RĀGS AROUND THE CLOCK

A Handbook for North Indian Classical Music, with Online Recordings in the Khayāl Style

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Music by Vijay Rajput

https://www.openbookpublishers.com

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80064-807-4

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80064-809-8

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978-1-80064-810-4

ISBN HTML: 978-1-80064-813-5

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0313

Cover image: Companion Persuading Radha as Krishna Flutes, folio from the “Lambagraon” Gita Govinda (Song of the Cowherd). India, Himachal Pradesh, Kangra, ca. 1825. Opaque watercolour and gold on paper. Gift of the Michael J. Connell Foundation (M.71.59.7), Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Wikimedia, public domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Companion_Persuading_Radha_as_Krishna_Flutes,_Folio_from_the_%27Lambagraon%27_Gita_Govinda_(Song_of_the_Cowherd)_LACMA_M.71.49.7.jpg

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3. EXPLORATIONS AND ANALYSES (I): *RĀG SAMAY CAKRA*

https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0313.03

3.1 Introduction

In the next two parts of *Rāgs Around the Clock*, I (David Clarke, henceforth DC) undertake a close reading of Vijay Rajput's (henceforth, VR) performances on the book's associated albums: *Rāg samay cakra* (here, in Part 3) and *Twilight Rāgs from North India* (in Part 4). While it would have been possible to organise these studies as track-by-track analyses of the albums, I have opted for a different strategy. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 consider in turn the two performance stages on which every track of *Rāg samay cakra* is based: *ālāp* and *choṭā khayāl*. The analyses pull out extracts from across the entire album in order to illustrate the different facets of these two stages (and in so doing also provide commentary on all of the fourteen *rāg*s sung). Following this, Part 4 includes a similarly extended account of the *baṛā khayāl* in Rāg Yaman from *Twilight Rāgs*. Hence, across the two parts, all of the three principal stages of a khayāl performance are investigated. (Other contents of Part 4 are discussed in its own introduction, Section 4.1.)

While these essays are longer reads than the earlier writings in this book, and have a stronger theoretical orientation, I have couched the material in ways that I hope will be accessible to students and lay listeners, as well as being of interest to researchers and professional musicians (I should add that it is not compulsory to read every part of every essay; each section is designed to be, to some extent, freestanding and informative in its own right). Importantly, these inquiries continue to include a pedagogical dimension. A key heuristic strategy is to place the reader in the position of the performer, and ask: what do I need to know in order to sing (and hence also to understand) an *ālāp*, or a *choṭā khayāl*, or—in Part 4—a *baṛā khayāl*?

In asking such questions, I also seek to pull out general truths from the specifics of VR's performances, and speculate on some of the bigger questions raised by khayāl and Hindustani classical music more widely. The answers are often formulated as rubrics that codify the knowledge which musicians and listeners acquire over a long period—musicians in order to perform, listeners in order to become appreciative audience members (*rasika*s) with whom artists can subtly and co-creatively interact in the live event. Ultimately this inquiry leads to the question (also addressed in the book's Epilogue) of what kind of knowledge is constituted by such rubrics, and how this relates to the intrinsically musical knowledge that is passed down through successive generations of performers—more bluntly, the perennial question of the relationship between theory and practice.

3.2 How Do You Sing an *Ālāp*?

Preamble

Ālāp is a fundamental principle of Indian classical music. It is the quintessential means through which a performer brings *rāg* into being: as musicologist Ashok Ranade reminds us (paraphrasing the medieval scholar Śārṅgadeva (1175–1247)), the Sanskrit word *ālapti* means 'to express or elaborate *raga*' (Ranade 2006: 176).

In order to distil this melodic essence, *ālāp* loosens its bonds with rhythm—with *tāl* and *lay*. Hence, during the *ālāp* that opens practically every Hindustani classical performance, the accompanying drum—tabla or pakhāvaj—is silent. Alone under the spotlight, the vocal or instrumental soloist is able to extemporise and explore a *rāg* at their own pace, free from any manifest pulse or metre—a condition known as *anibaddh*. Vocalists are also largely liberated from the constraints of text, instead singing non-semantic syllables.

*Ālāp*s vary enormously in length—in contemporary practice, lasting anything from about a minute to over an hour. They also vary in form, according to whether the soloist is a vocalist or instrumentalist; according to genre (for example, khayāl, dhrupad); according to *gharānā* (stylistic school); and according to performance circumstances. Audio Example 3.2.1 illustrates *ālāp* in the context of khayāl and the circumstances of the album *Rāg samay cakra*, in which *rāg* performances are compressed to an average of just five minutes; here we have the opening track, in which Vijay Rajput sings the dawn *rāg*, Bhairav.

Audio Example 3.2.1 Rāg Bhairav, *ālāp* (*RSC*, Track 1, 00:00–02:01)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/54b2530c

We might describe this unaccompanied, prefatory stage of a *rāg* performance as the *ālāp* 'proper'. But—importantly—the principles of *ālāp* often also manifest in the subsequent stages of a performance. In khayāl, a soloist often returns to this manner of singing during the subsequent *bandiś* (composition), alongside the tabla which now sustains the *tāl*. In such passages, *nibaddh* (metred) and *anibaddh* (unmetred) states co-exist as the *rāg* is further developed—a process sometimes known as *vistār*; I examine this matter further in my discussions of *choṭā khayāl* principles (Section 3.3) and *baṛā khayāl* principles (Section 4.3). In instrumental performance, and in vocal performances in the dhrupad style, the *ālāp* proper may be followed by two further stages, *joṛ* and *jhālā*, which invoke a pulse, though not yet the metrical rhythmic cycle of *tāl* (and usually still without drum accompaniment). While these stages are also considered part of the *ālāp* process, I do not extensively discuss them here, as they are not directly relevant to khayāl, my main topic of inquiry.

Given the significance of *ālāp* to Indian classical music, learning how to improvise in this fashion is paramount for a student. Indeed, this goes hand in hand with learning a *rāg*. The latter involves the student imitating phrases sung or played to them by their teacher in rhythmically free form, from simple to more complex, from lower register to higher register and back, so as gradually to internalise the characteristic behaviour of

each *svar* and the *rāg*'s repertory of melodic formations. In effect, this is the same process as fashioning an *ālāp*.

Just about every musician will affirm that learning mimetically like this is the only way truly to acquire such skills. They will probably also recommend close listening to performances and recordings by the great masters and other professional artists (increasingly possible in an internet age, and an opportunity afforded by the albums accompanying the present volume). While this wisdom is unimpeachable, it is also true that pedagogy is not entirely uninformed by theory, including the legacy of the *śāstra*s—the historical Indian treatises on music and performing arts. For example, in one of the most thoroughly researched accounts of *ālāp* in anglophone musicology, Ritwik Sanyal and Richard Widdess (2004: 144–52) show a continuity between rubrics for *ālapti* set out in Śārṅgadeva's thirteenth-century treatise, *Saṅgīta-ratnākara* (2023/1993: 199–201), and *ālāp* performances by present-day *dhrupadiyā*s—findings not without relevance to *kh*ayāliyās. While Widdess's investigation (with which I dialogue below) analyses Sanyal's own *ālāp* practice against the background of this wider historical context, my approach here is more inductive, seeking to channel rubrics for performing a khayāl-style *ālāp* from VR's renditions on *Rāg samay cakra* and from my own experience of learning from him. Nonetheless, this will also reveal a degree of consistency with historic formulations; and I will also seek to draw out some generalisable theoretical principles from my analysis.

I approach my question, How Do You Sing an *Ālāp*?, through three explorations, each involving close musical analysis. In effect, these are self-contained essays that could be read in any order. In the first and longest, I consider *ālāp* formation: how does a performer shape an *ālāp*, both across its entire span and from phrase to phrase? In the second, I undertake an empirical analysis of duration and proportion in an *ālāp*: how long should an *ālāp* last, both in absolute terms and relative to its place in a *rāg* performance as a whole? And in the third exploration, I broach the under-examined issue of what it is that khayāl singers sing instead of words in an *ālāp*: how do they select and combine non-lexical syllables?

Exploration 1: *Ālāp* Formation

Although an *ālāp* is improvised, and approaches to it vary between artists and *gharānā*s, this does not mean that anything is possible. An *ālāp* must take a coherent shape, beyond mere *rāg*-based noodling. 'What is your plan?', VR once provocatively asked me in a lesson, after I sang him a rather formless *ālāp*. Listen to any of the *ālāp*s on *Rāg samay cakra* and it is clear that he always has a plan, even if an unconscious one. How, then, does a performer shape an *ālāp*—give it form, and in the process elicit a *rāg*? In this exploration, I approach this question through two stages of inquiry. First, I explore VR's *ālāp* in Rāg Bhairav in its entirety as a case study. In the second stage, I widen the discussion, selecting extracts from *Rag samay cakra* as a whole, in order to explore variants of this and other principles identified in the case study.

Key to Exploration 1 are a number of theoretical terms that encapsulate certain essential processes of an *ālāp* and its melodic materials. Some of these terms come from explanations VR has given me verbally in class; others are adapted from western music theory; and

yet others I have devised myself. Although I introduce these concepts individually as the account proceeds, I also summarise and further explain them at the end of Exploration 1. Readers may want to consult that passage for reference as they work through the analysis below.

Case Study: An Ālāp in Rāg Bhairav

Since every performer needs to know how to begin their performance, and since we have already listened to VR's Bhairav *ālāp* in its entirety (Audio Example 3.2.1), let us now consider how he creates the sense of an opening—as extracted in Audio Example 3.2.2.

Audio Example 3.2.2 Rāg Bhairav, *ālāp*: opening (establishing phase)
(*RSC*, Track 1, 00:00–00:37)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/94dce8a1

What do we hear in this passage? To begin with, the omnipresent drone of the tānpurā and just a hint of the *rāg* to come as harmonium player Mahmood Dholpuri discreetly touches *komal* Re in the background. But the first main event is VR's entry at 00:07, where he sustains Sā, centring himself in his *svar*, the felt inner life of the note. *Svar* begins to mutate into *rāg*, and this single tone into a phrase, as he moves from Sā to Re; and he allows us to hear just a little flash of Ga, as a grace note (*kaṇ*), before descending back to Sā. These details are notated in Figure 3.2.1, phrase (i).

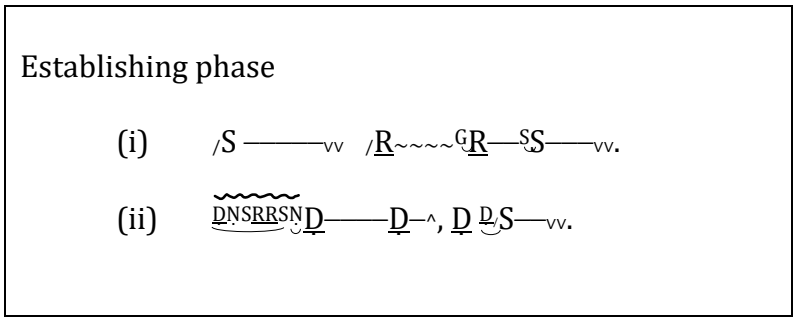

Fig. 3.2.1 *Ālāp* in Rāg Bhairav: opening (establishing phase), transcription. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

This transcription also includes VR's next phrase, (ii), which begins with a rapid flourish of notes—the ornamental figure known as *murkī*—and then sustains *komal* Dhā in the lower octave; following this, as before, we return to Sā.

From even this tiny amount of material, there is already much we can glean about how to perform an *ālāp*. First, as we have already begun to observe, what VR sings is more than a plain sequence of pitches. The sustained tones—notated (approximately to scale) with extended lines in Figure 3.2.1—are variously approached, enlivened, or ended by various kinds of ornamentation (*alaṅkār*). The more explicit decorations, such as *kaṇ* and *murkī*, are indicated with superscripted *sargam* letters. Below this threshold are other embellishments that would be distractingly cumbersome to spell out: instead, the initial approach to Sā from an unspecified pitch space and the subsequent glide (*miṇḍ*) up to Re are shown with an oblique (/); continuous oscillation (*āndolan*) (as applied here to Re) is shown with a string of tildes (~~~), while a shake or mordent at the end of a note

(one possible understanding of the term *kampit*) is indicated with one or more wedge or inverted wedge symbols (for example, ^, ᵛᵛ); the application of *gamak* (a wide shake), is shown with a wavy line. Meanwhile, other microscopic fluctuations are left for discerning ears to savour. (For more on ornamentation see Section 1.8.)

For the performer, there is a careful balance to be struck between sustained notes and decoration. 'Just relax', VR might advise; 'take your time, don't make it too busy'. Indeed one of the distinguishing features of Hindustani classical music is the prevalence of sustained notes during *ālāp*—as compared with its Karnatak counterpart, which places ornamentation much more in the foreground. VR sometimes refers to the sustained (or 'standing') notes in khayāl with the older śāstric term, *nyās svar* (see Jani 2019: 24; Ranade 2006: 233). As is so often the case, the meaning of this Indic term is mutable: *nyās* can also mean the note on which a phrase or a *rāg* ends—which may or may not be the same as any of its sustained notes. Ambiguities aside, such notes provide a crucial melodic focus to each phrase; hence I sometimes also refer to them below as 'organising pitch' or 'goal pitch' (the latter borrowed from Sanyal and Widdess (2004: 145)).

The second point we should infer from this opening phase of VR's Bhairav *ālāp* is his projection of the *rāg*'s grammar. Which notes can be sustained, which ones have a more decorative role, and in what fashion, will depend on the *rāg*. In this example in Bhairav, VR sustains the *vādī* tone, Re, in the first phrase, and the *saṃvādī* tone, Dha, in the second. In fact, in Bhairav, most pitches—with the qualified exception of Ni—can be sustained in some manner, as we will eventually hear.

Thirdly, we should note how the two short phrases transcribed in Figure 3.2.1, form a balanced pair—evidence of a plan. Each begins and ends on Sā; the first phrase *ascends* to the *vādī* tone and the second *descends* to the *saṃvādī*, as already noted. The first phrase begins to explore the middle octave (*madhyā saptak*), the second the lower octave (*mandra saptak*). And while the first phrase is longer than the second (around seventeen seconds compared to around twelve seconds), the two might still be perceived as durationally equivalent because they are relatively equivalent in substance. There is elasticity in the equivalence, a stretchy periodicity whose unit of measurement is something closer to a breath rather than a beat. (This observation complements Widdess's identification of a subliminal pulse in the *ālāp* practice of Sanyal (Sanyal and Widdess 2004: 176–80).)

All the material we have considered so far constitutes what I term the *establishing phase* of an *ālāp*. This is, in turn, part of a larger *phase schema* for the *ālāp* as a whole—a notion explored below. Introducing another theoretical concept, adapted from western music theory, we can say that the establishing phase starts to map out *svar space* (pitch space) around Sā. By voicing *vādī* and *saṃvādī*, and their associated *āndolan*, VR introduces those colours fundamental to the *rāg*'s identity. Above all, the establishing phase confirms Sā as the embracing tonic—as *the* key reference point, and ultimate point of departure and return. While there is no single way to execute the establishing phase, the structure that VR adopts here is classic, and can be summarised in the following simple rubrics:

1. Sustain Sā.
2. Explore the *svar* space slightly above and return to Sā.
3. Explore the *svar* space slightly below and return to Sā.

What next? In a nutshell, over the course of the rest of the *ālāp*, VR fully establishes the *rāg* by: (i) fashioning a series of similarly well–formed phrases that gradually ascend to *tār* (upper) Sā; and then (ii), in a somewhat shorter timescale descend back to *madhya* (middle) Sā. In this, we see how, behind the music's surface, the basic *āroh–avroh* contour of the scale of the *rāg* provides a structuring framework (as it does for just about every other facet of musical material in a performance). I refer to these complementary trajectories as the *ascending phase* and *descending phase* of the *ālāp*.

In our Bhairav example, VR ascends to *tār* Sā between 00:38 and 01:32, and returns to *madhya* Sā between 01:32 and 01:59. However, his ascent is made indirectly: in an *intermediate ascending phase*, he gets some way towards the goal, but breaks off with a descent back to Sā; then, in a *concluding ascending phase*, he resumes his ascent, this time completing the journey to *tār* Sā. Let us consider these individual phases in more detail.

The intermediate ascending phase is extracted in Audio Example 3.2.3 and notated in Figure 3.2.2. In phrase (iii), VR improvises around Ga, picking up from the highest pitch of the establishing phase. Next, in phrase (iv), he rises to Ma and reinforces it—for Ma has structural salience in Bhairav. Then, in phrase (v), he quits the ascent and returns to *madhya* Sā, lingering on the *vādī* tone, Re, whose significance and character are highlighted by the decorative *murkī* that leads into it and the *āndolit* (microtonal oscillation) that prolongs it.

Audio Example 3.2.3 Rāg Bhairav, *ālāp*: intermediate ascending phase
(*RSC*, Track 1, 00:38–01:01)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/b95cf025

Intermediate ascending phase

(iii) SRS G———R,

(iv) GGM———vv, M–vv,

(v) MGPMM GR~~~~~~RS——.

Fig. 3.2.2 *Ālāp* in Rāg Bhairav: intermediate ascending phase, transcription. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

The concluding ascending phase is captured in Audio Example 3.2.4, and notated in Figure 3.2.3. The initial organising pitch, in phrase (vi), is Pa, which terminates with a momentary deflection back to Ga. The next two pitches on VR's trajectory, voiced in phrases (vii) and (viii), are Dha and Ni; in the latter phrase they are heard in conjunction, illustrating the acute sensitivity between them in Bhairav. On the one hand, Ni strongly implies upward resolution to *tār* Sā, the goal of this phase; on the other, Dha also points downward to Pa, suggesting another deflection from the ultimate goal of the passage. However, this time, VR sees the implied ascent through to its conclusion and in phrase (ix) rises from Dha to *tār* Sā—another way in which Dha may behave under the *rāg* grammar of Bhairav (and in any case here catching Ni again in an ornamental *kaṭhkā* on the way). Such decisions

can retrospectively change our understanding of what we heard prior to them. It is only because VR chooses to proceed to *tār* Sā that we hear this passage as the *concluding phase* of the ascent; had he chosen to reverse course after phrase (viii) and returned from Ni to *madhya* Sā—a stylistically available option—the whole passage would have instead been be perceived as a second *intermediate* phase. (For more on the changing significance of *ālāp* material in real time, see Clarke 2017: paras. 6.1–6.5.)

Audio Example 3.2.4 Rāg Bhairav, *ālāp*: concluding phase of ascent to *tār* Sā (Track 1, 01:02–01:32)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/121ba272

Concluding ascending phase

(vi) GM\GP————PMG–.

(vii) GMGD~~~~D—~,

(viii) DDDN———N——\D, N–\D,

(ix) DDNṠ————vv.

Fig. 3.2.3 *Ālāp* in Rāg Bhairav: concluding ascending phase, transcription. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

Having achieved *tār* Sā, VR now embarks on the descending phase of his *ālāp*. Following convention, this is accomplished in considerably less time than the ascending phase (I discuss the question of the relative duration of *ālāp* phases in Exploration 2, below). The descent is executed in a single span from *tār* Sā to *madhya* Sā, though the pathway has its twists and turns—as can be heard in Audio Example 3.2.5, and seen in Figure 3.2.4. In phrase (x), VR echoes the preceding coupling of Dha and Ni; in phrase (xi), he approaches sustained Pa elliptically via Ma, and follows it with a drop to Ga. Behind the ornamentation, the overall trajectory of these two phrases yields the pattern N–D–M–P–G—a *vakra* (crooked) formation congenial to Bhairav. In the final gesture of the descent, phrase (xii), VR exploits the particular qualities of Re in this *rāg*. Paralleling the association between Ni and Dha in the upper tetrachord, Re is here approached via Ga, which creates a longing for continuation to, and closure on, Sā. Initially, that implication remains unfulfilled while VR repeats the G–R motion three more times, stretching out the moment, until finally resolving to Sā.

Audio Example 3.2.5 Rāg Bhairav, *ālāp*: descending phase (return to *mahdya* Sā) (*RSC*, Track 1, 01:32–02:01)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/aa9037cd

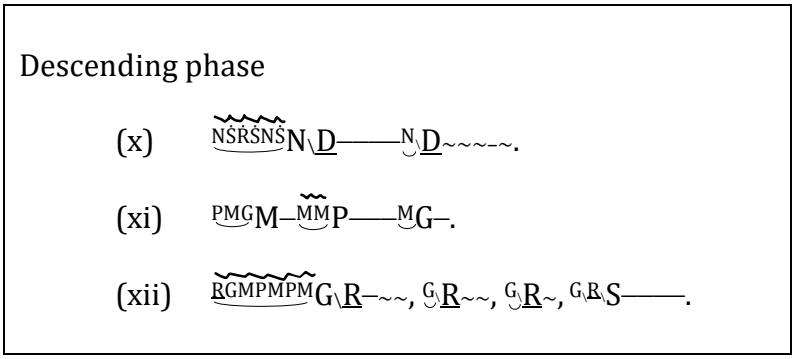

Fig. 3.2.4 *Ālāp* in Rāg Bhairav: descending phase, transcription. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

By way of summary, we can extrapolate from the particulars of VR's performance some rubrics for how to execute the ascending and descending phases of the *ālāp* (this list continues the one given above for the establishing phase):

4. Maintaining a balance between sustained and ornamental tones throughout, improvise a series of phrases, progressing steadily through the *āroh* scale of the *rāg*; continue until you reach *tār* Sā. This creates the *ascending phase*.
5. You may interrupt the ascending phase partway along by a return to Sā, to form an *intermediate phase* of the ascent.
6. If you take this option, you should next resume the ascending phase. You do not need to begin again at *madhya* Sā, but can pick up either from where you left off or in the space between Sā and that point.
7. On reaching *tār* Sā, return to *madhya* Sā, using the *avroh* scale. This creates the *descending phase*, which should be shorter than ascending phase.
8. Throughout, ensure the *rāg* grammar is projected; stay mindful of the *vādī* and *saṃvādī* tones, of other *nyās* (sustainable) *svar*s that are important to the *rāg*, and of melodic motions salient to the ascending or descending phases. Not all of these features need to be projected equally prominently, but attending to at least some of them will help you convey the salient qualities of the *rāg*.

