

## 4

## The rag alone

A typical instrumental recital of North Indian classical music begins with a section in which the *rag* is developed alone; there is no *tal*, so the *tabla* player sits without playing throughout this section, which can take up to half the total performance. There are usually three parts: *alap*, *jor* and *jhala*. Of these *alap* is the longest and most important. The other two could be omitted or a substitution made, but it would be very unusual to dispense with *alap* altogether, and unthinkable to change the order.

The importance of *alap*

It is with *alap* that the performance starts in a mood of tranquility and then very gradually increases in tempo, dynamics, rhythmic complexity, and overall excitement. It is only in this way that the *rag*'s beauty and subtleties can be revealed and explored in depth. (If one asks a musician a question like 'how does this *rag* go?' he will not sing or play *jor*, or *jhala*, *gat* or *tans*, but instead a kind of condensed *alap*.) The slowness of tempo and absence of pulse should not beguile the listener into thinking that the musician is indulging in some kind of whimsical free fantasy. It is precisely in *alap* that his knowledge of the minutiae which make up a *rag* is most severely put to the test. Within minutes – perhaps even seconds – of playing he will either create or destroy the *rag*. There are musicians who have enough technical mastery of their instrument to win over an audience with sheer virtuosity in the latter stages of a performance, even after an indifferent or bad *alap*, but a connoisseur will not be satisfied with such compensations. Not surprisingly, therefore, the anecdotes about the excellence of some or other great musician (usually of the past) are more likely to be about how he could sing one note in a special way, or improvise on three notes for an hour, rather than how fast he could sing a *tan*. This also reflects the apparent

development of North Indian classical music from the slow, dignified and meticulous, towards a more overtly virtuoso style (a development which is widely deplored by purists). Thus the old *dhrupad* vocal style has by now been almost completely superseded by *khyal* where the singer is allowed much more freedom and where the vocal gymnastics can come into their own. I do not wish to imply, however, that *khyal* is an inferior genre. That would be a foolish disregard of Indian music today as well as disrespect to some of the finest musicians of this century. Nor should one necessarily see *dhrupad* and *khyal* as irreconcilable opposites. The significant point is that *khyal* singers are often held in special esteem when they have derived a large measure of their art and knowledge of music from the *dhrupad* tradition. It is still generally acknowledged that for the most reliable and pure version of a *rag* one must consult a *dhrupad* musician. The kind of *alap* – a slow, serious and extended exposition of the *rag*, without rhythmic accompaniment – commonly heard in instrumental recitals is a further legacy of *dhrupad*. This point is emphasised by Ram Narayan, and can also be applied to other leading musicians, for example Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan.

The characteristics of *rag*

To discuss *alap* is to discuss the whole concept of *rag*. Since there is no adequate brief definition of *rag* – the shortest and least helpful to the Westerner being the traditional Sanskrit aphorism 'Rañjayati iti rāgaḥ' ('that which colours is *rag*') – it is necessary to list the main elements which make up this highly sophisticated melodic system. Once these relatively simple theoretical points have been discussed it will be possible to proceed towards an understanding of the subtleties in performance.

Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy has proposed the following chief characteristics (which I have paraphrased) by which one *rag* can be distinguished from another: (1) scale; (2) ascending and descending line; (3) transilience; (4) emphasised notes and register; (5) intonation and obligatory embellishments (1971: 45). The discussion should also include the time of day when the *rag* is performed and its mood, but to a large extent the time of performance is subsumed by number (4) above, and the mood

of the rag – traditionally considered to be one of its main attributes – has become largely a matter of subjective response. Consequently, mood or sentiment (*rasa* in Sanskrit) is too conjectural and unreliable to serve as a means of describing or analysing a rag though something will be said on the subject in the following pages.

When the *alap* begins the listener will, if no announcement has been made, be certain only of one thing about the rag: the time of day it is being performed. (At least, one hopes that this will be the case!) If he has been listening carefully to the tuning of the instrument he may well have discovered what scale the rag has, which will limit the possibilities. (In a vocal concert without *sarangi* accompaniment this clue will almost certainly not be given.) The great Indian musicologist Pandit V. N. Bhatkhande, working in the first four decades of this century, decided that most of the two hundred or so rags of North Indian classical music could be classified under ten *thats* (heptatonic scales). This system has been widely accepted, though it does pose problems, such as how to classify rags with a heptatonic scale slightly different from any of the ten *thats* (maybe by just one note) or with fewer or more notes than seven. In practice this means between five, the minimum number of notes a rag may have, and twelve, the maximum number used in present-day nomenclature.<sup>1</sup> Bhatkhande named each of his ten *thats* which are given below in staff notation with the corresponding Indian note names beneath, after what he considered to be the most common rag in it (Ex. 46).

Ex. 46

Kalyan that  
Sa Re Ga Ma# Pa Dha Ni Śa

Bilaval that  
Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Śa

Khamaj that  
Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni♭ Śa

Bhairav that  
Sa Re♭ Ga Ma Pa Dha# Ni Śa

Purvi that  
Sa Re♭ Ga Ma# Pa Dha# Ni Śa

Marva that  
Sa Re♭ Ga Ma# Pa Dha Ni Śa

Kafi that  
Sa Re Ga♭ Ma Pa Dha Ni♭ Śa

Asavri that  
Sa Re Ga♭ Ma Pa Dha# Ni♭ Śa

Bhairvi that  
Sa Re♭ Ga♭ Ma Pa Dha# Ni♭ Śa

Tori that  
Sa Re♭ Ga♭ Ma# Pa Dha# Ni Śa

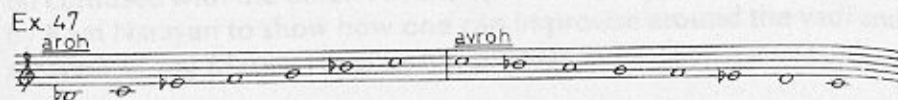
The rag after which the *that* is named, however, may not use exactly the same notes as the derived *that*. For example rag *Marva* uses fewer than the seven notes, and rags *Khamaj*, *Kafi* and *Bhairvi* use notes in addition to those given in the *that*.

It will be seen, apart from the convenient coincidence of the North Indian natural scale (*Bilaval that*) with the Western natural scale (C major), that there are other parallels between six of the *thats* and the Western (Church) Modes; the remaining four *thats* have no equivalents in Western music and consequently sound the most unusual and 'Oriental'.

That	Western equivalent mode
Kalyan	F-mode (Lydian)
Bilaval	C-mode (Ionian, also C major scale)
Khamaj	G-mode (Mixolydian)
Bhairav	–
Purvi	–
Marva	–
Kafi	D-mode (Dorian)
Asavri	A-mode (Aeolian)

Bhairvi E-mode (Phrygian)  
Tori -

The way the scale is used in *rag* is very important. Very few *rags* permit a straight ascent and descent of the successive notes of a complete *that*. If the *rag* is basically heptatonic<sup>2</sup> it will almost certainly contain all the notes in descent (*avroh*) but omit one or two notes in ascent (*aroh*) for example *rag Bhimplasi* (Ex. 47)

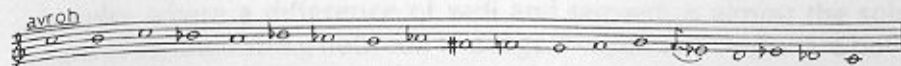


where the ascent is pentatonic and the descent heptatonic. In a pentatonic *rag* the typical *aroh-avroh* is straight up and down using all notes, since an ascending or descending line, like the *rag* itself, requires a minimum of five notes.

*Aroh-avroh* is further complicated by the use of accidentals and crooked motion. An example is the *aroh-avroh* or *rag Darbari* which was taught to Ram Narayan by *Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan* (Ex. 48).



The most extreme example I can recall is given by Ram Narayan for *rag Misra Bhairvi*. The basic scale of *Bhairvi* is *Bhatkhande's Bhairvi* that (see Ex. 46). The word *misra* suggests a mixture, and means that all accidentals may be used. Here the *aroh* does contain all seven notes of *Bhairvi*, but it is still much simpler than the *avroh*, which uses all twelve notes in a very crooked motion (Ex. 49).



In fact, few traditional North Indian musicians would be happy with simple straight up and down *aroh-avroh* claiming that this would not represent the true line of the *rag* as it is performed, or focus those notes with special importance. This leads to a discussion of the two important notes in a *rag*, called the *vadi* and *samvadi*.

Every *rag* must have the note Sa, and all but a very few have either Ma or Pa, or both, a perfect fourth or fifth, respectively, above Sa; possibly these notes could be replaced by Ma<sup>#</sup>, a tritone above Sa.<sup>3</sup> The drone normally reinforces the Sa and either Ma or Pa, though it must be said that one of Ram Narayan's favourite choices of drone notes (played on the *tambura*) is Sa and Ni. Inevitably, then, Sa is an important, indeed essential, note in any *rag*. Paradoxically, however, there are *rags* in which Sa is omitted for long stretches of melody, and otherwise rendered without emphasis. An example is the well-known *rag Marva*. Sa is weak and often omitted, although it is present in the drone. *Marva* is a special case in that its scale (see *Marva* that Ex. 46) omits Pa and does not contain the natural Ma. For one thing this means that the choice of a second drone note is most likely to be Ni (as it always is when Ram Narayan plays this *rag*) and for another it means that there is no note in the consonant relationship of a perfect fourth or fifth with Sa. This helps explain why Sa is relatively weak: Indian theory has always recognised the importance of the consonant intervals of perfect fourth and fifth (as well as octave) and this is the basis of *vadi* and *samvadi*. Nowadays these are two notes in a *rag* which are generally, though not always, a perfect fourth or fifth apart. Of the two the *vadi* is the more important, and is complemented in the opposite tetrachord by the *samvadi*. Any note of a *rag*, including Sa, is potentially *vadi* or *samvadi*. In the early stages of the *alap* the *vadi* and *samvadi* should be established by such things as greater intensity, longer duration, frequent repetition, and pauses after the note. The listener, however, must not be blamed for uncertainties. It is symptomatic of the rift between theory and practice that the *vadi* and *samvadi* do not always emerge as the strongest notes of the *rag*, or the musicians differ in their choice of *vadi* and *samvadi* for a particular *rag*, or even that they differ in their definition of the terms.

To return to the example of *rag Marva*, the *vadi* and *samvadi* are usually given as Re<sup>b</sup> and Dha respectively, which means that the interval between them corresponds to a minor sixth, rather than the customary

perfect fourth or fifth. Performances of *Marva* often seem to stress the Dha more than the  $Re^b$ . One way this may happen is if the note comes on the first beat of the *tal*, which will automatically tend to accentuate it. The fact that this beat (as we shall see in the next chapter) is called the *sam* has led Ram Narayan to propose one definition of *samvadi* as the note which falls on the *sam*. Without going into the validity or otherwise of this assertion I think the significant point is that there may now be a greater equality between *vadi* and *samvadi*, to the extent that one may be confused with the other. An example which supports this was given by Ram Narayan to show how one can improvise around the *vadi* and *samvadi* of rag *Marva*. He sang the phrases in Ex. 50



in which Dha actually occurs more times than  $Re^b$ , although  $Re^b$  is used more as the note on which phrases end.

Besides *vadi* and *samvadi* mention should be made of *anuvadi* and *vivadi*. In ancient theory these referred to notes which were related by imperfect consonance (*anuvadi*) or by the dissonant intervals equivalent to a semitone or major seventh (*vivadi*). Nowadays these two terms are not used a great deal, but when they are *anuvadi* refers to notes other than the *vadi* and *samvadi*, and *vivadi* to notes which are foreign to the *rag* but which may be slightly touched upon to heighten the effect of the *rag*, as well as to demonstrate the musician's command of the material. What does not seem to have changed over the centuries is the underlying belief in a hierarchy of notes. Interestingly, an analogy is made with social hierarchies. Kaufmann quotes a Sanskrit verse, of which he gives the following translation: 'The *vādī* is the king of the notes; the *samvādī* is the minister; the *vivādī* is the enemy; and the *anuvādī* is the vassal' (1968: 6).

Although there are doubts about the precise definition and identification of *vadi* and *samvadi* it should not be assumed that the whole concept has declined in importance. There are numerous

examples where a difference of *vadi* and *samvadi* is almost the sole means of distinguishing between two *rags*. *Bhupali* and *Deskar* are both pentatonic *rags* using the same notes: Sa Re Ga Pa Dha (all natural). Therefore, a straight up and down *aroh-avroh* is permitted in both. The difference between them is the *vadi* and *samvadi*: Ga and Dha in *Bhupali*, and Dha and Ga in *Deskar*, respectively. Obviously a clear distinction between the relative importance of *vadi* and *samvadi* must be made in these *rags*. Ram Narayan's phrases to illustrate the difference between them focused immediately on Ga and used a slide from Pa down to Ga in the case of *Bhupali*, and brought out the patterns Dha Sa Dha Re and Ga Pa Ga Dha in *Deskar*. Similarly, if in *Marva* the Ga is stressed there is a danger of confusing the *rag* with the similar *rag Puriya*.

In a live performance there would be little chance of confusing *Bhupali* with *Deskar*, since the former is an evening *rag* while the latter is a morning one. Bhatkhande maintained that the position of the *vadi* and *samvadi* determine the time of day the *rag* should be performed, and vice versa. Simply, if the *vadi* is in the lower part of the octave (*purvang*), which can be from Sa up to Ma or Pa, the *rag* is performed between noon and midnight, and if it is in the upper part of the octave (*uttrang*), which can be from Ma or Pa up to Sa, the *rag* is performed between midnight and noon. If the *vadi* is Sa, Ma, or Pa, then the *rag* may be performed in either period; in other words, *vadi* alone will not determine the time of performance. *Bhupali* and *Deskar* fit this explanation: *Bhupali*, an evening *rag*, has Ga as *vadi*, which is in the *purvang*, and *Deskar*, a morning *rag*, has Dha as *vadi*, which is in the *uttrang*. In practice, there must obviously be a more specific time than merely some time during a period of twelve hours, and Bhatkhande's explanations do go further.<sup>4</sup> In some cases musicians can be very precise: for example, *Malkos* is thought of as a midnight *rag*, *Marva* as a sunset *rag*, *Lalit* as a dawn *rag*, and so on, but in practice one may hear a *rag* performed three or four hours away from its customary time. Few musicians, or theorists for that matter, are clear about the origin of the time theory, though Ram Narayan is aware of the physiological changes through the day, mentioning pulse and breathing variations. He admits, however, that he adheres to the time theory because it is a tradition he has been taught to respect and against which he sees no reason to

rebel. This is typical of Indian musicians. Those few who actively oppose the time theory do so mainly on grounds that it will force many *rags* into oblivion as concert times become more standardised. (They also cast envious eyes at South Indian music, which is not restricted by a time theory.) This appears to be a plausible argument, but it overlooks certain points. Radio broadcasts of music in India commence at about 7 a.m. and continue, at intervals, until about 11 p.m. All-night public concerts are still quite common, as are morning and afternoon concerts, especially on Sundays. Commercial recordings make *rags* of any time of day available. Here, of course, the time theory can be doubly violated, first by the musician who may well record a *rag* at an unsuitable time, and secondly by the listener who may listen to it at any time. The practice of mixing two *rags*, for example the morning *Bhairav* with the evening *Bahar*, is another way of avoiding the restriction of the time theory. Another way is *ragmala*, a kind of medley of *rags* which may be from any time of day.<sup>5</sup>

These are all obvious arguments. From a musician's point of view, however, there are considerations which may escape the layman. Ram Narayan insists that even if certain *rags* are performed less in public they will not necessarily disappear, because they must still form part of the musician's repertoire if he is to maintain the *rag* tradition. Since Indian musicians on the whole seek to uphold the tradition of keeping *rags* 'pure' this means that they must know not only the specific *rag* but also all other *rags* which are closely related to it and with which it can easily be confused. Therefore, to play an evening *rag* correctly one must know *rags* from other times of day. If *Deskar* were a rare *rag* it would still have to be in the musician's mind when performing *Bhupali*, otherwise he could find himself in a no-man's-land between the two *rags*, or, worse still, be found there by the more knowledgeable members of his audience.

In the preceding discussion of *Bhupali*, passing mention was made of a downward slide from Pa to Ga, which helps characterise the *rag*. Indian music has a great variety of ornaments, and to do justice to this subject would require a chapter on its own. Collectively these ornaments are known as *gamaks*, but *gamak* alone can also refer to one particular ornament, which may be described as a slow or fast oscillation about a note, usually extending to the note above or below. To call

*gamak*, in its general sense, 'ornament' or 'embellishment' is something of a misnomer. Undoubtedly *gamak* does beautify a note, but such English words suggest something added and inessential, whereas *gamak* can be an integral part of a note and not to use it would violate the *rag*. This is a difficulty of Indian music which must be mastered and not used indiscriminately. Apart from certain *rags* which have particular *gamaks* on particular notes, different instruments as well as different genres of music, instrumental or vocal, tend to specialise in specific *gamaks*. On the *sarangi* the main ones, according to Ram Narayan, are *gamak* itself and *mind*, which is a slide in one direction between two notes. (The inference is that if these are the most important ones on the *sarangi* it is because they are the most important ones in vocal music, hence in North Indian classical music in general.) Because of its lack of frets and the relative lack of friction between fingernails and string, and because it uses a bow, the *sarangi* is not only able to produce extended and sustained *mind* but also to come nearest probably of all Indian instruments to reproducing all the *gamaks* of that most versatile and free of instruments in Indian music: the human voice.

