

# Indian Classical Music And Sikh Kirtan

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In the first part of this work, Dr. Mansukhani has dealt with the origin and history of Indian classical music. He has explained the fundamentals of the system and analyzed competently the different aspects of major *Ragas* and *Talas* of Hindustani music. Though he does not minimize the value of instrumental music, he affirms that vocal music holds an important place in India and as such voice training and modulation must get proper attention.

The second part of the book is devoted to a critical study of Kirtan -- a traditional form recognized by the Indian Sangeet Natak Academy. Kirtan is a special esthetic form which blends the excellence of poetry with high melody. The *Bhakti* poets helped in evolution of Kirtan. The Sikh Kirtan is a notable contribution of the 10 Gurus.

Though Sikh Kirtan may not be called a separate school of Indian music, it is generally accepted as a distinct tradition by musicologists. The Gurus enriched devotional music both in classical and folk styles. Their Shabads combined the beauty and significance of inspirational poetry with melodic excellence. They produce a feeling of the super conscious and link human consciousness with the supreme reality.

The author examines the different styles of Sikh Kirtan in the special features of the *Ragas* used in the Sikh scripture. For the first time the, the notation of 31 *Ragas of Guru Granth Sahib* has been supplied with necessary particulars. The book is a work of research on an important musical tradition and deserves a place on the shelves of public and private libraries.

**Forward - Preface - Introduction - About the Author**

## Foreword

It is rather odd, but music seems always to lie low in most of the religions of the world. Doubtless it is used in some, as a part of worship, but strictly and always as just one of the aids. Islam, of course, is quite forthright and throws it right out as sinful. Hinduism says a great deal; concepts such as Nada, Brahman, Anahata Nada and so on, but does very little in practical terms, leaving the subject ambiguous and unresolved.

In the Indian North, at a certain stage, music had fallen into such disrepute that until the first few decades of this brought music out in the open and pioneered a movement to give the art respectability and dignity, it could only be taught furtively in the seclusion of shuttered Barsatis and gloomy Tay-Khanas and at dead night.

Even in the Karnatak school where a great deal is made of the saintliness of its composers, music has never been a direct means of formal worship. With the utmost care and circumspection the Karnatak school preempted the use of music as means of formal worship by grammarising it root and branch. So that even during an Arangetram, vis-a-vis with the deity, Karnatak music continues to remain a performance in which technical virtuosity is the chief preoccupation of the qualified student. The sad despairing call of Tyagaraja, asking to be quenched of his thirst for Rama becomes a frond of leaping Solfeiges, syncopations and cross rhythms, masses of intricate Gamakas and exploding Arpeggios.

Sikhism is perhaps the only religion in the world that uses music as its chief mode of worship, where music is prayer, is High Mass, is meditation and offering. Firmly it makes the Kirtan and the Seizing into an unmediated and direct pathway to God, the shortest and the quickest means of reaching the true and terminal destination of man's journey through time, after which there are no more journeys to undertake, no more births to redeem. One reason why this happened only in Sikhism, was because its founder was a musician.

Mirabai, Kabir, Tyagaraja, Dikshitar, Tulsi, Sur, Dhyaneswar, or Chandi were all great musicians and saints but none of them founded a religion, whereas Guru Nanak did.

In the West, in the Christian religious tradition, music does play a part in even song, in hymnody and psalm, but this is intended to exhilarate and exalt. There is no evidence in the West of singing saints whose music and saintliness were equal and interchangeable. Bernadette, we are told had a contralto, and St. Anselm sang in a powerful countertenor, almost like a choir boy. But that was all desultory, occasional. To some extent, Western music in its technique and conception, preempts such an internal and mystical use of music. Try to visualise Mozart's "Te Derm" or a piece like "Ave Verum Corpus" or the Mass in D producing on a Christian congregation the kind of rapture or spiritual abandon which the Cardens and the Shabads are intended to produce and often do.

Barring Sikhism, the religions of India seemed to have stood in fear of the power of music. By omitting to make a mention of music as a direct mode of attaining the Godhead, it rarely did not want to use music without first sanitising it, making it all into Raga and Tala Vidya and offering it through the complex drill and format of the performance. So that even where a tradition almost exclusively of singing saints exists as in the Karnatak school where not a whisper of an earthly or a profane concern is allowed to enter music, it becomes difficult to experience the piety and the vision of Tyagaraja without having to fight your way through thickets of Swaraprastharas, through whole gaggles of grace and trills, through too much obscuring skill and craftsmanship. So that you have a situation in which even after the most exalted concert, the listener gets Bhakti only at second hand, slightly shopworn and tried on by too many customers.

In Sikhism this danger is recognised and precautions are taken. It prescribes as one of the conditions of leading a Satsang that the Kirtan should never be made into a performance. The Raga in which the Kirtan is composed is required to be used cautiously like the fire in a kitchen, properly controlled, properly directed. If the Raga flares into a bonfire, the meaning of the Kirtan would be burned to a crisp. So that Raga and the Tala have to be used as a means whereby the magic spiritual awareness may be experienced. That is all. If the Raga and the Tala should become too assertive, they would manipulate the text and its layered meaning and its measure will succumb to the rigid caprice of the Tala.

If all the separate components of our music are to be muted in Kirtan and if it may not become a performance, wherein will lie a Sikh Kirtan's rapture? How will it penetrate the filters of the mind and enter the soul? To this question the customary answer is the faith, the holiness and the purity of the singers's heart. This answer will silence any questioner. To the challenge of faith, holiness and purity there are no takers. But what we often tend to forget is that there is available in our musical tradition a well prescribed technique of working indirectly towards attaining the gift of producing this rapture without getting too deeply involved and sidetracked by Raga and Tala. This technique is Swara Sadhana. A Sikh Kirtan's power and purpose cannot be served, if the singer has no knowledge or

experience of Swara Sadhana. He cannot be mere novice in Swara without sentimentalising the whole thrust and the power of Sikh worship and making it maudlin.

The result of Swara Sadhana is not the same as having a good voice or being perfectly surel. The result of Swara Sadhana lies beyond the stage of being surel and is irrelevant to the knowledge of Raga. Without prior Swara Sadhana which involves devotion, the Sikh hymnody has no more spiritual value as worship than singing a purab-ang Bhajan.

When Prabhu Nanak Guru opened the eyes of Sajjan Thug, it was the power of Nanak Guru's Swara that cleansed the soul of the bandit. The same power brought rain and fire and stopped marauding elephants mid-step when Tan-Sen sang. The letter used his Swara Sadhana in the service of music and Guru Nanak for the soul. The power that dissolves egos, opens the narrowing arteries of a dying soul, the awakens from their spiritual deaths the walking cadavers of the cities and the towns like Duzdan, is the power of Swara Sadhana, the practice and the attainment of which gives all the qualities of soul and faith that makes a good Sikh Kirtan singer--the Ragi.

But Swara Sadhana is no easy task. One of the reasons why so few if any, make Kirtan, singing into the baptism of understanding and awareness which it is supposed to be. It is solitary, pulverising work on the swaras if the musical scale and it is enters your utterance. This is able to transform the listener by removing the Vibhakti from the heart and letting the Bhakti shine through. Let us not make any mistake about it; the power of the swara is the secret of the Kirtan, its mind-splitting power and the holiness about which we have heard so much and so often.

The swara hides within the musical note. By single minded Sadhana on the notes of the scale, the captured swara engulfs the being of the singer and his utterance thereafter is able to melt, according to Tyagaraja, the hardest substance in creation, which is the human heart. A melted heart is the clue that tells the musical sleuth that a Kirtan singer who is a Sadhak of the swara had passed that way.

Swara sadhana is not esoteric nor hidden. It is only as difficult as the common music-practice that makes a great musician, except that it is not the same kind of work and people do not practise it for the same reason. There are two irreducible minimum requirements for Swara Sadhana. The first condition is the total absence of personal ambition in the Sadhak. The Sadhak of the Swara is not asking to be a musician. It is swara he is after and not music. The second condition is that he should want nothing while he is engaged in working for the swara, beyond the secret of the swara he is seeking. This state of mind frees him from a limiting time-frame. His life then becomes his time. He will never therefore be in a hurry to reach his goal and he will know without having to reason that if he reached a certain level in Sara Sadhana, everything else will come to him naturally, without his wanting or trying for them. He must know this as a truth. Finally his work on the scales must be kept completely free from the slightest trace of Bhava or Rasa. Consequently he cannot acquire the swara through Raga.

There is enough evidence to show that Indian society feared and distrusted the swara's utterance. The reasons are obvious if we recognise that the purpose of religion is not merely to show man the place of God in his life but also to protect and threat to society. A swara-obsessed singer has always been a threat to social stability, to the common daily concerns of life. For such a man, song will distract the tiller from the fields, the girl from her proper love of the trivial, of gold, baubles and luxuries, her need for a man and a home, will distract the crafty usurer from his money, the children from obedience and respect for the old. Is there any wonder then that music was almost outlawed in the North at a time when perhaps there were too many swara-maddened singers in the country and why Tyagaraja's compositions bristle with clever Sangathis and brilliant musicals gymnastics. Nothing could be More devastating if swara were pursued by the many rather than by the very few and only at long intervals in man's history on earth.

This is one reason why music does not play a key role in religious worship of the formal kind. Hidden away in the raga and the tala and served up by merely surel Bhajans and Kirtans, these efforts become safe for daily use. There is no danger of our present-day Bhajans doing to people what was done to Sajjan Thug. The outlaws and highway men of our society will come to no harm. Spirituality thus has become a safe bet.

Dr. Mansukhani's book is a very important one. For the first time Sikhism's heart-rending music has been discussed between the covers of a formal book on Indian Classical Music. To the perceptive reader, this directly and lucidly written work should be a clarifying and edifying experience. I would like this book to go forth and perform its very vital task for those who have some experience of worship and some of music, but have not known where they meet.

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## **PREFACE**

Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani has done a tremendous amount of research and a worth job which will serve to educate the Eastern as well as Western mind in the realm of music-the most exalting and divine gift the planet earth has to offer.

He has analysed and classified many years of Indian music and has delved deep into the history of thousands of years of musical heritage, which must uniquely go to his credit. I have observed him examining, working and researching days and months and years to put this work out, and it is a very excellent work for those who want to understand music in the essence of their soul and in the projection of their mind and consciousness.

Dr. Mansukhani deserves great appreciation for bringing to the people of the world a great work on Sikh Sacred Music with a deep understanding and extensive research.

Siri Singh Sahib Bhai Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa Yogiji  
*Los Angeles 19th May, 1982.*

# INTRODUCTION

India is a land of music. It is the warp and woof of her life and being. It is the quintessence of her culture and philosophy. It sums up the genius of a people rich in tradition and fine arts. In ancient India, musical chant was the vehicle of piety and spiritualism. In medieval India, folk and secular music got as much attention and response as the sacred music of the sages, saints and sufis. In fact, all sections of the community were involved in music. According to the old classical tradition, the whole year was divided into six musical seasons of about two months each. During summer (May and June), Bhairava raga was intended to be sung, in rainy season (July and August), Megha raga, in autumn (September and October) Panchama raga, in the late winter (January and February), Sri raga, and in spring (March and April) Vasanta/Basanta raga.

In addition to the seasonal allocation of ragas, it was believed that certain ragas were particularly suitable for certain timings in the day or night. Ragas were classified round the clock. The twenty-four hours were divided into eight Pahars (periods) of three hours each, and as such melodies were earmarked for early dawn, early morning, late morning, after-noon, evening, early night, late night and after mid-night.

As we move from the valley of Kashmir to Kanya-Kumari, or go from the western desert of Rajasthan to the hill tribes of eastern Assam, we hear different kinds of melodies and rhythms, both of classical and folk varieties. The baul singers of Bengal will move us to tears with their devotional folk melodies. The harvest singers of the Punjab will throw us into bursts of laughter with their gay and jaunty tunes. The Vaishnavite singers of Brindaban will recite the leela (activities) of Radha and Krishna with a haunting sweetness. The Muslim Qawals of Lucknow will infect us with their clapping rhythms. More-over, the variety of their musical instruments is amazing. The Kashmiri player of Santoor (dulcimer), the Punjab farmer with his Dadh (small hand-drum) and sarangi (a small stringed instrument), the baul singer with his Gopi Yantra, the Tamil singer with his ghatam (earthen pot), the Kannada singer with his Saraswati Veena, the Lucknow player of Sarod display only a few varieties of tuneful and rhythmical instruments available in the country. As we move from one region to another, from one province to the next, the nature and style of music as well as the instrument change. The rich and the poor with their sophisticated and simple instruments respectively enjoy music in their own way. What matters is the spirit of the song and the rasa and enjoyment of it all. Whatever one goes in India one finds people relishing music and even in a village, one will come across an artisan or farmer listening to the music broadcast by the All-India radio. Sangeet sammellans and Kirtan-darbars (sessions of professional musicians) attract thousands of people. This clearly shows that music is woven intimately into the life and genius of the people.

Music is generally divided under three categories:

- i. Classical music (Shastrya Sangeet)
- ii. Light classical music (Bhav Sangeet)
- iii. Folk music (Deshi Sangeet)

Music which is sung or played according to the rules of the classical ragas in the field notes, rhythm and tempo is called classical music. Light classical music is less pure and rigid than classical music and does not require the knowledge of classical ragas and rhythms on the part of the audience. Bhajans, some shabads, film-songs, Lori and Dholak-kay-geet are sung in light classical style. In such music there is proper blending of poetry, tune and tempo, but less attention is paid to the purity of the raga and more to the content of the songs.

Folks music is the popular kind of regional music based on simple tunes. It pertains to the events of every-day life. It is generally meant for public entertainment and may be secular or religious. The tunes are called Dharna or Taraz. Jotiyen-de-shabad are the most popular form of folk music in the Punjab.

Ragas are like roses, different in colour, contour, flavour and fragrance, but they have something in common, namely musical notes and movements. Just as a gardener can recognise the different kinds of roses and tell their names and characteristics, in the same way a musician or instrumentalist can describe the features of each raga and what appeals to him. Indian music is not a technique but a creative and evocative art. However, a beginner must listen to classical music to cultivate his own taste. By and by, he will get acquainted with the peculiarities of ragas—their sounds, nuances, and rhythm, in short their individual characteristics.

This book deals primarily with the classical music of north India called Hindustani music. The references to the music of south India (Karnatak music) are scanty and marginal, because of the scope of the book and the restrictions of space.

The book has been written with the object of providing an introduction to the basic principles of Indian music to enable one to appreciate our rich musical heritage. Fundamentals of music, foundations of melody, principles and

kinds of rhythm, forms of vocal music and common musical instruments have been adequately covered. Besides this, an effort has been made to interest the western reader in the characteristics and beauties of north Indian classical music. Some parts of the manuscript were shown to English and American readers, and their response was quite appreciative. I hope the western readers will find the book stimulating and useful.

One important feature of the book is its exposition of Sikh sacred music. This school of music is known as Gurmat Sangeet or Kirtan. So far Gurmat Sangeet (singing of Gurbani) according to the traditions of the Sikh Gurus (1469-1708) has not received the attention it deserves. Therefore the characteristics of Gurmat Sangeet, and the ragas of Sri Guru Granth Sahab along with Indian notation have been given in detail. It is also felt that the book will stimulate some scholars to undertake research in the ragas of the Sikh scripture.

I am grateful to those who have offered me encouragement and advice in the preparation of this book. My thanks are specially due to Kendri Singh Sabha, Amritsar, for the pictures included in this work. I acknowledge my gratitude to Amarjeet Kaur of Los Angeles and Ragi Avtar Singh Gurcharan Singh of Delhi for details of notation and to those writers whose works, listed in the bibliography, have been consulted.

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London

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About the Author: Gobind Singh Mansukhani



Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani is a well-known educationist and a scholar of Sikhism. He has written a dozen books on Sikh history and religion. During his early years, he got interested in Hindustani music and learn it at the feet of his master-- Swami Brahmanand of Sind. This well-known vocalist was invited to saying at different sessions of the all India music conference.

Dr. Mansukhani is a veteran classical singer and has specialized in Sikh sacred music. He knows a number of Shabad-rites of Gurmat Sangeet. He has participated in many Kirtan Darbars and also judged the performances of musicians in the Kirtan competitions. He has lectures on Sikh Kirtan indifference cities in the USA, Canada and UK.

## **PART I: Indian Music**

## Chapter 1: Origins and History

### Origin and History

*Indian music is the product of centuries of innovation and development of melody and rhythm*

The origin of Indian music lie in the cultural and spiritual values of our country and go back to the Vedic Age. In those times, music was handed down orally from the *guru* (teacher) to the *shishya* (disciple). The art was called *sangeet* and included vocal music, instrumental music and dance. The great sages who dwelt in *ashramas* (hermitages) imparted instruction to their students who lived with them on the premises. The art of music was regarded as holy and heavenly. It not only gave aesthetic pleasure but also induced a joyful religious discipline. Devotional music was intended to take man towards

God and give him an inner happiness and self-realisation[1]. Subsequently this art branched off into three separate stream: vocal music (*geet*), instrumental music (*vadya*) and dancing (*nirtya*).

#### **Vedic Period (2500 B. C. to A. D. 200)**

The arts of vocal music, instrumental music and dance were quite popular in this age. Even the common man had some knowledge of these arts. People in general offered their musical prayers to their deities, in the morning and evening. Sessions of music called *sman* were held frequently and people of all classes participated in these assemblies. Artist were men and women of good character and were neither greedy nor frivolous. Different types of instruments like *ban* (similar to *veena*), *karkari* (somewhat like a lyre), *nadi* (flute) and *aghati* (cymbals) were used as accompaniments to vocal music. The two great epics-*Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* (c 800 B.C.) contain references to various musical instruments. *Marga* classical music was popular in these times. Panini (500 B.C.) has mentioned the players of the *mridanga*, *madduba* and *gharjhira* and the concerts of vocalists and dancers[2]. Musical concerts were held in the court of King Chandra Gupta Maurya (322 B.C.)[3]. All this indicates that music was quite popular and was regarded as a valuable achievement.

#### **Classical Period (A. D. 100-1200)**

The first authentic book on musicology was written in the second century A.D. by Bharata. His work entitled *Natya Shastra* deals not only with dance and music but also dramaturgy. He mentions three types of *grama* (scale), *Shajda grama*, *madhyama grama* and *gandharva grama*. The *gandharva* includes three categories-sacred music for temples and religious ceremonies, royal music for princely courts, and theatrical music for dramatic performances. He has mentioned the 22 *shruties* (microtones), *svaras* (notes), *moorchana* (scales ) and 18 kinds of *jatis* (ancient melodic schemes).

The period of the Gupta Kings (320-495) was conducive to the development of music. Emperor Samudra Gupta was himself a musician and a parton of arts. His son Chandra Gupta Vikramaditya ( 375-413), patronised group of poet and musicians at his court. Kalidasa, his poet laureate and playwright, made significant contributions to criticism on music, musical instruments and dance in his plays. His masterpiece, *Shakuntalam*, contains one song in *sarang* (*madhyamadi*) [4].

Matanga, a talented musicologist of the sixth century, wrote a comprehensive book on music entitled *Brihadeshi*. He explained the raga system which was in vogue and was quite developed. He made a distinction between *marga* and *deshi/desi raga*. While *marga* music is the classical type used for worship and devotion, and *deshi* music is the secular kind intended to delight the common man. He also furnished the characteristics of many *ragas*. Not much progress was made during the regime of the Rajput rulers of India. The greatest poet and musician of the twelfth century was Jayadeva whose *Geet Govinda* is well known. He had his disciples danced to his music in their ecstatic devotion to Lord Krishna.

### Medieval Period (A.D. 1200-1800)

During the thirteenth century Sarangdev (1210-1247) wrote a scholarly manual of music called *Sangeet Ratnakar*, in which he brought up-to-date the musical development of the centuries right from Bharata onwards. He explained different musical modes and terms and vocal techniques of *sharaj grama* and *madhyam grama*. He divided the octave into 22 equal interval called *shruties*.

Then came the Muslim invaders from outside the frontiers of North India. Generally they did not take kindly to music, though some of the Muslim rulers patronise professional singers in their courts. However, *Sufi* mystics and some unorthodox Muslims continued to have a soft spot in their hearts of music. One of the notable musicians in the court of King Allauddin Khilji was Amir Khusro (1253-1325) who composed a number of songs in praise of his religious preceptor, Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulya. He introduced new forms of music like *khayal*, *taran* and *qawali*, and new *talas* like *farodast*, *jhoomra*, *pahalwan* and *theka-qawali*. He also developed new instruments like the *sitar* and *dhol*.

In the fifteenth century, Kavi Lochan wrote an important treatise called *Raga Tirangani*. This is considered a reputed work on Hindustani music. He divided the existing *ragas* under twelve scales (*thath*). Swami Haridas, the saint-musician of Brindaban, was reputed singer of *Dhrupad* and he taught Tansen and Bajju Bawra. Another great musician and parton of singers with Raja Mansingh Tomar (1486-1516) of Gwalior who was an expert in *dhrupad* style and also made certain variations in classical *ragas*.

During this period, Indian music branched off into two main channels, following roughly the geographical division of the northern and southern parts of the country. The music of North India was called *Hindustani Sangeet* and that of South India was called *Karnatak Sangeet*. At this time the *Bhakti* movement (love-worship of God) gathered momentum and devotional music became very popular. Kabir (1440-1518), Tulsidas, Soordas and Chaitanaya Mahaprabhu (1486-1533) composed many *bhajans* (hymnal composition) which were sung in homes and temples. The Sikh Gurus (1469-1708) composed hundreds of hymns called *Shabads* to be sung in classical *ragas*. This sacred music called *Gurmat Sangeet* or *Kirtan* has a beauty and fervour of its own. The catholic classical music to the ethos of devotional poetry. They also used the elements of folk music to inspire the masses towards holy living and meditation on divinity. Part II of this book deals with the characteristics and contents of Sikh sacred music. One of the most important musicians of the sixteenth century was Tansen (1506-1589) who was patronised by Emperor Akbar. He enriched the *dhrupad* style of singing with various flourishes and embellishments. He also introduced some new *ragas* such as *Mian-ki-todi* and *Darbari Kanra*. His direct descendants who played on the *rabab* were known as *Rababigharana* and his son-in-law's descendants who played on the been (*veena*) were called *Beenkar-gharana*.

During the seventeenth century Venkatamukhi wrote an important volume on Karnatak music in 1640 entitled *Chaturdandi-Prakashka*. He devised a scheme of seventy-two parent scales, *melas*, using all the twelve notes. He furnished a fine exposition of Karnatak music and its prevalent forms.

Hindustani and Karnatak music differ in degree but not in kind. Though some of the *ragas* in both the systems are the same, there are some others which differ only in nomenclature and articulation. Karnatak music is generally more pure, precise and systemised than Hindustani music. The latter is eclectic, having absorbed the influence of its Muslim singers. It enjoys the freedom of experiment which is its greatest strength. In theme and in practice, it has a flexibility which is rare in Karnatak music. The latter is considerably preoccupied with spiritual and mystic content. Instrumental music in the Karnatak system strictly follows the vocal pattern. There is greater use of drums and mixing of tempo of Karnatak music than in Hindustani music.

However in northern India, the classification of *ragas* was modified on the *rag-ragini* pattern. There were six main *ragas* who had their wives called *raginis*. The *ragas* displayed the masculine traits of courage, wonder and anger, while the *raginis* exhibited feminine qualities of laughter, love and melancholy. This was represented by a family-tree called *Ragamala* (necklace of garland of *ragas*). Gangli listed 17 *Ragamals* in Sanskrit, Hindi and Persian including some anonymous ones [5]. Some of the texts of *Ragmals* contain pictures of *ragas* and *raginis*. Dr. Virsingh mentioned eleven kinds of *Ragamals* based on Shiva, Bharata, Hanuman and other systems [6]. There is a *Ragamala* at the end of the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, cataloguing the six *raga* families, which is quite different from the previous *Ragamalas*.

Later on, artists created *ragmalas* which combined music, poetry and painting. These paintings were "visual representations of musical modes (*ragas*) which were envisioned in divine and human forms by musicians and poets." Some *ragas* and *raginis* were regarded as human beings with individual characteristics. A *raga* became a man with a definite personality, dress and feeling; similarly a *raginia* was a woman of a certain complexion, dress and emotion. These were called *Ragamala miniatures* [7] and were done by painters of the Rajput School, Moghul School and Kangra School and can be found exhibited in some of the major art-museums all over the world.

### Modern Period (1800 onwards)

During the British period, western interest was roused in classical India music and it began to be studied from a scientific point of view. Captain A.N. Williard published *A Treatise on the Music of Hindustani* in 1834, giving the characteristics of the music of North India. Karnataka music was abundantly developed by Tyagaraja (1767-1847), Shastri, Dikshit and others. Tyagarja composed thousands of kritis (devotional songs) and created new melodies, thereby elating the standard and prestige of Karnatak music.

Bengal did not lag behind in the development of Hindustani music. Raja S.M. Tagore, a musicologist of repute, wrote a number of books, his most important being *The Universal History of Music*. His son Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) gave a new direction and dimension to Indian music. He knew both western and Indian music. He revolted against the rigidity of Hindustani music and started a new style of music, called after his name, *Rabindra Sangeet*. In his compositions, the beauty of wording is blended with rich and evocative music. He made innovations by blending different *ragas* and thereby creating new melodies. Through such combinations, he loosened the hold of classical traditions and the rigid styles of singing. His musical patterns, though unfamiliar in his own day, won popular support and eulogy on account of the beauty and dignity of his compositions.

In the twentieth century, the efforts of two notable musicians led to the development and refinement of Hindustani music as academic discipline, worthy of serious study in schools, colleges and universities. They also made the community realise the value and sanctity of music as a fine art. Vishnu Narayan Batkhande (1860-1936), though a busy lawyer, composed music and published a number of volumes of Hindustani music. He devised a system of notation and classified the *ragas* under *thaths* (scales). He set up a college of music in Lucknow which now bears his name. He was the first to arrange a conference of musicians on all-India level. He was connected both with the Baroda School of Music and the Gwalior School. As a musicologist, he was held in high esteem. The other notable musician was Vishnu Digambar Paluskar (1872-1931) whom the author had the privilege of knowing and listening to. He was adept in *khayal* music. He was the first to start a music school at Lahore in 1901 for training ordinary students. Thus he freed music from the patronage of princes and the monopoly of *gharanas* and opened the portals of classical music to amateurs. Moreover, he set a high standard of character for the students and teachers of music. His most important achievement was the establishment of a chain of schools of music known as "Gandharva Sangeet Mahavidyalaya" in important cities of India. He was held in esteem by eminent leaders Mahatma Gandhi on account of his high moral caliber.

Social and political changes in the wake of industrial civilisation and urbanisation have had a serious impact on the musical tradition of India. After Independence in 1947 and under the new socialistic constitution, the princess and the religious trusts and shrines which used to patronise musicians and provide them the opportunity and support to build up their musical talents have lost their resources. The limited court audience has ended and an era of mass-appeal has begun. Today, the musician has to depend on the men of learned professions and middle-class audience which attend ticketed concerts. The mass audience and the Government are the new patrons of artists. The All-India Radio and *Doordarshan* (Television) have encouraged musicians and singers and taken their music to the masses. The academies of music, dance and drama at the State and National level, have popularised classical music and furnished some kind of recognition and financial support to artists. Long-playing records have brought musicians money and attracted audiences for them. This has proved both advantageous and disadvantageous to the musical talent of India.

The demand for classical music exists; the potential market is the radio, the disc, the musical concert, the stage, the film and the soiree. School and university syllabi in music have attracted a large number of students, particularly girls. On the positive side, the artist has come out into the open and his art is now on display. He is a competitor for recognition and honour. If he is good, he is applauded by the public and honoured by the Stage. Besides the old *guru-chela* (teacher-disciple) system has been replaced by institutionalised training. This has encouraged a greater understanding and appreciation of music by larger sections of people. On the negative side, this modern concept has eliminated the personal and intimate relationship between the artist and the listener. Long drawn-out night sessions are not possible in the jet age. We have now time-bound concerts and, as such, music has to be tailored to the schedule. This has adversely affected the creativity of the artist and his experimentation and improvisation in music. Owing to the recent scientific and technological advances, the world is becoming a small and closely-knit place. Regional and national frontiers and rigid cultural patterns are becoming insignificant, in world of supersonic travel. Experiments in the borrowing of Hindustani music from Karnatak music and *vice versa* have enriched both the systems and produced some beautiful hybrids. Some Karnatak *ragas* have been added to Hindustani repertoire [8]. Western music is influencing Indian music. Similarly, Indian music is gaining much appreciation in the West. Daring experiments are being made to bring Indian classical music closer to western music, as for example the World Pacific Liberty Record featuring Indian and American instruments, and the discs containing a combination of jazz instruments and Indian drums. Indian music is not only ready to give but also to receive. Music is thus becoming truly international and bringing different nations nearer to one another in bonds of cultural kinship. The widely-acclaimed Sarod-Sitar duets of Ali Akbar and Ravi Shankar at the prestigious Edinburgh Music Festivals, the captivating music of Bismillah Khan's shehnai in U.K. and U.S.S.R., the sweet songs of Smt. M.S. Subbalakshmi at the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 1966 and the establishment by Ravi

Shankar of Kinnara School of Music in Los Angeles have firmly put Indian classical music on the world-map. The efforts of the UNO and UNESCO are fostering a great appreciation of the cultures and fine arts of countries other than one's own. The great strength of Indian music is its flexibility and resilience to absorb new nuances and ideas. It is difficult to predict the future of Indian music, but one can rest assured with the feeling that it will have a great impact on other countries and may hopefully combine and enrich both tradition and innovation in the years to come.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Yagnavalkya, the great Indian sage wrote in his connection: "He who knows the inner meaning of the sound of the lute, who is expert in intervals and in modal scales and knows the rhythms travels without effort upon the way of liberation."
2. Mookerjee, R.K., *Hindu Civilisation*, p. 124.
3. Raichaudhry, Majumdar and Dutta, *An Advanced History of India*.
4. Ranande, G.N., *Hindustani Music*, p.40.
5. Gangoli, O.C., *Ragas and Raginis*, p.105.
6. Chief Khalsa Diwan *Gurmat Sangeet* (in Punjab), p.11.
7. See Klaus Ebeling's *Ragamala Painting*, published by Ravi Kumar, Basel, paris and New Delhi.
8. Karnani, C., *Listening to Hindustani Music*, p.7.

## Chapter 2: Fundamentals of Indian Music

### Fundamentals of Indian Music

*Emotion and devotion are the essential characteristics of Indian music*

Among the fine arts, music occupies a very important and significant position. This is the art through which man can be happy himself and make others happy. Music is a great source of entertainment and power. Talented musicians have been able to control the working of the physical nature and of man. It is said that in ancient Greece, Orpheus enchanted not only wild beasts but also birds and insects with his music, and they followed the sound of his lyre. In India, we often see a snake dancing to the tune of the flute of the snake-charmer. It is said that Tansen, the celebrated musician of the court of Emperor Akbar, had the power to bring about rainfall with *raga Malhar* and create a fire with *raga Deepak*.

Music in ancient India was regarded as means of divine contemplation and bliss. Today it is regarded mainly as a means of entertainment. In the field of social life, music is a gesture of cordiality. Whenever we are happy, we sing and ask our friends to join us. It expresses our joys and feelings. When we are melancholy and sick, it reduces our sorrows and soothes our feelings. It has the capacity both of assuaging and intensifying different emotions. It has thus a great influence on the mind and heart of man.

Music involves both discipline and freedom. There is the discipline of the *svara* (note), the *laya* (tempo), and the *tal* (rhythm). A note is sung in rhythm and time-beat. On the other hand, the musician is free to make improvisations in his composition within the limits of the *raga*. In this way, he can show his skill and mastery over the *raga* he is playing or singing.

### **Nad (Sound)**

Etymologically, 'Na' means breath and 'Da' means fire or energy. Nad is thus a combination of breath and energy. It implies that the sound produced by living beings emanates from the lungs and comes out from the mouth. There are two kinds of *nad*: *Ahat* and *Anahat/Anahad*. *Ahat nad* is a sound produced by the collision of two things or by physical manipulation, as for example cymbals and human voice respectively. In both cases, vibrations produce the sound which dies away as the vibration comes to an end. This is the sound with which we are concerned in music. *Anahad nad* is a self-producing sound, or what is called "unstruck sound", as for example the music of the spheres due to the vibrations of ether in the upper regions. Rabindranath Tagore wrote in his connection; "The life-breath of Thy music runs from sky to sky." It is also called subtle or *Suksham nad*. This is the sound which the yogis or highly spiritual persons hear within themselves when they get into a state of higher consciousness. Goswami observes, "The conception of *Nad* is inseparately connected with the *kundalini* or the spiral energy which when awakened starts from the *muladhara* (basic plexus) and reaches the crown of the head [1]." This solemn music is heard only by the spiritually-evolved. Guru Nanak, "The word of Guru is the true *nad* [2]." There are two tones of *nad*: *karkash* (harsh) and *madhur* (sweet). The sound of the roar of guns or of a lion is harsh and unpleasant, while the sound of the peacock or the cuckoo is sweet and soothing. All musical sounds can be differentiated in three ways:

- a) By their *magnitude*, that loudness of intensity which depends on the energy used for their production,
- b) By the *pitch* depending on the number of vibrations per second: the greater the number of vibrations, the greater the pitch.
- c) By the *quality or timbre*, which depends on the nature of vibration and the relative prominence of the upper partials of the instrument [3].