Phase Schema: Variations

At this juncture, we need briefly to pause to absorb the following points: the rubrics sketched out above are primarily *heuristic*; they do not represent universally applied principles, but offer pragmatic guidelines for what *may* take place in an *ālāp*; variants of them are possible, and indeed common. For example, the complete *ālāp* schema—establishing, ascending and descending phases—is often abbreviated in order to proceed more directly to the entry of the *bandiś* (which is always felt to be waiting in the wings). In the ensuing section I will consider some of the ways in which the duration and ambit of a khayāl *ālāp* can be expanded or contracted, and its content elaborated, simplified or nuanced. Looking ahead to later sections, we should also note that what a performer does or does not do in their *ālāp* may well have an impact on the succeeding *khayāl* stage of the performance, and vice versa. For example, a *choṭā khayāl* may resume the uncompleted

āroh trajectory of an abbreviated *ālāp* in a series of rising *bol ālāp* passages (discussed in Section 3.3). And a *baṛā khayāl* often requires only the most perfunctory *ālāp*, since it may assimilate the contour of the entire *ālāp* phase schema into its own initial process—as manifested in the staged ascent of its *baṛhat* phase to *tār* Sā, and the eventual descent of the culminating *antarā* back to *madhya* Sā (discussed in Section 4.3).

But for now, let us consider some inflections of the rubrics derived from our case study, in order to get a sense of the wider spectrum of possibilities for an *ālāp* in the khayāl style. The supplementary rubrics below pick up from the ones above, and are each followed by an explanatory gloss. Rubrics 9–15 consider the construction of phases, rubrics 16–19 the formation of phrases. My examples draw largely from subsequent tracks on *Rāg samay cakra*, so also offering a wider window onto the album as a whole.

9. While *madhya* Sā is usually the organising pitch of the establishing phase, you do not have to make this the very first note you sing (cf. rubric 1).

   A theoretical distinction from the śāstras—one also made by VR—is useful here. This is between *grah svar*, a note on which you may begin a phrase, and *nyās svar*, a note which you may sustain, or which may act as a goal (as discussed above). Hence, while Sā functions as the *nyās svar* of the establishing phase, any other note appropriate to the *rāg* may serve to initiate it.

   For example, on *Rāg sama cakra*, Track 2, VR begins Rāg Toḍī by dwelling on Re and Ga before falling to Sā (Audio Example 3.2.6, 00:25–00:51). This is consistent with the *rāg* grammar for Toḍī, in which Ga is the *saṃvādī* tone and Re can also be given prominence in conjunction with it. Following this (00:52–01:13), VR steps back up to Ga from *mandra* Dha, the *vādī* of the *rāg*, before once again returning to Sā. All this underwrites the particular importance of the *vādī* and *saṃvādī* in this *rāg*, which at times rival Sā.

Audio Example 3.2.6 Rāg Toḍī, *ālāp*: establishing phase (*RSC*, Track 2, 00:00–01:13)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/9d62934f

10. In the establishing phase, when exploring the space below Sā, do not normally go any lower than the upper tetrachord of the lower octave (cf. rubrics 2 and 3).

    While it is possible in principle to go all the way down to *mandra* Sā in an extended *ālāp*, in a shorter khayāl *ālāp* one would not normally explore more than four or five notes below Sā—in other words, confining oneself largely to the upper tetrachord (*uttaraṅg*) of the lower octave (*mandra saptak*). In *Rāg samay cakra* the deepest VR goes in his lower-octave explorations is to *mandra* Ma—most notably, in Rāg Mālkauns, as heard in Audio Example 3.2.7. Here Ma is the *vādī*; the opening up of *svar* space between it and Sā prolongs the establishing phase, capturing the particular gravity of this *rāg*.

Audio Example 3.2.7 Rāg Mālkauns, *ālāp*: establishing phase (*RSC*, Track 12, 00:18–01:37)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/eec80b4b

11. You may create more than one intermediate ascending phase; this/these should be each based around successively higher notes within the *rāg*, according to its grammar (cf. rubric 5).

    While, in our case study, VR includes just one intermediate ascending phase, further additional stopping-off points are possible. These should focus on successively higher pitches—those that are allowed to be sustained within the *rāg* grammar. Each intermediate ascent should return to *mahdya* Sā.

    This principle is an important means of growing an *ālāp* and appears to be historically consistent with Śārṅgadeva's division of his *ālapti* framework into gradually ascending phases, termed *svasthāna* (Śārṅgadeva 2023/1993: 199–200, also discussed by Sanyal and Widdess (2004: 145).

12. The ascending phase can go beyond *tār* Sā (cf. rubric 4).

    As we can hear on several tracks of *Rāg samay cakra*, VR follows through on the accumulating intensity of the ascending phase to rise to *tār* Re or Ga. In longer performances it would be possible to go even further, and in fact VR touches just momentarily on *tār* Ma at the peak of the ascending phase in Brindābanī Sāraṅg (Track 4, 01:30–01:52). As ever, such moves follow the grammar of their respective *rāg* and serve to bring out its particular emotive properties (*ras*). The following instances are illustrated by the respective excerpts in Audio Example 3.2.8:

    a. In Multānī, VR fleetingly sings *tār* Ga and *tār* Re as decorations of *tār* Sā, within the figure N–Ṡ–$\dot{G}\dot{R}^{\dot{S}}$NṠ—. This does not disturb the prominence of Sā as the *saṃvādī* of the *rāg*.

    b. In Toḍī, by contrast, VR voices *tār* Ga much more fulsomely after he has reached *tār* Sā. In this passage, he also emphasises *komal* Ga's connection with *komal* Dha (as *saṃvādī* to *vādī*), as he did in the lower register (cf. Audio Example 3.2.6). This plangent rendering of upper Ga evokes the *karuṇ ras*, which is associated with this *rāg*.

    c. In Pūriyā Dhanāśrī, VR moves to *tār* Re before he settles on *tār* Sā, in a phrase that can be distilled as G–Ḿ–D-N—, N-D–N–Ṙ–N–D-P—. Shortly afterwards, we hear *tār* Re again, this time following the attainment of *tār* Sā; once again the higher note is touched on elliptically via Ni, in a movement that skirts around *tār* Sā. All these figures help create the particular expressive colouristic palette of this *sandhi prakāś* (twilight) rag.

Audio Example 3.2.8 Ascents beyond *tār* Sā:
(a) in Multānī (*RSC*, Track 6, 00:59–01:14)
(b) in Toḍī (*RSC*, Track 2, 01:57–02:18)
(c) in Pūriyā Dhanāśrī (*RSC*, Track 7, 01:19–01:59)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/bc05c226

13. The ascending phase does not have to go all the way up to *tār* Sā (cf. rubric 4).

    Whereas rubrics 11 and 12 showed how the notional phase schema can be expanded, here we consider ways in which its elements can be contracted, or even simply not applied.

Foreshortening of the ascending phase is common when an *ālāp* needs to be concise. Often this is the case prior to a *baṛā khayāl*, where an overly developed *ālāp* would upstage the following *khayāl*, which, after all, is meant to be the main focus of the performance. For example, in both *ālāp*s on the *Twilight Rāgs* album, VR takes the ascending phase only as far as Pa.

But brevity—actual or relative—is only one factor. In VR's *ālāp* in Rāg Śuddh Sāraṅg (Track 3), where the ascending phase stops at Pa (Audio Example 3.2.9, 00:00–01:03), we can assume brevity not to be top priority, because he then allows himself a second ascent to the same pitch (Audio Example 3.2.9, 01:03–01:34).

Audio Example 3.2.9 Rāg Śuddh Sāraṅg, *ālāp* (*RSC*, Track 3, 00:00–01:35)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/64f47f8d

VR's motive for stopping at Pa is more likely not to overshadow the generally low profile of the first line of the following *bandiś*. When I asked him about this, he replied that this was not a conscious decision, though, interestingly, he did affirm a wider principle: 'you must let the *khayāl* influence your *ālāp*; the *ālāp* is not just your creation, but is influenced by lots of things. You have to know the meaning of the *bandiś* and match its style in your *ālāp*'.

This point is further illustrated by a presentation in Rāg Bhairav on the *Music in Motion* (AUTRIM Project) website (Rao and Van der Meer n.d.: https://autrimncpa.wordpress.com/bhairav/, 01:06–02:10). Here, vocalist Padma Talwalkar progresses the ascending phase of her *ālāp* only as far as Dha; on the return journey to Sā she pauses on Ga. These prominent tones prepare the *svar* space for the same pitches in the opening of the *bandiś* 'Jāgo mohan pyāre', which flows on almost seamlessly in a beautiful transition into the *khayāl* that obviates any further exposition of the *ālāp*. This example nicely illustrates the point made at the opening of this section, that the ascending phase of an *ālāp* is often curtailed in order not to overly delay the entrance of the *bandiś*.

In other circumstances, it may be possible to dispense with the ascending and descending phases of the *ālāp* altogether. Many khayāl performances present only the establishing phase of an *ālāp*—enough to affirm Sā and indicate the essential characteristics of the *rāg* which are then fully explored in the ensuing *khayāl*. In such cases, this is usually a *baṛā khayāl*, and the prescinded form of the *ālāp* resembles the form known as *aucār*. Examples include Gangubai Hangal's (1913–2009) recording of Rāg Bhairav (1994) or Kumar Gandharva's (1924–92) rendition of Mālkauns (1993).

14. In certain *rāg*s, it can be appropriate to begin with the descending phase.

Some *rāgs*, known as *uttaraṅg pradhan rāg*s, emphasise the upper tetrachord. In such contexts, phrases may be oriented around *tār* Sā rather than *madhya* Sā, taking this higher pitch as their starting point and/or ultimate goal. One such *rāg* is Basant, whose *vādī* is identified by Bhatkhande as, explicitly, *tār* Sā (see Section 2.5.14).

This characteristic can be heard in the *bandiś* 'Phulavā binata', which VR chooses for this *rāg* (Track 14). Its opening sets out from *tār* Sā; and so, accordingly, does the *ālāp* which prefaces it. Here, then, VR is true to his maxim that what you do in your *ālāp* should relate to the content of your *khayāl*. Indeed, the phase schema of this *ālāp* unusually comprises *two* descending phases, both beginning on *tār* Sā, with no prior establishing or ascending phase. The first descent (Audio Example 3.2.10), pauses on Pa, then Ga. VR then momentarily drops further to *mahdya* Sā, but only as a jumping off point to sing the so-called Lalit *aṅg*, which involves both *suddh* and *tivra* versions of Ma sung adjacently—a figure that draws on the idiosyncratic grammar of Rāg Lalit. This motion resolves onto Ga, which could be heard as the goal tone of this first, intermediate descending phase.

Audio Example 3.2.10 Rāg Basant, *ālāp*: first descending phase (*RSC*, Track 14, 00:00–00:29)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/136bbc82

VR next steps back up through Ḿa and Dha to regain *tār* Sā; he redoubles this motion, touching on *tār* Re, and then curves back to begin the second descending phase (Audio Example, 3.2.11). This is initially modelled on the first descent; again, Pa and Ga function as intermediate goal tones. From Ga, VR makes a delightful rising deflection, Ḿ–N, before completing the descent to *madhya* Sā. This ends the *ālāp* and leads directly to the following *drut ektāl khayāl*, launched from the same *uttaraṅg* register.

Audio Example 3.2.11 Rāg Basant, *ālāp*: second descending phase, leading to opening of *bandiś* (*RSC*, Track 14, 00:29–01:06)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/5aa5f800

(As a codicil to these observations, we should also note the complementary type of *rāg*, *pūrvaṅg pradhan*, which focuses on the lower tetrachord. Some *rāg*s are often considered in complementary pairs that exhibit similar scale forms and qualities but privilege opposite tetrachords. Well-known examples include Darbārī Kānaḍā and Aḍānā, which are *pūrvaṅg* and *uttaraṅg pradhan rāg*s respectively; and, similarly, Bhūpālī and Deśkār.)

15. The elements of the phase schema are not radically discrete; they should flow from one another as a continuous process; their identities may sometimes blur. Phrases do not always map onto phases.

These points are a reminder that the phase schema which we extrapolated from VR's Bhairav *ālāp* is more an implicit, notional framework behind the music's surface than an explicit, empirical structure that manifests on every occasion. The actually sung *phrases* do not always align with the theoretical *phases* of the schema.

We can hear this by revisiting the extract from Pūriyā Dhanāśrī, discussed under rubric 12, above—Audio Example 3.2.8(c). In the elliptical turn around *tār* Sā the ascending phase blends seamlessly into the descending phase within a

single sung phrase. Here, phase boundary and phrase boundary do not coincide. Contrast this with the equivalent point in Rāg Yaman—Audio Example 3.2.12. Here, after ascending from Ni to *tār* Sā, VR sustains this goal pitch, winds joyful variants of the decorative figure N–D–N–Ṙ around it, then takes a short breath; this phrase and the ascending phase are both over. In a new phrase (at 00:25 on the audio example), he sings *tār* Sā again, and begins the descending phase. Here, then, phrase and phase *are* in alignment. Even so, there is no change of idiom at the turning point; we still sense continuity between the successive ph(r)ases.

Audio Example 3.2.12 Rāg Yaman, *ālāp*: turn from ascending to descending phase (*RSC*, Track 9, 02:19–02:56)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/4b7e18e3

In VR's realisation of Bhīmpalāsī, we find a subtle blurring of identity between all the elements of the *ālāp*'s phase schema, none of which precisely aligns with the manifest phrases—as we can trace in Audio Example 3.2.13. In the establishing phase (00:00–00:18), VR merges the motion below and above the initially sustained Sā into a single phrase: S—, .P–Ṉ–S–G—R–S. Already this elicits an ascending tendency beyond the immediate *svar* space around Sā, to Ga; and this blends into the trajectory of the subsequent intermediate ascending phase, to Ma, to Pa, to Ni (00:19–00:43)—before returning to Sā (00:44–01:00). This non-alignment of the phase framework with the phrase structure continues in the concluding ascending phase (begins 01:00), where the attainment of *tār* Sā (at 01:21) melts into the beginning of the descending phase back to *madhya* Sā, all within a single arc.

Audio Example 3.2.13 Rāg Bhīmpalāsī, *ālāp* (*RSC*, Track 5, 00:35–02:26)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/31b570eb

A similar compression of establishing, ascending and descending phases can be heard in VR's *ālāp* for Rāg Bihāg (Audio Example 3.2.14). Striking here is the way practically all phrases are drawn magnetically to Ga, the *vādī* of the *rāg* and a recurrent goal pitch (*nyās svar*) whose force of attraction becomes a key organising principle, working in productive tension with the phase schema.

Audio Example 3.2.14 Rāg Bihāg, *ālāp* (*RSC*, Track 11, 00:00–01:34)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/3de48f10

The phrases discussed in these examples are so fluidly conjoined that it may seem arbitrary to conceptually separate them into different phases at all. Nonetheless the phase schema remains discernible, even if, in these circumstances, it is sensed as a more abstract presence behind the sensory formation of actual phrases. This tells us that these discrete but interacting principles are both part of an *ālāp*'s organisation. And it also tells us that the way successive phrases are conjoined is

an important aspect of how to sing an *ālāp*. It is to this matter that we turn next, in a further set of rubrics.

Phrase Formation and Succession

16. In each phrase of the ascending phase, do not generally go higher in your melodic elaborations than its organising pitch or goal tone. However, you may subtly allude to the organising pitch of the next phrase as you approach the end of your present one.

    The sustained organising pitch (*nyās svar*) of a phrase represents a kind of ceiling. The musical elaborations that decorate this pitch should normally come from below—from the *svar* space that you have already begun to open up—so as to deepen the impression of the *rāg* as so far unfolded, rather than steal the thunder of what is coming up. However, this is more of a general principle than an abstract rule, and may sometimes be relaxed. In particular, it can be appropriate to give a discreet hint of the *nyās svar* of the next phrase as you reach the end of your present one. To illustrate this, let us briefly revisit the intermediate ascending phase of VR's *ālāp* in R*ā*g Bhairav—as captured in Audio Example 3.2.3 and Figure 3.2.2. Here the goal tone is Ma, attained and sustained in phrase (iv); and it is approached from Ga, sustained in phrase (iii). Within each of these phrases, the sustained tones are elaborated by notes no higher than themselves. Nonetheless, once he reaches Ma, VR turns back to Sā with a *murkī* that fleetingly touches on Pa: for those with sharp ears, this anticipates the organising pitch of the next phase.

17. You don't have to begin a phrase on its organising pitch.

    Just as an *ālāp* does not have to begin on Sā (rubric 9) so any phrase can begin on a note other than its organising pitch. To reiterate the terminology of the historical treatises, there is a distinction between *grah svar*, a note on which you can begin, and *nyās svar*, a note which you can hold. (Of course, in order to comply with rubric 16, the former must not be higher than the latter.) This is clearly illustrated in the extract from Bhairav just considered.

18. You don't have to end a phrase on its organising pitch.

    Even though the sustained, organising pitch of a phrase is usually perceived as its goal, it does not have to be sustained right to the phrase's end. We can see examples of such behaviour in Figure 3.2.5, which notates the ascending and descending phases of VR's Bhūpālī *ālāp*, as heard in Audio Example 3.2.15 (I do not consider the establishing phase here). We can readily note that in phrases (i) and (ii) the respective organising pitches Pa and Dha—shown in bold—are approached from Ga, below (cf. rubric 16), *and are then quitted with a drop back to Ga*. While not compulsory, this return helps keep the *svar* space below each goal pitch (indeed also the *vādī svar*) alive as VR progresses through the ascending phase.

Audio Example 3.2.15 Rāg Bhūpālī, *ālāp*: ascending and descending phases (*RSC*, Track 8, 00:34–01:30)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/15d329f8

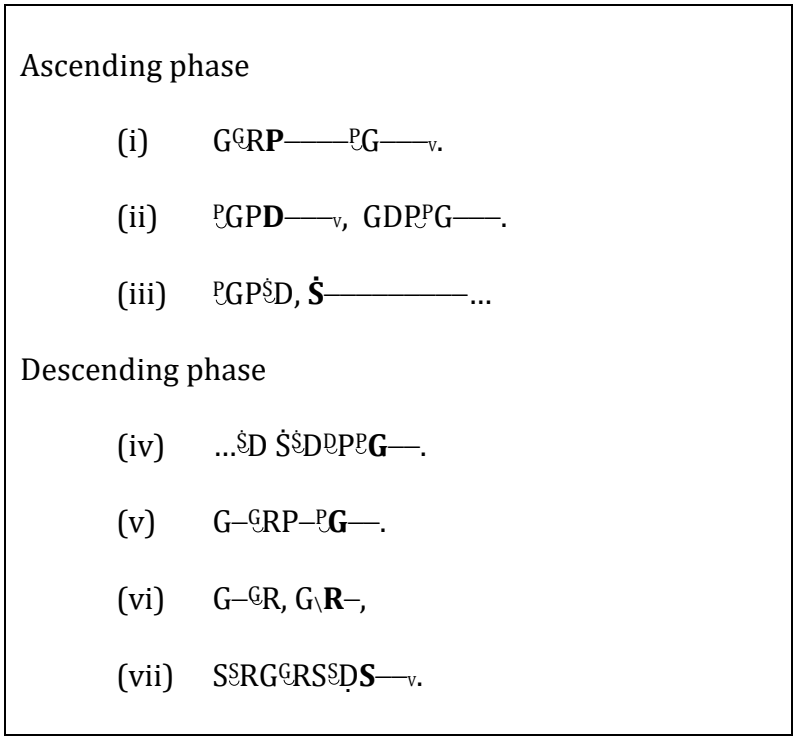

Fig. 3.2.5 *Ālāp* in Rāg Bhūpālī: ascending and descending phases, transcription. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

19. The *svar* spaces of successive phrases can (and usually do) overlap.

We can note a related property in the same Bhūpālī *ālāp*—namely that successive phrases often start by revisiting part of the earlier *svar* space, creating a *svar*-space overlap. For example, in Figure 3.2.5 while phrase (i) reaches Pa, phrase (ii) begins on Ga below it, before attaining Dha; phrase (iii) also starts on Ga, before ascending even higher, to *tār* Sā.

Svar-space overlaps may occur in the opposite direction. In the descending phase of the Bhūpālī extract, phrase (iv), dropping from *tār* Sā, has Ga as its goal; Ga remains the goal tone of the next phrase, (v), which backfills the previous pitch space by recapturing Pa, even as it also alludes to an impending descent by touching on Re. Similarly, the final phrase, (vii), begins on, and is organised around, Sā; but the phrase recoups the higher space of its forebear, in the motion **S**ˢRGᴳR–, before mapping out new pitch space in the lower octave—…SˢḌ**S**—.

The purpose of such overlaps is to foster connectivity between phrases and to keep the entire *rāg* alive and growing even when the focus is on specific organising pitches. This makes the point that it is the nurtured *rāg* itself—rather than the more abstract principles of the phase schema—that is the living heart of the music.

Summary: Terminology and Key Principles of Ālāp Formation

To conclude this Exploration, I here recapitulate and re-gloss some of the main technical terms used above, along with their associated principles. This is principally by way of summary, but it also points to the possibility of a formalised theory of khayāl-style *ālāp*—a potential future project.

