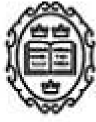

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Jonathan Katz

Music and aesthetics: an early Indian perspective

Western musical aesthetics, strictly defined, is a discipline of quite recent origin, but we can see in earlier texts—even some ancient ones—several of the interests and questions with which this specialized branch of philosophy came to concern itself. The aesthetician, it has been said, 'focuses on the nature of music *per se* and its place among the arts, in life and reality'.[1] By studying historical sources for musical aesthetics we may reasonably hope to gain insights in at least three rather distinct areas. First, there is the history of ideas itself and the relation of musical speculation to other fields of intellectual inquiry. Second, although we admit that we cannot step outside our own world, learning about the auditory world—and the associated intellectual world—of earlier composers, performers and listeners in their historical context can help us to give their music a fairer hearing and perhaps to go some way towards identifying with their expectations and presuppositions. We may call this the area of historical particularity. Third, we have the possibility of thinking, and therefore learning, more about musical structure and experience in general; if we really seek to define and describe music and speculate about it, we are likely to benefit from encountering a wide range of 'musical thought' from the past.

There must be obvious restrictions in our applying of criteria, for instance in musical style or 'rhetoric', and the aim for historical particularity will be concerned precisely with the location and application of appropriate models in analysis, theory and even cognitive aspects of music.[2] But even when we take due care not to assume too much common ground between historically separated styles and idioms, it is hard not to aspire to new thoughts about music, not merely the music of a distinct repertory but all music, and what it consists of and what it can 'do'. There is a universal side to the more philosophical brand of music theory, as in most branches of philosophy, and for this reason among others the speculations of earlier theorists can be of enduring interest. In this sense, then, it is possible that some apparent boundaries between musical cultures can be cautiously lifted. We should not be too surprised to find that musical theorists widely separated in time or region, or both, can be interested in some common areas such as the genesis of musical structures, the relations between music and speech, the power of music to rouse emotions, and so on—granted that discourse in any of these areas will be always conditioned by intellectual tradition and fashion, and of course by the particular musical culture in which it takes place. There follow here some general observations on musical

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experience, first from a Western standpoint and second with reference to what may be seen of the traditional Indian assumptions in music aesthetics.

For students venturing into unfamiliar musical territory a common experience is the need to suspend early reactions and judgements, or at least to leave them open to change. To a first hearing of any music, we bring the conditioning and the expectations gained from all of our previous listening experience, and our judgements and preferences are directed by our learned understanding of 'idiom'. This may be one of the more useful parallels to be drawn between music and language: however great may be our innate capacity to differentiate sounds and to store them in our memories, both the individual sounds and their continuations and sequences become significant to us only by virtue of our already learned auditory and cognitive habits. Though there comes a point at which we may claim to 'understand' what we hear within a particular musical system, our understanding must be in constant process of reconditioning, as long as our experience grows. Here the examination of musical communication from composer, through work, to listener has been able to share an interest with 'reception aesthetics' in the study of literature.

Not to prejudge the question of whether, or how, aesthetic experience differs from other experiences, we can still say that cognition plays a fundamental part in our *arrival at* the aesthetic experience. Theories of aesthetics have to relate both the principles of art and individual works of art to some kind of conditioned cognition on the part of the receiver. Our cognitive responses and expectations cannot be the same as those of listeners a hundred years ago, whatever constants and continuities there may also be. We can identify style and idiom as historical, regional and even individual (as of a particular composer), but must still 'respond' as creatures of our own time—'along lines that appear spontaneous and based on aesthetic criteria and judgements of meaning not contingent on any historical circumstances'.[3]

Recent discussion of 'authenticity' has exposed some serious difficulties in the conceptual background of some historical approaches to musical reconstruction, and we must remain wary of claiming 'objectivity'; both the performer and the historical musicologist, like the anthropologist, are always interpreting, and cannot entirely shed the learned conceptual apparatus which in any case directs their efforts and enquiries. It would appear that composers (and for that matter recording performers), like other artists, consign their work to unending reinterpretation, and perhaps the vitality of music that survives is actually dependent on this process. The composer may say to himself, as did an ancient poet, 'not all of me will die', but that which survives—the work—will be ever generating new responses and, with them, understandings and definitions of what it is that is heard.

