

Rasa and Abhinaya in Hindustani Vocal Music: Text, Performance and Aesthetic Communication

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ABSTRACT

Hindustani classical music can be viewed through the prism of intricate rhythm and melody, yet its fundamental quality lies in its ability to convey emotion and beauty. This study investigates how song-texts, or *bandiś*, serve as the main means of achieving *rasa* realisation. Sound serves as a medium for sophisticated emotional transmission in Hindustani music, which is essentially an artistic and expressive art form. The song text (*bandiś*, *pada*, *bol*) is crucial to this communication process, serving as the main factor influencing *rasa*-realisation and providing lyrical support. This study explores the connections between *rasa*, *abhinaya*, and aesthetic communication in Hindustani vocal music, drawing on the traditional philosophy of *rasa* as expounded by Abhinavagupta and expressed in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*. The paper argues that textual meaning, melodic elaboration, and interpretive improvisation together create a triadic aesthetic exchange among the song-text, the performer, and the listener (*sahṛdaya*) by analysing the structural and poetic features of song texts across genres such as *Dhrupad*, *Dhamār*, *khayāl*, *ṭhumrī*, and *bhajan*. To maintain the aesthetic integrity of Hindustani music, the research also emphasises the pedagogical and contemporary significance of incorporating *rasa* and *abhinaya* into performance practice. It examines how the idea of *abhinaya*, typically associated with dance, is essential to vocal performance. This study examines the triadic interaction among the text, the performer, and the listener (*sahṛdaya*). It emphasises the need for an integrated approach to preserve the art form's artistic integrity in modern practice.

Keywords: Hindustani Vocal Music, Indian Aesthetics, *Rasa* Theory, *Vibhāva*, *Rāga*, and *Khayāl*

INTRODUCTION

Hindustani classical music is one of the Indian subcontinent's most refined aesthetic traditions, characterised by its complex *rāga-tāla* structure and its deep ability to evoke emotions. In the Indian aesthetic framework, music surpasses simple, organised sound; it functions as a conduit for *rasa*—the sophisticated, universal experience of emotion (Deshpande, 1987).

The core principle of *rasa* derives from the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, whereby Bharata Muni asserts that *rasa* is the apex of an artistic process initiated by the amalgamation of three elements:

Vibhāva: The external stimuli or situational catalysts.

Anubhāva: The corporeal manifestations or reactions.

Vyabhicārī bhāva: The ephemeral emotional states that bolster the prevailing mood (Bharata Muni, trans. 1950, Ch. 6).

This theoretical framework, originally designed for dramaturgy, has evolved into a fundamental element of Indian musicological theory. During the performance, the musician employs the melodic confines of the rāg to elicit distinct bhava-s (emotions) that guide the audience towards a solitary, transcendent rasa (Rowell, 1992).

In Hindustani vocal music, the bandīś (composition), bol (lyrics), and pada (text) serve as the principal vibhāva—the essential catalyst that elicits a certain emotional reaction. Within Indian aesthetics, song lyrics serve as vital channels for emotional expression, directly influencing the performance's direction through rasa (aesthetic essence), abhinaya (expressive representation), and aesthetic communication (Goswami, 1995). In contrast to instrumental music, which frequently emphasises melodic abstraction, vocal genres foster a symbiotic connection between poetry and melody. In this combination, the literary element establishes a semantic foundation and particular context. At the same time, melodic embellishment amplifies and universalises the emotion, elevating it from an individual sentiment to a shared aesthetic experience (Martinez, 2001).

According to Daniel Neuman, in the Khayal tradition, the bandīś transcends a mere collection of syllables; it is a concentrated melodic and lyrical entity that delineates the essence of the rāga and its emotional capacity (Neuman, 1990). The effectiveness of this communication relies on the singer's capacity to harmonise literal meaning with melodic nuance.

The aesthetic process is also facilitated by abhinaya, a concept traditionally associated with dance and theatre, yet equally important in vocal music. Abhinaya literally means "carrying toward," indicating the conveyance of emotional significance from the performer to the audience. As detailed in aesthetic discourse (Coomaraswamy, 1956), abhinaya includes verbal expression (vācika), nuanced physical representation (āṅgika), and genuine emotional resonance (sāttvika). In Hindustani performance practice, these modes are expressed through subtle pronunciation, tonal nuances, microtonal variations, and emotive phrasing rather than explicit gesture. Hindustani music lyrics are crafted in Braj Bhāṣā, Awadhī, Hindi, and Urdu, characterised by conciseness and evocative poetic richness (Wade, 2001). Literary elements such as metaphor (rūpaka) and suggestion (dhvani) enhance the text's semantic and emotional dimensions. The study reveals that these texts serve as emotional templates for performance, directing improvisational development while preserving their expressive essence.

The communicative process in Hindustani music is inherently triadic, consisting of the song-text as the emotional stimulus, the performer as the interpretive medium, and the listener (sahr̥daya) as the aesthetic recipient. Within this structural framework, the text supplies the essential emotional content that the performer must express through melodic and rhythmic subtleties (Neuman, 1990).

Abhinavagupta's important commentary on the Nāṭyaśāstra, the Abhinavabhāratī, asserts that rasa fully manifests only when an astute and culturally sophisticated audience participates in this aesthetic engagement (Gnoli, 1968). To accomplish this, the listener must be a sahr̥daya—an individual whose heart is distinctly attuned to the emotional nuances of the artist. Thus, the performer's duty extends beyond technical skill; it becomes an interpretive endeavour to transform the literal lyrical meaning into a significant experiential effect (Saxena, 2010).

Abhinavagupta's seminal commentary on the Nāṭyaśāstra, the Abhinavabhāratī, emphasises that rasa reaches its full manifestation only when a perceptive and "culture-thorough" audience engages in this aesthetic interaction (Gnoli, 1968). For the experience to be successful, the listener must be a sahr̥daya—one whose heart is attuned to the same emotional frequencies as the artist. Consequently, the performer's duty transcends mere technical virtuosity; it is an interpretive mission to convert literal lyrical meaning into a profound experiential impact (Saxena, 2010).



Figure 1: Research Methodology

In modern education, there is a noticeable focus on technical skills—speed, accuracy, and intricacy—often at the expense of textual sensitivity and emotional expression (Neuman, 1990). This transition threatens to undermine the cohesive aesthetic quality of Hindustani music. Recentring rasa and abhinaya in performance and pedagogy is crucial for preserving the tradition's communicative vitality.

This research examines the interconnection among *rasa*, *abhinaya*, and aesthetic communication through a focused analysis of song lyrics in prominent Hindustani vocal genres. This study situates musical practice within the classical aesthetic framework. It analyses its textual, performative, and experiential dimensions, reaffirming that Hindustani music is fundamentally an art of aesthetic communication, in which poetry, melody, improvisation, and emotional insight converge to create the experience of *rasa*.

METHODOLOGY

The research follows a qualitative, exploratory design, employing a descriptive-analytical method to investigate the aesthetic and communicative dimensions of Hindustani vocal compositions. The study is structured around a rigorous process of fieldwork and archival research, beginning with in-depth interviews with musicians and instrumentalists to capture practitioner insights into the manifestation of *bhāva* and *rasa*. This is supplemented by the systematic analysis of primary and archival audio and visual recordings, which enables comprehensive documentation of stylistic nuances and historical performance practices (Neuman, 1990).

Data analysis is conducted through several specialised lenses to ensure a holistic understanding of the subject. All musical compositions are meticulously transcribed using the Bhatkhande notation system, providing a precise structural map for the evaluation of melodic and rhythmic features. This technical transcription is then paired with a detailed lyrical and textual analysis of the *Sāhitya* to identify the specific *vibhāvas*, or emotional stimuli, embedded within the poetry. Finally, the study employs comparative musicological analysis across different *Gharānā*-s to examine how lineage-specific interpretations influence the aesthetic trajectory of a performance (Goswami, 1995).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Rasa Theory

This research is based on the traditional Indian aesthetic theory of *rasa*, as defined by Bharata Muni in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* (about 2nd century BCE–2nd century CE). In Chapter 6 of this seminal work, Bharata articulates the renowned aphorism:

“*Vibhāvānubhāvavyabhicāribhāva-saṃyogād rasa-niṣpattiḥ*”

(*Rasa* arises from the conjunction of *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, and *vyabhicāri bhāva*) (Bharata Muni, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Ch. 6). The Concept of *Abhinaya* in Music.

In this context, *rasa* is not the unrefined psychological feeling (*bhāva*) encountered in everyday life; instead, it represents a sophisticated, universal, and aesthetic interpretation of emotion. It is appreciated by the sensitive and empathic observer or listener (*sahṛdaya*) in a state of thoughtful engagement. *Abhinavagupta*, in his seminal commentary *Abhinavabhāratī*, elucidates that *rasa* represents an act of aesthetic enjoyment (*āsvāda*), in which personal feeling transcends individual constraints and becomes universally expressible (*Abhinavagupta*, *Abhinavabhāratī*).