When an Indian musician talks about *gamak* he usually emphasises not only the correct movement of the *gamak* but also the correct intonation. This is a subject to be approached with the utmost caution, since it has been at the centre of a fierce controversy for many years. Ancient theory divided the octave into twenty-two (not necessarily equal) *srutis*. The word *sruti* is still commonly used today. As we have already seen, however, the octave is currently divided into only twelve named degrees. It would seem, logically, that there cannot be a fixed scale of twenty-two *srutis*, otherwise one would expect each *sruti* to be defined and included in the nomenclature. In fact there is no standardisation and the *srutis* have taken on a new, more flexible meaning, without – and this must be stressed – disappearing altogether. Few, if any, musicians would totally disclaim the importance of *srutis*, but they tend to give conflicting, often purely personal, definitions and numbers. According to Ram Narayan, *Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan* used to say he had his own set of twenty-two *srutis*. It seems that the musician's primary concern is not with an overall arrangement of microtones within an octave but rather with the intonation of particular notes. Thus one may speak of the Re in *rag Des* as being slightly flatter than the Re in

*rag Yaman* (both Re's being natural) or of the Re<sup>b</sup> in *rag Bhairav* as being very flat. Such examples are common and easily obtained from musicians. Perhaps *sruti* should consequently be regarded as inflexion within a limited context rather than as some abstract and rigid system of microtones. The following remark made by Ram Narayan is most telling in this respect: 'Some people will talk about, say, number three *sruti* for *Malkos*, but if you don't feel comfortable and convinced why should you sing that number three *sruti*?' The lack of agreement on their precise nature and the lack of consistency with which they are used in performance prevent *srutis* from being a reliable distinguishing factor between *rags*. Those traditional musicians who have a clear conception of *srutis* and a high degree of consistency in their use may be done an injustice by these remarks and by the conclusions of recent research,<sup>6</sup> but the truth may be that this aspect of the 'purity' of *rags* is declining the fastest.

It is significant that the objections to the use of the small Indian harmonium, now probably the most widely used instrument in North India, centred on its inability to render the *gamaks* and *srutis*. A good player can create the illusion of certain *gamaks*, but there is no way of changing the twelve pitches to the octave without dismantling the instrument. It is the flexibility and freedom of choice allowed by traditional Indian instruments and the human voice that is particularly missed on the harmonium, though this unsatisfactory state of affairs has evidently been endured with a considerable amount of enthusiasm.

*Sruti*, like *vadi* and *samvadi*, is an example of an ancient theoretical concept vestigiously present in modern Indian music but with altered meaning and importance. Another concept, from the same source, namely Bharata's *Natyasastra*, is *rasa*, the aesthetic basis of the arts. The *Natyasastra* was primarily concerned with the dramatic arts, and it is in connection with them that eight *rasas*, or sentiments, were expounded. These were:

<i>Sringara</i>	(love)	<i>Vira</i>	(heroism)
<i>Hasya</i>	(humour)	<i>Bhayanaka</i>	(terror)
<i>Karuna</i>	(pathos)	<i>Bibhatsa</i>	(disgust)
<i>Raudra</i>	(wrath)	<i>Adbhuta</i>	(wonder)

*Rasa* should not be confused with emotion. '... an ordinary emotion (*bhava*) may be pleasurable or painful; but a poetic sentiment (*rasa*), transcending the limitations of the personal attitude, is lifted above such pain and pleasure into pure joy, the essence of which is its relish itself' (S. K. De 1963: 13). This helps explain why *santa*, calm based on indifference to wordly things, became the ninth *rasa*, and even why *bhakti*, religious devotion, became, according to some, the tenth. The sceptic may reasonably ask how, for example, disgust can be instilled in a listener to music, except in a negative way, but a more pertinent question would be whether a particular *rag* can suggest a particular *rasa* consistently, to the exclusion of all others, and in such a way that there is no doubt among all the listeners what that *rasa* is. The answer is without any doubt no. Very few musicians consider *rasa* important beyond subscribing to the belief that *rag* has an aesthetic basis and does create some mood. (This much is conveyed by the Sanskrit definition of *rag*, quoted on p. 93). Ram Narayan claims that his music is all devotion, so all the *rasas* become one: *bhakti*. This should, he says, be the basis not only of Indian music but of any classical music.

### The essential Sa

The foregoing discussion of *rag* is intended to give an idea of the knowledge a musician must have before attempting *alap*, as well as to explain the necessity for concentration and humility. According to Ram Narayan, the function of *alap* is to bring out the *srutis* and personality of the *rag*. For '*srutis*' one should perhaps read: subtleties and intricacies of intonation, ornamentation and note values. The attention to detail in the performance of *rag* suggests the analogies of looking through a microscope or running a film in slow motion. It is only in *alap* that such meticulous care can and should be lavished on the *rag*. It has already been stated that the kind of *alap* one usually hears today, including that played by Ram Narayan, comes from *dhrupad* singing, where the *rag* unfolds slowly, note by note. Taking a basic range of two octaves the normal procedure is to establish the middle Sa, gradually work downwards to the lower Sa, then return to the middle Sa and gradually work upwards to the Sa an octave above, and beyond it ad lib. The question arises that if the notes of the *rag* are only gradually revealed

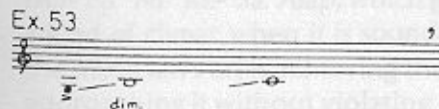
when does the *rag* become established? It might seem that, even if the *Sa*, and the *vadi* and *samvadi* are brought out in the beginning stages (as they should be) the listener cannot be sure of the *rag* until he has heard all its notes. It is further testimony to the extraordinary refinement and subtlety of *rag* that in fact it can be revealed from the way the very first note is played or sung. Obviously this postulates not only an excellent musician but also a perceptive and knowledgeable listener. Ram Narayan believes that *Sa* is different in every *rag*. He played the following examples to demonstrate how he would establish *Sa* at the beginning of an *alap* in various *rags*. I attempt below to capture the essence in notation and verbal description, but of course examples like these should be heard. First of all, *rag Gaur Sarang* (Ex. 51).



The *Sa* should be 'very straight and powerful', in Ram Narayan's words. It is approached by a quick glissando (*mind*) from *Pa* below, held loud, and tails off to a very short *Ni* a semitone below. Next *rag Multani* (Ex. 52).



*Sa* is approached by a quick glissando from *Ni*, a semitone below, and is held for a shorter duration and at a much lower dynamic level than the *Sa* of *Gaur Sarang*. It tails off to *Ni* a semitone below, which is slightly longer, hence clearer, than in *Gaur Sarang*. Next, *rag Patdip* (Ex. 53).



*Sa* is approached in two stages: by a quick glissando from *Pa* to *Ni* (below) which is held before sliding quickly on to *Sa*, which is itself held but only very slightly longer than the *Ni*. Also there is a gradual

*diminuendo* throughout the phrase, from the attack on *Pa* to the fade-out on *Sa*.

Further examples were: in *rag Yaman* *Sa* should be approached *Ni Re Sa*; in *rag Darbari* with a slight inflexion from the note above, in other words a very fast slide down from *Re*; while in *rag Bihag* it should be very loud.

If Ram Narayan's ideas were taken to their logical conclusion any *rag* could be distinguished from any other by the way this one note is intoned; such factors as *that*, *aroh-avroh*, and *vadi-samvadi* would be subsidiary. This is very much in keeping with the musician's concern for 'purity' of *rag* – the absence of confusion with other *rags* – so it must be pure from the very beginning. In practice, however, the process of establishing the *rag* unmistakably in the minds of the audience will usually take a little longer.

### The outline of *alap*

This is fixed in the musician's mind before playing: it will have been learnt from his teacher, and it is on this kind of skeleton that he grafts his own expression and variations. This is not to say that the teacher would have no control over how his student presents a finished *alap*, but there are instances where the teacher may give only the barest outline of a *rag* and leave all the rest to the student. This is at the opposite extreme from sitting together for hours working on every detail of a performance, which is the more traditional method of teaching, and it must be said that only he who has mastered at least one *rag* by learning all its details from his teacher can create his own material from the outline of a *rag*. Ram Narayan told me how he was once given only two days' notice to play *rag Puriya* on Lahore radio. Since he was not sure of the *rag* he went to *Ustad Abdul Wahid Khan* and explained the situation. The latter, who usually took a long time over teaching, gave him the following outline (Ex. 54).



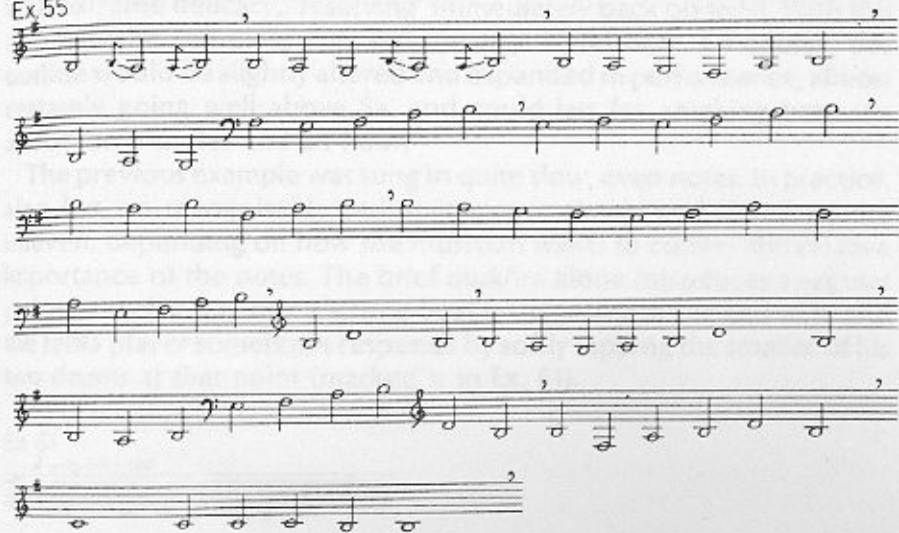


Not only was this method of condensing so much into a few phrases spanning hardly more than an octave unusual, but also the fact that Abdul Wahid Khan told him to write it down. From this outline he could, if intelligent enough, elaborate the *rag* for hours, making a complete performance except for the short composition which would have been learned separately. It was not necessary to say what were the *aroh-avroh* or *vadi* and *samvadi*, since all this information is contained in the outline. One can make out an ascent-descent pattern, albeit circuitous, and tendency for phrases to centre on Ga with Ni as a secondary resting note. The very first phrase, a mere three notes, establishes the relationship of these two notes; the next phrase confirms it, and the next two emphasise the importance of Ga. Sa, obviously a weak note in this *rag*, is omitted from these initial phrases. It would be reasonable, and correct, to assume that Ga and Ni are the *vadi* and *samvadi* respectively. It should also be clear that mere repetition is not a reliable indicator of *vadi* or *samvadi*, since Ma<sup>#</sup> occurs more often than either Ga or Ni, yet is a relatively weak and unstable note as phrases must always move on from it to their completion. The only phrase which does not end on Ga or Ni ends on the upper Sa. This note must always be treated carefully. In this case it is approached Ma<sup>#</sup> Dha Ma<sup>#</sup>Ni Ni Re<sup>b</sup> Sa. *Alap*, which gradually climbs up to this note, achieves a kind of climax when it is sounded for the first time, and a large part of the musician's art is achieving the maximum effect by exploring ways of approaching it without violating the *rag*. That portion of the *alap* which moves in the upper part of the octave and touches the upper Sa is called the *antra*, and that portion which moves in the lower part of the octave (usually from Sa up to Pa, or Ma if Pa is absent or particularly weak) is called *sthayi*. Since the upper Sa is so exposed, partly because it rings out

more on instruments and requires a greater effort to sing, the *antra* is a severe test of the musician's imagination and understanding of the *rag*. The same does not apply so precisely to the middle Sa, which has a different quality and value. (It should be acknowledged here that there are certain *rags*, like *Adana*, *Bahar* and *Sohni*, which should actually start in the upper register, but most follow the gradually ascending pattern just discussed.)

Abdul Wahid Khan's outline of *rag Puriya* served as a model of the *rag* from which Ram Narayan could generate his own material. In his words, he had the perfect form of one *rag* in a lesson of ten minutes. It could be taken as the basis for *alap*, as has already been said, but in order to show in more detail the stages of a typical *alap*, Ram Narayan gave the following outline in *rag Yaman*, which is traditionally regarded as a relatively easy *rag* to learn. From time to time he gave verbal explanations, which are included in quotation marks with my own commentary (Ex. 55).

Ex 55



This last phrase, 'just to say I have completed [one stage of the *alap*]', is called *mukhra*. It is customary to divide the *alap* into sections by the use of a *mukhra*, the characteristics of which are the repetition of Sa and the



temporary use of a pulse. In the first two phrases, Ram Narayan sang ornaments, but subsequently omitted them. Sa, a relatively weak note, is entirely omitted until the *mukhra*. Ni is emphasised to the extent that one may think it is the *vadi*, whereas it is the *samvadi* and Ga is the *vadi*. The phrases move in the lower octave, gradually extending downwards. In performance they would probably reach the lower Sa. The *alap* continued as in Ex. 56.

Ex 56

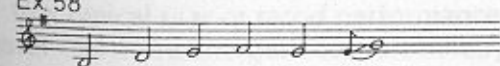


Here, Ram Narayan interrupted his singing to say: 'for example; it depends on your intelligence.' He then resumed (Ex. 57).

Ex 57

'This chapter is finished' (again by a *mukhra*). The *vadi*, Ga, is established. The music has begun its slow ascent from the region of the middle Sa. It continued as in Ex. 58.

Ex 58



Pa is established, and further phrases would be added to this brief one,

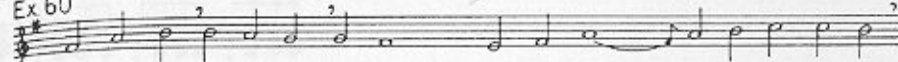
again to focus on Pa. After this came Ex. 59.

Ex 59



Ni is again emphasised, but an octave higher than in the first section. It has the effect of increasing the expectation for the upper Sa. Then, to play Sa 'you must know the *antra*'. (Ex. 60.)

Ex 60



'This is the most appropriate way to touch Sa.' The emphasis on Ni again 'teases', as it were, the upper Sa, which, when it finally comes, is sung with extreme delicacy, 'resolving' immediately back on to Ni. With this one has 'the complete *rag*, and the *alap* is finished'. Of course, this outline would be slightly altered and expanded in performance, almost certainly going well above Sa, and could last for anything between about ten minutes and an hour.

The previous example was sung in quite slow, even notes. In practice, *alap* has no recognisable pulse; it moves slowly and durations are uneven, depending on how the musician wants to convey the relative importance of the notes. The brief *mukhra* alone introduces a regular pulse in such a way that a strong beat is suggested at the end of it, and the *tabla* player sometimes responds by softly tapping the smaller of his two drums at that point (marked x in Ex. 61).

Ex 61



The *mukhra* sung by Ram Narayan in the *rag Yaman* phrases can be regarded as an abbreviated version of this one.

The third example (Ex. *Jor, jhala and tans*)

The next section of the performance, called *jor*, is characterised by a regular pulse throughout. Sections may still be marked off from each other by a *mukhra* phrase in which case a faster tempo will reflect the gathering momentum. It is interesting to note that Ram Narayan spoke of both *alap* and *jor* as having *tal*. He did not mean it in the literal sense, since in this kind of *alap* the *tabla* player remains silent and there is no rhythmic structure with the same regularity as a *tal*. What was meant was that durations and rests are significant and should not be thought of as purely arbitrary. *Jor* is usually slow to begin with, but gradually increases to quite a fast tempo, preparing the way for the next, even faster section. Ram Narayan calls *jor* 'a faster portion of *alap*, with rhythm'. It does not, however, repeat the same gradual unfolding of the *rag* over the full range of the instrument or voice, but instead concentrates on smaller patterns of notes, perhaps as few as two or three. Another feature of *jor*, though not obligatory, is the use of *gamak* – pronounced oscillations around notes – which is very difficult to notate accurately. Ram Narayan sang two brief examples of *jor*, in *rag Yaman*: Ex. 62,



which is essentially a pattern of three notes (Ni, Re and Ga), and Ex. 63,



which explores a wider range (one octave). Taken in isolation and sung slowly and less evenly these could be *alap* phrases. The pulse and increased speed are the crucial difference, but *jor* does move with greater freedom than *alap*, as well as concentrating on small areas at a time.

In a typical *sitar* or *sarod* performance fast *jor* will lead into an even faster and more energetic section called *jhala*. On plucked instruments this is especially effective, as it consists of the fast interplay of strokes on the stopped playing string with repeated strokes on the open drone

strings (*cikari*) and with very little melodic development. The great *sarangi* player *Ustad Bundu Khan* developed a kind of *jhala* for his instrument, where a stopped note is played with three fingers in rapid succession, followed by the open string, for example Ex. 64.



On the *sitar* or *sarod* the same passage would be played as in Ex. 65.



Ram Narayan practised *Bundu Khan's jhala* but discarded it, feeling it to be more suited to plucked instruments. Before finally eliminating *jhala* from his repertoire he devised other kinds, which closely resemble some of his *paltas* (Exs. 66–8).



