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CREATION AS TRANSFORMATION

(A notion of imagination as Creative Transformation envisaged by certain ancient Indian literary critics and its application in the field of music.)

The idea of creative imagination naturally suggests artistic activity. Activity such as that of the writer, the painter, the sculptor, the musician, the dancer, the architect and the like. This, we generally think, is the homeground of creative imagination, though, as has been justly pointed out, every human endeavour, whether thought or action, presupposes it, or, at least, needs it in order to be significant. The writer comes first on my list because we who deal in words tend to think of literature before any other art, as is amply borne out by our proceedings here. But I have another, a more important reason for listing him first. Reflections over the writer's art, that is, literature, has a longer history and a greater depth of critical self-awareness in India than with respect to any other art, a fact which is perhaps true of most cultures.

Indian literary criticism, however, gives great attention to form and this makes some of its concepts and formulations relevant not only to literature, where the content is as important as the form, but also to the more "formal" arts such as music, dance, architecture. I think we need to discuss these arts, too, and relate the

42

creative activity in them to the changing social milieu. As I am more familiar with music, most of my comments in this direction will relate to music and particularly Hindustani music and its history. What I have to say is rather exploratory and I hope it will be imaginative enough to save it from being merely fanciful.

The first part of my paper will be devoted to presenting in outline a concept of literary creativity conceived by Ānandavardhana and treated in detail by Rājaśekhara, in which the idea of transformation plays a key role. The new, according to these ancient Indian critics, is through imaginatively restructuring the old. This, one may point out, has always been true of all arts everywhere. Artists, be they poets, painters, sculptors, architects, or musicians, work within a tradition. They are heirs to a body of forms, that is, of "given" creations, which guide and shape their own endeavours. Transformation, in other words, is manifestly an inherent process in any artistic creation. Artists learn by copying and create by transmuting. This is even more obvious in traditional cultures, where a new work is deliberately modelled on the old.

The importance of Ānandavardhana and, following him, Rājaśekharà lies in the fact that they have conceptually articulated the role and significance of the transformatory function in artistic creativity. These Indian critics, so far as I know, are the only ones who have consciously *theorised* about this function, even though its *use* has been common enough in all arts everywhere. They distinguish between kinds and modes of transformation, and Rājaśekhara categorizes them in detail. They also distinguish between creative and non-creative transformations. Their discussion is worth recording in itself, but for me what they have done in the field of poetry will serve as a prelude for a similar attempt in analysing the creative process in music, a formal, non-representational art where creation plainly involves transforming the given.

Alaṁkāraśāstra, the name given in India to the literature of critical thinking concerning *kāvya*—the general term for imaginative writing—produced some of its most penetrating works over a period of two to three centuries between the 9th and the 12th, mostly in Kashmir. A few of the questions which occupied the critics were: what is *kāvya*? How is it distinct from other writings?

43

What is its purpose? What is *rasa*? How is *rasa* aroused? In whom? These were hotly debated issues and many insightful ideas and theories came up as a result of prolonged discussions lasting over numerous generations. Related to these were the questions regarding the nature of creative imagination and how it operates.

Interesting in our context, I believe, is the answer given by Ānandavardhana to the last question as to how creative imagination operates. Ānandavardhana discusses it in the last section of his remarkable work, the *Dhvanyālokā*, written sometime towards the end of the 9th century. It became one of the most influential critical works in India concerning *kāvya*. A century after its composition the celebrated Abhinava Gupta wrote an equally influential commentary on it which he named the *Dhvanyālokalocana*, renderable, perhaps, as "The eye-opener to the *Dhvanyāloka*."

The critical thinking of the period we are speaking of was pursued in an ambience of general philosophical theories and debates. This, I think, lends it a lasting depth and universality, even though this character has also been responsible for disparaging comments by historians oriented towards the impressionistic criticism of the 19th-century West. To them, Indian critical thinking was too general, too distant from the phenomenon it dealt with. Moreover, in this view, even where it came close to what it dealt with, it was much too formalistic. But it is just this character which makes it significant for me here.

Before getting on to what interests me in the *Dhvanyāloka*, let me briefly introduce it in the perspective of Indian poetics. The idea of *rasa*, one of the central, or perhaps the central, concept in Indian aesthetic thinking was initially outlined by Bharata, the semi-mythical author of the *Nātyaśāstra*, a work on theatre belonging in its present form to the beginning of the Christian era. Translating the term *rasa* is a tricky problem, as has been pointed out countless times. It is not only difficult to think of a simple, single equivalent word or phrase, such as, "dominant moods", "feeling", "basic emotions", "sentiments", "ethos" or the like, but futile to think of any. Anything but a long discursive explanation can only oversimplify, and thus distort, a complex concept which, as it stands, is definitive of the aesthetic realm in general as well as of emotions savoured through the experience of *kāvya*, emotion thus rendered as being in some sense "trans" or "extra" normal.

44

My intention, in this paper, is not to discuss *rasa*, except indirectly. I will assume in my readers a familiarity with the concept.