This argument can be focused on regional as well as chronological differences in music, and on the two together. We 'learn' our responses to new and unfamiliar musical idioms by exposure to them. Sometimes, before learning them, we have first to recognize that the idiom is indeed unfamiliar; to the experienced student of German Baroque music a first encounter with some of the music of the French 18th century can be disconcerting, the melodic and harmonic idiom sounding like an inferior or banal variety of what he knows already; only further immersion and experience teaches him otherwise. Some degree of 'acculturation' is needed, if we are to claim to 'understand'. A newcomer to a living tradition in non-Western music, for example, can do no better than attempt to absorb the responsive system of an already acculturated audience—and thus to cultivate the 'ability of experienced, sensitive listeners to understand and respond intelligently to the implicative sound relationships being presented'.[4] It is not so much a matter of learning rules as building on a (probably) innate auditory capacity; the capacity, as Roger Scruton puts it, is not just to hear, but to 'hear as', and the assumption is that whatever may be the personal individuality of response, 'hearing as' depends on a tempering of the innate capacity by an assumed common experience within a contemporary listening culture.[5] By increasing experience of particular styles and repertories, and experience shared with other listeners, we tend to arrive at some level of consensus in our reactions; having entered with the *capacity* to react and respond to events and progressions of musical sound, we learn by experience *when* to react, and perhaps a broad agreement

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in response, or in understanding of significant elements, is as near as we ever come to objectivity. For aesthetic *evaluation*, which involves 'seeing for oneself' what may not yet have been agreed upon, takes place still within a clear enough and in principle definable context of stylistic rules and expectations. To sum up, innate aesthetic capacities are subject to social and conventional 'tuning' and conditioning, not only in confronting our own contemporary and local music but in our approach to what is initially unfamiliar.

In a recent paper Kendall L. Walton has pursued the idea of understanding humour as an analogy to understanding music.[6] He suggests that, whatever our investigations of a musical piece may tell us about its structural nature, the crucial moment in understanding why it 'works' is an introspective act of 'recognition' or 'acknowledgement' of what it is that sparks our reaction to it; achieving this is like 'getting' a joke, and takes us a crucial step 'beyond acquiring information about what features are part of the content of one's experience'. Though there are problems with this theory, it proposes an attractive model of interaction between the work and an already present innate capacity in the listener.

Referring to the fact that in Western music a 'work' is exemplified by performances, which are instances of it, Nelson Goodman[7] has characterized such music as 'two-stage' (or 'multiple') and 'allographic'; while it is true that any performance necessarily involves re-creation and some degree of improvisation (in a broad sense), the notion of an inherited or received musical entity in the composition, to some extent analogous with the text of a poem or play, is crucial. Theoretical, analytical and aesthetic attention is focused on this entity even when aimed at circumscribing details of performance. To develop Walton's model a little, we might say that the 'joke' has to be retold in a more or less new context, and 'getting' the joke depends on a combination of personal insight and a consensus in the perceptions of contemporary listeners. The listeners presumably share a vital faculty of amusability, but the particular style of humour in any instance must be learnt by experience.

In Indian music we may find an antithesis to this model, but some significant common elements may emerge nevertheless. A particularly curious feature of South Asian art music and its history, since its very early days, is that it has been defined more as a body of *potential* structures than as a repertory of compositions. For this reason Indian theoretical and aesthetic attention has given logical priority to underlying musical principles rather than to the final product of a performance. In the traditional Indian discourse of musicology, the Sanskrit *Saṅgītaśāstra*, musical material is shown to be 'generated' from first principles; early Indian theory drew eclectically on various intellectual traditions (physiology, different schools of philosophy, grammar, logic, scriptural exegesis etc.) to present a scheme of things in which the originally undifferentiated and all-pervading sound, or 'noise' (*nāda*), is materialized and refined in a number of stages or evolutionary steps into the arrangement of sound which has aesthetic value. The refinement is regarded as taking place in the human body, initiated by the human desire for self-expression; the process is one of articulation into audible sound, differentiation into pitch, arrangement of pitches into patterns, and the deployment of patterns into melodies which are then further conditioned by metrical rhythm and formal structure. The essential underlying musical faculty is thus seen as a human function, like language; and, as in language, actual 'utterances' are produced according to developed and learned structural principles.