The third example (Ex. 68) apart from being excellent practice material, is so much like a *tan* that it provides a link between *jhala* and *tan*, the latter being substituted by Ram Narayan for the former. The word *tan* comes from a Sanskrit root meaning to stretch. Literally, then, the *rag* is stretched or extended over a wide range and usually at great speed. Ram Narayan sang an example of *tan* in *rag Yaman*. He broke off after the last note, and this could well happen in performance, in which case another, more complete *tan* would quickly follow (Ex.69).



Such music is much better suited to the *sarangi* than *jhala*. There is a great variety of *tans*, classified according to their shape and articulation. Much use is made of them in the section of the performance with *tabla* accompaniment, and more will be said on the subject in the next two chapters. The *tans* in the section preceding the entry of the *tabla* should be different, since they are not governed by a *tal*. Different *rags*, also, must have different *tans*, because a *tan* must obey the rules of the *rag*. Although most *tans* are (a) fast and (b) use many notes in a fluid succession, there are exceptions. A *tan* could have as few as three notes, but it would be followed by a longer one. A *tan* could also be very slow, with *gamak*.<sup>7</sup> Ram Narayan's example of this sounded no faster than *alap* or *jor* phrases, but moved freely over a wide range, whereas *alap* phrases tend to concentrate on very few notes at a time, and *jor* on small note patterns, each one usually within a restricted range of about a fourth or fifth. Also, the *tan* was more fluid, in other words played legato with several notes to the bow, whereas *jor* phrases are short, with rests between them, and use many bows, often one per note.

Of the three sections, *alap*, *jor* and *tan* (or *jhala*) *alap* is the most important. Some kind of *alap*, however brief, is necessary, but a performance may exclude either *jor* or *tans* (without *tal*) or both. Their value, apart from extending the performance, is to create variety and show the technical capabilities of the instrument and its player. They

also assist in the gradual progression from slow and serious to fast and exciting which is typical of North Indian classical music, and thereby enable the musician to 'warm up' before he attempts the technically demanding fast work.

### The meaning of improvisation

The next section of the performance introduces a composition, with *tabla* accompaniment. The assumption is often made that everything heard up to that point (*alap*, *jor* and *tans* or *jhala*) has been improvised. It is perfectly true to say that improvisation is an important part of Indian music, but there are dangers of misunderstanding. The tantalising question is always: how much does an improvising musician really improvise? To this should be added the questions: what does improvisation mean in his music? and: what is his concept of the term? At first Ram Narayan expressed outright hostility towards the view that Indian music is mainly improvised, and blamed other Indian musicians for helping to perpetrate this misconception. His argument was that because so much discipline, effort, and knowledge are necessary to understand *rag*, and – very important – to keep each *rag* pure and distinct, then logically there cannot be improvisation. For him improvisation suggested unusual experiments which flout accepted tradition, like putting alcohol or butter in tea. He sang a phrase of flagrant wrong notes to illustrate his concept. From this it could be deduced that improvisation suggested breaking rules, and the kind of improvisation he mistrusted was the kind which would be classified as 'free'. The idea that improvisation can exist and flourish within the limitations of a strict discipline appealed to him. He agreed that he does not have the entire performance mapped out in detail in his head, in other words it is not precomposed. The sequence of *alap*, *jor*, *tans* and section in *tal* will have been decided, as will the *rag*, *tal* and compositions, and the special way of treating the *rag* will be firmly in his mind. These are the limits within which he will work, and, as was stated at the beginning of this chapter, the narrower the limits the sharper the focus, so the truly great musician is one who can improvise on just a few notes for an extended period of time and keep the audience's attention and approval by his ingenuity and the beauty of his music. The way that

an *alap* outline is expanded underlines the importance of improvisation, as well as indicating its nature in Indian music. Much depends on the musician's intelligence and imagination since these are qualities which will enable him to extend and vary the material without damaging the structure. Improvisation in North Indian classical music can be defined as the art of extension through variation, made possible by the musician's thorough knowledge and fertile imagination. For this to be improvisation in the accepted sense there must be the added element of spontaneity which I think no Indian musician would deny. In speaking of *tal*, Ram Narayan distinguished between musicians who calculate complex rhythmic patterns beforehand, in other words precompose them, and those, like himself, who create them spontaneously, in other words improvise them. The added dimension of rhythm and the discipline of *tal* wedded to that of *rag* are the subject of the next chapter.

### Notes

- 1 I must add a warning: the convenient fact that North Indian music theory now recognises twelve divisions of the octave should not lead one to seek too close an analogy with Western music and think that Indian music has adopted equal temperament.
- 2 The Indian words for pentatonic (five notes), hexatonic (six notes) and heptatonic (seven notes) are *audav*, *sadav* and *sampurn*, respectively. *Sampurn* means 'complete' and for a *rag* to fulfil this condition it must contain each of the seven degrees of the scale (Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni) whether in its natural position or as an accidental. A *rag* like *Jog*, which has the six notes Sa Ga<sup>b</sup> Ga<sup>♯</sup> Ma Pa Ni<sup>b</sup> is classified as pentatonic rather than hexatonic since it has no Re or Dha.
- 3 The eminent *bin* player and *dhrupad* singer Ustad Z. M. Dagar gave me an example, a very rare *rag*, which has neither Ma nor Pa, nor even Ma<sup>♯</sup>. It is called *Adbhut Kalyan*, and its notes are Sa Re Ga Dha Ni (all natural).
- 4 Bhatkhande's explanation of the time theory is discussed more fully by Jairazbhoy (1971: 61-4).
- 5 *Ragmalas* are not easy to perform, since the music is continuous and the transition from one *rag* to the next must be smooth. Usually they take place within the framework of one *rag* (one of the freer ones which permit extensive use of accidentals) to which the music periodically returns during its wanderings.

- 6 Notably N. A. Jairazbhoy and A. W. Stone (1963).
- 7 It is often said that *tans* may not be used in *dhrupad*. What this means is that the *khyal* type of fast runs may not be used. To a *dhrupad* musician, however, *tan* literally means 'line' so an improvised phrase, which may sound like an *alap* phrase, could be termed *tan*.

## 5

### The rag with *tal*

At the end of the *alap* section there may be a pause to retune the instruments or else the performance will continue without a break, and usually the *rag* will remain the same. A melody with a clear rhythmic structure will be the signal for the *tabla* player to join the performance, which he will normally do with a flourish of rhythmic brilliance to make an immediate impact on the audience. But his basic function from now until the end of the performance is to maintain the particular *tal*, or time cycle, which has been introduced by the new melody.

#### The characteristics of *tal*

A *tal* is the framework which organises and governs rhythm just as a *rag* is that which does the same for melody, and the *rag* itself can either be subjected to the discipline of the *tal* or, as we have seen in the previous chapter, be independent of it. Any *tal* is described as having a certain number of beats, but this is as incomplete a definition as calling a *rag* a scale. In both cases the important qualitative considerations are neglected. Just as several *rags* may share the same scale, so several *tals* may share the same number of beats. The differences between such *tals* have to be sought in terms of how these beats are grouped, how they are stressed, and how they are realised in sound. Once these points are understood the *tal*, in its basic form, is clear.

The commonest North Indian *tals* have 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14 or 16 beats, and by far the most common of all is the sixteen-beat *Tintal*. Indian musicians themselves believe that once *Tintal* is understood and mastered any *tal* can be quickly learnt, so it is appropriate to begin this study of *tal* with it. Each beat of a *tal* is called a *matra* and a complete cycle of the *tal* is called one *avritti* (or *avart(an)*). Thus *Tintal* has one *avritti* consisting of sixteen *matras*. Within each *avritti* the *matras* are sub-grouped into a number of *vibhags* or *angs*. In *Tintal* there are four

*vibhags*, each with four *matras*. This explains why the *tal* is often described (in concert programmes and record sleeves, for example) as having 4 + 4 + 4 + 4 beats. To leave matters here, however, would not convey the essence, as there must obviously be some qualitative difference between these *vibhags*, otherwise the *tal* would be a four-beat one repeated four times. It is easy to make this qualitative difference using words like stress or accent, but they reflect a Western rather than Indian approach to rhythm. In *Tintal* one could say that the first beat is stressed and the ninth beat is unstressed, and, extending this, that the first, second and fourth *vibhags* are stressed while the third is unstressed. This would give a rough and ready idea of how the *tal* is constructed but it would not convey the subtleties of how it is executed. It may give the impression that every time the first beat comes round it is played with an exaggerated emphasis, which is certainly not the case. I propose, therefore, to concentrate from now on the Indian terminology and explain what happens in terms of the sound produced by Indian musicians.

The first beat of a *tal* is called the *sam*. This word suggests a point of convergence, of resolution, and it may be conveniently compared with the *Sa* of a *rag*, from which everything starts and to which everything returns. Improvisations tend to end on the *sam*, which is often played with an accent, especially after some long and complicated rhythmic passage. On the other hand it may pass almost unnoticed. At some other point in a *tal* come a *matra* and *vibhag* which serve as a foil or counterweight to the *sam*. The term for this *matra* and *vibhag* which it opens is *khali*, which literally means empty. In *Tintal* the ninth *matra* and the third *vibhag* are *khali*. If we now establish that the other three *vibhags* are qualitatively equal, then it can be seen that the *khali* is crucial in identifying the *tal* and ensuring that the whole cycle repeats only after one *avritti* of sixteen *matras*. When this *tal* is marked by hand-claps, which is common in practice but rare in performance,<sup>1</sup> the beginning of the first, second and fourth *vibhags* is marked by a clap (i.e. on the first, fifth and thirteenth *matras*) while the beginning of the third *vibhag* (the *khali*, ninth *matra*) is shown by a wave of the hand which moves away from the other hand, in the opposite direction to a clap, as if to give a precise visual representation of the opposition between *sam* and *khali*. In notation the *sam* is marked by a cross and the *khali* by a zero, and the other claps, or *talis*, by numbers. Thus the clapping pattern for *Tintal* is:

Avritti:	—————															
Matra:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Vibhag:	—————				—————				—————				—————			
	sam				tali				khali				tali			
	x				2				0				3			
	clap				clap				wave				clap			

It will be noticed that the *khali* comes exactly halfway through the *avritti* and this is typical of North Indian *tals*, of which most in common use have an even number of *matras*. In *Tintal* there are three claps per *avritti* (the *sam*, having a clap, is also the first *tali*) and this is literally what the name of the *tal* means: *tin*=three, *tal*=clap. To perform the *tal*, however, by counting numbers and clapping the hands would not be regarded as music. It must be played on the *tabla* and the components must be expressed in the *bols*, or language, of the *tabla*.<sup>2</sup> The simplest and universally (within the culture) recognised articulation of a *tal* using drum (*tabla*) *bols* is called its *theka* (literally support). The *theka* of *Tintal* uses four different *bols*: *ta*, *tin*, *dha* and *dhin*. The first two are played on the right-hand drum (*daya*) alone, while the second two combine the same sound with the bass resonance of the left-hand drum (*baya*). The *theka* of *Tintal* is:

Matra:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Tal:	x				2				0				3			
Theka:	dha	dhin	dhin	dha	dha	dhin	dhin	dha	dha	tin	tin	ta	ta	dhin	dhin	dh

The similarity between the first, second and fourth *vibhags* is paralleled by the use of the same *bols*: *dha dhin dhin dha*. The *khali vibhag* is characterised by the use of the other *bols*: *ta tin tin ta*. The version above shows these *bols* displaced by one *matra* (occupying *matras* ten to thirteen instead of nine to twelve) which is customary in performance, if not in theory. The point about these *bols* is that they eliminate the low, booming sound of the *baya*, thus '*khali*' can be interpreted here as 'empty of bass resonance'. This is very important when it comes to listening to a *theka* and finding one's bearings. Because the *sam* sounds no different, in terms of *bol*, from five other

*matras* in the *avritti* it is the *khali*, which is so obviously different in sound, that gives the aural perspective on the *tal*. Now it should be clear why I have been reluctant to talk in terms of stress or accent.

### Examples on the cassette: *thekas*

Item 4 on side 1 of the cassette is a demonstration of four of the commonest North Indian *tals*, starting with *Tintal*. First Ram Narayan speaks the *bols* of the *theka* and then Charanjit Lal Biyavat plays them on the *tabla*. After *Tintal* comes *Ektal*, which has twelve *matras*, six *vibhags*, four *talis* (including the *sam*) and two *khalis*, one of which comes in the expected place halfway through the *avritti*:

Avritti:												
Matra:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Vibhag:												
	sam				khali				khali			
Tal:	x				0				2			
	clap				wave				clap			
Theka:	dhin	dhin	dha	trika	tu	na	kat	ta	dhage	trika	dhin	na

*Ektal*, like *Tintal*, is one of the few *tals* which can be played at any tempo. The Indian word for tempo is *lay* and three *lays* are recognised: *vilambit* (slow), *madhya* (medium) and *drut* (fast). *Ati* (very) may be prefixed to *vilambit* or *drut*. When *Ektal* is played in *vilambit* or *ati vilambit lay* the *bol* given above as *trika* may be doubled to *tirakita* and serves as a convenient landmark in what can be an extremely slow tempo (for example, one *matra* only every four or five seconds). In a very fast tempo the clapping pattern changes to nothing but a clap on the *sam* and a wave on the second *khali* (at the seventh *matra*) and this may explain why this *tal* is called *Ektal* (*ek* = one).

The next *tal* is *Jhaptal*, which has ten *matras*, four unequal *vibhags* (2+3+2+3), three *talis* (including the *sam*) and one *khali* (halfway through the *avritti*):

Avritti:										
Matra:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Vibhag:										
	sam					khali				
Tal:	x		2			0		3		
	clap		clap			wave		clap		
Theka:	dhin na	dhin	dhin na			tin na		dhin	dhin na	

The last *tal* in this demonstration on the cassette is *Rupak* which is the exception to many rules. It has seven *matras*, three unequal *vibhags*, two *talis* and one *khali*. The strangest thing, which makes this unique among the common *tals* of North India, is that the *khali* comes on the *sam*. This only reaffirms that one cannot necessarily expect the *sam* to be an accented beat.

Avritti:							
Matra:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vibhag:							
	sam and khali						
Tal:	x/0		1		2		
	wave		clap		clap		
Theka:	tin tin na		dhin na		dhin nana		

These *thekas* are standard, but slight variants do exist, and in performance the *tabla* player may never play the *theka* in its simplest form but prefer to embellish it a little. This in fact happens in the rendering of *Jhaptal* on the cassette. What is common to all these *thekas*, and is of great help to the listener, is the use of light *bols* (i.e. without the bass sounds of the *baya*) to mark the *khali*, and heavier *bols* (i.e. combined with the bass sounds of the *baya*) to mark the *talis* (including the *sam*, except in *Rupak*). We find the same principles applying to the other *tals* of North Indian classical music, among which may be listed *Dadra* (six *matras*), *Kaharva* (eight *matras*), and *Jhumra* and *Dipcandi* (both with fourteen *matras*, subdivided 3+4+3+4, but with different *thekas* and usages). There are also *tals* with *matras* numbering nine, eleven, thirteen, fifteen, and so on, as well as some recent experiments with  $5\frac{1}{2}$  and  $9\frac{1}{2}$  *matras*. It could be said that a *tal* could be

invented for any number of *matras*, but whether it would appeal to musicians and audiences is another matter, and some of those stranger *tals* in existence are used very sparingly. *Tintal* can be regarded as the most straightforward, the most four-square and the blandest of *tals*, and yet for this very reason it is the best against which to pit all manner of cross-rhythms, and it is also the easiest in which to get lost! No musician ever tires of it, and no concert would really be complete without it. Indeed, it may well be the only *tal* used (in varying tempi).

### Tal and melody

So far we have examined the principles which govern the structure of *tal* and how it is realised in sound at a simple level. Sonority is of paramount importance in this, and *theka*, with its regular beats, is of more interest in terms of sonority than rhythm, and this element can be regarded as a link which joins melody and rhythm – often and erroneously treated as entirely separate entities. The whole form of that part of a North Indian classical performance in a *tal* rests on a simple principle: the *tal* should be clear throughout and its simple, easily identified structure may be articulated both rhythmically and melodically. Therefore, if we accept *theka* as the rhythmic (or sonorous-rhythmic) articulation, there must be something in terms of *rag* which can function as a kind of 'melodic *theka*'. That which fits this description most readily is called a *lahra*: a simple, time-keeping melody in a *rag* which fits the structure of one *avritti* of the *tal*. *Lahras* are not usually considered to be of much consequence and they are only used in the background to rhythmic solos by a drummer or dancer. For our purposes here, however, they give a clear and useful idea of the interchangeability of *theka* and melody and of how melody fits *tal*. Ex. 70 is perhaps the best-known of all *lahras*. It is in the pentatonic *rag Candrakos* and, predictably, in *Tintal*.

Ex. 70

Although there is not a separate note on each *matra* the melody clearly

phrases according to the *vibhags* of *Tintal*. There is also a logic in its contour which indicates the *sam* and the *khali*: the *sam* comes at the summit of a climbing phrase and the *khali vibhag* sees a falling of the melody to its lowest point. The more sophisticated melodies also show something of the *lahra's* structure and function as a melodic *theka*, though the material is seldom presented with such disarming simplicity.