Bharata, writing on theatre, had outlined the notion of *rasa* in connection with drama. More complex issues concerning the nature of *rasa*, the number of *rasas*—how distinguished, how aroused—how emotion in the *rasa*-state differs from ordinary experience and the like, were taken up much later mostly by the Kashmiri theorists of the period we have spoken of. It was argued that *kāvya* in general, of which drama, termed *dṛśya kāvya*, was but a species, gave rise to *rasa* in ways analogous to drama. Semantic issues were also involved in discussing *kāvya*, for *kāvya* uses words as its medium. The moot problem here posed before the *ālaṅkārikas* was: what distinguished the use of this medium in *kāvya*?—since words are also used in scientific, injunctive and other writings. It is in this area that Ānandavardhana's chief contribution lies. The semantic theories he had inherited argued for what may be called a pragmatic, common-sensical or "literal" concept of meaning. Ānandavardhana contended that words have meaning in many expressive, emotive ways not envisaged in this semantic scheme which took only the denotative sense into account.[1] Words, he said, do not only depict, they also evoke. Their power cannot really be understood within any semantic scheme which takes only logical relations into account. They have a large nimbus or aura of multiple meanings which they express through psychological, rather than logical, relations. He called this aura of meaning or "meaningfulness"—if one may use this word—*dhvani*, which I think can be best translated as "echo". Abhinava, in explaining it, speaks

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[1] Before Ānandavardhana, Indian semantics, or what may be called its main strand, postulated a *śakti*, "a power" in words termed *abhidhā* through which they directly denoted their objects. *Abhidhā*, it was believed, was aided by another "power" termed *Lakṣaṇā* which came into play when *abhidhā* landed into obvious logical absurdities. As in common usages like, "I drank five glasses". "He passed through hell", "John is a rat". The function of *lakṣaṇā* in such cases was to restore the denotative *abhidhā* sense through simple "logical" connections or associations. Thus "glasses" = "what they contain", "hell" = "suffering" and "rat" = "unpleasant habits or properties of a rat". Here the function of *lakṣaṇā* ended. It merely came to the rescue of *abhidhā* when usage showed such waywardness. It did no more. One can see, however, that "hell" and "rat" in these sentences cannot be reduced to any simple denotative meaning. They have a suggestive aura which cannot be tied down to *abhidhā* and this is one reason which led Ānandavardhana to argue for *dhvani*, an evocative "power" in words, beyond *abhidhā* and *lakṣaṇā*.

45

of *anuranana* or "resonance".[2] The *kāvya*-ness of *kāvya* lies in its powerful use of the potency of *dhvani* in words. It is, Ānandavardhana further argued, through the transliteral, often multivalent and multi-splendoured echo of meanings in words that *kāvya* generates the experience of *rasa*.

Ānandavardhana's *Dhvanyāloka*, which literally means "light on *dhvani*", is divided into four chapters called *udyotes*, literally, "illuminators". He believed that in *dhvani* he had discovered a new, revolutionary principle, which could illuminatingly transform all previous theorising concerning *kāvya*. In the first three *udyotas* of his work Ānandavardhana occupies himself in demonstrating that linguistic usage cannot be fully comprehended without accepting *dhvani*. He explores the various modes and ways of its operation showing how all that is fruitful in previous theorising can be more meaningfully subsumed under its workings.

In the fourth *udyota* Ānandavardhana speaks of how an awareness of the working of *dhvani* can give us—meaning the poet and his audience, *kavi* and *sahṛdaya*—an insight into the process of creation. The *udyota* begins with the proclamation that imagination is capable of infinite novelty *(pratibhānantyam)*. Interestingly, however, the capability of creating something new is defined as the capacity to renew, that is, to give an "old" established theme, motif, image or expression a new freshness by restating it with a richer nuance. The creative use of *dhvani*, says Ānandavardhana, can impart newness to a poetic statement though it be a restatement of older, "given" material *(vāṇī purātanakavinibaddhārthasaṁsparśavatyapi navatva-māyāti)*. He gives a few instances to illustrate his contention. The illustrations show how an established *mazmūn*, to give a familiar term from Urdu-Persian literature, signifying poetic theme or substance, becomes enriched in the hands of a greater poet who can wield his words with a greater suggestive power. An old poem in the hands of a creative poet is transformed into a new work.

It would be helpful here to take an example given by Ānandavardhana himself. Quoting a well-known verse from Amaru, he places against it a newer poem on the same theme or *mazmūn*.

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[2] Abhinava on *Dhvanyāloka, udyota* 1, *kārikā,* 13: see p. 241, vol. 1 of Dr. Ramasagera Tripathi's edition of *Dhvanyāloka* (Moti Lal Banaridas, 1973).

The freshness or the originality of the new poem, he says, cannot be denied, despite the force of the original.

Amaru's poem is:

Śūnyaṁ vāsagṛhaṁ vilokya śayanādutthāya kiñcicchanaiḥ
nidrāvyājamupāgatasya suciraṁ nirvarṇya patyurmukhaṁ /
viśrabdhaṁ paricumbya jātapulakāmalokya gaṇḍasthalīṁ
lajjānamramukhī priyeṇa hasatā bālā ciraṁ cumbitā //

[Certain that they were alone in the room, the young bride slowly raised herself a little on the bed. She gazed long at her husband's face as he lay feigning sleep. Thinking that he was really asleep, she planted a kiss on his cheek. No sooner than she did this, she saw the hair on his face stand erect with pleasure. Overcome with shyness she at once hid her face. Laughingly, her lover hugged her and gave her a long kiss.]

Rendered in Sanskrit, it is a charming scene, chiselled in its artistry. None would easily dare to tinker with it. Yet a later poet modelled his own poem on it and produced perhaps a greater masterpiece. What he did was to rearrange the same scene, infusing it with a greater depth and inwardness. The author of the newer poem is unknown. Perhaps Ānandavardhana knew the name but does not mention it.[3]

I would like to put in a remark here by way of parenthesis before quoting the newer poem. The notion of *rasa*, I have said, was conceived by Bharata in the context of theatre. The dramatic manner of depicting *rasa* tended to become normative and a marked dramatic element is present in much Sanskrit poetry.

