THE CONCEPT OF *LAYA* IN HINDUSTANI MUSIC

The present essay is but the beginning of an attempt to understand the basic concepts of Hindustani or North Indian rhythm in the light of relevant discourse which has not so far been made an object of explicit attention. Of these we here choose just one : *LAYA*. The frame of reference, however, has got to be fairly wide; for, considered as (musical) duration that is aesthetically regulated,[1] *laya* is in fact the only common feature of our *ālāpa*[2] and rhythmically organized singing, instrumental music and dance.[3] There is one other consideration which calls for some fulness of approach. The Indian word for music is *saṁgīta* and this word stands for both music and dance.

Now it seems to us that, in the context of Hindustani music, *laya* is clearly superior to rhythm. By rhythm we understand musical duration *as measured by beats*. *Laya* is not necessarily subject to such measurement. Its full meaning, however, is by no means obvious; and we set out to determine it by considering not what the ancient works have to say on the subject generally, but how the word is used in specific contexts, and how the fact it stands for actually informs the different aspects of our music variously.

I. *LAYA* IN *ĀLĀPA*

That *laya* permeates good *ālāpa* is commonly accepted. How it does so has, however, to be ascertained with care. The singing of a note for exactly the right length of time, so that, whereas it does seem full-blown, it is not exaggerated to the point of monotony; due regulation also of the time taken in covering different notes with a view to producing varied and likable effects; and, above all, a caefully graded increase of the speed of singing,— these are, in our view, the chief meanings and manifestations of *laya* in the context of *ālāpa*. What distinguishes all these features

of *ālāpa* is their common freedom from the employment of a specific number of beats as constituting a rhythm-cycle.[4] The singer here proceeds entirely on the strength of his own capacity for judging the propriety of music; and, for the listener, the only sources of appeal in *ālāpa* are : euphonic sweetness; structural propriety; feeling or ideal quality; and the diversity of manner, besides, of course, the skill of rendering the *rāga*[5] in question correctly and adequately. The (relatively) external aid of rhythmic *accompaniment* is here not available to the vocalist. So, if his singing is to be effective at all, he must concentrate throughout on the tunefulness and veriform effects of singing; which in turn calls for a very close subjective involvement with the music. This at once reminds us of an important traditional but general sense of the word *laya*, as distinguished from its meaning in *aesthetical* parlance : *laya* as the mind's self-identification with the object of attention or pursuit. Understood in this general sense, *laya* is certainly present in *ālāpa* too. But, in so far as close attention is a condition of success in *every* field of activity—whereas our concern here is *only* with musical duration and rhythm—we propose to ignore this general meaning of *laya* in our subsequent discussion.

Now, how musical duration (or *laya*) actually enters into sonant *ālāpa*[6] and conduces to its effects may be brought out as follows :

Suppose the vocalist sings the tonic *for a mere instant* and then *immediately* provides a steady, *elongated* rendering of the adjacent note, D flat. The effect worked up would be one of *mere emergence* if the transition from the tonic to the other note is accomplished *quickly*, though continuously; and it may be one of *emergence from within something* in case the passage is smooth and relatively *leisurely*. In the latter case there would be the extra suggestion of inwardness. The point to be noted here is that the *time* taken in passing from one note to another, or in rendering any single note, contributes vitally to the net effect of music. To us it appears that the element of time, thus incorporated, stimulates

a kind of linear imagining, and that the two together, aided by his feeling imagination, enable the musician to invest the *svara*[7] or the phrase with an emotive or ideal hue. It is indeed a fact that many different factors conduce to the overall effect of *ālāpa*, and that they do this with a jointness that seems inextricable. Yet, we repeat, the role of duration can here be clearly pointed out.

Thus, reverting to the instance cited above, if the D flat is *steady* and broad—and is, like the tonic, located in the middle register—the effect would be one of emergent effulgence; but if the note in question is rendered very finely (or thinly)—yet very steadily and tunefully—and if it is located by the side of the tonic in the higher register,[8] the effect may be one of looking at something far-off, *or* of detachment, provided the D flat comes smoothly, yet *quickly*, after a fine and *fleet* touch at the *sā*.[9] Or again, if proceeding steadily from ' B ' in the lower register, the voice touches the D flat (in the middle register) with the daintiness of an *instant*, and then lapses back *immediately* to the preceding note, the effect worked up may be one of a mere linear droop *or* of langour and despair.