Initially conceived in the realm of dramaturgy, *rasa* theory has significantly impacted Indian musicological discourse and performance aesthetics (Raghavan, 1967). This theoretical paradigm offers a compelling perspective on the interaction among song text, performance practice, and aesthetic communication in Hindustani vocal music.

Components of *Rasa* and Their Musical Implementation

The manifestation of *rasa* has four interconnected elements: *vibhāva*, *anubhāva*, *vyabhicāri bhāva*, and *sthāyī bhāva*. In Hindustani music, these aspects assume unique yet interrelated significances.

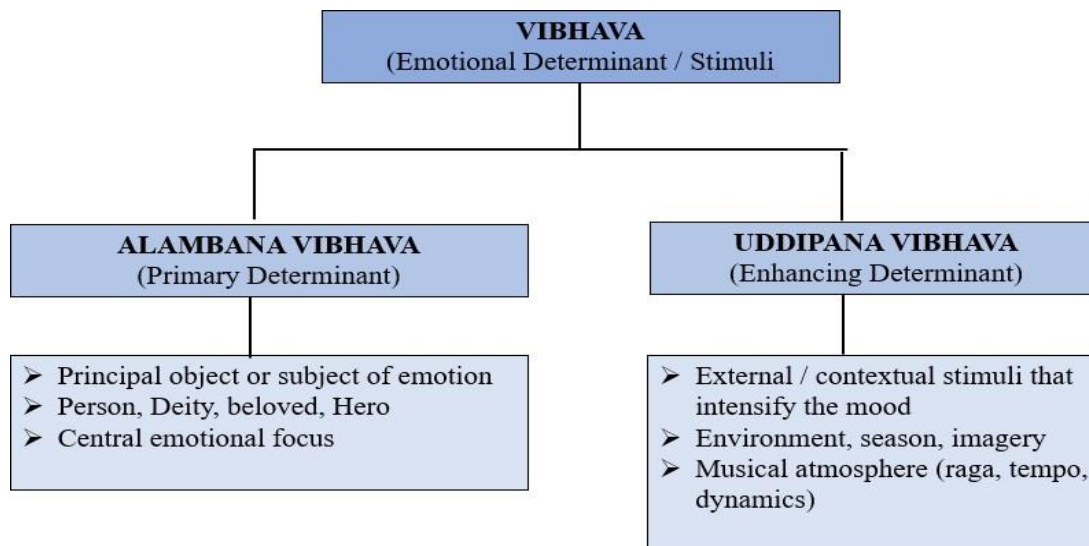


Figure 2: The categorisation of Vibhāva

Vibhāva (Determinants): Vibhāva denotes the emotional determinants or stimuli that elicit a specific mood. Bharata differentiates between:

Ālambana Vibhāva—the principal object or subject of feeling, and Uddīpana Vibhāva—the external or contextual stimuli that amplify the emotional ambience.

In Hindustani vocal music, the lyrics function as the primary vibhāva, offering thematic guidance and emotional impetus. The poetry themes—whether focused on love (śṛṅgāra), separation (viraha), devotion (bhakti), or pathos (karuṇā)—form the emotional basis of performance. A khayāl illustrating viraha establishes the emotional foundation upon which melodic development occurs. Concurrently, the rāga, characterised by its unique tonal quality and expressive shape, may serve as a uddīpana vibhāva, enhancing and intensifying the emotional atmosphere. Consequently, the language initiates the aesthetic journey, while the musical structure sustains and deepens it.

Anubhāva (Consequences)

Anubhāva refers to the expressive manifestations resulting from emotional stimuli. In theatrical contexts, these encompass motions and facial expressions. In vocal music, anubhāva is expressed predominantly through auditory elements, including:

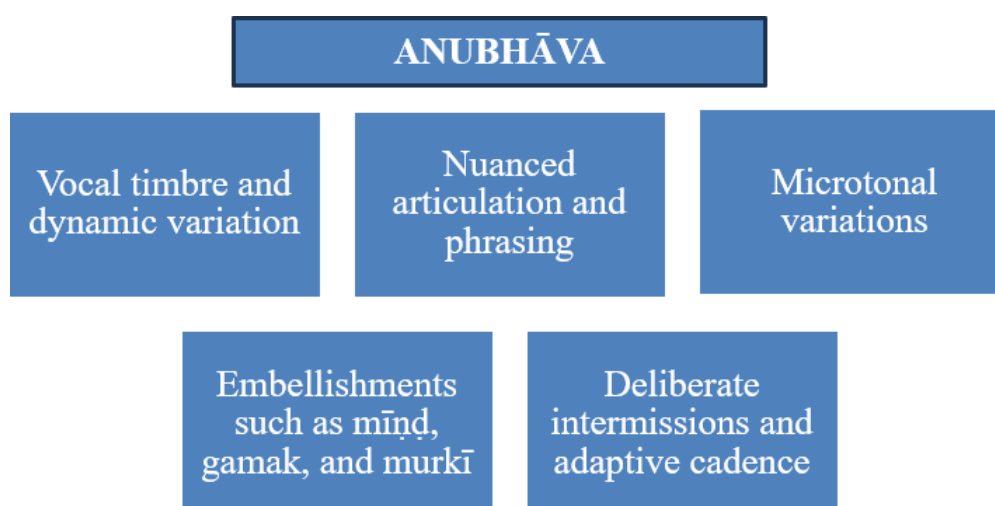


Figure 3: The categorisation of Anuībhāva

Through these expressive means, the performer reveals interior emotional feelings. Coomaraswamy (1956) notes that artistic expression converts internal emotions into tangible aesthetic forms. In Hindustani music, the extension of a single syllable can amplify emotional resonance, transforming lyrical implication into a tangible musical experience.

Vyabhicāri Bhāva (Ephemeral Emotional States)

Vyabhicāri bhāva denotes transient emotional states that enhance and complement the prevailing mood. Bharata delineates thirty-three ephemeral states, encompassing doubt, yearning, concern, delight, and exhaustion (Bharata Muni, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Ch. 7). These transient emotions support and amplify the primary effect without supplanting it. In Hindustani performance, such states manifest discreetly through improvised elaboration. In a composition focused on śrīngāra, elements of reluctance, yearning, or joyful anticipation may emerge through melodic nuances and rhythmic variety. These ephemeral variations augment the profundity and intricacy of the aesthetic experience.

Sthāyī Bhāva (Predominant Emotion)

The sthāyī bhāva is the stable, persistent emotional state that ultimately leads to the experience of rasa. When artistically refined via artistic mediation, the sthāyī bhāva metamorphoses into rasa—rati, which evolves into śrīngāra rasa, and śoka into karuṇā rasa, among others (Raghavan, 1967). In Hindustani vocal music, the sthāyī bhāva is influenced by three interconnected factors:

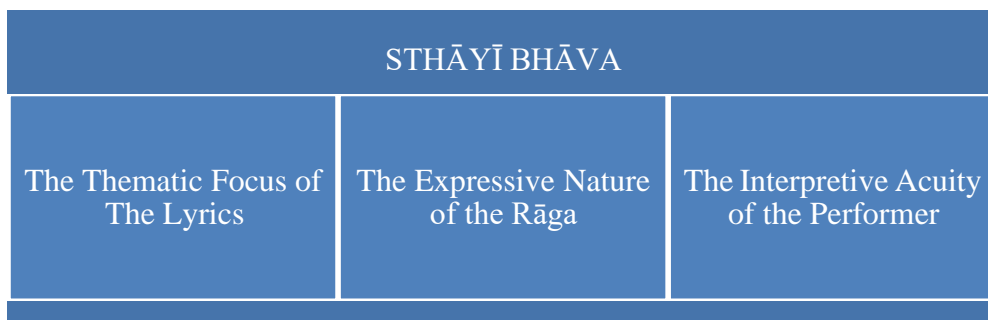


Figure 4: The categorisation of sthāyī bhāva

While *abhinaya* is traditionally linked with dance and drama, it is equally significant in vocal music. Etymologically, it means "carrying emotion towards the listener". In the context of Hindustani music, *abhinaya* manifests in three forms:

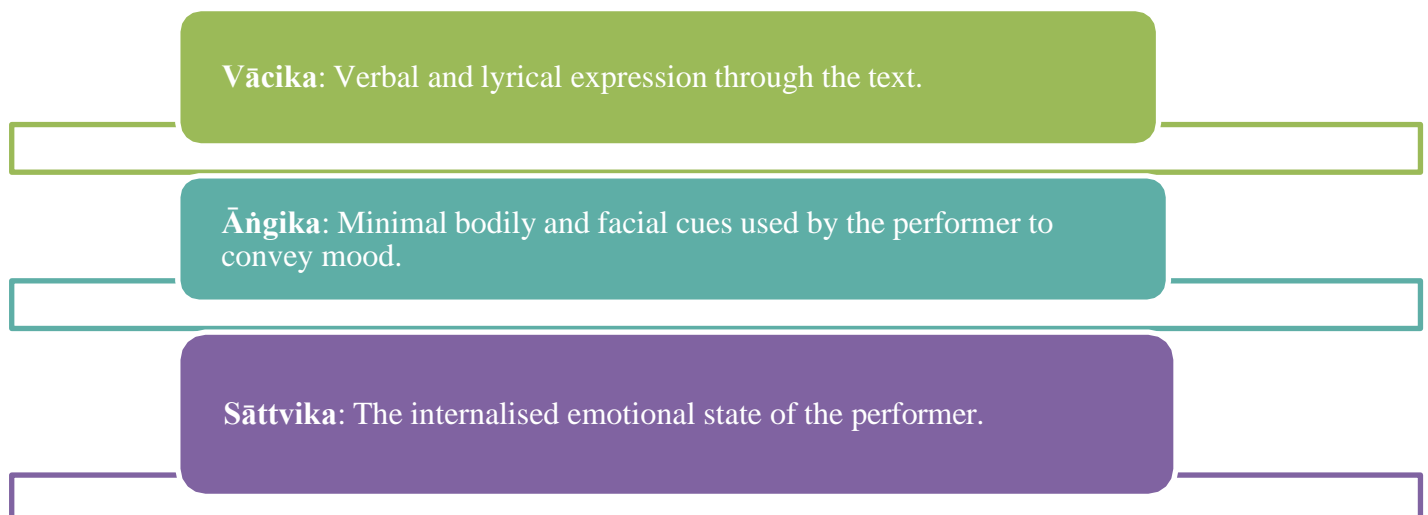


Figure 5: The categorisation of Abhinaya

Abhinaya in Hindustani Vocal Music

Traditionally associated with the domains of dance and drama, the concept of **abhinaya** is equally significant within the realm of vocal music. The term literally means “carrying towards,” denoting the essential process of “carrying emotion towards the listener.” In the context of Hindustani classical performance, *abhinaya* is the vehicle through which the performer bridges the gap between the written text and the listener's aesthetic experience.

Forms of Abhinaya in Music

The study identifies three primary forms of *abhinaya* that are adapted from dramatic theory to musical performance:

Vācika Abhinaya: This involves verbal or lyrical expression, focusing on the song's articulation, emphasis, and pronunciation. Vācika Abhinaya, as defined in the Nāṭyaśāstra by Bharata Muni, refers to expressiveness communicated through speech, vocalisation, intonation, and the artistic use of words. Bharata characterises it as the communicative aspect of performance expressed through articulated sound, poetic text, prosodic variation, and tonal modulation. The Nāṭyaśāstra, while primarily focused on theatrical performance, inherently applies its ideas to Indian art music, wherein the voice serves as the primary vehicle of expressive communication (Bharata, Nāṭyaśāstra, Chs. 17–19).

In Hindustānī Khayāl, Vācika Abhinaya assumes a sophisticated, introspective form. In contrast to theatrical traditions that rely on verbal communication enhanced by gesture and stagecraft, Khayāl emphasises expressiveness through the subtleties of *svara*, *bol*, and *laya*. The textual element of a *bandīś* is not simply lyrical content but an expressive core around which melodic development occurs. Through *bol-bāñṭ* and *bol-ālāp*, the performer reinterprets the text with diverse accents, extensions, and microtonal nuances, thus intensifying emotional resonance. In a *vilambit* composition conveying *viraha* (separation), the elongation of pivotal syllables via *mīñḍ* and *andolan* amplifies the emotional condition inherent in the poetry. This corresponds with the Nāṭyaśāstra concept that vocal modulation must reflect the intended *rasa*.

Researchers of Hindustānī music have noted that Khayāl emphasises creative interpretation and personal emotional expression. According to Vamanrao Deshpande, the core of Khayāl resides in the artist's ability to interpret the poetry line through tonal elaboration and improvisational creativity (Deshpande, *Indian Musical Traditions*, 1988). Bonnie C. Wade observes that in Khayāl performance, textual repetition and melodic variation fulfil not only structural functions but also expressive ones, enabling the singer to convey emotional nuance through vocal shading (Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity Within North India's Classical Music Tradition*, 1984). In this context, Vācika Abhinaya in Khayāl functions through the dynamic interaction of word and melody, where the enunciation of a single term—such as “*piya*” or “*mora*”—can be transmuted into a range of emotional significances via tonal emphasis, tempo alteration, and timbral variation.

Moreover, the therapy of *rāga* itself enhances Vācika expression. The significance of Darbari Kanada, expressed with persistent *andolan*, and the radiant breadth of Yaman, conveyed by seamless *mīñḍ*, illustrate how vocal interpretation enhances literary emotion. The vocalist's mastery of pitch, resonance, breath, and dynamic variation converts the poetic word into a tangible aesthetic experience. Consequently, Vācika Abhinaya in Hindustānī Khayāl is not assertive but rather implicit; it manifests through tone modulation rather than explicit dramatisation. Although grounded in the dramaturgical principles of the Nāṭyaśāstra, Vācika Abhinaya in Khayāl becomes a complex musical phenomenon in which the voice serves as both storyteller and performer and as an emotional catalyst. The Khayāl vocalist, through nuanced textual interpretation, *svara* modulation, and improvisational embellishment, performs an inner drama that leads to *rasa*-realisation for the audience. An exemplary instance of Vācika Abhinaya in Hindustānī Khayāl can be noticed in the renowned *vilambit bandīś* in Yaman:

“O beloved, my heart does not feel content without you.”

This conventional composition, typically rendered in vilambit ektāl or tūntāl, conveys viraha (the anguish of separation). The literary composition is straightforward; its expressive capacity is substantial. The term "piyā" serves as the emotional nucleus of the piece. During performance, the vocalist may extend "pi-yā" with a prolonged mīṇḍ from Ni to Ga or Re to Ga, permitting the vowel sound to flourish progressively. The elongation of the word not only adorns the rāga but also amplifies the emotional longing inherent in the sentence. The gradual oscillation on key notes amplifies the melancholic atmosphere, converting a fleeting word into an extended aesthetic experience.

Likewise, in Darbari Kanada, a composition such as

“Kāhe ko byāhi bides”

evokes profound sorrow. The interrogative "kāhe" (why) can be expressed with a profound, contemplative tone, often incorporating a drop in pitch through komal Ga and Dha, accompanied by notable andolan. The singer's intentional delay following "kāhe" might amplify the emotional significance of the inquiry. Through bol-bāṇṭ, the artist can deconstruct the phrase—kāhe... ko byāhi... bides...—with each iteration uniquely influenced by laya and tonal contour. The expressive enunciation of consonants and vowels, along with microtonal variations, comprises Vācika Abhinaya in its musical expression.

An illustrative devotional example can be observed in a bandiś in Bhairav, such as “The Enchanting Inhabitant of Braj.”

In this setting, the allure of “Man mōhan” may be accentuated through subtle gamak and radiant vowel elongation, while “brij ke bāsī” may be tempered to represent rural tranquillity. The voice articulates the material and interprets it through tonal nuance, dynamic variation, and rhythmic flexibility.

These instances illustrate that in Khayāl, the bandiś functions as the linguistic and emotional foundation. The singer employs sophisticated vocal techniques—elongation, repetition, emphasis, pause, and melodic reinterpretation—to transform poetic text into an expressive performance, thereby realising the aesthetic concept of Vācika Abhinaya as articulated in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

Āṅgika Abhinaya: This refers to the use of subtle, minimal bodily gestures and facial expressions that reinforce the meaning of the lyrics.

Āṅgika Abhinaya, as delineated in the Nāṭyaśāstra by Bharata Muni, pertains to expressiveness communicated by corporeal movement—major limbs (aṅga), minor limbs (upāṅga), and ancillary motions. In Hindustānī classical music, while performance lacks theatricality in the dramatic sense, nuanced bodily expression is a fundamental, albeit understated, aspect of communication. The body does not perform narrative actions; instead, it reflects and amplifies musical emotions.

An explicit illustration can be found in a vilambit khayāl in Yaman, exemplified by the bandiś “Eri āli piyā bin mora jiyā na lāge.” During the execution of a slow mīṇḍ from Ni to Ga, the vocalist frequently gestures the right hand in a subtle upward arc. This motion clearly delineates the melodic line's rise. During the exploration of falling phrases, the palm may progressively decrease in alignment with the musical contour. This movement is not deliberately orchestrated; it emerges naturally from profound immersion in the rāga. The hand consequently serves as a visible extension of svāra.

In a solemn rāga such as Darbari Kanada, the physical expression varies significantly. The vocalist generally adopts a stable, composed stance with limited motion. The head may tilt slightly lower, and the facial expression assumes an introspective demeanour. While sustaining andolan on komal Ga or Dha, the measured sway of the torso gently mirrors the oscillating action of the note. This controlled physicality amplifies the atmosphere of seriousness without excessive dramatisation.