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[3] Significantly, this verse, unlike the earlier one, uses purely verbal, "poetic" devices to great effect. It has two instances of the figure called contradiction or paradox: (1) the girl is described as *nirduddhacumbanarasā*, "deprived of the bliss of kissing" and yet *ābhogalolaṁ sthitā*, "vibrating with joy" *rasa* and *abhoga* acting as synonyms here. (2) The other instance, occurring in the last line, is obvious enough. Its effect is heightened by a subtle *double entendre* on the phrase *sākāṅkṣapratipatti* which means literally "unfulfilled desire" but also, as a technical term in grammar, "an incompletely formulated sentence", which "wants" something before it can make sense: a sentence left hanging in the middle of sense and nonsense as it were. An utterance such as, "Fortunately I...", for example, which demands additional phrases such as, "was there" or "had money", or "could hang on to the cliff" or the like, to make sense.

Amaru's poem pictures a scene not unlike a dramatic tableau which, though not entirely frozen or static, has a situational quality easily seen as an intense moment of heightened drama. My translation aims at outlining the dramatic scene described, the rich poetic nuances are, of course, lost.

The newer poem in Sanskrit reads:

> *nidrākaitavinaḥ priyasya vadanairvinyasya vaktraṁ vadhūḥ*
> *bodhābhāsaniruddhacumbanarasāpyābhogalolaṁ sthitā /*
> *vailaksyādvimukhībhavediti punastasyāpyanārambhiṇaḥ*
> *sākāṅksapratipatti nāma hṛdayaṁ yātaṁ tu pāraṁ rateḥ//*

> [As her husband lay feigning sleep, the young bride placed her cheek softly against his, forcibly restraining herself from the bliss (*rasa*) of kissing him passionately. And yet she throbbed with joy (*ābhoga*). He, too, remained unmoving lest she move away, embarrassed. Thus holding themselves back from what they intensely desired to do, their hearts were yet transported beyond the summit of eros.]

The playful movement of the earlier scene here becomes totally still, the outer movement transfigured into a vibration within. The action is so internalised, it transcends the realm of drama, becoming pure poetry: it can no longer be rendered on the stage. The poet certainly succeeds in handling his model imaginatively, metamorphosing his given material into something new and original. Such transformation, in Ānandavardhana's view, was nothing short of creation.

He cites, in this connection, an interesting opinion held by some critics who denied the very possibility of original creation in poetry. These critics argued that the purpose of poetry was to express universals of experience (*anubhāvyānubhavasāmānyam*). Such universals were finite in number and common to all men at all times, past or present. And, as such, they had already been expressed by earlier poets leaving nothing for modern poets to say. If, nevertheless, a new poet felt that he was making an original utterance, this was just make-believe (*mānamātram*). Ānandavardhana rejoins that if this view were true we would have had no original poetry after Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*, the epic considered the *ādikāvya*, the primal poem in Sanskrit literature. For one

48

would be inclined to assert that Vālmīki, the archetypal, paradigmatic poet, had already expressed the universals of experience. But this is patently absurd. It goes against the overwhelming judgement of *sahṛdayas*, discerning lovers of poetry, who recognise great poetry and poets after Vālmīki.

The *pūrvapakṣa*, the view which denies the possibility of new creation, argues, in reply, that all that is new in a so-called new poem is the use of new expressions for the same old things. In answer, Ānandavardhana asserts that a new word inevitably implies a new meaning, a new content *(vācya)* because words are inextricably *(avinābhāvena)* linked with their meaning or content. New expressions cannot but imply a new content.

Ānandavardhana admits that resemblances—*saṁvādāḥ*, 'conformances' he calls them—do exist between the creations of poets. Some may be involuntary since, as he says, minds of men work in similar ways.

However, this is not to deny the possibility of entirely original poetic creation. Just as nature, he remarks, can always create a new object[4] in spite of the endless variety of what it already has, so can a poet. But having said this he exhorts poets not to be afraid of *saṁvādas*, not to desist from a deliberate model-oriented practice and reliance on handling existing material. For this can be done creatively, resulting in new, "original" poems.

Saṁvādas between poems can be, according to him, of three kinds; (1) *Pratibimbavat*, that between a man and his mirror image (2) *ālekheyavat*, that between a man and his representation in painting: a painting necessarily transforms what it paints. (The kind of painting which Ānandavardhana and his contemporaries would have known, such as that of Ajanta, transforms quite palpably); (3) *tulyadehivat*, that between two men similar in looks but with distinct identities of their own.

Only the third kind of *saṁvāda* is creative: a poem reconstituted with the same elements as those of its model, but infused with a new self or spirit. Ānandavardhana does not go into the details of how the three types of *saṁvādas* he speaks of are to be distinguished in actual poetic practice. He leaves this to the judgement

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[4] *Dhvanyāloka, udyota* 4, *vṛtti* on *kārikā* 10.

49

of his reader, assuming that one who had studied the rest of his work would be able to arrive at the details on his own. The example we have quoted from him earlier is certainly, in his view, an instance of creative transformation, that is the *tulyadehivat*.