In the case of an orthodox Indian singer—that is, under the stress of some traditional moral images or attitudes—such employment of musical duration can profoundly influence the singer's own immediate experience.

Imagine, for instance, a devotee hallowing the morn with *svaras* of the *bhairava*[10] mode. Steadying himself with the basic *sā* (tonic) he sings to saturate himself with images and attitudes that are appropriate to the hour—the rising sun, yearning in prayer for a chastening of the self, pouring *arghya* ' holy water ' at the sacred idol,[11] and liberation from enslavement to the things of the world. A *brief* but sure touch at the tonic followed *immediately* by *komal re* (D flat) *prolonged* firmly and sweetly, at once blends the mind —by suggesting effulgence—with the fact of the rising sun. The same note (D flat) touched while descending from *ga* (E) provides

an euphonic analogue of the downward slant that the act of pouring *arghya* describes. As attunement grows through the aid of the *svaras*, the feeling of detachment also deepens, and the singer reinforces it by keeping to *sā* (tonic) merely ideally and by letting the voice *linger* repeatedly at the *re* (D flat), now *faintly* —yet sweetly—the note becoming a symbol of heavenly-mindedness.[12] Surely, the purpose of *ālāpa* is not merely to indicate the constituent notes of the *rāga*; and it is clearly improper to hold, as has sometimes been done, that the appeal of *ālāpa* is merely perceptual.

This is admittedly a very inadequate account of the aesthetic character of *ālāpa*. We have said nothing about the various *euphonic* devices that distinguish this most interesting aspect of singing from our music in general. But, in relation to our concern with *laya*, what we have pointed out is for the present enough; and we turn now to consider *laya* as manifest in rhythm.

II. *LAYA* IN RHYTHM

The transition may seem abrupt, but it is not really so; for, a clear link is provided by a requirement to which *laya* in *ālāpa* and *laya* in rhythmic music are both alike subject,—the requirement that sudden, unwarranted, or aesthetically dissatisfactory changes in tempo are to be avoided. If this be taken along with the consideration that the requirement just mentioned can be met—and its fulfilment identified—*also with the aid of beats*, we at once gain access to some important meanings of *laya* in the context of rhythmically organized singing. These may be brought out by considering some (Hindustani[13]) phrases from actual discourse[14] relating to such music as is ' accompanied ' by a rhythm-cycle :

(*a*) *Laya laṭak rahī hai* or *ubhār rahī hai.*

These are protests which may be made by the main performer to his drummer—accompanist. They signify an unwarranted slackening or acceleration of the *speed* of playing.

(*b*) *Laya quāyam hai.*

When extended as a compliment to the drummer, this means his ability to keep the basic *speed* of the rhythm steady and unchanged, not only when the cycle is played independently, but also *after*—or within or aginst—the execution of some intricate rhythmic patterns.

(*c*) *Laya girā lo, barhā lo.*

These are suggestions given to the drummer, to decrease or increase the *speed* of playing. In speaking of *vilambita* or *druta laya* too, we refer, in the main, to the slow or quick *speed* of the flow of musical time.

(*d*) *Chaunsat ki laya.*

This is a phrase which is sometimes used for a very *slow* rendering of *tritāla*, a rhythm-cycle of sixteen beats. It means that the playing here is four times slower than the 'normal' speed of the cycle. In so far as there is, in the case of rhythm, no generally accepted measure of 'normal' speed, the phrase in question does not stand for anything absolute. It is in fact used for any speed which one may think to be very slow in relation to his own conception of average tempo.

(*e*) *Tāla main hai, laya main nahin*

This is sometimes said by way of criticising a musician who manages to gain access to the *sama* (or the first beat of the rhythm-cycle), but is *not* able to maintain *even speed* or the equality of intervals *between* the various beats. Incidentally, the simplest—but by no means the odeal—meaning of 'being-in-*tāla*' (or correct in respect of rhythm) is the ability to mark only the *sama* correctly.

(*f*) *Tabaliyā aisā torhā chalā ki lahre vāle se laya nikal gayī*

What is meant hereby is the failure *to hold on to the speed* of the basic flow; and also the inability to remember—as a consequence of the basic lapse—the location of the accents, the *khāli* and the *bhāri*,[15] of the cycle.