*Nad* is related to *Dhvani* (a kind of sound). Music is concerned with sweet and pleasant *dhvani*. When a stringed instrument is played, vibrations are produced through the movement of the strings, and these vibrations give the sound when they reach the human ears. These vibrations go in cycles and come back, again they go and come back, and hence the sound continues till the strings come to rest. The unit for measurement of sound vibrations is one second.

Vibrations (cycles) ranging from 96 to 1024 per second can be produced by Indian vocal music, while the human ear is capable of picking up sound frequencies between 20 and 20,000 per second.

## Rasa (Emotion)

If *raga* (melodic pattern) be compared to a tree, *rasa*, is its fruit. Just as the tree gives fruit, which provides juice, flavour, relish or delight and nutrition, in the same way *raga* provides all these things symbolically. As one musicologist puts it, "Emotions is the food and the artistic consciousness is the tongue. The resulting experience is *rasa* [4]." Those who practice the *raga* are able to give the appropriate *rasa* to the listeners. Just as the fruit produces the seed which later grows into another tree, in the same way, the *thath* (parent scale) can contribute to the creation of another *raga*.

Undoubtedly, different types of music evoke different feelings and emotions. Certain sounds produce joy, others grief and yet others affection and tenderness. According to Indian aesthetics, each poem or musical composition produces a certain *rasa* (emotion). Literally, *rasa* means juice, but in musical context it implies more than an aesthetic relish—a transcendental experience. Some consider *rasa* as sentiment, but it is something subtle, even more than an emotion or empathy. *Rasa* is essentially emotional reaction and awareness of it. The feeling may be pleasant or sad, high or low, sublime or ludicrous, actual or imaginary, furious or peaceful. Every *raga* or *ragini* is like a hero or heroine respectively in a certain emotional situation, and the musician or singer is expected to create that very situation to enable the audience to share it. By and large, each *raga* is supposed to evoke a single emotion. For example, the notes of *Khamaj raga* are said to evoke erotic feelings or to create a romantic mood. *Kafi raga* is tranquilizing and pleasing and gives a feeling of peace.

In the system of Indian aesthetics, there are nine emotions called *nava rasa*. These are: *shingara* (romantic or erotic feeling), *hasya* (comic or humorous feeling), *karuna* (pathetic or sad emotion), *rudra* (anger or fury), *veer* (valorous or heroic), *bhayanak* (fear or terror), *vibhatsa* (odious or disgusting), *adhbuta* (wonder or surprise) and *shanta* (peace and tranquility). American psychologists who made a scientific study of the effects of music found nine kinds of emotional changes in the listeners [5]. Their feelings were similar to the nine *rasas*. These sentiments become more concretised in drama by the expressions of the eyes, lips, hands and words of the actor. In a musical performance, the audience gets the particular emotion or mood of the *raga* through the notes and rhythm, the style of singing and graces, the vibrations of the scale, and the feeling and ethos of the singer.

## Timing of Ragas

Some of the *ragas* have been linked to the seasons. For example, *Basant* or *Bahar raga*- as the very name indicates- as the very name indicates- belongs to the spring season. *Malhar raga* pertains to the rainy season. As mentioned earlier, by singing this *raga*, the singer can make the rain fall. Similarly, *Deepak raga* is so powerful that it produces a kind of fire within the singer which may even burn him. These stories cannot be brushed aside, because we know today that sound waves are a kind of energy. *Hindol raga*, the very name refers to the swing (*dol*), is cheerful and joyful as it is connected with the celebration of the birth of Lord Krishna.

Classical musicologists have assigned a specific time to the performance of a *raga*. This has been based on the types of *svara* (notes) used in a particular *raga*. Certain *ragas* can be sung during the morning hours, some in the afternoon, some in the evening and some late at night. The 24 hours of the day and night have been divided into eight parts called *pahar*- four of the day and four of the night. Each period consists of about three hours. The first *pahar* of the day is from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m., the second *pahar* from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and so on. The first *pahar* of the night is from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., the second *pahar* from 9 p.m. to 12 p.m. (Midnight) and so on. This theory is based on the suitability of notes to the periods of singing. Which may be given as under:

- a) *Ragas* of the period 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. use *Re* and *Dha*.
- b) *Ragas* of the period 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. use *Re*, *Ga*, *Dha*.
- c) *Ragas* of the period 9 a.m. to 12 noon use *Ga* and *Ni*.
- d) *Ragas* of the period 12 noon to 3 p.m. use *Ga* and *Ni*.
- e) *Ragas* of the period 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. use *Re* and *Dha*.
- f) *Ragas* of the period 6 p.m. to 9 a.m. use *Re*, *Ga*, *Dha*.
- g) *Ragas* of the period 9 a.m. to 12 midnight use *Ga* and *Ni*.
- h) *Ragas* of the period 12 midnight to 3 a.m. use *Ga* and *Ni*

It may be noted that there are three groups of *ragas* above: (a) and (e) go together; similarly (b) and (f) may be bracketed while (c), (d), (g) and (h) form the third group. The difference between (a) and (e), however, lies in the addition of *Ma* (sharp *Madhya*) in the latter sung in the afternoon.

There is little doubt that a morning *raga* produces its greatest effect and impact in the morning. Nevertheless musicians today do not strictly adhere to the time schedule of the *ragas*. There are reasons for the departure. Firstly, music concerts are generally held in the evening or sometimes late at night. If the classification is rigidly followed, the day-time *ragas* will never be played or sung. Secondly, there are certain mixed *ragas* or *guldasta* (bouquet of *ragas*) which are becoming popular. Such melodies have broken the rigidity of time classification. Moreover, the tempo of life in urban areas is changing people's attitudes and many music lovers welcome listening to their favourite *raga* at any time.

### Sadhana

The cultivation of one's music-talent is serious work. The student of music must be willing to spare time, effort and money for acquiring a thorough knowledge of the essentials of *ragas*. He must do the *sadhana* (practice with devotion) and learn the grammar. *Sadhana* implies a regular routine of practice of music- *svara*, *laya*, *tal*, and *gaiki*-steadily and correctly over a period of time for voice modulation. It is no use adopting a casual attitude to music like getting a few lessons. Great musicians have devoted their entire lives to its cultivation. If the student learns vocal music, he must cultivate his voice and make it steady and tonal. He must do the *alaaps* and *tans* over and over again. If he learns an instrument, he must practise it well and keep the time-beat (*tal*) so that the proper *rasa* of the *raga* is produced which he may be able to enjoy himself and communicate to his listeners. He must zealously safeguard the tradition and purity of music and acquire a thorough mastery over the *svara-vadi* and *sanvadi*, *tan* and *tal* so as to reproduce the very ethos and personality of the composition. Finally, his creativity must get a chance to display itself in innovations and improvisations of *tans* and *gamakas* (tonal graces). The following graded steps are suggested for a student of Indian music:

- a) He should learn to tune his *tanpura* and play on it to get the sense of the drone (tonic or SA).
- b) He should modulate his voice with the help of the *tanpura* and with the help of a teacher, with regard to its quality, tone, speed and flexibility.
- c) He must practice the *alankars*: SA, RE, GA, MA, PA, DHA, NI, SA, up and down in different tempos, several times. The permutations of *alankars* are given in chapter 3. It will be helpful if his teacher keeps time by clapping his hands. The slow tempo would mean one beat to each note, the medium tempo would mean one beat to two notes, and fast tempo would mean one beat to four notes.
- d) He must start to learn *tal* (rhythm) with a beat of his hands. The easiest *tal* to begin with is *teental* of 16 units (*matras*)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
clap	.	.	.	clap	.	.	.	empty	.	.	.	clap	.	.	.

It will be better if the teacher sings the *raga* and the student keeps the *tal*.

### Indian Music versus Western Music

The characteristics of Indian music will be evident if compared with Western music. There are essential differences between the two systems: the first is based on melody-single notes played in a given order, while the second is harmonic: a group of notes called chords played simultaneously [6]. The late Dr. Rabindranath Tagore who was acquainted with both the systems put it thus: "The world by day is like Europeans music-a flowing concourse of vast harmony, composed of concord and discord and many disconnected fragments. And the night world is our Indian music: one purem deep and tender *raga*. They both stir us, yet the two are contradictory in spirit. But that cannot be helped. At the very root, nature is divided into two, day and night, unity and variety, finite and infinite. We men of India live in the realm of night; we are overpowered by the sense of the One and Infinite. Our music draws the listener away beyond the limits of every day human joys and sorrows and takes us to the lonely region of renunciation which lies at the root of the universe, while European music leads us to a variegated dance through the endless rise and fall of human grief and joy." Basically Indian music evokes a spiritual sentiment and discipline-a

longing for realisation of the self salvation. Vocal singing is an act of worship and not an intellectual display of mastery over *raga*-technique. In the West, the singing of a song is a secular and formal exercise, not involving devotion or piety as in the case of Indian music [7]. The *Guru-shishya* tradition responsible for the deep attachment and dedication of the student to the teacher. In the West, usually a music teacher is just a person hired for giving lessons and there is no intimacy between the teacher and the taught.

Indian music, like Western music, is based on melody and rhythm, but it has no foundation of harmony and counterpoint so vital to Western music. Indian music is "modal"-based on the relationship between the permanent individual note called the tonic, with the successive notes. That is why the drone is played in the background of vocal music to remind one of the tonic note [8]. The Indian system is horizontal, one note following the other, while the European is vertical-several notes at a time. Yehudi Menuhin, the noted composer and musicologist, highlights the difference between the two systems by describing Indian music thus: "To appreciate Indian music, one has to adopt a completely different sense of values... one must orientate oneself and at least for the period concerned, forget there is a time-clock ticking away and merely sink into a kind of subjective, almost hypnotic trance. In that condition, the repetitive features of Indian music, both rhythmic and melodic, acquire an extraordinary fascination and charm... despite the domination of this hypnotic mood, a characteristic of Indian music is that far from deadening the intellect, it actively liberates the mind."

Another notable difference is in the place of "composition" in both the systems. In Western music, a composer first composes the music and puts it in notation: later the players play the music under the guidance of a conductor. There is hardly any improvisation, and the value of performance lies in the uniformity and the pre-determined conduct of tone and speed of music. In an Indian musical performance, while the grammar of melody and rhythm is fixed, the skill and ingenuity of the musician lies in his improvisation and creativity, especially in evocation of the mood and *rasa* of the particular *raga*. In this connection an international musicologist writes: "In the West, we construct solid blocks of music. After having carved out geometrically, in large sections, like building stones, the seven degrees of the diatonic scale, lined them up and placed them on top of each other according to cleverly worked out architectural laws which are called counterpoint and harmony. In this way we erected splendid edifices in sound. In the East, no one dreamed of dividing sound into blocks; instead they refined it to a wire-thin thread. They strove meticulously to stretch out the sound, to refine it to the point of extreme delicacy... No standardised materials, no building of two or six or ten floors; rather a simple variegated silk thread which unwinds and rises and falls imperceptibly, but which in every tiniest portion evokes a world of feelings and sensations." [9]

In Indian music, melody and rhythm are more developed and offer a great variety of subtleties, not possible in Western music. Indian notes are divided into small units called *shruties* (22 microtones in all), whereas Western music has only 12 semitones. The microtones are more subtle than semitones. These microtones adorned with *gracetones* (*gamakas*) produce a magical effect. Western music is capable of producing many moods and feelings. While Indian music has generally a principal mood or emotion in a *raga*. The Indian musician improvises according to his own creative genius within the framework of a *raga*, but in Western classical music such range of individual improvisation is inconceivable, except in jazz. Moreover, the great use of drums in Indian music emphasises its essential rhythm. It is only by keeping one's ears and minds open that one can appreciate the special sequences and melodies different from one's own. This will apply equally to Indian audiences attending performances of Western music, and to Western audiences listening to Indian music. Let us not forget that the two kinds of music are complementary, like two halves of classical music.

## School of Music

In Medieval India, there was school of music called *gharanas*. The word *gharana* literally means a family. So these families or guilds specialised in particular styles or traditions of music. There were in fact no teaching institutes, because they seldom accepted students from outside. These *gharanas* were experts in *dhrupad* or *khayal* or other forms of music. The difference in *gharanas* lies in their style of presentation, musical graces and accent and not in the basic structure of the *raga*. One of the most important schools was the *Gwalior gharana* because the musicians and their descendants lived in that city (*Gwalior*). Mian Ghulam Rasool, the singer of pure *khayal*, was the originator of the *Gwalior gharana*. Tansen, the famous musician, was the founder of two *gharanas* [10]. Then there was the *Agra gharana*, which originally specialised in *dhrupad*, but later on patronised *khayal*. Khuda Bash was the originator of the *Agra gharana*. Besides these, there were *Jaipur gharana*, *Agra gharana*. Besides these, there were *Jaipuri gharana*, *Delhi gharana*, and *Patiala gharana*. These guilds were noted for their characteristic styles, which might consist of the tempo, *alaap*, permutations, type of grace notes, jumping of notes and sequence of notes. There were also guilds specialising in playing on a particular musical instrument.

Schools in the modern sense of teaching institutes were established in the twentieth century. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar started the "Gandharva Sangeet Mahavidyalaya" in 1901 at Lahore. He set up the second school in Bombay

in 1908. Soon thereafter, Gandharva Sangeet Mahavidyalayas were started in many important town in India. Another famous musician, Vishnu Naryan Bharkhande, reorganised the Baroda Maharaja's training centre under the name of Baroda State Music School. This subsequently grew into the Music College of the University of Baroda. Bhatkhande also helped the establishment of Madhav Music College in 1918 at Gwalior. He also started the Maris College of Music at Lucknow in 1926, which was subsequently renamed after him. These schools and colleges train students in courses of classical music leading to diplomas and degrees in Indian music awarded by Universities and some recognised institutions. Indian classical music has been recognised as a subject of study for graduate and postgraduate examinations of certain Indian Universities. Rabindra Bharati, Calcuttra, and Indira Kala Sangeet Vishwavidyalaya, Khairagarh (Madhya Pradesh) are special institutions recognised by the Government of India for teaching and research in music.

## Notation

Notation is the art of describing musical ideas in written characters or symbols. Though the best way of learning music is from a reputed and qualified teacher, it is not possible for many students to get personal guidance. Some of the students take music examinations in India as private candidates. It is necessary for such students to learn music from books. There are two systems of notation or musicography for Hindustani music. One was devised by Bhatkhande and the other by Paluskar. In this book, I have followed the Bhatkhande system which is the easier of the two. In describing a *raga* the following information regarding it is given:

- a) *Thath* (parent scale)
- b) *Jati* (class)
- c) *Aroha* (ascent) and *avaroha* (descent)
- d) *Vadi* (sonant) and *samvadi* (consonant)
- e) Time of play or performance
- f) Characteristics
- g) *Rasa* (aesthetic joy or emotion)
- h) *Pakad* (distinguishing notes)

## Notes

*Shudh notes*: SA, RE, GA, MA, PA, DHA, NI notated as S, R, G, M, P, D, N.

*Komal Notes*: RE, GA, DHA, NI, notated as R, G, D, N.

. --,--,-- , --

*Teevra MA*: MA, notated as M.

*Mandra saptak*: (lower octave) SA, RE, GA, notated as S, R, G.

...

*Tar saptak*: (higher octave) SA, RE, GA, notated as

...

S, R, G.

*Tal*: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

+ 2 3

+ = *Sam*, 2 (*Tali*), 3 (*Tali*), 0 = *Khali*

*Meend* is indicated by a sign of a curve on the notes:

\_\_\_\_\_

( )

SAREGA.

A group of notes in one beat (*matra*) is represented by a curve underneath: SAREGAMA

(\_\_\_\_\_)

Four beats: SA . . . . .

One beat: SA

Half beat : SA . . (\_\_\_)

1/4 beat: SA . . . . .  
(\_\_\_\_\_)

1/8 beat: SA . . . . . (\_\_\_\_\_)

1/3 beat: SA RE GA  
(\_\_\_\_\_)

1/6 beat: SA RE GA MA PA DHA  
(\_\_\_\_\_)

When some note is slightly touched, it is written above the  
GA  
main note, for example PA  
Hereafter this notation will be used throughout the book.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Goswami, O., *The story of Indian Music*, p. 85.
2. Adi Granth; p. 879, Hereafter A.g. will be used for Adi Granth.
3. Ranade. G.H. *Hindustani Music*, p. 28.
4. Publications Division, New Delhi, *Aspects of Indian Music*, p. 59,
5. School Max and Esther Gatewood, *Effects of Music*.
6. Weber, Dr. A. In *Lectures on Indian Literature* (1876, p. 297) says: "There are two departments in music. Melody is the art of arranging several sounds in succession, one to another, in a manner agreeable to the ear; harmony is the art of pleasing that organ by the union of several sounds which are heard at one and the same time. Melody has been known and felt through all ages: perhaps the same cannot be affirmed of harmony."
7. Krishna Rao, H.P. writes in this connection in *The Psychology of Music* as follows: " It is the melody of Indian music alone that can express the external emotion. Harmony lets emotion in and melody lets it out. Melody unites or repels the hearts, while harmony unites them with nature."
8. Goswami, *op, cit.*, p. 40
9. Danielou, A ., *The situation of Music and Musicians in the Countries of the Orient*, p.55.
10. See chapter 1, p. 6.

## Chapter 3: Foundations of Melody (Raga)

### Foundations of Melody (Raga)

From Nad (sound) arose Shruti (microtone);

From shruti came Svara (note);

From Svara was formed Raga (scale);

From Raga was created Geet (songs);

So the soul of Geet is sound.

### **Raga**

Literally, *raga* means to colour or to please. Basically, *raga* is a scheme of melody. It has been defined in various ways. Matanga defines it as a "combination of notes, illustrated by melodic movements (*varna*), which is capable of producing pleasant sensations." Another musicologist observes: "It is a scientific, subtle, precise and aesthetic melodic form with its ascending and descending movement which consists of either a full octave or a series of five, six, or seven notes." Yet another musician puts it thus: "It is an arrangement of intervals in a definite order (not necessarily a consecutive order) upon which a melody is founded." According to an old definition, "a *raga* is a particular form of sound which is adorned with notes and melodic phrases and enchants the heart of the listener." A *raga* is "the gamut of several notes woven into a composition which through aural perception softens the heart of the listener." A *raga* is really the melody mould, the outline of notes, the basic element of the composition, while the actual composition may differ according to the art of the musician. The *raga* in its development, layer by layer, with all its improvisations and refinements, reflects the degree of the proficiency of the performer. A *raga* is self-created out of a set pattern of notes and its delineation depends on the skills of the performer. The latter is also a composer with a freedom and spontaneity of his own. As such the exposition of a *raga* by one musician is singer. Thus it is capable of great variety, flexibility, and subtlety. Like speech, *raga* is a channel of communications. Just as speech can be put down in words, so a *raga* can be represented by notation. A *raga* notes are interspersed with pauses and tonal graces. A *raga* should not be taken as a scale or a mode of melody, though it is related to them. However, every *raga* belongs to a scale.

*Two Systems:* There are two systems of scales in India. The South Indian or Karnatak music has 72 primary scales called *melas*, produced by variations of seven fundamental notes (*shudh svaras*). The Hindustani music prevalent in North India has ten primary scales called *thaths*. A *thath* is a group of notes from which raga can be built. Each of the ten *thaths* has got a raga of the same name. These *thaths* codified by V.N. Bhatkhande in the beginning of this century are as follows:

#### *Thath Svava*

1. *Kalyan* S R G M P D N
2. *Bilawal* S R G M P D N
3. *Khamaj* S R G M P D \_N\_
4. *Bhairav* S \_R\_ G M P \_D\_ N
5. *Purbi* S \_R\_ G M P \_D\_ N
6. *Marwah* S \_R\_ G M P \_D\_ N
7. *Kafi* S R G \_M\_ P D \_N\_
8. *Asavari* S R \_G\_ M P \_D\_ \_N\_
9. *Bhairavi* S \_R\_ \_G\_ M P \_D\_ \_N\_
10. *Todi* S \_R\_ \_G\_ M P \_D\_ \_N\_

However, there are some ragas which cannot be accommodated in the ten *thaths*, as for example *raga Pardeep* and *raga Ahir Bhairava*.

There is a lot of difference between *thath* and *raga*:

- a) A *thath* is based on 12 notes, while a *raga* can have a maximum of seven notes.

- b) A *thath* must have seven notes, while a *raga* may have less than seven notes.
- c) A *thath* must have seven consecutive notes, while a *raga* may not have consecutive notes.
- d) A *thath* has only the ascending order, while a *raga* has both ascending and descending order (*aroha* and *avaroha*).
- e) *Vadi* (sonant) notes have no relationship to a *thath*; in a *raga*, *vadi* notes are important.

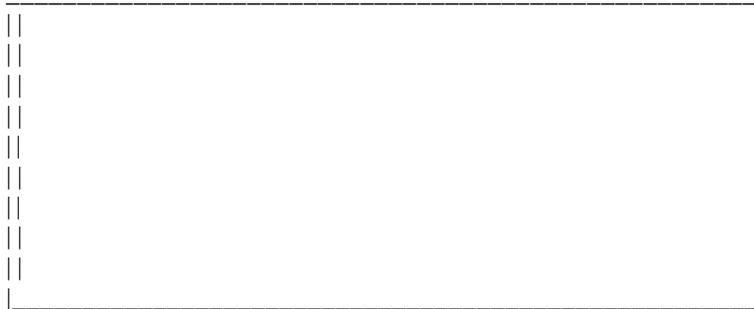
Between the two systems, the Karnatak one has comprehensive scales. We must note the following points about a *raga*:

- a) A *raga* belongs to some *thath* (parent scale) and has *aroha* (ascending scale) and *avaroha* (descending scale). The number of notes in the *aroha* and *avaroha* may differ.
- b) A *raga* must have five to seven notes. S is must. M and P cannot be excluded together.
- c) A *raga* must have two tetrachords; the lower one is called *poorvang* and the upper one *uttarang*.
- d) It must have a *vadi* (sonant) plus *samvadi* (consonant) and *amuvadi* (assonant) notes.
- e) It must not take both pure (*shudh*) and flat (*komal*) or pure (*shudh*) and sharp (*teevra*) of the same note consecutively, for example M followed by M or G followed by G . There are however a few exceptions.
- f) It must produce some feeling or aesthetic satisfaction or *rasa*.

*Gaiki*: The mode or practice of singing a *raga* in different variations according to the instruction of the teacher is called *Gaiki*. The singing of a composition in your own style with *tan*, *alankar*, and grace is also called *gaiki*. *Gaiki* may depend on the *gharana* (school/guild) to which the singer belongs.

### Basic Notes

There are seven basic notes which are called *shudh* (natural or pure). They are *shadja*, *rishabha*, *gandhara*, *madhyama*, *panchama*, *dhaivata*, and *nishada*. In short form, they are known as S, R, G, M, P, D, and N. This group of Indian solfa notes is called a *saptak* (seven notes of diatonic scale). There are three types of *saptak*: *mandra/mandar* (lower), *madhya* (middle), *tara* (higher). The three series will take the following form on a *harmonium*. A dot under the notes indicates *mandra*, and a dot over the notes indicates *tara saptak*, while the *madhya* (middle) scale has no dot over the notes. In addition, there are four *komal* (soft or flat) notes: R, G, D, N, and one *teevra/teebra* (sharp) note: M. which is written as M to distinguish it from M *shudh*, thus making a total of 12 notes in the chromatic scale. These five are called modified (*vikrita*) notes.



In western notation these notes are as follows:

*doh*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, *sal*, *la*, *ti* and their symbols are d, r, m, f, s, l, t; the sharp notes are : *ra*, *ma*, *fa*, *la* *ta*.

In C scale these are indicated as under:

C, D, E, F, G, A, B, and the sharp notes are Db, Eb, Fb, Ab, Bb.

In Indian notation, the 12 notes are written in the following symbols:

S, R, R, G, G, M, M, P, D, D, N. S can start from any note, and it represents the key of C in western notation.

### Shruti (Microtone)

*Shruti* is the smallest unit of measurement of a note which is clear and audible. It is defined as "a note of minute pitch which the ear is capable of hearing". It is called *alaku* in south India. *Shruties* are distinct microtones in an octave. These microtones represent unequal intervals presenting define expressive characteristics. "The 22 *shruties* cannot be produced in succession by the throat, but can be demonstrated on a stringed instrument. There are 22 *shruties* out of which seven main notes have been formulated as *saptak*. The number of *shruties* in each note are as follows: S: 4 *shruties* R:3, G:2, M:4, P:4, D:3, N:2. According to the laws of physics, a sound creates a number of vibrations and frequencies which can be measured, and the relation between two sounds (pitches) is the ratio between their vibrations. As such, S has 240 vibrations per second, R has 270, G-300, M-320, P-360, D-400 and N-450. It may be noted that *svaras* (notes) of the *shajada grama* (which begins with S corresponding to C scale) arise out of *shruties* and they may be represented as follows:

*Shruties*: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

|||||  
S R G M P  
20 21 22

||  
D N

If the pitch value of a *svara* (note) is reduced by one or more *shruties*, it becomes *Komal* (flat); if it is increased it becomes *teerva* (sharp). The *shruties* in the *madhyam grama* (corresponding to F scale of western music) will be as under:

*Shruties*: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

|||||  
M P D N S  
20 21 22

||  
R G

### Svara (Note)

*Svara* is a note of definite pitch which conveys an expression of charm and sweetness to the mind. *Shruti* is "the measure and the *svara* is the thing measured." There are seven basic *svaras*. However, in the vedic times, there were three *svarasudat* (higher), *anudat* (lower), *svarat* (middle). They correspond to the modern G, R, S. Later on the fourth note was added called *chaturtha*: M. Subsequently, three more were added, namely P, D, N. This group of seven *shuddh* (pure) notes is now called *saptak*. Later on five other *svaras* called *vikrit* (altered/modified) were added. There were four *komal* (soft or flat) that is R, G, D, and one *teevra* (sharp) that is M. It may be noted that there are no *vikrit* notes between G and M, N and S.

### Grama (Scale)

This old word stands for a basic scale of notes. The fixation of 22 *shruties* in a scale among the seven *svaras* (*saptak*) is called *grama*. When we fix 22 *shruties* in another sequence of pattern, it becomes a different or new scale. The playing of the seven notes in fixed *shruties* is a *grama*. In olden times, there were three *gramas*-*shajda grama*, *madhyam grama* and *gandharva grama*, equivalent to C, F, and G scales respectively in western music. *Shajda grama*: When the seven notes are played in 22 *shruties* in the following sequence it is called *shajda grama*-S in 4th *shruti*, R in 7th *shruti*, D in 20th *shruti*, N is 22nd *shruti*. If the notes are changed in any one of the above *shruties*, it will not be called *shajda grama*. In modern times, this *grama* is quite popular. In Sikh sacred music, a musician may switch S to the M note. This is called playing in M *grama*.

*Madhyam grama*: If in the *shajda grama*, one *shruti* is reduced in P, it becomes *madhyam grama*. It means that P (fifth note) will be on the 16th *shruti*, instead of the 17th *shruti*. *Madhyam grama* is M, P, D, N, S, R, G.

*Gandharva grama*: This *grama* has become obsolete since the second century. It is thought that this *grama* was P, D, N, S, R, G, M. We have very little information about this *grama*.

### Type of Notes

In the composition of a *raga*, certain notes are important, and some are subsidiary. There are others which are taboo. This gives us the pattern of notes in a *raga*.

- a) *Vadi svvara/amsa (sonant)*: Literally, it means the note which "speaks". This is the most important or dominating note in a *raga*, which is a sort of key to the unfoldment of its characteristics. It is like the king of that *raga*. As it is the pivotal note, it is played very prominently or repeatedly. In it lies the particular *rasa* of that *raga*. It also determines the time for the singing of the *raga*. *Vadi/Badi* is of two kinds: *poorvanga* and *uttarang*. *Poorvang vadi* means the lower tetrachord, that is the first four notes S, R, G, M. The timing for *ragas* which use such notes is from noon to midnight. Take *Khamaj raga* its *vadi* is G and as such it is *poorvang* and hence sung up to midnight. *Uttarang vadi* means the next group of notes (the upper tetrachord) that is the four later notes P, D, N, S. The timing for *ragas* which use these notes is from midnight to noon. An example of *uttarang raga* is *Bhairav* whose *vadi* note is D [1]. There are however some borderline *ragas* belonging to the time period of 4 to 7 a.m. and 4 to 7 p.m., which are called *sandhi Prakash* *ragas* which use R and D.
- b) *Samvadi svvara (consonant)*: This is second important note in the *raga*, after the *vadi* note. *Samvadi/sambadi* note is also deserves some notice. Its position is at an interval of a fourth or fifth from the *vadi* note. Its position is at an interval of a fourth or fifth from the *vadi* note. It has the same status as a minister in relation to a king represented by the *vadi* note.
- c) *Anuvadi svaras (assonant)*: All the *svaras* in a *raga* except the *vadi* and *samvadi* are called *anuvadi*. They are like the servants which are subordinate to the *vadi* (king) and *smvadi* (minister) *svaras*.
- d) *Vivadi svaras (dissonant)*: These are the dissonant notes which are not used in a *raga*, as for example P in *Gujri raga* or R in *Malkaus raga*. The use of *vivadi* notes disfigures the *raga*, and as such it is the enemy of the *raga*.

The four above types of notes determine the structure and pattern of the *raga*. In fact the change of *vadi* in the same scale of notes may yield a different *raga*.

### **Varna (Melodic movement)**

A scale can be developed in *varna* or melodic movement. There are four types of such melodic movements: *Asthai*, (level) which means playing the same notes continuously; *Aroha*, the ascending motion of the notes in a *raga*; *Avaroha*, the descending motion of the notes; *Sanchari* (wandering) the melodic movement combining all the three types mentioned above. In some cases, the *aroha* and *avaroha*, may differ in the type of notes, as for example *Khamaj raga* uses N in *aroha* and *\_N\_* in *avaroha*, or in the number of notes, as for example *Janpuri raga* uses five notes in *aroha* and seven notes in *avaroha*. By and large, the number of notes in *aroha* and *avaroha* is the same.

### **Alaap**

It is the unfolding of the essence and the pattern of a *raga* with a word like AA or RE or NA and with emphasis on the notes of *vadi* and *samvadi*. The *alaap* is essential for the training of the voice. It is also a sort of invocation or prelude to the *raga* and is helpful in creating the particular *rasa* (feeling) and the ethos of the *raga*. In the *alaap*, the rhythm is inherent, flowing from the improvisation and yet it does not belong to any fixed rhythm with a definite *sam*. The singer, through the *alaap* displays the transcendent nature of both melody and rhythm.

Sometimes, the *alaap* is done in parts called *angas*. *Anga* literally means a limb, that is part of the *alaap*. The *angas* would be from S to *vadi*, S to *vadi* and *samvadi*, S to *vadi* to *samvadi* To S, and then in the descending order. *Alaap* is slow in its movement and must stick to the rhythmic *angas*. The musician moves gradually shaping the *raga* according to his own talent and feeling.

### **Bandish**

While *alaap* is the revelation of the *raga*, *bandish* is its design or display. Here the modes are explained in tune and words. *Bandish* is a composition (vocal or instrumental) fixed in a rhythmic pattern.

## Asthai and Antra

*Asthai* is the basic and opening part of the *raga*. It is repeated throughout the *alaap*. *Asthai* brings together melody, rhythm and tempo. It has definite form and is repeated from time to time. It offers the *raga* a framework, a skeleton for the performer to fill in with his improvisation. It generally moves in the lower tetrachord.

*Antra* is the second section of the *raga* which generally relates to the upper tetrachord. It is fixed composition and complements the *asthai*. As we see the world in two different aspects in day and night, so we see a *raga* in different lights in *antra* and *asthai*. Both *asthai* and *antra* hold an important place in the singing of *khayal*, *dhrupad* and *dhamar*.

## Permutation of Melody

*Alankar*: It literally means an ornament or decoration. It is the repetition of the musical notes of a *raga* in a sequential pattern. So *alankar* is the specific pattern of certain group of notes of a *raga*. While vocalising *alankar*, the arrangement of notes should touch the heart and evoke the mood. It should be done in accordance with the rules of the *raga*. *Alankars* are regarded as combinations of several melodic movements. They fall under four categories: (a) *Asthai alankar*: vocalisation which returns to the initial note or S; (b) *Arohi alankar*: ascending vocalisation going up; (c) *Avarohi alankar*: descending vocalisation which goes lower; and (d) *Sanchari alankar*: consolidated vocalisation which uses all the three types mentioned above.

Some of the *alankars* are given below for practice:

1) S, R, G, M, P, D, N, S: S, N, D, P, M, G, R, S.

2) S S R, R R G, G G M, M M P, P P D, D D N, N N S:

S S N, N N D, D D P, P P M, M M G, G G R, R R S.

3) S G, R M, G P, M D, P N, D S: S N, D P, M G, R S.

( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

S D, N P, D M, P G, M R, G S: S R G M P D N S

( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

The *alankar* to be played in *Kehrva tal* (of four beats) is as under:

1 2 3 4

S G R M

G P M D

P N D S

S N D P M G R S

( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

4) S G R S, S M G R, R P M G, G D P M, M N D P,

P N D S: S N D P M G R S.

S D N P, P D N M, M P D G, G M P R, R G M S:

S R G M P D N S.

1 2 3 4

S G R S

S M G R

R P M G

G D P M

M N D P

P N D S

S N D P M G R S

( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

5) S D P M, R N D P, G D P M, M N D S: S D N P,  
D M P G, G P M G, R G R S.

6) This alankar and the next are meant for practice with *komal*(flat) *svaras*. The *komal svaras* are underlined>. The following scale forms *raga Bhairavi*.

.....  
S R G M P D, G M D N S R S, G R S N D N S,

-----  
M P D N D P M, S R G M G R S.

-----  
7) D N S R G R S, G M D P M G R S, D N S R G R S,

-----  
.....  
G M D P D M P G, G M D N S R S, D N S R N D P M  
S R G M G R S.

## Tan

It means the exemplification or patternisation of the *raga*. It is pronounced as *taan*. To practise the *svaras* of a raga in rhythmic patterns with different permutations is called *tan*. It can be one-half, one-fourth, one-eighth of the time of the *asthai*. The difference between *alaap* and *tan* is that of *laya* (tempo). *Alaap* is done in slow sequence, while *tan* is played in quick sequence-like a fast sweep. The idea is to extend the basic melody. *Tan* requires a lot of practice and lot of attention to *vadi* and *samvadi svaras*. Nowadays *tan* is often used as an ornament (*alankar*). *Laya* (tempo) has an important place in *tan*. Here is an example:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
S R G M P D N S  
S N D P M G R S,  
S R G M P D N S S N D P M G R S  
( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

There are four varieties of *tans*: (a) *shudh* or *sapat tan*: in this *tan*, the *svaras* (notes) are played in the sequential order, in the direct *aroha* and *avaroha* style; (b) *Koot tan*: here the *svaras* are played in any order not in the usual SRGMPDN sequence; (c) *Misrat tan*: here is a mixture of *shudh* and *koot* tans; the *aroh* is in *shudh tan*, while the *avaroha* is in *koot tan*; and (d) *Bol tan*: when the *tan* uses the words of the *geet* or song the words so used are called *bol tan*. Goswami mentions 17 types of *tans* used during the Moghul rule in India.

## Gamak

*Gamak* is a kind of grace or embellishment or ornament of a melody. It may consist of a graceful jerk on a note or notes or gliding over a note like a shadow or some other way in which the musical piece becomes graceful and attractive. Though *tan* comes close to *gamak*, it produces varieties of *svara* designs, but not designs of euphony. *Gamak* consists of various ways of touching and inflecting individual notes. *Gamak* differs from *tan* which consists of melodic figures. Some of the common *gmarks* are given as follows.

- 1) *Tripura* (flurry). This a slight touch on a note equivalent to one-eighth of a *matra*. It is also called *Hillola*.
- 2) *Sphurita* (throb). This is a quick stroke on a note equivalent to one-sixth of a *matra*. Similar strokes of quarter and half of a *matra* called *kampita* (shake) and *lina* (melting) respectively.
- 3) *Andolita* (swing). Here the stroke has the duration of a *matra* (may be slow, medium or fast tempo).
- 4) *vali* (ripple) any fast sliding.

- 5) *Ghasit* (sliding). This is sliding from one point to another point or points.
- 6) *Tribhina* (threefold). This is running with one stroke through three notes without any rest.
- 7) *Meend*. It is a kind of shake of strings- " a shake produced by rapidly pulling the strings between the frets of the stringed instruments giving out two notes whose interval may be as much as four semi-tones."
- 8) *Murki* (trill). This is attacking two or three notes in a given time. When the quick "trill rises to a crescendo, giving a sense of their merging in one another with a frenzy", it is called *jamjama/zamzama*.

*Gamaks* are a kind of "adventure in subtle portamento, gliding and vacillating variants in microtonality; without them a melody cannot smile." The duration of the *gamaks* will vary according to the nature of the raga and the skill of the artist. There are more than 15 kinds of *gamaks* in addition to mixed *gamaks*.

## Jati

Jati literally means "caste". Just as there are castes in any community in India, there are three castes or classes of *raga*. There are *Arava/Audava/Oudava*: pentatonic (five notes); *Sharva/Shadava*: hexatonic (six notes); and *Sampuram*: perfect heptonic (seven notes).

### Arava

It is the scale which uses five notes. It has three different types: (1) *Arava-Arava*, (2) *Arava-Sharva* and (3) *Arava-Sampuran*.

*Arava-Arava*: This is the scale in which both in the *aroha* (ascending) and *avaroha* (descending) five notes are used, as for example *Bhopali raga*- S R G P D, S D P G R.

*Arava-Sharva*: This is the scale in which the *aroha* (ascending) has five notes and the *avaroha* (descending) has six notes, as for example *Kedara raga*: S M P D N, S N D P M R.

*Arava-Sampuran*: This is the scale in which the *aroha* (ascending) has five notes and the *avaroha* (descending) has seven notes, as for example *Shudh Kalyan Raga*: S R G P D, S N D P M G R. Another *raga* is *Asavari*.

### Sharva

This is the scale in which there are six notes. It has three different types: (1) *Sharva-Arava*, (2) *Sharva-Sharva*, (3) *Sharva-Sampuran*.

*Sharva-Arava*: This is the scale in which the *aroha* has six notes, while the *avaroha* has five notes, as for example *raga Nata Kuranji* of Karnatak music, according to Subba Rao [2]. In Hindustani music it resembles *Bageshwari*.

*Sharva-Sharva*: This is the scale in which both the *aroha and avaroha* has six notes, as for example, *raga Sri Ranjani* of Karnatak music, according to Subba Rao.

*Sharva-Sampuran*: This is the scale in which there are six notes in the *aroha*, while the *avaroha* has seven notes, as for example *Khamaj*: S G M P D N, S N D P M G R S.

### Sampuran

This is the scale in which there are seven notes. It has three different types: (1) *Sampuran-Arava*. (2) *Sampuran-Sharav* and (3) *Sampuran-Sampuran*.

*Sampuran-Arava*: This is the scale in which there are seven notes in the *aroha* (ascending) and five in the *avaroha* (descending), as for example *Nut raga*.

*Sampuran-Sharav*: This is the scale in which there are seven notes in the *aroha* and six notes in the *avaroha*, as for example *raga Megh Malhar or Kafi*.

*Sampuran-Sampuran*: This is the scale in which *both* in the *aroha* and the *avaroha* there are seven notes, as for example *raga Bilawal*.

## FIXED FORMS OF HINDUSTANI MUSIC

The main forms of Hindustani music are as follows:

### Dhamar

*Dhamar* is a form of composition sometimes performed with *Hori raga* or after the completion of *dhrupad*. Its subject is the Krishna legend appropriate to the *Holi* festival. *Dharmatal* is of fourteen *matras* (musical units or beats). Very few musicians have mastery over *Dhamar*, also called *Hori*. Its *gaiki* is in *Brij Bhasha*, Hindi and Urdu. *Dhamar* depends on *bols* in double, triple, quadruple, and octet tones. Sometimes *bol tan* is also used. The *shingar rasa* (erotic feeling) is prominent in *dhamar*.

### Dhrupad

Literally *dhrupad* means "fixed". Traditionally, it is sung according to certain rules, in four sections called *asthai*, *antra*, *sanchari* and *abhog*. Now it is sung in two parts: *asthai* and *sanchari*. The theme is either the praise of gods or eulogy of patrons or seasonal beauty. In this style of singing, the wording is of a high and sublime order and includes words from Hindi, Urdu, and *Brij Bhasha*. There is a preponderance of feelings of *veer*, (heroic), *shant*, (peaceful), and *shingar* (romantic) *rasas*. It is sung in *chautal*, *teevra*, *sool*, *tal*, *brahm*, *tal*. In the *alaap*, the words usually used are *Nom*, *Tom*, *Gamak* (tonal graces) and *meend* (slide from one note to another using microtones) are quite useful for its rendering a great and beautiful rhythm. *Dhrupad* depends on *bols* in double, triple, quadruple and octer tones. Sometimes *bol bans* are used for showing craftsmanship. *Dhrupad* is sung in accompaniment of *tanpur* and *pakhawj* *Dhrupad* is sung in accompaniment of *tanpura* and *pakhawaj* (long drum instrument). It is said that " its emotional dignity is conveyed by slow elephantine movements and with the economy of flourishes and decorations (*alankars*):. It originated in the thirteenth century with the talent of Sarangdev. It was however popularised by Raja Maan tomar of Gwalior ( 1486-1516) in royal courts. *Dhrupad* possesses majesty and grandeur, but is not popular with the masses today.

### Khayal

Literally, *khayal* means "imagination" or "fancy". This form was created as a reaction to the rigidity of *dhrupad*. When the singer, complying with the rules of music creatively embellishes a song with *alaap*, *tan*, and *tal*, the composition is called *khayal*. It is said that Amir Khusro (1235-1325) popularised this form of singing in the thirteenth century. Sultan Hussain Sharque of Janpur (1458-1480) created a new form of *khayal*. Today it is popular in northern India. *Khayal* consists of two parts- *asthai* and *antra* . Literally, *asthai* means "stable" and consists of the first portion of the composition in lower and middle octaves. It is in fact the recurring burden of the song. The second part of the *khayal* is *antra*, its middle and last portion in the middle and upper octaves. Both are complimentary to each other.

*Khayal* is of two kinds: *vilambit* or *bara khayal*; *drut* or *chota khayal*. *Vilambit khayal* is sung in *vilambit laya* (slow rhythm) and consists of *antra*. It has a great depth of improvisation, but the singer returns to the *sam* (first beat indicated by a clap) after every improvisation. As the *raga* progresses it covers a greater range. In the beginning the singer displays the features of the *raga* (both *asthai* and *antra*) in slow rhythm, with emphasis on *vadi* and *samvadi* notes. Thereafter, he increases the tempo and sings *tans* and *bol tans* is *asthai* and *antra*. In *vilambit khayal*, the singer uses *tals* like *ek*, *tal*, *tilwara*, and *chautala* etc. Just as in older times, *dhrupad* was popular and rated high, in the same way, in modern times *khayal* is considered as an important and excellent type of composition.

*Drut or chota khayal*: Its composition is very small, and consists of *asthai* and *antra*, but its *laya* (rhythm) is quick. It embodies *shingar* (erotic) and *karuna* (pathetic) *rasas*. Like the *vilamabit khayal*, it makes use of *tan*, *alaap*, *bol tan*, *alankar*, and *bol alaap* (first word of the song). The *tals* used in *drut khayal* are *ek tal*, *teental*, *jhaptal* and *rupak tal*. *Khayal deals with more than one rasa* (emotions) while *thumri* is limited to *shingar* (erotic) *rasa*.

### Thumri

It is a light-classical melodious composition. The text is rather small, which consists of *asthai and antra*. This is a very popular performance in certain specified *ragas* like *Kafi, Khamaj, Tilak-Kamod, Peelu*, which can also be combined. There is a lot of improvisation in it with small *tans bols and alaap* which are its attraction. It is sung in the beginning in *deepchandi tal*; thereafter the *tals* are changed into *teental and kehrva tal*; its finale ends in *deepchandi tal*. The melodies are lyrical and romantic and produce erotic feelings. It needs a special quality of voice for its rendering.

### **Ghazal**

The composition of the text of the *ghazal* is generally in Urdu or Persian. It is sung in simple *ragas* in which *thumri and tappa* are sung. Its theme is secular or spiritual love and is full of *shingar rasa* (erotic feeling). *Tals* used for *ghazal* are *deepchandi, dadra, kehrva, teevra, etc.* There are many *antras* in this composition. The tune is the same, but the wording is different. The song is significant for its wording and meaning. The *ghazal* is not confined to any particular *raga* and may contain a combination of *ragas*.

### **Dadra**

Any light classical composition in *dadratal* is called *dadra*. *Dadratal* consists of six *matras* (3+3). The song is full of *shingar rasa* (erotic feeling). The composition consists of two parts: *asthai and antra*. It is regarded akin to *thumri*. This composition is much used in film music. It is sung in medium and fast tempo.

### **Bhajan**

It is a devotional composition. Just as in the *ghazal*, the words are important, in the same way, in *bhajan* the words have great significance. Not much attention is paid to the purity, consistency, and accuracy of the *raga*, because the object of the song is the adoration of the deity or God. The *tals* generally used for *bhajan* are *kehrva, dadra, jhaptal, rupak, and teental*. *Shant rasa* (sentiment of peace) emanates from a *bhajan*. The *bhajan* of Mirabai, Kabir, Soordas, and Tulsidas are quite popular.

These songs are very spiritual and moving, but they belong to the light classical category.

### **Shabad**

There are composition of the Sikh Gurus, *bhaktas* (saints) and *bhatts* (court singers) in thirty-one *ragas* included *Sri Gurur Granth Sahib* (the scriptures of the Sikhs). *Shabads* are hymns of prayer and in praise of Guru or God. A *shabad* consists of two or more parts. There is one *asthai* and the remaining verses form parts of the *antra*. A *shabad* should be sung in the specific *raga* in which it is composed. It can be sung in any *tal*, unless specially indicated. It is full of devotion and spiritual fervour and evokes *shant rasa* (emotion of peace) and *nam rasa* (devotional mood). *Shabads* are collectively known as *kirtan*. This differs from the *Padavali kirtan* of Bengal and *Kirtanam* of South India developed by Tyagaraja which though devotional in content, should be classified under the category of *bhajans* and not *shabads*.

### **Tappa**

This composition belongs to the rural people of the Punjab and deals with the love of Heer and Ranjha. It can be sung in any light *raga* and can use all the musical graces. Its trill is peculiar and its rhythm is medium. Its beauty lies in the combination of notes. Generally it contains an *asthai and antra*. It was popularised by Ghulam Nabi in the eighteenth century.

### **Tarana/Tillana**

In this style of singing meaningless words or *alaap* like *nam*, *tom* are used for tonal value. It has a subtle sense of rhythm. Its counterpart in Karnatak music is *tillana*. On account of its universal language it is suitable for teaching *raga*-music to students of any country.

### **Geet**

It is a light classical song. Even lyrical poems may be rendered into *geets*. Its contents are secular, meant for popular entertainment. It is generally full of erotic sentiments.

### **Ragamala**

Literally *ragamala*[2] means a garland of *ragas*. As such it is a musical composition different from a poem listing the names and geneologies of parent-scales (*thath*) and their branches and descendant-*ragas*. The beauty of the *ragamala* also called *rag sagar* (ocean of melodies) lies in the fact that each line or verse of the composition is sung in different *ragas*, so that the entire piece appears like a string of melodies hung on a particular common theme. In some cases different rhythms are used for different lines or verses and then it is known as *talmala*.

### **NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. There are some exception in both groups, as for example Bhairavi and Hamir. Some musicologists prolong *Poorvang Vadi* S to P and *Uttarang Vadi* from M to S.
2. Subba Rao, A. Raga-Nidhi, 2 Vols.
3. See chapter 1, 2 and 9 regarding Ragmala.

## Chapter 4: Rythm (Tal)

### Rhythm (Tal)

*What symmetry is to the plastic arts, rhythm is to music.*  
(Schopenhauer)

A raga is totally dependent on *tal* (pronounced *taal*). Vocal music, instrumental music and dance rely on rhythm for its effect on the audience. *Tal/tala* [1] is the means of measurement of time in music or dance. Rhythm is the breaking up of time in small units. Time is cut into pieces at certain regular intervals. Literally *tal* means the palm of the hand; the time is measured by the clapping of hands (*tali*) or beats of drums or sticks. *Tal* is divided into two halves; *Bhari* (full) starting with *sam*, and *khali* (empty) starting with *khali*. So *tal* is an organisation of rhythms or different beats in certain groupings which are smaller units of *matras*. These rhythmic units repeat themselves in cycles. The drummer has to produce the spoken syllable indicating the position of the hand on the drum. The permutation related to *tal* are as follows:

### Laya

The tempo of the rhythm or the duration of pace or speed is called *laya*. It is regular spacing of time. *Laya* is three kinds: *vilambit*, *madhya* and *drut*.

*Vilambit laya*: Slow tempo of the rhythm is called *vilambit lays*. Each beat lasts for about one second. For example, *dadra* has six *matras*. Instead of counting six *matras* (beats) one after the other like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 *vilambit laya* will prolong it in the following manner.

*Vilambit laya* ---ISS --- ISS ---ISS ---ISS ---ISS ---ISS

Matra 1 2 3 4 5 6

+ (*Tali*) 0(Khali)

(S stands for prolongation of rhythm)

The following are some of the *tals* of *vilambit lays*: *ektal*, *chartal*, *jhumra*, *tilwara*.

*Madhya laya*: Medium tempo of the rhythm is called *madhya laya*. It can be compared to the ticking of about half second of the clock. Some of the *tals* of *madhya lays* are *teental*, *jhaptal*, *dadra*, *kehrva*.

*Drut laya*: is doubly quicker in tempo than the *madhya laya*. The *tals* of *drut laya* are the same as in *madhya tal*, the difference being that they are done quicker. Each beat lasts for about one-quarter second. *Tarana* and *chota khayal* use *drut laya*.

### Matra

The unit of measuring *tal* is *matra*. The *matra* is determined in length by the pace of the overall rhythm. Each *tal* has a number of *matras*, as for example *dadra* has six *matras*. The number of *matras* does not change in *vilambit*, *madhya* or *drut laya*. Only the tempo or the time-sequence becomes slower in *vilambit*, average in *madhya* and faster in *drut laya*. A number of *matras* makes a *tal*, while the tempo determines the types of *laya*.

The smallest units the *akshara* (letter) and its several types are as follows:

*Anudruta* = 1 *akshara* = 1/4 *matra*

*Druta* = 2 *akshara* = 1/2 *matra*

*Laghu* = 4 *akshara* = 1 *matra*

*Guru* = 8 *akshara* = 2 *matra*

*Pluta* = 12 *akshara* = 3 *matra*

*Kakpad* = 16 *akshara* = 4 *matra*

*Avartan*: One cycle of the *matras* of a *tal* is called *avartan*. For example, *dadra* has six *matras*; as soon as six *matras* are completed, we have done one *avartan* (cycle) of *dadra tal*.

*Theka*: The playing of one *avartan* of a *tal* on the table (pair of drums) is called *theka*. It includes the repetition of

sound syllables (*bol*) to form rhythmic phrases. There are different types *thekas*, for example *jhaptal* and *sooltal* have both ten *matras* but their *thekas* differ. In *jhaptal*, there are three hand claps and one blank, in *sooltal* there three claps and two blank, thus making ten as mentioned in the following Table:

### *Jhaptal*

Beats 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Words DHI NA DHI DHI NA TI NA DHI DHI NA  
 Theka + 2 0 3

*Sooltal* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
 Words DHI DHA DIN TA KIT DHA TIT KAT GAT GIN  
 Theka + 0 2 3 0

*Sam*: The *matra* for which a *tal* begins is called the *sam* or *gur*. For example, in the above *jhaptal* and *sooltal*, the cross (+) stands for *sam*. It is the first beat of the *tal*. There is an emphasis on the *sam*, by which it is recognised from the other *matras*. Some musicians indicated the *sam* either by a shake of the head or a beat on the knee. It is like the pivot, and all the rhythmic variations must close on the *sam*.

*Khali*: After the *sam*, the next in importance is *khali*, meaning "empty" or "blank". At the *khali*, the beat falls on the right *tabala*, while the left *tabala* is empty. The symbol for *khali* is zero (0). Generally *khali* marks the commencement of the second half of the cycle (*avartan*).

*Tali*: Besides the *sam*, the *matras* on which the time-beat falls is called *tali* (clapping). In the table on this page the first *tali* shown by a cross and the remaining *talis* are indicated by numerals.

### Other Kinds of Laya

There are other kinds of *laya* (tempo) in addition to *vilambit*, *madhya*, and *drut laya* mentioned. They give great joy to the listeners, especially in *dhrupad*, *dhamar*, and in instrumental music. These are as follows:  
*Dugan* (1/2), *tigan* (1/3), *chaugan* (1/4), *aar* (2/3), *kunvaar* (7/4), *athagan* (1/8)

Some of the *layas* which are popular are explained below:

*Thhah Laya*: In this *laya*, each *anka* takes one *matra*. It is also called *Brabar Laya*.

*Dugan*: In this *laya* there are two parts or *anka* in one *matra*:

1 2 3  
 1.2 3.4 5.6

*Tigar*: In this *laya*, there are three parts (*anka*) in one *matra*:

1 2 3 4  
 123 456 789 10 11 12

*Chungan*: In this *laya*, there are four parts (*anka*) in one *matra*:

1 2 3 4  
 1234 5678 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

*Aar*: In this *laya*, two *matras* are split into three *matras*. First the *matras* are divided into three parts and each is doubled up. "S" is used to complete the sequence:

1 S S 2 S S 3 S S 4 S S

*Kunvaar*: In this *laya*, five *matras* are split up into four parts. First the *matras* are divided into fourth parts and then grouped into five each.

1 S S S 2 S S S S 3 S S S 4 S S S 5 S S S

*Beaar laya* and *athagam lays* are not common and hence are omitted.

### Symbols of Tal

The following symbols are used for *tal*:

*Sam* = + *Khali* = 0

*Avagrah* (Prolongation) = S (This is prolonged as "aa")

2 *bol*s in *matra* = Bracket, as for example DHA Gay

4 *bol*s in one *matra* = Bracket, as for example DHA DHA

TIN TIN

### Kinds of Tal

1) *Kehrva* (4/1). This *tal* contains four *matras*, it has *sam* on the first *matra*.

It is played as follows:

*Matras* 1 2 3 4

Words (bol) DHAGE NATI NAKA DHINA

*Theka* + 0

Some people play the *Kehrva* in eight *matras* as follows:

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Words (bol) DHA GE NA TI NA KA DHIN NA

*Theka* + 2 0 3

2) *Dadra* (6/2). It contains six *matras*, split into two parts, each of three *matras*. In this first part, there is one *tali* (hand clap), and in second part, there is one *khali* (empty). The first *matra* has *sam*, while the fourth *matra* is *khali* (empty) as under:

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6

Words DHA DHI NA TI TI NA

*Theka* + 0

3) *Rupak* (7/3). It contains seven *matras*: it is split into three parts, the first part is of the three *matras*, the next two *matras* each. The first *matra* and *sam* is *khali*, while the fourth and sixth *matra* get a *tali* (clap) each. This *tal* is like *teevra tal* is not *khali* as follows:

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Words (bol) DHIN DHA TRIK DHIN DHIN DHA TRIK

*Theka* + 0 2 3

Some people do the *rupak tal* in the following way:

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Words (bol) TIN TIN NA DHIN NA DHIN NA

*Theka* + 0 2 3

4) *Teevra* (7/3). It has seven *matras* divided into three parts of 3-2-2.

*Matras*. It has *sam* on the first *matra* and two *tali* on four and six *matras*:

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Words (bol) DHA DIN TA TIT KAT GAD GIN

*Theka* + 2 3

5) *Jhaptal* (10/4). It has 10 *matras*; it is split into 4 parts. In the first part there are two *matras*, in the second part three, in the third part two, in the fourth part three. There are three *talik* (hand-clap), and one *khali* (empty). There is *sam* on the first *matra*, the sixth is *khali*, the third and eighth *matras* have *tali* as under:

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Words (bol) DHI NA DHI DHI NA TI NA DHI DHI NA

*Theka* + 2 0 3

6) *Sool tal* (10/4). This *tal* has 10 *matras* divided into five parts of two *matras* each. There are three *talis* (1, 5, 7) and

two *khali* (3,9)

*Matras:* 1 2 3 4 5

Words (bol) DHA DHA DIN TA KIT

*Theka* + 0 2

6 7 8 9 10

DHA TIT KAT GAT GIN

3 0

7) *Ektal* ( 12/4). It has 12 *matras* which are split into six parts of two *matras*. There are four *talis* (hand clap) and two *khali* (empty). There first *matra is sam*, fifth and eleventh *matras* have *tali*.

*Matras:* 1 2 3 4 5 6

Words (bol) DHIN DHIN DHA TRIK TU NA

*Theka* + 0 2

7 8 9 10 11 12

KA TA DHI TRIK DHI NA

0 3 4

*Ektal* is played differently in *vilambit laya* while singing *bara khayal* as under:

*Matras:* 1 2 3 4 5 6

Words (bol) DHIN DHIN DHAGE TRIKAT TU NA

*Theka* + 0 2

7 8 9 10 11 12

KAT TA DHAGE TRIKAT DHAN NA

0 3 4

8) *Chartal/chau tala* (12/4). It has 12 *matras* divided into six parts of two *matras* each. It has four *talis* (1, 5, 9, 11) and two *khali matras* (3,7) as under:

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6

Words (bol) DHA DHA DIN TA KIT DHA

*Theka* + 0 2

7 8 9 10 11 12

DIN TA KIT TAK GADI GIN

0 3 4

9) *Dhamar*(14/4). It has 14 *matras* and is divided into four parts. It has three *talis* on 1,6, 11 *matras*. It has *khali*, on eighth *matra*.

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Words (bol) KA DHI TIT DHI TIT DHA S\*

*Theka* + 2

8 9 10 11 12 13 14

TA TIN S\* DHA DHIN DHIN S\*

S\* stands for "aa"

10) *Deepchandi* (14/4). It has 14 *matras* divided into four parts. There are three *talis* (1, 4, 11) and *khali* on eighth *matras* follows:

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Words (bol) DHA DHIN S\* DHA DHA TIN S\*

*Theka* + 2

8 9 10 11 12 13 14

TA TIN S\* DHA DHA DHIN S\*

0 3

11) *Teen Tal* ( 16/4). It contains 16 *matras* and is divided into four parts of four *matras* each. There are *talis*, and one *khali*.

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5 6

Words (bol) DHA DHIN DHIN DHA DHA DHIN

*Theka + 2*

7 8 9 10 11

DHIN DHA DHA TIN TIN

12 13 14 15 16

TA TA DHIN DHIN DHA

3

12) *Tilwara* (16/4). It has 16 *matras*, divided into four parts of four *matras* each. There are 3 *talis*, and one is *khali* (9).

The *sam* is on the first *matra*. It is played differently in *vilambit laya*.

*Matras* 1 2 3 4 5

Words (bol) DHA TRIKAT DHIN DHIN DHA

*Theka + 2*

6 7 8 9 10

DHA TIN TIN TA TRIKAT

11 12 13 14 15 16

DHIN DHIN DHA DHA DHIN DHIN

3

### **NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. According to one writer, *tal* is derived from *Tandava* (*Ta*)- the cosmic dance of Shiva, and *Lassya* (*La*)- the cosmic dance of Parvati, the female companion of Shiva.

## Chapter 5: Musical Instruments

### Musical Instruments

*Rabab, pakhawaj, and rhythmic ankle-bells play the Unstruck (celestial) music, (Guru Arjan)*

Right from the Vedic times, musical instruments were used in India. Ancient sculptures and temples show different kinds of drums, whistles, flutes, harps, gongs, and bells. During the many following centuries, these rough instruments were developed and refined into the forms in which we see them today. Some of the instruments are now decorated with ivory, silver, gold and peacock-feathers. Some of the instruments have facilities for playing delicate *gamaks*. Musical instruments are made by skilled craftsmen who have knowledge of musical sounds. The important towns where these instruments are manufactured are Lucknow, Rampur, Madras, and Tanjore.

Nowadays, many musical instruments are used, as for example, *tampura, sitar, harmonium, veena, sarangi, sarod, been, bansari, flute, tabla, pakhawaj, mridanga, dholak*, etc. Some of the instruments are of foreign origin, but Indians have adopted them, as for example *harmonium* and clarinet. Musical instruments perform one or more of the following functions: (a) to give the rhythm, (b) to provide that tonic note in the form of a drone, and (c) to accompany the vocal music point by point [1]. These instruments can be divided into two categories: *svaravad* (note instruments), and *tal vad* (rhythm instruments). The first category of instruments are those which produce *svaras* (notes) e.g. *sitar, sarod, bansari, harmonium*, etc. *Tal vad* includes those instruments which produce rhythm, e.g. *tabla, mridanga, pakhawaj, cymbals*, etc.

Indian musical instruments are of four kinds:

- (1) *Tat vad* (stringed instruments)
- (2) *Sushir vad* (wind instruments)
- (3) *Avanad vad* (leather or percussion instruments)
- (4) *Ghan vad* (idiophones).

### **Tat vad**

These are instruments with strings. When the strings are touched or played upon, they vibrate and produce different kinds of notes. *Tat vad* is sometimes called *tantra vad*. The stringed instruments are of two kinds: *tat* and *vitat*. *Tat vad* consists of those stringed instruments which are played by fingers directly or with a plectrum, e.g., *tampura, veena, sitar, rabab, been, sur-sringar* and *sarod*.

*Vitat vad* consists of those stringed instruments which are played with above, e.g., *sarangi, dilruba, taos, and asraj*.

### **Vad**

This covers instruments in which notes are produced by air columns. In such instruments, either the air is blown with the mouth as for example *bansari, clarinet, shenai, flute*, or through the bellows as in *harmonium* and organ.

### **Avanad vad**

These are percussion instruments which produce sound when dried animal skins, tightened by leather braces or cotton straps are struck. Mostly such instruments are used for producing *tals* (rhythms) and that is why some people call them *tal vad*. This category includes *mridanga, tabla, pakhawaj, dholak, nagara, dhadh, kanjira, and damru*.

### **Ghan vad**

These are idiophones of self-sounding instruments which combine the properties of vibrator and resonator. Some of them are struck together as cymbals, clappers and *khartal*, while some are struck singly as bells, gong, *chimta* (a pair of tongs) and *jaltarang* (cups of water producing different notes). Some are shaken like rattles and *manjira*. These instruments are made of wood or metal or both. In addition there are earthen pots like *matka or ghatam*. Some of these instruments are useful for rhythm only, e.g., *manjira, jhanjh, and khartal*.

As mentioned above, *tat vad, sushir vad,* and partly *ghan vad* come under the category of *svara vad*, as for example *tanpura, sitar, bela, sarod, bansari, shehnai, harmonium, organ, piano and jaltarang*. *Avanad vad* and partly *Ghan vad* come under the category of *tal vad*, e.g., *mridanga, tabla, pakhawaj, damru, manjira, khartal and jhanjh*.

## STRINGED INSTRUMENTS

Some of the stringed instruments are described below, along with instructions regarding how to tune them.

### 1. Tanpura/Tamboora

This is one of the oldest and popular instruments used for accompaniment of vocal music. Being a stringed instrument, it is remarkable both for giving support to the notes of vocal music and as a drone.

There are four strings in the *tanpura*. The first to the left is of steel. Sometimes in a *tanpura* is used for accompanying a male voice, the first string is of brass or bronze. This string is called *oancham* because it gives out the note of P. This is tuned to the P of the *madhya saptak* when accompanied by a harmonium. In the *raga* in which P is forbidden (as for instance in *Malkaus raga*), this string is tuned to M *shudh*. In the first place, the two middle strings of steel should be tuned to S of the male singer. The fourth string is of brass or bronze. It is tuned to S of the *mandar saptak*. (In the case of a female voice the S is set to fourth or fifth black reed of the *harmonium*). Some *tanpurashave* five to six strings. The normal tuning is P S S S. If there is no P in a *raga*, then tune M S S S. In case of the fifth string, the tuning will be as such: If there is N in the *raga*, then P N S S S : if there is no N in the *raga*, then P S S S S : if there is no P in *raga* then M S S S S. In case of a 6th string, the tuning will be as follows: If there is NI in a *raga*, then P N S S S S : if there is no N in a *raga*, then P S S S S S ; if there is P in a *raga*, then M S S S S S.

### 2. Sitar

*Sitar* literally is a form of the Persian word-*sihtar*-which means three strings. In the beginning, there were only three strings, but now seven strings are used.

The components of a *sitar* are similar to those of the *tanpura*. It has a *toomba, tabli, keel, dhurch, dand, gulu, atti gahan* and *sirra* like the *tanpura*. It has however seven *khootiyan* (pegs) and one *manka* (bead).

The *sitar* has seven strings. The first string on the left is made of steel. It is called *Baj-ki-tar*. It is tuned to M of *mandar saptak*. This is the string which is more frequently used in playing the *sitar*.

The second string is made of bronze and is called *jori-ka-tar*. The string is tuned to S of *mandar saptak*. The third string is made of bronze. This is also *jori-ka-tar*. The string is also tuned to S of *mandar saptak* like the second string. These two strings are tuned in the very beginning like the *tanpura*. The fourth string is made of steel. This is tuned to P of *mandar saptak*. The sixth string is made of thin steel and it is called *chikari*. It is tuned to S of *mandar saptak*. The seventh string is also made of thin steel and is also called *chikare*. It is tuned to S of *Tar saptak*. Some people tune the seventh string to the *pancham* (P) of *madhya saptak*.