Inspired perhaps by Ānandavardhana, another theorist, Rājaśekhara, whose career followed soon after that of Ānandavardhana, used a similar scheme for analysing poetic creativity.[5] His work, or what survives of it, the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā* is a manual for poets, intended as advice concerning how best to develop their art. It is in the context of plagiarism, *parārathaharaṇa*, that Rājaśekhara discusses ways of handling older material. He goes into much greater detail in discussing the matter than Ānandavardhana. For, unlike his predecessor, he was talking to poets about the techniques of their craft—*kavikarma*—not only delving into principles.

Rājaśekhara uses the phrase *parārtahaharapa* to mean appropriating something written by another. Yet *harapa* if creatively done, he says, is not *harana* but *svikarana*, "assimilation", a legitimate, indeed, commendable poetic practice. *Svikarana* operates through creatively transforming given material.

Rājaśekhara classifies various ways of handling older material on the basis of what he calls *yoni*: source. He has three basic categories of *yoni*: (1) *anyayoni*, a new poem of which the source is transparent, where one can easily make out the model on which it is based. (2) *nihnutayoni*, "concealed *yoni*", where the older poem is transformed beyond recognition into the new. (3) *ayoni*, a poem without a source, an entirely original, non-model-oriented creation. Rājaśekhara further subdivides the first and the second of these categories into sub-classes. But the third, *ayoni*, has no sub-classes; it is not really a way of handling older material but a category in itself. It cannot be further classified, for how can one prefabricate categories for the entirely original?[6]

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[5] Rājaśekhara quotes Ānandavardhana at the beginning of the 5th chapter of the *Kāvyamīmāṁsā*. In a stray verse attributed to him, he praises Ānandavardhana's concept of *dhvani*: See *op. cit.*, G.O.S. ed., edited by Dalal and Shastri, Baroda, 1934, p. 156.
It is not unlikely that Rājaśekhara was not directly inspired by Ānandavardhana in this matter, but that both were drawing from a common tradition current among critics and poets.
[6] Rājaśekhara does speak of three very broad "kinds" of *ayoni*, poems, making

Rājaśekhara subdivides *anyayoni* into two broad classes: (1) *pratibimbakalpa* and (2) *ālekhyakalpa*. These parallel the first two classes in Ānandavardhana (the suffix *kalpa* here is synonymous with *vat* of the earlier classification). Rājaśekhara describes the *pratibimbakalpa*—what may be called the mirror-image class—as no more than rewording an older poem in newer terms, thus making a change which does not alter the *paramārtha*, the "essential meaning" of the given.[7] This is an uncreative category, as in Ānandavardhana. But unlike Ānandavardhana, Rājaśekhara grants some creativity to the next class, namely the *ālekhyaprakhya* (*prakhya* in also synonymous with *vat*)—he was after all writing of the poet as a craftsman and could not keep his standards too stringent. He defines *ālekhyaprakhya* as: "making a given theme or subject - matter seem different through somewhat touching it up, refining it, making it more elegant (*samskārakarma*)."[8] The example he gives is illuminating. He quotes an old verse which describes the black snakes twined around Śiva's neck, with their hoods raised, as sprouts emerging from the dark, world-destroying poison stored in Śiva's throat—the poison having sprouted due to the life–giving waters of the close-by Gaṅgā dripping on them. This verse became the model for another which makes a minor variation in the metaphor. The new verse describes the white snakes twined around Śiva's locks as sprouts emerging from the root-like half-moon the god wears in his matted locks, watered by the nearby Gaṅgā. The language of the second verse closely follows the first and is obviously modelled on it. We have here a clear case of a variation on a theme, though admittedly a minor one.[9]

The two categories which Rājaśekhara considers really creative are the *tulyadehitulya* and the *parapurapraveśatulya* (*tulya* is another synonym of *vat*)—he commends them with the words: *so'*

a distinction on the basis of subject-matter: *laukika*, "this-worldly" concerned with things of this world; *alaukika* "trans-worldly" concerned with the gods and *miśra*, "mixed", concerned with a combination of the two: *Kāvyamimāmasā*, chapter 12. But this classification is radically different from the others in principle; its basis is not how the new transforms the old. Any corpus whatsoever of poems can, in fact, be classified as *laukika, alaukika* and *miśra*.

[7] *Kāvyamimāmasā*, Chapter 12.

[8] *Ibid*, Chapter 12.

[9] *Ibid.* Chapter 12.

51

yaṁ ullekhavānanugrāhyo mārgaḥ: "it is a recommended path worthy of mention"; in recommending *ālekhya*, he does not use the extra adjective, "worthy of mention".

Ānandavardhana had spoken of *tulyadehivat* as an apparent outward similarity but a marked inner difference between two poems. Rājaśekhara inverts the definition: he defines *tulyadehitulya* as a poem apparently differing from its model in content yet having a clearly-felt inner resemblance.[10] He gives two examples, each differently expressing a theme, common in Sanskrit poetry: "an extraordinary object needs an extraordinary home." The first poem expresses the idea thus: horses are common objects and can live in any home, but only a king's palace is a proper home for an elephant, or else they should be left in the forest. The second, a purportedly derivative poem, expresses the same idea through a change of metaphor: a diamond, it says, deserves a royal home or it had better not be taken out of the mine where it belongs.

Rājaśekhara's examples are not as inspired as those of Ānandavardhana or Kuntaka, to mention another theorist. They are not convincing as good examples of creative writing. But we are not here concerned with Rājaśekhara's critical judgement of poetry, but rather with his analytical categories which remain formally valuable, whatever the aesthetic value of the illustrations he gives to demostrate them.