The *Saṅgītaratnākara* ('Mine of jewels of music'), a monumental treatise composed in the Deccan by Śārṅgadeva in the 13th century AD, brought together many strands of musicological thought in a masterly organization, and presented an overview of musical theory and approved practice (i.e. practice that could be argued to be circumscribed by theory, for such was the traditionally perceived priority). The work provided a model for many later treatises and established the order of theoretical categories and issues that had to be taken into account. Illus.1 shows folia from a mid-19th-century manuscript of the (probably) early 17th-century Sanskrit treatise, *Saṅgītadarpaṇa* of Dāmodara. This is one of a class of theoretical compendia which were strongly influenced both in form and content by the earlier *Saṅgītaratnākara*, for which they were perhaps intended to act as a kind of epitome, and, in some

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1 The *tāla* chapter of Dāmodara's *Saṅgītadarpaṇa*, in an early 19th-century paper manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Mill 47, ff.172*v*–173*r*)

places, supplement; on the pages shown here, a list of metrical structures called *deśītālas*, cited from Śārṅgadeva's work, is supplemented by a list from another source. The purpose of such works was as much scholarly as musical, enabling the reader to learn and understand references to music in Sanskrit literature, and to discourse on the 'permanent' theory of music.[8] By contrast, a rather different approach is seen in a work like the *Rāgavibodha* of the South Indian theorist, Somanātha, composed in AD 1609. (Illus.2 is from the beginning of the chapter on the *vīṇā* in an 18th-century manuscript of the work.) Here the author has taken account of more recent, and perhaps current, musical practice, and even provided some unusually detailed and precise notations of illustrative melodic examples (see below).

The system of music and music theory we find in the *Saṅgītaratnākara* shows, in some important details, a shift away from what we see in the earliest attested Indian sources. As has often been observed, early Indian music theory is closely bound to the dramaturgical context in which music first appears to have come under aesthetic scrutiny. The *Nāṭyaśāstra*, ascribed to the sage Bharatamuni, is a treatise or compilation on the whole of the composite art of ancient Indian Sanskrit drama. It contains important chapters on music, and clearly inherits material from a previous tradition of descriptive and prescriptive musical theory. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* is hard to date, and perhaps the exercise is anyway of limited use in view of the composite nature of the work, but the bulk of the text as we now have it is generally considered to come from the first few centuries AD.[9] The musical portions of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and a roughly contemporary text, the *Dattilam* (ascribed to the sage Dattilamuni), both deal with the music of the classical Sanskrit drama, but with some difference of emphasis on the various genres that featured in the formal sections of the plays. A text of major importance which must be placed chronologically between these and the *Saṅgītaratnākara* is the *Bṛhaddeśī*, ascribed to Mataṅgamuni. The surviving portions of this work derive some of their material from the Sanskrit drama and some from outside this 'repertory'; by now a procedure for listing musical structures had evolved, and one that was considered adequate for including old and new material.

The *Bṛhaddeśī*[10] appears to be a compilation from various sources that were handed down by music-theoretical tradition and were available to be used in an exercise of comprehensive coverage of known musical practice. The title of the work suggests a

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2 The beginning of the *vīṇā* (lute) chapter of Somanātha's *Rāgavibodha* (AD 1609), in an 18th-century paper manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Ouseley 65b, ff.69*v*–70*r*)

significant, or large-scale (*bṛhat*) gathering of 'regional' (*deśī*) musical forms and practices under the umbrella of a broadly unitary theoretical model. In other words, a purpose of the *Saṅgītaśāstra* seems to be to define music in a theoretically viable system into which the whole of known practice may be fitted. The *śāstra* (theoretical discipline) of *saṅgīta* (music and dance) takes as its foremost task the logical and methodical definition and analysis of 'traditional' musical principles and structures. *Śāstra* as a whole assumed the precedence of norms over practice, but recognized both as valid and interdependent realms. The authors and compilers of the Sanskrit treatises accepted a distinction between *lakṣya* (the 'definiendum'—i.e. musical practice) and *lakṣaṇa* ('definitio'—i.e. scientific, theoretical and aesthetic explanation). The traditional belief, in the words of a prominent present-day scholar, was (and is) that 'the ancient *śāstra* embodies eternal truths and principles profound and comprehensive enough to regulate musical forms and practices of Indian classical music of all time.'[11]