### 3. Mikrab

This is the plectrum made of steel or brass which is worn on the right hand index finger. When the plectrum plays on the strings, it produces vibrations which causes different notes. When the plectrum touches the first string, the sound produced is of D and on the second is that of R. Some sitars have an extra *toomba* (gourd) at the end of the neck or midway. The *sitar* is played with the following *gat* (sequences):

(a) *Alaap*: It corresponds to the vocal style of the *raga*.

(b) *Jor*: This is the playing of the *raga* on the *sitar* in medium tempo after the *alaap* and without *tal*.

(c) *Jhala*: Playing on the *chikari* strings in quick tempo which like D R R R - is called *jhala*. The first string gives the note of D, and the final *chikari* give the tone of R.

(d) *Asthai and Antra*: *Asthai* is fixed composition of the *raga*. The *antra* is the compliment to the *asthai*. In the improvisation of the *raga*, after *asthai* and *antra*, *meend* (gliding) and *jamjam/murki* (trill) are played frequently. *Tans* are also played.

Nowadays *sitarists* generally play in *khayal* style. Sometimes *thumri* style is also used. Like *khayal* singers, instrumentalists will play in *drut laya* (fast tempo). They will play a new *asthai* and *antra*, generally in *teental* and then improvise at a very fast tempo until the performance reaches an exciting climax. This section is called *drut gat* (fast composition) and is climaxed by a fast *jhala* piece.

The sitar is very delicate instrument and as such it is to be kept and maintained with care and caution. The following points need to be noted:

- (a) The sitar should be kept covered, preferably in a cloth cover or a plastic bag.
- (b) The sitar should be kept lying on the floor, the frets facing upwards. It can also be kept standing in a corner.
- (c) The sitar should be cleaned frequently with a piece of soft cloth.
- (d) The strings should be periodically loosened so as to reduce the tension on them.

#### 4. Venna

Perhaps the oldest stringed instrument belonging to the seventh century is the *veena*. There are various kinds of *veena*, but mainly they belong to two categories: north Indian and south Indian. The north Indian *veena* is called *vachitra veena* and has no frets. The south Indian *veena* is more complicated and is called *saraswati veena*. As the name implies, this instrument is supposed to be the favourite of Saraswati, the goddess of learning. Some of the *veenas* have the painting of the goddess on the body. There are also other types of *veenas* with motifs of peacocks or crocodiles or some animal. The *veena* has seven strings of brass. Four strings are tuned to S, P, S, P and the remaining three are drone strings tuned to S P S. The south Indian *veena* has twenty-four frets fixed by wax. It may have one or two resonating gourds. It can be played with fingers or with a plectrum. There is also a superior kind of *veena* carved out of one piece of wood. The *veena* is played in a horizontal position as it rests on the lap of the player.

#### 5. Sarangi

The *sarangi* is a popular stringed instrument of North India. It has been in use from the thirteenth century. It can be played either solo or as an accompaniment of *khayal* or *thumri* or folk-song. The body is of teak wood and the lower part is covered with skin. The upper part containing the pegs is jointed to the lower part. Generally, there are three strings made of cat-gut and re tuned to S, P, S in *mandar saptak*. In some cases, first string may be of metal. Some *sarangis* also have few sympathetic strings under the main three strings. It is held in a vertical position and played with a bow which is different from that used for a violin.

#### 6. Rabab

This stringed instrument was used in Punjab, but Guru Nanak used it as an accompaniment for *Gurumat Sangeet* (Sikh sacred music). It was played by his disciple named Bhai Mardana (1459-1519) who originally was a *mirasi* (Muslim musician). It is similar to the rebec of Persia. The *rabab* has a piece of hollow wood at the top and a hollow circular wooden belly covered with a sheep skin at the bottom. There are two bridges, one in the middle and the other at the tip. The two bridges support six gut strings which are manipulated by six pegs at the top. Some *rababs* have a wooden *toomba* (gourd) at the top. It is played with a triangular wooden plectrum. Its sound resembles the human voice and it can play some gamaks. The effect of the drum-sound produced by it is very pleasing; it is eminently suitable for devotional music.

#### 7. Sarinda/Surinda

This instrument closely resembles the *sarangi*. It is about two feet long, and its bottom is oval. The upper part is left open and a small part of body is covered with a parchment. It has three cat-gut strings which produce notes of S, M, P. The upper ends of the strings are tied up to the pegs and lower ends to the hook below. It was used by the Sikh Gurus and their bards. It is played with a bow. Sometimes small bells (*gungroos*) are attached to the bow to produce rhythmic jingle along the notes.

### WIND INSTRUMENTS

#### 1. Harmonium

The *harmonium* is popular kind of *sushir vad*. The word *harmonium* is derived from the Greek word "harmony" which is the basis of western music and implies simultaneous sounding of several notes or the accompaniment of a melody by chords.

The *harmonium* has the appearance of a box out of which music can be produced. It is a reed-blown instrument like a large harmonica with mechanical bellows and keyboard. It is said that the *harmonium* was first produced in Paris in 1840 by Alexandre Debain. He devised a bellows worked by the player's feet to force air into a wind-chest and then through channels opened or closed by means of a keyboard. The notes are produced by reeds made of steel. The bellows is either worked by feet or hand. When the keys are touched and bellows is inflated, the air passes through the inner reeds and produces twelve notes (seven *shudh*, four *komal* and one *teevar*). The *harmonium* has either single reed or double reeds. In case of double reeds, two notes of the same type, in two *saptaks* are produced simultaneously. Generally, a *harmonium* has three or three and a half *saptaks*. This instrument is very easy to handle and is very popular in North India. The beginner can easily play it and learn both vocal and instrumental music. The instrument has fixed notes and its tones cannot be changed. The *harmonium* can be used also an accompaniment of a vocalist. Any *svara* (note) can take the place of S and the raga played accordingly.

The twelve notes of the *harmonium* are not natural notes but are a tempered scale. In the *saptak*, the difference between S and R and again between R and G and so on has been (**figures**) to consistent and equal degree. The main defect of this instrument is that it has twelve artificial notes though they correspond to the twelve natural notes (as for instance on a *sitar*). With the accompaniment of *harmonium*-notes, the *svaras* of vocal music also tend to be artificial.

By playing the *harmonium*, the human voice becomes artificial, because according to the tradition of Indian classical music, the real notes of 22 *shruties* should be produced. There are certain notes in classical music which cannot be reproduced by the *harmonium*, for example \_G\_ in *raga tod*, M in *raga Lalit*, etc. Therefore, practice of *svaras* on the *harmonium* tends to make the *svaras* unnatural or unreal. Many classical singers frown at the use of *harmonium*. For Strange ways condemns the use of the *harmonium* and regards it as a serious means of Indian music. He remarks "Besides its deadening effect on a living art., it falsifies it by being out of tune with its itself." [2]

It is not good to practise *svara-sadhana* (note modulation) on the *harmonium*. It is better to practise the *svaras* on the *tamboora*. When the strings are touched, they vibrate and the note continues to sound for a while, but in the case of the *harmonium*, the tone starts for a while, but in the case of the *harmonium*, the tone starts with inflation of the bellows and when the bellows stop, the note comes to an end.

*Meend* (glide from one note to another) and *gamak* (delicately mixing *svaras* in a *raga*) are not possible on a *harmonium* and as such, richness and excellence of melody is unavailable. This instrument is not good for accompaniment of vocal music, because it cannot reproduce the various delicate shades of vocal music. It is better to use a *sarangi* or *bela* (a kind of violin) for the accompaniment of vocal music.

## 2. Flute

This is very old and common wind instrument found all over the world. It belongs to the category of *sushir vad* (wind instrument)

In India, the flute is made of wood; however, some special flutes of ivory, brass and silver are also used on special occasion. The *vedas* refer to the flute as *venu*. In North India it is known by different names like *bansari*, *murali*; in South India it is called *pillam kuzhal*, *pillam grovi*, and *kolalu*. The common flute is about a foot long and has a mouthpiece and few holes. The length of the flute and the number of hole differ from one region to another. The popular flute in South India is called *mukhaveena*, which is a double-reeded pipe with seven holes. The bigger f lute-type instrument is called *nagaswara*. A new instrument of the wind-family is the *shehnai*. The oboe-like double reed instrument is supposed to be auspicious and is played to celebrate a marriage or festival. *Shehnai* concerts have become popular these days. Bismillah Khan and his group of *shehnai*-players have own the hearts of western audiences in Europe and America. It is possible to play *alaap*, *tans*, *thumris*, and light tunes on the *shehnai*.

## PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

### 1. Tabla

Tabla falls under the category of *avanad vad* (percussion instruments). It is an ancient indigenous *tal vad*. It consists of two drums standing upright. Bharata mentions the procedure of applying the paste on the drum. However it became popular during the Moghul rule because it was, and even today is regarded as a fit accompaniments for *khayal* and *thumri* compositions.

The drum with the black paste called *siyahi*, played by the right hand, is the real *tabla*, because its tone-range is

roughly and octave. The drum played with the left and is the bass or the drone counterpart and is called *dugga* or *duggi* or *bayan*. Tabla requires a lot of practice for reproducing different tals, especially half matras. According to Danielou, "The drummer of our Indian village is in no way technically inferior to the most celebrated concert musicians." [3] Allah Rakha and Samta Prasad are two well-known tabla players who have delighted both Indian and Western audiences.

## TUNNING THE TABLA

A *Tabla*-player keeps the two drums in front of him, the real *tabla* on his right and the *duggi* on his left. The right drum is tuned to S or P. In the *raga* in which P is omitted, it is tuned to M. A small hammer is used for tuning, the cylindrical wood-pieces under the straps. If the tabla is to be tuned down, the *gitki* (wood-piece) is pushed up. After hammering on one *gitki*, the next one to be set is on the opposite side. In this manner, all the *gitkies* are hammered and while hammering them, the *tabla* is struck with the hand to find out if the *svara* of the *tabla* matches with the base note of the instrument which the musician is using. After the *gitkies* are set up, the *gajra* (top-skin) is adjusted in case there is still some minor tone variation. The *duggi* or the left *tabala* is adjusted with the *gajra*. In some sets of *tabala*, the *duggi* has also some *gitkies* which are adjusted in the same manner as those of the right drum. In case there is no black paste (*siyahi*) on the *duggi*, it should be covered with *atta* (wheat-dough). The dough should be removed or gently scratched after use. The right *tabla* can produce a variety of complicated rhythms, while the *duggi* can produce a variety of complicated rhythms, while the *duggi* can only produce the main outline of the particular *tal* (rhythm). An expert tabla player (*tablachi*) can even play half *matras* skillfully.

## 2. Mridanga/Pakhawaj

The mridanga is an ancient instrument of *avanad vad* and is also called *tal vad*. It is said that Lord Shiva used to do *Tandava Nirtya*-cosmic dance with the help of this instrument. Bharata calls it *pushkar vad*. This word was adapted as *Pakhawaj*. As such, *mridanga* and *pakhawaj* are practically the same.

*Pakhawaj* was, and even today is, popular as an accompaniment of *dhrupad* and *dhamar*. The *mridanga* was formerly a clay-drum but now it is made of wood. The structure of the *pakhawaj* resembles that of the *tabla*, the main difference being that the tabla consists of two drums, while the *pakhawaj* is one long barrel-like drum with skin-covers on both unequal sides. The left side is smaller than the right side. The *pakhawaj* is tuned like the *tabla*. There are two ways of playing the *mridanga*. It can play twenty-five *varanas*, both primary and secondary as follows:

Primary *varnas*: Ta, Ta, Di, Thu, Na, Dha, Dda, Draday, Thee, Ga, Rivrar, Jhem.

Secondary *varnas*: Ran, Ka, Ga, Rran, Dhou, Dhi, Lan, Thace, Dan, Dhi, Ki, Ti, Thrar.

## 3. Dholak

The other popular drum instrument is called *dholak* or *dhavul*. It is like the *mridanga*, but its two sides are equal in size. It is about two feet long and one foot in diameter. It can be played with hands or with sticks. It is used for hymn-singing, folk music and folk-dance. The left side is like bass and other side can be tuned to a high pitch by tightening the cotton-rope braces. The other drum-type instrument are *nagara*, *tasha*, *kajira*, and *damru*.

## 4. Dhadh

It is small two-sided wooden drum. Some call it the *damru*. It is about 10 to 12 inches in length with a narrow waist in the middle. The parchments are held by cotton straps. It is held in the left hand and played with the right hand.

## THE ORCHESTRA

Recent orchestration of Indian music called the National Orchestra by the All-India Radio (*Akashvani*) has brought a new dimension to classical music. The orchestral composition of T.K. Jayarama Iyer and Ravi Shankar have received acclaim both from Indian and foreign audiences. Even though both Indian and western instruments are used, the orchestral compositions retain their Indian character. Similar orchestration is used to provide background music to film songs. Danielou is not in favour of the Indian orchestra (*vad vrinda*) because he fears that this will lead to "instrumental hybridisation and the abandon of improvisation" [4]. He also sees danger in changed structure of traditional musical instruments on the plea of modernisation, because it will affect the expressive potentialities of indigenous instruments. Another difficulty is the individualistic and melodic nature of Indian music. However it is a bold experiment and is regarded by some as a "permanent contribution to modern Indian music" [5]. It is too early to pronounce on the success or otherwise of this experiment in the orchestration of Indian music.

#### **NOTES AND REFERENCE**

1. Ranade, G.H., *Hindustani Music*, p. 75.
2. Fox Strangeways, *The Music Hindustani*, p.163.
3. Danielou, A., *The situation of Music and Musicians in the countries of the Orient*, p. 3.
4. Ibid., p. 66
5. Pulications Divisions: *Aspects of Indian Music*, p. 103.

## Chapter 6: Vocal Music

### Vocal Music

The true poets-they who are seers- seek to express the universe in terms of music. (Rabindranath Tagore)

#### 1. Human Voice

It is worthwhile to compare the human vocal organ to the reeds of the harmonium. In the human organ there are two vocal chords. There is a gap in between. One end of the gullet opens into the sound-box. The other end leads to the lungs. As the breath comes up from the lungs, the edges of the membranes begin to vibrate like the reeds of a harmonium which give rise to *dhavni* (sound). These membranes are connected with a muscle and according to need, their throbbing and tension can be modulated or regulated to produce a change in the voice.

#### 2. Madhur Dhavni

*Dhavni*, as explained above, is the result of the throbbing and vibration of the vocal chords. *Dhavani* is of two kinds: (a) *dhavni* without prolongation, which becomes silent immediately, (b) the *dhavni* which continues, and slowly and steadily comes to an end. The second type of *dhavni* is appropriate to music. The musician should practice *dhavni* to make it melodious. If he has control over the *dhavni*, he can improvise the musical embellishments and grace-notes according to his desire. Some musicians have a good voice, but on account of lack of practice and improper manner, their singing is not impressive. Such musicians should modulate their *dhavni* and practise the technique of *raga*. However, the musician is not a blind follower. He is a creative artist in his own right. He must show his originality in creating new permutations and sequences possible within the framework of the particular *raga* he is playing.

#### 3. Voice Training

Particular breath-control exercise may not be necessary for voice training. The *alaap* exercises are intended to secure both poise and resonance of the voice. What is needed is the capacity of sustaining the breath over a slow vocalisation. The *nom-tom* exercise are meant to give practice in the reproduction of vowel and consonant sounds (found in the wording of the song). The breath throws the vocal chords into action and when it passes through the mouth cavity, it resonates according to the opening or closing of the teeth and lips. The strain on the "vocal chords can be reduced to a minimum by the judicious use of mouth cavities and proper control and adjustment of the tongue, the teeth and lips" [1] The vowel sounds can be easily sustained while the voiced consonants require some effort. The *alaap* exercises apart from voice training are also meant to regulate the pitch and the time. Subsequently *tan* exercises regulate the voice in equal steps. The parts of the *alaap* (ascending and descending) acquaint the student with the different groups of notes in a *raga*. Finally in the *meend*, the continuous glide, the performer gets relief by a return to the tonic note and thus contains the aesthetic relish of the *raga*.

In India, vocal music is rated higher than instrumental music. As such, ancient writers laid emphasis on the cultivation of the voice. Control over the voice is the key to the art of singing. A cultivated voice is the result of great discipline. Bharata mentioned five qualities which a singer must cultivate in order to build up a musical voice:

- a) Volume of voice: It should be audible from a distance of about 60 feet. Perhaps this requirement is not necessary now on account of acoustic arrangements in concert hall.
- b) Steadiness of tone: It should be cultivated so as to improve the tonal quality.
- c) Mellowness of voice: The voice must be trained to be able to produce different notes without any effort.
- d) Production of several notes to the basic or fundamental note: Such notes would include similar notes, consonant notes and side notes. The singer must know the composite nature of musical notes and be able to reproduce them at will.
- e) Range of voice: It should be comprehensive. He should be able to use the notes of the three *saptaks*: the lower, the middle and upper octaves.

Sarang Deva the musicologist added the following qualifications for a good vocal singer. He is one who:

- a) Pays great attention to the rhythm of his song.
- b) Pronounces the words of his composition correctly and in such a manner that they are intelligible to the audience.
- c) Produces the raga-form correctly according to his tradition, and
- d) Sings in his natural voice and does not imitate another voice or singer.

According to the old Indian tradition, vocal music is a life long education and one cannot be perfect even when one approaches one's end. The *sadhana* is difficult but rewarding. Practice makes a person perfect. Even well-known and reputed singers practise eight to twelve hours a day.

#### 4. Dos and Don'ts

The following points should be taken into consideration if the singer is to acquire *merit* and reputation in the profession.

- 1) The musician should acquire a perfect knowledge of *shrutis*, *svaras*, *tal*, sequences and notations.
- 2) The words of the *geet* or composition should be clearly pronounced and be intelligible to the listeners. His pronunciation should be correct and unambiguous.
- 3) *Bol tan* should be practised for the elaboration of *raga*, *tal*, *alaap* and *alankar*.
- 4) The musician should keep in mind the *vadi* and *sanvadi* notes of the *raga* he is performing. He should use only those *svaras* which can be permitted in accompaniment. He must delineate the raga-form correctly.
- 5) The pitch of the voice of the singer should be neither too high nor too low.
- 6) The singer should sing the *raga* keeping in mind the *rasa* (emotion) which that *raga* is intended to produce. He should share that *rasa* with his listeners.
- 7) The singer should sing the *raga* keeping in mind the time appropriate to the *raga* and sing it at the right time. The restriction may not apply to special music concerts held at particular hours.
- 8) The singer should bear in mind as far as possible the preferences of his audience and also watch their response.
- 9) The musician should cultivate the modulation and melodiousness of his voice.
- 10) There should be no strain on the throat and there should be no break or hoarseness in the voice. The music should seem to follow effortlessly and spontaneously. His voice should be under his perfect control and he should sing with confidence and concentration.
- 11) He must have a good memory and should sing with grace and composure

The following are some of the *demerits* in singing which the musician should avoid:

- 1) To use *vivadi* (forbidden) or inappropriate notes in the *raga*.
- 2) To sing without *laya* and *tal*.
- 3) To sing with nasal twang or to squeak.
- 4) To sing with clenched teeth or a frown or puffed cheeks.
- 5) To sing loudly or in a harsh tone.
- 6) To sing nervously or with tension or tremor.
- 7) To turn or twist the neck while singing.
- 8) To make gestures while singing.
- 9) To sing inappropriately or indifferently without paying heed to the *rasa* (emotion) appropriate to the *raga*.
- 10) To adulterate or pollute the correctness (*shudhta*) of the *raga*.
- 11) To pronounce the words incorrectly or in such a manner that the listeners may not be able to understand.
- 12) To sing with eyes closed. However, in case of *Gurbani Sangeet* or devotional music, the composition may be sung with eyes closed to help meditation and the creation of the *rasa* (emotion).

- 13) To get out of breath while singing or to break the sound, or to squeak or stammer.
- 14) To look at the roof while singing, instead of looking at the audience.

#### **NOTES AND REFERENCES**

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## **PART II: Sikh Kirtan**

## Chapter 7: Music of the Divine Masters

### Music of the Divine Masters

Union with God is attained through kirtan. (Guru Arjan)

### Music and Religion

From ancient times, music has been regarded as a sacred art. It is related to certain values which are sublime and permanent but intangible. In the Vedic age, religious songs were sung in India in simple chants. Later on, *Gandharva* music "was seen by the Creator in His contemplation and afterwards performed by seers and saints", and was considered as the surest means of attaining liberation. Sacred music was known as *Marga Sangeet*, while secular music was called *Desi Sangeet*.

In medieval Europe, hymns were popular in the Christian Churches, Chateaubriand regarded music as "the child of prayer and the companion of religion." In England, church choirs and children's groups were established. Addison valued music as a spiritual aid because it "wakes the soul and lifts it high and wings it with sublime desires and fits it to bespeak the deity."

In India,, the contributions of saints and seers to the development of classical music have been manifold and significant. They have enriched it with streams of devotional songs. Jayadev Goswami (12-13 century) was one of the first mystical singers of Vaishnavite Bhakti. His *Geet Govinda* is regarded as a classic of devotional music. Herein, he sang of the love of Lord Krishna and Radha with great emotion and sincerity. Chaitanaya (1486-1534) of Bengal too sang of the mystic love of Krishna and Radha. Swami Haridas (1480-1575), the teacher of Tansen was a great expert in the *dhrupad* style of devotional music. The first five Sikh Gurus (1469-1606) were also great singers and musicologists. They have encouraged professional singers for the benefit of their congregations. It was in 1604 that for the first time, the largest ever collection of sacred hymns of the first five Gurus, fifteen saints and fifteen bards was compiled and named *Adi Granth*. The Gurus regarded sacred music as a means of spiritual *sadhana*. They affirmed that the singing of the praises of God stabilised the mind and inspired the devotional element of Karnatak music through his inspiring *kritis*. In Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) embellished Hindustani music with his own style called Rabindra Sangeet. His *Gitanjali* is an important collection of inspired poems for which he received Nobel Prize. In one of his poems, he says:

"When Thou commandest me to sing, it seems that my heart would break in pride,  
And I look to Thy face and tears come to my eyes.

Drunk with the joy of singing, I forget myself and call. Thee friend who art my lord."  
Though music is generally tabooed in Islam [1] as an instrument of satan, it enjoys a place of pride among the unorthodox Sufi mystics. They call it *Samai Hakani*--spiritual trance. The Chisti mystics of northern India encouraged the *qawwals* (musicians) to sing the praises of God and then got into a situation of rapture when all danced together in a sort of mystic trance.

In India, the *bhakti* movement gave an impetus to sacred music. There are nine traditional stages of *bhakti* (devotional worship) according to the Scripture [2]. These are as follows:

- 1) *Sunan* : Hearing to the Holy Word.
- 2) *Kirtan* : Singing of the praises of God.
- 3) *Simaran* : Remembrance of the Lord.
- 4) *Pooja* : Love-worship of the deity or God.
- 5) *Pad-sevan* : Surrender of the self at the Lord's feet.
- 6) *Vandhana* : Supplication to the Lord.
- 7) *Dasa-bhava* : Considering oneself as the Lord's servant and obeying His commands.
- 8) *Maitri Bhava* : Real friendship with the Lord and total dependence on Him.
- 9) *Atam-nivedan* : Surrendering oneself to the Lord as an act of total dedication. This leads to the merger of the individual soul with the Universal Soul.

Though kirtan is regarded as the second stage, the Gurus gave it supremacy over other forms of devotion and valued it as the chief mode of Sikh worship. Guru Arjan Dev says in this connection:

"Gurbani is the treasure of the jewels of Bhakti.  
By singing, hearing and acting up to it, one is enraptured." [3]

## What is Kirtan?

*Kirtan* has been defined in various ways. It means "laudatory recital, verbal and literary, of the name and qualities of a person. But its technical meaning consists in the repeated utterance of the name and description of the qualities of the divine being or beings,"[4]. According to Sikh religion, *kirtan* is the devotional singing of the praises of God in melody and rhythm. The composition is generally sung in classical *raga* with the appropriate *tala*. Though the appeal of sacred music is generally directed to one's feelings, the element of intellect is not ignored. The meaning and the significance of the words of the songs need to be understood in all its ramifications. For Guru Tegh Bahadur, *kirtan* is the singing of "the glory of God with words, mind and action,"[5]. According to the *Adi Granth*, the praises of God can be sung, tuned lilted, contemplated, uttered, intoned, listened to, discoursed on or played on instruments. The main aim of *kirtan* is to hymn the glory of God and to get spiritually closer to Him, because the goal is merger in Him. The Gurus commended it as the easiest and most effective way of spiritual fulfilment.

In *kirtan*, more important than the musical element is the feeling of love and devotion of the disciple. Even the best and perfect melody, unless accompanied by true belief and sincere feeling for God, may be of no avail. According to the Gurus, mere technical perfection of musical rendering and vocal skill is not *kirtan*. Guru Ramdas says: "Some sing of God through vocal music, musical instruments and chanting in various ways, but the Master is not pleased thereby.

What can crying (crocodile tears) accomplish for those who are full of fraud and sin within." [6]

So also the singing of secular or uninspired verses so-called holy men bring neither benefit nor solace. The Gurus disapproved the singing of *geets or kachi bani* composed by fake preceptors and poetasters. Guru Amardas says:

"When a person sings and you do not feel uplifted,

It is because his singing, arising, from his ego, falls flat," [7] Elsewhere he affirms:

" Duality can give no delight; the ego-centered finds no refuge.

Devotion cannot be produced through hypocrisy and as such the Lord is not attained." [8]

Guru Ramdas says:

"The Lord is beyond the melodies and airs.

Merely through these, His will cannot be realised." [9]

Pure, secular, sensual or festive type of music-even one connected with the love-stories of gods and goddesses or prophets-is not *kirtan*. Devotional music is that which promotes equipoise of mind or meditation on Divinity. *Kirtan* is an aid or a catalyst to enable the individual to attune himself with the Infinite. Music which is prostituted or profaned by catering to the satisfaction of lower instincts or someone's ego or for mercenary motives is known as 'fake' music.

The love of God is not won by music, chanting or dance. Even if the quality of music is inferior, He is won by the longing and love of the heart. Those songs are beautiful which tame the mind and link the soul with the Lord. Therefore he who truly loves God is capable of doing justice to sacred music. His singing produces the appropriate feeling and helps his listeners and evoke parallel feelings among the congregation. The singer gets stability of mind and imparts a feeling of equipoise to the audience.

Nowadays there is a tendency among the Sikhs and on the part on some Gurdwaras relaying *kirtan* through tapes and loud-speakers so that the people living in the neighbourhood may listen to the sacred music. Though this activity is inspired by a good movie, it has often proved counter-productive and created a lot of hostility between Sikhs and non-Sikhs, and also discouraged the Sikhs from visiting the temples or joining the congregation. Similarly routine singing of a part of the *Asa-di-var* every morning by professionals (*ragis*) or *granthis*, in the absence of the congregation is hardly conducive to the devotion which *kirtan* by singers lacking character and piety has often led to friction and protest. Besides, the mercenary motives of *ragis* often produce antipathy towards *kirtan*. The Gurus discouraged the performance of *kirtan* as means of amassing wealth. On the other hand, they said that *kirtan* is meant to "cut the chain of *maya* or attachment to worldly goods and possessions"[10]. The aim of *kirtan* is to bring peace and joy to the mind and to attain to the stage of *sahaj* (bliss). It has been observed that sometimes the singers sing the hymns in film tunes which distract the mind and bring to the listener's memory a recollection of the scenes in which the original film was sung. That is why religious organisations like the Shiromani Committee have rightly banned the singing of Shabads in film tunes in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib*.

## Benefits of Kirtan

Guru Arjan who compiled and grouped the hymns of Gurus and Bhagats under different *ragas* has mentioned the manifold benefits of Kirtan. There are four great objectives of human life: *dharam* (righteousness), *arth* (wealth), *kam* (success) and *mokshu* (salvation). All these four are achieved by *kirtan* [11], under the Lord's will:

"Whoever chants or listens to Kirtan, his evil consciousness disappears.

All his wishes are fulfilled and his hopes are satisfied." [12] Elsewhere Guru Arjan writes:

"Man obtains dominion, comforts, enjoyments and eternal bliss by kirtan of the Holy Name and all his wishes are fulfilled.

Nanak the slave says, one who is preordained by the Creator has his tasks accomplished." [13]

In addition to the above benefits, kirtan is the fountain of so many blessings, some of which are mentioned as follows:

### 1) *Remedy against Evil*

The devotional music clears the mind of the accumulated filth of previous existences. It gradually washes the inner consciousness and man becomes holy and spotless through the power of kirtan. Sacred music is regarded as a panacea of all ailments. It is a sure remedy for all the diseases of the mind. It removes evil inclinations and wicked thoughts. Guru Arjan Dev says:

"The disciple who obtains the panacea of Thy Name, gets rid of the diseases of many births. O man, perform kirtan day and night, which is the fruitful avocation of human life." [14]

According to the Gurus, *kirtan* removes duality and the five vices of lust, anger, greed, worldly attachment and pride. It removes the root of selfishness-the ego-which leads to action and the consequent chain-reaction of cause and effect.

### 2) *Support of Life*

The Gurus regarded *kirtan* as their prop of life and their soul's nourishment. Guru Arjan regarded it as a divine blessing and valued it as an aid to holy living. Referring to the devoted singers, he says: They acquire permanent seat in the Infinite Mansion." [15]

The Gurus thought *kirtan* particularly suitable to the house-holder's way of life. Austerities and penances for family-people are terribly painful and irrelevant. So the best way of spiritual development for people with social commitment is sacred music. It produces a kind of detachment in the midst of family life. Guru Arjan says: "He who day and night chants *kirtan* remains detached in his household." [16]

Moreover the homely comparisons and analogies like the seed and the tree, the spider and the web, the river and the sea, the thread and the gems, the river and boat, the puppet and the puppeteer convey clearly moral and spiritual ideas through perfect melodies.

### 3) *Source of Virtue*

*Kirtan* purifies the mind and leads to a life of virtue. It produces a desire in the devotee to emulate the qualities which we associate with God, for example, truth, justice, compassion, fearlessness, etc. *Kirtan* reinforces ethical conduct. Guru Ramdas says:

"Blessed is the destiny of the good people who by performing *kirtan* becomes virtuous persons." [17] Guru Arjan refers of the noble life of the devotee and says:

"He hears the *kirtan* and engages himself in meditation.

This is the characteristic of holy life." [18]

This is a story current in Iran (Persia) about a group of Sikhs who had settled there in the eighteenth century in a place called "Duzdan" which literally means the place of thieves. Once the ruler of that country happened to pass *incognita* through that place early in the morning. At that time, the Sikhs who had gathered together in a house, as usual were performing *kirtan*. The ruler heard the sacred music, while standing outside and was much impressed by their devotion. He felt that the name of the town should be changed as it was not a place of thieves but of holy men. He changed the name of the town from "Duzdan" to "Zahindan" which means the city of pious. Such is the great influence of *kirtan* on people who belong to other faiths.

### 4) *Valuable Asset*

The Gurus regarded *kirtan* as an invaluable gem, a diamond, Guru Ramdas says:

"God's Name is the only jewel and ruby. Through it, truth, contentment and wisdom are obtained... *Kirtan* is a priceless diamond. It is an ocean of bliss and virtues." [19]

The comparison is appropriate for obvious reasons. Firstly, just as the diamond emits light, *kirtan* provides illumination in this dark world. It is beneficial to the physically and spiritually blind, because they can listen to *kirtan* and thus gain peace of mind. Secondly, *kirtan* pierces the heart just as the diamond cuts through a hard substance. Guru Ramdas says:

"God Name is a diamond and a ruby, with which my soul and body are pierced ."[20]

Thirdly like the diamond, *kirtan* is a permanent and stable asset. Guru Arjan affirms:

"Kingdom, wealth and paraphernalia are of no use; God's *kirtan* is my mainstay. This wealth is stable and everlasting." [21]

Thus *kirtan* is a permanent and valuable heritage both for its aesthetic and spiritual enrichment.

### 5) *Fountain of Bliss*

Hymns are generally sung in slow and sustained tones to create a feeling of repose or 'spiritual pull' so as to attune the mind to the thoughts of the Guru. As such the display of musical virtuosity is held under restraint. It is the Holy word which uplifts the mind; poetry and music are brought in to magnify its emotional appeal. *Kirtan* creates a congenial environment which helps devotion. By repeated hammering of *shabad*, the mind becomes stable.

*Kirtan* creates a sense of true peace and spiritual aspiration. It is a sort of communion with Divinity. The minds of the devotees who perform or listen to *kirtan* are filled with zeal and fervour. They feel inwardly satisfied with the solace offered by sacred music:

"There is forever joy and charm of spontaneous music. The saintly beings abide there and regard *kirtan* as their solid sustenance." [22]

### 6) *Divine Nectar*

*Kirtan of Gurbani* is regarded as nectar or the water of immortality which liberates man from the bondage of materialism. The inner lotus blossoms by listening to sacred music and man's soul is purified. Guru Ramdas puts it thus:

"The nectar-like Bani is the divine essence; it resides within the God-oriented.

The lotus of the heart is illumined, man's light merges with the Supreme Light." [23]

The effect of *kirtan* is three-fold. *Firstly*, by listening to it, the aesthetic senses are satisfied; *Secondly*, the *rasa* (feeling) of *kirtan* delights the inner consciousness and offers spiritual nutrition; and *thirdly*, man's soul is transported into a realm of ecstasy. Guru Arjan sums up the benefits of *kirtan* in the following lines:

"Singing the Lord's praise, the soul is illuminated and the mortal abides the Lord's lotus feet. In the saints' society, he is emancipated, Nanak says, he crosses the terrible world ocean." [24].