The *parapurapraveśa*, the other broad sub-class under *nihanutayoni*, is not recorded by Ānandavardhana. The word literally means: "A person who has entered an alien town". He would look different, transformed by the new surroundings. Rāsjaśekhara defines this suggestive term more discursively as: "keeping the root idea or motif of the model but changing its context," its "entourage", he calls it, using another evocative word.[11]

Each of the four categories recorded above has eight sub-classes. It is interesting to see how Rājaśekhara makes his sub-divisions, illustrating each with a verse. He has a very formal approach; he gives us quite a structural analysis of the ways and techniques by which a given poem may be transposed or transmuted. He sounds startlingly like a musician recounting the different ways in which

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[10] Rājaśekhara, *op. cit.*, Chapter 12.
[11] Rājaśekhara, *op. cit.*, Chapter 12.

52

given musical pieces or themes may be varied. Each variation bears a name, some colourfully figurative, given, it would appear, by practicing poets.

I would like to list here some of these variations—without quoting the examples Rājaśekhara cites as illustrations—mainly to project more vividly his formal approach, suggestive of the practice of musicians.

I will begin by listing a few of the eight sub-species he classifies under *pratibimbakalpa*, which in his view was a transformation not deserving to be called "creative". I will mainly list those which rely on structural change. The very first is termed *vyatyastaka*—a name which may be rendered as "scattering the sequence". It is defined as "changing the order of parts without affecting the whole." The second is *khaṇḍa*—meaning "a segment". This consisted of using part of a larger theme. The third is *tailabindu*—literally "a drop of oil"—defined as enlarging or rather spreading out a brief idea in a manner resembling the spread of a drop of oil on water: considered an ugly shapeless spread. Another is *naṭanepathya*—"an actor's costume"—a transformation which merely translates a poem into another language, like an actor changing his dress. In music this could mean changing the words of a tune without making a change in the music.[12] These, I think, are enough to indicate what Rājaśekhara is trying to do. He adds that making variations of the above kind only stamps a poet as a nonpoet, revealing a lack of creativity (*kaverakavitvadāyī*).

Ālekhyaprakhya, which Rājaśekhara allows to be a creative mode of transformation, also has eight sub-species. Many of these, significantly, are structurally similar to those of the earlier non-creative mode. *Vyutkrama*, defined as the reversal of a given manner of stating a theme (*krameṇābhihitasyārthasya viparītāb-hidhānam*), is really no different from *vyatyastaka*, where the change consisted of a rearrangement of parts.

Another variation, *navanepathya*—"new costume"—is the same as *naṭanepathya*,—"an actor changing his costume"—of the earlier category. Similarly, *uttaṁsa*,—"an earring"—defined as "giving importance to a subsidiary idea" can be equated with the earlier,

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[12] Śārṅgadeva, the author of the famous 13th-century epitome on music, *Saṅgī-taratnākara*, categorizes *vāggeyakāras*. (composers), into three classes. The best are those who compose both the music and the words in a song. The lesser ones are those who borrow another's music, merely composing a new song for it.

53

khaṇḍa —"a segment"—that is, that using part of a given theme.[13]

The difference is the addition of a new dimension, namely creativity, which cannot be reduced to structure. What was just a transformation becomes here a creative transformation. Rājaśekhara quotes a verse from an earlier critic to express this idea. The entire range of available matter, says this critic, is given to the poet for transformation, which can be effected as an actor uses colour to transform himself through make-up.[14] The simile of the actor has been used again, but notable is the phrase used for expressing the idea of the kind of change effected, *anyathātvamiyārcchati*: "achieves a distinctive quality". Creative handling makes it a *felt*, qualitative change, though the structural base of the process remains the same.

There are some interesting sub-divisions of the remaining two categories, the *tulyadehitualya* and *parapurapraveśasadṛśa* which could be listed and discussed here. But I think we have had enough of Rājaśekhara. What I have in mind is not to discuss him but draw from him some cues in understanding creativity in music.

I need not stress, to begin with, the key role of improvisation in Indian music, or in other words, the basic transformational approach towards the given material. In poetry, at least sophisticated *kāvya* poetry, the same verse is, ideally speaking, handed over exactly as it was composed. If transformations have taken place, the reason is that the transmission process has not been quite as ideal as one could wish. Two different copies of the same poem are—or should be—identical. In Indian music there are few genres where such an ideal is even sought for. In Ravindra Saṅgīta or in film songs one does seek to make different renderings replicas of the original. But these are recent genres.

And the attempt at exact replication is a recent ideal in music, introduced from the West, where transformation is the prerogative of the composer. He alone may transform given material to create something new. But once a composition is given final shape it has to be rendered, ideally at least, exactly as given. Some transformational role is allowed to the conductor who may "interpret" a work

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[13] For sub-species of the *ālekhyaprakhya*, see chapter 13 of the *Kāvyamīmāṁsa*.
[14] *Ibid, loc. cit.*

54

in his way. But this is, in many cases, because of ambiguities in the scores of given compositions.[15] And even so, the transformation that does take place remains much below even the level of Rājaśekhara's first category, the *pratibimbakalpa*. The performance of a Western symphony is an attempt to produce a mirror image of the original. Rājaśekhara's *pratibimbakalpa*, despite its name— "mirror-image"—is more than producing a replica, a copy, of a given work. It is, we have seen, a transformational category, however insignificant one may judge the *quality* of the transformation to be. In Hindustani music, a transformation that may be fittingly termed *pratibimbakalpa*, is certain to creep in between all traditional musical genres whether light or classical, whether a *dhun*, a *ghazal*, a *gawwali* or a *ṭhumri*, a *khyāl*, a *dhrupad*. No two renderings of a piece in these forms, even by the same musician, are exact replicas. If we still speak of the "same" piece it is because we judge the transformation to be insignificant, or in other words *pratibimbakalpa*. A transformation there is bound to be, its quality or degree depending on the genre; its total absence would be a rare thing, needing, indeed, an unusual, out-of-the-ordinary effort.