For this to be so, theory had in some degree to remain aloof from historical change and to concern itself with fundamental issues like the origin and nature of sound and melody and rhythm, to provide models in which any actual 'forms and practices' will be explicable. But the *śāstra* could also at times, in a reverse process, adduce 'evidence' from musical practice, for example in comparing divergent regional traditions, or in recording different interpretations of a technical or structural term—the structure itself being sometimes in such cases a 'back-formation' from, or *śāstric* rationale for, what was found in reality. *Lakṣaṇa*, then, even in such instances, can be seen to embody principles applicable to what is found in *lakṣya*. I have suggested elsewhere that two main strategies were used in

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saṅgītaśāstra in this theoretical approach to musical practice.[12] First, there was a notion of 'comprehensiveness' in the final theoretical treatment of each technical ingredient in the *lakṣaṇa* of music; a system was developed in which all possible forms could be accounted for, a system implying the 'control' of *lakṣya* by *lakṣaṇa*. As an example we may take the *Saṅgītaratnākara*'s use of a system of computation in dealing with the scalar note-series called *kuṭatānas*. The system (borrowed from fields originally outside music theory) is designed to account for, and to show the 'production' of, all possible series, so that what is found in practice (or as a component in a more developed musical structure) can be properly located, classified, and shown to be covered in the *śāstra*. Comprehensive lists of melodic (*rāga*), metrical (*tāla*) and compositional (*prabandha*) forms, which we find in full or abbreviated form in many of the major treatises, are part of the same system of control, and there can even be a residual category included, a statement to account for structures which are theoretically or logically possible but do not actually occur in known practice.

The second strategy was the development of a complete technical vocabulary of definition, again supposedly rendering the *lakṣaṇa* of *śāstra* universally applicable. At certain times the uses of terms changed, but the general object remained—to describe music according to secure and stable traditional categories. The tendency may be seen even in some relatively recent theoretical treatises of music theory.[13] Performers and listeners in the 'classical' traditions of Indian music have been by no means uniformly learned in the *śāstra*. As I have already stated, it is important to remember that the Sanskrit treatises were often used, and intended, as much for transmitting erudition as for enlightenment in music as such.[14] While it is clear that, at various levels of sophistication, the tradition reflects thought about music, and that thought about music does not grow in a cultural vacuum or in total separation from music itself, the theoretical tradition also had a certain autonomy and, as a system, served its own ends. But, whatever the intellectual packaging, there are conceptual and historical connections between the broader principles of theory and the broader roles of music in people's lives.

Curiously enough, the models and criteria of classification of *rāgas*, the melodic types which the *Bṛhaddeśī* already makes clear were the basic structures of pitch patterns in musical performance, seem to have arisen from a repertory of actual song compositions of a more or less fixed nature. The *jātis*, classificatory melodic structures,[15] appear to have been abstracted from songs which used these 'modes', and each *jāti* was defined by way of classificatory features such as initial, final and predominant notes, weak and strong notes, pitch range etc., so as to serve as a generative theoretical base for other compositions. The *jātis* are commonly seen as the forerunners of the *rāgas*, and the *Bṛhaddeśī* took as one of its prime tasks the comprehensive collection of available melody types both from inherited tradition and from the provincial regions from which information could be gathered.[16] Here again it is likely that, at least in part, it was songs, i.e. existing and identifiable compositions, in all their melodic variety, that supplied the possibility for classifying (and probably 'tidying up' and schematizing) the melodic and modal substructures.