### 7) *Bestower of salvation*

*Kirtan*, through high thinking and holy feeling removes the fear of death and cuts the chain of transmigration. The cycle of birth and death comes to an end. Guru Arjan says;

"Day and night, sing *kirtan* of God, and you will never go into the cycle of transmigration" [25].

The demons of death dare not approach the performer of *kirtan*, because, if by error they do so, they will be called to account by God. *Kirtan* is therefore the means of liberation or salvation of the individual. According to Guru Amardas, by singing praises to the Lord's attributes, one is instinctively influenced by them. He says about the devoted singers:

"They are full of bliss; by singing His virtues they merge in the Ocean of Virtue" [26]

## **Dancing**

Dancing is so akin to music that often both of them go together. In the singing of Vaishnav bhagats, *Krishna-Lila* was accompanied by dance. Actors played the parts of Gopis, Radha and Krishna. This was more like an entertainment and display of theatrical skills rather than devotion. Besides this, there were dances in the halls of nobles and royal-courts where professional dancers and sometimes talented slaves danced to provide entertainment

and fun for the rich. The Gurus rejected both types of dancing as cheap entertainment, catering to the lower passions. However, they extolled kirtan as the noblest of fine arts because it is addressed more to the inner consciousness than to the hearing faculty, while the dance is mainly directed to the hearing faculty, while the dance is mainly directed to the audio-visual faculties. Guru Amardas says in this connection:

"By dancing and jumping, the Lord's devotion is not obtained. That person who merges in the Divine Word performs the Master's devotional service" [27].

However, the *inner dance*- the ticking of the mind to the Holy Word-is permitted in Sikhism. Guru Amardas approved of the dancing of the inner self in harmony with the Guru's word"[28]. Guru Nanak has described the true dance thus:

"Make intellect your musical organ and love your tambourine.  
By these joy and buoyant pleasure are ever produced in the mind...  
Deem the praise of the Lord as the clapping of the hands,  
Others dances produce sensuous pleasure in the mind.  
Let truth and contentment be your pair of cymbals;  
Let the perpetual vision of the Lord be your ankle-bells,  
Let non-duality be your music and song.  
With such devotion, dance, by beating time with your feet" [29]

Guru Arjan describes in detail the dance-worship acceptable to the Almighty thus:

"Make your hands the cymbals, your eyes the kettle-drums and your forehead the rebeck to play upon.  
Chime the sweet music of the flute in your ears and with the tongue sing the celestial strain:  
With the ankle-bells dance, O man, and shuffle the rhythmic movements of your hands.  
This alone is the dance approved by the Lord" [30].

Holy dance due to devotion and ecstasy is permitted by Gurus, but theatrical dance with make-up, gaudy dresses and decorations to win the approbation of the audiences tabooed. These are generally the antics and tricks either to get money or fame. The real test of dance is the fervour and devotion of the performer. True dance is spontaneous and inevitable in a condition of superconsciousness when the individual, overcome by love of the Lord is beside himself and simulates to the rhythm of his inner self. The Gurus liked the kind of dance which produced the feelings of love, peace and bliss. Clapping and gesticulation, which are associated with the response of the audience to courtly and profane dances are not permitted in Gurudwaras or in kirtan-darbars. The Gurus rejected the traditional dancing by *Devadasis* (temple dancing girls).

### **Kirtan and the Congregation**

The performance of *kirtan*, though possible individually or in isolation, is not encouraged. The Gurus advocated the performance of *kirtan* in congregation. It is an indication of divine grace that people gather together to participate in the *kirtan*. The congregation is generally held in the Gurudwara premises or in special enclosures covered with canopies on occasions of important *Gurpurb* celebrations. According to the Sikh faith, God is present in the congregation. According to the Sikh faith, God is present in the congregation. Bhai Gurdas is all praise for the holy congregation and says:

"The holy congregation is the Mansarovar lake;  
the Sikhs are the swans.

They digest the diamond-like words of the Guru through *kirtan*" [31]

It is said that *kirtan* done in chorus by those present in the temple is like the appeal of a deputation of the devout to God. Such a supplication is generally approved by the Lord. Moreover, it eliminates the feeling of duality in the individual, because he realises the Divinity in each member of the *Sangat*.

### **Kirtan in the Dark Age**

According to Guru Amardas, there is no need of celibacy, self-mortification, austerity, penance and pilgrimage in the modern age which is called the Dark Age-*Kalyuga*. The singing of the Lord's Name is the only righteous deed which brings the greatest unit. The Gurus simplified the path of spiritual fulfilment through *kirtan*. It is the vehicle of getting in tune with Divinity. Guru Ramdas says:

"Glorious is the Lord's praise and the Holy Name.  
It is the sublime deed in the Dark Age.  
By Guru's teaching, man is blessed with the  
Lord's praise and he wears the necklace of the  
Lord's Name in his mind"[32].

*Kirtan* overcomes the diseases of the mind and body and of doubt. However, this involves not only the performance and of or the listening to the *kirtan*, but also following strictly the instructions of the Guru contained therein. It is the means of salvation in these hardened dark times. Guru Amardas says:

"One who is dyed in God's colour sings His praises;  
Through the Guru's Word, he naturally merges in bliss" [33].

The teachings of the Gurus penetrate deep within the subconscious mind and thereafter through inclination and tendencies take shape in action. It is an inner transformation like the one which happened to Sajjan Thug when he listened to Guru Nanak's *kirtan*.\*

### Longing for Kirtan

The Gurus had insatiable thirst for *kirtan*. Guru Ramdas compared himself to a fish. Just as a fish cannot live without water, in the same way, the devotee cannot survive without *kirtan* or the Holy Name. His constant prayer to God is that he should always remember Him. This is the main object of his life and his highest achievement. Guru Arjan Dev wanted that he should be doing *kirtan* till the moment of his death. To him God's Name was uppermost day and night. A true devotee is engrossed in God's praises to such an extent that he entirely forgets himself and his physical needs. His mind is attuned to the singing of God's praises. He seeks those persons and places where he can be imbued with the love of the Lord's Name. We know of some Sikh musicians like Bhai Sham Singh and Bhai Mansa Singh who devotedly performed *kirtan* daily and for many years, in the Golden Temple, Amritsar, without any desire for gain or reward. So also Bhai Randhir Singh (1878-1961) performed uninterrupted *Gurbani Sangeet (Akand Kirtan)* not only for the whole night (*Raen-subai*), but also for more than twenty-four hours at a stretch. Then his face had a dazzling aura. The author had the privilege of observing his glowing face and listening to *kirtan* at Dagshahi (Simla Hills) in 1951. Whenever he sat for a *kirtan* session, there was no time-restriction. He would continue for hours together, while the members of the congregation would come out from time to time for food or rest.

### Link of Shabad and Consciousness

The highest benefit of *kirtan* is obtained by linking one's consciousness with the meaning and significance of the contents of the hymn. It is not enough that we understand the theme of the *shabad*; it is equally essential that we enter into its spirit and partake of the feeling of the Guru when he sang that hymn. This will mean a recreation of the environment, milieu and ethos of the particular hymn. As soon as the corresponding emotion is realised, man loses his separateness and gets in tune with God. According to Guru Nanak, the melody produces a concentration on the Lord which results in a spiritual vision. After all, the divine light is in the mind, while the senses are the servants of the mind. All then cooperate in the spiritual experience which is a blissful state arising out of the vision of the Lord. This is called *shabad-surat-da-mel* or *liv*. One gets into a trance or state of bliss (*anand*). This is an indescribable moment of exaltation arising out of *kirtan* experience.

### Rasa of Kirtan

Though in aesthetic theory, *Rasa* (aesthetic delight) belongs to the realm of poetry, it is generally extended to the field of music. There are nine types of *rasa* including *shant rasa* [34]. The Gurus added the tenth *rasa* which is called *Nam* or *Amrit rasa*. Though three main *rasas*, *shringar*, *veer*, and *shant*, are generally found in the *Gurbani*, the key factor is *Amrit rasa*- the feeling of transport or ecstasy-which Guru Nanak describes as:

"Whatever *rasa*, other than the true *rasa*, I have experienced appears to me to be tasteless and unsavory. I have tasted the *Amrit rasa* in Guru's company; it is sweeter than the juice of the sugar-cane"[35].

Even rivers of milk and piles of sugar and mountains of gold and gems will not attract one who has tasted the nectar of God's praises.

Guru Ramdas tells how the *Amrit rasa* can be obtained:

"The *rasa* of the immortalising *Nam*-nectar is exquisitely fine.

In what way can I obtain the nectar as my food?

The word of the true Guru is the emerald. He who acts thereon quaffs God's elixir.....

Showing His mercy, God Himself gives the Name-nectar to the virtuous and pours in into his mouth.

Then, O Nanak! Man's body and soul are invigorated and God dwells in his mind" [36].

After the devotee has tasted the nectar of *kirtan*, he is overjoyed and his mind in full of peace. Guru Nanak states:

"If one drinks God's elixir, he is wrapped in trance in his own Home and he then obtains peace.

By the Guru's grace, he understands his Lord.

His mind wanders not and he restrains its movements" [37].

The divine word continues to haunt the heart and there by the devotee recaptures the moments of peace and fulfilment at his own sweet will. The Guru describes the condition of the devotee who is transported into a mystic world through the performance of or listening to *kirtan*, in the following lines:

"Man's desire is eliminated and his mind is imbued with the Lord's Name.

His eyes are fixed on the eyes (vision) of the Lord and God's consciousness rings in his ears.

His tongue sucks is perfumed with the Name's fragrance and this experience is invaluable"[38].

The Gurus called *Kirtan Har-rasa* and *Amio-rasa*. He who drinks this nectar becomes the denizen of a mystic world. HE loses all sense of pain and materialism and his mind becomes exalted. Guru Arjan Dev describes the condition of the devotee thus:

"Within him, the torrent of nectar uniformly rains;

The soul drinks, hears and reflects on the Holy Name.

It rejoices and delights day and night and sports with God forever" [39].

This is a condition of spiritual exaltation which is beyond description and analysis.

## Resonance

Sacred music has two aspects; the outer and the inner. The outer side is the arrangement of words and notes, the welding of the substance and the tune which is a delight for the ear and the intellect. The inner side of this music is its mysterious process by which it opens the vista of inner consciousness and stabilises and wandering mind and brings joy and peace. Technically the result can be explained through the principle of resonance. It has been proved that in case of two instruments tuned identically, if the strings of one instrument are touched, the strings of the other instrument will automatically vibrate without any physical manipulation. Thus the mind will absorb the vibration of calmness through *kirtan*. One musicologist explains the process thus: "If two instruments, such as two *sitars*, are exactly in tune with each other and if one them is played upon, then it is observed that without touching each other, the wires of both the instruments vibrate in resonance automatically. Likewise, the mind is also constantly vibrating due to energy (*shakti*) manifested by the omnipotent in the soul (*jiv-atma*)-its *cidabhasa*. While music is being played or sung-going through the different notes of the various octaves-and one of notes comes into harmony and in identification with the vibrations of the mind of a person, the resonance becomes so strong that it holds the mind steadfast begins to flow gradually and flow gradually and follow the melody itself which is in tune with the external divine music, in perfect resonance and harmony with the raga and rhythm or melody (*dhun*) being heard externally. In this way internally the mind is gradually led, trained and channelised to attain calmness and repose. The result is that external joy begins to manifest itself slowly and steadily by itself. The more is the mind in tune, the greater is the mystic effect of the rhythm (*ghar*), modal music (*raga*)-reinforced with the Divine Word, the revelation (*shabad*) of the scripture"[40]. This joy creates in the mind a longing for a frequent repetition of the experience.

## State of Equipose (Sahaj)

*Kirtan* is a natural way of expressing love for Divinity. When the mind is full of devotion, it bursts into the song of the Lord. *Gurbani* is the path of *sahaj*-natural, simple but hopeful way of spirituality. According to Guru Amardas, God's love naturally and inevitably leads to detachment and desirelessness, not in the way of renunciation, but in an attitude of non-attachment to material things. By and by, *Kirtan* produces a state of getting closer to God by constant remembrance and imbibing some of His qualities [41]. This is a gradual but maturing process, like the ripening of the fruit on the tree. Sacred music enables one to reach this stage of peace and equipose. The mind becomes calm and relieved; it realises that the source of peace is not something external, but within one's own consciousness. The

mind gets stable and stays within its own 'home'. It tastes the joy evoked by divine aspiration. Guru Nanak says that the devotee, while engrossed in the contemplation of the Glory of God, unconsciously realises his own identity with the Lord, and 'singing his praises, he imperceptively unites with the object of his glorification'.

### **Divine Grace**

Though music attracts all human beings like a magnet attracting iron, the Gurus regarded a Sikh's love of *kirtan* as a sign of benefaction. Only a rare and spiritual individual feels himself attracted to the singing of the praises of God. This may be due to the good deeds done by him in previous existences. The Gurus felt that it is only through the writ on one's destiny that one becomes devoted to *kirtan*. Such a person is indeed a blessed soul.

However, it is the grace of God that really counts. Of course man must put in his best efforts towards learning of or listening to *kirtan*, but the acceptance of his devotion depends on God's will, Guru Amardas says:

"Gurbani is the divine light in this world; through God's grace it becomes to abide in the mind"[42].

It is up to the Lord to dye the devotee with His glory. But it is through following the Guru's instructions that one begins to earn the Lord's grace. Guru Arjan says in this connection:

"By the blessings of saints, one utters the Holy Name;

By the grace of saints, one sings *kirtan*" [43].

### **NOTES AND REFERENCES**

1. For the place of music in Islam, refer to A.B. Fyzee Rahamin's "The Music of India", London 1925.
2. *Adi Granth*, p.71.
3. *Ibid.*, p.985.
4. *Cultural Heitage of India*, Vol. IV, p. 321.
5. *Adi Granth*, p.450
6. *Ibid.*, p.450
7. *Ibid.*, 158; see also p. 820 "My Beauteous Lordd, let me not hear with my ears, the egoist's obscene songs and tunes which are useless."
8. *Ibid.*, p. 83,
9. *Ibid.*, p.1423.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 979.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 1300.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 683
13. *Ibid.*, p. 108
14. *Ibid.*, p. 889
15. *Ibid.*, p. 281
16. *Ibid.*, p. 649
17. *Ibid.*, p.1222
18. *Ibid.*, p. 893
19. *Ibid.*, p.449
20. *Ibid.*, p. 389.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 462
23. *Ibid.*, p. 1423.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 901.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 624; compare it with Tyagraja's verses:  
" O mind! devotion associated with the ambrosia of the notes and melodies is verily paradise and salvation. He who has knowledge of melodies along with the devotion of God is indeed a soul liberated here itself."
26. *Ibid.*, p. 122
27. *Ibid.*, p. 159
28. *Ibid.*, p. 506.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 350
30. *Ibid.*, p. 884. Some of the Hindu mystics like Chaitanya and Mira Bai sang and danced with true devotion. Some Sufi mystics did the same.
31. Bhai Gurdas, Var 9, 14
32. *Adi Granth*, p. 1314.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
34. See Chapter II ante.
35. *Adi Granth*, p. 119.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 1015.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 1091.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 102.
40. Guru Nanak Foundation. New Delhi: *Guru Nanak, His Life, Time and Teachings*. P. 225.
41. *Adi Granth*. 68.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 183.

## Chapter 8: Gurus and Kirtan

### Gurus and Kirtan

The Word of the Guru is the music heard by seers in ecstasy,  
(Guru Nanak)

#### **Guru Nanak (1469-1539)**

Guru Nanak used to chant his own verses even before he set out on his missionary tours. At Sultanpur Lodhi [1] where he worked as a store-keeper he would go out early morning and late evening in the company of Mardana to sing praises of God. Guru Nanak would start his divine song while Mardana played of the rebec. When Guru Nanak started his first missionary journey in 1499, he visited Sajjan Thug at Talamba (near Multan). At that time he sang the following song to the accompaniment of Mardana's rebec. So great was the impact of his music that the heart of Sajjan melted and he realised the enormity of his crimes.

"Bronze is bright and shining,  
Rub it and it gives out blackness;  
And a hundred washing cannot remove it.  
They are true friends (Sajjan) who stand by me" [2].

When Gurur Nanak went to Benares, he met Pandit Chaturdas, the cheif priest, who doubted the value of singing the praises of God in place of display of holy symbols like rosary and necklace of basil beads. Guru Nanak explained to him the importance of *kirtan* by using the metaphor of the Persian wheel:

"Make God your well, string His Name for the chain  
Of water-pots and yoke your mind as an ox to it.  
Irrigate with nectar and fill the plots therewith.  
Thus you shall belong to the Gardener" [3].

Guru Nanak regarded hymn-singing and hymn-listening with devotion as a link between man and God:

"Musical sound (*nad*) originated from God.  
It's holy in every sense. The best way to worship  
God is to blend the divine Word with sacred music" [4].

The singing (*nad*) produces a response or echo (*Anahad nad*) within the soul. He felt that *Gurbani and kirtan* are superior to all spiritual practices and as such they lead to the door of salvation.

"The Guru's hymn is the tenth gate of music,  
the Vedas and everything.  
My soul is imbued with the Lord of the universe,  
Who contains all pilgrim-spots, fasting, and austerities" [5].

After setting at Kartarpur in 1521, Guru Nanak performed *Kirtan* both morning and evening at the *Dharamsal or kirtanghar*, as his residence was called. He used to tell Mardana which strings (notes) too play for a particular hymn. After Mardana had played on the rebec for a few minutes, so as to create an appropriate atmosphere, Guru Nanak would start singing his song in that *raga*. Such was the great love between the two that the Guru designated two of his *salokas* as *Salok Mardana* which are found in the *Adi Granth* on page. 533.

Guru Nanak propagated his message of love and peace through *kirtan*. He used a composite language containing Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Sindhi words. His appeal to the listeners lay not so much in his words-some of which were quite unintelligible to his foreign audiences-as in his feelings and pious conduct. His spontaneity, his melody and his sincerity captivated the imagination of rural folk and they some how grasped his message.

Once on the outskirts of Baghdad, Guru Nanak, according to his routine, sang his hymns early in the morning, while Mardana played on the rebec. The orthodox Muslims got upset by the performance of his music in the lands of Islam and decided to punish him. As Pir Dastagir and his followers approached the spot, Guru Nanak began another song. The gentle strains of his music soother their hearts. They forget to throw stones at him. Their leader held a discussion with the Guru about music. He affirmed that music excited the passion and was regarded by Muslims as a means of sensual amusement and vulgar joy and consequently banned in Islamic countries. Guru Nanak explained to Pir Dastagir the true function of music. It is a potent instrument of both good and evil. It melts the hearts and thus and can be a vehicle of spiritual inspiration. God the great Musician has created the cosmic melody-the gentle rustle

of the reeds and waving plants, the murmur of the rivulets, the gushing of torrents, the humming of the bees, the constitutes the orchestra of nature. Love of music is a part of human nature. Whenever a person is happy or alone, he sings or hums a tune. Why not use the natural instinct for music for higher goals and values! Why not sing holy songs in praise of Allah-the Lord of the Universe! This kind of music attunes the individual should to the Universal Soul. The baser tendencies and depraved cravings of man are thus directed to sublime channels. As such, music can be used as an aid to spiritual fulfilment. The pir was greatly impressed by the Guru's argument in favour of sacred music. He and his followers who had come to lynch the Guru for the alleged crime against Islamic tradition became his admirers and friends.

Though Guru Nanak mainly followed the traditional forms of Indian poetry like *Salok*, *Pauri*, *Chlant*, *Var*, *Sohila*, he did not stick to the fixed number of *matras* (time-units). He started singing as the words came to him, but he changed the number of *matras* according to the requirements of the *raga* and *tala*. He also wrote popular kinds of poetry like *Barah-mah*, *Aarti*, *Patti*, *Pahray*, *Gosht* and *Alahaniya*. In all he composed 974 hymns in nineteen *ragas*.

At Kartarpur, two sessions of devotional music were held for the congregation. In the first session held before dawn-*Amrit-vela-the Japji* was recited and it was followed by the singing of hymns. The second session was held in the evening when *Sodar* and *Aarti* were sung. *Sohila* was recited by individuals late at night when they went to bed. Bhai Gurdas confirmed this routine in his *var*.

"Early morning, *japji* was recited and later (in the evening) *Sodar* and *Aarti* were sung" [6].

*Kirtan* became popular in the colony at Kartarpur:

"Every house became a temple, because *kirtan* was regularly performed therein" [7].

"The songs of Guru Nanak were sung to the accompaniment of the music of the *rabab* and the rhythm of *mridang*" [8].

According to tradition, Guru Nanak wrote the following hymn in *Tukhari raga* near the end of his life, wherein he expressed his joy at the realisation of his goal:

"The couch of my home becomes beautiful, when my Beloved enjoys me. By Guru's grace, I fulfilled my destiny. Nanak says, my Beloved enjoys me day and night. By obtaining God as my Spouse, I have become eternal" [9].

Guru Nanak's contribution to sacred music may be summed up as under:

(1) He sang of the Absolute and Infinite God and regarded devotional music (*kirtan*) as the best and easiest method of worship. Those who could not perform *kirtan* could listen to it; as they would imbibe the love of God, they would find joy and peace in their hearts. The Guru used *kirtan* as a means of union with the Divine Essence. By linking one's consciousness with the hymns, one realises the mystic bliss. Guru Nanak says:

"O my soul, singing God's praise, you shall easily merge in Him"[10].

He calls *kirtan* a ladder to reach the Lord's Mansion. The Holy Word of the Guru established a bond between the soul and the Creator. A man who performs *kirtan* with love is not subject to sorrow or decay. Guru Nanak says: "The man who performs *kirtan* is not subject to the harassment of death...

He is awakened with the love of God's Name and his soul is linked with the Lord" [11].

(2) Guru Nanak democratised sacred music and brought it from the exclusive temple halls to the homes of the ordinary men and women. *Kirtan* is the universal food-for the children, for the sick, for the illiterate, for the man in the street and for the highbrow. The Guru brought the awareness of regional music to the masses by singing his hymns in folk tunes. At the same time, as a master of music, he sang in classical *ragas* and specially in the reputable *dhrupad* form for the elite and the connoisseur.

(3) Guru Nanak used music as an instrument of national integration. His accompanist (instrumentalist)-Mardana, who played on the rebec, was a Muslim. Through his musical compositions, he laid the foundation of a popular religious literature and spiritual culture. Moreover, "his popularisation of *ragas* like *Asa*, *Suhi*, and *Tilang* in *shabad-kirtan* testifies to the Muslim impact. The blending of Hindu and Muslim music was initiated by Guru Nanak during Babar's time"[12].

### **Guru Angad (1504-52)**

During the last few days of his life, Guru Nanak instructed his successor-Guru Angad- to start the tradition of *kirtan* of *Asa-di-var*. *Rababis*-Bhai Balwand and Satta have written fine verses about the second Guru in their *Var*.

"Then the true Guru (Angnad), the son of Pheru, came to live in the village Khadoor.  
Meditation, hard service and self-discipline abide with you,  
O my true Guru, while great pride abides with others.....  
O my Guru, You are that peace whose depth cannot be found.  
You are brimful with the nine treasures of the wealth of the Name" [13].

These *Rababis* have stated that in addition to the customary *langar*, the kitchen of the Divine Name continued from which *Nam* was distributed to all the followers. The Lord's praises were sung together and thus the disciples were knit in a spiritual fraternity.

Mascauliffe has mentioned the daily routine in the following words:

"It was Guru Angad's practice to rise three hours before day, bathe in cold water, and engage in meditation and introspection. Meanwhile, the musicians sang *As-di-var*. After this, he used to hold court, when Balwand and Satta-the latter was the former's son according to some, and his brother according to others-two famous minstrels of the time, entertained the company with vocal and instrumental music. The *Sodar* was then repeated and food distributed as in the morning. After that, followed singing of sacred hymns, and then the Guru and his disciples retired to rest" [4].

There were some other musicians who also performed *kirtan* at Guru Angnad's court at Khadoor Sahab. Bhai Deepaand Bhai Buddha were amongst them. There are only sixty-two *salokas* of Guru Angnad under ten *ragas* in Guru Granth Sahab.

Guru Angnad was a great singer and an expert in seasonal *ragas* like *Basant* and *Malar/Malhar*. In *Suhi raga*, he sings his appreciation of the spring season in symbolic terms:

"Nanak, they in whose home their Spouse abides enjoy the spring season" [15]

"Meditate on Him who comes earlier than the spring season"[16]

In *Malar raga*, Guru Angad comments on the month of *Sawan*-the period of rainfall. Rain brings joy and fulfilment of devotees:

"The month of *Sawan* has come. O my companion, think of your Groom"[17].

"The month of *Sawan* has come. O my friend the clouds have burst forth" [18].

### **Guru Amardas (1479-1574)**

Guru Amardas was devoted to *kirtan*. He wrote 907 hymns in seventeen *ragas* which are included in the Scripture. In one of his famous composition called *Anand Sahab*, he dwells on the path of *sahaj*, which is the singing of the Lord's praises:

"Through the valuable melodies and their branches, the celestial fairies have come to sing the Guru's hymns. They who enshrine the Lord in their minds, sing *Gurbani* in praise of the Lord" [19].

In the *Anand*, he affirms that the five types of musical instruments-*panch shabad*-if used for the praise of the Lord's glory will control the five passion-*panch doot*, and as such bring solace and peace to the individual. *Anand* is sung in its abbreviated form (first five verses and the last) at all important Sikh ceremonies and for consecration of *Karah Prasad* (sacred food). *Anand* is a popular composition and it details the *Sadhana*, the cultivation of qualities necessary for gaining spiritual bliss.

Balwand and Satta have paid a tribute to the third Guru's love of the Divine Name in the following lines:

"On the bow of Truth, he mounted the arrow of the Lord's praise.

In the Dark Age, there was pitch darkness; the Guru rose like the shining sun"[20].

Guru Amardas calls himself a *Dhadhi*-minstrel of God-engaged in praising the attributes of the Lord. Using the image of the bard, the Guru tells him what to do:

"O bard! Strike such strains on your strings,  
That it emits the celestial melody of the Word,  
And the devotee gets attuned to his Lord"[21].

The Guru affirms that the love of the Lord finds a natural outlet in singing His glory:

"He who has the Lord's love within him sings God's praises,  
And by Guru's instruction gets easily absorbed in spiritual bliss" [22].

The Guru's love of music continued till his ripe old age. In the evening of his life-a sort of winter-he thought of the blooms of spring and the joy produced by the chanting of the Divine Name:

"Through the Name, whereby the body and the heart are reverdured, one ever abides in Spring...

When the Lord's mercy rains, the body and the soul blossom and the entire world grows green" [23]

Before his passing away, the Guru gave instructions that no one should lament at his departure; only *kirtan* be performed in his memory [24]. Bhai Bool and Pandha were the *kirtaniyas* at his court. Bhai Gurdas pays a compliment to the two musicians:

Pandha and Boola knew *Gurbani* well and sang it beautifully"[25].

Historians have also named Bhai Deep and Ugarsain as his court-musicians.

### **Guru Ramdas(1534-81)**

Guru Ramdas was a great singer and musicologist. He wrote 835 hymns in thirty *ragas*. The previous Gurus had composed in nineteen *ragas*. He added eleven *ragas*: *Devghandhari, Bihagara, Jaisri, Todi, Bairavi, Gond, Nut-Narayan, Maligaura, Kedara, kanra and Kalyan*. He also tried new forms of poetry and rendered them in appropriate melodies and rhythms.

Guru Ramdas was a great lover of *kirtan*. Once when the musicians did not turn up at the appointed hour, he sent a special messenger to call them. In the meantime, he felt restless for sacred music and composed the following hymn at that moment:

"Within my mind such a devotion has been produced,  
Within God I cannot live even for moment as fish dies without water.  
When will some one muster five or seven singers ?  
When will some one begin the tune of song ?  
In collecting and matching musicians, some moments will elapse.  
In the meantime, my mind must sing the Lord's praise" [26].

Guru Ramdas was critical of a casual or indifferent attitude to *kirtan*. He regarded true devotion and practice of the Guru's instructions as the criteria of the sacred music acceptable to God:

"All the Sikhs and servants come to worship the Lord and all of them sing the sublime *Gurbani*.

But God approves the singing and hearing of these who follow the Guru's commandments and regard them as perfect" [27].

Undoubtedly, the blessed ones perform *kirtan*, but salvation comes through God's grace rather than man's efforts.

"The Nectar-word of the true Guru-the quintessence-comes to abide in man's mind by the Guru's Grace.

Through it the heart lotus blossoms and his light blends with the supreme Light" [28].

Guru Ramdas's popular compositions are the *Chhants* in *Asa raga* and *Lavan* in *Suhi raga*. The six *Chhants* [29] consisting of twenty-four stanzas of four lines each were subsequently made a part of the *Asa-di-var* by the fifth Guru. In these hymns, the Guru describes his plight and longing for Divinity, as his eyes sparkle with the elixir of the Lord and his body is bathed in musk. The Guru symbolically presents a picture of the disciples's progress in this composition [30]. There are five stages in the soul's march to Divinity. Firstly, the devotee feels the pang of separation from the Lord. He therefore seeks to remove the cause thereof, namely his ego. Secondly, the Sikh prays for the Guru's blessing through the recital of *Gurbani* and the performance of the *kirtan*. Thereby he gets both divine knowledge and feeling of peace. Thirdly, he realises the value of the Holy Name through meditation. Fourthly, he feels a sense of nearness to God and experiences a thrill of joy. Finally, he is accepted in God's Court and as such escaped the cycle of birth and death.

The *Lavan* [31]-the wedding song-which is a part of the *Anand-karaj*(Sikh marriage) consists of four verses representing the four perambulations or stages on the spiritual journey of the bride and bridegroom: the performance of secular duties; elimination of the ego; detachment from materialism and cultivation of divine love; and the achievement of equipoise and bliss.

Guru Ramdas emphasises *Nam-simaran*-the remembrance of God and His glory. He says:

"Read of God, write of God, repeat God's name and sing God's praise.

And the Lord shall ferry you across the terrible ocean of the world" [32]. He regards *kirtan* as the means of salvation. He writes:

"When you sing the *Gurbani*, divine music is heard again and again.

The generous Lord has given us the gift: through it the human soul merges in the Supreme Light" [33].

Guru Ramdas seeks the Lord's elixir. In words full of alliterative magic, he writes:

"With their tongues the saints sing God's praise-the nectar of nectars, and on their tongue, they place God's elixir. Nanak asks for nothing but God. The love of the Lord's nectar alone is dear on him" [34].

Guru Ramdas showed great talent in linking his hymns to the appropriate *raga* and the theme composition. For example *pahray* is form poetry suited to a mood of despondency.

The Guru selected *Sri raga* for its musical rendering. Similarly *Suhi raga* is suited to the season of joy and as such was chosen for the singing of *Lavan* (wedding song). The Guru conveys his feeling of joy and peace in beautiful imagery thus:

"My body-bed has become cosy with Guru's instruction and I enjoy the quintessence of divine knowledge.... Night and day, I never enjoy peace and pleasure. Such is the writ of the Lord for me" [35].

Apart from classical ragas, Guru Ramdas composed his eight *vars* in folk music and indicated the traditional tunes-*dhunis*-for three of them.\* In his *vars*, he made experimentation with the *matras* (metrical units) in order to avoid the monotony of the same number of units in each line. He changed the number of *matras* to give freshness and rhythmic richness to his poems.

### **Guru Arjan (1563-1606)**

Like his father, Guru Arjan was extremely fond of *kirtan*. He says about himself:

"Your servant is imbued with the colour of the Holy Name. God the dispeller of sorrow has been generous and my mind is enraptured in *kirtan*" [36].

In *Sanskriti Salokas*, he writes:

"The sublime duty of human body is the performance of *kirtan*:

Nectar-sweet is the Lord's Name. O Nanak, the saints drink it and ask for more and more" [37].

His greatest contribution to the Sikh religion was the compilation of the Scripture. It contains the hymns not only of the Gurus but also of saints and minstrels belonging to different religions and castes. Guru Arjan maintained a number of musicians at his court, prominent among whom were Balwand, Satta, Jhanjhu, Mukandu and Kidara [38]. Bhai Ramu and Deepa also performed *kirtan* at his court.

Guru Arjan told the *sangat* (congregation) that *kirtan* and *katha* (discourse") are both necessary for understanding the principles of the Sikh faith. *Katha* is like the mother, while *kirtan* is her son. Many Sikhs recite *Gurbani* but do not understand it. For them *katha* is necessary, so that the teachings of *Gurbani* may be absorbed into their minds. He explained the a Sikh's *kirtan* by comparing it to individual recitation of *Gurbani*: "*Recitation* is like irrigation by water from a well which only benefits a small field; on the other hand, group *kirtan* is like rainfall which covers a large area and benefits many people at the same time" [39].

