the mythopoeic process by which *rāga-dhyānas* came into being.

Musical experience convinces us that every *rāga* has a *rūpa* of its own and that this is a living, dynamic *rūpa* both in form and spirit. Every *rāga*, in other words, has a distinct personality. The metaphor of a living and individual human being naturally comes to the mind. It was certainly this metaphor which gave rise to the idea of personified *rāgas* with *rāginīs* as their spouses. Nārāyaṇa's music lesson to Nārada in the *Bṛhad-dharma* assumes the existence of such personified *rāgas*: a notion already present in the *Aparājitapṛcchā*. But this metaphor of *rāgas* in human form is then carried a step forward by the Purānic poet and used to construct the allegory of *rāgas* becoming deformed in limb and body through Nārada's mishandling. Later in the story, the *Purāna* illustrates how a proper rendering could manifest a *rāga* in its undeformed, resplendent form. On this occasion the two *rāgas* (a *rāga* and a *rāginī*) sung by Śiva, appear bodily on the scene as individuals. It was felt as appropriate by the Purānic poet to describe these two *rāgas* as they appear as persons. The *rāgas*, however, could not be described as if they were ordinary men and women: they were thought to be transcendent entities. The Purānic poet found it fit to describe them in terms of iconic features associated with deities.

The *rāga-dhyānas* occurring in the *Bṛhaddharma* seem clearly to show a Tantra-like iconography. The Tāntric pantheon had innumerable deities both male and female. Each was characterised distinctively, often for the purpose of making plastic images or pictures. This resulted in a large gallery of iconic portraits, to which new additions were ever being made. It was easy, and, indeed, fitting, to multiply deities in the Tāntric manner; a number of set iconic elements had become established for the purpose which could be readily handled, permuted and combined to form new iconic forms. The *Bṛhaddharma* uses a well-travelled Tāntric *mārga* to create new icons for *rāgas* and *rāginīs*, which it saw as deities.

The *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa* has definite Vaiṣṇava leanings, but it also evinces a great influence of Tāntrism, which, in medieval times, exercised sway over every *sampradāya*. This influence was felt all the more in Bengal where the *Bṛhaddharma* was written. Its poet when called upon to portray a *rāga* and a *rāginī* must have found it the most natural of things to employ the ready-to-hand and readily malleable repertoire of iconic forms in which Tantra was so rich. Elsewhere, too, the *Bṛhaddharma* employs the same method in calling up new iconic portraits, as for instance, in picturing the plant *tulasī*¹⁵ or the twelfth day of the lunar month, *dvādaśī tithi* as deities.¹⁶

The idea of a *rāga-dhyāna* can, I think, be traced thus to the Nārada-story in the *Bṛhaddharma*. The idea was not an entirely novel conception: since early times it was believed that each musical note had a colour, a *varṇa* (in the sense of social class) and also a specific deity, though the note was not itself deified. What was new in a *rāga-dhyāna* was that *rāgas* themselves were turned into some kind of minor deities, and portrayed in iconic forms.

Once the idea of *rāga-dhyāna* was formulated, it quickly disseminated and acquired various forms. The painterly forms given to *rāgas* have never been uniform. Throughout the history of *rāga* painting, *rāga*-portraiture has had many different, and distinct schools. The very classification of *rāgas*, and, indeed, even the names of *rāgas* that are included in different lists of major forms have followed different traditions. The *rāga*-list given in the *Saṅgītopaniṣatsāroddhāra* is quite distinct from that of the *Bṛhaddharma*. The *rāga-dhyānas*, too, are different, though they follow the same Tantra-like iconic pattern. The *Saṅgītopaniṣatsāroddhāra* has, in addition, *dhyāna*-verses not only for *rāgas* but also for such smaller units of musical structures as

¹⁵ *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*, *pūrvakhaṇḍa*, 8, 5-6. *Tulasī* is described as:
śyāmāṅgī cāruvadanā divbhujā smitabhaṣiṇī
śaṅkha-padmakarā śvetavasanā yuvati satī
nānālaṅkārabhūṣādhyā sindūrarūnamālikā.

¹⁶ She is described as *gaurāṅgī*, *pitavasanā*, *dvibhujā* and *śyāmaprṣṭhikā*.
Ibid., *pūrvakhaṇḍa*, 23, 51.

tāna, *mūrchanā*, *śruti* and *svara*. In some early *Kalpasūtra*-miniatures, these, too, have been painted as if they were icons.¹⁷

Rāga-dhyānas and *rāga-mālā* paintings, generally known today are quite different in form and spirit from the descriptions in the *Saṅgītopaniṣatsāroddhāra* and from the *rāga* paintings found in late fifteenth century illustrated *Kalpasūtras*. Later *rāga-mālā* paintings and their associated *dhyānas* do not portray *rāgas* as icons, but picture them as characters within some kind of an episodic situation. A personified *rāga*-form is presented within what may be likened to a dramatic tableau. As a result, unlike earlier *rāga*-paintings, the later *rāga-mālā* is marked by action. A *rāga* is usually pictured as a man or a woman performing some action, or as the centre of some action, within a landscape or an architectural setting or an interior, or as is often the case, a combination of these.