The chapter on *prabandha* (song composition forms) in the same text is an early stage of the system found in greatly expanded form in the *Saṅgītaratnākara*, and here again the theoretician's aim was a comprehensive scheme that could embrace all known forms and describe the structure of each.[17] An actual performed structure could be accommodated by reference to one of these theoretical 'precedents'. A common Western reaction to such systems is to see them as symptoms of a characteristic early Indian obsession with classification, and certainly a feature of *śāstric* discipline is the precise and comprehensive listing and taxonomy of forms. Perhaps, though, we should see a little more in it than this. Indian creative arts, including music, came to be regarded in their own theoretical tradition as achievements of 'realization' or 'transformation' of an identifiable 'given'.[18] If it is true that an earlier diversity of forms was first embraced within a scheme, and that scheme became the notional generative basis for further acts of creativity, then a new 'composition' is seen to be created with strong reference to an already established entity. Theory, in this case, takes its input from practice and then generates further practice on

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a new but permanent foundation. The established entity is the inherited idea, the 'known' but pre-existent structure, subject to realization and transformation in an actual moment of performance. We must remember that composition and performance are interdependent in much of Indian music, and certainly in the traditions of art music with which we are concerned here; the focus of theoretical discourse in the *śāstric* treatises is therefore not on specific musical 'utterances' but on the formal and aesthetic realities which *generate* those utterances. Quality and beauty of execution are perceived in many features of performance, and in various *saṅgītaśāstra* texts there are very precise listings of technical resources and configurations which the performer may be expected to deploy, sometimes set against faults which are to be avoided. Assessing the meaning of such technical language is not easy; some of the terms appear to be derived from the everyday occupational language of musicians, and, like so much of the specific detail in *śāstra*, must have been entirely comprehensible only to those acquainted with a simultaneous aural experience of music in practice, even where an explanation and definition may be offered in the texts and commentaries. Such accounts often use apparently objective categories, but their interpretation must relate to taste and context-bound preferences, and is necessarily ephemeral.[19] It is thus in telling contrast to the kind of discourse which deals with fundamental matters of music aesthetics.

No discussion of any artistic genre in Indian tradition can be taken far without considering the subject of *rasa*, for this is the central and most potent idea in traditional Indian aesthetics. In *śāstra* the concept is first discussed in specifically dramaturgical theory, in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, which was, however, clearly drawing on already existing sources for the *rasa* idea. The early non-aesthetic meanings of the word *rasa* are to do with 'flavour', 'essence', 'juice', 'taste' etc., and it occurs in medical and culinary language. The earliest extant statement of the principle is that aesthetic 'relish' is produced from the various kinds of 'emotion' (*bhāva*), which are the emotional circumstances and ingredients presented in the drama before a spectator. Substitute for 'spectator' the more general category of 'experiencer' of art, and the *rasa* theory becomes a more general aesthetic concept.

Supporting his account from received tradition, the author of the relevant passage in the sixth chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* tells us how 'sensitive spectators' (*sumanasaḥ prekṣakāḥ*) 'taste' the emotions (*bhāvas*) which are suggested through the use of voice modulations and bodily (histrionic) gestures etc. in the dramatic presentation. The 'tasting' is analogous to the gourmet's tasting of flavours (*rasāḥ*) in culinary preparations. The resulting phenomenon is, importantly, more than the mere sum of the ingredients; it is, in the culinary simile, the tasting of the composite totality or full relish, and in the context of the drama it is the aesthetic experience of 'heightening'. Post-*Nāṭyaśāstra* poetic theory linked this to the process of self-realization and spiritual enlightenment.

The *rasa* principle was extended to non-dramatic literature such as lyric poetry; this extension and, further, that from poetry to other arts like music and painting, have been described by one scholar as an 'infiltration',[20] but the common opinion remains that in some way the *rasa* concept is relevant in the philosophical and psychological depiction of aesthetic experience in general. The concept provides a model in which the material 'received' by a spectator, listener, or indeed a religious devotee, from a work of art is perceived to relate to one or more parts of that person's already existing psychic make-up, conditioned as this is by the conventions of his particular cultural training. The receiver's cognition or recognition of 'emotion', and his understanding and consolidation of the various ingredients in the art-work, lead to a heightening of experience. This heightening was referred to by some post-*Nāṭyaśāstra* poetic theorists as a 'generalization' or 'universalization' (*bhāvanā* or *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*) in which the particularity of emotions presented in the art-work is eliminated, and the universal nature underlying them is appreciated in an ultra-mundane flight of imagination and realization. The precise working of *rasa* was discussed by many writers on poetics, but an essential and stable part of the theory was that there was a fixed number of specific *rasas* corresponding to a similarly fixed number of 'basic'