(*g*) *Laya kā andāz*[16] or *laya ki tamiz*

These commonly used phrases mean :

first, one's ability to determine (or develop) accurately the speed of the flow of (subsequent) music from the manner, leisurely or hurried, of its very beginning;[17]

secondly, to retain—so long as required—one's hold on the speed fixed as basic;

thirdly, *to improvise rhythmic patterns* of varying speed, extent and accentuation not only *without any loosening of the ideal hold just referred to, but primarily with the help of the impulse provided by this attunement*; and

fourthly, to remember the fundamental speed so unremittingly that any temporary change of pace—introduced purposely for working up new and beauteous effects—may be quickly assimilated into the fabric of the basic flow, through a skilful adjustment of the speed of what comes in the wake of the variation.

All or any of these meanings may be conveyed when we compliment a vocalist or instrumentalist[18] as being truly *layadār*,—that is, competent in respect of his hold over musical duration.

(*h*) *Laya se khailnā yā khilwārh karnā*

These words are used to describe the ability to *sport* with *laya* freely, but without faltering,—that is, to introduce such (proper) variations or patterns in or against the flow of *laya* as seen effortless, improvised and brief, as distinguished from those that are long, intricate and studied.

(*i*) *Layakāri karnā*

This stands for the execution of rhythmic variations and patterns of *all* kinds,—whether spontaneous, brief and dainty, or prefixed, large and majestic.

(*j*) *Tān main laya kātnā*

The phrase refers to a technical excellence of the way in which musical patterns can be executed. It is used, as appreciation, of a musical pattern which flows suchwise that some of its emphases seem to cut the fabric of *laya* at subtle places which are *not* normally marked in the rhythm-cycle as played.

(*k*) *Laya kī kāt tarāsh*

Whereas the word *kāt*, in the context of rhythm, simply means 'cut', 'cross' or 'divide', the Urdu word *tarāsh* stands for the idea of carving out shapely slices or figures from the matrix with loving cars. Both are used freely in actual musical discourse, but the latter is here preferable, because it directly suggests the ideas of form and design.

(*l*) *Laya kā bul*

In common Hindustani parlance, the word *bul* stands for a twist (not a knot) in a string or rope. In the region of rhythm, it is used to describe such a brief, sudden and subtle,[19] yet identifiable —but not necessarily obtrusive—change or turn in the (even) musical flow as does not suspend, but only diversifies and gently crystallizes the unity and continuity of *laya*. The word *badal*, on the other hand, would mean *any* kind of change in flow.[20] Thus, *dugan* and *chauguna*, which stand (respectively) for the double and fourfold quickening of *laya*, or the rhythmic variants called *ārh* and *kuvārh*, are changes or *badals* in general; but they are not *buls*, for they affect a much wider stretch of flow than a *bul* with its brevity can ever do.

Sometimes, indeed, a *bul* is so small and dainty that only a trained and vigilant listener can mark it.

(*m*) *Laya kā chukkur yā halquā*

Here, *kā* and *yā*, stand for 'of' and 'or' respectively; and the keywords are : *chukkur* and *halquā*. We may turn, first, to the former :

Considered in itself, the word *chukkur* means a circle or round. In ordinary parlance, however, it can also mean an engagement which permits no real headway, a situation which one can neither get out of nor handle satisfactorily. In brief, *chukkur* stands mainly for the ideas of unity and continuity, repetitiveness, containment, and self-completeness. It does *not* convey, in daily conversation, the sense of an inly measured flow.

Turning to music and musical discouse, we find that the features just referred to characterize, and the phrase in question is used with regard to the following situations :

1. First, when the *tritāla*[21] cycle is so played—say, at a lively pace, and long and effectively enough to induce total involvement with the flow—that the conscious counting of beats soon recedes into the background, and the mind is merely swayed, in subdued delight, by an unbroken flow that seems not only self-complete, but self-completing.

Here, the beats of course persist. It is clearly by heeding them that the playing remains grammatically correct. But the felt variety of the beats (or *bols*)[22] as played; their regulated intensity, serving—as required—to accentuate the flow; and, above all, the sweet steadiness of manner,—these details of drumming here cancel the need to count. The mind instead relaxes in utter self-abandonment to the flow, keeping to measure merely incidentally, and therefore effortlessly. The *mātrās*[23] (or beats) here do not *hold* our attention. They seem directly to make for the movement which animates them; and what here fills the mind is merely the feeling of a flow that sways us gently. As for the emphasis called *sama* (or the first beat), it is not here moveless and manifest like the centre of a circle but is only felt as implicit in the centripetal and centrifugal quality of the flow.