- *Ālāp*s progress through several *phases*: typically an *establishing phase*, an *ascending phase* (which may be subdivided into *interim* and *concluding* phases), and finally a *descending phase*. In this, my own nomenclature, I have preferred the word 'phase' to 'section' since it captures the essentially fluid nature of *ālāp*s and the way they shape time. I use the term *phase schema* to signify this sequence as a whole.
- *Ālāp*s comprise a succession of *phrases*. Pragmatically, we may describe a phrase as a short unit of melodic material articulated by a breath, pause or some other marker. While it is possible to make a theoretical distinction between different phrase levels (for example, 'phrase', 'sub-phrase'), this has not been essential to our present purpose (for a formalised investigation of phrase grammar in *ālāp*, see Clarke 2017). A more useful distinction, pursued above, is that between the phrases and phases of an *ālāp*, which, significantly, do not always map onto each other.
- Phrases are usually organised around one or more *sustained tones* or *standing notes*—or, to use the śastric term for this, *nyās svar*, meaning a note which can be held or sat on. Eligible notes include the *vādī* and *saṃvādī* tones of a *rāg* but need not be confined to these. *Nyās* can also mean the note on which a phrase (or a *rāg*) concludes—which may or may not be the same as any of its sustained notes. In similar vein, *goal pitch* refers to an emphasised note within a given stage of an *ālāp* (Sanyal and Widdess 2004: 145). Depending on context, I have used all these terms, with their overlapping shades of meaning, as well as the general descriptor, *organising pitch*. It should also be clear that I have used 'note', 'tone' and 'pitch' largely interchangeably, none of which fully captures the meaning of the Hindavi term *svar*.
- The sustained, organising pitch of a phrase is usually embellished by various kinds of ornament (*alaṅkār*) which bring the *svar* to life. In the notation of individual phrases, I have not shown every microscopic detail of these, as important as they are, since my aim has usually been to foreground what is melodically structural.
- I have invented the term *svar space* (adapting the western theoretical term *pitch space*) to refer metaphorically to the compass of pitches available to decorate a sustained note. As an *ālāp* unfolds, and the *rāg* opens up, so the bandwidth of this space gradually increases. In the ascending phase, the available *svar* space lies primarily below the current sustained note. In the descending phase, because the *svar* space has already been fully opened up, there is somewhat freer movement through it. Perceptually, *svar* space is embedded as a trace in the memory, subtly regenerated as we pass through the *ālāp*, deepening the *rāg*.

Exploration 2: Duration and Proportion

One question that faces any soloist as they begin a *rāg* performance is, how long shall I make my *ālāp*? The possibilities are elastic. Musicians often nostalgically recount a mythological heyday (I have heard VR do this) when famed artists performed *ālāp*s lasting up to two hours, making it possible to penetrate the true depths of a *rāg*. At the other extreme, an *ālāp* may last under a minute: accomplished performers know how to present a *rāg*'s essence in just a few phrases when necessary.

An *ālāp*'s duration—in both relative and absolute terms—is dependent on genre and performing context. Figure 3.2.6 considers several exemplary Hindustani classical genres, indicating typical proportions of their *ālāp* stage (shaded) relative to their composition-based stage (unshaded). These representations are highly schematic—approximate indications of events which may be variously extended, contracted, omitted or compounded, according to circumstance. The same *rāg* is of course performed continuously throughout.

(a) Dhrupad (extended)

Ālāp	*Joṛ*	*Jhālā*	*Bandiś*

(b) Instrumental (extended)

Ālāp	*Joṛ*	*Jhālā*	*Gat*

(c) Khayāl (extended)

Ālāp	*Baṛā khayāl*	*Choṭā khayāl*

(d) Khayāl (shorter)

Ālāp	*Choṭā khayāl*

Fig. 3.2.6 Relative duration of *ālāp* and composition stages in Hindustani classical genres. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

In part (a) we see how, in an extended dhrupad performance (whether vocal or instrumental), *ālāp* is the predominant feature. Even under present-day concert constraints and audience expectations, *ālāp*s lasting between thirty and forty-five minutes are not uncommon; these will often include *joṛ* and *jhālā* sections, extending the *ālāp* proper, and invoking a regular rhythmic pulse, but not the full metrical apparatus of *tāl* (and usually without drum accompaniment). The succeeding *bandiś* (with pakhāvaj accompaniment) is proportionally much shorter—in absolute terms commonly lasting up to around ten to fifteen minutes, which still gives scope for extemporisation and development. In variants of this schema (usually in subsequent, lighter items of a programme), the *ālāp* stage may be less extensive, perhaps dispensing with *joṛ* and *jhālā*, and re-balancing the proportional relationship with the succeeding *bandiś*.

Instrumental *rāg* performances likewise often begin with an extended *ālāp*, typically lasting between fifteen and forty minutes, and also including *joṛ* and *jhālā*—as mapped in Figure 3.2.6(b). The composition (*gat*) section that follows (accompanied by tabla) is likely to be commensurably substantial. It may involve more than one composition, the first in a relatively slow (*vilambit*) *lay* or in *madhya lay*, the subsequent one(s) in *drut lay*. In lighter renditions, both *ālāp* and *gat* may be briefer, with *joṛ* and *jhālā* omitted.

In a khayāl performance, an *ālāp*'s duration depends to a large extent on what follows it. At the beginning of a programme, an *ālāp* is likely to preface a slow, extended *baṛā khayāl*, followed by a faster *choṭā khayāl*, the former imparting an aesthetic gravity comparable to dhrupad (a topic I discuss at greater length in Section 4.3). Paradoxically, this requires the *ālāp* to be radically shorter than is the case with dhrupad—compare parts (a) and (c) of Figure 3.2.6—since the opening stage of the *baṛā khayāl* itself draws on the *anibaddh* (unmetred) ethos of an *ālāp*. The *ālāp* proper is accordingly often reduced to just a few phrases, though it can be longer (as in VR's *ālāp*s on the *Twilight Rāgs* album, which last around three minutes). In subsequent or shorter concert items, the *baṛā khayāl* may be omitted, leaving just the *ālāp* and *choṭā khayāl*; this allows the *ālāp* scope for expansion—see Figure 3.2.6(d). Even so, there remains the question of proportion: it would be unusual for an *ālāp* to be longer than the succeeding *choṭā khayāl*.

All the tracks on *Rāg samay cakra* follow the simpler, *ālāp–choṭā khayāl* schema shown in Figure 3.2.6(d). The album format and the pre-requirement to keep each *rāg* performance to an average of around five minutes serve as creative constraints at every level. At the level of the album as a whole, VR plays with the duration of tracks on either side of the mean length. This is demonstrated in Figure 3.2.7, which provides track data and a related column chart. Here we see significant variation in the length of performances, with Rāg Kedār at the shortest extreme (3'48"), Pūriyā Dhanāśrī at the longest (7'39"), and Bihāg lasting exactly the mean duration of the entire series (5'33"). These variations create a subtle ebb and flow in the large-scale pacing, which is tracked by the trendline mapped onto the column chart; this is based on a three-period moving average (i.e. the average duration of successive sets of three *rāg*s—of Tracks 1–3, then 2–4, then 3–5 etc.).

Track durations

1. Bhairav	00:05:06
2. Toḍī	00:05:47
3. Śuddh Sāraṅg	00:05:12
4. Brindābanī Sāraṅg	00:03:53
5. Bhīmpalāsī	00:05:15
6. Multānī	00:04:45
7. Pūriyā Dhanāśrī	00:07:39
8. Bhūpālī	00:07:03
9. Yaman	00:07:22
10. Kedār	00:03:48
11. Bihāg	00:05:33
12. Mālkauns	00:06:57
13. Megh	00:04:32
14. Basant	00:04:47
Average duration	**00:05:33**

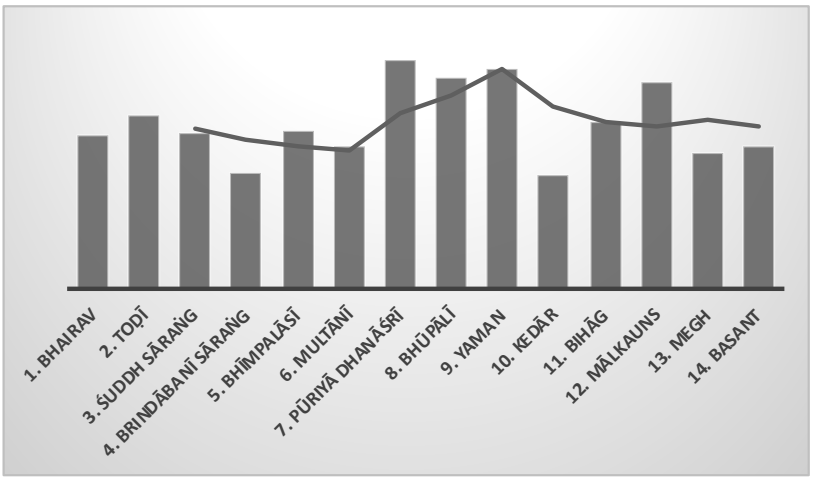

Fig. 3.2.7 *Rāg samay cakra*: track durations. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

Figure 3.2.8 shows how VR varies the absolute and relative lengths of individual components—*ālāp* and *choṭā khayāl*—across performances. The durations of *ālāp*s, range from 0'56" (Basant) to 3'27" (Pūriyā Dhanāśrī); with Bhairav, at 1'59", clocking in close to the mean duration of 2'01". (Instrumental introductions, whose lengths are also somewhat variable, are not analysed separately here, but rather included in the *ālāp* duration.) Similarly for *choṭā khayāl* durations: these range from 1'45" (Brindābanī Sāraṅg) to 5'19" (Pūriyā Dhanāśrī), with Mālkauns, at 3'30", close to the mean of 3'32". But interestingly, while *ālāp* and *khayāl* sometimes increase or decrease their three-period moving average length in step, at other times the trends proceed in contrary motion. We see flexibility in every dimension.

	***Ālāp* duration**	***Choṭā khayāl* duration**
1. Bhairav	00:01:59	00:03:07
2. Toḍī	00:02:42	00:03:06
3. Śuddh Sāraṅg	00:01:33	00:03:39
4. Brindābanī Sāraṅg	00:02:08	00:01:45
5. Bhīmpalāsī	00:02:25	00:02:50
6. Multānī	00:01:19	00:03:26
7. Pūriyā Dhanāśrī	00:02:20	00:05:19
8. Bhūpālī	00:01:28	00:05:35
9. Yaman	00:03:14	00:04:08
10. Kedār	00:01:23	00:02:25
11. Bihāg	00:01:30	00:04:01
12. Mālkauns	00:03:27	00:03:30
13. Megh	00:01:48	00:02:44
14. Basant	00:00:56	00:03:51
Average duration	**00:02:01**	**00:03:32**

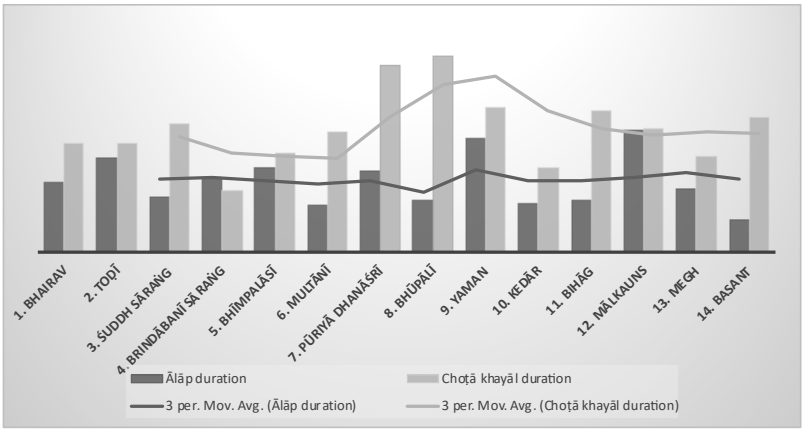

Fig. 3.2.8 *Rāg samay cakra: ālāp* and *choṭā khayāl* durations. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

These relativities are shown in another way in Figure 3.2.9, which charts *ālāp* length as a percentage of the overall performance duration. For example, in Bhūpālī and Basant, the *ālāp* only accounts for some 20% of the overall duration, whereas in Yaman this figure is 44%. And, unusually, in the cases of Mālkauns and Brindābanī Sāraṅg, the *ālāp* lasts half of the performance or more (50% and 55% respectively). If these seem relatively long durations, they remain acceptable because of the context: a sequence of many short performances, which would not be the norm in a live concert. Here, in the interests of creating a satisfying whole, VR seems to be teasing norms without violating them: the *ālāp*s, which on average account for 37% of the performance time, do not overshadow the *khayāl*s.

	Ālāp as % of duration		*Ālāp* duration	Performance duration
1. Bhairav	39		00:01:59	00:05:06
2. Toḍī	46		00:02:42	00:05:47
3. Śuddh Sāraṅg	30		00:01:33	00:05:12
4. Brindābanī Sāraṅg	55		00:02:08	00:03:53
5. Bhīmpalāsī	46		00:02:25	00:05:15
6. Multānī	28		00:01:19	00:04:45
7. Pūriyā Dhanāśrī	31		00:02:20	00:07:39
8. Bhūpālī	21		00:01:28	00:07:03
9. Yaman	44		00:03:14	00:07:22
10. Kedār	36		00:01:23	00:03:48
11. Bihāg	27		00:01:30	00:05:33
12. Mālkauns	50		00:03:27	00:06:57
13. Megh	40		00:01:48	00:04:32
14. Basant	20		00:00:56	00:04:47
Average:	**37**		**00:02:01**	**00:05:33**

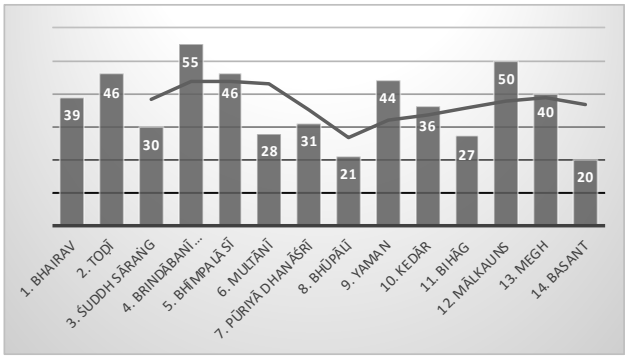

Fig. 3.2.9 *Rāg samay cakra*: *ālāp* durations as percentage of track durations. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

Finally, Figure 3.2.10 analyses duration *within ālāp*s. This measures the periods before and after the arrival on *tār* Sā, a key goal in the phase schema (as discussed in Exploration 1). In the case of Rāg Śuddh Sāraṅg, which only ascends as far as Pa, I have taken the second ascent to this note as the point of measurement; and Basant is omitted from the data, because, as an *uttaraṅg pradhan rāg*, it begins on *tār* Sā and hence has no ascending phase as such (see rubric 14, above). As would be expected, this analysis shows the period prior to *tār* Sā (or equivalent highest note) to be significantly the longer, accounting for on average 77% of the overall *ālāp* duration. This is approximately the inverse proportion of the ratio of overall *ālāp* duration to overall performance duration shown in the previous figure.

	Duration up *tār* Sā*	Duration after *tār* Sā*	Pre-*tār* Sā as % of ālāp
1. Bhairav	00:01:27	00:00:32	73
2. Toḍī	00:01:47	00:00:54	66
3. Śuddh Sāraṅg*	00:01:11	00:00:22	76
4. Brindābanī Sāraṅg	00:01:32	00:00:36	72
5. Bhīmpalāsī	00:01:57	00:00:28	81
6. Multānī	00:01:03	00:00:16	80
7. Pūriyā Dhanāśrī	00:01:47	00:00:33	76
8. Bhūpālī	00:00:59	00:00:29	67
9. Yaman	00:02:27	00:00:47	76
10. Kedār	00:01:14	00:00:09	89
11. Bihāg	00:01:11	00:00:19	79
12. Mālkauns	00:02:35	00:00:52	75
13. Megh	00:01:39	00:00:09	92
Average:	**00:01:36**	**00:00:30**	**77**

(* or highest goal tone)

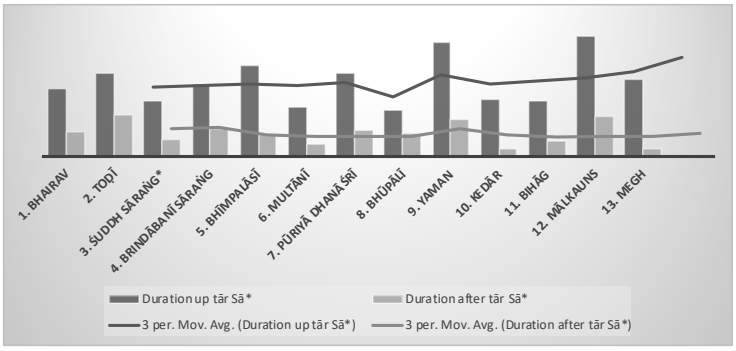

Fig. 3.2.10 *Rāg samay cakra*: durations before and after reaching *tār* Sā within *ālāp*. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

In summary, these analyses illustrate the extent to which the relative and absolute durations of an *ālāp* and its internal elements can be varied within a given performance context. The approach here is empirical—measurement based—and could be suggestive of a wider programme of analysis comparing, say, artists, *gharānā*s and genres from

similar standpoints across a wide corpus. But there is also the question of the performer's phenomenology—of how duration is *felt* and judged in experience. This question has practical relevance for the student, since the pacing of a performance cannot be learnt just by looking at the clock—even though its absolute length may well be determined by an external agency, such as a concert organiser or album producer. Having presented VR with the empirical data assembled here, I asked him whether he had consciously intended any of the trends shown. He answered in the negative: the artists had begun recording the earlier *rāg*s in the cycle, and then got into a groove, encouraging each other through their interaction to develop the music artistically; the rest just followed. The data empirically evinced from the end-product of this process demonstrate that durational proportion is as important a factor as any other in Indian classical music, and can be similarly nuanced and creatively fashioned—indeed at several levels. But, like those other factors, this one also has to be internalised through a long period of practice and accumulated experience.

Exploration 3: *Ālāp* Syllables

Among the least explained aspects of khayāl are the non-lexical vocables—syllables without a meaning—that vocalists use when fashioning an *ālāp*. For all that this matter is barely talked about, these sounds are crucial, since a singer cannot sing without singing *something*, and the introductory *ālāp* of a *khayāl* does not, as a general principle, use any text. (This changes during a *bandiś*, when a singer may use the technique of *bol ālāp*, that is, *ālāp*-style passages which deploy words from the song text.) So, if you are singing a prefatory *ālāp*, what vocables should you use?

Two options might be *sargam* syllables and *ākār* (singing to the vowel 'ā')—as in the case of *tān*s. But, while your teacher may encourage you to sing *sargam* syllables while you are learning *ālāp* (to stay aware of what you are singing and the direction you are going in), it is less common to do so in an actual performance. Conversely, one might indeed use 'ā'—but often this would be one of only several syllables. In practice, a large range of vocables is available: a sample taken from the *ālāp*s VR sings on *Rāg samay cakra* includes 'ā', 'a', 'nā', 'mā', 'e', 're', 'de', 'ī', rī, and 'nū'—a syllabary typical of many khayāl singers. I spell these as if they were transliterated from Hindi, Urdu or Sanskrit, to reflect possible linguistic backgrounds, even though, in an *ālāp*, such syllables are non-lexical (they do not form parts of actual words) and non-semantic (they carry no conventional meaning).

When and how does a singer deploy such vocables? And, more speculatively, what is their source, and what logic governs their combination? In the following discussion, I will explore both these dimensions—the practical and theoretical—since each has a bearing on the other.

To begin with the practical, let us revisit VR's *ālāp* in Rāg Bhairav, listening again to Audio Example 3.2.1, and giving particular attention to the syllables sung. Figure 3.2.11 transcribes these for each phase of the *ālāp*, in a layout corresponding to that of the *sargam* transcriptions in Figures 3.2.1–3.2.4.

Audio Example 3.2.1 [repeated] Rāg Bhairav, *ālāp* (*RSC*, Track 1, 00:00–02:01)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/54b2530c

Establishing phase (00:00–00:37)

Nā—, Nu>ā—nā.

Nā nā— nu>ā—, re nu>ā—.

Intermediate ascending phase (00:38–01:01)

Ā—(n)a,

ā—, ā—,

ā—(n)a nā—.

Concluding ascending phase (01:02–01:32)

Ā— (m)ā—.

Ā— nā—,

nā— nā—>e, e,

nā—.

Descending phase (01:32–01:59)

Nā—, nu>ā—.

Nu>ā ā—(n)a.

E—>ā—, nu>ā—, nū, nū>e—.

Fig. 3.2.11 Rāg Bhairav, *ālāp*: syllable sequence. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

It is clear from Figure 3.2.11 that the two most common syllables in this *ālāp* are 'nā' and 'ā'. The prevalence of 'ā' confirms *ākār* as an implicit underlying principle for *ālāp* singing. 'Nā' could be interpreted as an inflection of this which adds a soft dental consonant that focuses the initial articulation and tuning of *svar*—especially important in the establishing phase. In the ascending phase, VR uses 'ā' and 'nā' in full chest voice as he approaches *tār* Sā, to give a strong open sound—appropriately to this serious *rāg*. As he descends back to *mahdya* Sā, he returns to 'nā' and its variants, giving this performance a general symmetry. Prominent among these variants is 'nu>ā'—which should be read as 'nu' morphing into 'nā'. Initially, 'nu' is only briefly touched on, concentrating the beginning of the sound envelope at the front of the mouth before opening up to 'ā' at the back. At the end of the descending phase, VR more explicitly voices 'nū' as a vocable in its own right, before morphing it to 'e'. A related tendency is his subtle shaping of the envelope of a vowel with a half-articulated 'm' or 'n'—notated with parentheses in the Figure—which gives a subtle rhythmic nudge to the sustained vowel.

The syllabary in this *ālāp*, then, is carefully controlled: the overall selection is relatively confined; adjacent syllables are usually related; and contrasting ones—such as 're'—or less regular ones—such as 'nū'—are used sparingly and/or at strategic moments. The penchant for morphing sounds is a more individual aspect of VR's *gāyakī*; indeed, in the next track,

Rāg Toḍī, we find an even more idiosyncratic application. VR's *ālāp* in this *rāg* can be found complete in Audio Example 3.2.16; and its syllable sequence is notated in Figure 3.2.12, following the conventions used above.

