Nimbus Records

# THE RAGA GUIDE

## A SURVEY OF 74 HINDUSTANI RAGAS

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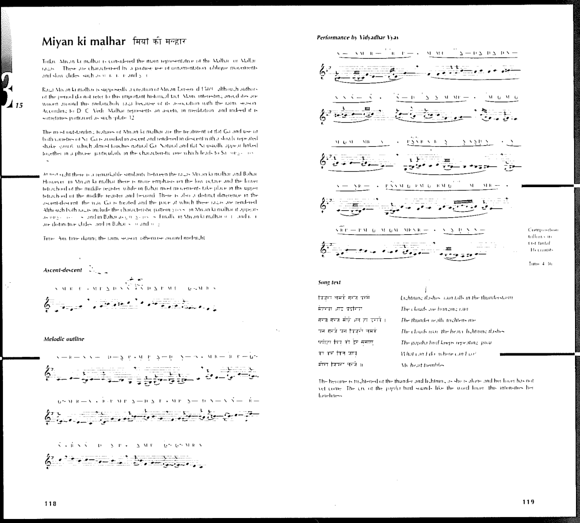
# THE RAGA GUIDE

The Raga Guide is an introduction to Hindustani ragas, the melodic basis for the classical music of northern India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. It is *the* modern reference work for listeners and connoisseurs, students and scholars.

## FOR EACH RAGA THE GUIDE PROVIDES:

An analytical and historical description

Transcription of the *alap* (melodic introduction) for each raga as performed on the CDs



Miyan ki malhar मियाँ की मल्हार

Ascent-descent

Melodic outline

Performance by Vidyadhar Vyas

Song text

118

119

Ascent-descent and melodic outline in both western and Indian notation

Song texts with English translation (for sung ragas)

**DISC ONE**
Abhogi, Adana,
Ahir bhairav,
Alhaiya bilaval,
Asavari, Bageshri,
Bahar, Basant, Bhairav,
Bhairavi, Bhatiyar,
Bhimpalasi, Bhupal todi,
Bhupali, Bibhas, Bihag,
Bilaskhani todi,
Brindabani sarang

**DISC TWO**
Chandrakauns, Chayanat,
Darbari kanada, Desh,
Deshi, Dhani, Durga,
Gaud malhar,
Gaud sarang,
Gorakh kalyan,
Gujari todi, Gunakri,
Hamir, Hansadhvani,
Hindol, Jaijaivanti,
Jaunpuri, Jhinjhoti

**DISC THREE**
Jog, Jogiya, Kafi,
Kamod, Kedar,
Khamaj, Kirvani, Lalit,
Madhuvanti, Malkauns,
Manj khamaj,
Maru bihag, Marva,
Megh, Miyan ki malhar,
Miyan ki todi,
Multani, Nayaki kanada,
Patdip, Pilu

**DISC FOUR**
Puriya, Puriya dhanashri,
Puriya kalyan, Purvi,
Rageshri, Ramkali,
Shahana, Shankara,
Shri, Shuddh kalyan,
Shuddh sarang,
Shyam kalyan, Sindhura,
Sohini, Sur malhar,
Tilak kamod,
Tilang, Yaman

Performed by
**Hariprasad Chaurasia** flute • **Buddhadev DasGupta** sarod
**Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar** vocal • **Vidyadhar Vyas** vocal

**Total playing time 5 hours 15 minutes**

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# THE RAGA GUIDE

## A SURVEY OF 74 HINDUSTANI RAGAS

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Buddhadev DasGupta, sarod
Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar, vocal
Vidyadhar Vyas, vocal

Nimbus Records with
Rotterdam Conservatory of Music

The Raga Guide is dedicated to the great scholar-musician

**Dilip Chandra Vedi (1901-1992)**

who guided us during the early stages of this project

Tabla accompaniment:
Sandip Bhattacharya for Vidyadhar Vyas
Devendra Kanti Chakrabarty for Buddhadev DasGupta
Ted de Jong for Hariprasad Chaurasia on ragas Asavari, Jogiya and Kafi
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# PREFACE

This guide is intended as an introduction to the vast topic of Hindustani ragas, the melodic basis of the classical music of northern India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Of the hundreds of ragas that exist, a selection has been made of those that are fairly well-established and commonly performed. The 74 raga sketches recorded by flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia, sarodist Buddhadev DasGupta, and vocalists Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar and Vidyadhar Vyas form the backbone of this anthology. The model these musicians have used had its origin in the 78 rpm discs which were recorded during the first half of this century. In these recordings, great vocalists and instrumentalists were capable of bringing out the essence of the ragas in just a few minutes.[1] Like their predecessors, the artists recorded for this project have been able to create little raga jewels, masterpieces in which they portray each raga in three to six minutes.

The ragas are presented on the four CDs in alphabetical order, as are the descriptions in this book and the *ragamala* paintings. The written material is intended for the listener who would like to understand more about the individual features of today's ragas. The ascent-descent and the melodic outline for each raga, as taught to students of Indian music, are given in both western and Indian notation, followed by transcriptions of the introductory movements of the 74 ragas. The texts of the vocal compositions sung on the CDs have been included in Devanagari script and in English translation.

What we have tried to elucidate is how each raga has its own fascinating history, and a unique form and melodic structure which distinguishes it from other ragas. We have refrained from describing the almost infinite possibilities of variation and the subtle ornamentations that a master musician generates. These can only be experienced by listening to the actual performances of the masters of raga.

This project was begun over a decade ago, when there was not a single comprehensive work available which discussed the ragas as they are performed today, and also contained concrete recorded examples of the ragas described.[2] For this reason, we requested the late Dilip Chandra Vedi in 1984 to compose brief outlines of the ragas that constitute the core of contemporary Hindustani music. At first he was reluctant to collaborate, complaining that it was virtually impossible to summarise the proper form of a raga, and express its structure and image in just a few passages. Later on he consented and painstakingly composed some fifty melodic outlines in major ragas.

In 1987 we became involved with setting up an Indian classical music course at the Rotterdam Conservatory, which was soon followed by the foundation of a department of World Music. From its inception the policy of this department has been to invite well-known musicians to conduct master classes in vocal and instrumental music. Over the years, many of these artists (not only the Indian musicians) have appeared on the World Music label of Nimbus Records. When Nimbus Records agreed some time ago to make brief recordings of the most prominent ragas by several of our visiting artists, and publish this survey, the project experienced a new lease of life.

Dilip Chandra Vedi's learned and poignant conception of ragas forms the foundation for the explanations in this guide. Buddhadev DasGupta, Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar and Vidyadhar Vyas have contributed to the analytical descriptions as well, and Hariprasad Chaurasia, as the artistic director of our Indian classical music course, has been a continual source of inspiration. We are very grateful to them for collaborating on this project.

We are indebted to everyone at Nimbus Records for their patience and co-operation, and to Klaus Ebeling for loaning us the slides of the exquisite *ragamala* paintings which are reproduced in this book. Many thanks are due to those who helped us in preparing various sections of the manuscript, including Emmie te Nijenhuis for translating the inscriptions of the Gem Palace *ragamala* paintings, Nalini Delvoye and Harold Powers for their many invaluable suggestions, Lenneke van Staalen for checking the music transcriptions, and Ted de Jong for reviewing the *talas* on the recordings. The National Centre for the Performing Arts in Bombay and the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden have also helped to make this guide possible. Last but not least we thank the Ford Foundation for their support of Dilip Chandra Vedi and other researchers through the International Society for Traditional Arts Research, New Delhi, in the initial phase of this project.

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Jazz, Pop & World Music Department
Rotterdam Conservatory of Music

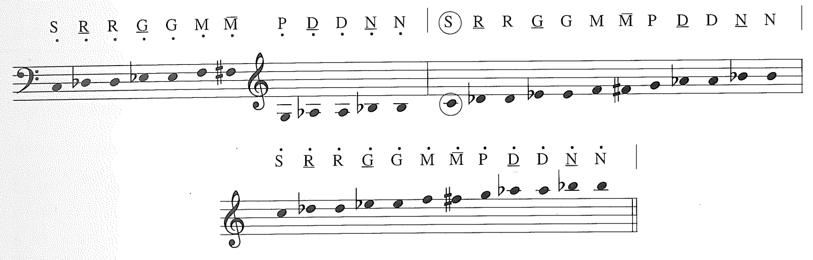
# NOTATION AND TRANSCRIPTION

In Indian music, the seven basic tones or scale degrees *(svaras)* are called *shadj, rishabh, gandhar, madhyam, pancham, dhaivat* and *nishad.* In teaching, singing and notation they are abbreviated to the syllables Sa (सा), Re (रे), Ga (ग), Ma (म), Pa (प), Dha (ध) and Ni (नी). For those not familiar with this fundamental aspect of Indian music, it may be helpful to compare the Indian *sargam* notation with the western sol-fa system, where Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha and Ni are equivalent to do, re, mi, fa, sol, la and ti (or si) respectively.