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or 'permanent' emotions (*sthāyi-bhāvas*). Thus, for example, the 'permanent' mental state of love (*rati*) gives rise to the 'erotic' (*śṛṅgāra*) *rasa*, anger (*krodha*) to the 'furious' (*raudra*), 'grief' (*śoka*) to the 'pathetic' (*karuṇa*) etc. The essential operation of the *rasa* principle in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* consists of the combination of permanent emotions with one or more of a larger group of 'transitory' (*vyabhicāri*) emotions, and the resultant arousal or 'production' (*niṣpatti*) of *rasa*. The system of 'permanent' and 'transitory' emotions is another example of comprehensive description, this time of the range of human feelings. There is provision within the system for limitless combinations and consequent subtleties of emotional depiction (on stage) and reaction (on the part of the audience), though the resultant *rasa* was considered to be classifiable within the scheme of eight (later nine) named types. Songs were used in drama, and the use of particular forms and particular *jātis* was prescribed for the various standard 'junctures' and developmental stages, as well as specific situations, in the dramatic plot. The learned, traditional association of *jātis*, and later the *rāgas*, with specific 'ethos' outlived the Sanskrit drama which had been the practical context and source of the theory, and later *saṅgītaśāstra* seems to accept the expressive power of music as such, without the necessary adjunct of word and representational drama. Some scholars have argued that it was the development of poetic theory away from drama and into other forms that helped to develop a sense of expressive autonomy for music (separate from the specific representations of dramatic situation and verbal text); for in those other forms an additional emphasis is placed on the contribution of 'suggestion' to communicated meaning, and here such processes as conventional association and evocation through patterns and figures of sound itself are crucial.[21]

The early account of how the expressive function of music is realized in practice is, as we have seen, focused on drama, where music is recognized as contributing to *bhāva* and heightening the *rasa* or helping to bring it about. By the time of the decline of Sanskrit drama, the growth of other forms of poetry, and the recognition and *śāstric* classification of song compositions independent of the drama in a system that nevertheless still recalls the notion of the mood- or situation-specific appropriateness of particular forms, *rasa* had become the central principle of Indian aesthetics; it accompanied or underlay most other concepts that developed in aesthetic theory.

The beauty of the *rasa* theory lies perhaps not so much in its assumption of precisely classifiable and nameable modes of human emotion as in its implied model of the interdependence between art and receiver. It is a model of 'recognition', in which a 'pre-discursive' entity is apprehended behind, or in, the specific example. The *rāga*, which is not a played or sung reality but has to be represented through an actual musical instance, is aesthetically specific, rather as the iconic character of a religious or cultic image precedes and underlies all the innumerable actual images made to represent that idea. A religious devotee is conditioned to recognize the idea behind the image—or in other words the significance of the image—and to *see* the icon *as* that idea. The performance of an improvisation or a structured song *in* a *rāga* is 'heard as' that *rāga* and enhances the listener's comprehension of this underlying musical 'essence'.

There has been much discussion in Indian aesthetics about the appropriateness of *rasa* theory to non-poetic and non-representational forms of art like music. I believe that the inquiry has sometimes taken an unproductive path in an effort to show that there is something, if not actually representational, then at least analogous to representation, at work in music—some kind of repertory of expressive feeling or moods which can be defined in terms similar to those of poetics. While it is true that music can at times 'refer', through conventional association, to emotions or 'atmosphere', the peculiar power of the *rāga* is something more self-referential, with the performance relating to an archetype and constituent ingredients in the performance relating to constituent parts of the archetype; the archetype itself is 'acquired' by listeners