Audio Example 3.2.16 Rāg Toḍī, *ālāp* (*RSC*, Track 2, 00:00–02:42)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/a8532369

Establishing phase (00:25–01:12)

(R)a—,

ra>e nā—, a>ā>e—.

Da re da nā— e—,

nā— re— e re nu>ā—.

Ascending phase (01:13–02:11)

Dā—,

de re—,

nā—(n)ā—ā—>e— e—.

Nā—,

ā—, nā—,

e— [*tār* Sā] — (m)a(v)e(m)a(d)uā—.

Nā—(n)a>e(v)e.

E—he—(n)ā—.

Descending phase (02:11–02:41)

Ā—(h)e—he-e-e—, nā—.

Nā—>a—(n)ā—,

re—e—(h)e he, nu>ā—.

Fig. 3.2.12 Rāg Toḍī, *ālāp*: syllable sequence. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

Syllables such as 'da', 'de', 're' and 'nā', provide a sonic contrast to those VR deployed in his Bhairav *ālāp*. Sung in close succession, the initial consonants lend a forward impulse to the musical progression. While these sounds would be recognised as part of a khayāl syllabary, the morphing phonetic string that VR sings after reaching *tār* Sā, '(m)a(v)e(m) a(d)uā—', is more idiosyncratic, as are the succeeding sequences, 'E—he—(n)ā—' and 'Ā—(h)e—he-e-e—'. What is the intent here? We might surmise that, in the imaginative spirit of khayāl, VR is pushing a little beyond the orthodox syllabary in order to intensify a peak expressive moment in a *rāg* associated with the *karuṇ ras*, whose qualities are pathos,

sadness and compassion. He brings emotional expression to the brink of actual words, but holds back from crossing the boundary, as this would destroy the very effect of yearning for the ineffable that is so essential here.

But, in any case, who decides what is or is not permissible? The question of who or what determines orthodoxy for *ālāp* syllables in khayāl remains moot. Historical writings offer some guidance, though the lessons may be equivocal. For example, Hakim Karam Imām's treatise of 1856–7, *Ma'adan ul-musīqī,* lays down a distinct orthodoxy about which syllables may or may not be used in an *ālāp*, and in what combinations (Imām 1959: 11–13; for a commentary on the socio-historical significance of this work see Qureshi 2001: 324–35). Imām roots his maxims in mythological prehistory, invoking 'Mahadeo' (Śiva) and 'the inhabitants of the Nether world' as the source of the originating syllables 'ā', 'nā', 'tā' and 'rā' (Imām 1959: 11–12). But his authority for how this syllabary can be extended (to include, for example, 're', 'nām', 'tom'), and its elements combined into *bol*s (such as 'ta-nā', 'ni-rī'), comes from the historically sanctioned practice of the *kalāvant*s—elite singers whose pedigree goes back to the court of Akbar the Great (r. 1556–1605). Yet Imām is here discussing the *kalāvant*s as exponents of dhrupad, not khayāl; conversely, he tells us that the *qavvāl*s, among whom 'the singing of *Khayal* has been prevalent', 'do not have *Alap*. Instead they begin with words of *Tarana*' (ibid: 11).

On the one hand, then, Imām's rubrics would seem not to bear on present-day khayāl practice, since contemporary *khayāliyā*s indeed do sing *ālāp*s, unlike their *qavvāl* forebears, but in a different way from *dhrupadiyā*s/*kalāvant*s. On the other hand, a comparison between the syllables sanctioned by Imām and those used by present-day *khayāliyā*s reveals some overlaps and connections. So it is worth considering the extent to which the non-lexical syllabaries of tarānā and dhrupad bear on khayāl—even if indirectly—given that these remain current in Hindustani music.

Tarānā syllables are familiar to most khayāl singers because this genre remains part of khayāl practice—a *tarānā* would optionally be sung at the *end* of a *rāg* performance as a virtuosic follow-on (or alternative) to a *choṭā khayāl*. The syllables used—such as 'tā', 'nā', 'de', 're', 'dim', 'nūm'—facilitate rapid vocal articulation and lively cross-rhythmic play (*laykārī*). They are believed to have their origins in the Persian language—which would be consistent with the cultivation of this form by the Sufi *qavvāl*s. Complementing this, the syllabary of dhrupad, often termed *nom tom*, is held to have its roots in Hindu *mantra*s, quintessentially '*oṃ ananta nārāyaṇa hari oṃ*', from which syllables such as 'ā', 'nā', 'ta', 'ra', 'rī' and 'nūm' are argued to be derived (Sanyal and Widdess 2004: 156–7). Such syllables, along with related ones such as 'te' and 'tūm', are key to the life force of dhrupad *ālāp*—appropriately also known as *nom tom ālāp*.

While in both tarānā and *nom tom ālāp*, syllables can be permutated in many ways, there are also implicit conventions governing their combination. This takes us back to the orthodoxy reinforced by Imām, even though he gives no systematic rationale for which combinations are desirable and which are circumscribed. By contrast, Sanyal and Widdess (2004: 154–6) successfully sketch out an explicit syntax for the combination and ordering of dhrupad syllables, even though the authors acknowledge that their formula may not be rigorously followed in practice; and Widdess develops some of these ideas further in a subsequent analysis (2022).

All this sheds light on khayāl. On the one hand, most syllables used in a khayāl *ālāp* can also be found in the syllabaries of dhrupad, tarānā, or both (given that there are some overlaps). The fact that syllables such as 'do', 'mī' or 'to' would sound eccentric in a khayāl *ālāp* is probably related to the fact that they would not be sanctioned in dhrupad or tarānā either. For khayāl singers, then, these genres—with which most are familiar—might act as an unconscious regulating presence in the background. And, for some, their influence might be more conscious. When I discussed this matter with VR, he confirmed that dhrupad is a subtle influence on his *ālāp* style, and reminded me that he had spent several months learning dhrupad with Ustād Wasifuddin Dagar; indeed, his own guruji Pandit Bhimsen Joshi (1922–2011), also studied dhrupad. When singing an *ālāp*, VR told me, he holds the mantra (or its devotional spirit) in his head as would a dhrupad singer, even though he may not literally be voicing its syllables.

On the other hand, part of what characterises the use of syllables in khayāl *ālāp* is its self-differentiation from those other genres. For one thing, not all their syllables seem equally available—VR once reprimanded me for using 'te', presumably because it too strongly connotes dhrupad. But it is also a question of delivery style: not at all like *tārānā*, with its rapid-fire syllables that fully engage with *tāl*, and different too from dhrupad *ālāp*, which is considerably less melismatic than its khayāl relative. In khayāl the enunciation of syllables may be fuzzy, and the rules for how they go together are most definitely so, compared with the quasi-syntactic constraints that Sanyal and Widdess identify for dhrupad. Even so, there are implicit understandings of appropriateness that are more elusive to define—more of an ethos than a syntax. In sketching some of these conventions below, I return from theory to practice, and to a more specific response to a student's question, 'What syllables should I sing, and when?'

1. Vowels such as 'ā' and 'e' are commonly sung; 'ī' is also possible, though less frequent.
2. These can also be sung with an initial consonant, giving options such 'nā' and 're' (more common), and 'de' and 'rī' (less common, but still appropriate); this helps focus tuning, and perhaps also alludes to more formalised syllabaries, such as that of dhrupad.
3. Syllable choice may be conditioned by register. Hence 'ā' and 'nā' tend to be more congenial to the lower register, 'e' to the middle, 'ī' to the higher; but this is not to say that any of these syllables cannot be used in other registers.
4. Carefully measured variety among syllables can help underscore the flow and direction of melodic invention; but don't have too big a selection at any one time—it is undesirable to draw attention to the syllables themselves.
5. Rarer syllables should be used sparingly and in strategic places. For example, 'nū' might best be used at or towards the end of a phrase to indicate closure (as would be the case with 'nūm' in dhrupad).

As our brief look at VR's *ālāp* renditions has shown, much is also dependent on the expressive context—this is khayāl after all, a genre noted for its range of expression and creative imagination. For example, when singing *tār* Sā, 'rī' is a congenial syllable, since

it focuses *svar*, constrains the airflow, and hence can be sustained for a long time; on the other hand, the same note can be sung in full chest voice to a syllable such as 'nā' if a certain robustness is appropriate—as in VR's Bhairav *ālāp*. What seems particularly important to his *gāyakī*—no doubt an aspect of his grounding in the Kirānā *gharānā* and his affinities for dhrupad—is the intimate connection between syllable and *svar*. On any given *svar*, changing the syllable will change its formant—the relative strength of overtones within the note, and hence its tone colour. This perhaps explains VR's calculated penchant for morphing vowels and blurring syllables.

Thus, the salience of a particular note within a *rāg*, the expressive connotations of *ras*, and the colouring one accordingly seeks to give it, can all be affected by the syllable chosen. This is not to say that these things are invariably consciously calculated—more probably they are imbibed through an intuitive absorption of style. Compared with dhrupad and tarānā, the syllabary of a khayāl *ālāp* is more open, flexible, and personal. While some artists and *gharānā*s may choose to keep to a circumscribed syllable set, we have seen that, for VR, a measure of play within this parameter is part of the rich expressive world afforded by khayāl.

Conclusion

The preceding explorations have examined some key principles that bear on how one sings an *ālāp*. In the process I have sought also to illuminate VR's *ālāp* renditions on *Rāg samay cakra*, and to illustrate aspects of his *gāyakī*. Throughout, I have allowed a tension to play out between providing pragmatic rubrics for practice and developing these into a theory of *ālāp* in its own right. To that extent I have allowed my text somewhat to exceed what would have been strictly necessary for a purely practical primer.

The tendency to theorise here is no doubt a response to the far-reaching nature of *ālāp* in Indian classical music; *ālāp* carries with itself a complex story that asks to be told. But what is also at the heart of the matter, is the way a beautiful, or touching, or searching *ālāp* may exceed or qualify any theoretical rubrics that can be written for it. This is not to dismiss the role of theory—whose own essence is a kind of reflection and exploration (not unlike an *ālāp*). But it is to note that theory and practice are rightly not identical—a point honoured in the *śāstra*s, which sought to codify and recount past practices while also acknowledging their evolution in the present. Theory—whether communicated orally or set down in practice—will always try to capture the riches of practice and pass these on to future generations. Practice will always pull at the moorings of theory, and sometimes slip them, especially if your search is to touch the divine. Perhaps the orally transmitted and improvised nature of *rāg* music makes any kind of comprehensive theory of *ālāp* fundamentally impossible. Any claim that the rubrics I have tried to draw out here might make to universality is countervailed by a practice that nudges all such formulations towards the status of heuristics—of rules of thumb.

VR draws attention to a strongly pragmatic and contingent dimension to performing an *ālāp*, when he says, 'everything affects your *ālāp*, not just the *rāg*, but the composition that follows it, the accompanists, the audience, the room you're singing in, your mood'. These things would have had an impact on the performances recorded on *Rāg samay cakra*,

involving particular people, in a particular place, on a particular day. Nonetheless, what we have been able to explore through that album is something that also exceeds those contingencies. Its *ālāp*s connect with those performed by countless other musicians, and, as we have glimpsed, have resonances with treatises going back through a long and rich history. My hope is to have conveyed from the intense specifics of the performed moment something of that bigger picture and abundant culture.

3.3 How Do You Sing a *Choṭā Khayāl*?

Introduction: Song and Its Elaboration

In Indian classical vocal music, *ālāp* finds its complement in song. *Ālāp*—free from the constraints of text and metre—explores *rāg* in purely musical terms. Song—animated by words and rhythms—grounds music in images and ideas. And while it may be a truism to say that song is vital to all Indian vocal types (whether khayāl, dhrupad, ṭhumrī, bhajan, ghazal, varṇam, kirtan, filmi, and so on), what distinguishes genres at the classical end of the continuum is the way they embed song into a process of improvised musical development.

In the vocabulary of Hindustani classical music, one word for song is *cīz*, though the more commonly used term is *bandiś*. The equivalent in instrumental music is *gat*, though instrumentalists also talk about playing a *bandiś*, especially if this also happens to be a song melody, as is not uncommonly the case. Significantly, *bandiś* carries the meaning of 'binding' (Ranade 2006: 71–4). A *bandiś* is bound to, and bound together by, the underlying *tāl* framework: it belongs to the *nibaddh* (metred) stage of the performance; by contrast, an *ālāp* belongs to the prior, *anibaddh* (unmetred) stage. *Bandiś, gat* and *cīz* are also often translated as 'composition'—though this differs from the western understanding of the word, since this one fixed element of a performance is only a few lines or phrases long, and usually lasts not much more than a minute. This is why considerable musical extemporisation around a *bandiś* is needed to make a fully-fledged performance. The *bandiś*, used as a reference point throughout, is what binds the elaborated passages into a larger whole.

Here, I use the concepts improvisation, extemporisation and elaboration somewhat interchangeably. I do not intend these terms in any transcendental sense, to imply the continuous, spontaneous generation of utterly novel ideas. Rather, Hindustani performers internalise a large stock of phrases, formulae, gestures, shapes and schemata through many hundreds of repetitions over thousands of hours of *riyāz*, which they then combine and permutate during a performance—sometimes predictably, sometimes unexpectedly, often engagingly, occasionally breathtakingly. (More detailed de-mystifications of the process include Napier 2006, Nooshin and Widdess 2006, Zadeh 2012.)

To present and improvise around a *bandiś* in the khayāl style is what is meant by 'singing a *khayāl*'. In this book, I use italics to denote performance in this vein, and upright font for the genre itself; hence, also, in dhrupad one sings a *dhrupad*, and in ṭhumrī one sings a *ṭhumrī*. In fact, khayāl singers sing two types of *khayāl*: the slow-tempo *baṛā khayāl*, and the medium- or fast-tempo *choṭā khayāl*. A full-length performance includes both types, while a shorter performance is more likely to feature just the *choṭā khayāl*—which means 'small *khayāl*' or 'short *khayāl*'. In this section, I focus on the latter type, which, while less weighty than a *baṛā khayāl*, has its own complexities and presents its own challenges for the performer (I consider *baṛā khayāl*—'large *khayāl*'—later, in Section 4.3).

How, then, do you sing a *choṭā khayāl*? In the first instance, I explore this question with examples from Vijay Rajput's album *Rāg samay cakra*, on which all the *khayāl*s are *choṭā khayāl*s. I take his performance of Rāg Bhairav (Track 1) as an initial case study, and

then widen the canvas with further empirical analyses of extracts from the entire album, examining the full range of elaborative techniques he employs. In a second approach to the question—a more formally theoretical account—I draw the threads of these analyses together into an extensive series of rubrics for performance; ultimately, I speculate whether what underpins the flow of a *choṭā khayāl* might be something like a grammar. All this amounts to quite a journey; if its latter stages push beyond the everyday discourse of musicians, I nonetheless continue to make the pragmatics of practice my touchstone. Readers are of course at liberty to tarry with the parts that interest them most.

Case Study: A *Choṭā Khayāl* in Rāg Bhairav

The *choṭā khayāl* in Rāg Bhairav heard on Track 1 of *Rāg samay cakra* is among the simplest of the cycle, and hence a good starting point for analysis. Here, VR demonstrates that even a minimal set of ingredients—the relatively straightforward delivery of a *bandiś* together with a few simple *tān*s—can make an aesthetically satisfying performance. We hear him in Audio Example 3.3.1; a notation of the *bandiś*—'Dhana dhana murata'—can be found above, in Section 2.5.1.

Audio Example 3.3.1 Rāg Bhairav, *choṭā khayāl* (*RSC*, Track 1, 02:00–05:06)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/14d9ee1a

For this *bandiś* in *tīntāl*, VR chooses a stately medium tempo (*madhya lay*)—about 105 beats per minute (bpm)—which matches the sober, devotional mood of Bhairav. Typically of many a *bandiś*, this one does not begin on *sam*, the first beat of the *tāl*, but with a lead-in from several beats earlier—in this case from *khālī*, beat 9. Also typical is the way tabla player Athar Hussain Khan delays his own entrance until beat 13 (he might have held back longer, until *sam*). VR presents the *sthāī*, the first part of the *bandiś*, according to convention—repeating the first line, singing the remaining lines just once, and then returning to the first line, which thus begins to function as a refrain. This opening portion can be heard in Audio Example 3.3.2.

Audio Example 3.3.2 Rāg Bhairav, *sthāī* (*RSC*, Track 1, 02:00–02:45)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/6a84bef3

Having reached this point, VR has the option of sticking with the *sthāī* and extemporising around it. However, on this occasion he goes down another stylistically sanctioned path: he segues into the *antarā*, the second part of the composition (Audio Example 3.3.3), thus giving us the *bandiś* complete before any elaboration begins. In the *antarā*, as in the *sthāī*, he repeats the first line as per convention; and because the *antarā* cannot stand alone—it is a contrasting episode—once its final line is sung, VR segues back to the first line of the *sthāī*.

Audio Example 3.3.3 Rāg Bhairav, *antarā* (with lead in) and return to *sthāī* (*RSC*, Track 1, 02:43–03:30)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/b85e0604

Already this structure, with its various levels of repetition and contrast, begins to imbue the *choṭā khayāl* with shape and form. While VR keeps the execution simple, he does not lose the opportunity to add judicious embellishments to the melody, especially when material is repeated. Most notably, he applies the technique of *gamak*—a wide shake—to create expressive intensity at salient points in the composition. Several instances are captured in Audio Example 3.3.4: (a) on the last line of the *sthāī* (on the word 'pyārī'), which already has a *tān* like form; (b) on the equivalent line of the *antarā* (on 'vicārī'), which echoes its forebear and rhymes with it; and (c) on the repetition of the first line of the *antarā* (at 'mohane suhave') in figuration that fills the gap between Dha and *tār* Sā, immediately followed (at the climactic 'bālī bālī') by a gesture that similarly fills the gap between *tār* Re and *tār* Ma. Entirely suited to the steady *madhya lay*, these inflections add gravity and substance.

Audio Example 3.3.4 Rāg Bhairav: *gamak* inflections (*RSC*, Track 1):
(a) 02:28–02:36
(b) 03:11–03:20
(c) 03:02–03:12)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/508d4c4a

Having completed his exposition of the *bandiś*, VR now needs to extend his performance. On this track, he does this quite simply, by presenting a series of short, eight-beat *tāns*—melodic runs—that succeed the first half-line of the *sthāī*. As the latter also lasts eight beats, each statement and its associated *tān* in total lasts one *āvartan* of the sixteen-beat *tīntāl* cycle. Three such iterations—captured in Audio Example 3.3.5 and notated in Figure 3.3.1—are enough to create contrast and move the proceedings forward.

Audio Example 3.3.5 Rāg Bhairav: *sargam tān*s (*RSC*, Track 1, 03:20–03:59)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/dfa21ef6

tīntāl

o				**3**				**x**				**2**			
9	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
G	M	D	D	P	–	M	M	ṠN	DP	– D	MP	GM	P	P	–
Dha -	na	dha -	na	mu -	-	ra -	ta								
G	M	D	D	P	–	M	M	SR	GM	PD	NṠ	– N	DP	MG	RS
Dha -	na	dha -	na	mu -	-	ra -	ta								
G	M	D	D	P	–	M	M	ṠN	DP	MP	DP	MP	DP	MG	M
Dha -	na	dha -	na	mu -	-	ra -	ta								

Fig. 3.3.1 Rāg Bhairav: *sargam tān*s, notated. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

These are *sargam tān*s—i.e. *tān*s sung to *sargam* syllables (we will consider other types of *tān* below). Such examples can be readily emulated by students, and are often recorded in their notebooks, either dictated by their teacher, or invented by themselves. Repeating *tān*s many times over in one's *riyāz* helps build a stock of fixed ideas that can be dissected and permutated in ever-new variations in the moment of performance—as discussed in the preceding reflections on improvisation. VR has often reminded me that there is no shame in drawing from memorised, pre-composed materials on stage: 'even guruji [Pandit Bhimsen Joshi] used to do it', he has told me more than once: 'the first few *tān*s were always composed. Once you get settled in, then you can improvise.'

As it happens, VR holds back from extended *tān* work in this opening track—we will hear more elaborate ones later. In the final stages of this *choṭā khayāl* (from 01:58 of Audio Example 3.3.1), VR simply returns to the *sthāī*, reprising it in its entirety, and including a repetition of the first line that has a slight variation at 'Kṛṣṇa murāri'.

Practically all Indian classical performances end with a *tihāī*—a figure repeated three times—and this one is no exception. As we hear in Audio Example 3.3.6, VR's strategy is again straightforward, and in fact typical of the Kirānā *gharānā* (stylistic school), which is not preoccupied with excessive rhythmic complexity. Having reprised the *sthāī*, VR takes its first half-line, 'dhana dhana murata' and sings it three times, so that the last iteration ends on *sam* with the word 'Kṛṣṇa'. On cue, the tabla stops playing, and VR winds down the performance, improvising a brief, unmetred continuation of the phrase in the vein of an *ālāp*, which brings us home to Sā.

Audio Example 3.3.6 Rāg Bhairav, *choṭā khayāl*: concluding *tihāī* (*RSC*, Track 1, 04:32–05:06)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/d4dc3447

By way of a coda, it is worth pointing out that a well-written *bandiś* provides an excellent encapsulation of the grammar and melodic behaviour of a *rāg*. As George Ruckert puts it (2004: 54), 'The fixed compositions carry the maps of the *rāg*s—the balances of the notes, the moods, the typical phrases, the proper way to begin and end—in short, the lore of the *rāg*s'. And so it is the case with the present composition, which exemplifies many salient features of Bhairav, some of which were noted in Section 2.5.1. A useful exercise is to note which pitches are used to begin and end each phrase, and which can be dwelled upon. The *bandiś* can suggest material for improvisation: taking several adjacent notes of a composition (such as G–M–D, or GRGM^{G}R), slowing them down, singing them non-metrically while preserving their relative prominence, and applying discreet decoration can, for example, yield suitable phrases for an *ālāp*.