Indian music uses twelve semitones. The first and fifth scale degrees, Sa and Pa, are unalterable. The other five scale degrees can be altered from their natural position. When Re, Ga, Dha and Ni are lowered by a semitone they are called *komal.* A sharp Ma is called *tivra.* A scale consisting of only *shuddh* (or natural) notes corresponds to the western major scale.

Three registers or octaves are mainly used in performance: *mandra* or low, *madhya* or middle, and *tar* or high. Each octave can be divided into a lower tetrachord or pentachord *(purvang,* from Sa to Ma or Sa to Pa) and a higher tetrachord or pentachord *(uttarang,* from Pa to Sa or Ma to Sa).

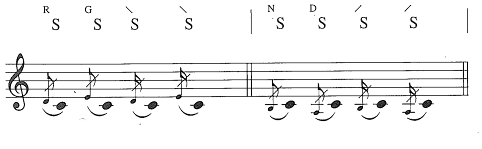
In the Indian notation used here for the ascent-descent of the ragas, their melodic outlines and the transcriptions of the recorded introductions, the syllables Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha and Ni are further abbreviated to S, R, G, M, P, D and N. The flat notes are shown as $\underline{\text{R}}$, $\underline{\text{G}}$, $\underline{\text{D}}$ and $\underline{\text{N}}$, and sharp Ma is given as $\overline{\text{M}}$. High octave notes have a dot over them and low octave notes a dot beneath.


S R R G G M M P D D N N | S R R G G M M P D D N N |
S R R G G M M P D D N N |

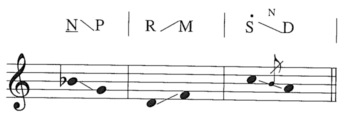
Indian musicians have a great sense of accuracy of intonation. Still, there is no absolute or fixed pitch for the tones. It is generally recognised that the actual position of the semitones, excluding the natural fourth, natural fifth and octave, can vary slightly from one raga to another and from one musician to another. Flat notes can be lowered by approximately 20 cents, and are then called *ati komal* ('very flat'). Similarly, the augmented fourth can become *tivratar* ('very sharp'). Such microtonal variations are usually referred to as *shrutis.*

Although Hindustani music often uses long steady notes, what happens in between the notes, i.e. the manner in which the notes are linked and embellished, is at least as important. In many cases specific ornaments are characteristic features in the performance practice of a particular raga, and therefore define its flavour. Of the many embellishments that can be listed, the following appear in the transcriptions.

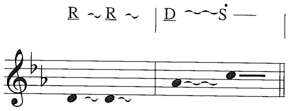
***Kan:*** a single grace note or inflection before or after an articulated tone. In the Indian notation it is written in superscript or as a small rising or falling sign.



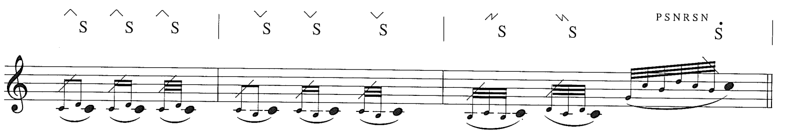
***Mind:*** a slow, continuous slide from one tone to another. It is indicated as an oblique line between two notes.



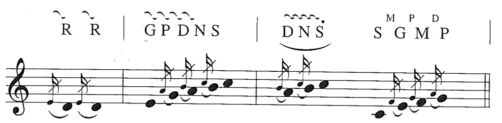
***Andolan:*** a delicate oscillation of a single tone. It is indicated by one or more tilde signs after the note.



***Murki:*** a fast and delicate ornament similar to a mordent, involving two or more tones. It is indicated by a circumflex or inverted circumflex sign before the articulated note or by a zigzag pattern, or by writing the notes used in the *murki* in superscript.

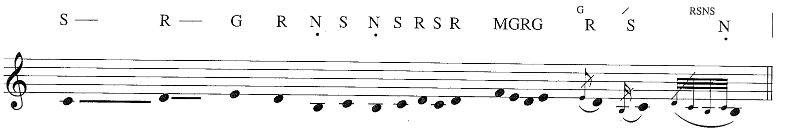


***Gamak:*** a shake on a single tone. It is shown as a wavy pattern over the embellished notes or in superscript.

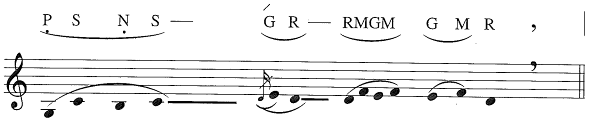


The ascent-descent and the melodic outline of each raga, as well as the transcriptions of the introductory movements of the recordings, are presented in both Indian and western notation. Middle C is given as the tonic, Sa; however, the actual pitch of the tonic of a vocalist or instrumentalist will depend on the pitch range of his or her voice or instrument.

As shown in the following example, we have chosen a type of proportional notation which is commonly used in contemporary western music. To indicate the approximate duration of individual notes, a sustained note is followed by a horizontal line; the faster the passages, the closer the notes are placed to each other.



Finally, a slur links a particular melodic movement, and a comma indicates the end of a phrase or section, or a pause. As is common in Indian notation, the note which appears before the comma is usually sustained.



# WHAT IS A RAGA?

As king Nanyadeva of Mithila (1097-1147) wrote, the variety of ragas is infinite, and their individual features are hard to put into words, *"just as the sweetness of sugar, treacle and candy [...] cannot be separately described, [but] must be experienced for oneself."* [3] He warned his readers that: *"the profoundly learned in raga, even Matanga and his followers, have not crossed the ocean of raga; how then may one of little understanding swim across?"* [4]

In the history of ragas, Nanyadeva's predecessor Matanga played a crucial role. He is quoted by virtually all later scholars as the foremost authority on raga. His *Brhaddeshi,* completed in about 800 AD, is a landmark in that it reconciles the theory of ancient music *(marga),* described in earlier works, with the living music (*deshi*) practised in various regions of India. Matanga's treatise includes musical notations of scales and melodies, and also the first definition of raga:

*"In the opinion of the wise, that particularity of notes and melodic movements, or that distinction of melodic sound by which one is delighted, is raga."* [5]

In other words, ragas have a particular scale and specific melodic movements; their characteristic 'sound' should bring delight and be pleasing to the ear (or the *"minds of men,"* as Matanga puts it elsewhere). But what exactly is a raga? Is it possible to define raga?

Virtually every writer on Indian music has struggled with this fundamental question and usually begins by explaining what it is not. As Harold S. Powers puts it: *"A raga is not a tune, nor is it a 'modal' scale, but rather a continuum with scale and tune as its extremes."* [6] Thus a raga is far more precise and much richer than a scale or mode, and much less fixed than a particular tune. A raga usually includes quite a large number of traditional songs, composed in different genres by the great musicians of the past. But ragas also allow the present-day creative musician to compose new songs, and to generate an almost infinite variety of melodic sequences.

Broadly speaking then, a raga can be regarded as a tonal framework for composition and improvisation; a dynamic musical entity with a unique form, embodying a unique musical idea. As well as the fixed scale, there are features particular to each raga such as the order and hierarchy of its tones, their manner of intonation and ornamentation, their relative strength and duration, and specific approach. Where ragas have identical scales, they are differentiated by virtue of these musical characteristics.

Yet ragas are not static. We shall see that in the fascinating but complex history of ragas, some can be traced back to ancient or medieval times; others originated (or were rediscovered or reinvented) only a few centuries or even a few decades ago. Virtually all ragas, however, have undergone transformations over the centuries, and many of them have fallen into disuse.

Most importantly, a raga must evoke a particular emotion or create a certain 'mood,' which is hard to define, however. As the term raga itself implies, it should 'colour' the mind, bring delight, move the listeners and stimulate an emotional response.[7] In other words, the concept of raga, which has evolved over a period of two millennia, eludes an adequate brief definition. It is an open-ended concept in which the association of a particular raga with a specific emotional state, a season or time of day, though intangible, is as relevant as its melodic structure.

## 1 Raga: its structural features

Ragas must consist of at least five notes.[8] They must contain the tonic (Sa) and at least either the fourth (Ma) or fifth (Pa).[9] Both varieties of a note which can be altered (Re, Ga, Ma, Dha or Ni) should not be used consecutively, although there are some exceptions.[10]

The broadest way to describe a raga is by its characteristic ascent-descent pattern *(aroha-avaroha),* from middle Sa to high Sa, although it should be remarked that not all ragas begin on the middle tonic. When ragas contain all the seven notes of the scale in ascent and descent they are called *sampurna* ('complete'). Ragas with six notes are called *shadav,* and those with five, *audav.* However, there are many ragas in which the number of notes in ascent and descent are not identical, and where one or more notes may be omitted in the ascent (or less frequently in the descent). These are the so-called compound (*sankirna* or *mishra,* 'mixed') ragas, which may even have more than seven notes, when both the natural and flat or sharp varieties of one or more notes are included in either ascent or descent.