The section of a performance in *tal* is introduced by one of these more sophisticated melodies – not a *lahra* – played or sung by the main artist. There is no fixed association of a particular *rag* with a particular *tal*; any *rag* can be set to any *tal*, in theory if not in actual practice. The clear pulse and phrasing of this melody give the *tabla* player his cue, and he should be in no doubt about the *tal*, and *lay*, and the position of the *sam*. (There are, however, accounts of musicians deliberately and mischievously trying, successfully or otherwise, to baffle the *tabla* player with melodies in strange *tals* or with very irregular phrasings.) There is always a chance that the *tabla* player will actually know the melody since it is precomposed and probably figures prominently in the main artist's repertoire. Even if he does not know it, the structure will be typical of a whole corpus of such melodies and thus there will be no problem in following it. Such precomposed melodies in a *tal* are generally known as *gats*. This term strictly applies only to instrumental music; the vocal (*khyal*) equivalent is *ciz*. In either case the looser term for composition, *bandis*, may sometimes be used.

Both *gat* and *ciz* are normally in two sections: *sthayi* (or *astai*) and *antra*. These terms have already been discussed in the previous chapter in connection with *rag*, where they refer to the lower and higher tetrachords respectively. Similarly, in a composition the first part, the *sthayi*, tends to gravitate in the lower half of the *rag* scale, while the *antra* moves to the upper *Sa* and beyond.

*Gats* on instruments like *sitar* and *sarod* are characterised by a rhythmic structure derived from standard plucking patterns. Even so, nowadays they are becoming increasingly vocal in style; one might say that the left hand is becoming more important than the right. The *sarangi* has never evolved such an independent repertoire and the majority of the compositions played on it are either exact copies of vocal compositions or very close imitations, with slight variations. It is sometimes thought that Ram Narayan, in establishing the *sarangi* as a solo

instrument, has sought to wean it from its dependence on vocal music and give it an instrumental style influenced by plucked instruments. Although there is no doubt that he is well versed in the styles of these instruments and greatly admires the leading exponents, he rejects this notion. Most of the compositions he plays are from the *khyal* vocal repertoire which, for the most part, he learnt from his teachers, and even when he has modified them and given them a style more suited to his instrument their vocal origin is never obscured.

One important feature which Ram Narayan's music shares with that of the leading *sitar* and *sarod* players is its overall form: *alap* (with *jor* and *tans*) followed by one or two *gats*. Most other solo *sarangi* music, such as it is, keeps much closer to the form of a *khyal* throughout, whereas Ram Narayan is effectively combining *dhrupad* in the *alap* section (unaccompanied by *tabla*) with *khyal* in the *gat* section (accompanied by *tabla*). We now look at different types of vocal and instrumental composition to see how they contribute to this *gat* section.

### Main vocal styles

The word *khyal* means 'thought' or 'imagination', which is appropriate as the style gives much scope for improvisation. There are two types: *bara* (big) *khyal* and *chota* (small) *khyal*. The *bara khyal*, which comes first, is not only longer but moves at a much slower tempo. The favourite *tals* are *Ektal* (twelve *matras*) and *Jhumra* (fourteen *matras*) and one *avritti* may take a minute or more. Because of this the full *sthayi* and *antra* could take several minutes to sing and so they may not be rendered complete. What is preserved from the *sthayi*, and serves as a repeated motif to round off improvised sections throughout the *bara khyal*, is the phrase leading up to the *sam*. This phrase is called the *mukhra* and may be only a few notes of a few seconds' duration. It is comparable in content and function to the *mukhra* which rounds off sections in *alap* (discussed in the previous chapter). In *khyal* this sacrifice of a large portion of the composition means that the words, which are hardly ever of much poetic value or importance anyway, become 'submerged' in the music and only sporadically reappear. Large stretches are sung to the vowel *ā* or to the names of the notes (*Sa*, *Re*, *Ga*, etc.) or perhaps to syllables taken from the text. *Tans* can be



constructed from these phonetic resources, in which case they are called *akar tan* (sung to *ā*), *sargam tan* (sung to the note names) and *bol tan* (sung to the syllables of the text). In the beginning stages, however, the style is very similar to *alap*, but the important point is that it is in *tal*, so the singer develops a kind of *alap* and then returns to the *sam* by means of the *mukhra*. As in the development of *alap* from slow and contemplative to fast and extrovert discussed in the previous chapter, so the *khyal* moves from this slow *alap* style to fast *tans* often demonstrating incredible vocal virtuosity. The *chota khyal* introduces a new composition at a much faster tempo (one *avritti* about every five seconds) and usually is in *Tintal* or perhaps *Ektal*. Here a full line of the *sthayi* may be used as a refrain and the intervening *tans* can be even more rapid and dazzling.

Ram Narayan's style incorporates much from the *chota khyal* section, but takes little from *bara khyal*, apart from slow compositions and some of the *tan* types associated with it. His *alap* and *gor*, as we have seen, are without *tabla* accompaniment and are derived from the *dhrupad* style of singing. *Dhrupad* – the word is of Sanskrit origin, roughly meaning 'fixed verse' – is thought to be older than *khyal* and of Hindu rather than Muslim origin. It is characterised by great dignity, almost solemnity, and it develops the *rag* slowly and meticulously with absolute clarity of note and pitch, completely eschewing any facile display of vocal 'fireworks'. For this reason it seems to have gone out of favour and is only appreciated by patient connoisseurs. The *alap* alone may take over an hour and is without drum accompaniment. The singer will not offer the lively, highly embellished *tans* used in *khyal* but will still demonstrate superlative vocal control, acquired only through strict discipline and practice, and it is said that a man should attempt *dhrupad* only if he has the strength of five buffaloes!

The composed part of *dhrupad*, the *dhrupad* proper, is set in one of the *tals* associated with it, such as *Cautal* (twelve *matras*) and *Dhamar* (fourteen *matras*)<sup>3</sup> and the drum used for accompaniment is the *pakhavaj*, not the *tabla*. The *sthayi* and *antra* sections are usually augmented by two more (which can also exist for *khyals* but are hardly ever included in the performance) called *sancari* and *abhog*. The words of *dhrupad*, usually in praise of a Hindu deity, are more important than in *khyal* and there is much less scope for improvisation and none at all

for the extravagant vocal gestures encouraged in *khyal*. The combination of the slow and serious *dhrupad*-style *alap* and *gor* followed by the faster and more exhibitionist *gat* section in *khyal* style clearly works well in an instrumental recital and is a feature of Ram Narayan's style.

A third vocal form and style should be mentioned since it is often encountered, especially at the end of concerts. This is *thumri* which is often described, rather condescendingly, as 'light classical'. In essence it is a short form with an important text of veiled or overt erotic connotations and a preference for certain *rags* (like *Bhairvi*, *Pilu*, *Kafi*, and *Khamaj*) which permit great freedom of movement and use of accidentals. Some *sarangi* players, as well as transferring complete *khyals* from vocal music to their instruments, play *thumris* just as they would be sung, but Ram Narayan is not among them. The spirit of *thumri* may be in certain of his pieces but not the letter. The concluding item in his recital is usually a short piece (five to ten minutes) in one of the *rags* associated with *thumri* and he exploits its freedom, often 'modulating' en route to other *rags*. The prefix '*misra*' (mixed) denotes that the *rag* will be used in this way. The mood inherent in the text, often one of pathos caused by the beloved yearning for the embrace of her lover, and, by implication, man's yearning for union with God, may be suggested in the music, but Ram Narayan regards these pieces as abstract and purely musical and does not consider *thumri* to be part of his repertoire. In most cases the compositions he plays in the so-called *thumri rags* are his own creations and have no text. This is not untypical of other instrumentalists whose relaxed and freer concluding items are also often subjected to loose and imprecise terminology. Another concluding item which, like *thumri*, is intended to charm the audience and allow it to unwind after the long and rigorous main pieces, is known as *dhun* and is a short piece freely based on a folk tune.

### Instrumental compositions

To avoid confusion between *khyal ciz* and instrumental *gat*, Ram Narayan calls the composed melody in his recitals *sthayi* and *antra*, which are common to both. The first composition, after the *alap*, will generally be in a slow or medium tempo and the most likely *tal* will be

*Tintal*. The second composition, which comes much later and replaces the first, is in a faster tempo and still most commonly in *Tintal*, and is also built of the two parts *sthayi* and *antra*. Usually the two compositions have nothing in common except the *rag* and perhaps the *tal*, and the words (if any) are different. There are, however, examples where one composition could be quite clearly derived from the other by a process of modification and variation within limits typical of the processes of improvisation and composition in North Indian classical music. Ex. 71 is the main part of the *sthayi* (over one *avritti*) from a composition in the *rag Tori* and *vilambit Tintal* (the phrase leading up to the *sam* is the *mukhra*).



This may be compared with a composition in medium-fast tempo in the same *rag* and *tal* (Ex. 72).



The two compositions are autonomous but obviously similar. In the slow speed just the one line (Ex. 71) might be all that is performed of the composition, whereas in the faster tempo one *avritti* would pass too quickly and the composition would sound unacceptably incomplete. This fragment (Ex. 72) would be repeated many times at its first appearance and be restated between improvised sections later in the piece, but other portions of the complete composition would be included, even if only stated once. The *sthayi* continues with a second line which is as long as or longer than the main part (Ex. 73).



And it could be extended for another sixteen *matras* (Ex. 74).



Then will come the *antra* (which moves to the region of the upper *Sa*) (Ex. 75).



It could come immediately after the *sthayi*, or after some improvisation following the *sthayi*, or possibly be omitted altogether. This last possibility depends on several things and raises some interesting points about the teaching and learning processes of Indian music. According to Ram Narayan there are musicians who omit the *antra* for the simple reason that they do not know it! His contention was that masters would not teach the *antra* until they were completely happy with the student. Another point is that many of them could be secretive and not wish to impart *all* their compositions, especially to students who were not their sons. Even in Ram Narayan's repertoire the *sthayi* and *antra* are not always, to use his words, 'very regular', nor is this very important since the listener's attention tends to be focused not on the composed part as much as on the improvised 'episodes'.

In common with other North Indian musicians Ram Narayan relies heavily on the repertoire of compositions learnt from his teachers but also adds some of his own creations. These do not number many because he is happy with the old pieces he has learnt, and he places more emphasis on the composition of *paltas* which are essential to the development of technique and of facility in *rag* as well as to the composition and improvisation of *tans*. He is also less than enthusiastic about the vogue for creating new *rags*, although he has made his own contribution in the *rags Nand Kedar* and *Kafi Malhar* (both of which, as

the names suggest, being mixtures of two *rags*, which is quite a common way of creating new *rags*). One of his favourite and most successful original compositions is in the traditional *rag Marva*, and is set to *drut Ektal* (Ex. 76).

Ex. 76

Before going back to the *sthayi* after the *antra* a *tan* of one or two *avrittis* will be played, for example Ex. 77.

Ex. 77

In playing the older vocal compositions which he learnt from his teachers, Ram Narayan makes slight alterations to the original, without destroying its basic shape. An example may be given in the infrequently heard afternoon *rag Patdip*.<sup>4</sup> The original sung version, notated from Ram Narayan's rendition without *tabla* or other indication of *tal*, is as Ex. 78.

Ex. 78

The more embellished played variant of the same refrain of the *sthayi* was rendered as in Ex. 79.

This gives a rough idea in terms of a short fragment of the composition. Later in this chapter a more substantial example will be discussed which gives the composition a more extended treatment, incorporating some of the main elements which make up the complete form of the section in *tal*.

This section begins with at least the first part (which I refer to as the refrain) of the *sthayi*, and will perhaps continue with the rest of the composition, but the refrain, or just its *mukhra* phrase in very slow tempi, will be of particular importance and be repeated at intervals throughout the section. When an artist announces that he will play, for example, 'a composition in sixteen beats', he does not mean only that; in fact, the composed *sthayi* and *antra* will take a very small fraction of the performance, the main emphasis being on improvisations and variations of the artist's own creation.

### The *tabla* accompaniment

The *tabla* player also has his chances to exhibit something more interesting than *theka*, though how much opportunity he is given depends on the main artist. In vocal music (*khyal*) the *tabla* player does little more than keep the *theka*, and some instrumentalists maintain this tradition, while others believe that the audience's enjoyment will be enhanced if the *tabla* player is given prominence several times. He will be given his cue by a restatement of the composition's refrain, and will immediately launch into something which sounds complex and quickly diverts the audience's attention away from the main artist. The refrain then functions as a kind of *lahra* for the brief sections of *tabla* solo.

To explain in detail what happens in these passages would require at least a short text-book on the technique and repertoire of the *tabla*, and there is anyway no hard and fast rule about what should occur. Perhaps the most important point to be made is that the *tabla* player is certainly

not engaging in some random display of rhythmic agility. In fact, he will seldom improvise at all but instead draw from his repertoire of *tabla* compositions, and what he plays will have been carefully worked out and practised beforehand. The *tabla* repertoire is extremely rich, and self-contained *tabla* solos are highly appreciated and can keep an audience enthralled for half an hour or more. The *tabla* accompanist is therefore never short of material when given his cue for a 'solo' in a *rag* performance. Normally he will choose items which parallel the kind of music being played by the main artist. If the composition is being varied in long notes, then he will choose something with a variety of *bols* played clearly and without hurry, and if the main artist has moved on to faster *tans*, then he will play a rapid stream of *tabla* sounds. Such correspondances are so well established that it is quite common to compare items of the *tabla* repertoire to the stages of a *rag* performance. Thus *peskar* is compared to *alap*, *kayda* to *paltas* based on combinations of a few notes, *tukra* to *tan*, *rela* to *jhala*, and so on. These are rather loose and imprecise comparisons and cannot serve as definitions of the terms. *Peskar* is associated with the Delhi style of *tabla* playing, and the word has the meaning of 'to present'. It is not played in fast tempo and its function is to transform the *theka* with a variety of beautiful *bols*. It will be recalled that a *bol* is a sound, like a syllable in language, and, to pursue the association, it must be 'pronounced' correctly. Rhythms are not learnt until the individual *bols*, from which they are built, have been mastered; thus it is important to remember that in Indian classical drumming sonority is as important as rhythm (and actually precedes it in the learning process). *Kayda* (literally 'rule') is also a speciality of the Delhi *gharana* and its main feature is its restriction to just a few *bols* which may be placed in different combinations and played at different speeds but not increased by the introduction of other *bols*. An important difference between *peskar* and *kayda*, then, is that the former introduces new *bols* as it progresses and is rather slow and majestic in sound. The *tabla gat* is sometimes considered as the Eastern equivalent of the *peskar* and *kayda*, and is particularly associated with the Farrukhabad *gharana*. It is a precomposed, lengthy piece, extending over three or four *avrittis*, and seeks to create a kind of poetry from the rich variety of *bols*. A *tukra*, on the other hand, is a short, often spontaneous piece of great liveliness, even a certain

capriciousness. It gives the *tabla* player a good chance to show off, and he will often recite the *bols* before playing them, thereby adding to the interest and excitement. *Rela*, if anything, goes a stage further. The word literally means a torrent or flood, an apt description for the fast stream of delicate *bols* which cascade from the player's fingers in a smooth and effortless profusion. An extract of *rela* is presented by Charanjit Lal Biyavat on the cassette immediately after the *thekas* (item 4, side 1) in order to show what can be done on the *tabla* at the other extreme from the slow and spaced *bols* of *theka*.

There are other kinds of piece in the *tabla* repertoire, too numerous to discuss here, but among them may be mentioned the Benares *uthan* (literally a beginning and swelling). As its name suggests it is an opening flourish which makes a *créscendo* and enables the *tabla* player to produce something interesting and complicated before settling into the *theka* of the *tal*. It is especially useful in accompaniment when the main artist has begun playing a *gat* in which the *tal* is somehow disguised. The *tabla* player would be foolish to allow himself to be tricked into committing himself immediately to some *theka* which may turn out to be the wrong one, so *uthan* can give him the chance to decide what the *tal* is while he is actually playing. This kind of game is not very common and usually the *tal* structure of the *gat* will be very clear, in which case the *tabla* player can begin with, perhaps, some *peskar* in that particular *tal*. Games between the main artist and the *tabla* accompanist do, however, occur quite often and can make the performance one of good-humoured rivalry. If the main artist produces some complex rhythmic pattern, the *tabla* player will naturally want to imitate it. Some artists discourage too much of this kind of shadowing and persistent commentary on their music, while others formalise it into the *saval-javab* (question-answer) device which is becoming increasingly popular in North Indian classical music. Here the main artist plays a phrase and pauses for the *tabla* player to reproduce its rhythm and, as far as possible on the drums, its melodic contour. The phrases become more and more complicated and then decrease in length until the two musicians end up more or less in unison. Such a game, in which there is no doubt that the *tabla* player is responding to the music there and then rather than relying on his stock of learnt compositions, generates considerable excitement and is best left to the

end of the performance, by which time the music has become fast and lively. It is, however, an instrumental – not vocal – device suited to the percussive capabilities of plucked instruments, and is not used by Ram Narayan.

The foregoing summary of the main items in the *tabla* repertoire pointed to some differences between the *gharanas*, but this is a traditional approach concerned with origins and can be misleading when present-day *tabla* playing is considered. The dividing lines between the half-dozen *gharanas* or even between the broader distinction of Eastern (*Purab*) and Western (Delhi) are by no means as rigid as may have been implied. One cannot distinguish between *gharanas* as one distinguishes between languages. Nowadays vastly improved communications and the greater mobility of musicians mean that a musician will no longer barricade himself within the confines of one *gharana*. *Kayda* is extensively used in the Eastern school, and a Delhi performer may begin with a flourish similar to the Eastern *uthan*. The entire language and repertoire of the *tabla* is fast becoming common property and some of the leading players of recent times, for example Ahmad Jan Thirkwa and Alla Rakha, are regarded as masters of more than one style.