2. Secondly, during the playing of a *quāyada.*[24]

Here, the effect called *laya kā chukkur* may be worked up—and the phrase aptly used—when, after opening the pattern repose-

fully, the drummer turns to bedeck its various sub-sections with a close, but orderly filling of *bols*. Here, it is the compact successiveness of the syllables, their fitting embedment in divisions, as also the slight spurt with which they are sometimes made to get at a basic emphasis of the cycle, that make for the suggestion of unbroken continuity. True, in the case of some specially intricate *quāyadas* what delights us specially is the *bul* that they throw up with delightful unexpectedness; and this *bul*, we must add, is always a variant which is *distinct*, and not merely dainty. Yet, perceptible though it always is, such a syllable never seems to disturb or disrupt, but only relieves the fabric of the flow.

3. Thirdly, after a spell has been thrown on the listeners by some steady and tuneful repetitions of the *sthāyi-antarā*[25] of a properly organized *tarānā*,[26] provided its content is not sparse.

Here, too, the two key factors for the production of the effect in question are closeness of musical syllables and clarity of approach to the *sama*. But the effect is readier if the composition describes a clear *āroha*[27] and *avaroha*.[28] A *vilambita khyāl*[29] does not normally provide for the essentials just mentioned; and this is precisely why its *independent* singing is not able to conjure up any *chukkur of laya*.

To conclude : the phrase, *laya kā chukkur*, stands for a flow that seems unified and organized, self-completing and not merely independent or isolated; and, above all, measured *without our having to measure it*. If a cycle is merely played (and followed) once or twice *and slowly*, it is of course a distinct something; but it does not seem to work up a *chukkur of laya* because the playing is not duly sustained and close-banded.

The phrase may now be considered in its alternative form; *laya kā halquā*. Literally, the word *halquā* means the area or orbit of effectiveness. Taken along with *laya*, it conveys the significant idea that, if properly worked up, the round of rhythmic flow can permit indwelling and may seem to encompass us. This is quite

different from what the phrase, *ṭheke kā halquā* means; which is, as already pointed out, simply the number of beats the cycle comprises.

(*n*) *Laya ka dhakkā yā ghoonsā*

Where the flow of *laya* gains access to the *sama* not only correctly and sharply, *but in a manifestly well-designed way*, the knowledgeable listener may express his approval by pointing to the *laya kā dhakkā yā ghoonsā* which the rhythm here gives. The experience thus referred to is no mere understanding, but a swaying that is felt and a shock of delight. In the case of music, the suggestion in question is the effect of *āmad*[30] or that part of the *sthāyi* (first line of the song) which seems an organized, self-evolving access to the *sama* or the first beat.

(*o*) *Laya kī jātiyān*

A *jāti* is a specific way in which *laya* may be made to flow. It owes its distinctness to the precise way in which it organizes its emphases or beats. The direct reference here is only to a manner of movement, and so to *laya*. But, in so far as a *jāti* is inconceivable apart from beats, and also because we may freely speak of the *jāti* of a rhythmic pattern *that conforms to a cycle*, it would be truer to say that the phrase in question marks a passage of the mind from mere *laya* (as found in *ālāpa*) to the idea of *tāla* with its *mātrās* and syllables.

(*p*) *Laya-pradhāna yā tāla-pradhāna*

Such a way of speaking is relevant to both music and dance; and in both contexts it refers to two alternatives : the dominance of flow and continuity *or* of beats, their order, and the way they are emphasized.[31] Thus, while doing a *ṭhāṭ*[32] a *Katthaka* dancer may either dance very gently, presenting only the undivided continuity of *laya* through a gentle wavy employment of arms and upper part of the body generally; or relatively quickly, with greater emphasis on footwork and spirited arrivals at the *sama*, without of course neglecting the basic posture and the distinctive overall grace of the item.

Now, the conclusion of our discussion so far may be that *laya* in rhythm is open to the following characterizations :

> Speed of musical flow which is quick or slow, but even,[33] evenness being here manifest in the equality of inter-*mātrā* intervals (see above, a to f); the basic flow that *permits—and controls* as their continual, if implicit point of reference—the various rhythmic patterns and divisions (g to k); *unity and continuity* of flow (l, m and p); *orbit and extent* of flow (m); the *impact of its self-completion* (m); and, finally, its distinct *manner of movement* (o).