A raga may be further characterised by one or more key phrases or motifs (*pakad*), or by a more extensive series of note patterns in the form of a melodic outline (*chalan,* 'movement') which summarises its development. In the raga descriptions we have focused on their melodic outlines, given as a series of consecutive ascending and descending phrases. The notes may be phrased in straight sequences, or in oblique, zigzag (*vakra*) patterns or, more often, a combination of both, since not all ragas permit a direct ascent-descent.

A raga is more dynamic, far more complex and less fixed than a melodic outline; however, a *chalan* composed by a master musician can disclose its basic grammar, and the treatment and melodic context of each tone. Melodic outlines may vary from one musician to another; they appear to depend very much on the traditional songs the artist has in mind when he composes them. Yet there are few differences of opinion about the melodic progression of common and well-known ragas.

Brief as it is, a melodic outline cannot (and is not intended to) reveal the minute and decorative details of a raga performance. It cannot disclose how an artist builds up or releases tension by creating a micro-universe around one tone for some time, or how he increases the tension by creating ever-changing combinations of two, three, four or more notes.[11] But a melodic outline can show the characteristic patterns and motifs of a raga, and in which way it is distinguished from other ragas. It can also show which notes are emphasised, often repeated and sustained, which notes are weak or hidden, and on which notes phrases should end.

A note that is frequently used, or that is held for a long duration is usually referred to as the *vadi* ('sonant' or dominant note). Theoretically there should be another strong note at a perfect fourth or fifth from the *vadi* which is called the *samvadi* ('consonant'). Since there is not always perfect agreement about which note-pair to designate as sonant-consonant in a given raga, we have chosen to use terms such as 'important', 'strong', 'emphasised', 'articulated', 'sustained' or 'pivotal', as well as 'weak' or 'oblique' to denote the various musical functions of tones.

## 2 Raga classification

Most Indian musicologists have made an effort to classify the ragas that were current during their time, so much so that from the 9th century onwards there exists a bewildering number of classification systems, which often contradict each other. Much of what the early scholars wrote about the ancient tone systems (*gramas*) and modes (*jatis* and *grama ragas*), and the systems in which ragas were grouped, deserves our attention, as these writers attempted to reconcile the ancient theory with contemporary practice. However, many of the ragas we hear today seem to have changed so dramatically, that it seems rather futile at this point to trace their origin beyond the 16th century.[12]

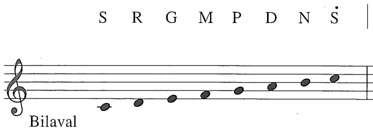
After the early raga classification systems, which were based on the ancient *jatis* and *grama ragas,* came the numerous *raga-ragini* schemes. These appear in literature on music from the 14th to the 19th century. They usually consisted of six 'male' patriarchal ragas, each with five or six 'wives' (*raginis*) and sometimes also a number of 'sons' (*putras*) and 'daughters-in-law.'[13] According to Damodara (c.1625), the system of the legendary Hanuman contained the following ragas and *raginis:*[14]

| **RAGAS** | RAGINIS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| **Bhairav** | Madhyamadi | Bhairavi | Bangali | Varatika | Madhavi |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| **Kaushik** | Todi | Khambavati | Gauri | Gunakri | Kakubh |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| **Hindol** | Velavali | Ramakri | Desh | Patamanjari | Lalit |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| **Dipak** | Kedari | Kanada | Deshi | Kamodi | Natika |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| **Shri** | Vasanti | Malavi | Malashri | Dhanashri | Asavari |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 |
| **Megh** | Mallari | Deshkari | Bhupali | Gurjari | Takka |

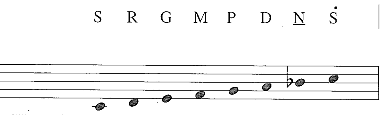
Two centuries after Damodara, N. Augustus Willard observed that there was not only disagreement in the various systems about the main ragas and their *raginis* and *putras,* but that there was also *"very little or no similarity between a raga and his raginis."* [15] This is probably the reason why the *raga-ragini* schemes had largely fallen into disuse by the beginning of the 19th century.

Pundarika, a South Indian musicologist who migrated to the North in the second half of the 16th century, was the first to introduce the southern method of classifying Hindustani ragas according to scale types (*melas*).[16] His method was adopted by contemporary and later authors, including Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936), whose monumental study on Hindustani music and compilation of hundreds of classical songs grouped by raga are undoubtedly the most influential reference works of the century.[17] Bhatkhande's rational and pragmatic raga classification is based on ten heptatonic scale types, called *thats.*

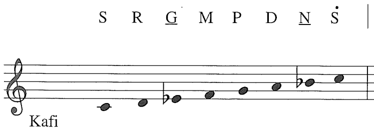
A *that* ('framework'), as Bhatkhande used the term, is a scale using all seven notes including Sa and Pa, with either the natural or altered variety of each of the variable notes Re, Ga, Ma, Dha and Ni. In Bhatkhande's system all ragas are grouped under ten scale types, each of which is named after a prominent raga which uses the note varieties in question.



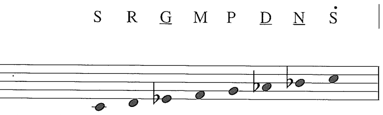
Bilaval



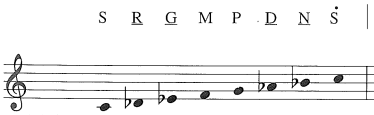
Khamaj



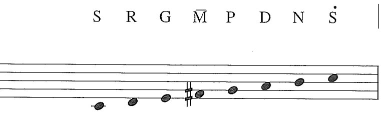
Kafi



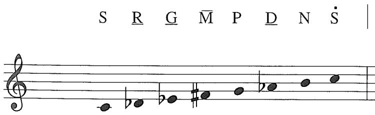
Asavari



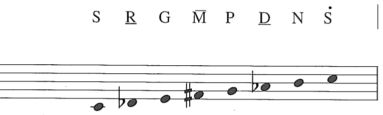
Bhairavi



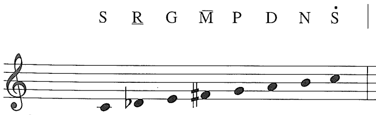
Kalyan



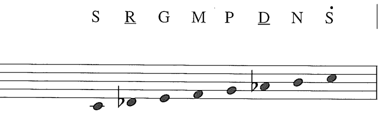
Todi



Purvi



Marva



Bhairav

There are quite a few inconsistencies in this system, however, which Bhatkhande himself was partly aware of. For example, it cannot really accommodate important ragas such as Patdip (SRG̲MPDN), Ahir bhairav (SR̲GMPDN̲) and Madhuvanti (SRG̲M̄PDN), since they have a scale type that does not belong to the ten-*that* system. Again, raga Lalit (SR̲GMM̄D̲N) cannot be classified since it omits the fifth degree (Pa) and has both varieties of Ma. It is also hard to group other ragas with both varieties of either Re, Ga, Ma, Dha and Ni, and there are quite a few of them. In each case one has to decide between two possible *thats*. Furthermore, it has been argued that hexatonic and pentatonic ragas cannot be classified in the ten *thats* since the missing notes make the classification ambiguous.

More importantly, using scale types as the main criteria for his classification and referring to them as 'genera' from which the ragas (conceived of as melodic 'species') could be derived, Bhatkhande obscured the fact that the *thats* are mere skeletons, and not genera in the historical and evolutionary sense of the word. As we shall see, quite a number of ragas have different scale types but are historically and musically related (for instance, raga Bilaskhani todi is classified in Bhairavi *that* but raga Miyan ki todi in Todi *that*). In addition, many ragas grouped together in one scale type by Bhatkhande seem to have no further relationship with one another.

For these and other reasons, many musicians have challenged Bhatkhande's *that* system. Omkarnath Thakur (1897-1967), one of the century's influential music theoreticians and a famous *khyal* singer, for example, rejected the idea of classifying ragas under scale types.[18] Yet no musicologist has so far been able to come up with a raga classification system that has been accepted as widely as Bhatkhande's. Until the history of ragas has been traced through a detailed and comparative study of both historical literature and oral traditions, it will not be possible to replace Bhatkhande's scheme with a more comprehensive and scientific system that reflects the evolutionary development of individual ragas. Needless to say, such a study is long overdue.