An additional example can be derived from the rendition of a devotional bandiś in Bhairav, namely “Man mōhan brij ke bāsī.” During the performance of "Man mōhan," the vocalist's facial expression often softens, and the

eyes may briefly shut, indicating introspective reverence. The subtle elevation of the eyebrows or a tranquil smile amplifies the bhakti-bhāva inherent in the text. The emotional essence of the poetry is subtly mirrored in physical delicacy.

In Dhrupad, specifically within the Dhrupad lineage, Āṅgika Abhinaya is expressed with an upright posture and intentional, measured hand motions that correspond with the evolving ālāp. The minimalist movement emphasises meditative focus and structural clarity.

Consequently, Āṅgika Abhinaya in Hindustānī music serves as a corporeal manifestation of musical ideology. Gesture, posture, facial expression, and deliberate physical movement enhance the auditory aspect, augmenting aesthetic communication while remaining secondary to the dominance of sound.

In this setting, the allure of “Man mōhan” can be accentuated through subtle gamak and radiant vowel elongation, whilst “brij ke bāsī” may be tempered to suggest a sense of pastoral tranquillity. The voice not only articulates the material but also interprets it through tonal nuance, dynamic variation, and rhythmic flexibility.

These instances illustrate that, in Khayāl, the bandīś functions as both the foundational text and the emotional impetus. The singer employs sophisticated vocal techniques—elongation, repetition, emphasis, pause, and melodic reinterpretation—to transform poetic text into an expressive performance, thereby realising the aesthetic concept of Vācika Abhinaya as articulated in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

Sāttvika Abhinaya

This represents the most profound level of expression, characterised by an internalised emotional state and authenticity, reflected through tonal nuance and timbral depth. The Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata Muni defines Sāttvika Abhinaya as involuntary, deeply internal responses from true emotional experience. According to Bharata, interior states are expressed through tears (asru), shaking (vepathu), voice alteration (svarabheda), horripilation (romāñca), and silence (stambha). Sāttvika Abhinaya, unlike Āṅgika or Vācika Abhinaya, is spontaneous and arises from deep emotional absorption.

Sāttvika Abhinaya holds a significant yet subtle place in Hindustani classical music. The art form focuses on internalising bhāva, as it is predominantly melodic rather than theatrical. While immersed in a rāga, vocalists may experience involuntary alterations in their vocal and physical performance that go beyond purposeful technique.

In Bhairav devotional songs like “Man mōhan brij ke bāsī,” the singer's emotional connection to the text may cause tears or a quivering tone when speaking the heavenly name. These signals are not technological instruments but rather evidence of the genuine internalisation of bhakti-bhāva. Sincerity is instinctively perceived by the listener, enhancing rasa-realisation. In the austere ālāp of Dhrupad, Sāttvika Abhinaya is often seen in deep meditation. The performer may appear disconnected, inhaling deeply and sustaining notes with focus. The performance space's silence evokes inner peace, which the audience appreciates. Hence, Sāttvika Abhinaya in Hindustānī music is the peak of aesthetic sensation. The technique dissolves into emotional reality, and the performer's inner mood resonates through the music. Unlike conscious gesture or explicit speech, it is silent but powerful evidence of real rasa from rhythmic elasticity. The bandīś is the textual and emotional seed in Khayāl, as shown in these samples. By using vocal techniques such as elongation, repetition, emphasis, pauses, and melodic reinterpretation, singers can transform poetic language into an expressive enactment, aligning with the aesthetic concept of Vācika Abhinaya in the Nāṭyaśāstra.

In Hindustani music, *abhinaya* is frequently internalised rather than being overtly demonstrative. Consequently, the performer's voice serves as the primary expressive medium. Technical elements such as microtonal inflexions (śruti), oscillations (gamak), and glides (mīṇḍ) are not merely decorative; they serve as critical emotional signifiers that deepen the realisation of *rasa*.

Song-Texts as Emotional Blueprints

Song texts in Hindustani music are often written in languages like Braj Bhāṣā, Awadhī, Hindi, and Urdu. These texts are compact poetic forms that utilise deep emotional suggestions (*dhvani*), metaphors (*rūpaka*), and symbolism. They act as "emotional blueprints," providing the structural and emotive foundation for the performance.

Song-Texts as a Form of Emotional Architecture

The song texts used in Hindustani classical music form the basic foundation for aesthetic transmission. The literature in question is often written in several regional languages and dialects, with Braj Bhāṣā, Awadhī, Hindi, and Urdu being the most prominent. However, rather than extensive narratives, they are condensed poetic forms that offer profound emotional resonance in a few lines chosen at random.

Instruments of Literature and Their Purpose

The effectiveness of these works as "emotional blueprints" is dependent on several important literary and aesthetic methods, including the following:

When a text conveys deeper meanings beyond the precise definitions of its words, this is referred to as "dhvani," or suggestion. Metaphor, also known as *rūpaka*, refers to the use of figurative language to establish connections between personal experiences and emotions. One definition of symbolism is the use of traditional symbols to evoke particular feelings or associations at specific times of the year. The texts serve as the basic *vibhāva*, or determinant, from which a performer constructs a rendition. They provide the key framework, both structural and emotional, around which the performer develops their rendition. By serving as a blueprint, the text guides the performer's improvisation, ensuring that each melodic phrase remains in harmony with the anticipated aesthetic essence of the composition.

Song-Texts in Hindustani Music

The lyrics in Hindustani music are the essential component for aesthetic expression, distinguished by their linguistic and poetic variety. These pieces are predominantly composed in languages including Braj Bhāṣā, Awadhī, Hindi, and Urdu.

Poetic Techniques and Composition

Although typically concise, these works are crafted to be emotionally rich, employing intricate literary techniques to imply profound significances:

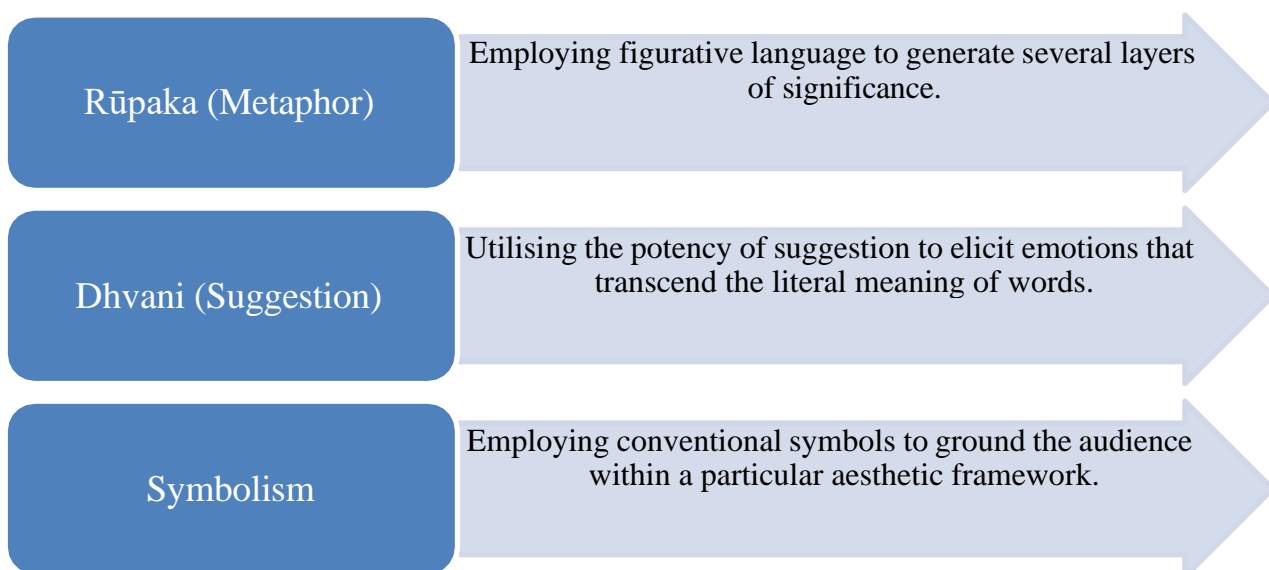


Figure 6: The Song-Texts as Emotional Blueprint

The conciseness of a *khayāl bandīś* is misleading; although the words are succinct, they carry significant emotional weight. A solitary phrase depicting a situation like *viraha* (the anguish of separation) furnishes the performer with sufficient thematic substance to produce extensive melodic explorations via *ālāp* and *vistār*. Thus,

the lyrics serve as an emotional framework, providing the fundamental structural and emotional basis that guides the entire performance.

Genre-Specific Rasa Realisation

The expression of rasa in Hindustani music varies across genres, textual compositions, and performance methodologies. The analytical elements of this study delineate how each vocal form navigates the interplay between song-text, improvisation, and emotional expression in distinct manners. The development of rasa is hence distinctive to the genre, influenced by aesthetic priorities and stylistic traditions.

Khayāl

Khayāl, the preeminent genre of Hindustani classical vocal music, is distinguished by relatively concise, evocative lyrics that serve as a basis for extended melodic improvisation. The study indicates that the text is frequently abstract, allowing emotional significance to develop progressively throughout the musical development.