Guru Arjan sought God's blessing that he might be allowed to do *kirtan* till the end of his life. When asked about the time of performing *kirtan*, he answered that it should be done continuously, irrespective of the time of day or night. He said:

"He, on whom the Lord casts his merciful glance, is blessed with truth, contentment, divine knowledge and contemplation. Night and day, he does *kirtan* and utters the praise of the Beloved Lord and his mind is filled to the brim with the Nectar-Name" [40].

Guru Arjan regarded the hymns not only as a channel of devotion, but also as a means of merging with the Lord:

"My beloved *Gurbani* is a shower of nectar;  
By the grace of the Guru, it rains eternally on my mind.  
Being coloured with the hue of the Creator,  
The *word* leads to the vision of the Lord and eternal bliss" [41].

He summed up the manifold benefits of *kirtan* thus:

"Hymn-singing banishes the threat of hell, dispels all sorrow and rids one of several maladies.  
The fear of death is overcome and the moral escapes death's couriers" [42].

For Guru Arjan, *kirtan* is a kind of *Raj-Yoga* which allows both secular and spiritual sovereignty. The singing of praises of God gives the delight and happiness which is usually associated with kingly power, and on the other hand, it is a mean of union with Divinity- *Jog baniya tera kirtan gaave* [43].

Balwand and Satta, the court-musicians delighted the congregation with their *kirtan*. One day, Balwand asked Guru Arjan for a large sum of money. The Guru earmarked the offerings of the approaching Baisakhi festival for them.

However, there was little collection on the Baisakhi day and the musicians demanded more money. An argument ensued in the course of which the musicians abused the Guru and his predecessors and refused to perform *kirtan*. The Guru dismissed both the singers and asked the congregation to take up the duty of the performance of *kirtan*. He further ordered that every Sikh should learn *Kirtan*, and the congregation should no longer depend on the services of professional musicians. In one of his hymns the Guru says:

"O God's people! You must all sing the Lord's praise and  
With your tongue chant the priceless qualities of the Lord" [45]

Such non-professional singers were called *ragis*. The Guru blessed these singers who sang the sacred verse, without any expectation of compensation or reward:

"How concentrates his mind on Him, for ever singing His praises" [45]

Guru Arjan installed the Scripture-*Adi Granth-in Harmandar Sahab*(Golden Temple) at Amritsar in 1604. It contains his 2218 hymns in thirty *ragas*. He initiated the system of five music-sessions-*chowkies*-which are as follows and continue to be performed till this day:

- (1) *Asa-di-var di chowki*: 3 am. to 6 am. In addition to *Asa-di-var* , hymns are sung in ragas like *Asa, Ramkali, Bhairav, Prabhati, Gauri, and Devgandhari*.
- (2) *Anand di chowki*: 6 a.m to 10 a.m. First the entire *Anand Sahib* of forty *pauris* is sung and it is followed by hymns in *ragas like Gujri, Todi, Suhi, and Tukhari*.
- (3) *Charan Kamal di chowki*: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is also called *Bilwal di chowki*. During this session, hymns are sung in *ragas like Bilwal, Manjh, Wadhans, Gond, Sarang, Basant, Maligaura, etc.*
- (4) *Sodar di chowki*: 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. It is also called *Sandhi-Prakash*. Hymns are sung in *ragas like Sri, Dhanasri, Jaitsri, Bairari, Maru, Asa, etc.*
- (5) *Sukh Asan or Kalyan di chowki*: 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Hymns are sung in *ragas like Kalyan, Kanra, Bihagra, Sorath, Tilang, Nut-Narayan, Kedara, Malhar, Asa and Jaijawanti*. At the end *Kirtan Sohila* or Song of Praise is recited.

Guru Arjan also started the amateur class of musicians whose main function was to perform *kirtan* in different *ragas*. Before this, the *rababis* were the professional musicians who sang before the Guru and the *sangat*. As stated earlier, when Satta and Balwand went on strike, this class of musicians called *ragis* came into being. The fifth Guru personally trained the *ragis* in hymn-singing in the appropriate *ragas*. Guru Arjan was not only a great singer, but also an eminent musicologist. He could sing his compositions up to seventeen *ghars* and he devised a musical instrument called *sarinda* played with a bow. He used to sing while playing the *sarinda*.

## Later Gurus

Guru Hargobind the sixth Guru (1595-1644) was a great patron of musicians. He established a new class of singers called *dhadhi*. They sang of heroic deeds of old warriors and thereby inspired the Guru's soldiers. Bhai Abdullah was a great devotee of the sixth Guru. He sang *Asa-di-var* at the *Akal Takht*. The group of Abdulla and Natha sang the *vars*, after the conclusion of the evening session. Abdulla played on the *sarangi* while Natha played on the *dhadh* (*hand-drum*). At Kirtapur, Bhai Banwali and Parsram also performed *kirtan*. Guru Hargobind introduced the new instruments like *dhadh* and *sarangi*.

Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru was very fond of *kirtan*. He showed great respect of *Gurbani*. On one occasion when some Sikhs approached him while singing hymns, he got up from his couch and bowed to them, thus showing his reverence for *kirtan*. Guru Har Rai did not see the face of Bhai Ram Rai because the latter changed a line of *Sri Gur Granth Sahab*, in order to please Emperor Aurangzeb.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, (1621-75) composed 116 hymns in fifteen *ragas*. He introduced a new *raga* called *Jaijawanti* and composed four hymns therein. His musical skill lies in using the notes of the *sargam* in his hymns, as for example, *Naana, Roop, Dharay, Ram Naam Simaran, Nis Din Sun Puran*, etc. His *salokas* can also be sung according to the times of any of the *ragas* of his hymns [46]. He took a number of *kirtanias* on his travels to different parts of India which included Bhai Gulab Rai, Bhai Bhel, Bhai Mansud and Bhai Gurbaksh.

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, (1666-1708) was a great patron of poets and musicians. Baddu and Saddu *Rababis* used to do *Asa-di-var* in his court. He composed his hymns in nineteen *ragas*, some of which are different from those of *Sri Guru Granth Sahab*, as for example *Adan, Paraj and Kafi*. He was a versatile genius:

"He gave us music, martial and hymnal, sacred and secular, simple and complex. In him, we find a saint singing hymnal songs, a soldier giving martial music, a householder singing virtues of a good life and a painter creating wonderful pictures in music" [47].

He describes God in His aesthetic attributes in *Jap Sahab*. The beauty of His voice makes Him *Geet Geetay*-one whose song is the best of all songs-and *Tan-Tanay*-one whose song is the best of all rhythms. To such God the tenth Guru offers his obeisance.

Most of the Sikh Gurus were, in their own right, masters of music and some created new melodies like *Rag Tukhari*, while some popularised new instruments like *sarinda and sarangi*.

### Harmonious Blend of Poetry and Music

The Gurus were experts in the harmonious blending of their poetic compositions with the appropriate melodic types and rhythms. By their uncanny instinct, they matched the *raga* with the individual hymnal composition. This harmony imparts both beauty and vitality of their compositions and creates the appropriate *rasa* and impact on the audience. This coordination is reflected in the diction, imagery, prosody and theme of the composition on the hand, and the choice of the *raga*, its ethos and its spirit on the other. Here is just one example each of this rare harmony between matter and melody from the compositions of the first Guru and last Guru.

In *raga* Basant which is specially suitable for the spring season as its very name indicates, Guru Nanak uses the image of the tree (the devotee) which in spring (*kirtan*) blooms to (spiritual) fruition. Man can enjoy the eternal spring if he leads a life of holiness and meditation:

"The virtuous deeds are the tree, God's Name its branches, Faith its flowers, and divine knowledge its fruit, Attainment of God are its leaves and effacing the ego its dense shade...  
Nanak, they who by Guru's grace merge in God, wither not and ever remain green"[48].

In the *khayal* form of composition. Guru Gobind Singh composed the following hymn which is rich in visual images:

"Without Thee, rich coverings are an agony to us,  
And to live in the comfort of our households  
Is like living with snakes! Our water-pots  
Have become like pikes on which we are impaled;  
The cup we drink from has an edge like a dagger!" [49].

### NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. G.S. Mansukhani, *Life of Guru Nanak*, p. 25.
2. *Adi Granth*, p.729.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 1171.
4. *Sikh Sacred Music*, p. 38.
5. *Adi Granth*, p. 879.
6. Bhai Gurdas, Var I, 38.
7. *Ibid.*, I, 27.
8. *Ibid.*, 24, 4.
9. *Adi Granth*, p. 1110
10. *Ibid.*, p.1113.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 867.
12. Ardaman Singh Bagrain, *Guru Nanak's Solution of National Unity and integration*, p. 30. In this connection, Aurobindio Ghose wrote: "Where else could the songs of Tukharam, a Kabir and Sikh Gurus and their profound spiritual thinking have so found so speedy an echo and formed a popular religious literature? This strong permeation or close nearness of the spiritual turn, this readiness of the mind of a whole nation to turn to the highest realities is the sign and fruit of an age-long, a real and a still living and supremely religious culture."  
(*The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p, 147)
13. *Adi Granth*, p. 967.
14. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, II, p. 15.
15. *Adi Grant*, p. 791.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 791.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 1280.

18. Ibid., p.1280.
19. Ibid., p. 917.
20. Ibid., p. 968.
21. Ibid., p. 908.
22. Ibid., p. 114.
23. Ibid., p. 1420.
24. Ibid., p. 923.
25. Bhai Gurdas, *Var, II, 18*.
26. *Adi Granth, p. 368*.
27. Ibid., p. 669.
28. Ibid., p. 1423.
29. Ibid., p. 448.
30. Puran Singh wrote: "The music of disciple poetry kindles the light of love in empty shrines; its cadence is that of the temple bells that waken the worshipers at dawn." (*The Spirit of Oriental Poetry*, p. 86).
31. *Adi Granth, p. 773*.
32. Ibid., p. 669.
33. Ibid., p. 442.
34. Ibid., p. 507.
35. Ibid., p. 773.
36. Ibid., p. 642.
37. Ibid., p. 1356.
38. Bhai Gurdas, *Var, II, 18*.
39. *Singh Sabha Patrika: (Feb. 1978) p. 51*.
40. *Adi Granth, p. 841*.'
41. Ibid., p. 404.
42. Ibid., p. 297.
43. Ibid., p. 387.
44. Ibid., p. 821
45. Ibid., p. 962.
46. See Tara Singh: *Guru Teg Bahadur, Rag Ratnavali, p. 185-241*.
47. D. P. Ashta, *The Poetry of Dasam Granth, p. 279*.
48. *Adi Granth, p. 1168*.
49. UNESCO, *The Sacred Writings of the Sikhs, p. 272*.

## Chapter 9: Music of the Granth Sahib

### Music of Guru Granth Sahab

*O God's people, sing the Lord's praise with priceless melody and timbre (Gumrerbitu Arjan).*

The Sikh Scripture compiled in 1604 as *Adi Granth*, later renamed by Guru Gobind Singh as *Guru Granth Sahab*, is unique among the world's scriptures, because its poems were set to music by the Gurus. This is the only scripture which is mostly in music-1343 pages out of a total of 1430-and it shows the harmony between Revelation and *raga*. The Gurus realised the power of music over men's minds and souls and as such they conveyed their innermost thoughts and feelings through the medium of music. This sacred music appeals to all men even though the meaning of the wording may be unintelligible to them. Pure music is free from the limitations of word, meaning or rhythm. It is a unique combination of various faculties and limbs: melody-pattern from the intellect, devotion from the heart, playing on instruments by the hands, tunes from the throat, and the *rasa* from revelation. The importance of revelation is emphasised in the scripture in the following lines:

"People consider it as a song, but in fact it is a meditation on Divinity"[1].

*Gurbani* (Guru's hymns) and *kirtan* (sacred music) are the essence of Sikhism.

*Kirtan* is a sort of celestial melody. Guru Ramdas calls it *Anahad nad*-heavenly strains containing unending nectar. He says:

"On hearing the hymns of the true Guru, the musical instruments ever play and unstruck music resounds" [2]. The vocal music produces an echo within man-in the soul itself-which is called *instruck* music. Guru Nanak observes in this connection:

"Within me rings the unstruck music (of bliss)."

Similarly Guru Arjan affirms:

"The flute of the Name, O Nanak, plays within the devotee." Sacred music is fine art wedded to spiritualism. *Kirtans* are not merely classical music. It is also the sugar-coating of *Gurbani*. It is not performed to make *Gurbani* pleasing and palatable. The Gurus were very clear about its objective. They warned the listeners not to confuse it with other types of music or deem it as a mode of entertainment. The Gurus called the secular type of music fake and false, because it was a manifestation of the singer's ego and dealt with worldly pleasures and attachments:

"Singing, *raga* and instrumental rhythm as such are false;

They arise out of the three *gunas*(*Rajas, Tamas and Satava* and perish in no time" [3]

In the *kirtan*, prominence is given to the sacred word and content and the devotion which accompanies the singing. Pure classical music is a display of *raga-gymnastics* and *alaap* technique and often the words or *bols* have no meaning.

### **Kirtan: A Distinct Tradition of Sacred Indian Music**

Though it may not be correct to call *kirtan* a distinct *school* of Indian music, it is certainly a distinct *tradition* and a new contribution to sacred Indian music. It uses both the classical Hindustani music and *desi*(folk) music for divine praise and glorification, and employs the local idiom and poetic forms so as to intensify its appeal to the masses. Its objective is spiritual inspiration and its medium is the emotional appeal of both pure and popular music. By combining the purity of *raga and tala* with correct intonation and feeling, its appeal extends even to highbrow musicians.

Undoubtedly, the Sikh school of music established by the Gurus adopted some elements of the existing devotional music-the *bhajan and kafi*-of different religious sects of India. However, the Gurus added a new dimension to the current forms of music by harmonising the Hindustani and Karnataka styles under the forms of *Dakhni*. They used the existing *ragas* in different *ghars and dhunis*. As such they made a distinct contribution to Indian music. Dr. A.S. Paintal remarks in this connection: "The Sikh sacred music, through its intimate sharing of the spirit of classical Hindustani music and its artistic assimilation of the popular and folk styles of music for its aesthetic-emotional

needs, evolved new modes and patterns of devotional music based on, and intimately related to, the well-known indigenous forms and styles of devotional music, characteristic of other religious faiths. Here we discern a synthesis that so truly governs the catholicity of the Sikh religion whose contribution to devotional music is not only of outstanding merit, but is also a part and parcel of the great heritage of this country in its religious and devotional modes of expression and appeal."

### Arrangement of Ragas

A few points and characteristics of the major *ragas* of the Scripture are given as follows:

#### (1) *Sri Raga*

*Sri raga* is one of the parent ragas from which other *ragas* have been derived. The word *Sri* means supreme or exalted and as such this *raga* powerful. Bhai Gurdas calls it a supreme *raga*, supreme like the philosopher's stone among other stones, because it has the power of converting baser metals into gold. The gurus gave it the first place. This *raga* is sung in the evening-a period of dusk and darkness. Man's mind and his inner state as a mortal is one of darkness-caused by *maya*-and ignorance of his spiritual potentialities. So from darkness to light is the law of nature. In *Sri raga*, Guru Nanak has dealt with the existing ignorance and superstition and the neglect of spiritual values on account of man's ego, greed and love of worldly pleasures:

"The foolish and greedy soul is attached to and lured by greed,  
Being materialistic and evil-minded, the individual is not soaked in God's Name and continues coming and going"  
[4]. Some writers state that this *raga* is associated either with extreme heat or extreme cold. In the hot season, we need water; in the cold season, we need warmth and fire. As such, the Guru has referred to man's thirst for water and compared the soul to a fish' and likened man's passions to a dreadful fire" [5]. Basically the Gurus have pinpointed in this *raga* the longing of the individual soul for the Universal Soul.

#### (2) *Manjh*

This is a regional *raga* of Manjha- the central portion of the Punjab-and is sung in the afternoon. Here Guru Nanak has given an account of social, cultural and religion conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims in his age. Guru Arjan has composed the calendar- *Barah Maha*-in this *raga*. He has dwelt on the characteristics of different months, and the importance of water and milk in the agricultural economy of the Punjab[6]. Metaphorically these two things respectively signify that man without devotion and kindness is no good at all.

#### (3) *Gauri*

*Gauri* has the largest number of composition which cover about 14 per cent of the total number of pages of the Scripture. It contains two important compositions of Guru Arjan, *Sukhmani* and *Bavan-akhri* (acrostic). As it is a serious *raga*, the Gurus have given herein the exposition of profound concepts like fear, consciousness, soul and salvation. There are a large number of variants of this *raga* which have been listed later in this chapter.

#### (4) *Asa*

*Asa raga* literally means the melody of hope. As the Gurus emphasised the singing of God's praises before dawn, this *raga* is conducive to *kirtan* before day-break. It is a soothing and pleasing *raga*, appropriate for the singing of the *Asa-di-var*, the morning-prayer of the Sikhs. Guru Ramdas's *Chhants* set the tone of this blissful composition: "My eyes are damp with the nectar of the Lord; My soul is filled with His love" [7].

#### (5) *Sorath*

It is a *ragini of Megh raga* and is sung at night. The Gurus have referred to the darkness of superstition and *maya* which envelopes the individual. Guru Nanak says: "This mammon is the enticer of the world, o brother, All the deeds done in its wake are sinful"[8].

#### (6) *Dhansri*

This *raga* is very appropriate for worship and supplication. Guru Nanak many *Bhagats* have composed *Aarti* in this *raga*. The Guru has described the adoration of God by the objects of nature:

"What other worship can be compared to Nature's own Festival of Lights,  
While the Divine Music resounds within!"[9].  
Ravidas, Sain, Pippa and Dhana have composed *Arati-hymns in this raga*.

(7) *Todi*

Generally used for singing praises of noble men and kings, this *raga* was quite popular at Akbar's Court. Tansen sang *Mian-ki-todi* praise of Emperor Akbar. The Gurus, however, used this *raga* to sing the praises of God. Guru Arjan sang as follows:

"I have just one God, my Lord; I know no other.  
The Lord's praise is my way of life, occupation and caste;  
Hearing the *kirtan* of the Lord, I feel great joy"[10].

(8) *Suhi*

This is morning *raga* and a happy one. The Gurus have composed hymns concerning married life in this *raga*. These are *Ghorian*, *Lavan*, *Suchaji*, *Kuchaji* and *Gunwanti*. There are several references to the life of the householder and particularly to the condition of the housewife. Her longing for her spouse becomes very keen and irresistible, as the night deepens:

"I have neither beauty now bewitching eyes nor decent manners, now sweet speech.  
The bride bedecks herself with divine knowledge.  
If her spouse loves her, she becomes a happy wife"[11].

(9) *Bilaval*

*Literally*, Bilaval means 'delight' and therefore this *raga* is often sung in the spring season. Guru Arjan sings of the bliss which spiritual fulfilment brings:

"I am blessed with great destiny for my God is my Bridegroom.  
In His court plays the spontaneous celestial strain.  
Night and day, I abide in bliss, listening happily to musical instruments;  
Disease, sorrow and pain harass not here, nor is there birth or death"[12].

(10) *Ramkali*

*Ramkali* is popular with *Yogis*, and therefore Guru Nanak has composed *Sidh-gosht* in this *raga*. The third Guru has also referred to the paraphernalia of *Yogis* and particularly the harp (*kingri*) used by them:

"Strike such strains on your harp, O *Yogi*, that it may produce the celestial strain and you may remain absorbed in God's love....

Fix the fear and love of the Lord as the two gourds of your harp and make your body its frame.  
If you become virtuous, then shall the string play. In this way your desire shall de part"[13].

(11) *Maru*

This *raga* is associated with warriors and is used to inspire people to acts of heroism. Guru Amardas calls that person a warrior who fights against his mind and its evil inclinations:

"Valiant and the most distinguished are the persons who grapple with their minds.  
They who recognise their won self ever remain united with their God"[14]

Kabir gives a similar connotations of the spiritual hero--*Soora*:

"He alone is known to be a warrior who fights for the sake of his religion,  
He dies, cut piece by piece, but never deserts the battle field"[15].

(12) *Basant*

As its very name indicates, *Basant raga* belongs to the spring season--the period of fruition and joy, Guru Nanak has sung of man's spiritual development in terms of a tree's growth:

"The virtuous deeds are the tree, God's Name its branches, faith its flowers and Divine knowledge its fruits;  
Attainment of god are its leaves and effacing the mind's ego its dense shade"[16].

Guru Arjan sings herein of the eternal spring obtained by devotion to God. The inner spring (bliss) comes through singing God's praise in *Basant raga*:

In his home alone is the eternal spring"[17].  
"Meeting with my Guru-God, I ever abide in bloom.  
The Elysian tree has sprung for me.  
It bears flowers and gem-like fruits of various sorts"[18].

#### (13) *Malar*

*Malar* is related to the rainy season. The Indian peasant eagerly awaits the onset of the monsoon-showers with expectancy and calculates the production of his crops on the amount of rainfall. *Malar* is a peaceful and cooling *raga*. The Gurus have been used the symbolism of the rainy season for spiritual purposes. The Guru is the cloud, his hymns (*shabads*) are the rain and the man's mind is the land. By cultivating the mind, the crop of the Holy Word (*Nam*) is produced. Guru Amardas says in this connection:

The Lord orders the cloud-god and the rain falls in torrents;  
Corn and wealth are produced in great abundance and their value cannot be told.  
O Nanak, praise the Name of God who supplies and gives sustenance to all beings"[19].

#### (14) *Prabhati*

This *raga* literally means the 'dawn'. So it is sung early in the morning. The Gurus have regarded all along the early morning time as the most appropriate for singing the praise of God because the environment of stillness and peace is conducive to the stabilisation of the mind. Symbolically, the light of the dawn represents the manifestation of divine knowledge and the wisdom to be gained by following the Guru's path. Guru Nanak says:

"Meditate on the Lord's Name in the early morning, abandoning all wordly attachments;  
Nanak prays that whosoever become the slave of the Lord's slave wins, while the rest lose the game"[20].

#### (15) *Jaijwani*

This is the last *raga* of the Scripture and contains only four hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur. It is generally associated with the winter season and hence the evening of life. The Guru tells us about the need of remembering God's Name, because life is fleeting and unstable:

"The body is like the hail. It shall melt away in no time.  
Shed all your doubts and utter the Lord's name"[21].

### **Best Raga**

When Guru Ramdas was requested to name the *raga* he like the most, he answered that any *raga* which produced inner joy and devotion and brought him into tune with God was the best:

"Of all the *ragas*, brother, that one is the best,  
Through which the mind gets attuned to the Lord;  
True is the melody of the Lord; its value is inestimable.  
Those ignorant of the qualities of divine music  
Are ill-equipped to comprehend the message of God"[22].

Similarly the other Gurus warned the Sikhs not to get lost in the technicalities and intricacies of *ragas*, because it is just a medium of expression of devotion. Those *ragas* alone are good which help in spiritual *sadhana* and divine love. Mere love of classical music as art or as a hobby for an individual may be feasible, but its exploitation as a money-spinner through *kirtan* is not approved. Guru Nanak says:

"The Guru-oriented renounces the love of *ragas* and other tastes"[23].  
Regarding *Sorath*, which is a delightful *raga*, Guru Nanak imposes a condition:  
*Sorath* is always pleasant if the True One is in the heart"[24].

Guru Amardas too has expressed his views about certain *ragas*. He regards *Sri raga* good if it strengthens devotions and piety:

"*Sri raga* is the choicest of *ragas* if it creates love for Truth" [25].

About *Wadahans*, he says:

"To be imbued with the Divine Word is the essence of *Wadahans raga*;  
Clasp the True Name to your heart" [26].

Similarly he expresses his view on *Dhanasri*:

"*Dhanasri raga* is considered rich, O brother, when it serves the True Guru"[27].

About *Bilaval raga*, the third Guru states:

"Sing the *Bilaval raga*, O dear ones, by concentrating on One God"[28].

He clarifies his idea further and tells us that if devotion and meditation are not induced by the *raga*, singing is of no avail:

"There can be no *Bilaval* in duality;

The self-willed person does not reach the goal"[29].

About *Kedara*, the Guru states:

"Amongst *ragas*, *Kedara* is considered great, O brother, if through it one loves the Name.

Then one continually associates with the saints company and develops love for the True Lord"[30].

The third Guru lays down a stipulation for singing hymns in *Malar raga*:

"*Malar raga* is cooling; contemplating God in it, peace is obtained"[31].

Guru Ramdas has shown a liking for *Bilaval raga*, but he insists that it must be used for praising the Lord:

"Singing in the *Bilaval* measure, I hum the praise of the Sublime God, my Lord Master"[32].

Guru Arjan reiterates the idea that hymn-singing in any *raga* must be accompanied by adoration and deep faith.

He states his view specifically on three *ragas*, *Gauri*, *Sorath* and *Maru*:

"*Gauri raga* is most auspicious if it creates love for the Lord in the heart"[33].

"Through *Sorath* melody, drink the nectar that never becomes tasteless;

Nanak says, singing the praise of the Lord's name, one gains perfect glory in the Lord's Court"[34].

About *Maru raga*, he says that its singing with devotion subdues the five passions:

"Through the Guru's Word, man contemplates the Name with love and becomes detached.

When he overwhelms the five enemies (vices), O Nanak, then *Maru raga* becomes fruitful"[35].

## Ragmala

The Adi Granth contains the following thirty-one ragas (in the serial order):

Sri raga, Manjh, Gauri, Asa, Gujri, Devagandhari, Bihagara, Wadahans, Sorath, Dhanasri, Jaitsri, Todi, Bairari, Tilang, Suhi, Bilaval, Gond (Gaund), Ramkali, Nut-Narayan, Mali-Gaura, Maru, Tukhar, Kedara, Bhairav (Bhairo), Basant, Sarrang, Malar, Kanra, Kalyan, Prabhati and Jaijawanti. But of the above thirty-one ragas, technically fourteen are ragas and the rest are raginis. It may be noted that no distinction has been made in the Scripture between a raga and a ragini. Ragmala given at the end of the scripture gives the following eighty-four melodies. Six are male (parent) ragas; the thirty raginis are their wives and the remaining forty-eight are their sons. This list is as follows:

### (1) Bhairav raga

Wives: Bhairavi, Bilawali, Punyaki, Bangli, Asleghi.

Sons: Pancham, Harakh, Disakh, Bangal, Madhu, Madhava, Lalit, Bilaval.

### (2) Malkaus raga

Wives: Gaundkari, Devagandhari, Gandhari, Seehute, Dhanasri.

Sons: Maru, Mustang, Mewara, Parbal, Chand, Khokhat, Bhora, Nad.

### (3) Hindol raga

Wives: Telangi, Devkari, Basanti, Sindhoori, Aheeri.

Sons: Surmanand, Bhasker, Chandra-Bimb, Mangalan, Ban, Binoda, Basant, Kamoda.

### (4) Deepak raga

Wives: Kachheli, Patmanjari, Todi, Kamodi, Gujri.

Sons: Kaalanka, Kuntal, Rama, Kamal, Kusum, Champak, Gaura, Kanra [36].

### (5) Sri raga

Wives: Bairavi, Karnati, Gauri, Asavari, Sindhavi.

Sons: Salu, Sarag, Sagra, Gaund, Gambhir, Gund, Kumbh, Hamir.

### (6) Megh raga

Wives: Sorath, Gaundi-Malari, Asa, Gunguni, Sooho.

Sons: Biradhar, Gajdhar, Kedara, Jablidhar, Nut, Jaldhara, Sankar, Syama.

If we compare the above scheme with the ragas of the Adi Granth, we find that only two major ragas-Sri raga and Bhairav-have been included in the Scripture. The remaining male parent ragas, namely Malkaus, Hindol, Deepak and Megh have been excluded. Sri raga is the first raga in the Scripture instead of Bhairav raga of the Rāgmala. Asawari used in the Scripture as a part of Asa raga is according to rāgmala the wife of Sri raga. The following eleven wives (raginis) and eight sons of the parent-ragas are included in the Scripture:

Bhairavi: Son: Bilaval

Malkaus: Wives: Devagandhari, Dhanasri

Son: Maru

Hindol: Wive: Tilang (Telangi)

Son: Basant

Deepak: Wives: Todi, Gujri

Son: Kanra

Sri Raga: Wives: Gauri, Bairavi

Sons: Sarang, (Sarag), Gaund

Megh: Wives: Sorath, Asa, Suhi (Sooho), Malar

Sons: Nut, Kedara

There is no mention of Bihagara, Wadahans, Mali-Gaura, Kalyan[37], Manjh, Jaitsri, Ramkali, Tukhari, Prabhati and Jaijawanti in Rāgmala.

### Variations of Ragas

The following variants of *ragas* are formed in the hymns of the composers noted below:

- (1) *Gauri Guareri*-Guru Nanak, Ravidas
- (2) *Gauri Dakhni\**-Guru Nanak
- (3) *Gauri Cheti*-Guru Nanak, Kabir, Namdev
- (4) *Gauri Dipki*-Guru Nanak
- (5) *Gauri Purbi Dipki*-Guru Nanak
- (6) *Gauri Purbi*-Guru Ramdas, Kabir, Ravidas
- (7) *Gauri Manjh*-Guru Ramdas
- (8) *Gauri Sulakhni*-Guru Ramdas
- (9) *Gauri Malwas*-Guru Arjan
- (10) *Gauri Mala*-Guru Arjan
- (11) *Gauri Bairagin*-Kabir, Ravidas
- (12) *Gauri Sorath*-Kabir
- (13) *Wadahans Dakhni\**-Guru Nanak
- (14) *Tilang Kafi\*\**-Guru Tegh Bahadur
- (15) *Suhi Kafi\*\**-Guru Arjan
- (16) *Suhi Lalit\*\**-Kabir, Farid
- (17) *Bilaval Dakhni\**-Guru Nanak
- (18) *Bilaval Mangal*-Guru Arjan
- (19) *Bilaval Gaund\*\**-Namdev
- (20) *Ramkali Dakhni\**-Guru Nanak
- (21) *Maru Kafi\*\**-Guru Nanak
- (22) *Maru Dakhni\**-Guru Nanak
- (23) *Basant Hindol\*\**-Guru Nanak, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjan, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Kabir
- (24) *Kalyan Bhopali\*\**-Guru Ramdas
- (25) *Prabhati Dakhni\**-Guru Nanak
- (26) *Prabhati Bibhas\*\**-Guru Nanak, Guru Ramdas, Guru Arjan, Kabir.

*Ragas according to Thaths of Hindustani Music*

- (1) *Bilaval: Asa, Bihagra, Bilaval, Gond, Nut*
- (2) *Kalyan: Kalyan, Kedara*
- (3) *Khamaj: Manjh, Wadahans, Sorath, Tilang, Maru, Jaijawanti*
- (4) *Kafi: Dhanasri, Sarang, Kanra, Suhi*
- (5) *Bhairav: Bhairav, Gauri, Devagandhari, Ramkali, Prabhati*
- (6) *Purbi: Sri, Jaitsri*

(7) *Todi: Todi, Gujri, Tukhari*

(8) *Marwah: Bairari, Maligaura*

(9) There are no ragas in the Sikh scripture belonging to *Asawari and Bhairavi thaths*. Under *raga Asa* there are some hymns in *Asawari*, which should be considered as a part of *Asa*. *Basant* and *Malar* seasonal ragas though some musicians have classified them under *Poorvi/Marwah* and *Khamaj thaths* respectively.

### Timing of Ragas

The time classification of the 31 ragas of the Sri Guru Granth Sahab is as under. A difference of one hour is permissible according to tradition.

3 a.m. to 6 a.m.: *Asa, Ramkali, Bhairav, Tukhari, Prabhati*.

6 a.m. to 9 a.m.: *Devagandhari, Bilawal*.

9 a.m. to 12 noon: *Gujri, Todi, Suhi, Gond, Sarang*.

12 noon to 3 p.m.: *Dhanasri, Wadahans*.

3 p.m. to 6 p.m. : *Manjh, Gauri, Tilang*.

6 p.m. to 9 a.m. : *Sri raga, Maligaura, Bairari, Jaitsri, Kadara, Kalyan*.

9 p.m. to 12 midnight: *Bihagara, Nut (Nut-Narayan), Kanra, Jaijawanti, Sorath, Malar*.

12 midnight to 3 a.m.: *Maru, Basant*.

Seasonal ragas to be sung during the particular season (at any time of the day and night) are *Malar* in the rainy season (July to September), and *Basant* in the spring season (March and April). If sung out of season, the timing indicated above should be followed.

### Musical Instruments for Kirtan

Musical instruments used for *kirtan* have been mentioned in the Scripture and theological texts. The Gurus avoided the use of *kingri* (harp) and *been* (serpent-charmer's flute), because these had become the traditional symbols of the yogic orders [38]. The Gurus and their court-singers used the *rabab* [39]. The Gurus and their court-singers used the *rabab* [39], *mridang*, (long drum), *pakhawaj*, *surinda*, *sarangi*, *taoos*, *cymbals*, *khartal*, *tabla*, *dholak*, and *dhadh*. Bhai Gurdas confirms that in Guru Nanak's time, people sang his hymns to the accompaniment of certain instruments:

"In every home, the compositions of Baba Nanak were sung to the accompaniment of *cymbals, mridang* and *rabab*" [40].

Guru Nanak describes the movements of the mind in terms of rhythmic instruments:

"The mind's impulses are like cymbals and ankle-bells and With them continually thumps the drum of the world"[41].