In contemporary music practice, there are partial alternatives, grouping some ragas but not the whole range. Ragas with different scales may share a number of characteristic melodic features and motifs. To refer to them, musicians use the term *ang* ('part'). Well-known examples are the Kanada *ang* (G̲MR), Malhar *ang* (M\R, R/P, N̲\P), Bhairav *ang* (M$^{G}$\R̲~S), and Todi *ang* (R̲ ´G̲- `R̲~S).[19] The Bilaval, Kalyan and Sarang *angs* are more difficult to define.[20]

## 3 Ragamala

By the 13th century, the ancient performance traditions had largely vanished. The modes (*jatis*) of a repertory of sacred and dramatic songs had been replaced by ragas, the modes of a repertory of secular songs. The number of ragas had also expanded dramatically. Nonetheless, musicologists still attempted to reconcile the old theory with contemporary practice. The assumption that one or more particular sentiments (*rasas*) were associated with a raga, remained as a convention, and the idea that each raga should be performed at a certain time of day or during a certain season would continue to be an aspect of the theory and practice of North Indian music as well.[21] Often a colour, deity, planet or animal was associated with the raga. This idea was carried through in the *raga-ragini* systems, in which the images of 'male' ragas and 'female' *raginis*, and the emotions they expressed, played a crucial role.

In music literature from the 14th century onwards, ragas and *raginis* are frequently described in a short Sanskrit verse (*dhyana*, 'contemplation').[22] In these poems they are personified as a particular deity or as a hero and heroine (*nayaka* and *nayika*) in various traditional love scenes. Later, these *raga-ragini* images were portrayed in series of paintings, known as *ragamalas* ('garlands of ragas'). As H. J. Stooke puts it: *"Poetry, painting and music were thus brought into a new relationship."* [23]

A *ragamala* album usually contains 36 or 42 folios. The paintings portray a human or divine figure, with or without other persons, in a somewhat stereotyped romantic or devotional setting. Usually the central figure has one or more characteristic emblems. Most paintings are inscribed with the name of the raga or *ragini* they represent, and often also a *dhyana*.

The pictorial descriptions of Shubhankara (c.1550), Meshakarna (1570), and particularly Damodara (c.1625) seem to have had the greatest impact on the *ragamala*-painters.[24] Most likely these authors, or the painters themselves, based their descriptions on earlier, hitherto unknown sources. According to Klaus Ebeling, a great majority of the painters used the following *raga-ragini* system: [25]

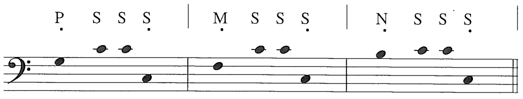
| **RAGAS** | RAGINIS | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| **Bhairav** | Bhairavi | Nat | Malashri | Patamanjari | Lalit |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| **Malkosh** | Gauri | Khambavati | Malav | Ramkali | Gunkali |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| **Hindol** | Vilaval | Todi | Deshakh | Devgandhar | Madhumadhavi |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| **Dipak** | Dhanashri | Vasant | Kanada | Varari | Deshvarari-Purvi |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| **Megh** | Gujari | Gaud malhar | Kakubh | Vibhas | Bangal |
| 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 | 36 |
| **Shri** | Pancham | Kamod | Malhar | Asavari | Kedar |

In the 19th century, *ragamala* painting ceased to be a living art. Many of the ragas and *raginis* that had undergone transformations over the centuries were still classified and portrayed in an iconographically stereotyped fashion. Interestingly, Willard (1834) remarks that the *ragamalas "offered for sale are sometimes so incorrect, that scarcely one of the representations is strictly in conformity with the descriptions given in books."* [26]

Most present-day musicians do not see a direct connection between the poetical descriptions and the painted *raga-ragini* images, and the feelings a particular raga can evoke. However, we have included these images in *The Raga Guide* because of their artistic, philosophical and historical significance, and because we believe they are an important key to understanding the musical meaning of individual ragas.

## 4 Ragas in performance

Hindustani music is essentially solo music and invariably performed with a drone, usually provided by the *tanpura*. The *tanpura* player does not participate in either the exposition of the raga or in maintaining the rhythm, but must keep the drone going independently. Usually the two middle strings of this unfretted long lute are tuned to the tonic and the outer strings to the low fifth and the low tonic (P̣SSṢ). Instead of Pa, the first string can be tuned to the natural fourth (ṂSSṢ) when Pa is omitted or weak; or to the natural seventh (ṆSSṢ) when there is an augmented fourth; or sometimes even to Dha or Ga.



Each of the recordings on the CDs represents a raga performance in miniature. Performing a raga involves a number of movements such as a non-metrical introduction (*alap*), one or more compositions (a vocal *bandish* or instrumental *gat*), rhythmic improvisation (*layakari*) and fast passages (*tana*). The order in which these are presented, and the emphasis placed on them, depend largely on the vocal or instrumental genre as well as the individual style of the performer.

Vocal *dhrupad* recitals usually begin with an *alap*, a fairly extended section without rhythmic accompaniment.[27] In this part, a musician methodically explores the raga through a concentration on distinct phrases, patterns and movements. Also, in the *alap* a musician discloses his knowledge of the details which make up the raga he performs, as well as his musical and improvisatory skills. The exposition starts around the middle tonic, Sa, moves slowly into the low octave, gradually works its way up to the middle and high octaves, and then finally returns to middle Sa. Thus the raga is delineated in the three main octaves.

The *alap* has no text and is therefore the ideal medium for expressing and manifesting the salient features of a raga. One way of performing vocal *alap* is to use abstract syllables such as *te, re, na, ta, nom, tom.* This is referred to as *nom-tom*. An example of this type of *alap* can be heard on the recording of raga Hindol by Vidyadhar Vyas. It serves traditionally as an introduction to a *dhrupad* or *dhamar* song. An instrumental performance may also commence with an elaborate *alap* to develop the raga. On the CD recordings, both Hariprasad Chaurasia and Buddhadev DasGupta present a condensed version of the *alap* before they play and elaborate the composition with *tabla* accompaniment.[28]

The slow, non-metrical *alap*, devoid of a clear pulse, may be followed by movements called *jod* ('joining') and *jhala*.[29] These introduce a rhythmic pulse. The *jod* is played in medium tempo, and the *jhala* in fast tempo, building up to a super-fast speed. In instrumental *jhala,* the left hand plays a slow melody while the right hand creates complex rhythmic patterns on the main and drone strings, in a spectacular display of speed and virtuosity.

Ragas are known to musicians primarily through traditional compositions in genres such as *dhrupad, dhamar, khyal, tappa, tarana* and *thumri.* Good compositions possess a grandeur that unmistakably unveil the distinctive features and beauty of the raga as the composer conceived it. A song (*bandish* or *chiz*) or instrumental composition (*gat*) may be relatively short, but it plays a vital role as a recurring theme in the performance. It should have at least two parts, *sthayi* ('standing, constant') and *antara* ('intermediate'). The *sthayi* portrays the raga's main features in the first part of the middle octave and part of the lower register, and the *antara* covers the higher part of the middle octave to high Sa and beyond.

In *khyal,* most singers explore the *alap* within the bounds of the composition in meter, accompanied by *tabla*.[30] In this type of *alap,* called *vistar* or *badhat,* it is common to use either the long vowel 'a' (*akar*) or the words of the composition (*bol alap*). To commence the performance, the *khyal* singer may sing just a few phrases to give an indication of the structure and flavour of the raga (known as *auchar)* before the *tabla* player joins in. This is the pattern followed by Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar and Vidyadhar Vyas on the recordings, although Vyas also prefaces his introductions with the ascent-descent of the raga.

In the first and main part of a *khyal* performance (usually referred to as *vilambit* or *bada khyal),* the artist chooses a slow or medium tempo song in which the raga is gradually unfolded. A short section of this composition, taken from the first line of the *sthayi,* is used as a refrain to conclude each cycle of the *vistar.* This refrain is referred to as the *mukhda* ('signature') and leads up to the first beat (*sam*) of the rhythm cycle. In other words, after each improvisation the *sam* is a point of culmination and resolution.

After the *vistar* has been completed, some rhythmic improvisations (*layakari*) may be introduced before going into *tana* sequences. Such melodic extensions and patterns can be sung with the words of the song (*bol tanas*), with the long vowel 'a' (in *akar*) or with the names of the notes (*sargam*). Rapid *tanas* become more prominent in the medium to fast composition (*chota khyal*) which concludes the presentation of a raga.

A special variety of *chota khyal* is the *tarana.* This medium to fast composition uses apparently meaningless syllables such as *ta, na, de, re, dim.* The recording of raga Gorakh kalyan by Vidyadhar Vyas demonstrates a *tarana;* here, the singer also uses *nom-tom* syllables to improvise around the composition.