The process of rasa-realisation in khayāl transpires through sequential stages of development: ālāp (slow, non-metrical investigation), vistār (melodic expansion), and tār-s (rapid melodic passages). The performer internalises the text's emotional content and conveys it through tonal complexity, microtonal modulation, and rhythmic subtlety, rather than through blatant dramatisation.

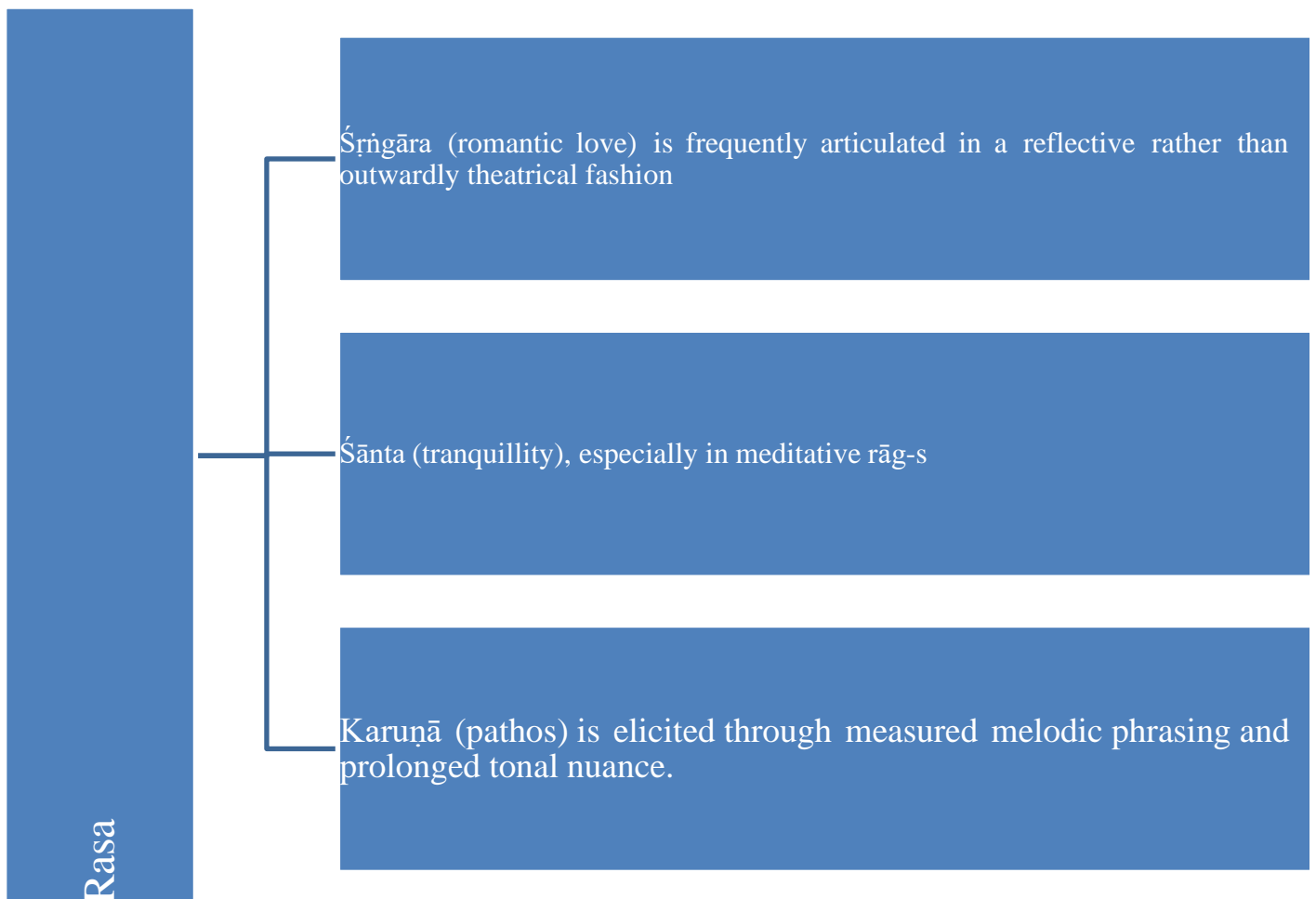


Figure 7: The Rasa Realisation

In this genre, abhinaya is predominantly internalised. The conciseness of the bandiś does not constrain emotional profundity; instead, spontaneous elaboration allows the performer to develop and amplify the sthāyī bhāva until it evolves into rasa.

Sl. No.	Rāga	Rāga	Rasa Classification	Thematic Dimension	Opening Line (Sthāyī)	Performance Aesthetics
1	Ābhogī	Bhakti	Devī Stuti (Ādi Śakti)	Jayattī jaya jaya ādi śaktī	Jayattī jaya jaya ādi śaktī jag janani	Vilambit alāp expansion, sustained vowel elongation
2	Bhairavī	Śṛṅgāra (Lilā)	Holī–Kr̥ṣṇa playful teasing	Holī–Kr̥ṣṇa playful teasing	Bāṭ calat nahīṃ cunari raṅga dāri	Bol-banāo, delicate murkī, expressive rhythmic play
3	Hamīr	Śṛṅgāra	Nāyikā complaint	Nāyikā complaint	Kaise ghar jāū jāū langarvā	Madhya-laya elaboration, emphatic tihāī
4	Bihāgarā	Śṛṅgāra	Romantic quarrel	Romantic quarrel	Nit karat rār tum ham so langara	Rhythmic elasticity with bold phrase emphasis
5	Durgā	Bhakti	Devī Mahimā	Devī Mahimā	Jaya jaya jaya Durge Mātā Bhavānī	Clear articulation and devotional gravity
6	Bairāgi Bhairav	Bhakti	Bhakti / Prārthanā	Sarasvatī invocation	Mā Śārade jagat janani	Nāda-brahmat symbolism
7	Yaman Kalyān	Bhakti–Viraha	Śiva Darśana yearning	Śiva Darśana yearning	Darśana dehu Śq̄ṅkara Mahādeva	Expansive mīṇḍ with luminous tivrā Ma
8	Tōḍī	Viyoga Śṛṅgāra	Dawn-separation motif	Ehora bhāī torī bāta	Bhora bhāī torī bāta tākat piyā	Curvilinear mīṇḍ, and deep andolan
9	Gorakh Kalyān	Viyoga Śṛṅgāra	Emotional abandonment	Sajana bina bāvari bhāī	Madness metaphor, tear imagery	Soft tonal shading, introspective delivery
10	Aḍanā	Śṛṅgāra	Romantic confrontation	Gagari mori bharana nāhi det	Encegetic projection with	Energetic projection, strong tān-pāiterns
11	Kausik Kānada	Vira –Bhakti	Musical warfare metaphor	Rājana ke siratiṅja	Vira / Gamak, structured rhythmic phrasing	Majestic gamak, structured rhythmic phrasing
12	Śāṅkarā	Desī	Impermanence (vīri –bast me)	Sūci kahat hai Adāranga ye	Expansive ingzgo, balanced melodic phrasing	Reflective tempo, balanced melodic phrasing
14	Māru Bihāga	Viyoga Śṛṅgāra	Existential longing	Pṛīta moro sāvaro ajahū na aē	Expansive alāp with emotional repetition	

Figure 8: Analytical table of khayal bandiś themes

Ṭhumrī

Ṭhumrī holds a unique status as a semi-classical, text-oriented genre. In contrast to khayāl, ṭhumrī prioritises lyrical expressiveness and emotional immediacy. The technique of bol-banāv—an expressive expansion of words—constitutes the essence of its aesthetic character. The predominant rasa in ṭhumrī is Śṛṅgāra, especially in its vipralambha (separation) aspect. The performer frequently personifies the emotional essence suggested in the poem, facilitating a more immediate and personal verbal interaction. The expressive tactics encompass:

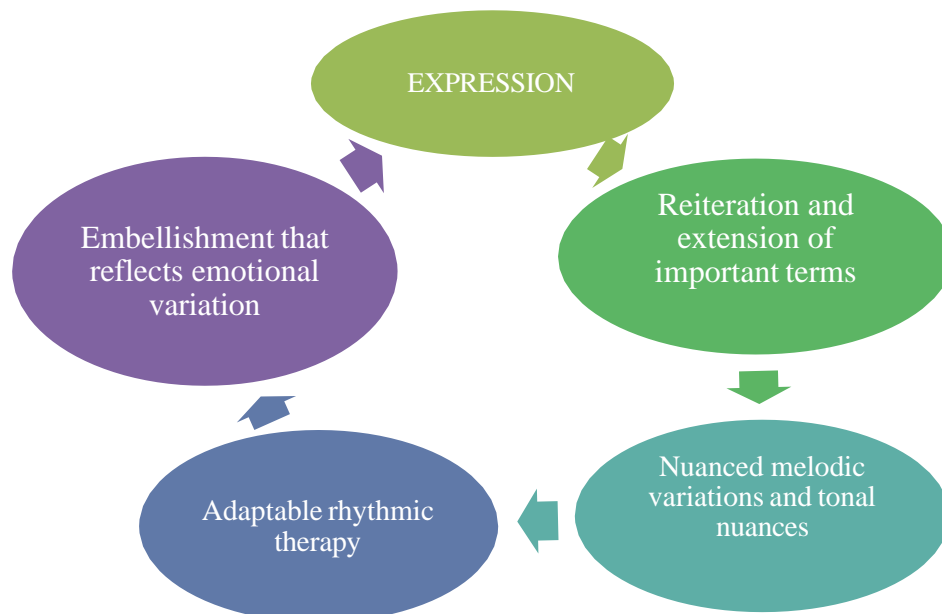


Figure 9: The expressive tactics in Ṭhumrī

These strategies render the lyrical substance the primary vibhāva, facilitating the conveyance of rasa with intensified immediacy. The interaction between semantic meaning and melodic improvisation creates a complex aesthetic experience.