The arrangement of the parts of a *tabla* solo into the whole does not follow a set rule, but a typical sequence would be:

*peskar – kayda – gat – tukra – rela*

which shows exactly the same kind of progression from slow and stately to fast and lively that we find in melodic forms. Thus when the *tabla* accompanist is given a cue to depart from *theka* during the slow melodic *gat* at the beginning of the section in *tal* he will probably play *peskar* or slow *kayda*. A fast *tukra* or *rela* would clearly be totally inappropriate and should be saved for later when the main artist has moved on to fast *tans* and possibly *jhala*. The *tabla* player must regulate everything – style of item, loudness and tempo – to the main artist, who can control him by meaningful glances (encouraging or menacing!) or curtail his solo by discontinuing the time-keeping refrain of the *sthayi*.

### Organising the *tal* section

The overall form of a typical section in *tal* can be given, in essence, as follows:

<i>Main artist</i>	<i>Tabla accompanist</i>
<i>Slow tempo</i>	
<i>sthayi</i> (refrain)	'solo' (for example, <i>peskar</i> )
slow improvisations on <i>sthayi</i> , or remainder of <i>sthayi</i> and <i>antra</i>	<i>theka</i>
further improvisations <i>sthayi</i> (refrain)	<i>theka</i>
further improvisations (possibly slow <i>tans</i> )	'solo' (for example, <i>kayda</i> )
<i>sthayi</i> (refrain)	<i>theka</i>
faster <i>tans</i>	'solo' (for example, <i>gat</i> )
<i>sthaya</i> (refrain)	<i>theka</i>
still faster <i>tans</i>	'solo' (for example, <i>tukra</i> )
<i>sthayi</i> (refrain) and so on.	<i>theka</i>
<i>Fast tempo</i>	
<i>sthayi</i> (refrain) and perhaps rest of <i>sthayi</i> and <i>antra</i> (different from previous ones)	'solo' (for example, <i>rela</i> )
<i>tans</i>	<i>theka</i>
<i>sthayi</i> (refrain)	short 'solo' (for example, <i>tukra</i> )
faster <i>tans</i>	<i>theka</i>
<i>sthayi</i> (refrain)	short 'solo' (for example, <i>tukra</i> )
fastest <i>tans</i> or possibly <i>jhala</i>	<i>theka</i>
<i>sthayi</i> (refrain)	'solo' (for example, <i>rela</i> )

concluding *tans* *theke* *theke* *theke*

The improvisations of the main artist will tend to cover many *avrittis* of the *tal*, while the repeats of the *sthayi* refrain will be relatively brief, and thus the *tabla* player will play *theke* for much longer than anything else. This shows a typical, rather than absolutely rigid progress of the music and interaction between the two musicians. Basically it demonstrates the fact that the *tal* is clearly audible throughout, either as a *theke* on the *tabla* or in the simple structure of the *sthayi* refrain on the main instrument. If the melodic improvisations are gravitating around the upper *Sa*, the musician may repeat the *antra* instead of the refrain of the *sthayi*. In both parts of the section in *tal* the tempo (basically slow and fast) is periodically increased by the main artist until at the end of the performance both musicians are playing at about their fastest possible. Slowing the tempo, on the other hand, would be unthinkable in this music.

Some of the *tans*, which occupy a large proportion of the section in *tal*, have already been discussed in other contexts in earlier chapters. On the *sarangi* they may be played at different speeds and further varied by different bowings. A *bol tan* (a *tan* which in vocal music is sung to the syllables of the text and usually not very fast) would be articulated with mostly one note per bow. The bow is then 'the tongue of the *sarangi*', to use Ram Narayan's phrase. More fluent and fast *akar* (sung to the sound *ā*) *tans* would be played with many notes per bow. Rhythmic interest and complexity can also be achieved mainly through the use of the bow. One of the commonest procedures is to subdivide *matras* not only into the obvious twos, fours and eights but also into threes, fives, sevens, and so on. This kind of variation goes under the name of *chand*, and Ram Narayan also uses the term *jati*. Another rhythmic device which has become so common that it is virtually a *sine qua non* of a North Indian performance is the *tihai*, which is simply the principle of singing or playing the same thing three times. The essence of the *tihai* is that the threefold statement creates the preparation, expression, and resolution of tension. Most *tihais* are contrived to end on the *sam*, though it is possible to end at other points of the *tal*, such as the beginning of the *sthayi* phrase, as long as this sounds convincing and not arbitrary or accidental. The first statement merely presents the *tihai*

phrase but the second creates the anticipation that what is by now apparently a *tihai* is going to resolve. This tension is often enhanced by a strong sense of cross-rhythm, and perhaps also by stronger accents, and is only resolved at the end of the third statement when the whole *tihai* finally comes to its climax and point of rest. One of the simplest possible *tihais* (in *Tintal*) will illustrate the principle (Ex. 80).

Ex. 80

Matras (pulse) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 1

Tihai: 1 2 3

Most *tihais* are far more complex than this and can exist in any *tal* and in any length and rhythmic organisation, but the basic principle remains the same. They can, of course, all be calculated beforehand and learnt thoroughly so that nothing goes wrong in performance, but still more exciting are those created spontaneously, where the occasional irregularities and adjustments to ensure a correct resolution can add to the tension, and thus make the resolution even more satisfying. The skill of the performer in such cases is not lost on the audience and they may well burst out into spontaneous applause. Ram Narayan distinguishes between those musicians who calculate all their rhythmic feats in advance and those who keep the *tal* in their head all the time and are therefore able to improvise cross-rhythms against it. Even *tihais* – which are very exposed because the audience quickly recognises them and will know if they go wrong – are created in this way. Ram Narayan belongs to this latter category of musician and the subsequent analyses of his performance will tend to bear this out. To understand this approach to rhythm one must above all understand the special importance of the *sam*, which serves (but not necessarily each time round) as the focus of the *tal* – the point of reckoning, of convergence, where order is imposed on potential chaos. The relationship of melody and rhythm to the *tal* may elsewhere be so loose and irregular (as, for example, in some of a *bara khyal*) that it could be equated with that of two parallel lines. The *sam* ensures that they do not remain parallel but periodically meet. To call it a main stress, or, worse still, the first beat of the bar, would be trite and misleading.

### Examples on the cassette: a composition sung and played

Item 5 on side 1 of the cassette is a short performance in rag *Bhairav* and *Tintal*. The *sthayi* of the composition is first sung by Ram Narayan without *tabla* accompaniment. In the background is heard the drone of the *tambura*, and also the sympathetic strings of the *sarangi* which Ram Narayan plucks, using the instrument rather like a *surmandal*. The composition is a slow *khyal* and the Hindi words are:

Mere to sundar bal(a)mā  
Kāse kahū unkī batiyā

My lover is so beautiful and clever  
Whom should I tell about him?

According to Ram Narayan this is a composition, which he learnt in Lahore, of the Patiala *gharana* of *khyal* singing. The sentiment and general poetic merit of the words are typical of *khyal* texts.

The sound of rag *Bhairav* will, it is hoped, have become familiar to the listener by this point in the cassette. It is one of the most common morning rags of North Indian music. Bhairava is believed to be one of the incarnations of Shiva and the rag mixes a mood of awesome grandeur with tenderness and slight melancholy (Kaufmann 1968: 233). Daniélou, quoting from Sanskrit texts, gives an impression of Bhairava as a formidable hero smeared with ashes or sandal paste and holding a trident or human skull (1969: 125). Bhatkhande gives the *aroh-avroh* as follows:

Sa Re<sup>b</sup> Ga Ma, Pa Dha<sup>b</sup>, Ni Śa | Śa Ni Dha<sup>b</sup>, Pa Ma Ga, Re<sup>b</sup>, Sa

and the *vadi-samvadi* as Dha<sup>b</sup> and Re<sup>b</sup> respectively. The *pakar* (catch-phrase typical of the rag) he gives is:

Sa, Ga, Ma Pa, Dha<sup>b</sup>, Pa (1970, vol. II: 165)

which omits Re<sup>b</sup> in ascent and shows something of the common *aroh-avroh* (played by Ram Narayan) in which Re<sup>b</sup> and also Pa are

omitted in ascent. The vocal rendition is transcribed in Ex. 81.

Ex. 81

Tambūrā Tarabs

(sung)

ā

me - re -

to me - re - to

sun - da - r ba - la - mā

kā - se - ka -

hū u - n - kī ba - ti - yā

me - re - to

me - re - to sun - da - r ba - la -

mā.

Line 1 and most of line 2 is the kind of *alap* phrase which usually begins a *khyal* performance, and is sung to the meaningless syllable *ā*. The Sa is clearly established and the other notes of the rag, except Re<sup>b</sup> and Pa (which are omitted in the ascending line of this rag). The *mukhra* is the phrase sung to the words 'mere to sundar'. It begins in line 2, but breaks off and is stated complete in lines 3 and 4. At each appearance the

syllable 'me-' is highly embellished. The *sam* (not heard since there is no *tabla* accompaniment in this demonstration) comes on the syllable 'ba-' and the note Ga (line 4, and also near the end of line 8). What is presented overall is first a short *alap* phrase, then the *mukhra* leading into one *avritti* of the *tal*, with the conclusion just after the second *sam*.

The version played on the *sarangi*, which follows, takes the same composition but extends the music around it (Ex. 82).

Ex. 82 (played)

Ex. 82 (played) consists of 10 staves of music. The notation is written in a single system across the page. It features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including dotted notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, often grouped with slurs. There are several instances of ornaments (sharada) and other decorative elements. The music is presented in a single system across the page.

The rag with tal 139 consists of 14 staves of music. The notation is written in a single system across the page. It features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including dotted notes, eighth notes, and sixteenth notes, often grouped with slurs. There are several instances of ornaments (sharada) and other decorative elements. The music is presented in a single system across the page. The score includes a tempo marking '♩ = 52' and a dynamic marking 'attacca'.



The opening *alap* phrases start and end with the same notes as in the sung version and keep to the same notes and range, but there is more repetition, especially of the Sa. The *mukhra* comes in line 3, at the change in the notation to a treble clef, and the *sam* (again, not marked by the *tabla*) near the beginning of line 4 (the third note). It is not hard to fit the words of the original composition to this *sarangi* version. In line 6 the very first phrase and the last one are obviously the embellishments on the syllable 'me-', with their rapid melismas, though the latter phrase

ends on a sustained Ga, which possibly indicates the *sam*. The *mukhra* returns at the beginning of line 7, and the *sam* on the accented Ga towards the end of the line seems to be the true one.

What happens next takes us beyond the material presented in the sung version and is a typical development of a *bara khyal*. The phrases in lines 8 and 9 are the kind which would begin an *alap*, and the next few lines (8–13) are really an *alap*, spanning the *sthayi* and *antra* registers of the rag, but greatly telescoped. Some *tans* are inserted (lines 14 and 15) and at the end of line 16, plus the whole of line 17, the *mukhra* heralds the return of the composition.

This time the entry of the *tabla* with a clear *theka* of slow-medium *Tintal* establishes the *tal* structure of the *sthayi* beyond any doubt. It will help to show the relationship between this version of the *sthayi* and the sung one if the words are added to the first *avritti* (lines 18 and 19) (Ex. 83).

Ex. 83

From the middle of line 20 to the middle of line 21 is an *alap* phrase which is basically the same as those at the beginning of the sung and played versions. The *mukhra* recurs, leading to the *sam* (line 22) and this is followed by more *alap* phrases which climb to the upper Sa. Having thus established the *sthayi* and *antra* registers of the rag (not to be confused with the composed *sthayi* and *antra* of the song), Ram Narayan begins a series of fast and fluent *tans* (lines 24–7) which would be sung to the sound *ā*. These lead straight back to a repeat of the *mukhra*, halfway through line 27. Line 28 sees a slight increase of tempo and, beginning on the seventh *matra*, a short but excellent example of a *bol tan* (which would be sung to the syllables of the song). It is characterised by relatively long note values (compared to those of the preceding *akar tans*) and short bows (generally only one or two notes per bow). The *mukhra* has all but disappeared (although its shape and

the way it creates anticipation for the *sam* are retained at the end of lines 29, 31 and 33) but the *sam* still comes on the note Ga (lines 30, 32 and 34). The short performance concludes with more *akar tans*. The final *sam* is reached at the beginning of line 34, and the sustained note followed by unwinding *alap* phrases are the cue to the *tabla* player to end, either immediately on the *sam* (which would be appropriate if the piece had risen to a great climax of speed and intensity) or else with some short and discreet improvised ending pattern. In fact, Charanjit Lal Biyavat continues in *lay* with the *theka* up to and including the seventh *matra*.

To end at this point is permissible and is quite typical of Ram Narayan's early recordings on 45 r.p.m. discs, where time was strictly limited. In a concert one would hear a longer *alap*, with *jor*, a more extended development of the slow composition and, later, a fast composition. The present demonstration is intended primarily to show how an instrumental performance can grow from a brief extract of vocal music and how the original vocal style is retained throughout. Almost nothing departs from vocal music here, except possibly the greater use of accents which are one of the delights of Ram Narayan's bowing technique. Even the *tihai*, which is so prevalent in instrumental music but much rarer in vocal music, is absent from this performance.

The form of the instrumental performance (Ex. 83) may be summarised as follows:

	line (bracketed number refers to the <i>matra</i> )
short <i>alap</i>	1-3
<i>mukhra</i>	3 (at treble clef sign)
<i>sthayi</i> of the composition (without <i>tabla</i> )	4-7
<i>alap</i> phrases (full range of the rag)	8-13
<i>tans</i>	14-15
<i>mukhra</i>	16 (end) and 17
<i>sthayi</i> of composition (with <i>tabla</i> )	18-20

<i>alap</i> phrases	20 (5)-21 (12) (cf. lines 1-3)
<i>mukhra</i>	21 (13-16)
<i>alap</i> phrases (full range of the rag)	22 (4)-24 (2)
<i>tans</i>	24 (4)-27 (12)
<i>mukhra</i>	27 (12-16)
<i>bol tan</i>	28 (7)-29 (12)
<i>tans</i>	31 (9)-33 (12)
including fragment of <i>sthayi</i>	31 (14)-32 (2)
concluding phrase (like <i>alap</i> )	34

This gives a very good idea of what happens, in miniature, during the course of a typical North Indian performance. It is typical not only of Ram Narayan's style but also of vocal (*khyal*) music on which it is based, and even of other instrumental styles. In those cases the details will be different (the repertoire of compositions is different and so are, to some extent, the methods of constructing *tans* and *alap* phrases) but the general order of events will be much the same. This should be borne in mind when listening to a longer, complete performance which is the subject of the next chapter.

## Notes

- 1 In North India, that is. In the South it is common to see many members of the audience keeping the *tal* by hand-claps, but there the system of articulating *tals* is different.
- 2 I have made a slight over-simplification. *Tintal* (and other *tals*) could be played on other drums, but in practice the use of the *tabla* is so extensive that it can be considered indispensable to North Indian classical music, especially of the kind most often heard and discussed in this book.
- 3 *Dhamar* also refers to a composition, similar to *dhrupad*, using only this *tal*.
- 4 Which he plays on the disc entitled *Beat and Bow* (His Master's Voice, EALP-1312).
- 5 I am indebted to Shri R. S. Gupta for this translation.

## 6

## A complete performance

The principal aim of this book is to give as clear an account as possible of what happens in a typical performance of North Indian classical music by providing the actual performance (as a recording) with a notation of it, and a detailed commentary which incorporates the main elements of theory discussed in the earlier part of the book. Before presenting the notation and commentary I shall fill in the relevant background information to the performance. 'Background' is perhaps not the right word, since I regard this information as essential and just as much a part of the analysis and commentary as the details on the musical notes themselves.

## The context of the performance

Naturally, the whole idea was first discussed with Ram Narayan, so he knew how the performance would fit in the context of the book. I asked him to provide the kind of complete performance that he would give in a concert, keeping all the main stages (*alap*, *jor*, *tans*, slow composition and fast composition) but restricting the time to about twenty minutes in order that it should fit on to the cassette and, no less important, that it should not present an overwhelming burden of transcription. He is quite used to playing complete performances of this kind of length (about one-third that of a major concert item) for commercial disc recordings, as are the other leading Indian musicians, so he was not being asked for anything which would have been completely unnatural and therefore constraining. In fact, Ram Narayan's many discs include one which features a performance of *rag Sri* only slightly longer than this one, and it follows a similar pattern and uses the same compositions (in slow and fast *Tintal*). It may interest the reader to compare this earlier disc recording<sup>1</sup> with the one on the cassette, as it tells much about the concepts of constancy and variability in Indian music. The *rag (Sri)*

and *tal (Tintal)* are the same, as are the compositions and the overall form (*alap*, *jor*, *tans*, and compositions in *tal*). The differences are of detail: similar phrases may be varied or extended, new ones added, bits repeated, and so on. The result is that the two performances may sound remarkably alike (especially to one unfamiliar with Indian music) but each exists in its own right as a completely independent and valid ordering of possibilities from the infinite number in the *rag*.