The reason is that musical education itself consists of training in the techniques and norms of improvisation. True, a musician is also taught certain more or less pre-set forms, but the handling of these has to be essentially improvisational. The more *śāstrīya*, "classical", the form, the greater, one might think paradoxically, the role of improvisation in it. Thus, improvisation is central to *ṭhumrī*, *ṭappā*, *khyāl* and *dhrupad*. Transformation, in other words, is built into the very making of any particular performance in any of these forms.

In analysing and judging such music, transformational categories such as those of Rājaśekhara can plainly be of great help. When we speak of two performances or renderings of a *ghazal*, *ṭhumri* or

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[15] In music, as in many other arts, a degree of what may be termed "interpretation" is involved in even faithfully copying a work. A copy in music can never be a mechanical copy in the sense that two copies of the same poem are. Such copies can only be produced on a gramophone or a similar device. A musician reproducing an original cannot do so mechanically. For reproduction itself is an art, a process which is bound to leave some imprint of the artist on the work he copies. He cannot but interpret, in other words, as he copies. But interpretation, in a significant sense, comes in only when the original is uncertain, not given in its entirety, and thus having parts or aspects capable of alternate renderings.

55

khyāl being the "same", the identity in such cases can be meaningfully understood only in terms of a *pratibimbakalpa* likeness. A later rendering is never exactly a replica of the earlier one. There is bound to be some rearrangement of parts. We speak of the two as being the same because we feel no real change has taken place—there is no *anayathā-bhāva*, to use an earlier phrase from Rājaśekhara.

This raises a question. Can we delineate the structural details of what I have, following Rājaśekhara, called the *pratibimbakalpa* in music? His model, I should think, will not serve as more than an analogy: music does not use words in which form and content can be analytically sifted with convenient ease. Music is form alone, or at least, the content in it is inseparable from form. The distinction of word and meaning so essential in poetry is meaningless in music. Analytical categories applying to poetry, however structural, cannot be used for music without important modifications and alternations. Details will have to be worked out, though I must confess, I have as yet not made a move in that direction.

But if we have to work out any details at all we must first seek to answer two crucial questions: What is the "given" in music that the musician seeks to transform and how and with what does he do it?

In seeking to answer these questions, I shall be speaking of the "classical" forms alone, though what I have to say may be seen at the end of my analysis to apply also to the relatively lighter forms of Hindustani music. The answer to the first question is obviously: a *rāga*. In classical music what a musician is taught are *rāgas* which are his "given". But the "given" in this case is a peculiar "given". It is not a pre-formed structure which a musician has simply to reproduce. A *rāga* is a generalised form. Take the description of any *rāga* and what you will have is a general description of its form: rules and norms concerning the total path the *rāga* should traverse. Its *antaramārga*, as the ancients aptly called it: the scale (*that*) to be used, notes to be emphasized, weakened, dropped, jumped over, to be more significantly interlinked, to be used in ascending or descending, obligatory bends or twists to be made between them and so on. Given this, any *rāga* can in principle be realised or given concrete form in a number of different ways. But this is true only in principle. In practice certain

56

crystalisations have taken place, crystalisations made by generations of creative musicians, to which a new practitioner becomes heir. These crystalisations are a musician's "given". They are not, however, fixed or frozen entities. They cannot be reproduced as replicas: though, of course, they have elements which are relatively more stable, such as the *bandish*.[16] But a large part of their form remains fluid and malleable.

These crystalisations, I think, can best be described as styles. We have in Hindustani music four major styles of rendering a *rāga* (not to speak of sub-styles—*gharānās*—within these): the *dhrupad* style, the *khyāl* style, the *thumrī* style and the *tappā* style. I believe that in order to seek an answer to the second question I had asked earlier, namely, how and with what does a musician create and transform a *rāga* (for every creation itself involves transformation, using improvisation as it does), we must look for the structural basis of musical style.

But before I analyse further, I must deal with an objection that is bound to arise concerning what I have just said. I have spoken of four styles in which a *rāga* can be rendered, implying that my *rāga* can be rendered in any of these styles. The immediate objection would be that this is simply not true. *Thumrī* is sung in only a handful of *rāgas*; so is *tappā*. There are *rāgas* of more recent origin in which *dhrupad* is not sung,[17] others such as *Khamāj* and *Bhairavi* in which *khyāl* is not sung. Yet *dhrupad* and *khyāl* are the two encompassing, inclusive styles in Hindustani music: most *rāgas* can be sung in both and almost all *rāgas* can be sung in either of them. We should, therefore, it may be argued, speak of only two styles of rendering *rāgas*. The other two are not truly universal styles, being limited to a few *rāgas*.

I would, in reply, like to argue two points. One: it is true that presently the *thumrī* and *tappā* styles are confined to a very few *rāgas* and are in this sense lame styles. But this is a relatively recent development. Earlier these styles were as broad-based as the *khyāl*. There existed *thumrīs* in all the *rāgas* in which *khyāls* were sung.

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[16] A composition "fixed" in its melodic contours, set to a certain rhythmic cycle (*tāla*) and often forming the nexus around which improvisation takes place.