In the highly expressive and ornamented light-classical *thumri* genre, the predominant motif of the song lyrics is erotic or mystical love. *Thumri* compositions usually consist of a *sthayi* and *antara,* and are mainly sung or played in particular ragas, including Bhairavi, Kafi, Pilu, Khamaj, Desh, Tilang, Tilak kamod, Jogiya, Sohini, Jhinjhoti and Pahadi. These ragas allow the musician the freedom to introduce accidental notes and passages from other ragas. The recording of Pilu by Hariprasad Chaurasia is a typical instrumental *thumri.*

The lyrics *(pad)* of vocal compositions cover a wide range of themes, from religious, devotional and philosophical subjects to eroticism and love (especially concerning the amorous exploits of Krishna and the yearnings of the milkmaids), as well as a description of nature, the seasons and music itself. Most *khyals* and *thumris* are composed in Braj bhasha, the western literary dialect of Hindi; others in Avadhi, its eastern counterpart, and Punjabi.[31] Braj bhasha is the language spoken in the area of Mathura, where the Hindu god Krishna is said to have spent his childhood. From the 16th up to the late 19th century it was the most prominent literary language, and even today it is frequently used in song lyrics, although not in its original form.[32]

In India, vocal music has traditionally been allotted a primary position. To a certain extent, instrumental music has tried to follow in its footsteps. Due to their capacity to produce sustained sounds, instruments such as the *sarangi* and harmonium were (and are still) used for accompanying the voice. When the *sarangi* gained a solo status, either the vocal repertoire was faithfully maintained or there was a borrowing from other instrumental genres and styles. Possibly because of their limited scope for imitating the voice, plucked instruments like the *bin*, *sitar* and *sarod* (the instrument played by Buddhadev DasGupta) evolved their own style of playing (*baj*), and major instrumental genres were developed for them.

A composition for *sitar* or *sarod* is known as a *gat*. Those in slow or medium tempo are based on fixed stroke patterns and are called *masitkhani gats*, named after Masit Khan, a late 18th century pioneering *sitar* player-composer. Following on the slow or medium speed *gat*, a fast composition is played which has its origin in the *razakhani gat*, named after the mid-19th century *sitar* player Ghulam Raza Khan. The structure and lively tempo of these *gats* are more conducive to rendering *tanas:* first short ones, and then gradually expanding in length and variety. A fast instrumental composition may conclude with *jhala* movements, commencing at a fairly high speed which continues to accelerate.

## 5 Talas in performance

All the recordings in this collection have rhythm accompaniment on *tabla*. A composition in Hindustani music is set to a particular rhythm cycle *(tala)*, which consists of a fixed number of time units or counts (*matras*) and is made up of two or more sections. The first beat of each section is either stressed (shown by a clap of the hands) or unstressed (shown by a wave of the right hand).

Among the *talas* which are in common use, the sixteen-beat *tintal* (or *trital:* 4+4+4+4) is perhaps the most popular today.[33] Other common *talas* are:

*dadra* - six counts: 3+3
*rupak* - seven counts: 3+2+2
*kaharva* - eight counts: 4+4
*jhaptal* - ten counts: 2+3+2+3
*ektal* and *chautal* - twelve counts: 2+2+2+2+2+2
*dhamar* - fourteen counts: 5+2+3+4
*dipchandi* - fourteen counts: 3+4+3+4
*addha tintal* or *sitarkhani* - sixteen counts: 4+4+4+4

Several of these are represented on the recordings. For instance, Hariprasad Chaurasia plays a composition in medium-fast *jhaptal* in raga Bhupal todi, and a composition in fast *ektal* in raga Bhupali. In Jaunpuri and Sindhura, Buddhadev DasGupta demonstrates the progression of tempo in a performance by playing first a *gat* in (medium) slow *tintal* and then a composition in fast *tintal* to conclude.

The drum syllables of the *tabla* (or other percussion instruments) are known as *bols* ('words'). These are memorised and can be spoken, and refer to the patterns of drum strokes. The basic *bol* pattern which characterises a *tala* is known as the *theka*. The *sam* is the first beat of the cycle, whereas the beat which serves as its counterbalance is called *khali*. Generally, the *khali* is in the middle of the cycle, except in the case of *rupak*, where it falls on the first beat. The visible characteristic of the *khali* is that it is shown by a silent wave of the hand. The *sam* is often shown by an especially emphasised clap. The pattern for medium-fast *tintal* is shown as follows:

| count | 1 2 3 4 | 5 6 7 8 | 9 10 11 12 | 13 14 15 16 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| bol | dha dhin dhin dha | dha dhin dhin dha | dha tin tin ta | ta dhin dhin dha | dha |
|  | clap | clap | wave | clap | clap |
|  | sam |  | khali |  | sam |
| notation | x | + | 0 | + | x |

The tempo (*laya*) at which a composition is performed is specified in relative terms: *vilambit* (slow), *madhya* (medium) and *drut* (fast). As the performance progresses, the speed of rendition goes on increasing. In *layakari* ('playing with rhythm'), rhythmic variations are introduced with reference to the basic tempo. The simplest form of *layakari* involves playing at various tempos such as *daidh* (one and a half times the original speed), *dugun* (double speed), *tigun* (three times the original tempo) and *chaugun* (four times as fast). In more complex *layakaris*, off-beat movements and mixed tempos are used, and in vocal music, the words can be spaced in different ways over the rhythm cycle. A currently popular feature of a raga performance is the *tihai,* a pattern that is repeated three times and ends on *sam* or on the *mukhda*. In many of the recordings a *tihai* is employed to end the recital and bring the raga to a close.

## 6 A performance in miniature

This section is followed by a transcription of raga Alhaiya bilaval (CD 1.4), a *khyal* sung by Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar in fast *tintal* (sixteen counts). It serves as an example of the way a raga can be presented in a performance. Although this recording is only a few minutes long, some of the improvisation techniques of a longer *khyal* performance are included. The following is a description of what is sung, which can be compared with the transcription and followed by listening. The rhythm cycles are numbered in the transcription and referred to by number in the text.

First, Shruti sings an *auchar,* a few phrases to introduce the raga. This is followed by the first line of the composition, *kavana batariya gailo mai,* and the *tabla* player joins in when the first beat of the rhythm cycle comes round. The numbering in the transcription starts from here. One rhythm cycle of *tintal* is given in one line of staff notation, subdivided into four sections of four counts.The numbers from left to right along the bottom of the page are counts one to sixteen for each cycle.

In **cycles 1-10** the vocalist sings through the fixed composition and then starts the improvisation. From here on, phrases are sung to elaborate on the raga, and the improvisation sections are interspersed with a refrain, usually taken from the first line of the song - in this case *kavana batariya,* and sometimes the third word, *gailo.* During the first phrase, sung with the long vowel 'a,' and starting at the end of **cycle 10**, the fifth, Pa, is sustained for ten counts of **cycle 11**. Shruti lets the beginning of the next rhythm cycle go by (count 1 of **cycle 12**), then sings another phrase in long 'a' to lead up to the refrain.

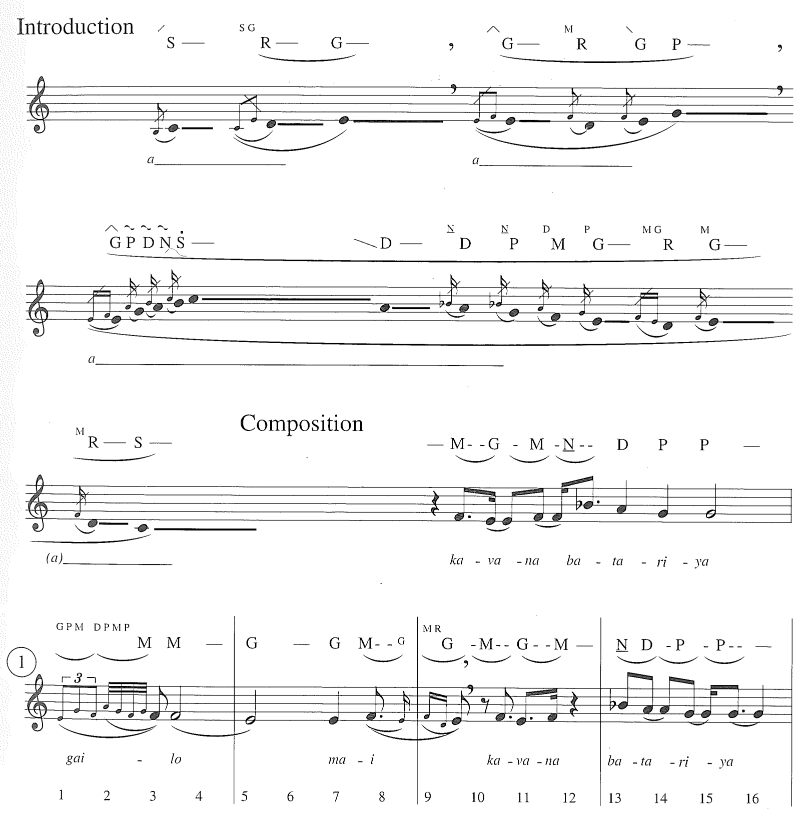
The next improvisation starts from the eighth count of **cycle 13** with the word *batariya;* this way of singing is known as *bol alap.* Shruti sustains the final 'a' of the word to sing a phrase, pauses, and continues the next phrase again with 'a.' This section lasts just over two cycles (13-15), followed by the refrain, up to the end of **cycle 15**. In **cycle 16** the vocalist starts a short *tana,* a fast melodic pattern, which progresses from the third, Ga, to the natural seventh, Ni. The natural seventh is sustained, leading to an improvisation in **cycle 17** which includes the melodic movement $\mathrm{D\underline{N}DP}$, showing the use of the flat seventh in this raga.