It was largely to facilitate such a comparison (I had already made a detailed study and transcription of the disc version, which predates the cassette recording by about four and a half years) that I asked Ram Narayan to play *rag Sri*.<sup>2</sup> It is clearly a *rag* he knows well and with which he feels an affinity. The scale of the *rag (Purvi that)*<sup>3</sup> is very unusual by Western standards, which, it is hoped, will enhance its melodic interest for the listener. In India it has the double advantage of being popular and highly esteemed as a very serious and profound *rag*.<sup>4</sup> In describing it, the Sanskrit texts quoted by Daniélou (1969: 226) and Kaufmann (1968: 281) speak of a young and beautiful hero of regal appearance who is tender and amorous and loved by women. Bhatkhande gives the *aroh-avroh* as follows:

Sa Re<sup>b</sup> Re<sup>b</sup>, Sa, Re<sup>b</sup>, Ma<sup>#</sup> Pa, Ni Śa | Śa, Ni Dha<sup>b</sup>, Pa, Ma<sup>#</sup> Ga Re<sup>b</sup>, Ga Re<sup>b</sup>,  
Re<sup>b</sup>, Sa<sup>3</sup>

and the *vadi-samvadi* as Re<sup>b</sup> and Pa respectively (1967, vol. III: 361), which is confirmed by other writers, but Ram Narayan reversed the *vadi* and *samvadi* given above in his verbal description of the *rag*, although in practice I would maintain that he supports the majority verdict. His *aroh-avroh* is slightly different from Bhatkhande's:

Ni Sa Re<sup>b</sup> Pa, Ma<sup>#</sup> Pa Ni Śa Re<sup>b</sup> | Ni Dha<sup>b</sup> Pa, Dha<sup>b</sup> Ma<sup>#</sup> Ga Re<sup>b</sup> Sa

The first phrase extends the already large leap from Re<sup>b</sup> to Ma<sup>#</sup> by a semitone, thereby juxtaposing *vadi* and *samvadi*, the second rests on the *vadi* in the *antra* register, the third pauses on the *samvadi* in descent, while the fourth bypasses it and comes to rest on the Sa.

Bhatkhande (1967, Vol. III: 361) and Kaufmann (1968: 281) state that *Sri* is a *rag* for performance at sunset, which is worthy of comment.

There are many theories about why particular *rags* became assigned to certain times of day, and one of the most convincing concerns those *rags* which are performed at the junction of day and night – i.e. dawn or sunset. Dr B. C. Deva, in his article 'Ragas and their time',<sup>6</sup> discusses the so-called *sandhi prakas rags* (those performed at the junction of day and night) and proposes some interesting and plausible theories about their structure. In general they tend to exhibit the following characteristics, which have in common the creation of tension:

1. pentatonic or hexatonic rather than heptatonic content, hence leaps;
2. use of dissonant notes (defined as those in a semitonal relationship to the drone notes)<sup>7</sup> such as  $Re^b$ ,  $Ma^\sharp$ ,  $Dha^b$  and  $Ni$ ;
3. use of tortuous movements and avoidance of resting places.

A good example of a very common sunset *rag* which fulfils these conditions is *Marva*. Its scale is  $Sa\ Re^b\ Ga\ Ma^\sharp\ Dha\ Ni$ . (The  $Dha$  is natural rather than flat.)  $Pa$  is omitted and  $Sa$  is a weak note, and these factors give the *rag* a particular instability. Thus it is basically hexatonic but also pentatonic in many of its melodic phrases. The 'dissonant' note  $Re^b$  is strong, and other such notes –  $Ma^\sharp$  and  $Ni$  – are also prominent. Many of the typical phrases generate tension by circling the 'tonic' ( $Sa$ ), for example:

$Ni - Re^b, Re^b - Ni - Dha$

In *rag Sri* the  $Sa$  is much stronger and the  $Pa$  is not only present but actually the *samvadi*. Many features typical of the *sandhi prakas rags* are, however, still there. The scale is heptatonic, but the ascent is pentatonic and has as its most remarkable feature the unusually large leap from the dissonant note  $Re^b$  (which is also the *vadi* and therefore very strong) to the dissonant note  $Ma^\sharp$ . All four dissonant notes to the traditional  $Sa-Pa$  drone, namely  $Ni$ ,  $Re^b$  and  $Ma^\sharp$ ,  $Dha^b$  are present in this *rag*. The fact that Ram Narayan's drone is  $Ni-Sa$  may be thought to invalidate this analysis, but the traditional role of  $Pa$  as a complement to  $Sa$  is so strong that even this does not seriously affect it. The pull of  $Re^b$  (the *vadi*) and its use as a culminating point of phrases adds to the tension. The very unusual tritonal relationship between the *vadi* and *samvadi* ( $Re^b$  and  $Pa$ ) in this *rag* must also be underlined.

Deva shows the possible relationship of these data to the particular time of day:

The meeting of day and night has held a mystery to living beings: trees, animals and men. This is the time when the mode of life changes drastically and suddenly. Trees change their mode of transpiration and respiration. Animals change from action to rest or vice versa. But the most important change for a human being is in his state of mind: as day passes into night, consciousness quiets and other forces take over. The infra- and supra-conscious forces are now given their chance to project themselves into the individual mind. Archetypes are given their chance to roam about in the psychic matrix of the individual. Indeed this is the time when a new life is almost created. . . . The *sandhya* [twilight] is, then, a most crucial time; hence it is that the artist is then 'inspired' and the *yogi* sits for his meditation. (1967: 142)

The switch over of modes of existence occurs twice at the junctions of day and night. Now for the extraconscious forces to act, it is necessary that the conscious itself be quiet or disturbed and less capable of censorship; in the words of Ehrenzweig it should be 'confused' and its pretensions to constancy and reality be destroyed. To achieve this the music must be such that it introduces tension. (1967: 143)

It is in no way an attempt to deflate Dr Deva's outstanding contribution to our understanding of this somewhat controversial, but important, aspect of Indian musical theory if the following questions are raised: are the musicians themselves aware of these forces? is the response to such *rags* the same among all performers and all listeners? do musicians feel bound to perform *rags* at their proper time? and would they perform them badly or just differently if the time were not the proper one? These are not questions which can be easily answered, if at all. It must be pointed out, however, that the cassette recording of *Sri* was made in the early afternoon, for a number of reasons. The earlier disc recording of the same *rag* was made on a winter's night, long after dark, and neither recording was made in India. Ram Narayan's own opinion is that there is no major difference between them on the basis of performance at contrasting times of day. Indian music is very flexible and resilient; theory, however rational, is not the sole criterion of acceptability in practice.

As was mentioned earlier, Ram Narayan was especially asked to play

*rag Sri*. Had the choice been left entirely to him then he might have chosen a *rag* suitable to that time of day (afternoon). The significant point is that he did not feel himself incapable of playing *Sri*, which is proved by the excellence of his performance. The choice of *rag* on side 1 of the cassette was, however, his, and he chose *Bhairav*, an entirely suitable *rag* for the time of the recording, which was in the morning a few hours before the performance of *Sri*. The scale of *Bhairav* is different from that of *Sri* by only one note (Ma<sup>h</sup> instead of Ma<sup>#</sup>), and Jairazbhoy points out the close relationship between *Bhairav* and *Purvi thats* (the latter being the *that* of *rag Sri*).<sup>8</sup> Sameness or close similarity of scale do not, however, ensure the same for *rag*, and the two *rags* on the cassette should not sound alike.

The entire recording was made within the space of a few hours in a private apartment in Paris. The atmosphere was deliberately kept informal and close to that of a recital in India for a small group of music lovers. Ram Narayan especially asked some friends and students (about half a dozen) to come and listen and help create the right mood and inspiration. Fortunately for the purposes of the recording their appreciation was not communicated in sound, and other extraneous noises were minimal, since it happened to be Easter Sunday. After retuning his *sarangi* for *rag Sri*, Ram Narayan played the performance as it is on the cassette. There was no rehearsal, no re-takes, and no editing after the recording had been made. It is thus a typical live performance (ex. 85, at the end of the chapter).

The sequence of major sections is as follows:

	Line	Approximate duration
without <i>tal</i> (and <i>tabla</i> )		
<i>alap</i>	1-74	10' 17"
<i>jor</i>	75-94	3' 15"
accelerating into		
<i>tans</i>	94-99	
with <i>tal</i> (and <i>tabla</i> )		
slow composition ( <i>Tintal</i> )	100-148	6' 40"
fast composition ( <i>Tintal</i> )	148-184	2' 19"
Total duration: approximately		22½ minutes

### Alap

Before the *alap* begins (line 1) there is a preliminary section, lasting about twenty-six seconds, in which Ram Narayan plucks the sympathetic strings in a glissando and also one of the playing strings. The purpose of this is to check the tuning and to give himself 'good inspiration'. The bow is used to start the *alap* at the beginning of line 1 and the complete performance from this point is played *arco*. The first note to be established is, as expected, the Sa, and it is done in a way that fixes it as the Sa of *rag Sri*. The phrase in which it occurs starts, with an accent, on Pa, rising to Sa via Ni. The Sa is held and the phrase ends on Ni. The next phrase (up to the second note of line 3) hovers on Ni and then moves to the *vadi* (Re<sup>b</sup>), immediately falling back, through Ni and Dha<sup>b</sup>, to the *samvadi* (Pa). By this point, only a few seconds into the performance, the Sa, the *vadi* and the *samvadi* of the *rag* have all been established, and, in Ram Narayan's words, '*Sri* has been completed in two phrases', meaning that its salient features have been given and there should be no doubt as to its identity.

This *alap*, which is quite long in relation to the performance as a whole, is typical of the *dhruvad* *alap*, which slowly allows the *rag* to unfold and explores individual notes and small groups of notes, first in the lower register and then, gradually moving upwards, in the higher one. The whole thing starts in the middle register (Sa) and moves fairly quickly to the lower octave Sa, reaching this, the lowest note on the *sarangi*, by line 8. On the way the notes most emphasised are the *samvadi* (Pa) and the *vadi* (Re<sup>b</sup>), with the Sa intervening as a kind of pivot between them. The first section ends at this low point in line 11, and in line 12, continuing to the first sustained Re<sup>b</sup> in line 13, is the *mukhra* phrase which marks off the divisions—the 'paragraphs'—of the *alap*. The basic structure of the *mukhra* may be simply notated in *sargam* as:

Sa – Sa – Sa Ni Ni Sa Sa (or Re<sup>b</sup>)

The next section continues to develop the *vadi*–*samvadi* relationship, or juxtaposition, in the lower octave, but the other notes of the *rag*, conspicuously less strong, also appear. The insistence on this relationship becomes even greater at the end of this section, around

lines 22–3, before the *mukhra* in lines 24 (last phrase) and 25 rounds it off. The section before the next *mukhra* (line 27, last phrase, and 28) is very short and embellishes the notes with a little slow *gamak* and *mind*. The sober sparseness returns in line 29 and again the  $Re^b$  is stressed. It is in the middle octave, and between its repetitions the material of the lower octave is recapitulated, so that old ideas are not discarded but added to new ones in an ever richer melodic line. The *mukhra* is repeated (lines 37–8) but the music continues after in the same style, concentrating on the lower octave until its next appearance (line 43).

From this point, the *alap* begins its gradual ascent through the middle octave, predictably emphasising the  $Re^b$  from the outset, to the upper register (which is reached in line 62). Some of the notes and phrases in this middle octave are echoed in the lower octave, which is both easy and effective on the *sarangi*, and in lines 48–9 the open first string is used as a kind of *acciaccatura* to the sustained note. It is important to know, as a general feature of *rag*, that in a phrase like  $Ma^\sharp Pa Dha^b Ma^\sharp$  which recurs in this *alap* (see, for example, lines 48–9) the  $Dha^b$  is conceived of as part of a descending rather than ascending phrase, thus the *aroh* of this *rag* (which omits  $Dha^b$ ) is not violated.

The *mukhra* returns at the end of line 51 and occupies most of the next line. By this point the development through the middle octave has concentrated on the notes between  $Sa$  and  $Dha^b$  above, and the centre of gravity is the  $Ma^\sharp$  which rivals the  $Re^b$  as the note of primary emphasis and temporarily usurps the power of the  $Pa$ . This is restored in the next section, however, when the  $Pa$  is reached and becomes the focus of phrases and the most emphasised note. Other noteworthy features of this section include the use of different strings to play the same note. Thus the middle octave  $Pa$  is played not only on the first string (as usual) but also high on the second string, which gives a different, more muffled sound, and permits a large *mind* (slide) over an entire octave (for example, at the beginning of line 55); *mind*, which is so effective on the *sarangi*, is a prominent feature of this section. The other embellishment heard a great deal up to this point is the rapid turn around a note, for example at the end of the *mukhra* in line 52. This kind of ornament, which Ram Narayan calls *zamzama*, may be played with only one finger, or, more probably, with two, but never, as a Western string player would expect, with three.<sup>9</sup> *Mind* could be played with one

finger, but Ram Narayan usually prefers to change fingers imperceptibly on the way. These long *legato* phrases are broken up by a somewhat capricious gesture at the end of line 59 and in line 60 where the  $Ni$ , and also the  $Dha^b$ , are 'teased' with a little stab of the bow rather than clearly intoned. The *mukhra* returns in line 61, and in the first phrase of that line the two very short  $Sa$ 's are articulated by changing the strings (open for the first  $Sa$  and *sul* II for the second), which is a small nicety of *sarangi* technique worth mentioning.

Line 62 is something of a landmark in the *alap*, since it is the summit of the gradual ascent – the *antra* of the *rag* which is so important and without which the *alap*, however long up to this point, cannot be complete. The upper  $Re^b$  dominates the phrase, completely overshadowing the  $Sa$ . Again, the possibilities for wide *mind* are exploited to good effect, and the upper  $Pa$  is firmly established. Line 67 (last note) to halfway through line 68 is a phrase which would hitherto have been out of place in the gradually unfolding *alap*, but which here serves a recapitulatory function and offers a brief contrast to the predominantly high-pitched notes of this section. It is simply the *aroh* of the *rag*, from the *vadi* in its lowest register, over  $2\frac{1}{2}$  octaves. A similar phrase in line 72, varied with *mind* in the next line, rises to the  $Pa$  an octave higher, bringing Ram Narayan's third finger to within about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches from the bridge! Despite the spectacular nature of this section, with its very high notes and large *minds* of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  octaves, the real climax and point by which the exposition of the *rag* can be said to be completed, is in line 62, which establishes the *antra* and opens up the high register. The *mukhra* in line 74 marks the transition to *jor*. The progress of the *alap* may be summarised thus:

Note/region of emphasis	Line
$Sa, Re^b$ (middle and lower octave) and $Pa$ (lower octave)	1–11
<i>mukhra</i>	12–13
$Re^b$ (middle octave), $Pa$ and $Re^b$ (lower octave)	13–24
<i>mukhra</i>	24–25

Re <sup>b</sup> , Pa and Dha <sup>b</sup> (lower octave)	26–27
<i>mukhra</i>	28
Re <sup>b</sup> (middle octave) and Pa (lower octave), also Ni, Sa, Ga and Ma <sup>#</sup>	29–37
<i>mukhra</i>	37–38
lower octave	39–43
<i>mukhra</i>	43
middle octave, beginning of ascent, as far as Dha <sup>b</sup> , Re <sup>b</sup> and Ma <sup>#</sup> emphasised	44–51
<i>mukhra</i>	52
middle octave, Pa emphasised	53–61
<i>mukhra</i>	61
ascent from Pa reaches the <i>antra</i> with the upper Re <sup>b</sup> , and continues to ascend, eventually touching the Pa two octaves above; Re <sup>b</sup> and Pa ( <i>vadi</i> and <i>samvadi</i> ) continue to be the notes most emphasised	62–74
<i>mukhra</i>	74

### Jor and tans

The repeated Sa's at the beginning of the *jor* (line 75) establish the pulse which is the salient feature of *jor*. Also characteristic are the frequent changes of bow and diminishing note values. The *mukhra* continues to function as the demarcation between sections (lines 77, 82–3, 86–7, 91, and 93–4) and the *vadi* and *samvadi* lose none of their influence. The other main feature is the frequent use of *gamak*, first in line 78, which becomes persistent from line 87 at a point where the tempo of the *jor* suddenly increases. The accents and variable groupings of notes per bow give the music an energetic character which contrasts with that of the contemplative *alap*.

The dividing line between many of these *jor* phrases, especially those with consecutive rather than repeated notes (for example in line 93), and *tans* is blurred, and the transition to what may be called the *tans* proper, at the end of line 94, is so smooth as to be almost unnoticeable. *Gamak* continues to play an important part, but the number of notes per bow and the tempo both increase. This whole *tan* section, from line 94 until the *mukhra* in line 99, is played as a continuous phrase without any breaks.

### The section in slow Tintal

The *alap*, *jor* and *tan* section ends halfway through line 99 (at the first comma) with the *mukhra* which had recurred throughout. What follows immediately is another *mukhra*, this time of the slow composition in *Tintal*. It also centres on repeated Sa's but is distinguished from the earlier *mukhra* by the slide down to Pa. This *mukhra* is the cue for the *tabla* player to enter on the *sam* (line 100) and he will play from now until the end of the performance. The first two *avrittis* of the *tal* (slow *Tintal*) are taken up with the repeated *sthai* (refrain), which is the normal procedure and gives the *tabla* player a chance to make his entry with something more interesting than *theka* which will seize the audience's attention. Here Charanjit Lal Biyavat plays a fusion of *kayda* and *peskar* which he learnt from his father, Chatur Lal. The composition played with this by Ram Narayan was also learnt from a teacher, rather than being his own composition, and it is from the *khyal* repertoire. The same applies to the composition in fast *Tintal* which comes later, but in both cases Ram Narayan has made changes to adapt them to the *sarangi*. It will also be noticed that in both cases the *sam* falls on the *vadi*, Re<sup>b</sup>, which ensures its continued prominence.