[17] When I say "sung", I also imply "played", for the musical styles I am speaking of apply to the manner of rendering a *rāga* irrespective of whether this is done in singing or playing.

57

Tradition bears this out. And if one needs documentary evidence, one has only to pick up the two collections of Lucknow *ṭhumrī* published by the University Press of Sangeeta Nataka Akademi and look at the list of *rāgas* in which Lallan Piyā and other equally famous singers had composed *ṭhumrīs*. One of these two collections is devoted entirely to Lallan Piyā, a singer who lived into the twentieth century.[18]

This might at once prompt a question: why has *ṭhumrī* declined, and so speedily? I will not let this question distract me here and move on to my second point which, in fact, follows from the first. The fact that the *ṭhumrī, could* mould any *rāga* to its stylistic needs, just as *khyāl* does today, certainly proves that it is *capable* of being an encompassing, universal style like *khyāl*, even though it no longer is so. One can quite possibly envisage a resurgence of *ṭhumrī*, its extension to more and more *rāga* once again (the *ghazal*, a form somewhat similar to the *ṭhumrī*, is witnessing such an extension) though the possibility seems to me remote. But the very fact that such a possibility can be visualised is enough for my purposes. It shows that the *ṭhumrī* is a possible universal style like *khyāl*.

The same can be said of *ṭappā* which is almost on the brink of total disappearance. It is today a style without any vitality. There are very few *ṭappā* singers and the total number of *ṭappās* one hears may be counted on one's fingers. Yet there was a time when *ṭappās* were sung in a so-called serious *rāga* like Pūriyā:[19] and I would maintain that even if this were not true, the possibility of its becoming so would still be undeniable. Indeed, if there is any style that deserves resurgence it is the *ṭappā*.

Before I take any further step in speculating on the structural basis of musical style, I would like to point out that style relates

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[18] *Ṭhumrī Saṅgraha* compiled and notated by Gangadhar Rao Telang, Lucknow, 1977. *Lallan Piyā Kī Ṭhumriyāṁ*, compiled and notated by Bharatendu Bajpai, Lucknow 1977. We gather from the introduction of the latter work that a direct disciple of Lallan Piyā died in 1950. It is not unlikely, therefore, that Lallan Piyā himself was alive at the beginning of the twentieth century.

[19] Dr. Prem Lata Sharma, Head of the Dept. of Musicology, at Bihar University, recently told me that she heard a musician from Bihar sing a most intricate *ṭappā* in Pūriyā, properly maintaining the *rāga* form. Apparently a tradition of *ṭappā* singing, which has disappeared from the rest of North India, survives in a remote corner of Bihar.

58

not only to structure but also to sensibility. A change in style is an index of a change in sensibility. And sensibility is related to milieu in however tenuous, not-exactly-definable a manner and hence to history and transformations in society. Consider the four major musical styles we have been speaking of. Their marked difference in musical idiom and hence the different sensibilities they express needs no comment. The severe, sombre *dhrupad* with its austere lines and curves is a world removed from the mellifluous *khyāls* of which it is the parent. The "effeminate" eighteenth century social milieu of the court of Muhammad Shah, known as *rangile*, "the colourful one", in which *khyāls* as we know them took shape, was far removed from the more "heroic", war-like, rough period between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries when *dhrupad* emerged out of the earlier *prabandha* form. *Ṭhumrī*, lighter in feel and approach than the *khyāls*, emerged out of *khyāls*, in the nineteenth century. The *ṭappā* was born of *ṭhumrī*. The genius behind this intricate filigree-like form was a Punjab musician named Shorī Miyān, said to have been trained in the *ṭhumrī*, style. Other influences moulding the classical *ṭappā* are not very clear. It does not seem to have much more than its name in common with the popular folk *ṭappā* of Punjab. Its links with the *ṭhumrī*, however, are clear enough.

The historical aspect of the emergence of these styles is certainly suggestive of some connection between the successive transformations in music and something "akin" in the emergent social milieux which nurtured them. But with a formal art like music it is difficult to pinpoint the nature of this connection: to speak concretely of what was "akin" in the social structure. In music, where form and content are inextricably merged, the style *is* the sensibility. We cannot separate the expression from what it expresses. We cannot consequently, speak of any concrete factor in a social structure which music represents or mirrors.

To return to the question of style, I find the category of *tulya-dehivat* quite illuminating in understanding the relation between *rāga* and different styles of rendering it. The *tulyadehivat* according to Ānandavardhana occurs when two poems are similar in appearance but different in spirit. What happens to a *rāga* rendered in different styles is analogous. The tonal structure of a *rāga*, its *antaramārga*, remains recognisably the same even with a change

59

of style (otherwise we would not be speaking of the same *rāga*), yet a great difference can be felt in spirit. We can recognise, say, *rāga Bihāg*, in a *dhrupad*, a *khyāl*, a *thumrī* or a *tappā* as the same *rāga* but the *Bihāg* in each of these cases is expressive of a very different ethos.

Conversely, the *tulyadehivat* can also help us to form a criterion for judging if a new style has been achieved. Today it is the *khyāl* alone where significantly new and exciting experiments are being made in style. The similarities in two *dhrupad* renderings of any *rāga* by two different musicians can, I feel, be more often than not appropriately termed *pratibimbavat*.