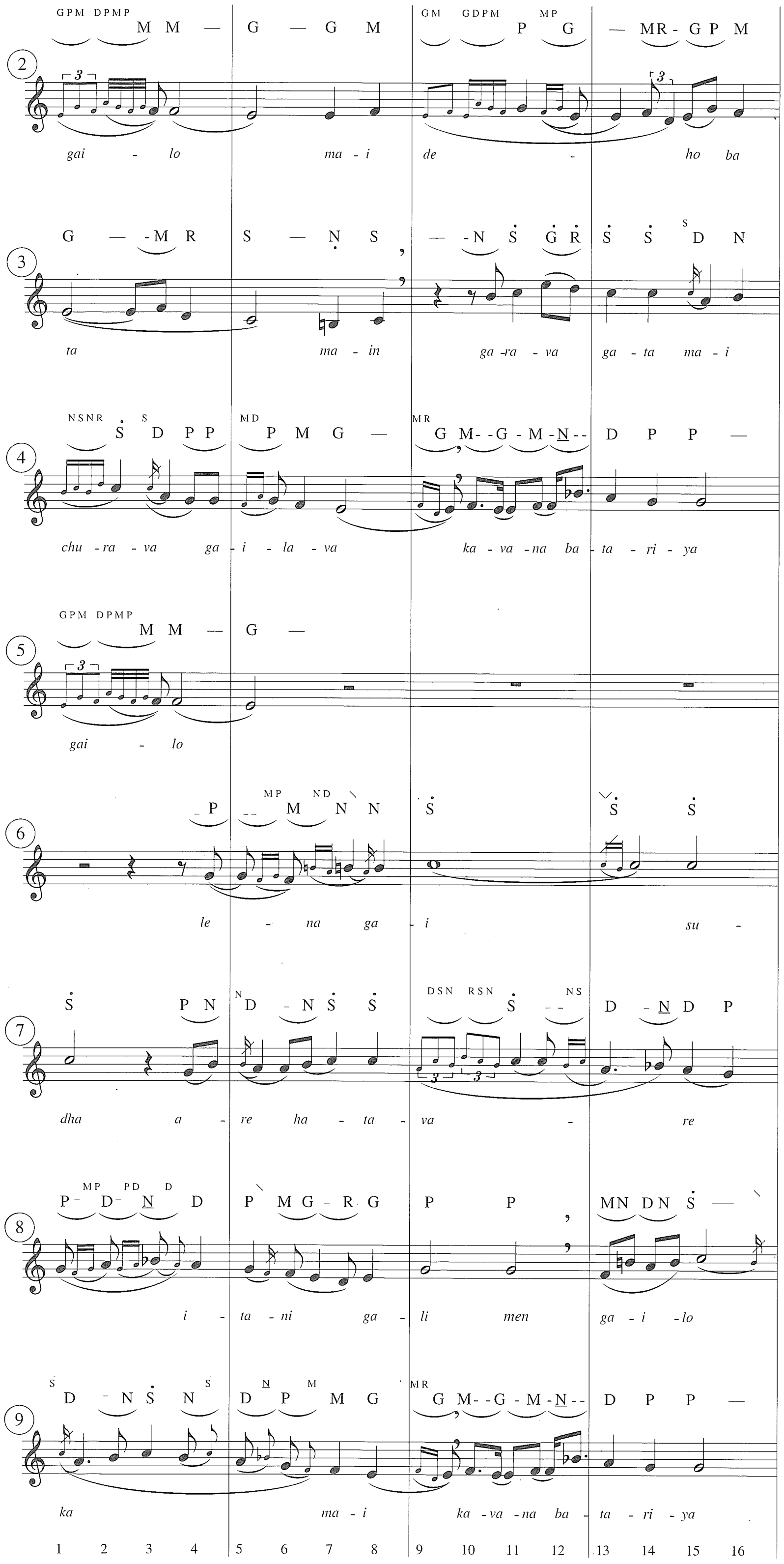
Towards the end of cycle 17, Shruti sings a short *tana* followed by a slower-pace phrase, leading back to the refrain in **cycle 18**. The *sarangi* player fills in the theme for a few beats and the vocalist again starts a phrase with a *tana* from the end of **cycle 19**. In this, Shruti reaches the high tonic, Sa, but continues by sustaining the seventh, Ni, in **cycle 20**. A further *tana* is sung up to high Sa, which is sustained this time in **cycle 21**; in one breath she continues the phrase down the scale to lead into the refrain in **cycle 22**.

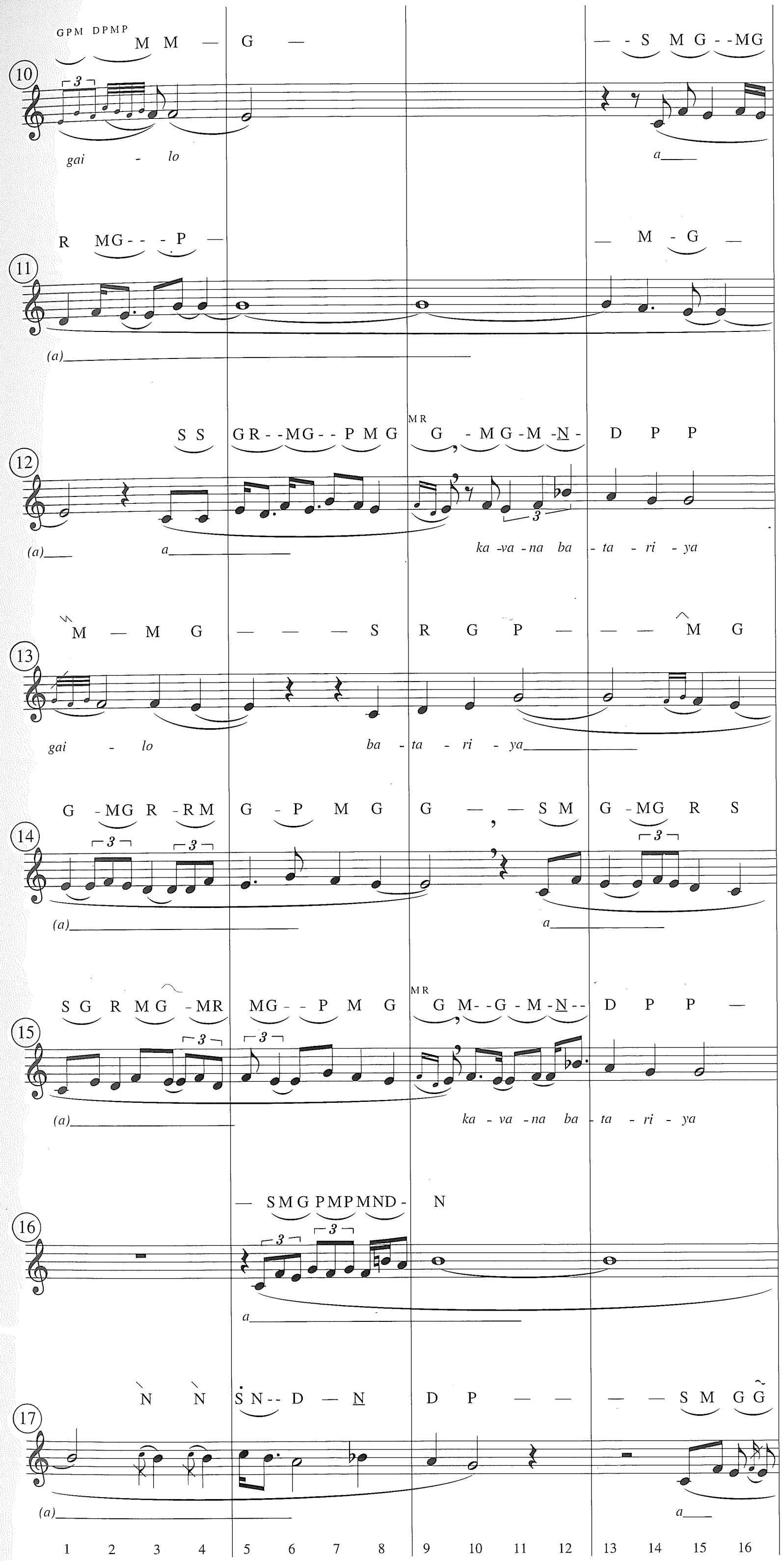
Now Shruti starts to sing longer *tanas.* The type of *gamak* (shaking) ornamentation which she uses in the *tanas* starts to become more pronounced. From **cycle 23** to **cycle 24** she sings a *gamak tana* over 18 counts, reaching up to the third, Ga, above the high tonic. Three more pieces of *gamak tana* improvisations interspersed by the refrain are sung, from **cycles 25** to **29**. The first line of the composition is repeated almost three times, each time slightly varying the set melody, in **cycles 29** to **32**. The performance comes to a conclusion in **cycle 32** with the word *gailo*, the melody ending on the third tone, Ga.