Ṭhumrī holds a unique status in North Indian semi-classical music as a genre focused on lyrics and emotional expression. In contrast to khayāl, which prioritises the structural development of rāga via melodic and rhythmic improvisation, ṭhumrī highlights textual expressiveness and emotional immediacy. The poetic wording of the bandīs serves as the primary vehicle for conveying emotional nuances.

A characteristic aesthetic element of ṭhumrī is the bol-banāv technique, in which specific words or phrases are musically elaborated, repeated, and embellished to reveal the many nuances of emotional significance. Through nuanced melodic variations, delicate mīṇḍ and murkī, and an adaptable rhythmic interpretation, the performer transforms the lyrical material into a profoundly emotional musical dialogue.

The primary emotional framework of ṭhumrī is Śṛṅgāra rasa, predominantly expressed in its vipralambha (separation) aspect, in which the heroine's (nāyikā) yearning for the absent beloved serves as the central narrative theme. In performance, the vocalist frequently embodies the emotional essence of the lyrics, thus converting the work into a mode of personal theatrical expression. This method facilitates a direct, personal connection with the audience, as the singer's vocal expressions reflect the poem's psychological nuances.

For instance, in the renowned ṭhumrī “Kaun gali gayo Śyām,” the lyrics convey Rādhā's longing for Kṛṣṇa. In which lane has Śyām departed, please inform me, dear friend. “Please inform me, dear friend.”

During the recital, the vocalist may frequently embellish the word “Śyām” with extended mīṇḍ and intricate ornamentation, expressing yearning and emotional ambiguity. The expression “batā de sakhi” can be used with conversational nuance to convey the intimate rapport between the heroine and her companion. Utilising these interpretive skills, the vocalist brings the poetic narrative to life, allowing the emotional essence of the composition to unfold gradually.

❖ MUSICAL & LEXICOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SEMI-CLASSICAL FORMS ❖					
❖ A Comparative Overview of Hori / Dhamar, Tappa, Dadra and Thumri ❖					
Type (Form)	Lyrics / Bandish	Artist	Raga	Taal	Rasa
Hori / Dhamar	'Fagunwa Aayo Sakhi Aaj...	Traditional	Kafi	Deepchandi	Shringaar
Tappa	'Nazar Nahi Aanda...	Vidushi Girija Devi	Kafi	Addha	Shringaar
Dadra	'Julmi Sawariya Na Maane Kahanwa...	Bilambita Banisudha	Bhairavi	Dadra	Shringaar
Thumri	'Kon Gali Gayo Shyam...	Bilambita Banisudha	Khamaj	Jat	Viyog / Bhakti

Note on Expressive Flexibility in Semi-Classical Forms:

- ❖ Semi-classical genres such as Hori, Tappa, Dadra and Thumri emphasise expressive lyricism and emotional nuance rather than strict adherence to rigid raga grammar. Performers frequently incorporate ornamentation, improvisation and flexible melodic movement to enhance the *bhava* and poetic sentiment of the text, allowing the emotional essence of the composition to emerge more prominently.

Figure 10: Musical and lexicological analysis of semi-classical Form

Devotional Song

Bhajan, as indicated in the study, emphasises devotional sentiment and spiritual surrender. The linguistic material is often straightforward and comprehensible, highlighting devotion (bhakti), humility, and yearning for the divine.

The primary rasas linked to bhajan encompass:

Devotional sentiment (bhakti)

Śānta (tranquil contemplation),

Karuṇā (pathos, frequently articulated as a longing for divine grace).

In this genre, the devotional subject—be it a god, guru, or heavenly principle—serves as the primary ālambana vibhāva. Melodic repetition and uncomplicated rhythmic patterns encourage communal engagement and reflective immersion.

While musically simpler than khayāl, bhajan attains significant emotional depth through genuine expression and collective engagement. The aesthetic experience emerges from the convergence of poetic dedication, melodic simplicity, and collective spiritual awareness.

Poet	Prominent Pad / Choupai	Vocalist	Raag (Melodic Base)	Taal Rhythm	Ras Emotion	Alankar (Poetic Device)
Tulsidas	Shri Ramachandra Kripalu Bhaju Man...	Lata Mangeshkar	Yaman Kalyan (Mishra)	Rupak (7 Beats)	Riakti Shanta	Rupak / Upama: "Kanja lochan, Kanja mukh"
Surdas	Maiya Mori Main Nahi Makhan Khayo...	Lata Mangeshkar	Mishra Khamaj	Keherwa Bhajani	Vatsalya	Anupras: "Maiya Mori Main..."
Meerabai	Payoji Maine Ram Ratan Dhan Payo...	Lata Mangeshkar	Mishra Pahadi	Keherwa	Madhurya Bhakti	Rupak: "Ram Ratan Dhan"
Kabir Das	Chadariya Jhini Re Jhini...	Anup Jalota	Desh	Keherwa	Nirveda	Anyukti: "Chadariya"
Guru Nanak	Koi Bole Ram Ram Koi Khudai...	Bhai Nirmal Singh	Ramkali	Keherwa	Universal Devotion	Pad Maitri: Rhythmic alignment of names.
Raidas	Prabhuji Tum Chandan Hum Pani...	Anup Jalota	Mishra Khamaj	Keherwa	Dasya Bhakti	Upama. "Chandan-Pani", "Ghan-Mor"
Narsinh Mehta	Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye...	Lata Mangeshkar	Khamaj	Keherwa	Shanta / Karuna	Drishtant: Examples of a true devotee

Note on Melodic Flexibility in Devotional Music:

◆ In the rendition of Bhakti Sangeet (devotional music), vocalists frequently employ Mishra Ragas (mixed melodic frameworks) rather than adhering to rigid classical grammar. The primary abjective of this genre is not the technical exhibition of a Raga, but rather the elevation of the semantic and emotional maience (Bhava and Rasa) of the poet's lyrics. This melodic flexibility ensures that the spiritual and literary message of the Pad is delivered with maximum emotional resonance, prioritizing lyrical clarity and devitium over strict strualural wies.

Figure 11: Musical and lexicological analysis of devotional texts

Aesthetic Dynamics Specific to Genre

The manifestation of *rasa* in *khayāl*, *ṭhumrī*, and *bhajan* demonstrates varying equilibria among textual density, improvisational liberty, and expressive immediacy. *Khayāl* promotes abstract internalisation and progressive emotional development; *ṭhumrī* highlights text-driven expressiveness and lyrical embodiment, and *bhajan* focuses on devotional clarity and contemplative immersion.

In every instance, the lyrics serve as the primary catalyst (*vibhāva*), but melodic embellishment and interpretative nuance convert it into an aesthetic experience. The variety of Hindustani vocal genres demonstrates the flexibility of *rasa* theory across many musical contexts, confirming its lasting significance in performance practice and artistic expression.

Aesthetic communication in Hindustani vocal music constitutes a triadic relationship among the song text, the performer, and the listener (*sahrdaya*). This paradigm embodies the traditional conception of *rasa* as an experiential occurrence that emerges via connection rather than through solitary artistic creation. According to the analytical paradigm of this study, *rasa* arises when these three aspects are harmoniously aligned.

The Lyrics: The Emotional Catalyst

The lyrics—known as *bandīś*, *pada*, or *bol*—function as the principal *vibhāva*, the factor that establishes emotional orientation. It builds the performance's thematic and emotional framework through poetic imagery, metaphor, and evocative language (*dhvani*). The language conveys longing, devotion, peace, or pathos, serving as the "emotional blueprint" for aesthetic development. In this situation, the text does not simply accompany the tune; it underpins the entire emotional landscape of the performance.

The Performer: The Interpreter and Medium

The actor serves as the interpretive intermediary, converting literary meaning into a tangible aesthetic experience. The artist brings the lyrical subject to life through vocal articulation, tone modulation, and improvisational embellishment. This position transcends mere technical execution; the performer must embody the text's emotional core through internalised *abhinaya*. Through melodic expansion and expressive nuance, the performer fosters the *sthāyī bhāva* (dominant feeling) towards complete *rasa*-realisation.