In brief, *laya in rhythm* means a flow which is (when established) even, and one and continuous so long as the music lasts;[34] has distinct ways of movement, and its own orbit or extent; permits, as their ground and controller, a variety of effects and arrangements; and which—by virtue of its organization around, and shapely access to, the central beat—can look well-oriented and complete, without being cut short, as it wheels, without faltering, its flowing rhythmic rounds.

Now, only one of these features of *laya* characterizes *ālāpa* too : the quality, we may say, of being the willed locus of musical changes and effects. Steadiness of flow or speed is admittedly an important meaning of *laya*, but it cannot *as such* be regarded as a *basic and pervasive* feature of *both ālāpa* and rhythmic singing; for,

> first, evenness of speed is itself, specially in the case of *ālāpa*, the result of the artist's own active willing; and
>
> secondly, though never haphazard,[35] the *ālāpiyā*[36]—as already brought out—is free to sing two adjacent *svaras* or tufts of notes *at inequal speed*, simply for the sake of working up a specific effect.

So, if a definition of *laya* be demanded, we could perhaps offer the following :

> *Laya* is musical duration which is controlled—but not necessarily with the (objective) aid of beats—in respect of its

speed; and which permits such a variety of pace, emphasis, and arrangement[37] that it seems utterly removed from what we commonly mean by time. In *ālapā* (we must add) the regulation of *laya* is much more subjective than in the case of rhythm or *tāla*.

By way of clarifying and justifying this definition, we think it necessary to make the following additional remarks :

First, duration is aesthetically as relevent to the articulation of a single note as to the rendering of an expansive musical phrase or pattern. Thus, the *tāra sā* (upper tonic) may be either touched with the brevity of an instant, and so skilfully, and daintily that it may continue to throb in the mind even when it has ceased as a sound; or rendered so long and soulfully that it may seem to soak us in sweetness; or abruptly cut short in the mid, in which case it will appear ' half-fed ', as our *masters* say, and clearly dissatisfactory. Again, by singing it for a longer time than is allowed to its adjacent notes, a *svara* can easily be made to appear an emphasis, a bearer of effect, or a revealer of the distinctive hue of the *rāga*.[38]

Secondly, we choose to interpret *laya* as ' controlled ', not necessarily steady, musical duration. For, whereas it is not in fact throughout even, the tempo of actual music—even where it changes—is set and controlled by the musician himself.[39]

Thirdly, our definition says that—whereas it itself is regulated by the artist—*laya* simply *permits*, not necessarily produces or actively controls, a rich and beauteous variety of rendering. It is of course true that, in the case of rhythmically organized music, the flow of *laya*—as marked by the drummer—controls creative work, by virtue of the demands that the *sama* be duly, if eventually, arrived at; and that the evenness of *inter-mātrā* intervals be, in general, maintained.[40] But *alāpā* is subject to no such demands; and in so far as for our definition we need features that are common, we choose the word ' permits '.

Fourthly, allied to the above is the consideration—which our definition emphasizes—with regard to the subjective and objective determination of *laya* in *ālāpa* and rhythm respectively. When *ālāpa* is being done there is no drum to mark the rhythm, and the flow has to be regulated entirely by the performer himself. The determination here is subjective.[41] In music which is 'accompanied' by rhythm, on the other hand, the drummer (we have seen) makes demands that the singer must reckon with; and the flow of *laya* in such music, is rarely—in slow *khyāl* singing it is perhaps never—so thoroughly assimilated by the vocalist as to make it entirely unnecessary for him to look at the drumming with a view to finding some clue for gaining access to the *sama*.

Yet, we must add, the regulation of *laya* is not even here *entirely* objective. In slow singing, where the interval between any two successive beats is naturally big, the vocalist must draw upon his own ability to keep the flow steady; for he cannot obviously go on counting incessantly even between the two adjacent beats. What here enables him to keep them rightly apart or together is not the conscious resort to any subsidiary unit of measurement, but that non-calculative kind of estimation which KANT calls aesthetic.

It is indeed the musician himself who turns *laya* into the material of beauty. *Laya* only permits, we repeat, but does not itself produce any changes or emphases. As it runs through a cycle, it is indeed differentiated; and the emphases of laya, the *sama* and the off beat specially, are as a rule unmistakable. But it is only when they have been played by the drummer for quite some time—and with due regard to both temporal steadiness and euphonic propriety which, in the case of *tablā*[42] playing, calls for a very skillful and blended use of the 'left' and the 'right' drums—that a spell is worked up by the round of *laya* which may *now* seem disembodied, and on its own wings afloat, inducing in the drummer (or the singer) such intense self-attunement with the

flow that lovely, little patterns of sweet and sure step may simply seem to well up from *laya's* own fabric. The seeming spontaneity of creation is here but a consequence of the artist's own prior work.