In addition to *gamak tanas,* other kinds of fast passages such as *sargam tanas,* singing the names of the notes, and *bol tanas,* using the words of the composition, are used by vocalists for a *khyal* performance. They may be found on some of the other recordings by Shruti Sadolikar-Katkar and Vidyadhar Vyas.

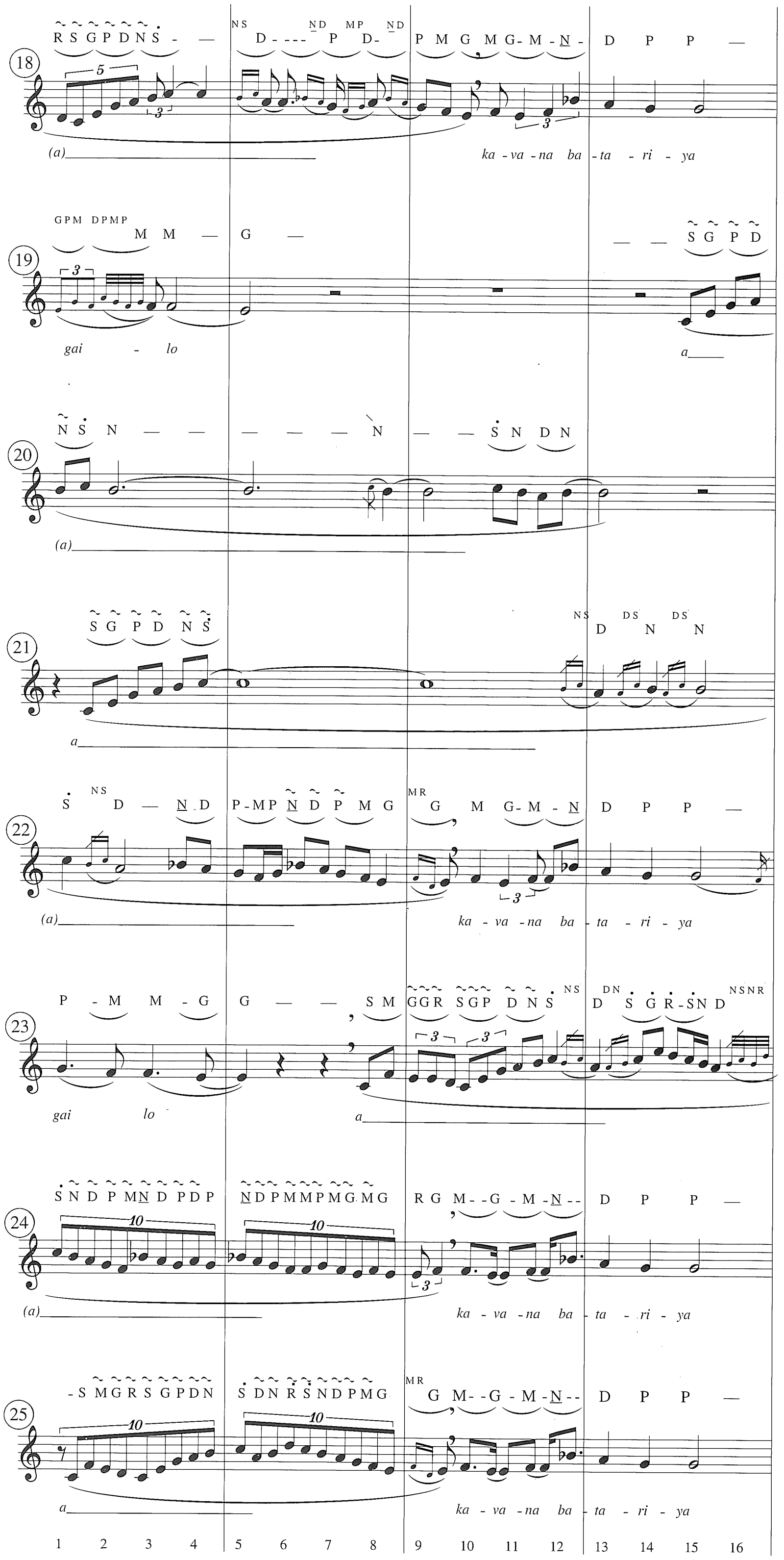
## 7 Transcription of raga Alhaiya bilaval

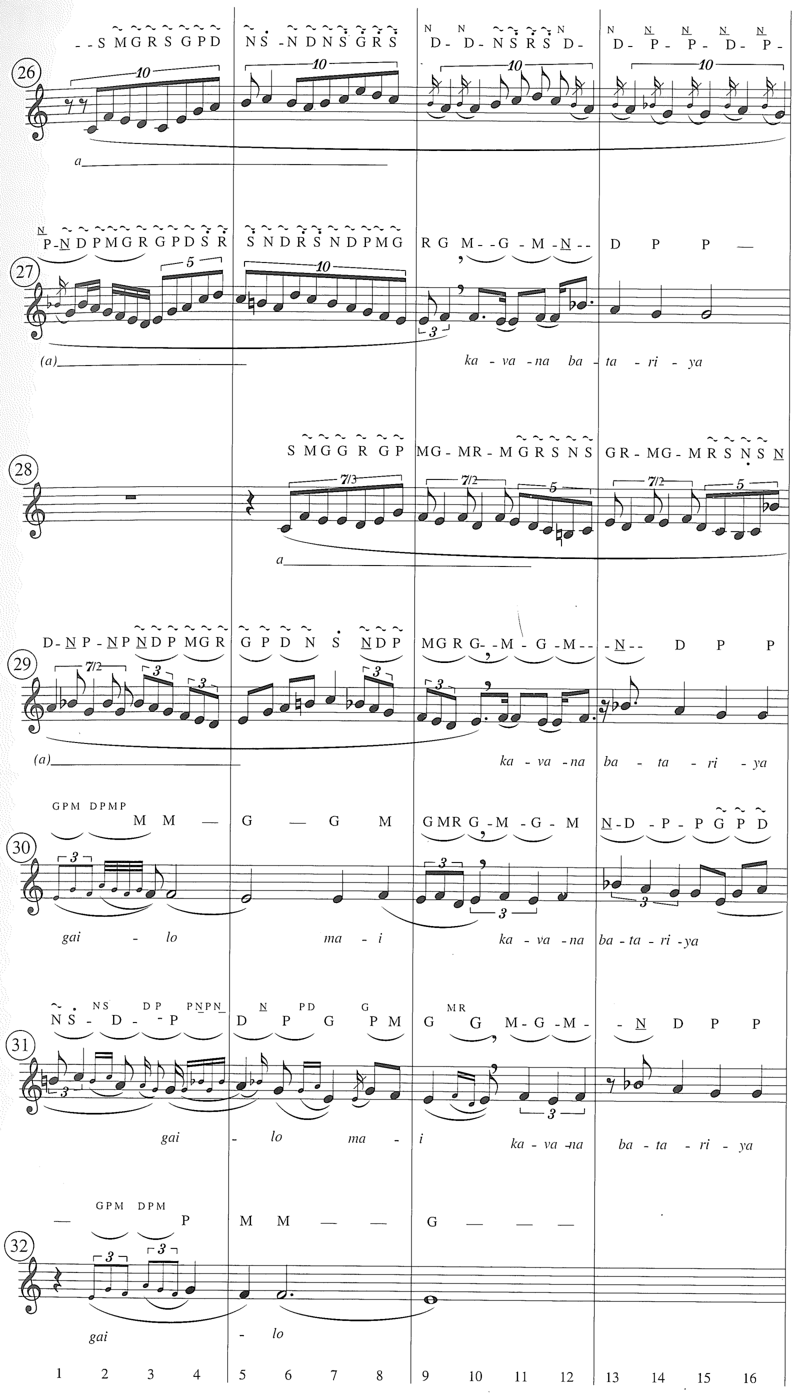

Introduction
S — R — G — , G — R G P — ,
a
a
G P D N Ṡ — D — D P M G — R G —
a
R — S —
Composition
— M- -G - M -N- - D P P —
(a)
ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
GPM DPMP M M — G — G M- -G
MR G -M- - G- -M — N D -P -P- - —
1
gai - lo
ma - i
ka - va - na
ba - ta - ri - ya
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