The Listener (Sahrdaya)

The Aesthetic Recipient: The listener, referred to in classical thought as the *sahrdaya* (meaning "one of like heart"), is an active participant in the aesthetic experience rather than a passive recipient. As *Abhinavagupta* notes, *rasa* is perceived solely by an audience member with the requisite sensitivity and cultural attunement. The *sahrdaya* does not react to the performer's individual, visceral emotion but to its universalised, aesthetic representation. By engaging in attentive listening and contemplative immersion, the listener can perceive or comprehend the *rasa*.

The attainment of *rasa* occurs solely when the emotional impetus of the song's lyrics, the performer's interpretive embodiment, and the listener's receptive sensitivity align. If any of these factors is compromised—if the text lacks profundity, the performer's expression is shallow, or the listener is distracted—the aesthetic experience is rendered incomplete. Aesthetic communication in Hindustani music represents a dynamic integration of text, voice, and receptive awareness.

Song-Text Analysis

The chosen song texts illustrate how poetic composition directly influences *rasa* in Hindustani vocal music. The devotional works in *Rāga Ābhogī*, *Durgā*, *Bairāgī Bhairav*, and *Yaman Kalyāṇ* focus on divine entities as *ālambana vibhāva*, employing repetitive invocations and epithets to amplify *bhakti*. Their language prioritises

surrender, humility, and a yearning for darśana, facilitating prolonged vowel extension and deliberate melodic expansion to enhance contemplative profundity.

The śṛṅgāra-themed writings in Bhairavī, Hamīr, Bihāgarā, and Aḍānā depict humorous disputes, banter, and passionate declarations. Seasonal allusions, rural locales, and direct engagement create vivid uddīpana vibhāva. The emotional tone varies from māna and lajjā to assertive confrontation, allowing for expressive bol articulation and rhythmic flexibility.

The viyoga śṛṅgāra writings in Toḍī, Gorakh Kalyān, and Māru Bihāga emphasise separation and emotional turmoil. Temporal imagery, such as daybreak, and metaphors like fish out of water, intensify the feeling of yearning. The language is reflective and emotionally evocative, harmonising seamlessly with fluid melodic progression and prolonged mīṇḍ.

The heroic and philosophical works in Kauśik Kānāḍā, Śāṅkarā, and Desī transition towards magnificence and contemplation. Regal commendation and martial analogies transform musical components into emblems of power and expertise, while contemplative imagery elicits detachment and śānta rasa. The authors collect the song texts analysed here from oral traditional teaching of Hindustani classical music.

Comparative Mapping: Rāga–Rasa–Abhinaya in Selected Bandiś

RĀGA	RĀGA	RASA	BHĀVA	ABHINAYA	AESHETIC TECHNIQUES	AESTHETIC OUTCOME
Ābhogī	Ābhogī	Bhakti →	Śraddhā, Dainya →	Sustained “Jaya” phrases →	Meditative devotional immersion	Meditative devotional immersion
Bhakti	Śṛṅgāra (Lilā)	Śṛṅgāra (Lilā) →	Māna, Lajjā →	Bol-banāo, playful →	Bol-banāo, playful	Playful erotic charm
Bhairavī	Hamīr	Śṛṅgāra (Social Play) →	Māna, Irṣyā →	Fluid-scale; scope for mirkt and an- →	Medium-tempo bol-āilāp	Intimate, dialogic rasa
Hamīr	Bihāgarā	Śṛṅgāra (Social Play) →	Māna, Irṣyā →	Expansive, āroha-avaroha →	Medium-tempo bol-āilāp; emphatic tihāt	Reverential elevation
Bairagī (Prārthīnā)	Durgā	Bhakti (Prārthanā) →	Dainya, Vinaya →	Medium-tempo bol-āilāp; emphatic tihāt →	Clear articulated lagāv; restrainee gamak	Inner humility and surrender
Yaman Kalyān	Yaman Kalyān	Bhakti–Viraha →	Āśraya, Longing →	Clear articulated lagāv →	Repetition of “Mahādeva”	Luminous yearning devotion
Toḍī	Toḍī	Bhakti (Prārthanā) →	Śaranāgati →	Śhuddha-swara clarity, devotional →	Tira Ma luminosity; expansive glide →	Deep pathos, emotional stretch
Aḍānā	Śṛṅgāra (Assertive)	Bhakti–Viraha →	Āśraya, Longing →	Tvī-ra, Ma. lulinse; it: symmetrical phrasing →	Repetition of “Mahādeva”; elongated mind →	Luminous yearning devotion
Kauśik Kānāḍā	Śāṅkara	Vīra / Bhakti →	Abahūt, Gaurava →	Powerful bol-tān; elongated mind →	Mājestic projection →	Interorse: grandeur
Desī	Sānta	Viyoga Śṛṅgāra →	Utsāha, Gaurava →	Powerful tān –āe →	Powerful bol-tān →	Existential yearning

■ Bhakti ■ Śṛṅgāra ■ Viyoga Śṛṅgāra ■ Vīra ■ Sānta ■ Sānta ■ Sānta ■ Maru Bihāg
■ Bhakti ■ Śṛṅgāra ■ Viyoga Śṛṅgāra ■ Vīra ■ Sānta ■ Sānta ■ Sānta ■ Viyoga Śṛṅgāra

Figure 12: Comparative Mapping Raga-Rasa – Abhinaya in selected Bandish

The comparative analysis of song texts shows a complex interplay among rāga structure, poetic text, and vācika abhinaya, revealing the aesthetic communication in Hindustani vocal music through both sonic and semantic elements. Rāga Ābhogī, a Bhakti-oriented literature, emphasises the deity as the principal ālambana vibhāva and devotion through the repetition of epithets such as “jaya” and “mahā māyā”. The pentatonic austerity of Ābhogī promotes meditation, while persistent vowel extension and mild mīṇḍ create a contemplative mood.

Rāga Bhairavī, affiliated with līlā-based śṛṅgāra, identifies Banvārī (Kṛṣṇa) as the emotional anchor and Holī imagery as uddīpana vibhāva. Bhairavī's flexible scalar character allows for expressive murkī and bol-banāo, permitting fun māna and lajjā articulation. While Rāga Hamīr depicts śṛṅgāra through dramatic conversation and social shame, madhya-laya wording and strong tihāi-s emphasise emotional assertion. Rāga Bihāgarā depicts a romantic conflict in a rural setting, with conversational verbal focus and rhythmic elasticity that enhance the intimacy of the dialogue.

In Rāga Durgā, the Goddess's appearance emphasises the bhāva of śaraṇāgati, promoting devotion. Clear, pure svāra-s and balanced phrasing enhance reverence. In Rāga Bairāgī Bhairav, komal re and dha enhance contemplation, while restrained gamak and tonal lagāv create a humble, prārthanā-appropriate mood. In Rāga Yaman Kalyāṇ, the cry for darśana combines bhakti and viraha, introducing existential yearning. The luminous tivra Ma and vast mīṇḍ inspire spiritual ambition, while the repetition of “Mahādeva” deepens devotion. Viyoga śṛṅgāra reaches emotional depth in Rāga Toḍī, with dawn images serving as uddīpana vibhāva. Komal Swara's curved melodic lines reflect emotional tension, and slow mīṇḍ with delicate andolan expresses pathos. Rāga Gorakh Kalyāṇ intensifies separation through subtle tonal shading and restrained articulation, turning tear imagery into auditory meditation. In Māru Bihāga, the metaphor of fish without water emphasises existential need, while broad ālāp and reiterative phrases build emotional intensity.

Rāga Aḍānā portrays assertive śṛṅgāra with a strong upper-register accent and tān execution, expressing energetic love conflict. Royal praise of Rājā Rāmacandra in Rāga Kauśik Kānaḍā combines vīra rasa and bhakti, while grave gamak-oriented movement and organised laya create heroic grandeur. The alaṅkāra bandīś in Rāga Śaṅkarā uses a battle metaphor to illustrate musical technique, turning tān, laya, and gamak into symbolic weapons. In this piece, precise rhythm and strong bol-tān provide intellectual-heroic delight. Rāga Desī uses a river-boat metaphor to convey philosophical detachment, while moderate tempo and balanced phrasing foster śānta rasa, or contemplative equanimity.

In this corpus, rāga functions as a sonic vibhāva, shaping emotional experience before textual meaning is fully understood. Bhakti relies on lengthened vowels and tonal stability, while śṛṅgāra emphasises rhythmic flexibility and bol articulation, viyoga on mīṇḍ-dominant curvature, and vīra on clear tān and laya authority. Thus, Hindustani vocal music's abhinaya is acoustic rather than gestural, and rasa comes from text, tonal design, and expressive vocal technique.