Having narrated VR's progress through a single *rāg* performance, I now take a complementary look across *Rāg samay cakra* as a whole, highlighting particular techniques VR uses to extend a *choṭā khayāl*. In what follows, I discuss typical vehicles of musical expansion, such as *bol ālāp*, *tān*s and *behlāvā*. But I first consider how VR exploits the potential of the *bandiś* itself for extending a performance.

Treatments of the *Bandiś*: Simplicity and Repetition

Although VR sometimes keeps things simple for didactic purposes (as in his Bhairav performance), his purpose is also to show that this can still be musically satisfying. Simplicity can be a creative option when placed on a continuum encompassing more elaborate treatments. Across the course of *rāg samay cakra*, we find several rising waves of complexity which fall back to simpler formations—peaks and troughs broadly commensurate with the length of tracks, as mapped in Figure 3.2.7. For example, one of the most developed workings of material comes mid-way through, in Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī (Track 7), followed by relatively straightforward treatments of Kedār and Bihāg (Tracks 10 and 11).

Most straightforward of all is Track 4, Brindābanī Sāraṅg. At 1'45", the *choṭā khayāl* on this track is the shortest on the album—shorter even than its prefatory *ālāp*. The *khayāl* focuses exclusively on the *bandiś*: we do not find even the handful of *tān*s heard in Bhairav. This perhaps reflects the fact that the *bandiś* is relatively long: the *sthāī* and the *antarā* each have three lines (Audio Example 3.3.7). The *bandiś* also has an interesting cross-metrical structure (for details, see the *rāg* description in Section 2.5.4). As if to help us savour this feature, VR repeats the second line of the *sthāī* in addition to the more usual repetition of the first. There is also a nice *enjambement* between the last line of the *antarā* and the return to the first line of the *sthāī*. By dispensing with any further development, VR allows the flowing elegance of the *bandiś* to speak for itself.

Audio Example 3.3.7 Rāg Brindābanī Sāraṅg, *sthāī* and *antarā* (*RSC*, Track 4, 02:09–03:25)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/ea3867fd

In Rāg Bhīmpalāsī (Track 5), VR applies repetition intensively throughout the *bandiś* (see Section 2.5.5 for the notation). Here the *sthāī* has just two lines. He sings the first line three times, the second twice; returns to the opening line, again singing it three times; goes back to the second line, again sung twice, then back to the first. The first line of the *antarā* is similarly intensified, in this case being sung four times; the second and third lines are both sung twice. The complete sequence of events is shown line-by-line in Figure 3.3.2, which should be read in conjunction with Audio Example 3.3.8; time codes in the figure (and in the discussion below) are given for both the album track itself and for this audio example respectively.

Audio Example 3.3.8 Rāg Bhīmpalāsī, *choṭā khayāl* (*RSC*, Track 5, 02:26–05:20)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/7ecc7207

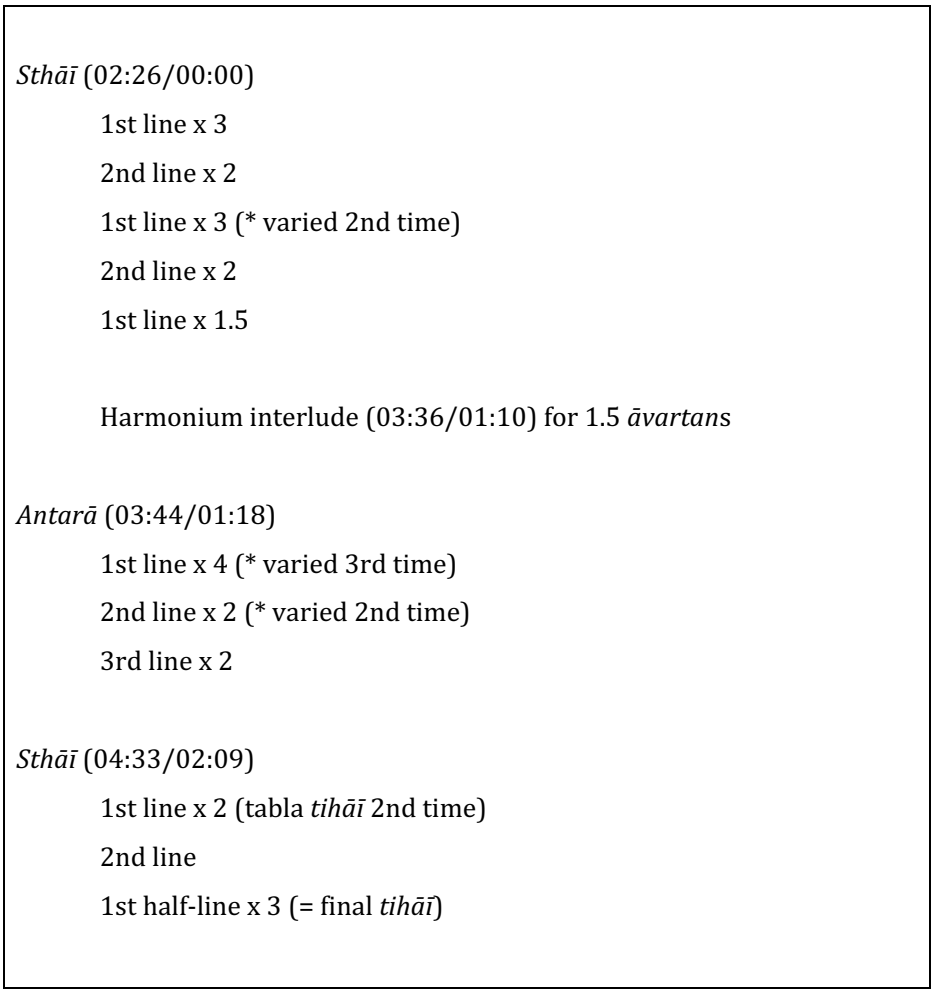

Fig. 3.3.2 Rāg Bhīmpalāsī, *choṭā khayāl*: repetition structure. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

Again, there is no *tān* work in this *choṭā khayāl*; repetition is virtually the sole means of expansion. But this is never monotonous, thanks to various subtleties that are also traces of the performers' own enjoyment and invention. These include the short harmonium interlude by Mahmood Dholpuri at 03:36/01:10, which picks up where VR breaks off, halfway through the first line of the *sthāī,* and artfully foreshadows the second line of the upcoming *antarā*. Then there are variants of individual lines—indicated with asterisks in Figure 3.3.2. VR is careful not to overdo this: he needs only one variant to complement several iterations of the original. Added to these variants are numerous subliminal inflections to the rhythmic and textual delivery of the ostensibly non-varied lines, and other elements such as tabla player Athar Hussain Khan's *tihāī* a few seconds after the reprise of the *sthāī* at 04:33/02:09.

Here, then, we get a strong sense that VR is *composing with the composition*. Out of the small form of the *bandiś* he creates something bigger. The *bandiś* need not simply serve as a foil for improvisatory episodes, but can itself act as a basis for musical expansion. We can hear a similar approach in Rāg Śuddh Sāraṅg (Track 3, from 01:34; notation in Section 2.5.3). The *choṭā khayāl* extends itself through substantial repetition within the *bandiś* (especially the *sthāī*); and it is only in the last minute or so of the track that VR begins to apply other techniques of expansion, such as *bol ālāp* and *tān*s (devices I discuss below).

First-line Accumulation

The technique of expansion-through-repetition finds its epitome in a process I term *first-line accumulation.* While the first line of both *sthāī* and *antarā* is normally repeated once, or possibly twice, sometimes—most notably in fast-tempo *khayāl*s—it can be repeated repeatedly, to the point where a listener might lose count of how many times. And this is the point: in such a context, the first line's role as a formal element in a balanced poetic structure is temporarily suspended as it becomes a point of intrinsically musical focus—a kind of time loop. The aforementioned performance of Rāg Śuddh Sāraṅg, where VR at one point repeats the first line of the *sthāī* five times (Track 3, 02:34–03:04), verges on this category. But for an archetypal example in *Rāg samay cakra* we should consider Rāg Yaman (Track 9; *bandiś* notation in Section 2.5.9). VR launches this *choṭā khayāl* by singing the *sthāī*'s opening line, 'Śyām bejāi āja moraliyã', a total of eleven times—as excerpted in Audio Example 3.3.9 and transcribed in Figure 3.3.3.

Audio Example 3.3.9 Rāg Yaman, *sthāī*: first-line accumulation (*RSC*, Track 9, 03:10–04:01)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/da6343d4

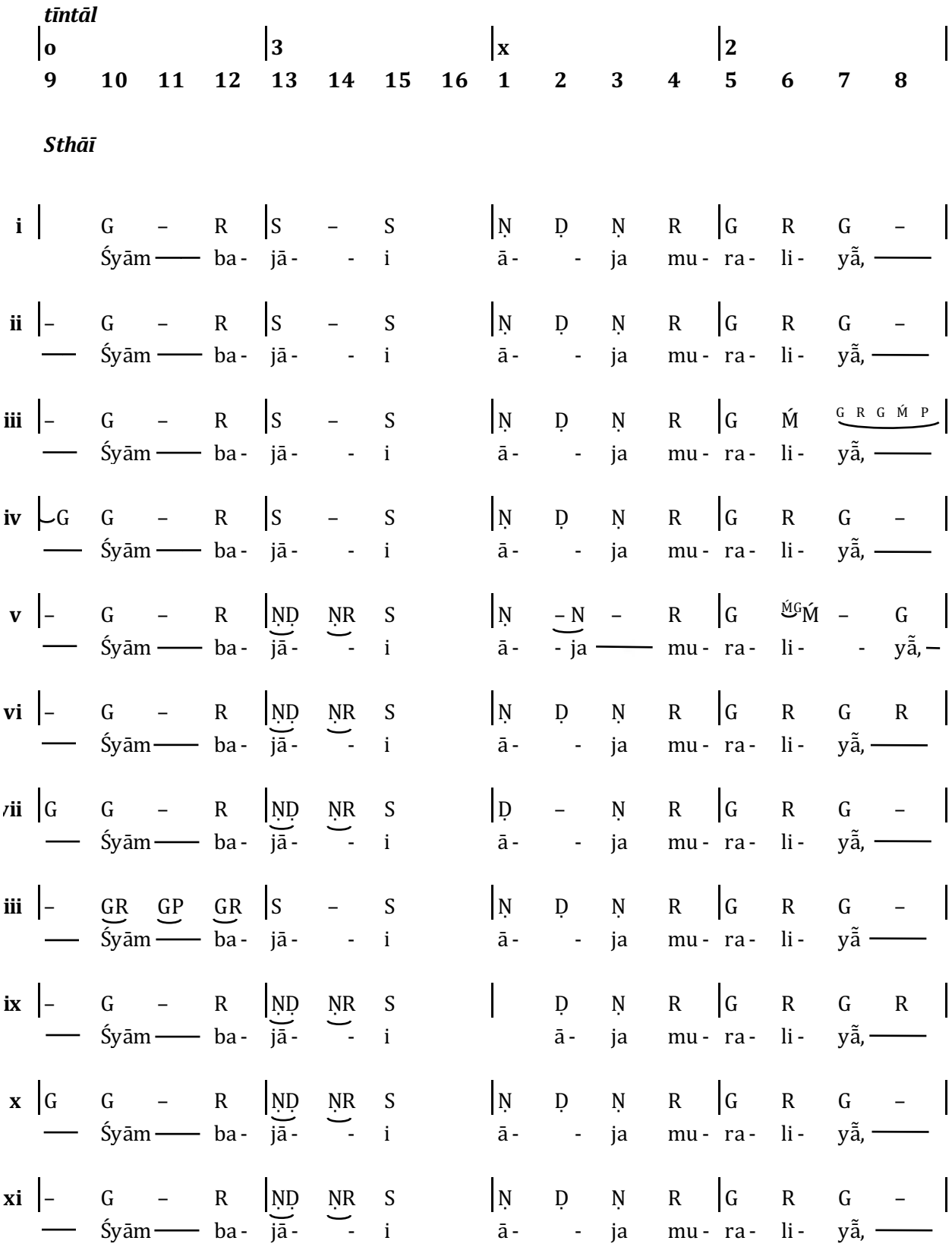

Fig. 3.3.3 Rāg Yaman, *sthāī*: first-line accumulation. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

I will return to this passage presently, but first let us consider a couple of further examples. In Rāg Toḍī (*bandiś* notation in Section 2.5.2), the opening line, 'Laṅgara kã̄karīya jīna māro', is heard eight times, and then four times more after a brief deflection to the second

line, 'more aṅgavā'—so, twelve times in total (Audio Example 3.3.10(a)). This intensification is reflected in the *antarā*, whose opening line, 'suna pave morī', is heard five times (Audio Example 3.3.10(b)).

Audio Example 3.3.10 Rāg Toḍī: first-line accumulation:
(a) *sthāī* (*RSC*, Track 2, 02:41–03:50)
(b) *antarā* (ibid., 04:14–04:46)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/9f9b9514

In Rāg Basant, VR sings the opening line of the *sthāī*, 'Phulavā binata ḍāra ḍāra', nine times in succession, and that of the *antarā*, 'Ai rī eka sukumārī', seven times (Audio Example 3.3.11 (a) and (b); *bandiś* notation in Section 2.5.14). The process in fact seems endemic across this *khayāl*: more unusually, it is applied to the third line of the *antarā*, 'āvenge nandalāla', which is sung five times, a gesture perhaps unconsciously triggered by its resemblance to the opening of the *sthāī* (Audio Example 3.3.11 (c)).

Audio Example 3.3.11 Rāg Basant: repetition–accumulation:
(a) *sthāī* opening line (*RSC*, Track 14, 00:57–01:25)
(b) *antarā* opening line (ibid., 02:03–02:28)
(c) *antarā*, third line (ibid., 02:29–02:46)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/607ffe9f

As can be heard from these several examples, such intensive repetition is an occasion for melodic and rhythmic variation. The process needs discreet handling—as illustrated in Figure 3.3.3, which transcribes the opening of the *sthāī* from Rāg Yaman (cf. Audio Example 3.3.9, above). Here, the variation process does not begin until the end of iteration iii, with a melodic flourish on the last syllable, after which the fourth statement is sung 'straight'. In iteration (v), VR decorates the second *vibhāg* to create what is in effect a little *bol tān* (ṆḌ ṆR) on the last two syllables of 'bajāi'. Subsequently, this figure virtually becomes a fixture, being subtly voiced in every iteration except for the eighth, which instead makes a short *tān* out of the content of the first *vibhāg*. (Such morphing of identity perhaps also gives an indication of how *bandiś*es mutate over time.) We can also note tiny rhythmic displacements after *sam* in iterations (v) and (ix), which add further life and unpredictability to the sequence.

If these are the manifest characteristics of such intensive repetition, what is its function? In *choṭā khayāl*s that follow extended and intensive *baṛā khayāl*s, first-line accumulation creates a kind of clearing of the air; gives the soloist a chance to mentally re-group; and gives the accompanists, especially the tabla player, a chance to move into the limelight for a short period—as can be heard at the onset of the *choṭā khayāl* in Rāg Yaman on the *Twilight Rāgs* album, Track 6. On *Rāg samay cakra*, first-line accumulation provides contrast between the different *rāg* renditions, as well as providing didactic exemplars of how to do it in any context. As the name suggests, the aesthetic effect of such intensive repetition is *accumulative*. Rather than stalling the proceedings, the process actually creates momentum, tension and excitement by generating the expectation of moving on, while withholding change. We might see this as a melodic embodiment of the principle of *tāl*: a ceaseless cycling which nevertheless is also part of a directional drive. Subtle variations of the kind analysed in Figure 3.3.3 underwrite this tendency: their succession

creates an expansion of content, a localised sense of development, the whole becoming greater than the sum of the parts.

Even though a *bandiś* can serve as its own resource for extending a performance, sooner or later, a soloist will reach a point where they have to do something else in order to create contrast and further expansion. In the following sections, I will consider some of the available techniques for doing so.

Bol Ālāp/Vistār

Musical development can flow quite naturally out of the *bandiś*. A technique that facilitates this is *bol ālāp*, in which the soloist improvises in the manner of an *ālāp* using the words—*bol*s—of the composition, over the continuing *tāl*. In Rāg Multānī (Track 6), VR sings a *bol ālāp* after completing the opening *sthāī*—as we hear in Audio Example 3.3.12 and see transcribed in Fig 3.3.4 (for a notation of the complete *bandiś* see Section 2.5.6).

Audio Example 3.3.12 Rāg Multānī: *bol ālāp* (*RSC*, Track 6, 01:45–02:22)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/e0623666

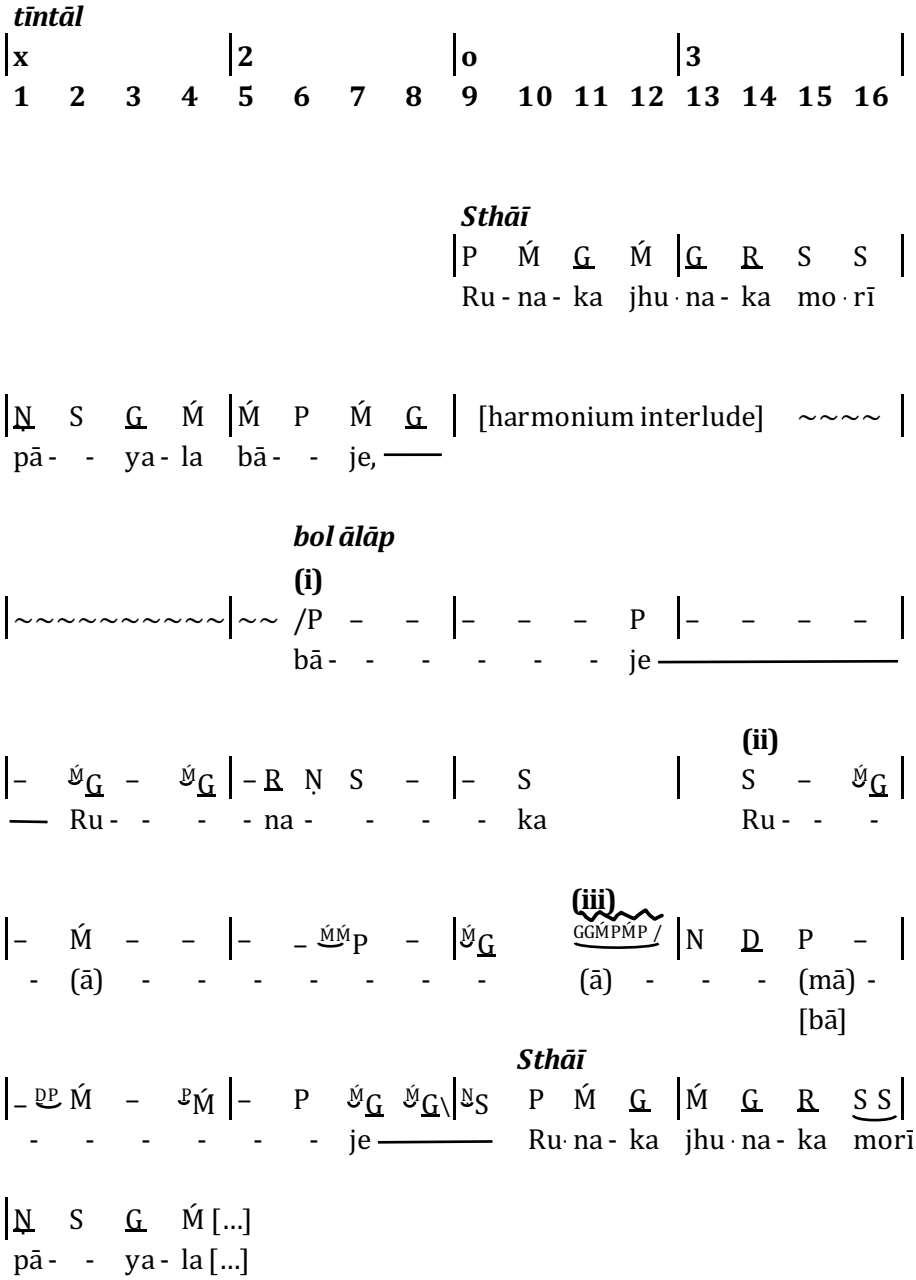

Fig. 3.3.4 Rāg Multānī: *bol ālāp*, transcription. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

The transcription includes essentials of melodic ornamentation without seeking to be too granular. Similarly, it locates the rhythmic position of notes in the *bol ālāp* only approximately in relation to the metrical *tīntāl* grid indicated at the top of the notation. This is partly for technical reasons, but also because, paradoxically, paying too much attention to precise rhythmic positioning would be contrary to a singing style whose spirit is to detach itself from precise rhythmic positioning: while the character of the *tāl* is *nibaddh* (bound—metrical), the melody gravitates towards the opposite condition, *anibaddh* (unbound—non-metrical).

The notation remains sufficiently sensitive to capture these qualities. It clearly reflects how, in contrast to the *sthāī*, VR's *bol ālāp* melody is melismatic (several notes to one syllable) rather than syllabic; and how the soloist begins his phrases on non-structural

points of the metrical framework—in this case on (or around) beats 6, 14 and 11 (the three episodes are labelled with roman numerals). This positioning is probably less the result of conscious calculation and more the outcome of intuitive avoidance of key metrical markers, such as the beginning of *vibhāg*s. Even so, a soloist has to keep one ear open for the *tāl*. Phrase (iii) ends directly on *khālī*—which means that when VR resumes the *sthāī* it is initially shunted one beat 'to the right', and he has to compress the two syllables of 'morī' into a single beat, so that the second half of the first line (beginning 'pāyala') is correctly aligned on *sam*.

Melodically, VR begins phrase (i) of his *bol ālāp* by sustaining Pa, and ends it by falling to Sā. Following this, Pa remains the organising tone, though now as a goal rather than a point of prolongation: in phrase (ii) it is approached from below with the motion S–^{M}G–Ḿ, and in phrase (iii) from above with N<u>D</u>P. All the while, there is subtle melodic decoration appropriate to the supple contours of Multānī. We should recall from our prior discussion of *ālāp* (Section 3.2) that the term *ālapti* means 'to express or elaborate *raga*'; as he gradually expands the compass of his free melodic explorations, this is just what VR is doing here.