We may next explain why we prefer to define *laya* as musical duration rather than as musical flow. Our reasons here are briefly as follows:

(*a*) Duration means continuance in time, or time indefinitely. The word *laya* too is used mainly for an essential temporal feature of music. On the other hand, when we speak of a musical flow we may mean merely the various notes traversed, or the melodic way they are sung (or played) without directly giving any thought to the tempo of music.[43]

(*b*) Again, when we speak of a *flow* we refer, in general, to a movement from one point to another, horizontally. On the other hand, *laya* can be present (we have seen) also in the steady and properly timed rendering of a single note,—say, the *tāra sā* from which dainty flourishes may simply seem to drip. What we have here is no flow, as commonly understood, but only the passage of musical time or duration. A *svara* at which the voice lingers may seem to *last in time*;[44] and the right word for *its laya* would be 'duration', not 'flow'.

Finally, we turn how to see how, as our definition insists, musical duration differs from actual time :

What is *given* to us in actual duration is some physical or mental fact or happening. The duration *created* by music is, on the other hand, inlaid with *svaras* and rhythmic turns. Again, whereas, if considered from the outside, a musical recital is clearly an event —and is itself in actual time—*within* its magical domain the various features of time are all radically altered.

Thus simultaneity, here, is *not primarily* a matter of parallel physical processes or detached, concurrent happenings; it is grounded instead in an inwardly affirmed shapeliness of rhythmic or melodic design and attainment. The delightful sharpness of a perfectly simultaneous access to the *sama* by the (principal) musician and his drummer would of course be missing if their moment of marking the beat in question is not *actually* the same. But, if the musician realizes the *sama* correctly, by merely looking at the drumming, it is just as little artistic as nodding in harmony with the ticks of a clock. On the other hand, if the same rhythmic propriety is achieved primarily as a result of self-determination by the basic structure of ones own *sthāyi* or *gat*,[45] or by the subsidiary shapeliness of a pattern—prefixed or improvised— the concurrence would be truly musical. Where the main performer and his accompanist both lose their hold over the basic flow and form of the cycle, and—after weaving random patterns—yet land jointly at a point by force of mutual understanding or merely by chance, the point is either not the *sama* at all; or, it *is* the *sama*, it fails to appear what it aesthetically should—that is, the natural end-point *demanded immanently by the very design of a flow*.

Even successiveness in music is not merely a matter of 'before' and 'after'. It is rather a passage of beauty interwrought— as in the case of complementary musical phrases or notes that provide *saṁvāda*[46]—or of upflow and flowering. as in the case of *āmad* rightly built up. Duration in music is never mere time. Its instants sparkle;[47] its fluidities tranquilize us, or during ascent, yearn.[48]

It is indeed important to see how musical duration is *not* actual time. The two are of course not wholly unrelated. But, in so far as rhythm is often regarded as *merely* a matter of measured time, it seems necessary, if one is to remain true to the distinctive character of duration in music, to heighten its differences from

actual time. The following, in addition to what we have already said above, should make the matter clearer :

(*a*) A slowly played rhythm-cycle does take more (actual) time than a *druta* (or quick) execution of the same. But to say just this is to consider the matter merely from the outside, and very inadequately. Whether as the matrix of a solo recital, or as providing 'accompaniment', how exactly a cycle affects us, on the whole, turns (also) on its relation to the patterns which it initiates, supervences or sustains. For instance, when in a solo recital the drummer lapses back to the cycle steadily, after executing a *tukrā*[49] of extra fluent pace, the *ṭhekā*[50] may *seem slower* than it really is; and, as incidental to 'accompaniment', it may *appear to be a mere moveless background*,[51] in which case the question of *druta* or *vilambita* does not at all enter the mind, and applause is extended to the drummer's *steadiness*. In case *laya* is 'thrown very high up', as they say, and if the drummer too promptly follows suit, we may certainly be struck by the shear speed of the *ṭhekā*; but even here what is admired by trained listeners is not quick speed alone, but its maintenance *consistently with the inner clarity and completeness of the cycle*. The proper execution of *bols*, evenness of *laya*, and preservation of rhythmic structure and shapeliness,—it is these, and never *mere* speed or loudness, that delight the knowledgeable listener.