Performance Analysis

The composition in Rāga Yaman adheres to the conventional Sthāyī–Antarā structure, likely established in Tīntāl (16 mātrā-s), as seen by the fourfold division (4+4+4+4). The sthāyī text commencing with “Ae Ri Aa Li, Piya Bin...” creates an atmosphere of viraha (longing in separation), which serves as the emotional core of the performance. The defining characteristics of Yaman—Tivrā Ma (M), the prominence of Ga and Ni, and the ascending sequence Ni–Re–Ga–Ma—are distinctly evident in the melodic framework. Phrases like Ni s Dha Pa s | s Re Re Sa emphasise the rāga's chalan, whereas S Ga Re Ma Ga accentuates the elegant, flowing movement typical of Yaman.

The sthāyī primarily examines the madhya saptak, centring on Ga and Ni, thus establishing tranquillity. The antarā rises into the tāra saptak (Pa Pa Sa' Sa'), enhancing the emotional resonance of the text “Jab Se Piya Pardes Gavan Kino.” The upward expansion reflects increased emotional urgency.

Swar-Bol Relationship (Expressive Mapping)

- The bandīś exhibits a strong correlation between melodic structure and lyrical emotion:
- The phrase “Piya Bin,” set to S Ga Re Ma Ga, permits lengthening of “Piya,” facilitating mīṇḍ from Ni to Ga or from Re to Ga in elaboration.
- The reiteration of “Ghadi Pal Chhin Chhin” in declining sequences (S Ni Ni Dha Pa Pa | Re Re Sa Sa) sonically illustrates the gradual passage of time.
- In the antarā, the ascension to Sa' on “Piya Pardes” amplifies emotional distance through pitch elevation.

- Consequently, the composition serves as a performance framework, directing both melodic improvisation and emotional nuance.

Performance Analysis Through Gharānā Perspectives Gwalior Gharānā

The Gwalior rendition would prioritise the precision of bandiś and a structured vistār. The sthāyī would be cultivated through sapāt tāns and direct melodic progression. The cadential accent on “sam” would be pronounced, and the bol articulation (“Ae Ri Aa Li”) would remain sharp. Ornamentation will be restrained, maintaining compositional integrity—performance character: equilibrated, structurally sound, rhythmically anchored.

Kirana Gharānā

A Kirana method would significantly reduce the tempo to vilambit. The expression Ni–Re–Ga–Ma will be elaborated with an extended mīṇḍ, with a focus on Ga and Tīvrā Ma. “Piya” would feature extended vowel elongation, with microtonal inflexions prevailing over rhythmic variations—performance character: contemplative, swara-focused, introspective.

Jaipur-Atrauli Gharānā

Jaipur-Atrauli would interpret the bandiś with complex layakārī. Intricate combinations and elaborate bol-bāṅṅ patterns would arise from sequences such as Ga Ma Ga Ma | Pa Dha Pa Pa. Tāns would be rhythmically computed, frequently culminating dramatically on sam.

Performance Character: Intellectually sophisticated, architecturally intricate, rhythmically oriented.

Patiala Gharānā

Patiala would invigorate the composition with swift, embellished tāns and bol-tāns. Murki and khaṭkā adornments would enrich “Piya Bin.” The antarā’s tāra saptak area would be utilised for brilliant tān cascades. Performance Character: Lyrical, expressive, and adorned with embellishments.

Common Aesthetic Constants

Notwithstanding stylistic variations, all **Gharānā-s** uphold:

Adherence to Yaman's grammar (Tīvrā Ma centrality, Ga–Ni predominance)

Tīntāl framework

Sthāyī–Antarā structure

Aalāp, Bol-ālāp, Bol-tān, and Tān progression

Resolution to serve as a structural anchor

The fundamental mood of the rāga—śānta, combined with śṛṅgāra, persists through several stylistic interpretations.

Comparative Table: Khayal Gharana Focus Parameters

Parameter	Gwalior	Kirana	Jaipur-Atrauli	Patiala	Common Elements
Main Focus	Bandiś structure	Swar-lagav	Layakari	Tān & Ornamentation	All follow Rāga grammar
Swar Treatment	Clear & direct	Miñd-pradhan	Structured & vakra	Decorative	Tivra Ma central
Tān Type	Sapat	Sapat	Smooth glide	Fast & murki	Tān ends on Sam
Lay Approach	Balanced	Balanced	Slow emphasis	Mostly Teentāla	Mostly Teentala
Bhaav	Classical balance	Introspective	Intellectual	Romantic	Yaman's mood remained
Bhaav	Swar Treatment	Clear & direct	Rhythmic complexity	Energetic	Mostly Teentala
Bhaav	Lay Approach	Tivra Ma central	Tivra Ma central	Tivra Ma central	Yaman's mood remained
Bhaav	Classical balance	Classical balance	Introspective	Intellectual	Yaman's mood remained
Bhaav	Bhaav	Classical balance	Intellectual	Romantic	Yaman's mood remained

■ Bhakti ■ Śrngāra ■ Bhāva ■ Tān & Ornamentation ■ Common Elements
■ Śrngāra ■ Śrngāra ■ Vira ■ Msatyl Teentāla

Figure 13: Comparative Table: The performance analysis of Song-text in different Gharānā-s

This bandiś in Rāga Yaman illustrates the dynamic interplay of compositional structure, lyrical emotion, and rāga conventions during performance. The sthāyī creates emotional stability within the middle octave, while the antarā enhances expression through elevation into the upper register. Each **Gharānā** reinterprets this framework according to its artistic priorities—structure (Gwalior), swara-depth (Kirana), rhythmic complexity (Jaipur), or ornamentation (Patiala)—while the rāga’s radiant tranquillity maintains the overarching premise.

Contemporary Relevance and Conclusion

In modern Hindustani music education and performance, there has been a significant change towards prioritising technical expertise as the primary measure of artistic proficiency. The precision of intonation, tempo, and clarity in tān-s, together with complex rhythmic manipulation and extensive improvisational mastery, is frequently highlighted in both institutional and guru-śiṣya settings. Although technical proficiency is undeniably vital to sustaining the structural integrity of rāga performance, an excessive focus on virtuosity may gradually detract from lyrical significance and emotional expression—the fundamental pillars of the aesthetic tradition.

Historically, Hindustani vocal music developed within an artistic framework influenced by the ideas of rasa and abhinaya. The bandiś was designed not just as a structural framework for rāga presentation but also as the emotional core directing interpretive elaboration. The text offered conceptual guidance, literary subtlety, and emotional orientation. Certain modern educational settings do not consistently examine texts’ semantic and literary aspects. Students can attain technical proficiency in melodic development without critically analysing the poetic imagery, linguistic context, or emotional meaning inherent in the lyrics. This disparity threatens to convert music into a demonstration of skill rather than a vehicle for aesthetic expression.

The combined instruction of rasa and abhinaya is thus of paramount significance. An effective pedagogy must foster awareness of literary significance alongside rāga grammar. A meticulous examination of songs in their native languages—Braj Bhāṣā, Awadhī, Hindi, or Urdu—enables artists to understand the emotional nuances that shape interpretation. Understanding poetic suggestion (dhvani), metaphorical framework, and thematic direction enhances expressive authenticity. When melodic elaboration arises from internalised emotional comprehension, improvisation becomes a natural extension of meaning rather than a mere decorative display.

Moreover, in an increasingly globalised performing environment, where Hindustani music engages culturally diverse audiences, the communicative clarity of *rasa* takes on fresh importance. Technical excellence may elicit appreciation, yet it is aesthetic appeal that cultivates enduring engagement. The triadic interaction between song-text, performer, and *sahṛdaya* listener is essential for preserving the tradition's life. Re-centring aesthetic awareness guarantees that performance remains an act of sophisticated emotional exchange rather than merely a technical display.

This work has investigated the interconnection of *rasa*, *abhinaya*, and aesthetic communication in Hindustani vocal music through a detailed analysis of song texts. Based on Bharata Muni's *Nāṭyaśāstra* and further aesthetic analyses, it has been confirmed that *rasa* represents the paramount objective of artistic expression. The lyrics serve as the principal emotional influence, defining thematic direction and emotional orientation. The artist, via interpretive acuity and internalised *abhinaya*, converts poetic significance into experiential aesthetics. The listener, as *sahṛdaya*, actively engages in the realisation of *rasa* through receptive awareness and thoughtful involvement.

The manifestation of *rasa* in genres such as *khayāl*, *ṭhumrī*, and *bhajan* takes distinct stylistic forms, yet it maintains a common aesthetic framework. The abstract suggestiveness of *khayāl*, the expressive immediacy of *ṭhumrī*, and the devout sincerity of *bhajan* each exemplify the significance of the song-text as an emotional framework. Improvisation, when informed by textual sensitivity and aesthetic purpose, enhances *rasa* instead of distracting from it.

Hindustani music is not only a method of melodic arrangement but also a refined form of artistic expression. The *Rasa* theory remains an essential foundation for comprehending interpretive subtleties, performance dynamics, and audience experience. Maintaining the expressive profundity of this heritage necessitates a balance between technical precision and emotional understanding. The lasting power of Hindustani vocal music resides in its ability to amalgamate poetry, melody, and introspection into a transforming aesthetic experience—where emotion is elevated, universalised, and collectively enjoyed as *rasa*.

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