3 The *rāgiṇī Āsāvarī*, in its common pictorial icon of a female snake-charmer. This is one of an incomplete set of early 17th-century *rāga* paintings in an album presented to the Bodleian Library by Archbishop Laud in 1640. Gouache on paper, 15.1 × 10.6 cm (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud MS Or. 149, f.19*r*)

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through acculturation and experience. The traditional *saṅgītaśāstra* prepared a model which suits particularly well the modern Hindustani (North Indian) classical music in which, as Harold Powers puts it in the terminology of linguistics, 'a person with the "competence" in that musical language can say of any musical phrase that it is or is not a "token" of a phrase "type" included in some particular raga.'[22]

The notion of specific ethos in *rāga* may be seen both in those traditions which associate *rāgas* with particular seasons of the year and times of day and in the tradition of sets of iconic verses and paintings known as *rāgamālā*, a genre which particularly flourished in some parts of India from the 16th to the 18th centuries and still survived into the 19th. The practical and historical links between the paintings and verses and the *rāgas* they purport to depict or represent are likely to remain a matter of scholarly debate for a long time; arguments will have to be brought in from the literary background of the verses and from the history of painting and pictorial iconography, as well as from the historical sources for the classification of *rāgas*, for the *rāgamālā* is a systematic and particularly hierarchical ordering of *rāgas*. But the essential conceptual links with *saṅgītaśāstra* and with musical aesthetics can perhaps be deduced from what has been said already. First, then, the 'control' and ordering of a multiplicity of entities, reflecting the recognition that 'competence' and acculturation mean acquaintance with the different entities and the ability to distinguish between them. Second, the receiver recognizes, and emotionally responds to, the integrity and individual ethos of the particular *rāga*. Some *rāga* images are fairly stable and consistent both within single traditions, of which there were many in the scattered Indian court centres of painting and in the various textual lineages in which *rāga*-descriptive verses appeared in *saṅgītaśāstra* treatises. Other *rāgas* produced different representations in different traditions, perhaps in some cases through contamination or confusion on the part of artists and in other cases because there really were different ideas generated within the *śāstra* by musicians and musicologists. But the powerfully felt notion of specific affect or ethos overrides the diversity. The numerous separate paintings of single iconic subjects seem to relate to the underlying ideas in a way that was perceived as analogous to the relation of a performance to the 'pre-discursive' musical structure. My present view is that the *rāgamālā* idea should not be dismissed, either as the invasion of musical territory by pictorial and poetic art, or as a merely arcane department of musical lore. Rather it represents an aesthetic approach to the nature of *rāga* itself. In some of the later *saṅgīta* texts the many *rāgas* are defined both in terms of their auditory (pitch, modal etc.) structures, and also in their 'forms'. For example Somanātha (whose *Rāgavibodha* is shown in illus.2) was, in Powers's words, 'equally at home with, and equally insistent upon, both his 51 poetic *rāga* icons (substantively equivalent to painted *rāga* icons) and his 51 musical *rāga* icons'.[23] Parallels are hard to find in Western music and musical thought. Basic points of auditory reference, to which compositions may relate, are generally either less detailed in specific content and ethos, such as in tonality, modality or musical 'form', or much more so (and therefore less open-ended), as in the repertory of songs known by congregations and contained in church cantionals, and used as the basis for new compositions.

Indian musical theory, and indeed the aesthetic assumptions which may be discerned beneath the performance practice of the Indian classical music with which we are today more familiar, expect of performers and listeners that they learn the musical equivalent of 'getting the joke', and that they relate what they hear to what is already within them—a kind of matrix of melodic, rhythmic and formal patterns so that they can 'hear as'. The *rasa* principle may be illuminating for any discussion of art, but it seems particularly apt in such systems of thought as the Indian *śāstric* view of music, since it accounts for that peculiar ability we find in Indian music to 'mean' and 'refer' (to a musical archetype) and, through the processes of reference and transformation, to illuminate the archetype and enlighten the listener's sense of understanding.

4 *Rāga Vibhāsa* in its pictorial icon of a pair of lovers at daybreak; a central Indian painting, gouache on paper, 19.7 × 15 cm, *c.*1675 (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, EA 1991.154)

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1 I. Bent and W. Drabkin, *Analysis* (London, 1987), p.2.