(*b*) Again, though in wedging a close filling of *bols* into a limited temporal stretch (or number of beats) the drummer certainly avails of the *actual* divisibility of time, the enrichment is always to be done *in accordance with some design*, so that it is never a case of merely calculative subdivision of time. Moreover, in such cases, the intenser the filling of *bols*, the more 'crowded' will the pattern

appear, investing rhythm at once with a distinctive semblance of spatiality. In actual life too, it is true, a period of time may seem packed with events and activity. But these do not make any decorative design. This also explains, incidentally, the difference between meaningless sounds that occur freely in our daily experience and the mnemonic syllables that our rhythm builds upon,[52] always as a flourish or pattern, or as beautiful structure.

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NOTES

1. Rather than measured by counting the beats it may comprise.
2. *Ālāpa* is music *minus* language and rhythmic accompaniment. For Indians, the ability to sing effectively without these two aids is the hall-mark of a great musician. Singing without language, but *with* some drumming, is a subsidiary meaning of *ālāpa*. In its basic form, *ālāpa precedes* music accompanied by rhythm.
3. The classical dance-form that can be put under Hindustani or North Indian music is only *Katthaka*.
4. Indian rhythm runs in cycles. The first beat, called *sama*, is central. From *sama* the rhythm sets out, and to *sama* it returns, completing the cycle. A substantial part of our music too is subject to this dual requirement; and the ability of the musician to return to the first beat sooner or later, with split second accuracy *and in a well-designed way* is an important criterion by which we judge the excellence of the music presented.
5. Classical Indian music–which, of course, includes South Indian or Karnatak music, too, always renders a *rāga*. A *raga* is a melody-*type*. It is not a song. Many songs can be sung in the same *rāga*. Every *rāga* is organized around its own key notes, and has therefore a sensible individuality which a trained listener can perceive quite clearly. A dual *rāga-tāla* form characterizes all classical *songs*. But *ālāpa* is free from *tāla* or cyclic rhythm, though it has got to be done in a *rāga*.
6. *Ālāpa* is the opening movement of our classical *instrumental* music too. But the ideal of *ālāpa* is, in the case of North Indian music, provided by the *singer* of *ālāpa-dhruvapada*. *Dhruvapada* is the song, set to a rhythm, which follows *ālāpa*.
7. *Svara* is the Indian word for the musical note.
8. The three voice registers–treble, middle and base are in Hindustani called : *tāra*, *madhya* and *mandra*.

9. The Indian syllable for the tonic.
10. *Bhairava* is a devotional *rāga* meant for early morning. The common Indian view is that there are specific *rāgas* for different hours of the day. Some *rāgas* are meant for the various seasons
11. This religious practice is still common among the orthodox Hindus The hands and the water poured reverently here slant downward..
12. Cf. TAGORE'S remark : "....Indian music concerns itself more with human experience as interpreted by religion, than with experience in an everyday sense....Our music....takes us to that lonely region of renunciation.... "

    Traditionally, and in principle, Indian music aims at God-realization. How this ideal is at least thinkable, and how the basic concepts of Hindustani music are quite intelligible, -all this can be argued. See, for instance: "Essentials of Hindustani Music ", by S. K. SAXENA, in *Diogenes*, Spring 64, No. 45.

    We must add, however, that the remark cited above is certainly not true of the bulk of Hindustani music today.
13. Hindustani is the language of many North Indians. It is a blend of two languages : Hindi and Urdu.
14. The analysis that follows does not throughout directly illumine the meaning of *laya*; but where it does not do so, it should enable us to understand some other important words in our rhythmic discourse.
15. *Bhāri* means a beat that is played. *Khāli* is the off beat.
16. This phrase, as against the alternative one, may also be taken to mean the distinctive manner of (the flow of) *laya itself.*
17. This ability is very essential for the drummer-accompanist. Otherwise, the very opening stages of his playing are likely to be marred by hasty self-corrections.
18. The reference here is to an instrumentalist who is the main performer, as distinguished from a mere accompanist.
19. Subtle by virtue of the angle at which it pecks the flow of *laya*.
20. Another common meaning of *badal* is exchange or transposition.
21. *Tritāla*, a rhythm of 16 beats, is the most popular cycle in the region of classical Hindustani music.
22. A *bol* is a mnemonic syllable by means of which we identify a specific sound produced by the drummer by striking a particular part of the drum in a set way.
23. A *mātrā* is a syllabic instant.
24. A *quāyadā* is an impressive, elaborate and methodically organized pattern.
25. *Sthāyi* is the first time of the song. *Antarā* follows it, employing higher notes of the octave.