The improvised phrases from line 104 (fifth *matra*) are reminiscent of *alap*, but the importance of *tal* is shown by a *tihai* – the first in the performance – in line 105 (Ex. 84a). The *tihais* in this performance have been notated together (Ex. 84) to show the phrase which is repeated three times; also the duration in *matras* (excluding the *sam* on which the whole *tihai* ends) of each *tihai* is indicated, as well as the *matra* on which it starts and ends. The location (line number) of the *tihai* in the

performance is given in brackets. By comparing these abstracted examples with the originals in the context of the performance the reader will appreciate how *tihais* work and how their improvised performance can lead to slight irregularities (meaning that the repetitions may not be exact).

Ex. 84 *Tihais* in the performance of rag *Sri* (each phrase three times)

SLOW *TĪNTĀL*

a. (105) 4 3/4 matras: 12th - sam

b. (108-109) 13 1/4 matras: 3rd - sam

c. (121) 5 1/2 matras: 11th - sam

d. (123) 4 1/2 matras: 12th - sam

e. (127) 5 1/2 matras: 11th - sam

f. (131) 3 matras: 14th - sam

g. (133) approx 4 1/4 matras: 12th - sam

h. (139) approx 3 1/2 matras: 13th - sam

i. (143) 4 matras: 13th - sam

j. (147) 5 1/2 matras: 11th - sam

FAST *TĪNTĀL*

k. (159-160) 19 matras: 14th - sam

l. (166) 15 matras: 2nd - sam

The *alap*-style musings lead in line 108 to the upper *Sa* in a phrase which also turns out to be the basis of a *tihai* (Ex. 84b). The *antra* of the rag at this point gives the spirit, if not the letter, of the *antra* of the composition (in line 110) and the next few lines (until line 115) continue to emphasise this upper register. The *mukhra* halfway through line 115 leads to the *sthayi* refrain, which again gives the *tabla* player a cue to depart from *theka*, and this time he plays a short *kayda*.

The rests in line 118 signify the end of a section in which the *sthayi* and *antra* registers of the rag have been explored, and one assumes that Ram Narayan is also using them to think of his next phrase. Continuity of melodic line does not, however, return until line 121 – which includes another *tihai* (Ex. 84c) – but instead the music is allowed to ‘breathe’ between sporadic fragments of the *sthayi*. A short *tan* in line 122 (fifth and sixth *matras*) is modified in the next line and becomes the basis of another *tihai* (Ex. 84d). The *avritti* of the *tal*, lines 124 and 125, is a loose elaboration of the *sthayi* as a kind of fast *alap*, and a varied version of the *mukhra* is clearly discernible in the last four *matras*. The next *avritti* returns to the short *tan* of line 122 and increases its range and length. The phrase is repeated three times, but I hesitate to call it a *tihai* because it culminates almost half a *matra* after the *sam* (at the beginning of line 127). Not content to leave this loose end, Ram Narayan develops another *tan*, again slightly longer and faster, and this time makes the *tihai* on it (Ex. 84e) end perfectly on the *sam* (at the beginning of line 128). The next *avritti* (lines 128 and 129) offers some respite from this tension and excitement and is again a kind of *alap* elaboration around the *sthayi* with a variant of the *mukhra* at the end.

Once *tans* are begun, however, they are never absent for long, and here they return with great panache in line 130 (seventh *matra*). Again, Ram Narayan gives his phrases coherence, with a sense of inevitability, by his skilful use of *tihai* (Ex. 84f). He achieves further variety by deliberately delaying the expected resolution on the *sam* (line 132) by a quarter of a *matra*. The next *tan* (line 132, fifth *matra*) is based on a descending scale which is repeated with a successively narrower range before plunging to the lower reaches of the instrument. The music



undulates ferociously on the bottom string, and finally 'resurfaces' in a spurt of two octaves; this rising phrase becomes the basis of a dazzling *tihai* (Ex. 84g). Again, a contrast is called for and these rapid *tans* are not resumed until line 138 (eighth *matra*). Before them the tempo is increased and an *avritti* of the *sthayi* enables the *tabla* player to offer his own equivalent of fast and dazzling *tans*, namely *rela* (lines 136 and 137). The *tan* beginning in line 138 (eighth *matra*) ends with a terse figure of hardly more than two notes which again is treated as a *tihai* (Ex. 84h). The repetitions are separated by rests longer than the figure itself, and the third statement is decidedly longer than the other two. The next line sees a further increase in tempo, so that the *tans* which begin in line 141 call for even more virtuosity. The first one lasts from the *khali* to the *sam* and, although a phrase within it is repeated three times, it does not culminate in a real *tihai*. It is quite typical of Ram Narayan's style, and of North Indian classical music in general, that this *tan* is developed into something longer and more conclusive in the one which immediately follows it. Improvisation is spontaneous variation, extension and regeneration of existing material. Thus the *tan* starting in line 142 (fifth *matra*) is at first similar to the preceding one but reaches a greater climax with a fluent and perfectly timed *tihai* (Ex. 84i). The last *tan* of this section in slow tempo (from line 144, seventh *matra*, to line 148, *sam*) is, typically, the longest and most complicated, combining straight ascending and descending lines, repeated notes with *gamak*, irregular phrasings, and, to end, a *tihai* (Ex. 84j).

### The section in fast *Tintal*

Such a point of climax and exhilarating virtuosity is suitable as the transition from slow to fast tempo, heralded by a new composition. The *sthayi* phrase of this composition in fast *Tintal* begins on the twelfth *matra*; its first statement interrupts the *tal* of the previous composition at a random point quite soon after the *sam* (in line 148), and the new melody, with its faster tempo, is lively and even catchy. The *sthayi* refrain, filling one *avritti*, is repeated and the *tabla* player could take this as a cue to play some short composition, for example a *tukra*, but in this case he prefers to keep the *theka* throughout. The first half of line 152 has a *déjà entendu* feel, and is in fact the same as the *mukhra* to the now

relinquished slow composition. In conjunction with the rest of line 152 and line 153 it serves as a balancing second phrase of the *sthayi*. There is no *antra* played for this composition; the *sthayi* admittedly emphasises the upper register but there is no question of confusing it with the *antra*, simply for the reason that it is the first part of the composition to be heard and is used as the refrain.

It would be acceptable to insert *alap* phrases at this point in the performance, but they are better suited to the section in slow tempo. Here the mood is lively and full of innocent charm, and the structures are generally simpler and unadorned. *Tans* which fit the *matras* regularly are most appropriate. All the *tans* in this fast section are in fact constructed from two notes per *matra*. The first one (line 155) has a very choppy character, due to the change of bow for each note – somewhat unusual in Ram Narayan's music. It is probably an equivalent of the vocal *sargam tan* (sung to the names of the notes). It continues, broken by rests, until the end of line 159. Here, on the fourteenth *matra*, the *sthayi* refrain returns, but two *matras* late. One is tempted to ask in such a situation whether it was intentional or a mistake; but this is not the point. It is far more a matter of what happens immediately after the anomaly; in other words, does the musician do something which indicates that it is part of some logical and perfectly 'correct' scheme? In this case the answer is clearly yes. What is in fact presented is a *tihai* based on the opening phrase of the refrain – a cunning manipulation of the relationship between refrain and *tal* favoured by *khyal* singers (Ex. 84k). In the third statement one can easily substitute two crotchets for the minim (fifteenth and sixteenth *matras*), making the *tihai* perfectly regular.

In line 164 the more common melismatic *tans* (similar to those sung to *ā*) return after three *avrittis* in which the tempo is increased. Whereas in the slow *Tintal* section the *tihais* grew out of the *tans*, in this section they are derived from the melody of the composed refrain, and are also far fewer in number. The *tihai* in line 166, like the previous one (line 160), starts with the first phrase of the refrain on the 'wrong' *matra* (here the thirteenth instead of the twelfth) but consists of no more than an anticipation of the *sam* (Ex. 84l). A further increase of tempo (determined, like all the others, by Ram Narayan) makes the subsequent *tans* faster, and they are also progressively longer, which, as has already

been mentioned, is a typical procedure. The *tan* beginning on the *sam* in line 169 starts in a similar fashion to the previous one, but develops into an excellent example of a *sapat tan* (one based on the straight ascent-descent line of the *rag*). No performance would be complete without *sapat tans*, and this example (line 169, fifteenth *matra*, to line 170, eleventh *matra*) spans the entire three-octave range of the *sarangi*. The refrain (line 173) is played only once before the next *tan*, so the momentum of these fast *tans* is not lost. The last *tan* (from line 174 to the *sam* at line 181) is fittingly the longest in the section, if not the whole performance. Its structure is quite complex, consisting of repeats within repeats. From line 175, sixth *matra*, it falls into three main sections, each one of which has three sub-sections, and the whole is based on the repetition of a ten-*matra* phrase. The structure of the *tan* may be shown as follows (numbers refer to the line in the notation and those in brackets to the *matra*):

Section I: 175 (6)–177 (4)

1. ten-*matra* phrase 175 (6)–175 (15)
2. repeated 175 (16)–176 (9)
3. repeated, plus extra *Sa* (eleventh *matra*) 176 (10)–177 (4)

Section II: 177 (5)–179 (3) (repeat of section I)

1. ten-*matra* phrase 177 (5)–177 (14)
2. repeated 177 (15)–178 (8)
3. repeated, plus extra *Sa* (eleventh *matra*) 178 (9)–179 (3)

Section III: 179 (4)–181 (1) (varied repeat of section I)

1. ten-*matra* phrase, plus extra *Sa* (eleventh *matra*) 179 (4)–179 (14)
2. shortened version of ten-*matra* phrase (seven *matras*), plus extra *Sa* (eighth *matra*) 179 (15)–180 (6)
3. ten-*matra* phrase, plus extra *Sa* (eleventh *matra*) 180 (7)–181 (1)

The extra *Sa*, occupying one full *matra*, serves to round off the main sections and prevent the whole *tan* from being merely nine statements of the same phrase, which would be intolerable. This threefold repetition of a thrice-repeated phrase (not forgetting the modification in the third section) is quite common in North Indian classical music,

and is the kind of *tihai* within a *tihai* that is a speciality of the Benares *gharana* of *tabla* playing but that has now spread all over North India and is equally effective in melody. It demands the complete mastery of *tal*, since it can so easily go wrong, and the virtuosity displayed here would not go unnoticed by the audience. After such a *tour de force* the end of the performance will come at the climax and leave the musician and his listeners exhilarated and happy. The refrain is played a couple more times and rounded off, again using the *tihai* principle: the opening phrase of the refrain is played twice, followed by a phrase of the same length which achieves contrast by falling towards the middle and lower octaves (line 183). If this last phrase had been an identical repeat of the first two, the culminating point would have been the upper *Re*. To end the performance there would have suggested incompleteness and unresolved tension. Ram Narayan accordingly makes the modification so that the performance ends where it began: on the middle octave *Sa*, with a phrase which is virtually identical to the one at the start of the whole performance. The music has come full circle; it has returned to the timeless womb of the *Sa*, whence it emerged. Melody and drone become one, and the *tambura*, from whose strings the ceaseless drone had created the first sound of the performance, fades away after the last *sarangi* note has expired, and takes the omnipotent *Sa* back to the realms of inaudible sound.

### Notes

- 1 Nonesuch Explorer Series, number H-72062.
- 2 In this one instance the words are often reversed to give the name *Sri rag*; in fact Kaufmann maintains that this is always the case (1968: 279).
- 3 See Chapter 4, p. 95.
- 4 Cf. Bhatkhande (1967, vol. III: 361): 'this *rag* is very profound and popular' (my translation).
- 5 This is given in staff notation by Jairazbhoy (1971: 168).
- 6 In *Psychoacoustics of Music and Speech* (The Music Academy, Madras, 1967, pp. 134–46).
- 7 It is interesting that two of the leading Indian writers on Indian music, Deva and Jairazbhoy, both find Western concepts of dissonance (Helmholtz and after) acceptable to Indian music. To a large extent, of course, they are incorporating the indigenous ancient Indian theories of *vadi-samvadi* and *sruti*.

- 8 Jairazbhoy also makes the interesting comparison between the North and South Indian versions of Sri. The latter has a scale completely opposite to that of the former, i.e.  $Re^{\sharp}$  instead of  $Re^{\flat}$ ,  $Ga^{\flat}$  instead of  $Ga^{\sharp}$ ,  $Ma^{\sharp}$  instead of  $Ma^{\flat}$ ,  $Dha^{\sharp}$  instead of  $Dha^{\flat}$ , and  $Ni^{\flat}$  instead of  $Ni^{\sharp}$  (1971: 101).
- 9 Reasons for this are discussed in Chapter 2, p. 62.

## Ex. 85 Raq Sri: complete performance

Musical score for Raq Sri, complete performance, measures 1-10. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Tambura' and 'Tarabs'. The first measure is marked '(arco)'. The score consists of ten staves, each containing a single melodic line with various ornaments and phrasing marks.

Musical score for Raq Sri, complete performance, measures 11-23. The score continues from the previous page, consisting of thirteen staves. It features a variety of melodic patterns, including long phrases with ornaments and shorter, more rhythmic passages. The notation includes many slurs and grace notes, characteristic of the Raq Sri style.

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Musical score for page 164, measures 50-62. The score is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music consists of a single melodic line with various ornaments and techniques. Measure 50 starts with a quarter note followed by a series of eighth notes. Measure 51 features a series of eighth notes with a slur. Measure 52 has a series of eighth notes with a slur. Measure 53 includes a slur over a series of eighth notes, with the instruction "sul II" above it. Measure 54 has a slur over a series of eighth notes, with "sul II" above it. Measure 55 has a slur over a series of eighth notes, with "(sul II)" above it. Measure 56 has a slur over a series of eighth notes, with "(sul II)" above it. Measure 57 has a slur over a series of eighth notes, with "(sul II)" above it. Measure 58 has a slur over a series of eighth notes, with "sul I" above it. Measure 59 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 60 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 61 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 62 has a slur over a series of eighth notes.

Musical score for page 165, measures 63-75. The score is written in a single system with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music consists of a single melodic line with various ornaments and techniques. Measure 63 starts with a quarter note followed by a series of eighth notes. Measure 64 features a series of eighth notes with a slur. Measure 65 has a series of eighth notes with a slur. Measure 66 includes a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 67 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 68 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 69 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 70 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 71 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 72 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 73 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 74 has a slur over a series of eighth notes. Measure 75 has a slur over a series of eighth notes.

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*ritacca*

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slight accel. to  $d = c. 63$

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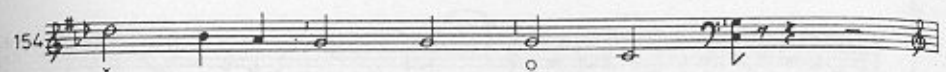
151


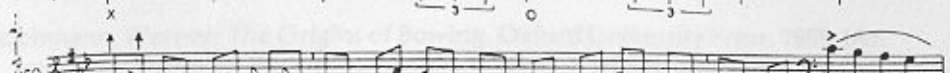


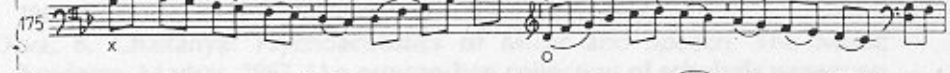

152

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$d = c. 207$



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The image displays five staves of musical notation, numbered 180 through 184. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#).  
 Staff 180: Contains a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a circled note and an 'x' below the staff.  
 Staff 181: Continues the melodic line with similar rhythmic values and a circled note.  
 Staff 182: Shows a more sustained melodic line with a circled note.  
 Staff 183: Features a melodic line with a circled note and a bracket above it.  
 Staff 184: Shows a melodic line with a circled note and a bracket above it labeled 'c. 4 sec', indicating a specific duration for a phrase.