In a *rāga-mālā* picture the character representing the *rāga* is usually easy to recognise. But the important thing is that it does not alone represent the *rāga*: the *rāga* is represented by the whole situation within which the *rāga*-character forms only a part. This is quite distinct from earlier iconic representations of *rāgas* where the icon of a personified deity was all important. In later *rāga-mālās*, the situational or 'dramatic element' is so important that in some cases where the painting of a *rāga* shows more than one person, it is difficult to say which of them represents the *rāga*. In a representation of the *rāginī śyāma-kalyāṇa*, from an eighteenth century Deccan set (in the collection of the Archaeological museum, Hyderabad, reproduced in Ebeling, *Rāgamālā Painting* p. 203 fig. 99), two ladies are shown sitting in a pensive mood. One has a female attendant wielding a *camara*. It is difficult here, as Ebeling has also remarked, to say which lady represents the *rāginī*. Evidently, the whole picture represents the *rāginī*. In another miniature showing the *rāginī vasantī* (reproduced in Ebeling, *Rāgamālā*

¹⁷ Nawab, Vidya Sarabhai, 419 *Illustration of Indian Music and Dance in Western Indian Style*, figures: 1-107. (Ahmedabad, 1964).

Painting, p. 288), two girls are shown picking flowers. Again it is not possible to say which of them is the *rāginī*: apparently, both together are.¹⁸

Though a *rāga* is shown within an episode, its picture is limited to that one single episode. It is not made to move from one episode to another like Kṛṣṇa in a *Bhāgavata* or a *Gīta-Govinda* set or like Dholā in a *Dholā-Mārū* set. In this, the *rāga*-image is more like paintings illustrating *nāyikā-bheda* poems where every painting represents a single specific situation. Indeed, if one sees the same *rāga* in another situation, one can be sure that the image belongs to another school of *rāga-mālā* painting.

Limiting a *rāga* to a single situation or image seems surprising, for a *rāga* as rendered musically, shows changing moods unfolding over a period of time. Its visual representation seems to demand a similar unfoldment through multiple images woven together. The only ambitious attempt that I know of at visualising musical movement through a series of suitably changing images has been made by Walt Disney in his film *Eroica* based on Beethoven's well-known symphony of the same name. The dynamic movement possible in a film is not possible in painting, yet the miniaturist could have represented a *rāga* through a set of paintings rather than one single miniature.

The images in later *rāga-mālās* are conceived as images diffused with a poetic rather than an iconic spirit. The influence of the *riti* poetry of the age, dominated by themes of love, is palpable in many of the images. A great number of images found in later *rāga-mālās* are obviously drawn from the *nāyaka-nāyikā* poems of the age. Their painterly-style or *kalam* is also modelled on the representations of the *nāyaka-nāyikā* theme which had begun to be popular among patrons of the miniature during the fifteenth century and after. The earliest of the new style *rāga-mālās* (middle and late 16th century) already echo the

¹⁸ The same difficulty of identification can be noted in the representation of *gajadharā*, a *putra* of *megha*; *surmanad*, a *putra* of *hiṇḍola* and *mālava*, a *putra* of *śrī*, reproduced in Ebeling, *Rāgamālā Painting* p. 296. These representations show two people engaged in a fight: either could be the *rāga* in question.

style of early miniatures based on *Vasanta-Vilāsa* (1451), *Caurapañcāsikā* (1550) and *Laura Candā* (1550).

The changes in form that took place in the later *rāga-mālā* are indicative of a change in spirit. What was an icon with trans-human meanings was now brought down to a human plane, albeit with few exceptions as in the case of some *rāgas* like *Bhairava*. The process of transformation is not very clear. Few texts and paintings survive from the period of transition and these provide no clue in this matter. The newer taste was for greater movement and a more episodic and dramatic manner of painting. *Rāgamālā*, as a genre, could have appealed to the newer taste only if it could mould itself to the new manner of painting. And this is, indeed, what happened. *Rāgas* as deities were in this process, desecrated. But this aroused no feelings of compunction, for though imagined as deities, *rāgas* were never part of any cult or divine pantheon. Their portrayal could be suitably transformed to occupy a place in the repertoire of themes that had begun to capture the imagination of painters and patrons of a newer age. This done, the *rāga-mālā* entered the mainstream of the new schools of miniaturists.

An interesting question may be asked here: Did the transformation in *rāga-mālā* reflect in any way a similar transformation in music? This is difficult to answer, though a transformation in music contemporaneous with the transformation in *rāga-mālā* painting does not seem to have occurred. What did occur was a major transformation in the art of painting of which *rāga-mālā* was only a genre. It was, I think, this change in the painter's approach to his art that entailed a change in the conception of *rāga*-portraiture. A similar thing can be witnessed today. Over the last hundred years, no radical transformation has occurred in music, but *rāga*-images painted today by such modern painters as M.F. Hussain and Laxman Pai are certainly very different in spirit and form from those of the preceding period. What has happened is a transformation in the painter's attitude to his art.