②
GPM DPMP M M — G — G M GM GDPM P MP G — MR - G P M
gai - lo ma - i de - ho ba
③
G — -M R S — N S , — -N S G R S S S D N
ta ma - in ga -ra - va ga - ta ma - i
④
NSNR S S D P P MD P M G — MR G M- -G - M - N- - D P P —
chu - ra - va ga - i - la - va ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
⑤
GPM DPMP M M — G —
gai - lo
⑥
- P - - MP M ND N N S S S
le - na ga - i su -
⑦
S P N N D - N S S DSN RSN S NS D - N D P
dha a - re ha - ta - va - re
⑧
P- MP D- PD N D D P M G - R G P P , MN DN S —
i - ta - ni ga - li men ga - i - lo
⑨
S D - N S N S D N P M M G MR G M- -G - M - N- - D P P —
ka ma - i ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16



GPM DPMP M M — G — — - S M G - - MG
10
gai - lo a
R MG - - - P — — M - G —
11
(a)
S S GR - - MG - - P M G MR G - M G - M - N - D P P
12
(a) a ka -va -na ba - ta - ri - ya
M — M G — — — S R G P — — — M G
13
gai - lo ba - ta - ri - ya
G - MG R - RM G - P M G G — — S M G - MG R S
14
(a) a
S G R M G - MR MG - - P M G MR G M - - G - M - N - - D P P —
15
(a) ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
— S M G P M P M N D - N
16
a
N N S N - - D — N D P — — — — S M G G
17
(a) a
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16


18
R S G P D N S - — NS D - - - ND P MP D- ND P M G M G- M - N - D P P —
(a)
ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
19
GPM DPMP M M — G — — — S G P D
gai - lo
a
20
N S N — — — — — N — — S N D N
(a)
21
S G P D N S NS D DS N DS N
a
22
S NS D — N D P - MP N D P M G MR G M G - M - N D P P —
(a)
ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
23
P - M M - G G — — S M GGR SGP D N S NS DN D S G R - SN D NSNR
gai lo
a
24
S N D P M N D P D P N D P M M P M G M G R G M - - G - M - N - - D P P —
(a)
ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
25
- S M G R S G P D N S D N R S N D P M G MR G M - - G - M - N - - D P P —
a
ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16


26
- - S M G R S G P D | N Ṡ - N D N Ṡ G R Ṡ | D - D - N Ṡ R Ṡ D - | D - P - P - D - P -
a
27
P - N D P M G R G P D Ṡ R | Ṡ N D R Ṡ N D P M G | R G M - - G - M - N - - | D P P —
(a)
ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
28
S M G G R G P | M G - M R - M G R S N S | G R - M G - M R S N S N
a
29
D - N P - N P N D P M G R | G P D N Ṡ N D P | M G R G - - M - G - M - - | - N - - D P P
(a)
ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
30
GPM DPMP M M — | G — G M | G M R G - M - G - M | N - D - P - P G P D
gai - lo ma - i ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
31
N S - D - - P | D P G P M | G G M - G - M - | - N D P P
gai - lo ma - i ka - va - na ba - ta - ri - ya
32
— GPM DPM P | M M — — | G — — —
gai - lo
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

# THE RAGAS

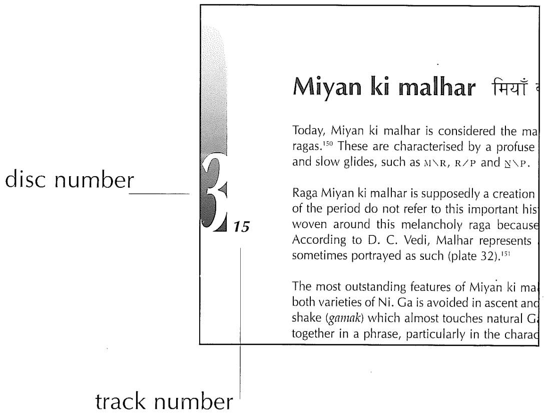
Much of what is written here about the ragas is based on the opinion of the musicians who participated in this project as well as an analysis of their (and other) recordings, and our earlier research with the late Dilip Chandra Vedi. Unfortunately, the recorded interviews with Vedi containing detailed information about the individual ragas were stolen, so that we had to rely on our training, notebooks and memory.

A major source of information on Hindustani ragas is Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande's four-volume *Sangit shastra* (first published in Marathi between 1910 and 1932), and his compilation of classical songs grouped by raga in six volumes, *Kramik pustak malika* (1919-37). These have remained the most influential reference works of the century for music teachers, scholars and performers. It should be remarked, however, that quite a few of the ragas described by Bhatkhande have changed during the period since he completed his study, and that new ragas have emerged.

Among other publications in Indian languages, special mention should be made of Vishnu Digambar Paluskar's *Raga pravesh* (1911-21), Omkarnath Thakur's six-volume *Sangitanjali* (1938-62), Ramkrishna Narahar Vaze's *Sangit kala prakash* (1938), Vinayak Rao Patwardhan's seven-volume *Raga vijnana* (1961-74) and Vimalkant Roy Chaudhury's *Raga vyakaran* (1981). The reader and researcher who wants to understand how the ragas were conceptualised by musicians in different parts of northern India should consult the various books Sourindro Mohan Tagore published at the end of the last century, as well as Krishnadhan Bandyopadhyaya's *Gita sutra sar* (1885), Bhavanrav A. Pingle's *Indian Music* (1894), and Ernest Clements and Krishnaji B. Deval's three-volume *The Ragas of Hindustan* (1918-23). The latter work has recently been reprinted and contains transcribed examples of many ragas.

For the English reader Walter Kaufmann's *The Ragas of North India* (1968) and B. Subba Rao's four-volume *Raganidhi* (1956-66) remain standard works. Alain Daniélou's *The Ragas of Northern Indian Music* (2/1968) is interesting since it represents a particular view on the subject. In *A Comparative Study of Selected Hindustani Ragas* (1991), Patrick Moutal gives a detailed overview of the various opinions expressed by 20th century musicians and musicologists. George Ruckert's first volume of *The Music of the Baba Allauddin Gharana* gives us an insight into the vast knowledge of his esteemed guru, *sarod* maestro Ali Akbar Khan.

Finally, in *Melodic Types of Hindustan* (1960), *The Rags of North Indian Music* (1971) and *The Ragas of Somanatha* (1976), Narendra Kumar Bose, Nazir A. Jairazbhoy and Emmie te Nijenhuis respectively have made a fascinating effort to explain the structure and evolution of ragas. Recently, Richard Widdess has contributed to this type of historical research by exploring *The Ragas of Early Indian Music* (1995).



**Miyan ki malhar** मियाँ

Today, Miyan ki malhar is considered the ma
ragas.[150] These are characterised by a profuse
and slow glides, such as M\R, R/P and N\P.

Raga Miyan ki malhar is supposedly a creation
of the period do not refer to this important his
woven around this melancholy raga because
According to D. C. Vedi, Malhar represents
sometimes portrayed as such (plate 32).[151]

The most outstanding features of Miyan ki ma
both varieties of Ni. Ga is avoided in ascent and
shake (*gamak*) which almost touches natural G
together in a phrase, particularly in the charac

# Abhogi अभोगी

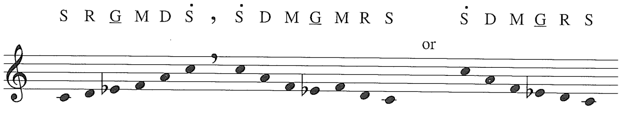
Abhogi is a relatively recent raga which has been borrowed from the classical music of South India. Since the northern Abhogi has movements that are typical for the Kanada ragas, it is often referred to as Abhogi kanada.

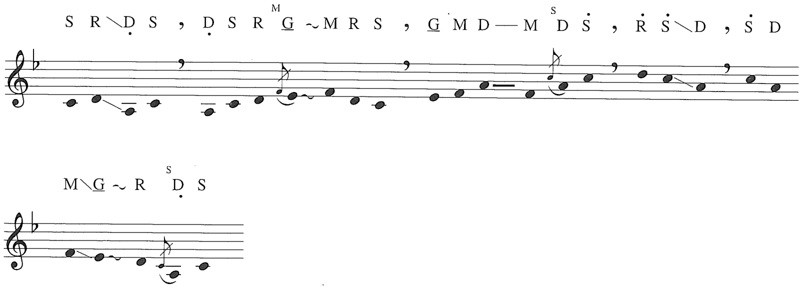
Both Pa and Ni are omitted in this raga. Some musicians drop the Re in ascending patterns as well.[34] Sa and Ma are important notes in Abhogi, but Dha and Re are frequently sustained as well. Flat Ga is often approached from Ma in ascent and has a light oscillation to show the typical Kanada feature. The ascent and descent can be direct unless the distinctive Kanada phrase G̲MRS is used. Still, many musicians tend to return to the tonic as follows: MG̲RḌS.

There are some similarities with raga Bageshri. However, Bageshri also includes flat Ni and a limited use of Pa, which gives it a different flavour.

Time: Early night, 9 - 12.

### *Ascent-descent*



### *Melodic outline*