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## Glossary

Spelling in the book	Modern Indian (Devnagri) spelling and transliteration	Brief definition	
abhog	आभोग	ābhog	the fourth part of a complete composition, rarely heard nowadays
abnūs	आबनुस	ābnūs	ebony
Adana	अदाना	Aḍānā	the name of a rag
adbhuta	अद्भुत	adbhuta	the rasa of wonder
Adbhut Kalyan	अद्भुत कल्याण	Adbhut Kalyān	the name of a rag
Ain-i-Akbari	आईन - इ - अकबरी	Āin-i-Akbarī	chronicle of the Emperor Akbar's reign (sixteenth century) by Abul Fazl Allami
akar	आकार	ākār	sung to the vowel ā
alabu sarangi	आलबु सारंगी	alābu sārāngī	gourd sarangi, an instrument combining sarangi and violin
alankara	आलंकार	alānkāra	ornament, can be used as an alternative to both gamak and palka
alap	आलाप	ālāp	the first part of a performance, in which the rag is unfolded in free time
ang	अंग	aṅg	another name for vibhag
antra	अन्तरा	antrā	upper register, focusing on the upper Sa, applying to rag and to the second part of a composition which centres on this register
anuvadi	अनुवादी	anuvādī	(assonant), nowadays usually refers to notes of the rag other than the vadi and samvadi
aroh	आरोह	āroh	ascending line of a rag
Asavri	आसावरी	Āsāvri	the name of a rag and that
astai	अस्ताई	astāi	another name for sthayi
ati	अति	ati	very (used to qualify tempo and intonation)
audav	औडव	auḍav	pentatonic
avanaddha vadya	अवनद्ध वाद्य	avanaddha vādya	membranophone
avritti	आवृत्ति	āvṛitti	one complete cycle of a tal
(āvart, āvartan)	आवर्त आवर्तन	(āvart, āvartan)	
avroh	अवरोह	avroh	descending line of a rag
baj	बाज	bāj	style of tabla playing
Bahar	बहार	Bahār	the name of a rag

## Glossary 179

bandis	बंदिस	bandīs	composition
bani	बानी	bānī	tradition of <i>dhrupad</i> singing
bara (khyal)	बड़ा (स्थायत)	barā (khyāl)	big (first part of <i>khyal</i> , in slow tempo)
bas	बास	bās	bamboo
basri	बासरी	bāsri	North Indian bamboo flute
baya	बायाँ	bāyā	left-hand drum of the <i>tabla</i> pair
Bhairav	भैरव	Bhairav	the name of a rag and that
Bhairvi	भैरवी	Bhairvī	the name of a rag and that
bhakti	भक्ति	bhakti	devotion, often called the tenth <i>rasa</i>
bhava	भाव	bhāva	emotion
bhayānaka	भयानक	bhayānaka	the <i>rasa</i> of terror
Bhimplasi	भीमपताची	Bhīmplāsī	the name of a rag
Bhupali	भूपाली	Bhūpālī	the name of a rag
bibhatsa	बीभत्स	bībhatsa	the <i>rasa</i> of disgust
Bihag	बिहाग	Bihāg	the name of a rag
Bilaval	बिलावल	Bilāval	the name of a rag and that
bin	बीन	bīn	North Indian stick zither
bol	बोल	bol	syllable (refers to song texts and <i>tabla</i> sounds)
Brihaddesi	बृहददेशी	Bṛihaddesī	Sanskrit treatise by Matanga (c. ninth century A.D.)
Candrakos	चंद्रकोश	Candrakos	the name of a rag
Cautal	चौताल	Cautāl	the name of a <i>tal</i> (twelve <i>matras</i> )
chand	छंद	chand	metre, refers to rhythmic variations obtained by subdividing beats
chota (khyal)	छोटा (स्थायत)	choṭā (khyāl)	small (second part of <i>khyal</i> , in fast tempo)
cikara	चिकारा	cikārā	a bowed folk instrument, similar to the <i>sarangi</i>
cikari	चिकारी	cikārī	usually two plucked strings, tuned to Sa an octave apart, and used to emphasise the drone and create rhythmic variety
ciz	चीज	cīz	composition in <i>khyal</i>
Dadra	दादरा	Dādrā	the name of a <i>tal</i> (six <i>matras</i> )
dagga	दग्गा	ḍagḡā	another name for <i>baya</i>
dahina	दाहिना	dāhinā	another name for <i>daya</i>
Darbari	दरबारी	Darbārī	the name of a rag
daya	दायाँ	dāyā	right-hand drum of the <i>tabla</i> pair
derh pasli sarangi	देड़ पसली सारंगी	ḍerh paslī sārāngī	a folk <i>sarangi</i>

Des	देस	Des	the name of a rag
Deskār	देसकार	Deskār	the name of a rag
Devnāgrī	देवनागरी	Devnāgrī	script used for Sanskrit and Hindi (and a few other Indian languages)
dha	धा	dhā	a <i>tabla bol</i> (see also <i>Dhaivat</i> )
dhage	धागे	dhāge	a <i>tabla bol</i>
Dhaivat	धैवत	Dhaivat	the name of the sixth degree of the scale (abbreviated to Dha)
Dhamār	धमार	Dhamār	the name of a <i>tal</i> (fourteen <i>matras</i> ) and of a composition similar to <i>dhruvad</i> in that <i>tal</i>
dhani sarangi	धानी सारंगी	dhānī sārāṅgī	a folk <i>sarangi</i>
dhin	धिन	dhin	a <i>tabla bol</i>
dhruvad	ध्रुवद	dhruvad	vocal style and composition
dhun	धुन	dhun	piece based on a folk tune
dilruba	दिलरुबा	dilrubā	a bowed instrument combining features of <i>sitar</i> and <i>sarangi</i>
Dīpcandī	दीपचन्दी	Dīpcandī	the name of a <i>tal</i> (fourteen <i>matras</i> )
drut	द्रुत	drut	fast
Ektāl	एकताल	Ektāl	the name of a <i>tal</i> (twelve <i>matras</i> )
esraj	एसराज	esrāj	a bowed instrument, similar to the <i>dilruba</i>
gaj	गज	gaj	bow
gamak	गमक	gamak	ornaments in general, also specifically the oscillation about one note
ganda bandhan	गंठा बंधन	gaṅṭhā bandhan	thread-tying, the ceremony performed when a master and pupil formally establish their relationship
Gandhar	गान्धार	Gāndhār	the name of the third degree of the scale (abbreviated to Ga)
gat	गत	gat	composition, especially for <i>tabla</i> and plucked stringed instruments
Gaur Sarang	गौड़ सारंग	Gaur Sārāṅg	the name of a rag
Gavti	गावती	Gāvṭī	the name of a rag
gayki	गायकी	gāyṭī	vocal style (adapted to instruments)
geru	गेरू	gerū	red ochre
ghana vadya	घन वाद्य	ghana vādyā	idiophone
gharana	घराना	gharānā	tradition, based on families and geographical locations
ghatam	घटम	ghaṭam	earthenware pot, used like a drum (South India)
ghe	घे	ghe	a <i>tabla bol</i>
ghunghru	घुंघरू	ghuṅghrū	bells worn around the ankles by dancers

gottuvadyam	गोट्टुवायम	gottuvādyam	South Indian plucked stringed instrument
gujratan sarangi	गुजरात सारंगी	gujrātan sārāṅgī	a folk <i>sarangi</i>
guru	गुरु	guru	teacher (Hindu)
hasya	हास्य	hāsyā	the rasa of humour
jaltarang	जलतरंग	jaltarāṅg	instrument consisting of bowls filled with water and struck with sticks
jati	जाति	jāti	type or species, here used as another name for <i>chand</i>
javari	जवारी	javārī	smooth curve on the bridge of the <i>sitar</i> , <i>tambura</i> and certain other instruments
jhala	झाला	jhālā	section after <i>jar</i> , characterised by fast interplay of playing strings and <i>cikari</i> strings (on plucked instruments)
Jhaptāl	जपताल	Jhaptāl	the name of a <i>tal</i> (ten <i>matras</i> )
Jhumra	जुमरा	Jhūmrā	the name of a <i>tal</i> (fourteen <i>matras</i> )
Jog	जोग	Jog	the name of a rag
jogiya sarangi	जोगिया सारंगी	jogiyā sārāṅgī	a folk <i>sarangi</i>
jar	जोड़	jar	section after <i>alap</i> , in which a pulse (but not a <i>tal</i> ) is introduced
Kafi	काफ़ी	Kāfī	the name of a rag and that
Kāfi Malhār	काफ़ी मलहार	Kāfī Malhār	the name of a rag, created by Ram Narayan
Kāharvā	काहरवा	Kāharvā	the name of a <i>tal</i> (eight <i>matras</i> )
kālavant	कलावन्त	kālavant	respected class of musician
Kalyān	कल्याण	Kalyān	the name of a <i>that</i> and a group of rags
karuṇa	करुण	karuṇa	the rasa of pathos
kat	कत	kat	a <i>tabla bol</i>
kaydā	कायदा	kāyḍā	a <i>tabla</i> piece in which the <i>bols</i> are limited and unchanging
khālī	खाली	khālī	empty, the <i>matra(s)</i> of a <i>tal</i> marked by a wave
Khamāj	खमाज	Khamāj	the name of a rag and that
khyāl	खयाल	khyāl	vocal style now prevalent in North India
kinār	किनार	kinār	layer of skin around the circumference of the <i>tabla</i>
lahrā	लहरा	lahrā	simple time-keeping melody
Lalit	ललित	Lalit	the name of a rag
lay	लय	lay	tempo
madhya	मध्य	madhya	medium (used especially for tempo)
Madhyam	मध्यम	Madhyam	the name of the fourth degree of the scale (abbreviated to Ma)
mahrāb	महराब	mahrāb	niche faced by Muslim worshipper

Malkos	मालकोश	Māḷkoś	the name of a rag
Marva	मारवा	Mārvā	the name of a rag and that
matra	मात्रा	mātrā	a beat of a tal
mind	मीड	mīṇḍ	unidirectional slide (portamento) between two notes
misra	मिश्र	miśra	mixed (referring to rags which permit a relatively free use of accidentals)
Misra Bhairvi	मिश्र भैरवी	Miśra Bhairvī	the name of a rag
mizrab	मिज़राब	mizrāb	wire plectrum (sitar)
midang	मृदंग	mṛdaṅg	North Indian barrel drum (another name for pakhavaj)
mridangam	मृदंगम	mṛdaṅgam	South Indian barrel drum
mujra	मुजरा	mujrā	performance by dancing girls
mukhra	मुक्छ्रा	mukhrā	phrase which marks off sections in <i>alap</i> , and phrase of a composition which leads to the <i>sam</i> of the tal
Multani	मुलतानी	Multānī	the name of a rag
na	ना	nā	a <i>tabla bōl</i>
nagasvaram	नागस्वरम	nāgasvaram	the South Indian oboe
Nand Kedar	नंद केदार	Nand Kedār	the name of a rag, created by Ram Naṣayan
Natyasastra	नाट्यशास्त्र	Nāṭyaśāstra	Sanskrit treatise on the dramatic arts by Bharata (date uncertain) which includes the first extant written discussion of Indian music
Nisad	निषाद	Niṣād	the name of the seventh degree of the scale (abbreviated to Ni)
pakar	पकर	paḱar	catch phrase by which a rag may be identified
pakhavaj	पखावज	pakhāvaj	North Indian barrel drum
palta	पलटा	paḷṭā	exercise (also refers to a type of variation on the <i>tabla</i> )
Pancam	पंचम	Pañcam	the name of the fifth degree of the scale (abbreviated to Pa)
pandit	पंडित	paṇḍit	wise man (Hindu), also used as a title
Paṭdīp	पटदीप	Paṭdīp	the name of a rag
peskar	पेशकार	peśkār	usually the first part of a <i>tabla</i> solo which presents a variety of <i>bōls</i> in a majestic way
Pilu	पीलू	Pīlū	the name of a rag
punya pratap vina	पुण्य प्रताप वीणा	puṇya prātap vīṇā	bowed instrument combining <i>sarangi</i> and violin
Puriya	पुरिया	Pūriyā	the name of a rag

purvang	पूर्वांग	pūrvāṅg	lower tetrachord of a rag
Purvi	पुर्वी	Pūrvī	the name of a rag and that
rabab	रबाब	rabāb	plucked (sometimes bowed) stringed instrument (throughout the Muslim world)
rag	राग	rāg	the melodic basis of Indian classical music
ragmala	रागमाला	rāgmālā	garland (medley) of rags
rasa	रस	rasa	sentiment, the aesthetic basis of the arts in India
raudra	रौद्र	raudra	the <i>rasa</i> of wrath
ravanhattha	रावणहत्था	rāvanhatthā	a folk fiddle
rela	रेला	relā	fast stream of <i>tabla bōls</i>
Risabh	रिषभ	Riṣabh	the name of the second degree of the scale (abbreviated to Re or Ri)
riyaz	रियाज़	riyāz	practice
rudra vina	रुद्र वीणा	rudra vīṇā	another name for the <i>bīn</i>
Rupak	रूपक	Rūpak	the name of a tal (seven matras)
sadav	सादव	śāḍav	hexatonic
sadhana	साधना	sādhanā	dedication
sadhu	साधु	sādhu	holy man (Hindu)
Sadj	षड्ज	Ṣaḍj	the name of the first degree ('tonic') of the scale (abbreviated to Sa)
sagird	शागिर्द	śāgird	pupil (usually Muslim)
sahnai	सहनाई	śahnāī	the North Indian oboe
sam	सम	sam	the first <i>matra</i> of a tal
sampurn	सम्पूर्ण	sampūrṇ	complete, heptatonic
samvadi	संवादी	samvādī	(consonant), note in a rag of importance second only to the <i>vadi</i> , with which it is usually related by the consonant interval of a perfect fourth or fifth
sancari	संचारी	sañcārī	the third part of a complete composition, rarely heard nowadays
sandhi prakas	संधि प्रकाश	sandhi prakāś	the junction of day and night
sangati	संगति	saṅgati	accompaniment
sangita	संगीत	saṅgīta	a general name for music, including dance
Sangitaratnakara	संगीतरत्नाकर	Saṅgītaratnākara	Sanskrit treatise by Sarṅgadeva (thirteenth century)
santa	शान्त	śānta	peace, often called the ninth <i>rasa</i>
santur	संतर	santūr	North Indian dulcimer

sapat (tan)	सपाट (तान)	sapāt (tān)	smooth, a tan which uses the ascending and descending line of the rag in a straight sequence
sarangi	सारींगी	sāraṅgī	the main bowed instrument of North India
Sarasvati	सरस्वती	Sarasvatī	the name of a rag
sarasvati vina	सरस्वती वीणा	sarasvatī vīṇā	the main South Indian plucked stringed instrument (usually simply called vina)
sargam	सरगम	sargam	system of notation using the names of the notes (Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, etc.) and refers also to tans sung to these names
sarinda	सारिन्दा	sāriṅdā	a folk fiddle
sarod	सरोद	sarod	North Indian plucked stringed instrument
sati	सती	satī	Hindu wife who immolates herself on her husband's funeral pyre
saurangi	सौरंगी	saurāṅgī	a hundred colours, a name sometimes substituted for sarangi
savā-javāb	सवात - जवाब	savā-javāb	question-answer, the exchange between main artist and tabla accompanist
sindhi sarangi	सिंधी सारींगी	sindhī sārāṅgī	a folk sarangi
sisam	शीशम	śīśam	the name of an Indian wood
sisya	शिष्य	śiṣya	pupil (usually Hindu)
sitar	सितार	siṭār	North Indian plucked stringed instrument
Sohni	सोहनी	Sohnī	the name of a rag
Sri	श्री	Śrī	the name of a rag
sringara	शृंगार	śṛṅgāra	the rasa of love
sruti	श्रुति	śruti	microtone
sthayi	स्थायी	sthāyī	the first and most important part of a composition, which centres on the lower and middle registers
surbahar	सुरबहार	surbahār	bass sitar
surmandal	सुरमंडल	surmaṅḍal	North Indian psaltery, used to accompany vocal music
(svaramandala)	स्वरमंडल	(svaramaṅḍala)	
sur peti	सुर पेटी	sur peṭī	small key-less harmonium, used as a drone
sur sagar	सुर सागर	sur sāgar	large sarangi with additional plucked strings
susira vadya	सुषिर वाद्य	suṣira vādyā	aerophone
Svaramelakalanidhi	स्वरपेलकलानिधि	Svaramelakalanidhi	Sanskrit treatise by Ramamatya (sixteenth century)

syahi	स्याही	syāhī	black spot on the tabla and pakhavaj skins
ta	ता	tā	a tabla bol
tabla	तबला	tablā	two small kettledrums used as the main rhythmic accompaniment in North Indian classical music
tal	ताल	tāl	time cycle, the rhythmic basis of Indian classical music
tali	ताली	tālī	the matras of a tal marked by a clap
tambura	तम्बूरा	tambūrā	plucked stringed instrument used only as a drone
tan	तान	tān	extended pattern of notes, usually performed fast
tarab	तरब	tarab	sympathetic string
tar sahnai	तार सहनाई	tār sahnāī	an esraj fitted with a metal horn
tata vadya	तत वाद्य	tata vādyā	chordophone
that	ठाट	thāt	heptatonic scale, used as a means of classifying North Indian rags
theka	ठेका	ṭhekā	the basic articulation of a tal using tabla bols
thumri	ठुमरी	ṭhumrī	a type of love song often used to conclude a recital
tihai	तिहाई	tiḥāī	the threefold repetition of a phrase, usually calculated to end on the sam
tin	तिन	tin	a tabla bol
tin	तीन	tīn	three
Tintal	तीनताल	Tīntāl	the name of a tal (sixteen matras)
tirakita	तिरकिट	tirakīṭa	a tabla bol
Tori	तोड़ी	Toṛī	the name of a rag and that
trika	त्रिक	trika	a tabla bol
tukra	टुकड़ा	ṭukrā	short, lively piece played on the tabla (also used in dance)
tu	तू	tū	a tabla bol
tun	तुन	tun	the name of an Indian wood
ustad	उस्ताद	ustād	master (Muslim), also used as a title
uthan	उठान	uṭhān	opening flourish on the tabla
uttranig	उत्तरांग	uttrāṅg	upper tetrachord of a rag
vadi	वादी	vādī	(sonant), most important note in a rag (apart from the Sa)
vibhag	विभाग	vibhāg	subdivision of the avritti of a tal

vicitra vīna	विचित्र वीणा	vicitra vīnā	North Indian equivalent of the <i>gottuvadyam</i>
vilambit	विलम्बित	vilambit	slow
vīna	वीणा	vīnā	a word covering many types of plucked stringed instruments, in both North and South India
vīra	वीर	vīra	the rasa of heroism
vivadi	विवादी	vivādī	(dissonant), a foreign note to a rag (but which may be used in certain cases by expert performers)
Yaman	यमन	Yaman	the name of a rag, the main one of the Kalyan group
zamzama	जमजम	zamzamā	used by Ram Narayan to describe a fast turn around a note on the <i>sarangi</i>

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