In the expressive flow of *bol ālāp*, a vocalist may also loosen ties to the text itself—choosing just one or two words and even re-ordering them; sometimes phonetic integrity also falls away as text syllables dissolve into sustained vowels. Figure 3.3.4 reveals how, in phrase (i), VR selects just two words—'baje' and 'runaka'—from the *bandiś*, dislocating them from their surrounding text and reversing their original order. In phrase (ii), which would begin with 'runaka', the first vowel, 'u', soon morphs into 'ā', on which VR fashions a long melismatic melody. Rather than completing the word (with '-naka') he ends the melody with '-je', the second syllable of 'baje', thus conflating the fragments of the original two words. Clearly, there is a shift of aesthetic priorities in this semantic and phonetic dissolution, away from the syntax and storytelling of the *bandiś*, and towards the general feelings engendered by it and the *rāg* itself.

It is only a short step from these conditions to using this *anibaddh* technique without words at all—instead using *ākār* (singing to the vowel 'ā') or other non-semantic syllables. This happens in VR's *choṭā <u>kh</u>ayāl* for the monsoon *rāg* Megh (Track 13), captured in Audio Example 3.3.13. As before, these *anibaddh* passages flow from statements of the first line of the *bandiś* ('Ghanana ghanana ghana ghora ghora'). The first has a strong focus on the pitch Re (prominent in Megh), and begins with the syllable 'gho-', taken from 'ghor' in the *bandiś* text. But 'o' quickly shifts to 'a', and then to 're' and 'nā'—non-semantic syllables often used in an *ālāp* (see Section 3.2, Exploration 3). Something similar happens in the second *anibaddh* passage, which uses the syllable sequence 'gho-', 'ā', 'dā', 'nā', in a melodic ascent to *tār* Sā. Aesthetically, there is no discernible difference between this style of delivery and that of *bol ālāp* (which uses actual words), even though any contact with the *bandiś* text is highly attenuated.

Audio Example 3.3.13 Rāg Megh: *bol ālāp*/*vistār* (*RSC*, Track 13, 2:15–03:09)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/f3efbb6b

Do we need a different name for a *bol ālāp* without *bol*s? The question prompts a brief digression on the vicissitudes of Indian music terminology. Pragmatically, VR tends to

describe this type of wordless elaboration simply as '*ālāp*' (even though, in this context, a *tāl* is also present). Alternatively, some commentators might apply the term *vistār*, meaning 'expansion' (for example, Ruckert 2004: 57–9)—though, *vistār* is also sometimes used interchangeably with another term, *baṛhat*, meaning 'increase' (Clayton 2000: 137–8). For some, *baṛhat* has the more specific connotation of a systematic process of *ālāp*-style elaboration over a *tāl*, gradually rising through the scale degrees of a *rāg*—a procedure that dominates a *baṛā khayāl*, but may also be intermittently encountered in a *choṭā khayāl*. But then others also understand *vistār* this way; while yet others use *baṛhat* to mean a more generalised process of growth and acceleration across a *rāg* performance (Ruckert 2004: 57). My own preferences in this book are to reserve the term *ālāp* for the unaccompanied *ālāp* 'proper' that opens a performance; to use *vistār* for *bol ālāp*-style passages without words in a *choṭā khayāl* (as discussed above), or sometimes even as a synonym for *bol ālāp* itself; and to reserve *baṛhat* for the more thorough expansion process of a *baṛā khayāl* (as discussed in Section 4.3).

As well as knowing *how* to sing *bol ālāp* or *vistār*, there is also the question of *when* to do so. As with much else in a *choṭā khayāl*, there are seemingly no completely hard and fast rules for this, only certain conventions that can be expressed heuristically and then applied and adapted according to mood and circumstance. Some possible models are shown in Figure 3.3.5—schematised respectively from VR's renditions of Rāgs Multānī and Megh, as already discussed, and Yaman, discussed below.

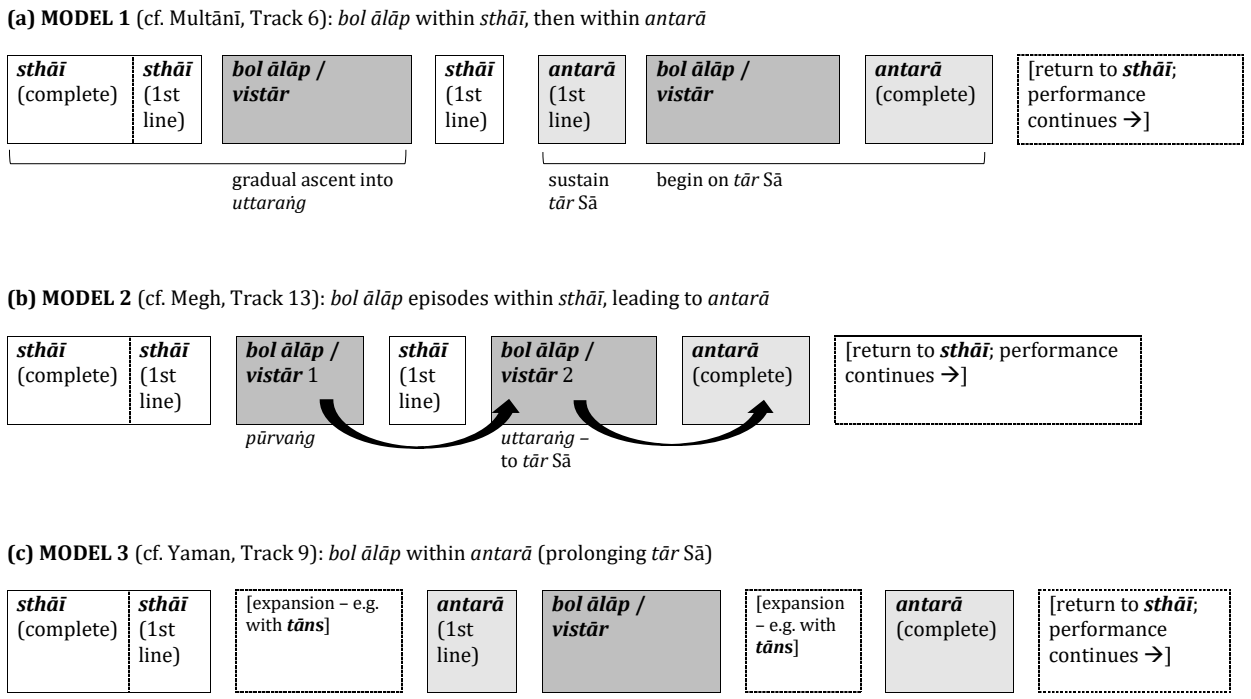

Fig. 3.3.5 Models for timing of *bol ālāp*/*vistār* within a *choṭā khayāl* (not drawn to scale). Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

Model 1 proposes one answer to the question, when do you sing *bol ālāp* or *vistār*? You can sing it after the *sthāī* and at the start of the *antarā*. But note that it is conventional to have sung the *sthāī* in its entirety first, because this provides stable ground from which the more expansive *vistār* episodes flow. After this, you may initiate your *bol ālāp* or *vistār*

(shown in dark shading in the graphic). As we heard in VR's Multānī performance (Audio Example 3.3.12), this might involve several phrases which successively expand the ambit of the *rāg*, gradually ascending into the *uttaraṅg* (upper tetrachord) of its scale. A fall back to *madhya* Sā and a reprise of the first line of the *sthāī* close off this episode. Next, from several possible avenues of continuation, VR elects to sing the *antarā*, and this generates another occasion for *vistār* (the entire passage can be heard between 02:28 and 03:34 of Track 6). Characteristically, this episode is sparked by the arrival on *tār* Sā in the first line of the *antarā*: VR sustains that pitch for a while before he begins his *vistār* (in this instance, he also morphs into another singing style, *behlāvā*, discussed below; but *vistār* or *bol ālāp* would be the norm). Only when he has completed his extemporisation does he sing the *antarā* complete, and this leads back to the *sthāī* and further development. Under this model, then, the *bol ālāp* episodes are embedded into their discrete performance stages, as shown by the braces under the graphic of Model 1.

Model 2 shows another option. It is possible to sing two or more *vistār* passages after the initial *sthāī*, each prefaced by the *sthāī* refrain, and each rising higher than the last, until *tār* Sā is reached, which then launches the *antarā*. This is the model VR adopted in his performance of Megh, as discussed above and heard in Audio Example 3.3.13: first, *vistār* in the lower tetrachord (*pūrvaṅg*); then back to the first line of the *sthāī*; then another *vistār*, this time in the upper tetrachord (*uttaraṅg*), reaching *tār* Sā; finally the *antarā*, sung complete. The arrows in Model 2 indicate the overall goal-directed tendency of the individual *vistār* episodes.

The overarching ascending trajectory here could be understood to reflect the conventions of an *ālāp* 'proper'—or indeed the staged rising profile that some call *baṛhat*. And we could interpret the ensuing *antarā*, whose initial melodic focus is *tār* Sā and descends back to *madhya* Sā, as similarly mirroring the subsequent descending phase of an *ālāp*. What all this suggests is that the overall process and its *āroh–avroh* vector can underpin a performance in different guises at different times (it is also lies implicitly behind Model 1, for that matter).

In their different ways, the *vistār* passages of Models 1 and 2 help promote continuity between *sthāī* and *antarā*; but it may also be possible to use the technique to create a contrast. This option is represented in Model 3, which is based on VR's *choṭā khayāl* in Rāg Yaman. Here, as in Model 1, *bol ālāp* is used as a means of expanding the *antarā*. However, unlike Model 1, there is no prior *bol ālāp* passage associated with the *sthāī*. Instead, expansion in the *sthāī* phase is achieved initially through first-line accumulation—as already discussed (see Figure 3.3.3 and Audio Example 3.3.9, above)—and then through an energetic series of *tān*s. These last are heard at the beginning of Audio Example 3.3.14, and are followed by a short harmonium interlude. VR then sings the first line of the *antarā*—'Jogī jaṅgama jatī satī aura gunī munī'—pausing on the last word, sustaining *tār* Sā, and—only now—giving time for an expansive *bol ālāp* episode, which contrasts with the previous, more metrically oriented material. After several *bol ālāp* phrases, VR seems poised to sing the *antarā* complete—but not yet: the emotion behind this burgeoning melodic expression first explodes into a dazzling, extended ākār *tān* whose energy finally takes us there.

Audio Example 3.3.14 Rāg Yaman: *antarā* and *bol ālāp*, with lead-in (*RSC*, Track 9, 04:32–05:45)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/fdff71b5

There is no single model, then, for when and how to sing *bol ālāp*/*vistār*—the examples given here are by no means exhaustive. Although the technique, with its reflective sensibility, is commonly applied before moving to more virtuosic *tān* work, this need not always be the case—as we saw in Model 3. In a *choṭā khayāl*, anything is in principle possible within the available stylistic conventions and constraints, as long as the performance is coherent in its concept and convincing in its execution. I will return to the wider question of how we might codify those conventions and constraints in the later stages of this section. But first let us consider some more of the available devices for expansion of a *khayāl*.

Tāns

*Tān*s—melodic runs and flourishes—are as important a device for extending a performance as anything else a khayāl singer has in their armoury. *Tān*s are a hallmark of the style; neither dhrupad nor ṭhumrī—related Hindustānī vocal styles—use them. There are essentially four basic types of *tān* that khayāl singers use on a regular basis:

- *Sargam tān*s—sung to *sargam* syllables.
- *Ākār tān*s—sung to the open vowel 'ā'.
- *Bol tān*s—incorporating words from the *bandiś*.
- *Gamak tān*s—incorporating a wide melodic shake or oscillation around each note.

Not all types will be equally prominent in any given performance. This may depend on the *gharānā*(s) with which a singer identifies, and on their personal skill set. However, *ākār tān*s usually feature particularly strongly, given that they are most conducive to flights of invention. They are certainly favoured by VR, who is a virtuoso of rapid *tān* work (as was his late guru, Bhimsen Joshi). Hence, there are plenty of examples of *ākār tān*s on *Rāg sama cakra*; but the other types of *tān* are also heard. Let us consider all four in turn.

Sargam Tāns

*Sargam tān*s are normally the first form of *tān* a student learns. We have already considered some simple examples in our earlier account of Bhairav, but to amplify the principles, we can also consider the latter part of VR's *choṭā khayāl* in Rāg Bihāg (Track 11)—as captured in Audio Example 3.3.15 and notated in Figure 3.3.6.

Audio Example 3.3.15 Rāg Bihāg: *sargam tān*s (*RSC*, Track 11, 03:47–04:47)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/7f3f16b8

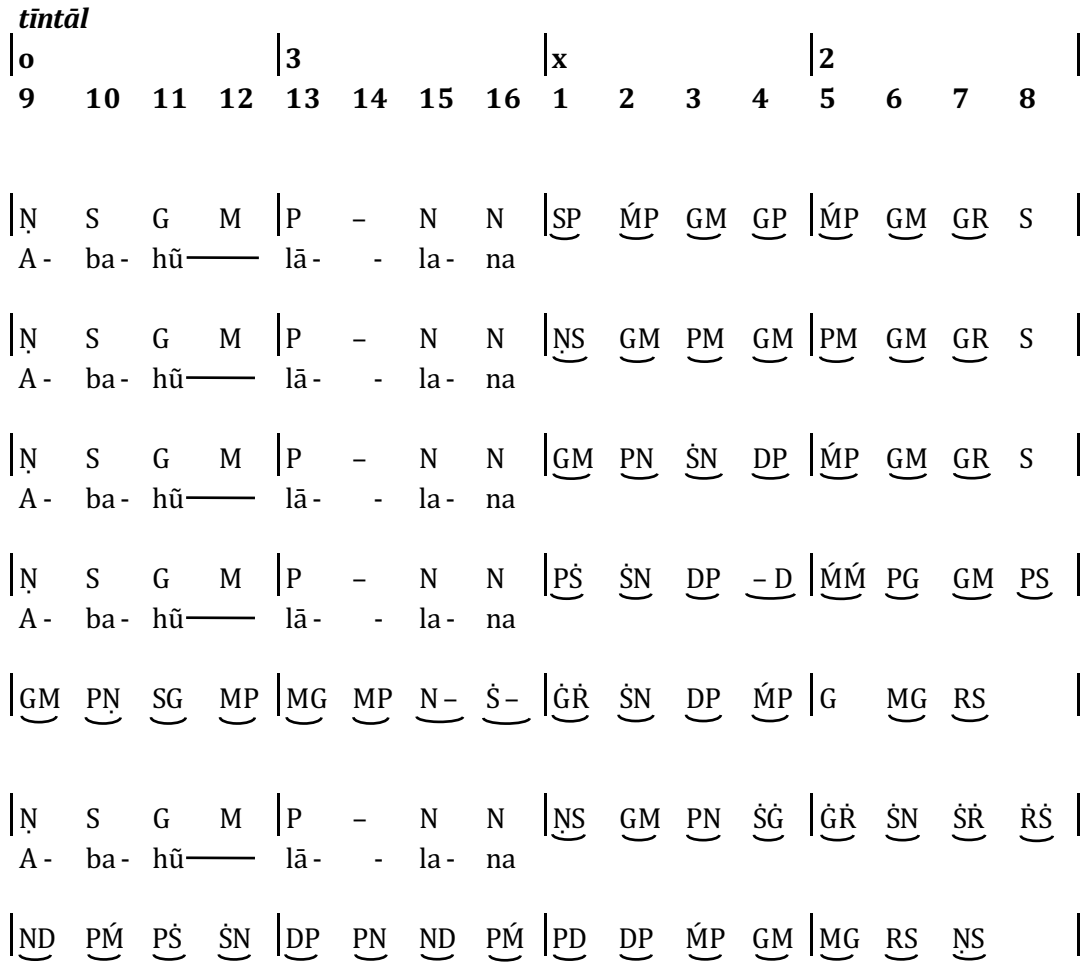

Fig. 3.3.6 Rāg Bihāg: *sargam tān*s, notation. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

We can draw several general principles of *tān* construction from this example, which may apply equally to other types of *tān*:

1. The *tān*s alternate with the first line, or first half-line, of the composition (*sthāī* or *antarā*, depending on the stage of the performance).
2. The *tān*s subdivide each *mātrā*, so intensifying the level of rhythmic activity.
3. Several *tān*s are performed in succession; they loosely relate together.
4. The *tān*s vary in length; as the sequence proceeds, they tend to get longer.
5. *Tān*s often have an underlying *āroh–avroh* contour; as the sequence progresses, their compass tends to get wider; profiles may vary from *tān* to *tān* to avoid predictability.

To elaborate on these general principles as VR applies them in this specific *tān* sequence, as notated in Figure 3.3.6:

1. The first half-line of the *sthāī* (‘Abahũ lālana’) occupies beats 9–16 of the *tīntāl* cycle; this is then followed by either an 8-beat or 24-beat *tān*, beginning on *sam* and concluding on beat 8, ready for the next iteration on *khālī*.

2. In general, the *tān*s proceed at a rate of two notes per beat, though in *tān* (iv) there are some longer notes or short gaps which create rhythmic play (*laykārī*).
3. Here we have a sequence of five *tān*s that begin simply and become more complex. We can hear linkages between them: the first three end similarly; *tān*s (iv) and (v) spend more time in the higher register intimated by *tān* (iii); the figure GM PN ṠN DP ḾP at the beginning of *tān* (iii) is developed as the figure PṠ ṠN DP –D ḾḾ P at the beginning of *tān* (iv); and the all-encompassing *tān* (v) captures fragments from all the preceding ones (for example, ṆS GM P; GM PN Ṡ; PṠ ṠN DP).
4. VR opts for just two lengths of *tān* in this particular passage. The earlier ones last eight beats, the later ones twenty-four. *Tān*s of other durations would also have been possible, though for durations divisible by sixteen it is necessary to sing the entire first line of a *tīntāl* composition to ensure it returns at the right place in the *tāl* cycle. In principle, *tān*s of any length are possible in any *tāl*. But for beginners (and even experts) simplicity has its place, especially in the first stages of improvising a *tān* sequence.
5. Regarding contour and compass: *tān*s (i) and (ii) suggest an *āroh–avroh* contour by ascending to Pa within the first few beats and falling back to Sā in the last three beats. *Tān* (iii) does this by ascending directly from Ga to *tār* Sā, and then returning slightly elliptically to *madhyā* Sā. In *tān* (iv), the *āroh–avroh* pattern only emerges about halfway through, after an early descent from *tār* Sā; this avoids predictability. *Tān* (v) opens with a steep ascent to *tār* Ga and uses the remaining twenty beats to wind gradually back to *madhyā* Sā. This happens to be a *palṭā* that VR often teaches his students—a practice phrase that encapsulates key melodic features of a *rāg* (this one also works for Rāg Bhīmpalāsī, which has the same *āroh–avroh* structure as Bihāg). Such phrases serve as storehouses of ideas for improvisation.

Although *sargam tān*s are common enough, they beg the question, why spell out the names of the notes one is singing? Is such musical self-referentiality not a little odd, tautologous even, compared to *bol tān*s which use words from the *bandiś* text, or *ākār tān*s which free the performer from verbal constraints altogether? One possible answer is historical: singers sing *sargam tān*s because that is simply the way it has been done by previous generations; by continuing to do so, one upholds tradition—*paramparā*. Other reasons are didactic: singing *tān*s to *sargam* syllables encourages students to communicate to themselves a terminology for pitch in Indian music in the very act of singing it—a unified moment of theory and practice. Practically speaking, *sargam tān*s are easier to sing at a steady tempo than is the case for *ākār tān*s; the presence of a consonant at the start of a note makes it easier to sing in tune.

While these features facilitate behind-the-scenes learning, they can also be attractive in a performance. The articulation of *tān*s with *sargam* syllables can imbue them with life and playfulness, and audiences can also find enjoyment in subliminally identifying the syllables with the notes—affirming that they too are in the know. *Sargam tān*s can be particularly effective at faster tempos in a demonstration of vocal flair. We hear this

in a later stage in VR's performance of Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī, captured in Audio Example 3.3.16. Here a short sequence of *sargam tān*s contributes to an extended process of musical development that also includes *ākār tān*s, instrumental *tān*s and, beyond the excerpt, much more. When the performers are seeking to pull out all the stops like this, *sargam tān*s afford a valuable additional resource.

Audio Example 3.3.16 Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī: *sargam tān*s in a developmental context (*RSC*, Track 7, 05:03–06:03)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/66d7d267

Ākār Tāns

In principle, any *sargam tān* can also be sung in *ākār*, provided the tempo is fast enough to let the *tān* flow freely, which is their essence. The reverse is also true: any *ākār tān* could also be sung in *sargam* provided the tempo is not tongue-twistingly rapid. What these observation point to is the intimate connection between *tān* and *lay*. *Ākār tān*s are particularly suited to *drut lay*, where they contribute to rhythmic drive. They feature abundantly in VR's up-tempo performance of Rāg Yaman: Audio Example 3.3.17(a) illustrates a passage after the reprise of the *sthāī*, when, following an interlude from the accompanying instrumentalists, he surfs across the *tāl* in strings of melismatic *tān*s, two notes per *mātrā*. The entry of the *tān*s builds on energy generated in the instrumental interlude; as in the previous audio example, from Pūriyā Dhanāśrī, we find ourselves in the thick of an extended developmental process at a climactic point in the performance, and it feels like the music is free from any formulaic confines. A similar pattern of events can be heard in Audio Example 3.3.17(b), taken from the latter part of Rāg Basant, in *drut ektāl* (Track 14). We first hear harmonium player Mahmood Dholpuri mirroring VR's *tān* style, which VR picks up on in further *tān*s of his own, finally returning to the *bandiś*. In both these examples, then, we hear how *tān*s contribute to rhythm: they channel the burgeoning forward flow of the music and help expand time within a wider interplay of ideas and techniques.