CHAPTER – THIRTEEN

Some Reflections on the *Vīnā* in
Gupta Coinage

Samudragupta's *praśasti* calls him a great musician. He is described as surpassing Nārada and Tuṅburu in musical skill.¹ The *vīnā* type coins minted by Samudragupta show him as playing the *vīnā* (Pl.VIII. 8). They are proof that the *praśasti* — allowing for the usual poetic exaggeration — was not voicing an empty praise. The coins also reveal that Samudragupta took great pride in his musicianship, for no king before him had minted coins of this kind.

Samudragupta was not the only Gupta king who minted *vīnā* type coins. Similar coins minted by his grandson, Kumāragupta-I, have also come to light (in the Bayana Hoard). Presumably, Kumāragupta-I, too, was a *vīnā*-playing musician. But no *praśasti* extolling Kumāragupta's musicianship has been uncovered. It might be argued that Kumāragupta-I, was merely emulating his illustrious grandfather in minting a coin-type initiated by him, without having any active personal interest in *vīnā*-playing. There are, however, strong grounds which suggest that Kumāragupta-I, too, was, in all likelihood, a musician. Skill in music was not a rare thing among ancient Indian kings.

Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, the royally-born heroes of the *Mahābhārata*, were renowned for their skill in music. The *Harivaṃśa* ascribes to Kṛṣṇa the authorship of a new kind of music, the *chālikya-gāndharva*.² Coming to a "historical" period, we hear of Udayana's excellence on the *vīnā*. So famous was this 6th century BC king of Kauśāmbī for his *vīnā* that legends have preserved the name of his instrument also. His *vīnā*, called the *ghoṣavati*, evidently played a central role in Udayana's chief exploit, the wooing and winning of

¹ *niśitavidagdhamatigāndharvalalitairvriditātridaśapatigurutumburunār-adādeh...* Fleet, *Gupta Inscriptions* No.1, p.8.

² *Harivaṃśa*, 89, 66-83 (Citraśālā press edition).

Vāsavadattā, daughter of Pradyota, king of Mālavā. Many stories of the magical powers of this *vīnā* were current during ancient times. The *ghoṣavati*, it was said, could subdue the wildest and the most violent of raging elephants with ease.

King Khāavela who ruled over Kāliṅga in the second century BC was another king who prided in his proficiency in music. The Hathī-gumpha inscription speaks of his skill in the art.³ Another ruler, Mahākṣatrapa Rudradāman in the Junagadha inscription of 2nd Century AD speaks of his mastery over music.⁴ Early Buddhist literature speaks of many kings and princes who were experts in music.⁵ Kālidasa in his *Raghuvamśa* says that the royal laps of Agnivarna were graced equally by his sweet-spoken queen and his sweet-voiced *vīnā*.⁶

Evidently it was not uncommon for kings to be musicians. Many ancient authorities speaking of the education of kings had, indeed, prescribed music as part of a prince's curriculum. Bhīṣma, lecturing Yudhiṣṭhira on polity (*rājadharmā*) in the *Anuśāsanaparva* of the *Mahābhārata* advises him that he should, as a king, acquire a knowledge of music along with other skills and arts necessary for a good ruler.⁷ *Rāmāyaṇa* also includes music among the branches of learning that a prince was required to be versed in.⁸ The Hathigumpha inscription of Khāavela informs us that the king had learnt music along with military arts

³ 'tatiya puna vase gandhavvedabudho dapanatagitavādītasandamsanāhi usava-samājakarāpanāhi kiḍāpayati nagari': *Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. 20, p. 79.

⁴ 'gāndharvanyāyādyanām vidyānām mahatīnām pāraṇadhāraṇavijñāna-prayogāvāptavipulakīrtinā... mahākṣatrapena rudradāmnā: Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 44.

⁵ *Mahāvagga* 10, 2 (p. 376 of the Pali Publication Board edition brought out by the Bihar Government). See the story of Prince Dīghāyu. Also Kusa Jātaka (No. 531). Mahāumagga Jātaka (No. 546) etc. Buddha himself was taught music (*Lalitavistara*, Ch. 12, p. 108 of the Mithila Vidyapitha edition). The story of Kuṇḍāla who sang under the balcony of king Aśoka is also noteworthy.

⁶ *aṅkamaṅkavarivartanocite tasya ninyaturaśūnyatāmubhe vallaki ca hṛdayaṅgamasvanā valguvāgapi ca vāmalocanā. Raghuvamśa* 19, 13.

⁷ *Mahābhārata, Anuśāsanaparvan* 104, 46-50.

⁸ *History of Dharmaśāstra*, P.V.Kane, Vol. III, p. 49. Rāma and his brothers, says Kane, are described as proficient in *Vedas, vedāṅgas, rājavidyā, dhanurveda* and also *gāndharvaveda*. (*Rāmāyaṇa* 1, 18, 24, 26; 2, 1, 20; 2, 21, 34-35; 5, 35, 13-14).