26. *Tarānā* is a *vocal* composition distinguished by its effective employment of memonic syllables.

27 & 28. Musical ascent and descent.

29. *Khyāl* is the more popular form of North Indian classical vocal music. A song in this form is also called *khyāl*. *Vilambita* means adagio.

30. *Āmad*, incidentally, is a very clear instance of the operation of the Gestalt laws of coercive design and common destiny in Hindustani music. For a fuller account of *āmad* see : "The Fabric of Āmad : A Study of Form and Flow in Hindustani Music ", by S. K. SAXENA, in *Sangīt Nātak*, official Journal of the Sangīt Nātak Akademi (New Delhi, India), No. 16, April–June 1970.

31. The *sama* too is a beat, though the focal one; and where its centrality is heightened by showing how the flow moves towards it designedly, it is clearly rhythm or *tāla* which dominates.

32. *Ṭhāṭ* is the traditional opening item of a *Katthaka* dance recital.

33. *Laya* may be quick or slow, but once it *has assumed* a certain speed it must proceed steadily so long as the musician does not himself wish to change it and with due reason.

34. For, the drummer goes on playing and marking the flow uninterruptedly; and also because, by way of preserving the unity of the rhythm-cycle, the flow is imagined to persist even where it is not marked audibly on the drums.

35. That is, without carrying for likable effects, as distinguished from propriety in respect of mere evenness of speed.

36. A musician who specializes in singing *ālāpa*.

37. Here, we purposely avoid such words as 'expression' and 'embodiment'. Rhythm perhaps does not *express* anything, though it may well seem to be taut or relaxed, ebullient or (even) coy. Nor does 'embodiment' seem adequate to the *flowing* form of most rhythmic work. Perhaps the safest way to speak of rhythm is to say that it *appears* organized and variform, provided 'appears' is not taken to imply a contrast with what is 'real'.

38. Understood as the regulated duration of the stay of voice at a particular note, *laya* seems essential for the technical and emotive propriety of *rāga*-rendering. Thus, if the voice lingers for more than an instant at the (note) *rishabh* in a recital of *rāga puriyā*, a dual offence is at once committed against the technical accuracy *and* the pathetic, drooping imagery of the *rāga*.

39. This is so, at least in principle.

40. Or at least not awkwardly flouted.

41. But it is *not merely so*. For, the technical demands of the *rāga*, as an *objective* melody-type, have to be met throughout; and these include the requirement that the important notes of the *rāga* in question be treated *for the right length of time.*
42. The more popular drum in the field of classical and light classical Hindustani music. Comprises two pieces.
43. Such a restricted interpretation of ' musicai flow ' is, we add, only possible and legitimate, not necessary. Speaking generally, ' musical flow ' includes the flow of rhythm too; for, music is a blend of melody *and rhythm.*
44. Longer than it actually does, so that musical duration remains different from actual time.
45. The basic, rhythmically organized tune in the case of instrumental music.
46. Musical consonance.
47. We have here in mind the *druta* rendering of the *tāra sā* (upper tonic) by Padma Bhushan Ustad A. Rahimuddin Khan DAGAR. The note is touched with the brevity of an instant; and so suddenly yet sweetly, that it seems to sparkle like a star.
48. This certainly is the effect of quite a few *āroha* (ascending) patterns in an exposition of *rāga puriyā* by Shri Behre Buwa, one of our most soulful singers.
49. A brief rhythmic pattern.
50. The basic rhythm-cycle as played, as distinguished from the patterns conforming to the idiom of the cycle.
51. Which it is really not. The *seeming* slowness and movelessness are both ' virtual ' elements.
52. These syllables-such as : *tā, dhā, dir, dir*-are methodically employed *only* in rhythm. In our view, rhythm is the only art-and, according to the Indian point of view, it *is* an independent art distinguishable from music and having its own creative devices, criteria of evaluation, and relevance to aesthetical theory-the materials of which are used *only* for the sake of creating (rhythmic) beauty. For a criticism of READ'S view that ' in *music* alone, it ts possible for the artist to appeal to his audience directly, *without the intervention af a medium of communication in common use for other purposes* ', See : " Form and Content in Hindustani Rhythm ", by S. K. SAXENA, in *Sangit Nātak*, No. 18, Oct-Dec. '70