2 The interplay between aesthetics and historical style analysis is to be seen in such works as L. G. Ratner, *Classic music: expression, form, and style* (New York, 1980). The psychological and cognitive implications of style and idiom differentiation are examined in N. Cook, *Music, imagination and culture* (Oxford, 1990), esp. pp.22ff. and chap. 3, 'Knowing and listening'.

3 L. Botstein, 'Between aesthetics and history', *19th century music*, xiii (1989), pp.168–78.

4 L. B. Meyer, *Music, the arts, and ideas* (Chicago, 1967), p.266.

5 R. Scruton, *Art and imagination: a study in the philosophy of mind* (London, 1974), p.174; see esp. chap. 12, 'Understanding art', pp.168–87.

6 K. L. Walton, 'Understanding humor and understanding music', *Journal of musicology*, xi (1993), pp.32–44, and in *The interpretation of music*, ed. M. Krausz (Oxford, 1993), pp.259–69. The idea appears to have been already hinted at by Scruton, *Art and imagination*, p.182.

7 For an introduction to this literature, see the historical sections of H. S. Powers, 'India, subcontinent of', *New Grove*; and L. Rowell, *Music and musical thought in early India* (Chicago, 1992), esp. chap.6, pp.119–43.

8 The character and relative status of music-theory and practice are discussed in various contributions in *The traditional Indian theory and practice of music and dance*, ed. J. Katz (Leiden, 1992).

9 See R. Widdess, *The rāgas of early Indian music* (Oxford, 1995), p.4f.

10 A new edition of the *Bṛhaddeśī* is being brought out in three volumes, of which the first two (containing Sanskrit text, English translation and brief commentary) are already published. P. L. Sharma and A. B. Beohar, *Bṛhaddeśī of Śrī Mataṅga Muni* (New Delhi, 1992, 1994).

11 P. L. Sharma, 'Traditional Indian musical aesthetics', *Journal of the Music Academy, Madras*, xxxiv (1963), pp.83–98.

12 *The traditional Indian theory and practice of music and dance*, ed. Katz, p.6.

13 See H. S. Powers, 'Reinterpretations of tradition in Hindustani music', *The traditional Indian theory and practice of music and dance*, ed. Katz, pp.9–51.

14 This is discussed at greater length in J. Katz, 'Indian musicological literature and its context', *Puruṣārtha*, vii (Paris, 1983), pp.57–75.

15 For an account of early Indian melodic formation and classification, see Widdess, *The rāgas of early Indian music*.

16 See R. Widdess, 'The geography of rāga in ancient India', *The world of music*, xxxv/3 (1993), pp.35–50.

17 The relevant section of the text has been translated with commentary by L. Rowell, 'The songs of medieval India: the *prabandhas* as described in Matanga's *Bṛhaddeśī*', *Music theory spectrum*, ix (1987), pp.136–72, and 'The prabandhas in Matanga's *Bṛhaddeśī*', *The traditional Indian theory and practice of music and dance*, ed. Katz, pp.107–41.

18 For a comparison of theories in poetics and music, see M. Lath, 'Creation as transformation', *Diogenes*, cxxvii (1984), pp.42–62.

19 An attempt is made to sum up these specific 'values' of Indian music in Rowell, *Music and musical thought in early India*, pp.334–7.

20 Nagendra, 'The nature of aesthetic experience', *An introduction to Indian poetics*, ed. V. Raghavan (Bombay, 1970), pp.117–27.

21 See P. L. Sharma, '*Rāga* and *rasa*', *International musicological society, Report of the twelfth congress, Berkeley 1977*, ed. D. Heartz and B. Wade (Kassel, 1981), pp.525–8.

22 H. S. Powers, 'The structure of musical meaning: a view from Banaras', *Perspectives of new music*, xiv/2–xv/1 (1976), pp.308–34.

23 H. S. Powers, 'Illustrated inventories of Indian rāgamālā painting', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, c (1980), pp.473–93, here p.475; this is a major review article on three important *rāgamālā* studies published in the 1970s.

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