Audio Example 3.3.17 *Ākār tān*s in a developmental context:
(a) in Rāg Yaman (*RSC*, Track 7, 05:03–06:03)
(b) in Rāg Basant (*RSC*, Track 14, 03:40–04:08)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/a68e6cde

Even in less rapid tempos, VR finds opportunities for virtuosic displays of *ākār tān*s in the later, more developmentally oriented stages of the performance. In such cases, he sings *tān*s at a rate of *four* notes per *mātrā*. Audio Example 3.3.18 extracts moments from his *choṭā khayāl*s in Śuddh Sāraṅg and Bhūpālī.

Audio Example 3.3.18 Four-note-per-*mātrā ākār tān*s:
(a) in Rāg Śuddh Sāraṅg (*RSC*, Track 3, 04:15–04:37)
(b) in Rāg Bhūpālī (*RSC*, Track 8, 04:08–04:26)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/3006861d

Bol Tāns

Bol tāns are similar in style to *ākār tān*s—only with words from the *bandiś* text rather than purely with vowels (analogously to *bol ālāp*). On *Rāg samay cakra*, VR uses this device sparingly, usually applying it to repetitions of a *bandiś* in order to create variety. In Audio Example 3.3.19, two very brief extracts illustrate this usage in contrasting ways. In (a), from Rāg Multānī, VR sings a *bol tān* to the words 'pāyala bāje', following the opening half-line of the *sthāī*: it displaces the second half-line of the melody with a different profile. Conversely, in (b), from Rāg Bhūpālī, the function of a *bol tān* sung to 'gāīye' is to *decorate* the first half-line melody with a flourish: it maintains the original profile.

Audio Example 3.3.19 *Bol tān*s:
(a) in Rāg Multānī (*RSC*, Track 6, 03:41–03:50)
(b) in Rāg Bhūpālī (*RSC*, Track 8, 02:11–02:19)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/8b90ff4f

Not uncommonly, we hear VR move from *bol tān*s to *ākār tān*s in close proximity, demonstrating that to some extent these devices are interchangeable. Revisiting Audio Example 3.3.11(a), at the inception of the *choṭā khayāl* in Rāg Basant, we hear both forms of *tān* as comparable ways of varying the many iterations of the first line of the *bandiś*; it is as if the *ākār tān*s realise an emancipation from the *bandiś* implied in the earlier *bol tān*. Revisiting Audio Example 3.3.10(b) (from 01:12), we again hear *bol tān*s judiciously adding variety to a period of first-line accumulation—in this case in the *antarā* of Rāg Toḍī.

Gamak Tāns

As *ākār tān*s may be fostered by the drive of a *drut khayāl*, so *gamak tān*s are prompted by steadier *lay*s. Their shaking style adds colour and character, bringing *tān*s in slower tempos to life. *Gamak* is unquestionably a difficult technique to master, involving a single, wide oscillation around each note that at its extreme may make the actual *svar* almost unidentifiable to the listener—though not to the performer (for a more detailed account, including spectrographic analysis see Sanyal and Widdess 2004: 164–6). While *gamak* is a technique cultivated in dhrupad, it is no stranger to khayāl, its heavy style being especially appropriate to *gambhir rāg*s—*rāg*s of gravity. We have already commented on its application in the *tān*-like elements of VR's *bandiś* in Rāg Bhairav (Audio Example 3.3.4); in Audio Example 3.3.20 we can hear examples of actual *gamak tān*s in Rāg Mālkauns.

Audio Example 3.3.20 Rāg Mālkauns: *gamak tān*s (*RSC*, Track 12, 04:47–05:15)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/1a8ac27b

Behlāvā

A related technique can be heard in Audio Example 3.3.21: an extraordinary *vistār* passage in the *antarā* of Rāg Multānī, where VR extemporises widely in a style that hybridises *bol ālāp* and *gamak*. He explained to me that this is a rare technique called *behlāvā*, peculiar to the Gwalior *gharānā*. This provenance is confirmed by Nicolas Magriel, who describes

it as 'an emotive "calling out" voice quality' (Magriel and DuPerron 2013, I: 60). Sandeep Bagchee also acknowledges the Gwalior origins, stating that *behlāvā*s 'develop the *rāga* through *swar-vistār* in *ākār*' (1998: 123)—a description consistent with the way VR sings in this passage.

Audio Example 3.3.21 Rāg Multānī: *behlāvā* (*RSC*, Track 6 , 02:34–03:20)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/8a41a687

Bol Bāṇṭ, Lay Bāṇṭ

A further way to extend a khayāl performance is through *laykārī*—an umbrella term that encompasses various techniques of rhythmic elaboration or variation (see Clayton 2000: 153–4). One such technique is *bol bāṇṭ* ('word division'), which draws out the rhythmic potential of the song text by repeating words or re-arranging their order. Although this device is more a feature of dhrupad than khayāl, we do find occasional instances in VR's *gāyakī*—for example, during his *baṛā khayāl* in Rāg Bhairav on the *Twilight Rāgs* album (Track 2, 12:22–12:55). A related device, also associated with dhrupad, is *lay bāṇṭ*—defined by Martin Clayton as 'a special technique involving diminution of the *bandiś* to double, triple, and/or quadruple speed within an unchanging *tāl* structure' (2000: 159). VR provides us with an example of this in his *choṭā khayāl* in Rāg Kedār (*Rāg samay cakra*, Track 10)—as captured in Audio Example 3.3.22, and notated in Figure 3.3.7. In this extract, he sings the *bandiś* first at normal speed (*ekgun*) and then at double tempo (*dugun*), while the underlying *lay* in *tīntāl* remains constant. Strictly speaking, in *lay bāṇṭ*, the *bandiś* melody would remain unchanged under such rhythmic diminution, whereas here VR creatively re-composes it; but he arguably invokes the spirit if not the letter of the technique.

Audio Example 3.3.22 Rāg Kedār: *lay bāṇṭ* and *laykārī* (*RSC*, Track 10, 02:30–03:12)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/d2efe16c

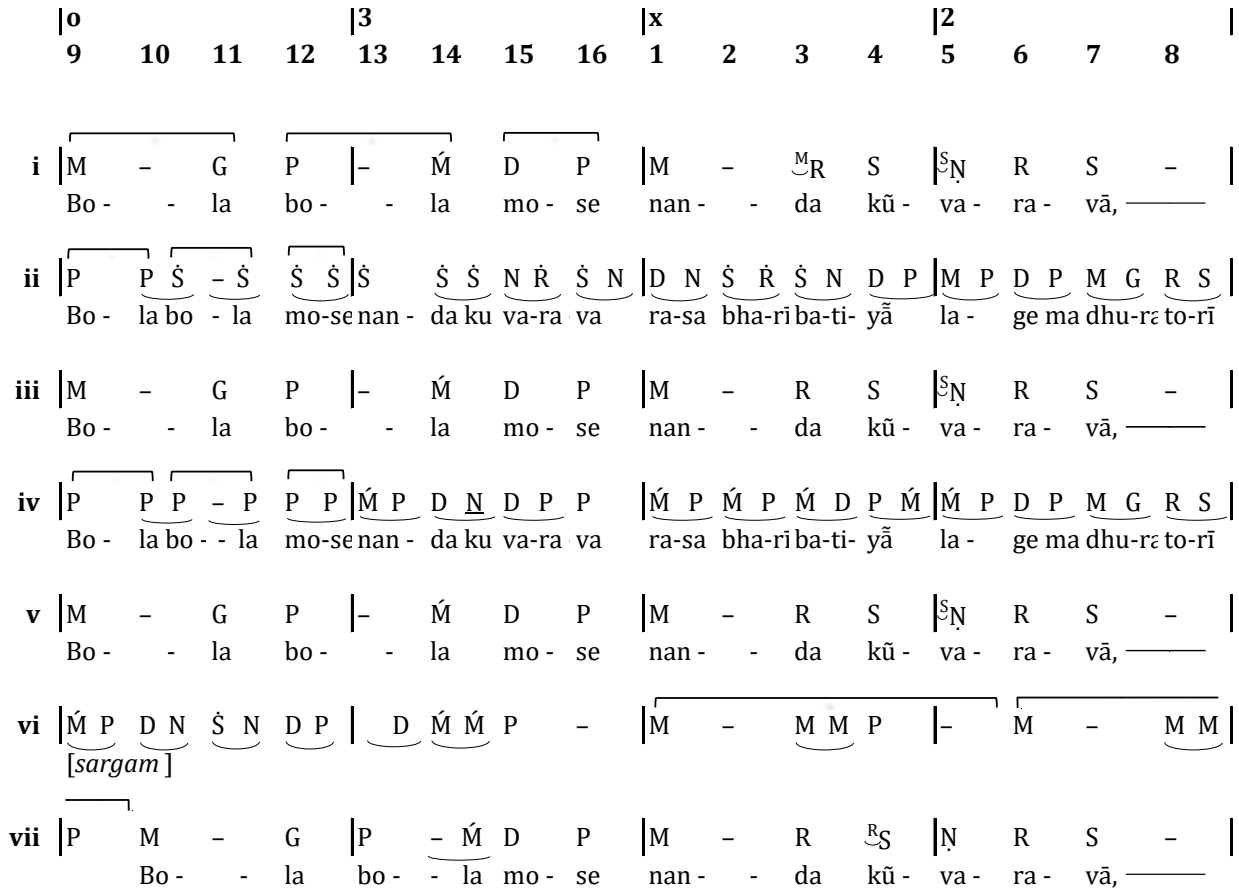

Fig. 3.3.7 Rāg Kedār: *lay bāṇṭ* and *laykārī*, notation. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

Already in its original form, the *bandiś* is rhythmically playful. The opening words, 'bola bola mose', group the eight beats from *khālī* to *sam* into a 3+3+2 pattern that cuts liltingly across the 4+4 arrangement of the *vibhāg*s—as indicated by braces over line (i) of the notation. In his *lay bāṇṭ* treatment of the *bandiś*, transcribed in lines (ii) and (iv), VR not only delivers the words at double speed, but also recomposes the melody. Although this does not break up the text (as it would under *bol bāṇṭ*), it does intensify the syllabic cross-accentuation: the 3+3+2 figure of the *bandiś* gets condensed into the first *vibhāg*, creating a lively syncopated feel. This compression creates space to fit the second line of the *bandiś* ('rasa bharī batiyã̃ …') into the same *āvartan*; it is again presented in *dugun* and again re-composed, this time as a torrent of syllables. While these variations keep the text intact, they nevertheless direct our attention towards its phonetic and rhythmic properties—towards what is musical in the poetry. After a further *ekgun* statement of the first line of the *bandiś* (Figure 3.3.7(v)), VR sings a *sargam tān* (vi), which, slightly syncopated, maintains the previous *laykārī* feel. Midway, at *sam*, he introduces a new figure lasting five beats (M— MM P—, highlighted with a brace in the notation), and repeats it. This has the effect of shifting the melody's accentuation out of line with the *tīntāl* structure, so that the first line of the *bandiś* begins a beat late and has to be compressed in order to reach *sam* at the right point (vii).

Lay Increase

The introduction of *tān*s and *lay bāṇṭ* increases *rhythmic density*: the level of activity per *mātrā* or beat (see Clayton 2000: Chapter 6). A further option is to increase the rate of the *lay* itself. While not compulsory, one or more upward tempo shifts are quite common in longer performances (conversely, drops in tempo are extremely rare). Even though the *choṭā khayāl*s on *Rāg samay cakra* are all short, three of the longest ones—in Rāgs Pūriyā Dhanāśrī, Yaman and Mālkauns—include *lay* increases. The several moments where these step changes occur can be found in Audio Example 3.3.23.

Audio Example 3.3.23 *Lay* increase:
(a) Rāg Yaman (*RSC*, Track 9, 06:20–06:49)
(b) Rāg Mālkauns (*RSC*, Track 12, 05:48–06:14)
(c) Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī (*RSC*, Track 7, 04:41–05:11)
(d) Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī (ibid., 05:54–06:32)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/6faac6c1

Performers must stay mindful of the relationship between the character of the *bandiś* and the *lay* in which they perform it; and they must ensure that any acceleration of the *lay* is justified—that it either issues out of already intensifying activity or facilitates it. In the Yaman example, the *bandiś* is well suited to *drut lay*: the exuberant picture painted by the words would be less effectively conveyed if the *lay* were slower. So, VR sets out at around 270 bpm; the gradual acceleration to 290 bpm heard in Audio Example 3.3.23(a) arises logically after a passage of *ākār tān*s that very slightly nudges the tempo forward, as if the performers were previously straining at the leash.

While this takes us from *drut* to *ati drut* (very fast) *lay*, the tempo increase in the Mālkauns extract (Audio Example 3.3.23(b)) takes us from 165 bpm—only a little faster than *madhya lay*—to 225 bpm—clearly *drut*. This enables VR to diversify the types of *tān* he can include: *gamak* in the earlier phase (cf. Audio Example 3.3.20); *ākār* in the final minute. If the former type reflects the *gambhīr* character of the *rāg*, the latter is perhaps a response to the joyful poem about springtime.

In the Pūriyā Dhanāśrī examples—(c) and (d)—we find a *bandiś* that can sit comfortably at either end of the *drut* spectrum—a point evidenced by *two* tempo increases. Both of these are associated with the extended developmental process heard in this performance. The first tempo uplift (c) accelerates the *lay* from 165 to 225 bpm. It comes once VR has completed an exposition of both *sthāī* and *antarā* and turns to expand his presentation: reprising the *sthāī*, he now embarks on a series of *sargam tān*s (discussed above in conjunction with Audio Example 3.3.16). The second tempo increase (Audio Example 3.3.23(d)) follows intensive engagement with the accompanists, and takes us to around 260 bpm for the climactic closing stages. VR initially takes advantage of this even faster *lay* not to inject further *tān*s (these will come later), but to sing an expansive *bol ālāp* passage which takes him well into the upper octave. In other words, the faster *lay* sustained by the tabla is initially accompanied by a radical drop in rhythmic density from the soloist, who instead increases melodic intensity. This makes the point that *lay* accumulation is not a one-dimensional strategy.

Putting It All Together: A Scheme of Rubrics

In the next stage of this investigation, I seek to synthesise all the above observations into a theoretical schema for the event sequence of a *choṭā khayāl*. In more extended form, this revisits the question we examined earlier in respect of *bol ālāp*: not only what do you sing, but also when (and how) do you sing it?

In truth, musicians do have a kind of mental road map through which to navigate their journey through a *khayāl*. This is very clear in the case of a *baṛā khayāl*, as I discuss in Section 4.3; but, paradoxically, although (or because) a *choṭā khayāl* is less weighty, the number of possible routes through it is greater, and in this respect it is more complex. Its particular challenge to the singer—mirrored in the enjoyment of a knowledgeable listener—is to decide at every juncture, which way now? Student performers are likely to be advised by their teacher to plan their route in advance and keep it simple—as in our opening Bhairav example. But as they gain in skill and confidence, musicians may increasingly leave their options open. The ideal is a state of spontaneity and aliveness, where, in the moment of delivery, even the performers do not know exactly what will happen next.

Of course, while much of this creative decision-making may be unconscious, and while the ineffable may play its part, the process is firmly underpinned by convention, even though this permits considerable flexibility. Is it possible systematically to capture such conventions in words, and to organise their presentation in such a way as to reflect that flexibility? Would we even want to? Clearly, khayāl singers are eminently capable of practicing their art, and listeners are capable of enjoying it, without consulting theory books. However, while the kind of theoretical description to which these questions steer us takes us beyond what is strictly necessary for performance, it also makes conscious a yet more compelling image of what is at stake when performers perform; and potentially all parties—students, listeners, researchers and professional artists—have investment in such knowledge.

As in my analysis of *ālāp* in Section 3.2, I here proceed by assembling a schema of rubrics. As before, these do not represent axiomatic, final principles, but rather heuristic guidelines for possible actions in live performance. The rubrics are arranged below in three groups. The first—termed *event sequence rubrics*—focuses on the overall ordering of events. The second group—*musical elements*—explores options for executing different techniques and types of musical material within that sequence. And the third group—*global rubrics*—has a more generalised bearing on a performance over and above the sequence itself. Each rubric has its own label, comprising one or more letters, and there is frequent cross-referencing: the quasi-algebraic style reflects an intention to keep descriptions rigorous, parsimonious and systematic. Nonetheless, I have tried to think from a performer's perspective throughout; hence, I express the rubrics as if directed to a student performer—which is also to invite the identification of non-performers with the soloist's situation in the moment.

Event Sequence Rubrics

So, let us first consider those rubrics that relate to the order of what happens. Beneath the surface of the musical events, it is possible to discern a beginning–middle–end sequence, whose components I term *opening phase*, *elaboration phase* and *closing phase*. The bulk of a *choṭā khayāl* is usually oriented around the elaboration phase, but in any case, like the phase schema of an *ālāp*, the phases here are not discrete 'sections' as such. Rather, they succeed one another almost imperceptibly; they are more correlates of the artist's disposition at each stage of the performance: 'now I'm beginning'; 'now I have to grow the core of my performance'; 'now it's time to end'. Each phase is described below under its own rubric; its components are in turn cross-referenced to the rubrics for *musical elements* (indicated in parentheses).

O – Opening phase

- Sing the *sthāī* of your chosen *bandiś* in its entirety (S), either in simple mode (s) or extended mode (e).
- You may optionally sing the entire *sthāī* (S) a second time.
- You may optionally follow the *sthāī* with the *antarā* (A) in simple mode (s).
- After you have sung the *sthāī* (and *antarā*, if you elect to do so) you should normally sing a reprise of its—the *sthāī*'s—first line (S^1), which from here on acts as a refrain, or *mukhṛā*.
- Next, proceed to the elaboration phase (E).

  NOTES:

  - A complete second statement of the *sthāī* immediately following the first is less commonly made, but is not unusual. (On *Rāg samay cakra*, VR applies it in the *choṭā khayāl*s for Toḍī, Śuddh Sāraṅg, Bhīmpalāsī, Pūriyā Dhanāśrī, Yaman, Kedār and Mālkauns.)
  - The *antarā* is quite commonly deferred until the elaboration phase, where there are additional options for its delivery.

E – Elaboration phase

You have several options for what to sing next. You can mix and match from the following:

- *Bol ālāp*/*vistār* (V).
- *Tān*s (T).
- *Antarā* (A).
- *Laykārī* (L).
- Reprise of the entire *sthāī* (S).
- *Lay* increase (LI).
- Instrumental interlude (Int).

NOTES:

- *Vistār* and *tān*s are the most common vehicles for musical expansion, and normally begin to be heard earlier in the elaboration phase.
- Not all these elements are compulsory, though all are in principle available. There is some mutability regarding order, but the *antarā* (unless already sung in the opening phase) is not likely to appear before passages of *vistār* and *tān*s have begun to do their work of expansion. Similarly, *laykārī* techniques, and especially any *lay* increase, make most sense once some developmental momentum has already been achieved.
- In principle, all the above elements may be executed more than once. Indeed, this would be strongly expected in the case of *vistār* and (especially) *tān*s, which occur frequently and are often linked together in series. Other features, such as the *antarā*, are likely to be revisited at most once.
- Between episodes of each type of material, and often within them, it is customary to interpolate the first line of the *sthāī* as a refrain (S^1).
- A reprise of the complete *sthāī* (S) within the elaboration phase tends to re-focus the musical direction after a period of growth involving *tāns* and/or *vistār*. As in its initial statement, a reprise of the *sthāī* may take simple or extended form, including first-line accumulation (S^1A). This may also be associated with an increase in *lay* (LI).
- Some principles of instrumental interludes (Int) are outlined under 'global rubrics', below.
- Once you have executed the elaboration phase to your (and your audience's) satisfaction, proceed to the closing phase (C).

C – Closing phase

- Your performance should normally end by first returning to the *sthāī*, or at least the first line (S/S^1).
- The first line or half-line of the *sthāī* may then be used as the basis for a final *tihāī* (Th) which leads to closure on *sam*, whereupon the tabla stops playing.
- You, the soloist, should keep going for a few seconds more with a concluding *bol ālāp* phrase (Cba) that finally comes to rest on *madhya* Sā.

NOTE:

- The first step of the closing phase (S or S^1) may also serve as the final step of the elaboration phase, thus creating an elision (→) between the two phases.

Musical Elements

The following rubrics are glosses on the musical elements and gestures referenced in the event sequence rubrics above. The rubrics below include options—and hence decisions that have to be made—regarding each kind of material.

S – Complete statement of *sthāī*

Either:

(s) Simple presentation: the *sthāi* is sung in its entirety, the first line normally repeated once, the other lines less likely to be repeated—see rubric BH (*bandiś* hierarchy), below. This is followed by a return to the first line of the *sthāī* (S^1).

Or:

(e) Extended presentation: the first line is subjected to several repetitions, creating first-line accumulation (S^1A), before the whole *sthāī* is delivered. Subsequent lines may also be repeated once (analytically notated as S^2R, S^3R etc.), though this is less common.

NOTES:

- Option (s) is more usual in a freestanding *choṭā khayāl*, i.e. without a prior *baṛā khayāl*.
- Option (e) often occurs when the *choṭā khayāl* follows a *baṛā khayāl*.
- The greater the level of repetition within the *sthāī*, the greater the need for variation or decoration of the melody in order to sustain musical interest.

S^1 – *Sthāī*, first line as refrain

The first line of the *sthāī* acts as a refrain throughout a *choṭā khayāl*; in this guise it is sometimes referred to as the *mukhṛā*. This gesture commonly punctuates the end of events and actions, and/or acts as a launchpad to succeeding ones. This principle is built into the specification of many rubrics, but even where it is not, its operation may be assumed. Here are the most common places you might apply it:

- Following entire statements of the *sthāī* (S).
- Following (or preceding) individual *vistār*/*bol ālāp* episodes (V), individual *tān*s (T) and individual *laykārī* episodes (L).
- Following the final line of the *antarā* (A).