Guru Arjan clarifies the process of devotional singing in terms of musical instruments:

"Make your hands the *khartal* (wooden cymbals), your eyes the kettle-drum and your forehead and rebecc to play upon.

Play the sweet music of the flute in your ears and with your tongue sing the celestial melody"[42].

According to the Sikh tradition, there are five kinds of musical instruments. Guru Nanak has explained the role of the five kinds of instruments in realising the highest spiritual stage, as under:

"The Lord is manifest in the tenth gate where the celestial strain resounds to the accompaniment of the sounds of the five musical instruments.

Turning away from the world, the heart-lotus is filled with Nectar and this mind then goes not anywhere. Merging in the Primal Lord, man forgets not the mental meditation.

By the Guru's grace, all the organs are blessed with five virtues and man abides in his own home"[43].

Guru Amardas refers to them as *panch shabad* in the *Anand*.

These are:

(1) *Stringed instruments: (Tat val)* like *rabab, surinda, taoos, sitar* (a later development).

(2) *Leather instruments: (Virat vad)* like *mridang, pakhawaj, dholak, tabla* (a later development).

(3) *Metal instruments: (Ghan vad)* like *chimta, cymbals, khartal*.

(4) *Wind instruments: (Sushir vad) like flute, bansari harmonium.*

(5) *Clay instruments: (Nad vad) like earthen pot, ghatam, jal-tarang (a later development).*

The main purpose of *kirtan* and instrument music accompanying it is to meditate on God. Guru Arjan emphasises this point in unmistakable terms:

"To discourse on God and to perform *kirtan* and to hear the resounding of Divine music is the aim of my life.

Nanak, the Lord is highly pleased with me and I have obtained my heart-desired fruits"[44].

Instrumental notes keeping ringing within the devotee's mind even after the *kirtan* has ended; the flute of the Name is heard inside.

## Some Technical Terms

### *Ghar*

One of the important words used frequently at the top of a group of hymns or a composition is *Ghar*. Literally, it means "house", but it has been interpreted by scholars in different ways. According to Bhai Kahn Singh [45], it has two meanings, firstly the *tala* (rhythm-pattern) and secondly the direction to perform the *raga* according to *Sargamparastar*. *Ghar* is a hint to the musician to sing the *Shabad* according to a particular number of *svaraparastar*. According to another scholar, *ghar* was, in the medieval tradition, the *svara* from which a particular *raga* commenced, but in that case, numbering would not be necessary. One writer states that *ghar* refers to *vadi* (dominating) note, as we understand it today [45A]. Another musicologist affirms that *ghar* means the number of divisions in a particular *tala*. For example, "*ghar 3*" means the *tala* which is divided into three sections. It may be noted that there are three criteria of distinguishing one *tala* from another: (a) the number of *matras* (time-units) in a cycle; (b) the sub-divisions or parts of the cycle in terms of *tali* (stress) and lack of *tali or kali* (absence of stress); and (c) the composition of drum syllables or phrases called *theke* (like *dha, dha, din ta*) which is used as a time-measuring pattern.

One musician told the author that the late Almost-the noted musician-knew a lot about different *ghars*. He played a *tala* of 51 *matras* divided into seventeen parts of *ghars*. According to others, *ghar* means the number of beat in a *tala*. For example "*ghar 10*" means a *tala* of ten beats (as for example *jhp tala or sool tala*), and not ten parts of a *tala*. There is no decisive or authoritative interpretation of *ghar*, but the one which connotes the sections or the parts of the *tala* appears to be plausible. Where *ghar* is not mentioned, the hymn can be sung in any *tala*, but the *raga* should be sung in its pure form [45B]. The terminology of *talas* for *kirtan* is the same as that of Hindustani music. No *ghar* is indicated for *Vars* because they follow the simple folk rhythm, *ghars* are given only for compositions set to classical music. In some cases, particular *ghar* has been specially mentioned, as for example *Ek svan-kay ghar gavna* [46] and *Yanariay kay ghar gavna* [47].

### *Partal*

*Partal* means that there are different *talas* for parts of the hymn. It implies that different parts are to be sung in different *talas*. If the composition has two parts-*asthai* and *antra*- the *asthai* is to be sung in one *tal* and the *antra* in another. In the performance of *partal*, different variations of tempo (*laya*) are also possible. There are forty-nine hymns in *partal* in twelve different *ragas*, composed by the fourth and the fifth Gurus and set to different *ghars*.

### *Sudhang*

This term has been used once in *Asa raga* [48] by Guru Ramdas. It means that the hymn is to be sung in its pure form. It is a direction to the musician to sing the composition in *raga Asawari* and not in *raga Asa*.

### *Rahau*

This term is found generally in every hymn ser in a *raga Rahau* means support, essence or in musical terminology *asthai*. The basis of the hymn is the line of the *rahau*. It contains the central thought of the hymn. The other lines of the hymn are an extension or exposition of the *rahau* line. When there is a departure from the thought of the *rahau* or the introduction of a new thought, the Gurus have indicated it as *Rahau II, Rahau III* [49]. This will necessitate the corresponding number of *asthais*. In *salokas*, there is no *rahau*, and therefore the *asthai* is the line containing the main or central thought. In the *vars* of Bhai Gurdas, however, the last line sums up the idea of the *pauri* and is therefore considered as *rahau* line or *asthai*.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Adi Granth*, p. 335.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 442.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 832.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 448.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 635.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 663.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 715.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 750.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 846.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 908.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 1089.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 1105.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 1168.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 1180.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 1180.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 1181.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 1330.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 1352.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 1423.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 815.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 642.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 585.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 1419.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 849.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 849.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 1087.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 1283.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 849.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 311.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 1425.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 1425.
36. Some mention *Kalyan raga* after *Kanra*, but *Kalyan* in the context means "singing praises". See S.S. Kohli: *A Critical Study of Adi Granth*, p. 100.
37. *Ibid.*
38. *Adi Granth*, p. 368.
39. See Glossary for meaning of technical terms and the chapter on musical instruments.
40. Bhai Gurdas, Var 24, 4.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 349.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 884.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 1291.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 818.
45. Kahm Singh: *Mahan Kosh*, p. 441.
- 45(A). M.K. Gill: *Guru Arjan Dev: Jivan-TE-Bani (Punjab)*, p. 79.
46. *Adi Granth*, p. 91. This hymn is to be sung in the same *tala* (*ghar* 4) as the hymn: *Ek Svan dui svai naal* on p.24 of the Scripture. See also Singh Sabha Patrika, Feb 1978, p. 140.
47. This hymn on p. 802 is to be sung in the same *tala* (*ghar* 2) as the hymn: *Ianariyay manra kah karaly* on p.722 of the Scripture.
48. *Adi Granth*, p.369.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

## Chapter 10: Performance of Kirtan

### Performance of Kirtan

Real Kirtan is performed through words, mind and actions.

#### **Kirtan Tradition**

The Sikh tradition of *Kirtan-Gurmat Sangeet*-started by Guru Nanak at Kartaput in 1521 was strengthened by his successors and particularly by Guru Arjan at Amritsar. In spite of several interruptions, *kirtan* continued to be performed at the Golden Temple and other historical Gurdwaras with due attention to *raga*, *tal* and *dhuni*. The three types of Sikh musicians-*rababis*, *ragis*, and *dhadhis* continued to flourish during the period of the Gurus. The *rababi* tradition was started by Guru Nanak by engaging Bhai Mardana as his accompanist-musician. Formerly the Muslim singers were called *mirasis*, but Guru Nanak gave them a new name-*rababis*, because they played on the *rabab* (rebec) and adopted the Sikh way of life in food, dress and manners. Some of the notable *rababis* after Mardana were his son Shahjada. Balwand and Satta, Babak-son of Satta, Chatra-the son of Babak, and Saddu and Baddu-the *rababis* used to perform *kirtan* regularly at Amritsar before the Partition in 1947. The last of the line of *rababis* was Bhai Chand whose *kirtan* the author had the privilege of listening to, before 1947. After the Partition of India, the *rababis* migrated to Pakistan, the line of *rababis* is almost dying out.

The second type of musicians-*ragis*-were the amateur singers whom Guru Arjan encouraged to perform *kirtan* in order to avoid dependence on professional *rababis*. Some of the bards (*bhatts*) at the Court of Guru Arjan, whose compositions are included in the Scripture, became *ragis* and did *kirtan* before the congregations at different centres. Early in the eighteenth century, Bhai Jassa Singh Ahluwalia-the great warrior-performed *kirtan* at Mata Sundri's residence at Delhi, after the passing away of Guru Gobind Singh. *Kirtan* at the Golden Temple, Amritsar, was discontinued (on account of the persecution and atrocities of Muslim rulers) for many years in the eighteenth century. When the Sikh *missals* (confederacies) obtained control of Amritsar, *kirtan* was restarted at the Golden Temple. Bhai Mansa Singh *ragi* performed *kirtan* at the Golden Temple during the regime of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Bhai Sham Singh Adanshabi did *kirtan* at the Golden Temple for more than seventy years. Outside Amritsar, Sant Attar Singh, Bhai Sujan Singh, Bhai Randhir Singh and his groups proved to be devoted *kirtanias* who did commendable missionary work.

The *ragi* group generally consists of three persons: one plays the *tabla* or *jori* (pair of drums) and he seldom participates in the singing; the other plays the harmonium, and the third plays a stringed instrument or harmonium or cymbals. The leader of the group sits in the centre and the group is known by his name. Even today, *ragi*-groups are employed by the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee to perform *kirtan* in relays at the Golden Temple and at some historic Gurdwaras in the Punjab. Some of the traveling *ragi*-parties continue to perform *kirtan* in different parts of the world where there is a concentration of Sikh residents. Some groups of American Sikhs are particularly devoted to *kirtan* and sing hymns every morning in their Ashrams or in the local Gurdwara on holidays. The third type of musicians called *dhadhis* were first employed by Guru Hargobind early in the seventeenth century. He instructed them to sing heroic ballads (*vars*) in his court to inspire the Sikhs at acts of valour and heroism. Bhai Abdulla-expert in playing the *sarangi*, and Bhai Natha-player of *dhadh* (a small hand-drum) were quite popular. The clash with the tyrannical Muslim rulers appeared imminent. The *dhadhi*-groups performed before the *sangat* and groups of Sikh soldiers. These groups subsequently became very popular all over the Punjab on account of the use of folk tunes and their zealous and emotional style of singing. These folk singers had hardly any knowledge of Hindustani classical music, but their appeal to the masses was irresistible. A *dhadhi* group consists of two or three singers, one playing on the *sarangi*, another playing on the *dhadh*, and the third may be their leader, discoursing on the contents of their songs. Though they are expected to sing *vars* of the Scripture, they usually sing their own poetic compositions on the daring exploits of Sikh warriors and martyrs. One of the famous *dhadhi-jathas* was that of Kishen Singh Kartor. Sohan Singh Seetal is also a well-known *dhadhi*.

The tradition of *kirtan* developed over the period of the ten Gurus is as follows:

- (1) Hymns from the following compositions only are permitted in *kirtan*: *Adi Granth*, *Dasam Granth*, *vars* and *kabits* of Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Nandlal's poems.
- (2) The *kirtan-group* is generally seated on the right side of the *palki* of Guru Granth Sahab. No special seats or cushions are provided for the singers. However, in big *diwans* (Assemblies), the use of platform or dais is allowed,

provided it is lower than the *palki* (seat) of Guru Granth Sahab. This is done to enable the *ragis* and the congregation to have full view of one another.

(3) In the morning, *kirtan* of entire *Asa-do-var* (24 *chhants*, *salokas* and *pauris*) is completed. The singing of *Asa-di-var* is not to be interrupted by *katha* (exposition of a random hymn read from the Scripture) or lecture.

(4) Appropriate compositions of *Gurbani* are sung at certain functions. For example at the time of *Anand Karaj* (Sikh Wedding) *Lavan*, *Anand* and suitable *shabads* are sung. At the funeral of a Sikh, appropriate *shabads* relating to death are sung. *Kirtan Sohila* is recited before cremating the dead body.

(5) Every hymn should be sung in the indicated *raga* and *tala*. The singer should use the appropriate *laya*, *tan* and *palta*. However, he must not forget the *rasa* and the appropriate ethos, mood and spirit of the hymn.

(6) *Vars* should be sung as indicated in the Scripture. For example *Gauri var* should be sung in *Gauri raga*, *Ramkali var* in *Ramkali raga*, with appropriate *dhuni* if indicated.

(7) Display of musical skill and excess of *alaap* and *tan* are not permitted, as they tend to make the minds of singers and listeners mercurial and unstable.

(8) Correct pronunciation and intonation of *Gurbani* is essential so that the audience may understand the wording and the meaning of the hymn. The singer is not supposed to introduce any words of his own or make interpolations in *Gurbani* [1]. The use of extra words like *ha*, *ji*, *wahwah*, *piyara*, etc., is against the spirit of *Gurmat*.

(9) The *raga*-technique and the sounds of instruments are subordinated to the singing of the hymn. What is brought out prominently by the musician is the *Gurbani* and its *rasa*, and not the musical expertise. Parallel quotations (*parmans*) to illustrate the theme are permitted during the *kirtan*.

(10). Any hymn which has been commenced should be completed. Lack of time is no reason for stopping the singing of a hymn in between.

(11) No *kirtan* is permitted during *Akhand Path* (continuous reading of the Scripture).

(12) The listeners should not make offerings (donations) to the musicians while the *kirtan* is in progress. Offerings can be made at the end of the *kirtan*. The best way is one followed by *Sufi* Congregations, where the listeners make the offerings to the president of the function or the organiser who respectfully hands over the collections to the leader of the music-group at the conclusion of the function. No *ragi* should interrupt his *kirtan* to acknowledge a donation or offering, nor should he mention the name of the donor. He should make a collective acknowledgement of the offerings at the end of the *kirtan*. This procedure is in accordance with Resolution No. 5 dated 2nd January 1976 of the Kirtan Sub-Committee of the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. In any case, interruption of *kirtan* to praise a donor or office-bearer of the Gurdwara or a distinguished visitor by name is absolutely forbidden, as it is against *Gurmat* (Guru's instructions).

### **Qualifications of Kirtaniyas**

Like any other profession, there should be some minimum qualifications for a *kirtaniya* (performer of *kirtan*). It has been observed recently that singers who know a few *ragas* and *shabads* call themselves *ragis* and begin to exploit the Sikhs' devotion to *kirtan*. Knowledge and practice of *kirtan* is a lifelong education and requires total *sadhana* and sincerity.

(1) The prospective singer should join a school of music or class of *kirtan* or take a recognised course or training from an expert musician for a number of years in the alert and technique of Hindustani classical music. He must train his voice and make it sweet and acquire proficiency in *raga* and *tal*.

(2) He should memorise *Gurbani* and also know its meaning and relevance.

(3) He must learn the traditional *Shabad-ritan* (modes of singing) from experts.

(4) He should practise the singing of *dhrupad*, *khayal*, *vardhunis* and *partal*.

(5) He must have full knowledge of musical instruments and should specialise in playing on at least one instrument.

(6) He must study the Sikh Scripture and acquire mastery over Sikh history and *Gurmat*-philosophy. He should also be in a position to give exposition of any hymn which he sings and be able to discourse on Sikh tenets and lives and objectives of the Gurus.

(7) He should not make a vain display of his instrumental craftsmanship or voice-gymnastics.

(8) He should be able to create the *rasa* of the hymn both in himself and the audience. He must convey the spirit of *Gurbani* so as to stabilise the mind and nourish the soul. Guru Ramdas wrote of *kirtan*-experience as follows:

"The entire body and mind became rejuvenated,  
And the mind bloomed in the lush garden;  
The darkness of ignorance vanished,  
With the light of the lamp of divine knowledge" [2].

(9) A *kirtaniya* should not fix any fee for doing *kirtan* at any place.

(10) A *ragi* should have an excellent moral character. He must practise what he preaches. He has to play an important role as a link between the Sikh and *Gurbani*. Guru Arjan showed great respect to *kirtanias*. Once he went on foot to the house of Balwant and Satta to call them for performing *kirtan* before the congregation.

(11) To do *kirtan* with the help of a book or *Gutka* is against tradition because the singer cannot link his mind to the hymn.

### **Guru Arjan's Instructions to Kirtanias**

Guru Arjan composed a hymn offering instructions to *kirtanias*. Included in the Sikh Scripture under *Ramkali raga*, the hymn is as follows:

"The Lord's singer imbibes love for the One and sings the melody of only one God.  
He abides in the country of one God and shows the way to God and sees the one Lord pervading all.  
He visualises one God, serves only the one Lord, who is known through the Guru.  
O praiseworthy, praiseworthy is such a *kirtaniya*!  
He sings the praise of the Omnipresent Lord, shedding all relishes of worldly goods.  
The five virtues like contentment (etc..) he makes his musical instruments and walking in the Lords's love his seven notes.  
The forsaking of pride of his power he makes the drone-note of his musical instrument and places not the circuit of coming and going ever again.  
To play like Narad is for him to realize the Lord to be just present.  
To shed his sorrow is for him the tinkling of ankle-bells.  
To abide in celestial beatitude in his exhibiting his dalliance.  
Such a dancer is not subject to birth again.  
If anyone becomes pleasing to the Lord, out of million that mortal alone thus sings the Lords's praise.  
Says Nanak, I repair to the support of the saint's society;  
They sing there the praise of the one Lord alone"[3].  
The instructions of the Guru to the singers may be summarised as follows;

- (1) The singer must be mentally alert and his heart should be full of devotion to God.
- (2) He must keep himself detached from worldly affairs and must not run after money.
- (3) He must cultivate good habits and practise the five virtues of truth, contentment, faith, compassion and patience.
- (4) He must neither be proud of his talent nor be hypocritical.
- (5) He must practise the presence of God and experience real joy and peace.
- (6) He must regard himself as a devoted servant of the *sangat* (congregation).

### **Kinds of Kirtan**

There are different kinds of *kirtan* depending on the prominence given to one or the other aspect of *kirtan*. The following kinds are current:(1) *Music-oriented Kirtan*: In this *kirtan*, prominence is given to *raga* and *tal* and the technical perfection of music. *Gurbani* is subordinated to the pure art of music. There is great stress on alaapand *tan*, while wording and meaning of hymn are subordinated to the requirements of the permutations and combinations of notes and display of the graces of classical music.

(2) *Instrument-oriented kirtan*: Prominence is given to the skill and display of instrumental music. The sound of the instruments dominates and almost drowns the intonation of the hymn. It is very difficult to make out the wording of the hymn. In such *kirtan* little attention is generally paid to the purity of *raga* in which the hymn is composed. This is the least satisfactory kind of *Gurmat-sangeet*.

(3) *Hymn-oriented kirtan*: The hymn is all-important. *Raga* and *tal* are subordinated to the correct wording and intonation so that it may be intelligible to the audience. The singer is able to convey the *rasa* and meaning of the hymn to the listeners. This kind of *kirtan* is highly valued by appreciative congregations, because the wording is more important than the tune.

(4) *Discourse-oriented kirtan*: In this *kirtan* prominence is given to the exposition of the hymn. The *raga* and *tal* are not as important as the message of the Gurus, explained by the musicians through lecture or commentary. More time is devoted to discourse (*viyakhia*) than to singing. Though some people like this kind of *kirtan*, it is not generally rated high by true lovers of *kirtan*.

(5) *Demand-oriented kirtan*: Here the musicians sing the songs which are very popular or for which a demand or requisition is made by the listeners. Some musicians are well known for singing certain hymns in popular tunes and styles, and their listeners coax the singers to sing their favourite hymns. The idea behind such *kirtan* is simple as the law of demand and supply. It is just meant for the delight of the listeners-*kan-rasa*. The musicians make a lot of money by complying with the wishes of members of the audience.

Applause of *kirtan* is not done by clapping or the exclamation of *wah-wah* (well done). The appreciation is expressed generally at the end of the performance of *kirtan* by *Granthi* (reader of the scripture) or some office-bearer of the Gurdwara or the President of the function by a shout of *Bolay so Nihal* (whoever shouts shall be happy), which is followed and supported by loud shout of *Sat Sri Akal* (Timeless God is true) by the congregation. However, in case of high appreciation, the leader of the *ragi*-party may be given a *Saropa* (robe or cloth of honour) by the President or Secretary of Gurdwara or the Management.

(6) *Congregational Singing*: Many people do not realise the value and significance of congregational singing, perhaps on account of the average level of its musical quality. Community singing is the simplest way of worship by the laity and saves them from the monopoly of professionals and the performance of religious austerities. *Jotiyande-Shabad* (singing in chorus) is quite popular with the Sikhs, particularly during *Nagar-kirtan* (singing in ceremonial procession) and *prabhat-pheri* (dawn rally sacred music). The devotees sing popular *shabads* to the accompaniment of indigenous instruments like *Dholak*, *khartal* or *chimta* (tongs). Moreover group-singing helps the devotee to purge himself of his caste-consciousness or professional status and thus deflates his ego. He realises his presence of the *One* within and each member of the congregation. This gradually strengthens the personal relationship between the members of the group and creates lasting and intimate bonds of friendship between the members of the *sangat*. Sometimes congregational singing is led by a *ragi*-party. Though it is not possible to secure modulation or uniformity of voices when so many people sing together, the general effect is one of devotion and sincere response.

This kind of *ragi* oriented chorus-singing may take one of the following forms:

- (1) The *ragi*-party sings line by line, alternately repeated by all, or the *ragi*-party sings 'odd' lines and the congregation sings 'even' lines.
- (2) The *ragi*-party sings the line, then the ladies sing the same line and finally the men sing the same line in chorus.
- (3) The *ragi*-party sings the line and the congregation repeats the refrain.
- (4) *Akhand/Nirban kirtan*: *Akhand* or *Nirban kirtan* (uninterrupted session) which is done without any desire or motive, and purely out of the devotion is commended in the Scripture. It does not require the practice of the grammar of *raga* or the technique or classical performance. Its object is to purify the mind and the soul by singing the glories of God and perhaps to have a vision of the Divine Essence. By constant singing of the qualities of God, one ultimately merges in Him. Bhai Randhir Singh and his groups used to be so absorbed in hymn singing and the drinking of the Nectar-Name that they lost all sense of time and even the desire for food. They often found themselves in a condition similar to the one mentioned by Guru Arjan in the Scripture:  
"There the peace-giving nectar is distributed to all;  
They are not put on the path of death and die not again;  
They who enjoy the Lord's love realise its bliss;  
The pious persons utter the hymnal words like the flowing of the nectar spring"[4].

## **Kirtan Styles**

### CLASSICAL STYLE

The important question that needs to be answered is: "In what classical style did the Gurus sing their hymns?" Was

it *dhrupad* style or *khayal* style of some other mode of singing ? According to scholars, *dhrupad* style was popular ever since Raja Mansingh Tomar (1486-1516) gave it a place of pride. Guru Nanak and his successors generally adopted the *dhrupad* style in his hymns of revelation and discipleship. *Dhrupad* singing is divided into four parts: *asthai*, *sanchari*, *antra* and *abhog*. Take an example of Guru Arjan's hymn in *Suhi-raga* given below[5]. The first two lines are to be sung in *asthai*, the next two in *sanchari*, the next two in *antra* and the last two in *abhog*:

- (a) *Buray kam kau uth khaloiya....rung laptana---Asthai*  
 (b) *Lobh lohar kau bigas fool baitha....laptiyo janjara----Sanchari*  
 (c) *Bikhai nad karam sun bheena....subh dhandhay---Antra*  
 (d) *Kah Nanak prabh bakash karijai.....Nam laina---Abhog*

*Dhrupad* singing is done in the appropriate *tala* and *laya*.

Later, the *khayal* style was introduced by Muslim musicians and then some of the *rababis* at the Gurus' court sang in the same style. Guru Gobind Singh sang some of his compositions in *khayal* style.

## FOLK STYLE

As stated earlier, some parts of the Scripture, specially the *vars* are directed to be sung according to folk tunes or *dhunis* or *taraz*. These were meant for simple rural folk. Folk music should not be regarded as inferior to classical music. Both speak the same language, but at different levels. The base is the classical *raga* but the *dhuni*--often indicated--is the folk tune. The *vars* containing *salokas* and *pauris* are generally sung in the *raga* indicated at the top. The marital tunes (*dhunis*) of nine *vars* [6] indicated in the Scripture were known to the singers of that period. The *dhunis* of *vars* mentioned in the *Adi Granth* are as follows:

- (1) *Manjh ki Var, Mahala I*  
*Malak Murid Tathha Chandrahara Sohiya di Dhuni*  
 Text of the original *tara*: *Kabul wich Murid Khan faria wad jor.*  
 Beginning of *Gurbani*: *Tu karta purkh agam hai aap srisht upati* (p. 137)
- (2) *Gauri ki var, Mahla V*  
*Rai Kamal di Mouj, Ki var di dhuni*  
 Text of the original *taraz*: *Rama rai kamal see run bhara bahin.*  
 Beginning of *Gurbani*: *Jo tudh bhavay so bhalla sach tera bhana* (p. 318).
- (3) *Asa-di-Var, Mahla I*  
*Tunday Asrajay ki Dhuni.*  
 Text of the original *taraz*: *Bhabhikiya sher sardul rai run maru wajay.*  
 Beginning of *Gurbani*: *Aapeenay aap sajiyo aa peenay rachio nav* (p.462)
- (4) *Gujri ki Var, Mahala III*  
*Sikandar Birahan ki var ki dhuni*  
 Text of the original *taraz*: *Paapi khan bahram pur chariya Sikhandar.*  
 Beginning of *Gurbani*: *Aapna aap upaaon tadah hor na ko* (p.508).
- (5) *Wadahans ki var, Mahla IV*  
*Lallan Bahlma ki dhuni*  
 Text of the original *taraz*: *Kal lala day desh daa khoiaa bahlma.*  
 Beginning of *Gurbani*: *Tu aapayhi aap aap hai aap karan keeaa* (p.585).
- (6) *Ramkali ki var Mahla III*  
*Jodhay Veeray Poorbani ki dhuni.*  
 Text of the original *taraz*: *Jodh beer dohay sannay do gallan karay karaaria.*  
 Beginning of *Gurbani*: *Sachay takhat rachaiya baisan kou jaaee* (p.947).
- (7) *Sarang ki var, Mahla IV*  
*Rai Mah-may Hasnay ki dhuni.*  
 Text of original *taraz*: *Mahma hasna rajpoot rai bharay khatti.*  
 Beginning of *Gurbani*: *Aapay aap niranjana jin aap upaaiya* (p. 1237).
- (8) *Malar ki var Mahla I*  
*Ranay Kailash tatha Malday ki dhuni.*  
 Text of the original *taraz*: *Dharat ghora parbat palan sirr tattar umber.*  
 Beginning of the *Gurbani*: *Aapeenay aap saaj aap pachhaniya.* (p. 1278).

(9) *Kanray ki var, Mahla IV*

*Musay ki var ki dhun.*

Text of the original *taraz*: *Tirai sau sath murataba ik ghuriay dagay.*

Beginning of *Gurbani*: *Tu aapay hi sidh sadhku, tu aapay hi jag jogia* (p. 1312)

In addition to the *vars*, most of the folk hymns are in praise of God. However, there are a few folk hymns on death (*alahnian*), marriage (*ghorian*) and festive occasions. It may be noted that folk music has a wider appeal and it acquires a refined character when it is welded with classical Hindustani music. Those who do not know *raga* can sing hymns in *sadharan* or *jotiyan* tune.

*Asa-di-var* is to be sung in *raga Asa* which is classical, while the *dhuni* is that of the popular var of *Tunday Asraja* [7]. A *var* is generally intended to produce a heroic and martial feeling-*Bir rasa*. Its diction is simple but emotional. *Asa-di-var* contains *pauris* (of Guru Nanak) of five line each, along with his *salokas*. The *salokas* of Guru Angad were added later on to it by Guru Arjan. *Chhants* of Guru Ramdas were directed to be sung with *Asa-di-var* of Guru Nanak, by Guru Arjan on account of the similarity of contents. Just as the theme of the *var* of *Tunday Asraja* is the victory of good over evil, in the same way, the subject of *Asa-di-var* is spiritual evolution and fulfilment. Hurdles in the path of divinity, like ego, hypocrisy and evil thoughts are conquered by following the path of truth and meditation and the earning of God's grace.

The musical effect of this 'Ballad of Hope' is extremely blissful. Krishna Chaitanya, an Indian musicologist observes in this connection: "In musical impact, it is like the plaint-chant of European Christianity. It is a recitative, which has taken wings, rather than abstract arabesque of sound. But in musical texture, it is wholly different from plaint-chant. This is because plaint-chant comes early in the evolution of European music, whereas the melodic pattern of the *Asa-di-var* is derived by simplification from a nature classical tradition" [8].

Instead of the clash of arms, we find in the *vars* of the Gurus the clash of ideas. The *vars* are spiritual content though they follow the tune of a current folk tale. There is a clash between truth and ritual, piety and hypocrisy. In the *Asa-di-var*, Guru Nanak condemns the rituals of bathing, burial, sacred thread and *Ras Leela* (dramatic performances) of the lives of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna. *Vars* have not been reduced to notation. There is no special *tala* with a *theka* (syllables) for it. *Var* has a simple rhythm-a folk *tala*-pattern.

The essence of the *var* lies in the *pauris*. As per tradition, the *pauri* is first sung and thereafter recited, to enable the *sangat* to grasp the meaning and significance thereof. It is not necessary to give any parallel quotations from *Gurbani* while singing *Asa-di-var*.

### **Kirtan System (Maryada)**

The traditional *kirtan* system current during the period of the Gurus and at format functions today is as follows:

- (1) The musicians play a tune on the instruments as a prelude for a few minutes to create the proper environment and mood for *kirtan*. This is called *Shan*.
- (2) Then comes the invocation or an introductory prayer called *Mangla-charan*. Generally the verses beginning with "*Dandot bandna anak baar, sarab kala samarath*"[9] are sung in "*dhamar*" or "*chartal*". It creates the appropriate bent of mind and spirit for the main *raga* and the *Gurbani*.
- (3) The main composition (or hymn) in classical *raga* generally follows in *dhrupad* style. As mentioned earlier, *dhrupad* is sung in four sections with appropriate *tala* played on the *tabla*. Sometimes a composition in *partal* follows the *dhrupad*.
- (4) The next piece is a hymn either in *bara* or *chota khayal* style. The hymn is substantiated by appropriate lines of *Gurbani* or parallel quotations (*parmans*) which are intended to seep through the mind and fill it with great *rasa* or feeling of peace.
- (5) The last piece is a small *shabad* or *pauri* sung as a finale. This marks the end of the *kirtan* session. The follows the routine of the Gurdwara.

*Anand* sung if *Karah Parsad* has been prepared. This is followed by supplication (*Ardas*) and reading of any hymn (*Hukum*) from the Scripture, and the distribution of *Karah Parsad*.

### **Kirtan Darbar**

*Kirtan* sessions in which several music-groups participate either for competition or otherwise, according to certain rules laid down by the organisers is called *Kirtan Darbar*. Generally a *raga* is prescribed and the participants are expected to sing one or more hymns in the *raga*. Judges are appointed who grade the performance of each group, according to marks awarded by them for purity of *raga*, sweetness of voice, intonation of *Gurbani* and audience reaction. The author has had the experience of judging some of these competitions. Cash prizes or trophies or medals are given to the first and sometimes to the second and third groups in the order of merit.

The object of holding *Kirtan Darbars* is to maintain the purity of the *raga* technique and to ensure the excellence of performance of a particular *raga* and *tala* or a certain composition. The element of healthy competition leads to the improvement of the quality of performance of sacred music and raising of the standard of appreciation of the audience. Sometimes, the *Darbar* is held without prescribing any rules and the best musician is judged according to the taste or the applause of the audience. It is desirable to formulate a set of standard rules for the conduct of *Kirtan Darbars* in the interests of uniformity and impartiality.

Celebrations on the occasions of the tricentenary of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom (1975) and the 400th Foundation Day of Amritsar (1977) included some notable *Kirtan Darbars* held all over the Punjab. Several *ragi*-groups sang special hymns and the best of them was recorded on Long Playing Records and cassettes and made available for sale. Some of the *kirtan* sessions were relayed by radio stations in India. These are worthwhile attempts at improving the standard of *Gurumat Sangeet*, but perhaps something more needs to be done to catch the young and budding artists and give them proper training in recognised institutions. The *Namdhari* organisation is doing its bit in preserving the *Kirtan* traditions. Its leaders-Bhai Jagit Singh and Baba Bir Singh-have good mastery over *kirtan* technique. They also hold *Kirtan Darbars* and competition from time to time. Though classical Hindustani music is a subject of school and university courses, no attempt has been made to introduce courses in *Gurumat Sangeet*. It is hoped that the Punjab State authorities and universities located in the region will give serious attention to this need of the times. Only when *kirtan* is given official recognition and stature, it will show a great improvement in training and performance.