At best with a more sensitive, creative musician, it does not move beyond the *ālekhyavat*. The reason is that *dhrupad* is a closed, confined style. Transformations are strictly circumscribed and not allowed to stray beyond prescribed limits. This is what allows *dhrupad* to retain its strength and character. But this also prevents it from producing such different styles as we have in the *khyāls* of Amir Khan and Kumar Gandharva, to take two tellingly extreme examples. The difference between two *khyāl* styles is surely in the *tulyadehivat* class.

Though I am tempted here to speculate on the sensibility, or rather the gamut of sensibilities, that modern *khyāl* embodies and their relations with today's milieu, I must now turn to the analysis of the structural components of musical style, the raw material with which it is constituted.

At this point I would like to introduce a rather unfamiliar technical term, the *sthāya*, which I find promising in making the analytical attempt I am aiming at. Śārṅgadeva defines *sthāya* as: "*rāgasya avayavāḥ sthāyāḥ*,": "*sthāyas* are the limbs of a *rāga*." The actual music of Śārṅgadeva's days, that is, the early thirteenth century, is no longer available to us, except in imaginative reconstruction: our own music is in many essentials a legacy from it. However, it is clear from Śārṅgadeva's descriptions that in speaking of *sthāya* he has in mind musical phrases, idioms, melodic figures and the like, in other words, organic structural units of a kind a musician would use to "build" any *rāga*. He gives a long list of *sthāyas* which he apparently considers the basic limbs, organic "building blocks" for constructing a *sthāya*—any *sthāya*. The *sthāyas*—from the root "*sthā*", "to remain"—are the "constants"

60

which a musician handles in order to make his improvisations.

Modifying Śārṅgadeva a little, I would like to speak of *sthāyas* as the smallest organically meaningful structural units into which the totality of melodic movements in a *style* may be reduced. Following Bharata, I would like to call *sthāyas geya-mātṛkās*. Let me explain. In speaking of dance, ancient theorists distinguish between two basic categories of dance: the *nṛtya* and the *nṛtta*. The *nṛtya* was mimic in purport; one could not speak of *nṛtya* without *abhinaya*, mime. But *nṛtta* was purely formal. Bharata calls it a dance which has no connection with the meaning of any text,[20] whereas expressing textual meanings was central to *nṛtya*. In analysing the structure of *nṛtta*, Bharata speaks of basic units of movements which he terms *karaṇas*.

He also calls them *nṛtta-mātṛkās*: literally, the "mothers of dance", so named because these in larger clusters constituted the dance as a whole.[21] Abhinava Gupta's comments in explaining the meaning of *karaṇa* are significant. Abhinava describes *karaṇa* as a body movement which has the quality of grace *(gātrāṇāṁ vilāsakṣepa)*. He further qualifies it as the smallest movement which is nonpragmatic, not made with a utilitarian purpose, and yet having the sense of a single unit.[22] A *karaṇa* is, in other words, the smallest aesthetic block into which *nṛtta* may be analysed. Clearly, *sthāya*, as I have spoken of it, is a notion analogous to *karaṇa*. This is why I have also called it *geya-mātṛkā*, "the mother of song". *Sthāya* in my sense is the smallest unit into which a musical style may be broken.

Even in common musical parlance we do speak of different *sthāya* in connection with different musical styles, though we do so loosely. Expressions like *ṭhumrī kā aṅga, khyāl ka aṅga, dhrupad kā aṅga, ṭappā ka aṅga*, (the *aṅga* of *ṭhumrī*, of *khyāl*, of *dhrupad*, of *ṭappā*) are common among musicians. *Aṅga* in such

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[20] *Nāṭyaśāstra* (G.O.S. ed.) Vol. 1. 4,262. *Nṛtta* is here spoken of as: "*ṅagītakārthasaṁbaddhaṁna capyarthasya bhavakaṁ*".

[21] *Ibid* 4,31 and 4,59-60. There is a suggestion in the second passage that the *nṛtta-mātṛkā* is a unit even smaller than the *karaṇa*, but for my purpose the question of their equivalence is irrelevant. I take them to be equivalent for the point I am making here.

[22] Abhinava on *Nāṭyaśāstra* 4,28-33: "A (graceful) movement distinct from those made in connection with avoiding the undesirable *(heya)* and achieving the desired *(upadeya)* is *karaṇa*... a single movement from one point to another appropriate point is *karaṇa*".

61

usage is neither unambiguous nor precise. But an important aspect of the meaning of *aṅga* in such contexts is plainly structural. *Dhrupad kā aṅga* means melodic movements typical of the *dhrupad* style, such as *gamak*, the *sut* and the like. Listed together and further analysed such movements can yield typical *sthāya* units of the style.

Though I have not made the necessary detailed analysis for identifying and listing typical *sthāyas* of various styles, I believe the exercise will yield fruitful results. The *sthāya* approach can be helpful not only in understanding style, but it may also be valuable for understanding the transformation of one style into another. For if *sthāya* can be seen as the basis of style, the transmutation of *sthāya* can be shown to be an important basis of the emergence of a new style. We, in fact, do speak of such a process when we say, for example, *"dhrupad ke aṅga ko khyāl meṁ dhāl liyā"*: "the *aṅga* of *dhrupad* has been moulded into that of *khyāl"*. Mutating a *dhrupad aṅga* to render it into a *khyāl aṅga* is common among musicians, a fact which can easily be demonstrated.

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[22] Abhinava on *Nātyaśāstra* 4,28-33: "A (graceful) movement distinct from those made in connection with avoiding the undesirable *(heya)* and achieving the desired *(upadeya)* is *karaṇa*... a single movement from one point to another appropriate point is *karaṇa*".

62