NOTE:

- You may also treat the first line of the *antarā* in a similar, more localised way (A^1) once you get there—for example, as a launching-off point for *tān*s, *vistār* and other developmental techniques in the upper register around *tār* Sā before singing the *antarā* complete (A).

S[1]A – *Sthāī*, first-line accumulation

The first line of the *sthāī* may be repeated several or many times as a means of accumulating intensity. There are two contexts where this rubric may normally be applied:

- In the opening phase, as part of the extended delivery of the *sthāī* (S(e)); this is more likely when the *choṭā khayāl* follows a *baṛā khayāl*.
- In the elaboration phase, where it may also be associated with an increase in *lay* (LI).

  NOTE:

  - The first line of the *antarā* may be similarly treated (A[1]A)—see next.

A – *Antarā*

It is usual to sing the *antarā* at least once in a performance. Essentially, there are three possibilities:

(s) Simple presentation: sing the *antarā* in its entirety, usually repeating the first line once.

(e) Extended presentation: sing the first line of the *antarā* one or more times (A[1]), then sustain *tār* Sā (which is normally the goal tone of the first line); extemporise around this pitch, rising higher if you feel this is appropriate (*tār* Sā is most commonly prolonged by *vistār*/*bol ālāp*, but *tāns* are also possible). Once this work is done, you may either: (i) sing the complete *antarā*; or (ii) first repeat the entire process to build further intensity.

(d) Delayed presentation: the first line is subjected to first-line accumulation (A[1]A) before the whole *antarā* is sung; or the first line is treated as a localised refrain (A[1]) with several intervening episodes of *vistār* or *tān*s before the entire *antarā* is sung; or there may be some blending of these processes.

NOTES:

- Option (s) is usually applied when the *antarā* is sung as part of the opening phase, though it may be delivered this way in the elaboration phase too.
- Option (e) is normally associated with the elaboration phase, and occurs quite commonly. Its elaborations around *tār* Sā create localised development, as well as contributing to the larger tendency of growth.
- Option (d) is less common and usually occurs in the elaboration phase. Its essence is a spirit of play around the moment of arrival of the complete *antarā*. Its orientation is towards the future.
- The *antarā* itself is usually composed with a built-in return to the lower register and *madhya* Sā, which prompts a return to the first line of the *sthāī* (S[1]) or possibly all of it (S).
- In principle, it is possible to sing the *antarā* a second time, following an intervening period of development (for example, VR does this in the *choṭā*

khayāl of Rāg Mālkauns). However, this is not common: if you wish to take this option, you should bear rubric BH in mind (see below).

V, T – *Vistār*, *tāns*

Vistār and *tān*s are the main techniques for musical expansion and development in a *choṭā khayāl*. Because they often interact, I here treat them together.

- *Vistār* is used to expand the expressive reach of the *bandiś* and the *rāg*. The term is used in this rubric to mean either a passage of wordless *ālāp* (V(a)) or a passage of *bol ālāp* (V(b))—sung independently of the *tāl* maintained by the tabla.
- *Tāns* have a contrasting function: they 'bring out … the decorative possibilities within a *rāga*' (Mittal 2000: 121). They normally take one of the following forms:

  T(s) *sargam tān*s

  T(a) *ākār tān*s

  T(b) *bol tān*s

  T(g) *gamak tān*s

NOTES:

- It is common to present one or more episodes of either or both techniques during the elaboration phase.
- Each instance of either technique is normally preceded and followed by the *mukhṛā* (S^1 or A^1, depending on the context).
- You may proceed directly from one technique to another, or interpolate these with S^1/A^1.
- Which technique to use when is partly a question of whether it is desirable to increase or lower rhythmic density at any given point: *tān*s will increase it, *vistār* will lower it. This is related to whether you wish to step up the intensity or introduce a period of contrast after a period of busy activity—cf. rubric AI, below.
- Although *sargam* and *ākār tān*s are most commonly heard among the *tān* types, and the former may more likely be sung before the latter, there are no hard and fast principles regarding ordering.

L – *Laykārī*

Although the term can encompass 'any technique intended to develop or vary rhythm' (Clayton 2000: 153), for this rubric I use *laykārī* to signify techniques of rhythmic play or intensification that are not listed in other rubrics, notably:

- L(bb) *bol baṇṭ*.
- L(lb) *lay baṇṭ*.

NOTES:

- These techniques are more commonly associated with dhrupad, and not extensively used in their own right in khayāl. But their cross-rhythmic, syncopated style may sometimes be applied to variations of the *bandiś* or within the delivery of *tān*s.
- *Laykārī* techniques are more likely to be introduced later in the elaboration phase.
- Other *laykārī* devices listed under separate rubrics include *lay* increase (LI), and *tihāī* (Th)—see next.

LI – *Lay* increase

As the elaboration phase proceeds, you have the option of increasing the *lay*. This may be associated with an episode of first-line accumulation (S^1A/A^1A). The decision to increase the *lay*, as well as when to do so, should be made with regard to the overall accumulation of intensity (AI).

Th – *Tihāī*

While most Indian classical performances end with a *tihāī*—a phrase repeated three times—this rhythmic device can be introduced anywhere to create musical interest. Usually a *tihāī* will end either on *sam* or at the beginning of S^1 or A^1. *Tihāī*s can create cunning cross-rhythmic play; they can even be compounded into a *cakradār*—a *tihāī* within a *tihāī* within a *tihāī*, though this device is more usually deployed in instrumental music. In the Kirānā *gharānā*, where melodic invention is more important than rhythmic, *tihāī*s are normally kept simple. At the very least, a *khayāliyā* needs to know how to employ a *tihāī* in the closing phase (C) of their performance.

Int – *Interlude*

Occasionally, as the lead artist, you may want to signal an interlude, giving one or more of the accompanying team a little time in the limelight. This is an effective way to create contrast and/or to give yourself a moment to re-group physically and mentally. As always, timing needs to be judicious, as does duration. An interlude is most likely to be effective some way into the elaboration phase, once you have established your presence as soloist. Too long a break from centre stage will detract from the main focus of the performance: yourself and your own invention. A similar foregrounding of one of the accompanists might happen at the beginning of a *choṭa khayāl* (S(e)) when this follows an extended *baṛā khayāl*.

Global Rubrics

The following rubrics do not apply to any specific phase of the performance, nor, usually, to any specific type of musical material; rather they condition the performance as a whole.

AI – Accumulation of intensity

Practically every Hindustani classical performance is shaped by one or more arcs of mounting intensity at local and global levels. This principle (AI) is engineered through the combination and permutation of a number of elements, including:

- Ascending register, for example, across episodes of *vistār* and *tān* work.
- Increasing length of such episodes.
- Increasing *lay* (LI).
- Increasing *lay* density—i.e. level of rhythmic activity per *mātrā*, *āvartan*, etc.
- Increasing complexity of invention, including level of interaction with accompanists.
- Increasing volume.

NOTE:

- AI is usually not manifested as a single uninterrupted gradient, but as a series of rises and falls within an overall ascent. The choice of techniques, and the manner of their application, should be made with this in mind.

BH – *Bandiś* hierarchy

The overall performance is conditioned by an assumed hierarchy within the different components of the *bandiś*:

a) The *sthāī* is superordinate to the *antarā*. It is presented first, and it or its elements (notably the first line) should preponderate. While the *antarā* is quite often sung only once (and may very occasionally be omitted entirely), it would be unthinkable to treat the *sthāī* this way. The *antarā* is always followed by a return to the *sthāī*.

b) The first line of both *sthāī* and *antarā* have greatest salience within their respective portion of the *bandiś*. In the case of the *sthāī*, the first line is usually repeated, sometimes cumulatively (S^1A); and it operates as a refrain, or *mukhṛā*, across the entire performance (S^1), helping bind it together. The first line of the *antarā* is often similarly repeated, and may similarly operate as a reference point while that stage holds sway (A^1, A^1A).

c) Other lines of the *sthāī* and *antarā* may be repeated, but this is rarer. Overstating them would violate (a) and (b). For example, it would be highly unusual to repeat the last line of the *antarā*, since it tends to have the composed-in function of leading back to the *sthāī*.

NOTES:

- At one extreme of the hierarchy we have the first line of the *sthāī*, which could be seen to stand synecdochally for the *bandiś* as a whole; and at the other we have the last line of the *antarā*, which may be heard only once in the entire performance.
- This rubric matters because it regulates the balance of the different elements across the performance as a whole. For example, if, after a period of development, you decide to introduce the *antarā* a second time, you need to ensure that you give comparably greater attention to the *sthāī*, so that the latter is not eclipsed. For the same reason, you would be less likely to sing the *antarā* a third time.

→ Merge/elision

Not all the categories of musical material outlined above remain discrete at all times. *Bol ālāp* may merge into wordless *ālāp* (*vistār*), or, as it becomes more rhythmically energised, morph into *tān* singing or *laykārī*. Similarly, as you begin singing the *sthāī* or its *mukhṛā*, you may want to hand over to one of the accompanists, hence transitioning into an interlude. A late statement of the *sthāī* may simultaneously round off the elaboration phase and initiate the closing phase, creating an elision between them. These and other examples of merging or elision are represented in this account with an arrow symbol between the components, for example, V(a)→T(a) (= *vistār*/wordless *ālāp* merging into ākār *tān*s).

Does a *Choṭā Khayāl* Have a Performance Grammar?

If the above schedule of rubrics looks surprisingly complicated, this is because the options for singing a *choṭā khayāl* actually *are* complicated—or can be. What this schema implies is that beneath a performance there may lie something not unlike a grammar that can generate realisations on a continuum from the simple to the complex. If the above rubrics are correctly formulated, they should in principle be able to model any *choṭā khayāl* performance. While fully testing this hypothesis would be a long-term project, we can consider a complementary pair of instances here as initial proof of concept.

At the simpler end of the spectrum, Figure 3.3.8(a) presents a second analysis of VR's Bhairav *choṭā khayāl*, in the form of an *event synopsis*. This re-description applies the rubrics developed above to the performance events in tabular form. The first column gives the track time code for the inception of each event. The second indicates the *āvartan* in which the event begins: *āvartan*s are numbered successively, and beat numbers are indicated with superscripts—which confirm that virtually all the events in this *tīntāl* performance begin on *khālī*, beat 9. (The final *āvartan*, 19, is shown in brackets since this is not a complete instance at all: the *tāl* dissipates as soon as the final *sam* is articulated.) The third and fourth columns respectively show the performance phase and constituent musical elements, using rubric codes from the schema. The fifth column provides a concise generic description of the elements, and is supplemented by the sixth which comments on features specific to the performance.

Choṭā <u>kh</u>ayāl in Rāg Bhairav

(a) Event synopsis

1	2	3	4	5	6
Time code	***Āvartan no.***	**Perf. phase**	**Elements**	**Description**	**Comments**
02:01	0^9	**O**	S(s)	*Sthāī* complete (simple mode).	
02:36	4^9		S^1	1st line of *sthāī* (*mukhṛā*).	
02:45	5^9		A(s)	*Antarā* complete (simple mode).	
03:21	9^9		S^1	1st line of *sthāī* (*mukhṛā*).	
03:29	10^9	**E**	T(s)	*Sargam tān*s.	3 x 8 beat *tān*s, preceded by 1st half-line of *sthāī* as *mukhṛā*.
03:56	13^9	**E→C**	S(s)	*Sthāī* complete (simple mode). Creates elision with closing phase.	
04:33	17^9	**C**	Th(S½)	*Tihāī*, based on 1st line of *sthāī.*	
04:46	[19…]		Cba	Closing *bol ālāp*.	
05:00				[Ends]	

(b) Event string

O: S(s), S^1, A(s), S^1

E: T(s)

E → C: S(s)

C: Th(S½), Cba.

Fig. 3.3.8 Rāg Bhairav, *choṭā <u>kh</u>ayāl*: (a) event synopsis; (b) event string. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

This synoptic analysis makes the straightforwardness of the performance transparent. It shows how the opening phase (O) prevails for half the total duration (nine *āvartan*s out of eighteen); how the elaboration phase (E) essentially comprises a simple sequence of *tān*s; and how it elides with the closing phase (E→C) as the *sthāī* is reprised in its entirely before the final *tihāī*.

Part (b) of the figure extracts this information more concisely still. This *event string* arranges the sequences of musical elements linearly by performance phase. It is this notation that suggests the possibility of some form of quasi-grammatical underpinning.

Choṭā <u>kh</u>ayāl in Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī

(a) event synopsis

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Time code	***Āvartan no.***	**Perf. phase**	**Elements**	**Sub-elements**	**Description**	**Comments**
02:21	0^{10}	**O**	S(e)	S^1A	Complete presentation of *sthāī*, in extended mode: first-line accumulation.	First line 4x.
02:46	4^{9}			S^2R	Second line of *sthāī*, repeated.	
02:59	6^{10}		S(e)	S^1A	Further complete presentation of *sthāī*. First-line accumulation (*sthāī*).	First line 4x. Overall pattern same as preceding.
03:25	10^{10}			S^2R	Second line of *sthāī*, repeated.	
03:38	12^{10}		S^1		First line of *sthāī* used as refrain (*mukhṛā*).	
03:44	13^{10}	**E**	A(e)	A^1	*Antarā* (first line).	Extended mode.
03:50	14^{10}			A^1→V(b)	First line of *antarā*, merging into *vistār* (*bol ālāp*).	Ends with short *tān*.
04:15	18^{9}			A^1A	1st-line accumulation (*antarā*).	First line 4x.
04:41	22^{10}			A^2	2nd line of *antarā*.	Concludes *antarā*.
04:47	23^{10}	**E2**	S^1A+LI		First-line accumulation (*sthāī*), with *lay* increase.	First line 3x. LI begins during 2nd statement.
05:06	27		T(s)		*Sargam tāns*.	3 *tāns*, with 1st half of S^1 as *mukhṛā*.
05:18	29^{9}		S^1→Int		First line of *sthāī* merging into harm. interlude.	
05:28	31^{9}		T(a)		*Ākār tān*.	Single, short *tān* lasting ½ *āvartan*.
05:31	32		Th(S^1¼) →S^1 →Int		*Tihāī* based on first quarter-line of *sthāī*; elides with first line, merging into harm. interlude	
05:46	35		T(a)		*Ākār tān*.	Single, longer *tān* lasting 1.5 *āvartans*.
05:53	36^{10}		S^1→Int →S^1		First line of *sthāī* merging into interlude, merging back into first line of *sthāī*.	
06:07	39^{9}	**E3**	S^1R+LI →Int		First line of *sthāī*, repeated, with *lay*	

					increase, merging into harm. interlude.	
06:17	41[13]		V(b)		*Vistār* (*bol ālāp*).	Segue into following *tans*.
06:32	45[9]		T(a)		*Ākār tāns*.	Climactic, accumulative. S^1 (or fragments) as *mukhṛā*.
06:58	52[2]		Th(S¼) →S^1→		*Tihāī* based on first quarter-line of *sthāī*, merging into 1st line, merging into …	
07:04	53[9]	**C**	S(s)		reprise of *sthāī* (complete).	
07:12	55[10]		Th(S½)		*Tihāī*, based on 1st half-line of *sthāī*.	
07:18	[57…]		Cba		Closing *bol ālāp*	Returns to *madhya* Sā.
07:36					[Ends.]	

(b) Event string

O: S(e){S^1A, S^2R}, S(e){S^1A, S^2R}, S^1

E: A(e){A^1, A^1→V(b), A^1A, A^2}

E2: S^1A+LI, T(s), S^1→Int, T(a), Th(S¼)→S^1→Int, T(a), S^1→Int→S^1

E3: S^1R+LI→Int, V(b), T(a), Th(S¼)→S^1→

C: S(s), Th(S½), Cba.

Fig. 3.3.9 Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī, *choṭā khayāl*: (a) event synopsis; (b) event string. Created by author (2024), CC BY-NC-SA.

The elements are arranged syntagmatically, i.e. in a meaningfully related chain; and they elaborate principles implicit in the performance-phase rubrics.

Before reflecting further on the validity of the grammatical conceit, let us first apply the above model to a more complex example of a *choṭā khayāl* performance. This one is in Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī, from Track 7 of *Rāg samay cakra*. The event synopsis of VR's rendition is shown in Figure 3.3.9(a). It follows the format of the previous figure, except that it contains an additional column, 5, which shows sub-elements of musical elements where appropriate; this is necessitated by the greater complexity of the performance, the longest on the album. We can see in column 4 that VR elects to open with the *sthāī* in its extended mode (S(e)), whose sub-elements are a period of first-line accumulation (S^1A), in which the first line is heard four times, and a repeated second line (S^2R). As if this were not repetition enough, VR then repeats the entire sequence—S^1A, S^2R—followed by a reprise of the first line of the *sthāī* (S^1) which henceforward acts as a *mukhṛā* or refrain. Such pervasive repetition requires imaginative delivery, and VR obliges with subtle variations of the first line throughout—as captured in Audio Example 3.3.24.

Audio Example 3.3.24 Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī: opening phase (*sthāī* in extended mode) (*RSC*, Track 7, 02:20–03:43)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/6f80a1fb

Audio Example 3.3.25 Rāg Pūriyā Dhanāśrī: beginning of elaboration phase (*antarā* in extended mode) (*RSC*, Track 7, 03:43–04:49)
https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12434/43bc8b34

The *antarā* is likewise presented in extended mode (A(e))—heard in Audio Example 3.3.25 and summarised in Figure 3.3.9(a). The *antarā*'s position, immediately following the *sthāī*, initially suggests that it might be a continuation of the opening phase. However, mid-way through a repeat of the first line, VR pauses on *tār* Sā and morphs this into an extended period of *vistār* (*bol ālāp*)—(A^1→V(b)). By this point it is clear that we have moved into the elaboration phase (see column 3)—an impression confirmed by a subsequent period of first-line accumulation (A^1A). This mirrors the opening treatment of the *sthāī* (S^1A) and retrospectively suggests that even the opening phase had something of the quality of an elaboration phase. Moreover, the event synopsis shows how the elaboration phase 'proper' dominates the performance; column 3 interprets it as compounded into three stages—E, E2 and E3—the latter two being articulated by *lay* increases (LI).

As was the case with the Bhairav analysis, Figure 3.3.9(b) distils this information into an event string, one line per performance phase. Sub-elements are notated within curly brackets, as subsets of their respective elements; these in turn are presided over by the rubric code for the respective performance phase—shown in bold. This concise notation facilitates comparison between performances: even a superficial glance reveals something of the significantly greater complexity of the performance compared with its precursor. While the algebraic style looks abstract, the compressed encryption of rubrics is in fact an apt metaphor for the near-instantaneous decision-making demanded of a performer in the live moment: each letter symbolises a commitment to a musical action that subsequently unfolds with full expression (and often passion) in real time. And, even more than the last example, this encoding is suggestive of an underlying grammar that might have generated it. But in what sense might we understand this notion?

Conclusion

The event-string representation suggests a grammar because it reflects the way elements of musical material are chained together under repeatable and combinable principles that are understood by those making and hearing the music; it reflects how a potentially infinite number of combinations can be generated from a finite number of conventions. However, the notation is not yet a formal description of the putative grammar itself, but rather of its outputs. To model the underlying principles of the grammar per se would need a yet further level of formalisation: one able algorithmically to express the options for the combination and succession of rubrics, perhaps in the form of a flow diagram, perhaps mutating quasi-algebra into actual algebra. A properly formalised grammar would also need to find a systematic and rigorous way to express the probability of options within the

schema, which in this account I have only indicated informally with modal verbs such as ‘should’, ‘can’ or ‘may’, or with adverbs such as ‘usually’ or ‘not commonly’.

Such a grammar would also need to contend with the fact that a *choṭā <u>kh</u>ayāl* is both *hypotactic* and *paratactic*. To explain: hypotaxis refers to the way language may structure ideas in terms that are mutually dependent—for example, the embedding of sub-clauses within a main clause. Parataxis refers to a sequence of ideas whose order is mutable and does not subordinate any one to any other. We can see hypotaxis operating within the hierarchic conditions described in global rubric BH—for example, the first line of the *sthāī* as superordinate to the following lines. Hypotaxis is also visible in the event-string notation, which shows several nested levels: a line for each performance phase, presided over by a governing rubric (indicated in bold); the linking of elements so governed with commas; and the representation of their sub-elements inside curly brackets, as subsets. However, many of those same elements also function *paratactically*, thus manifesting a countervailing, anti-hierarchic tendency. For example, S^1 and S^1A may occur at various points; and devices such as *tān*s and *bol ālāp* operate under similarly loose conditions, with considerable flexibility as regards order. Thus, hypotaxis and parataxis intermingle, with an attendant challenge for grammatical modelling—or even for the notion of grammar as such. I do not intend to pursue these matters further here, but signal that these are some of the issues that any future programme of analysis along such lines would need to address.

Finally, does any of this matter? I think it does. While on the one hand, the written schema of rubrics, and the implicit grammar to which its formal organisation points, exceeds what practicing musicians consciously need to know, on the other hand, the rubrics are closely related to performance: they codify the guidance communicated orally by gurus and internalised by students over many years of practice until it takes the form of intuition. The notion of a performance grammar may be apposite because, as Harold Powers put it in a classic article, ‘few musics are as much like language as Indian music is’; and in Indian classical music, ‘spontaneous and flexible musical discourse is as essential and almost as easy for the trained musician as speech for the fluent speaker of a language’ (1980: 38, 42). At the back of my own mind in attempting such a theoretical distillation of practice has been the historically remote example of the classical grammarian Pāṇini, who, between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE, codified Sanskrit into a compact number of algorithms (Kiparsky 1993). I speculate about this connection not to aggrandise my own findings, but to throw light on what such frameworks proffer in their abstraction. Significantly, they model unconscious collective knowledge that lies deep beneath everyday discursive utterances. And, as I have attempted to show in this analysis, they make the orally transmitted artistry of Hindustani classical culture—in all its complexity and sophistication—legible to us.