Perhaps it will be good if *Kirtan Darbars* and competitions are also organised for improving the standard of folk music of the Scripture and particularly the singing of *ofvars*. Most of the traditional *dhunis*, mentioned earlier in this chapter, are dying out and it is very necessary to preserve them, so that lovers of *kirtan* may be able to listen to them at least on tapes or discs. I understand that the Punjabi University, Patiala, has recorded some of the traditional tunes of *Gurmat Sangeet*. I would like it to start a department of *kirtan* both for technical research purpose and teaching. Something on an all-India level also should be done in this direction. The Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi which is the central organisation for maintaining musical archives and tradition, and Tata' National Centre of Performing Arts, Bombay, which encourages the traditional styles of music schools or *gharanas* [10] and restores to them their ancient prestige and income, should come forward with schemes to preserve the heritage of *kirtan* for posterity. The recent announcement of the Punjab Government of an Annual Award for the best *kirtaniya* is likely to bring new talent to the domain of *Gurmat Sangeet*.

However, musical sessions and *kirtan Darbars* should be up-graded to encouraging healthy competition and not for the commercialisation of sacred music. It has been observed some organisation have lately mushroomed to promote popular *kirtanias* and prepare their discs in order to make money. This is against the very spirit of *kirtan* which is intended to offer peace and joy and not exploit the faith of the Sikhs.

### Some Famous Ragis

Some of the well known *ragis* who used to perform *kirtan* during the nineteenth century and some of the living *Kirtanias* are listed here during the nineteenth century and some of the living *Kirtanias* are listed here. It may be noted that some of the former Sikh Maharajas and Chieftains used to support *ragis* at their State-capitals. For example the rulers of the erstwhile Patials, Nabha and Kapurthala States encouraged and supported several musicians. The *ragis* who used to perform at the court of the Maharaja of Patiala were Baba Pushkara Singh. Mahant Gajja Singh supplied the notation of all the *ragas* of Sri Guru Granth Sahab to a Macauliffe who got them rendered into Western notation by a German musician and subsequently published them in Volume V of his work entitled *The Sikh Religion*.

Some well known *ragis* of this century were Sunder Singh of Amritsar, Hira Singh Bhag Singh, Almost, Ishar Singh Rarewala, Uttam Singh, Surjan Singh, Sujan Singh, Jwala Singh, Samud Singh, Sudh Singh, Pardhan Singh and Gopal Singh. Amongst the living *ragis*, Gurucharan Singh an Avtar Singh, Prof. Gurdayal Singh, Mohan Singh, Prof. Darshan Singh and Vikram Singh Khalsa (American Sikh) are rated high for their devotion and classical technique. Among the female *Kirtanias*, the name of Gurdeve Kaur Pujara of London is quite popular today. A list of long playing records of well known *ragis* is given in the Appendix.

## Present Trends

*Kirtan* is becoming more popular day by day, particularly among the Sikh Youth. *Kirtan* classes have been started by some Gurdwaras and organisation. However, with the democratisation of *kiran*, the quality of training and performance will have to be watched and improved. Television and radio programmes in devotional music seem to discourage and radio programmes in devotional music seem to discourage the traditional modes of singing, with the result that ancient melodies are dying out. Besides, most of the present-day *ragis* know very little about the grammar and technique of Hindustani music. Moreover, the performance of *kirtan* by American Sikhs who have a knowledge of Western music has led to a new type of *Kirtan*-the performance of hymns and Khalsa songs with string band music possessing a new and resonant melody. These experiments are likely to enrich the repertoire of Sikh sacred music. The 'internationalisation' of *kirtan* and its performance in Indian and Western styles-though distinct and separate-may perhaps result, in due course of time in an amalgam of the two types.

It is earnestly hoped that research in *Granthian Kirtan* would attract the attention of teachers of music and musicologists, so that its technique and methodology may be fully explored and appreciated. The future seems to be full of promise and surprise.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Adi Granth*, p.1171: "I sing the word written by the Guru, I know no other composition."
2. *Ibid.*, p. 997.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 885.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 738.
6. For details, see *Gurmat Sangeet Part IV* (C.K. Diwan), p. 5.
7. An outline of the story of Asaraja (meaning the king named As) is given below. As (pronounced 'Us') was a son of Raja Sarang in ancient times. His step-mother-the King's second wife-fell in love with him but he refused her advances. The lady out of spite blamed him of incest. Raja Sarang ordered his execution at the insistence of his wife. He told his minister to carry out the order of execution of As. The minister was a wise man. He took As to a jungle and ordered the executioner to cut one hand of As a proof of his death. After cutting his hand, they left him in the jungle. A party of traders soon passed through the jungle and heard the cries of As. They attended to his wound and took him to a neighbouring country. They sold him as a slave to a washerman. As had lost his hand and was called As the cripple (*Tunda-As*). He was given the duty of loading a bull with dirty clothes and bringing back the washed clothes to his master-the washerman. Unfortunately the king of the town died suddenly, without leaving any heir. The ministers decided that the man who passed through the city gates first the next morning, would be crowned as King. As usual *Tunda-As* who went out early morning with his bullock to the rivulet (outside the city) with his load of dirty clothes, happened to be the first man to pass through the city gate. He was crowned and called *Tunda Asraja* (King Asa the cripple). Soon thereafter the crops failed on account of drought. Asaraja had bought a lot of grain in advance to feed his people. Raja Sarang-the father of Asraja-had two other sons who were given to hunting and pleasure. Raja Sarang felt the effects of famine and sent his minister to buy grain from the neighbouring country. The minister came to Asaraja's town for purchase of grain and met him and recognised him. Asraja gave the minister a lot of grain free. Raja Sarang came to know of the generosity of Asraja. He also became aware of the bad character of his second wife. He called Asraja to his palace and desired to pass on the crown to him instead of to his senior son. Sardul the senior prince decided to claim the kingdom. With the help of his maternal uncle Sultan Rai, he waged war against Raja Sarang and Asaraja. The court-poet composed a *var* to be sung in a particular *dhuni* (tune) in praise of King Asraja who was a symbol of the victory of virtue over vice. This *var* became very popular and inspirational. Guru Arjan found a great resemblance between the five-lined *pauris* of Guru Nanak's *Asa-di-var* and the *var* of *Tunda-Asaraja* and prescribed the tune of the latter for the singing of the former.
8. G.S. Manuskhani, *Introduction to Sikhism*, p. 125 (1977 edition).
9. *Adi Granth*, p. 256.
10. Gopal Sharman, *Filigree in Soun*, p. 176.

# Chapter 11: Ragas of Siri Guru Granth Sahib

## Ragas of Sri Guru Granth Sahib

The following arrangement has been followed in the scheme of notation.

First the parent scale (Thath) is given and then the class (Jati) of the raga, which may be pentatonic (Arav), hexatonic (Sharav) or septatonic (Sampuran). This is followed by the notes (Svares) used in the raga. The sonant (Vadi) is given followed by the consonant (Samvadi) note. In some cases the atmosphere of the raga is then indicated. Then follow the notes of the ascending movement. (Aroha) and the descending notes (Avaroha). The characteristic notes (Pakad) of the raga are indicated.

The Ragas of the Sikh Scripture are given in the serial order. The notation of the *Dhunis* of the *vars* is not mentioned here, but will be found in the two volumes in Punjabi entitled *Gurbani Sangeet: Prachin Ritt-Ratnavali* (pp. 953-983) by Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurucharan Singh, published by Punjabi University, Patiala, 1979.

*Note:* M Teevar is represented by m in notation.

R (komal) is represented by r

G " " g

D " " d

N " " n

### 1. SRI RAG



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Poorvi. *Jati:* Arava-Sampuran

*Svaras:* R, D, m, rest Shudh. Varjit G D in Aroha.

*Vadi:* R *Samvadi* P

*Atmosphere:* Solemn and grave

*Time of Singing:* Evening (6 PM-9 PM)

*Aroha:* S r r P, m P N S

*Avaroha:* S N d P, m D m G R, R R P R G G R S

*Pakad:* S, r, r, P, m G r, GR S

*Note:* This is an important raga and occupies the first place in the Sikh Scripture. The word "Shri" means great or respected. It is an important raga and its quite popular. In avaroha, S r P are used in accompaniment and M Teevar is touched frequently.

### 2. MANJH



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Khamaj, *Jati:* Sharav-Sampuran

*Svaras:* S R M P D N Shudh

S R G M D N in Aroha;

N in Avaroha:

S n D P, D n D P, M G R S

G and N both Sudh and Komal

*Vadi:* S, *Samvadi:* P

*Time of Singing :* Fourth Pahar of the day (3 PM- 6 PM)

*Aroha:* S R, M P D, N S  
*Avaroha:* S N D P, D N D, P, M G R S  
*Pakad:* M G R S, N P N S P N S, N D P M G R S

### 3. GAURI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Bhairav, *Jati:* Arav-Sampuran  
*Svaras:* S r M, P N  
*Vadi:* r *Samvadi:* P  
*Atmosphere:* Peaceful and Tanquil  
*Time of Singing:* Afternoon (3 PM-6 PM)  
*Aroha:* S r M, P N  
*Avaroha:* S N d P M G r S, N S.  
*Pakad:* S r M P, G r S N D P M P N S

*Note:* It is extremely devotional in mood. It has the greatest number of composition including the popular *Sukhmani Sahib* of Guru Arjan. This raga is not sung in *Tar Saptak*.

### 4. ASA



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Bilaval. *Jati:* Arava-Sampuran  
*Svaras:* All Shudh, (N sometimes are used in descending movement)  
*Vadi:* M. *Samvadi:* S  
*Atmosphere:* Peaceful and refreshing  
*Time of singing:* Fourth Pahar of the night (3 AM-6 AM)  
*Aroha:* S R M P D S  
*Avaroha:* S N D P M G R S  
*Pakad:* S, R, M P D, P M, G R S R G, S

*Note:* N is sometimes used in Avaroha for greater impact of the raga. It produces Bhakti rasa (devotional emotion), which is very essential for early morning prayer. *Asa-di-Var* the Sikh devotional dawn composition consisting of 24 *chhants*, 24 *pauris* and *salokas* is sung daily in Gurdwaras and homes for its blissful effect.

### 5. GUJRI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Todi *Jati:* Sharav-Sharav  
*Svaras:* R G D (komal), M (Teevar), S and N Shudh, Varjit P  
*Vadi:* D. *Samvadi:* G  
*Atmosphere:* Solemn and devotional  
*Time of Singing:* 9 AM-12.00 Noon (second Pahar of the day)  
*Aroha:* S r g m D N S  
*Avaroha:* S N d m g r S  
*Pakad:* m d N d, m g r g r s

## 6. DEVGANDHARI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Bhairav. *Jati:* Arava-Sampuram

*Svaras:* S G M P D (Shudh): R and d in Avaroha, both forms of R, D & N are used.

*Vadi:* M. *Samvadi:* S

*Atmosphere:* Peaceful and tranquil

*Time of Singing:* First Pahar of day ( 6 AM-9 AM)

*Aroha:* S R M P, d P M, P D S, R S

*Avaroha:* R S N d P, M n P, M G R S.

*Pakad:* M, P d, m, G, S R M

## 7. BIHAGRA



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Bilaval. *Jati:* Arav-Sampuram

*Svaras:* S G M P N: in Avaroha (Both M, N). R & D prohibited in Aroha.

*Vadi:* G. *Samvad:* N

*Atmosphere:* Peaceful and refreshing

*Time of Singing:* Second pahar of the night (9 PM-12.00 midnight)

*Aroha:* N S G M P N S

*Avaroha:* S N D P, n D P, m G M G R S

*Pakad:* G M P n D P, G M G, R S.

## 8. WADAHANS



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Khamaj. *Jati:* Sharav-Sampuram

*Svaras:* N (Both); S R M P D (Shudh); G in Avaroha

*Vadi:* P *Samvadi:* R

*Time of Singing:* Third Pahar of the day (12 Noon-3 PM)

*Aroha:* S R M P D n P N S

*Avaroha:* S n P D M, G R S, N S

*Pakad:* S R M P n P, D P, M G R, S, N, P N S

## 9. SORATH



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Khamaj *Jati:* Arav-Sharav

*Svaras:* S R M P N (Shudh); D, n IN Avaroha

*Vadi: R Samvadi: D*

*Atmosphere: Peaceful and devotional*

*Time of Singing: Seocnd Pahar of the night ( 9 PM- 12.00 midnight)*

*Aroha: S R M R N S*

*Avaroha: S R n D P D M G R N S*

*Pakad: R M P N, S n D P M D, M R N S*

*Note: This is a light and beautiful raga and conducive to meditation on the True Lord (43).*

#### 10. DHANASRI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath: Kafi. Jati: Arav-Sampuran*

*Svaras: N G (Komal), S R M P D (Shudh);*

*Vadi: P Samvadi: S*

*Time of Singing: Third Pahar of the day (12.00 noon-3 PM)*

*Aroha: S g M P n S*

*Avaroha: S n D P M g R S*

*{M M}*

*Pakad: N S {g g} M P, P, n D P, g, M, g, R S.*

#### 11. JAITSRI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath: Poorvi Jati: Arav-Sampuran*

*Svaras: M (Teevar): S G P N (Shudh): R, D m in Avaroha*

*Vadi: G Samvadi: N*

*Atmosphere: Solemn*

*Time of Singing: First Pahar of the night (6 PM-9 PM)*

*Aroha: S G, m P, N S*

*Avaroha: S r N d P m G P G r S.*

*Pakad: S G m P, D m P, P m G P G r S.*

#### 12. TODI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath: Todi. Jati: Sampuran*

*Svaras: R, G, D (Komal) M (Teevar), N Shudh: (Slight P in Aroha)*

*Vadi: D Samvadi: G*

*Atmosphere: Blissful.*

*Time of Singing: Second Pahar of the day (9 Am -!2.00 Noon)*

*Aroha: S r g m P d N S*

*Avaroha: S N d m P m d m g r g r S*

*Pakad: d, n S, R g, r S, m, g r g r S*

#### 13. BAIRARI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Marwah. *Jati:* Sampuran.  
*Svaras:* R (Komal), M (Teevar), rest Shudh  
*Vadi:* G *Samvadi:* D  
*Time of Singing:* First Pahar of the day (6 AM- ( AM)  
*Aroha:* S r G, m p m G, P D N S  
*Avaroha:* S N D P G P m G r s  
*Pakad:* P d G, P D, m G, r G, m G, r S

#### 14. TILANG



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Khamaj *Jati:* Arav-Arav  
*Svaras:* S G M P N, n in Avaroha: R D Varijit  
(not used)  
*Vadi:* G *Samvadi:* N  
*Atmosphere:* Light.  
*Time of Singing:* Third Pahar of the day (3 PM-6 PM)  
*Aroha:* S G, M P N S  
*Avaroha:* S n P G M G S  
*Pakad:* N S G M P N S, N P, G M G, S  
*Note:* In this raga, there is emphasis on G and N. Thumri is generally sung in this raga.

#### 15. SUHI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Bilaval *Jati:* Sampuran  
*Svaras:* N (shudh & Komal), rest Shudh.  
*Vadi:* P *Samvadi:* S  
*Time of Singing:* Second Pahar of the day ( 9 AM-!2 Noon)  
*Aroha:* S R G M, R G M P, N D N S  
*Avaroha:* S n D P, n D P, M G, D P M G R, P M G R, G R S  
*Pakad:* S n P, M G R G M M G R S.

#### 16. BILAVAL

*Thath:* Bilaval. *Jati:* Sampuran  
*Svaras:* All Shudh ( N Komal in Avaroha)  
*Vadi:* D *Samvadi:* G  
*Atmosphere:* Peaceful, tranquil  
*Time of Singing:* Second Pahar of the day ( 9 AM-12 Noon)  
*Aroha:* S R G M P, N D N S  
*Avaroha:* S N D P, M G R S  
*Pakad:* D, P M G M R S

## 17. GOND



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Bilaval. *Jati:* Sampuran (Irregular)

*Svaras:* All Shudh

*Vadi:* S *Samvadi:* M

*Time of Singing:* Second Pahar of the day ( 9 AM- 12 Noon)

*Aroha:* S R G M, P D N D N S

*Avaroha:* S N D N P, M G R S

*Pakad:* M, P, N D N P, G ,M, G, R, G R S

## 18. RAMKALI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Bhairav. *Jati:* Arav-Sampuran

*Svaras:* R D (Komal), rest Shudh

*Vadi:* P *Samvadi:* S

*Time of Singing:* Fourth Pahar of the night ( 3 AM- 6 AM)

*Aroha:* S R G, M G, P d, S

*Avaroha:* S N d, M P d n P G, M, r S

*Pakad:* P, M P, d n P, G, M, r S.

*Note:* Guru Nanak composed *Sidh Gosht* in this raga because it is popular with the Yogis.

## 19. NUT-NARAYAN



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Bilaval. *Jati:* Sampuran-Arav

*Svaras:* Both M, rest Shudh: G, N prohibited in Avaroha

*Vadi:* P *Samvadi:* R

*Time of Singing:* Second Pahar of the night ( 9 PM-12 Midnight)

*Aroha:* S r S, N D P, D S, r G m P, m D N D S

*Avaroha:* S N d P, G, D m G P m G R S

*Pakad:* m G m D n S, r N d P, D, G, R S

## 20. MALI GAURA



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Marwah. *Jati:* Sampuran

*Svaras:* r, both types of M and D, rest Shudh

*Vadi: r Samvadi: P*

*Time of Singing: First Pahar of the night (6 PM-9 PM)*

*Aroha: S r S, N D P, D S, r G m P, m D N D S*

*Avaroha: S N d P Mm G, D m G, P m G R S*

*Pakad: m G m D N S, r N d Pm D m G, R S*

## 21. MARU



MIDI Sequence

*Thath: Khamaj. Jati: Arav Sampuran*

*Svaras: Both M & N, rest Shudh, R prohibited in Aroha*

*Vadi: G Samvadi: S*

*Time of Singing: Third Pahar of the day (12 Noon- 3 PM)*

*Aroha: S M G M P D S N S*

*M R*

*Avaroha: S n D P M D P M, P M, G S*

*Pakad: S M G M P D S N S*

## 22. TUKHARI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath: Khamaj. Jati: Sampuran*

*Svaras: G, M both ( M slightly used) and N both; rest Shudh*

*Vadi: P Samvadi: S*

*Time of Singing: Fourth Pahar of the day (3-6 PM)*

*Aroha: N S g R S, G M P M P M P, P D n D P M P, S N S*

*Avaroha: S N S N S, n D P, P M P M P, M g R S, R N S*

*Pakad: P D n n D M P G M P M G R S N S*

## 23. KEDARA



MIDI Sequence

*Thath: Kalyan. Jati: Arav-Sharav*

*Svaras: S M P D N Shudh, M (Teevar); R G prohibited in Aroha & G in Avaroha-occasional touch of G.*

*Vadi: M Samvadi: S*

*Atmosphere: cooling and healing*

*Time of Singing: First Pahar of the night (6 PM-9 PM)*

*Aroha: S M, m P, D P, N D, S*

*Avaroha: S N D, P, M N P DP, M G M R S*

*Pakad: S M, M P, m P D P M, M R S*

## 24. BHAIRAV

*Thath: Bhairav. Jati: Sampuran*

*Svaras: R D (Komal) rest Shudh*

*Vadi: d Samvadi: r*

*Atmosphere: Solemn*

*Time of Singing:* Early morning (fourth Pahar of the night 3 AM 6 AM)

*Aroha:* S r G M P d N S

*Avaroha:* S N d P M G R S

*Pakad:* d d P G M r S

## 25. BASANT



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Poorvi. *Jati:* Sharav-Sampuran

*Svaras:* R & D Komal, M (both Shudh and Teevar) rest Shudh

*Vadi:* S *Samvadi:* P

*Atmosphere:* Refreshing and inspiring

*Time of Singing:* First Pahar of the night (6-9 PM); any time during the Spring season

*Aroha:* S G, m d, r S

*Avaroha:* r N d, P, m G, R S, M

*Pakad:* S M, m m G, N d P, m G, S g, m D S

## 26. SARANG



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Kafi. *Jati:* Arav-Arav

*Svaras:* N (both Shudh and Komal), G D (*Varjit:* forbidden), rest Shudh

*Vadi:* R *Samvadi:* P

*Atmosphere:* Light

*Time of Singing:* Second Pahar of the day (9 AM-Noon)

*Aroha:* S R M P N S

*Avaroha:* S n P M R S

*Pakad:* N S, R, P M R, S

## 27. MALAR/MALHAR



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Khamaj. *Jati:* Sampuran-Sampuran

*Svaras:* All Shudh;

*Vadi:* M *Samvadi:* S

*Atmosphere:* Soothing and refreshing

*Time of Singing:* Any time in the rainy season or late night time

*Aroha:* S R R G M, M P, N D N S

*Avaroha:* S D P M G, M R, R S

*Pakad:* S R G M, M R P, D N P, M R S

Note: There are various types of Malar, but *Mian ki Malar* is very popular

## 28. KANRA



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Kafi. *Jati:* Sampuran  
*Svaras:* G Komal, rest Shudh; (R P for accompaniment) both N, D prohibited.  
*Vadi:* P *Samvadi:* S  
*Atmosphere:* Solemn  
*Time of Singing:* Second Prahara of the night (9 PM-12 Midnight)  
*Aroha:* S R g, M P N S  
*Avaroha:* S n D n P M P g M R s  
M  
*Pakad:* S, R n S R P g, N, n P, M P S, n P, M P, M G M, R S

#### 29. KALYAN (YAMAN)



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Kalyan. *Jati:* Sampuran-Sampuran  
*Svaras:* M (Teevqar), rest Shudh  
*Vadi:* G *Samvadi:* N  
*Atmosphere:* Solemn  
*Time of Singing:* First Pahaar of the night (6 PM to 9 PM)  
*Aroha:* S R G, m P, D, N S  
*Avaroha:* S N D, P, m G, R S  
*Pakad:* N R G, R, S, P m G, R S

#### 30. PRABHATI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Bhairav, *Jati:* Sampuran  
*Svaras:* R, d (Komal), both M, rest Shudh  
*Vadi:* M *Samvadi:* S  
*Time of Singing:* Early morning (fourth Pahaar of the night, 3 AM-6 AM)  
*Aroha:* S r G M, m G, M P d N S  
*Avaroha:* S N d P M, G r S  
*Pakad:* G M G, r S, R, S, d N S, G M d P, M G M G R S  
*Note:* Literally "Prabhati" means dawn. So this raga is sung at pre-dawn or dawn.

#### 31. JAIJAWANTI



MIDI Sequence

*Thath:* Khamaj. *Jati:* Sampuran  
*Svaras:* Both G, both N, rest Shudh  
*Vadi:* R *Samvadi:* P  
*Time of Singing:* Second Pahaar of the night (9 AM-12 Midnight)  
*Aroha:* R g R S, R, G M P, D P N S  
*Avaroha:* S n D P D M, G R, R G R S  
*Pakad:* R g R S, D n R  
*Note:* This raga is used only by Guru Tegh Bahadur



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## APPENDIX

### DETAILS OF LONG-PLAYING GURBANI RECORDS

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*Title - Singer - Producer Co. - Record No.*  
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1. Apnay Satgur Kay Balharay - Jaswant Singh - Philips - 6405-612
2. Asa-di-var - Piara Singh Polydor 2488-136, 7(2)
3. Asa-di-var - Surjan Singh HMV ECLP-2307, 8(2)
4. Dukh Bhanjan Tera Naam - Rafi & others Odeon MOCE-4151
5. Gurbani Shabad Kirtan - Gurdev Kaur Zella 214
6. Guru Nanak Foundatio -Quincentenary Shabad Records Various Ragis HMV ELR-235-40(6)
7. Guru Tegh Bahadur Simariye - -do- Polydor 2329-849
8. Jagat Bikhari Phirat -Balaji Rajindar Philips 6405-609
9. Japji Sahab and Rehras -Tarlochan Singh EMI ECLP-2355
10. Kaisi Aarti Hoye - Arjan Singh Polydor 2392-832
11. Nanak Nam Jahaz Shabads - Samund singh & others - EMI 3 AEX 5303
12. Naam Japiye Jahaz Shabads - Balaji Rajindar Philips 6405-607
13. Pritam Manmohana - Piara Singh Polydor 2392-851
14. Punjabi Shabad - Narindar Biba Odeon ELCP-2502
15. Punjabi Shabad - Tarlochan Singh HMV EASD-1709
16. Sadho Gobind Kay Gun Gao - Jaipal Singh Polydor 2392-851
17. Satgur Teri Ote - Gurmukh Singh -do- 2392-893
18. Shabads - Arjan Singh, etc. -do- 2392-832
19. Shabads - Jaswant Singh, etc, EMI 2392
20. -do- - Mohini Narula Odeon MOCE-2013
21. Shabads and Salkas of - Guru Tegh Bahadur Jodh Singh, etc EMI 1714
22. Shabad Gurbani - Darshan Singh EMI ECSD-3013
23. -do- - Gopal Singh HMV EASD-1702
24. -do- -do- -do- EASD-1706
25. -do- -do- -do- EASD-1712
26. -do- -do- -do- EASD-1717
27. -do- - Gurdial Singh, etc, G.S.Sabha(U.K) S-108
28. -do- - Kanwal Sidhu EMI EASD-1710
29. -do- - Sadhu Singh EMI EASD-3010
30. -do- - Various Ragis EMI EASD-1705
31. Shabad Kirtan Punjabi - Devindar Singh Ram Jas MSJ-004
32. Shabad Mala - Rahi Eastern Melodies SM-001
33. Shabads of Guru Nanak - Tarlochan Singh EMI 2440
34. Shabad Path, Sohila, etc. - Shamsher Singh INRECO 2442-0002
35. Sikhism through Songs of Guru - Khushwant Singh Polydor 2488-138, 9(2)
36. Sukhmani Sahab - Tarlochan Singh EMI ECR-2320,21(2)
37. Tai Sarab Nam Kathe - Amrit Kaur, etc., EMI EASD-30

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## Glossary

- ABHOG: The fourth and final part of dhrupad composition.
- ALAAP: Improvised, slow and introductory prelude of a raga or song.
- ALANKAR: An exercise in the melodic phrase of a raga in definite patterns also called palta.
- AMSA: The most important or pivotal note in a raga, also called vadi.
- ANAHAD NAD: Unmanifested, unstruck and divine sound.
- ANTRA: Second or subsequent portion a Hindustani composition.
- ANUVADI: Notes in a raga other than vadi and samvadi, an assonant.
- ARAVA: Pentatonic raga, also called odava.
- AROHA: The ascending scale of a raga.
- ASTHAI: First part of a Hindustani composition, also called sthayi.
- AVARTAN: A complete circle of time-measure.
- AVAROHA: The descending scale of a raga.
- BANDISH: A composition (vocal or musical) fixed in a rhythmic pattern
- BAUL: Bengali folk musician who sings simple and religious melodies.
- BEEN (BIN): North Indian name for the veena.
- BHAJAN: Popular devotional and religious song, a hymnal composition.
- BOLS: Drum syllables or phrases (like dhin, dha, tin trikat).
- CHARTAL: Drone strings in instruments like sitar, sarod, etc.
- CHIKARI: A session of sacred Sikh music conducted by ragis, in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahab.
- DADRA: A Hindustani musical style; Hindustani tal of six matras with 12 beats.
- DEEPCHAND: A Hindustani tal of 14 matras with four beats.
- DESHI: Folk music, regional tunes.
- DHAMAR: Hindustani fixed composition; Tal of 15 matras with four beats.
- DHAVANI: A sound, also suggestive power of words and symbols.
- DHUNI: Tuned based on a raga.
- DHRUPAD: A Hindustani form of fixed composition in four parts.
- DILRUBA: A stringed instrument combining features of sitar and sarangi and played with a bow.
- DRONE: A instrument which plays the tonic or the dominant note (as for instance the tamera).
- DRUT: Fast tempo or quick rhythmic beats of tal.
- EKTAL: A rhythm of 12 matras with four beats.
- ESRAJ: A stringed instrument less complicated than the dilruba, played separately or as an accompaniment.
- GAIKI: Manner and style of singing, also a school or tradition of music.
- GHARANA: A tradition or school of music, a musical guild with distinct style of performing.
- GHAZAL: A light classical composition in Urdu or Persian, generally dealing with a theme of love.
- GRAMA: Ancient scale of music.
- GURBANI: The composition of the Sikh Gurus, also called Bani.
- GURU: Teacher or religious preceptor. One of the Sikh Gurus; duration or two short syllables.
- HOLI/HORI: Song of Holi festival; Dhamar composition sung in Hori style.

JATI: Ancient melodic scheme. Any of the three classes or raga depending on five, six, or seven notes.

JHALA: Third part of a raga played on an instrument, after the jor.

JODI: Literally a pair (of drums), also called tabla.

JOR: The sound part of a raga played on an instrument, after the alaap.

KAFI: A Hindustani raga, a form of poetical composition.

KEHRVA: Hindustani tal of four matras and one beat (sometimes played as four and four beats).

KHALI: An important interval in tal called 'empty' or vacant. It is indicated by a wave of the hand.

KHAYAL: A fixed form of Hindustani composition. Literally it means 'imagination'.

KIRTAN: Singing of the hymns of the Sikh Gurus, also singing praises of God.

KIRTANIYA: A singer of Sikh sacred music, a ragi who can perform kirtan.

KOMAL: Flat or tender note like r, g, d, n.

KRITI: A form of devotional composition also called kirtanam in Karnatak music.

KUNDALINI: The spiritual power at the root of the spine (muldhara) which has to rise through the nine chakras (stages) to the head to give immense joy and enlightenment.

LAGHU: An interval of one short syllable (in a tal of three or more units)

LAYA: The tempo of the raga, as distinct from beats of tal.

MADHYA SAPTAK: Middle octave.

MANDRA SAPTAK: Lower octave denoted by a dot under the note.

MANJIRA: A pair of small hand cymbals made of meta. They are called jalva in Southern India.

MATRA: Metrical or rhythmic unit.

MEEND: A slide from one note to another so as to link their sounds.

MELA: Scale in Karnatak music.

MOORCHANA: Modes or scales of music before the formation of raga system. Extending of a note to another in ascending or descending scale.

MURLAI: A flute, usually associated with Lord Krishna who played it beautifully.

NAD: Primal sound or resonant sound.

NAVA RASA: The nine emotions or moods expressed in music according to Indian aesthetics.

PAKAD: The particular and characteristics notes of a Hindustani raga.

PAKHAWAJ: North Indian drum (same as mridangam) with two sides.

PARTAL: Singing of different parts of one and the same hymn in different tals.

PURVANG: Literally, the first limb of the lower tetrachord of a scale (SA to MA)

QAWALI: Muslim devotional or light composition often accompanied by rhythmic clapping.

RABAB: A Stringed instrument played with a wooden plectrum.

RABINDRA SANGEET: Bengali songs set to music by Rabindranath Tagore.

RAGA: A melody-scheme or a particular arrangement of notes and melodic patterns.

RAGI: A Sikh devotional singer who can recite Gurbani in classical ragas, class of musicians originated by Guru Arjan.

RAGAMALA: a) A composition listing different raga families; b) a musical piece displaying different ragas.

RASA: The emotional effect or aesthetic relish of a raga.

RUPAK TAL: A rhythm of seven matras and three beats.

SADHANA: Serious and devoted practice for spiritual or musical training.

SAM: The first and most important beat in a Hindustani rhythm (tal)

SAMPARDAYA: Tradition, school or style of music, similar to gharana.

SAMVADI: Third part of the dhrupad composition.

SAMPURAN: Group of seven notes that may form a raga, heptatonic.

SANCHARI: Third part of the dhrupad composition.

SAPTAK: An octave, the group of seven notes from SA to NI.

SHABAD: Devotional hymn composed by Sikh Gurus or by bhagats, whose compositions are included in Sri Guru Granth Sahab, also the Word of God.

SHRUTI: The interval of a microtone. There are 22 shruties in an octave.

SHENNAI: An oboe-type double-reeded instrument of Northern India.

SHUDH: The natural or pure notes of an octave.

SITAR: A seven-stringed instrument with sympathetic strings and frets used in North India.

SUFI: Unorthodox Muslim mystics who patronise music.

SVARA: A note or tone of definite pitch. There are seven basic svaras.

TABLA: A percussion instrument consisting of two drums. It is also called tabla-bayan.

TAL: A cyclic arrangement instrument consisting of two drums. It is also called tabla-bayan.

TAN: A musical phrase sung on vowels or syllables in a particular extemporisation of a raga.

TANPURA/TAMBOORA: A stringed drone instrument used in North India.

TAPPA: A love song of North India with strong rhythm and fast tempo.

TARANA/TILLANA: A quick popular melody using meaningless words or nonsense syllables.

TEENTAL: A rhythm of 16 matras and four beats.

THATH: The regular primary scale of Hindustani music.

THEKA: The drum phrases for a tal like DA, DHI, NA.

THUMRI: A lyrical and romantic form of light Hindustani music.

TILWARA: A rhythm of 16 matras and four beats in Hindustani music.

UTTARANGA: The upper tetrachord of a scale from PA to SA.

VADI: The most important or pivotal note in a raga.

VAD VRINDA: Orchestra or an instrumental ensemble.

VAR: A form of composition in praise of God or heroes, a ballad or an ode recounting praise of warriors.

VEENA: Popular stringed instrument of south India. Its counterpart is Been in North India.

VIKRIT: Modified or variant note, as opposed to Shudh note. The vikrit notes are komal (flat) or teevra (sharp).

VILAMBIT: Slow tempo in rhythm.

VIVADI: Dissonant note in a raga; it is also called the enemy of the raga.

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