CHAPTER - I
IMPROVISATION

As outlined in introduction musical improvisation results from a combination of many elements, chief among which are:

1. The intellectual skill of the performer,
2. His emotional quotient / level,
3. His mental and attitudinal conditionings,
4. His inborn / inherent faculties,
5. His technical virtuosity and
6. His background of training and studentship.

Each individual music practitioner or performer has his / her unique mix of the abovementioned ingredients. Hence, the quality or nature of the improvisation made or indulged in by him is consequently bound to be *sui generis*. Nevertheless, it is possible to broadly identify two well defined *genres* of improvisation. I would like to call the first, “planned improvisation” and the second, “creative improvisation”. At the very outset, and before embarking upon a detailed discussion of the respective characteristics of these two *genres* of improvisation, it is clearly emphasized that although it is generally accepted that creative improvisation is superior and more desirable than planned improvisation, perhaps on account of its creativity and / or originality, for the purposes of this thesis, no values whatsoever are being attached to these two improvisational categories. In fact, both the above stated categories of
improvisation are encountered in the practical performances of even universally acclaimed exponents of Hindustani classical music. Not only this, most performers use both the above mentioned kinds of improvisation in the self - same recital : only an informed analysis of their individualistically peculiar combinations of the six determinants of improvisation enumerated at the beginning of the chapter will show whether they use “planned improvisation” or “creative improvisation” predominantly and at what approximate ratio to each other. Here, it would be proper to point out that in Hindustani classical music it is standard practice as well as necessary to internalize prelearnt melodic phrases that constitute and structure a raaga. This is invariably done and mastered during the course of training with the guru, but more often than not, transcended with improving dexterity in the grammatical aspects and growing maturity relating to the structural as well as the emotional ethos of the raaga as the student comes into his / her own as a performing artiste.

KINDS OF IMPROVISATION

These two kinds of improvisation may now be further discussed in the following manner : ----

A. **PLANNED IMPROVISATION:** This is Improvisation that results from prelearnt musical material.

Here, the performer draws upon his stock of musical phrases and expressions to create a beautiful, interesting and often unique canvas of the raaga chosen by him / her. Now, creativity consists in his constantly or
continually rearranging the standard note combinations, ornaments, and subtle nuances of sound\(^1\) that are known to characterize the *raaga* and that he has mastered over long years of arduous practice. Every other / new performance of the same *raaga* by an artiste results in a fresh and uniquely different portrayal of that *raaga*, since the rearrangement referred to above is new on every occasion. As this rearrangement is totally spontaneous, the resultant music is improvised music.

The rearrangement of previously learnt material may take several forms, such as:-

1. Whole phrases may be presented in different orders, that is, once a musician has learnt the phrases A, B, C, and D, he may evolve his own permutations of now presenting them, for example: ACBD, ADCB, BCAD, BADC, CABD, CDBA etc. A small example in Raaga Bageshri solfé would perhaps be (A) SgMgRS, (C) DmS, (B) SM, (D) MPDgRS.

2. Whole phrases may be presented in different orders, but with judicious repetitions. In the present example the musician may repeat some phrases to get a wider range of improvisation, eg.: ABCAD, BDBCA, CDACB etc.

3. If some prelearnt phrases have the potentiality of being divided into subphrases, the musician may create permutations with or without repetitions of the subphrases. To illustrate this, we shall take the phrases given in the previous example. Now, if the phrase A can be broken up into two subphrases,

\(^1\) A *raaga* is never a mere collection of gross notes. It also always includes the manner of articulation/sounding of notes. See the section, *VARNAATIRIKTAALANKAAR* (वना[ǓतǐरÈतालंकार) in Appendix 1 for a list of such ornaments and subtle nuances of sound.
a1 and a2, B into three subphrases, b1, b2 and b3, C into two subphrases, c1 and c2, and if D is left as a single phrase, the scope of possible permutations increases enormously, eg. : a2b1c2Dc1b2, b1a2c1b3a1 etc. Consider the following example in the raaga Darbaari, where the phrases A, B, C and D are, say:-

A. MMRSðηSRg, with the subphrases a1 and a2 being respectively, MMRS and ðηSRg.

B. gMRSηSRSd-ηP, with the subphrases b1, b2 and b3 being respectively gMRS, ηSRS and d-ηP.

C. ṠṂPḍḍηR-RS, with the subphrases c1 and c2 respectively being ṠṂPḍḍ and ηR-RS.

D. SdηP.

Improvisations can be created by permutating the subphrases to get new composite phrases, such as : ---

(i) a2b1c2Dc1b2 : dηSRggMRSηR-RSSdηPṂṂPḍḍηSRS

(ii) b1a2c1b3a1 : gMRSdηSRg-ṂṂPdd-nPMMRS etc.

Such “cutting and splicing” techniques are adopted very frequently, consciously or unconsciously by all Hindustani classical musicians.

4. The musician may judiciously present prelearnt material in new contexts. For example, while involved in the development of the antaraa (अन्तरा) stage, the artiste may all of a sudden go back for a short time, for contrasting effect, to sthaayi (स्थायी) or mantra (मन्द्र) development before"
continuing with the development of the antaraa. Here, the use of the prelearnt sthaayi material at the antaraa stage puts it (the sthaayi material) in a new context, making for improvisation.2

5. The musician may adopt different prelearnt ways of executing notes, such as varying dynamics (volume level), applying different embellishment, altering the duration of notes, etc.

These standard methods are discussed in a separate chapter.3

6. The musician may create contrasts by singing / playing a phrase and, immediately thereafter, either repeating it an octave lower or higher, although repetition at the octave higher is rare, or singing / playing a similar phrase in the complementary tetrachord, i.e. five notes, or four notes, depending on the raaga, higher or lower. Such repetition at a higher or lower pitch causes the musician to shift to the uttaraardha or the upper tetrachord when the original phrase is in the poorvaardha or the lower tetrachord or to the poorvaardha if the original phrase is in the uttaraardha. For example, the phrases GrS, NrG, and SNdNrS can be contrasted by the phrases NdP, mdN, and PmGmdP

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2 The sthaayi and antaraa of a bandish / composition are based upon the principle of contrast. We know that the ashtak (अष्टक) has two parts, the poorvaardha (पूर्वार्ध) or poorvaanga and the uttaraardh (उत्तरार्ध) or uttaraanga, viz. SRGMP and MPDNS respectively, and consists of, as the name suggests, eight notes including the high Sa or the upper tonic. The sthayi is mostly restricted to or contained within the poorvaardha of the ashtak. The antaraa, therefore, is composed in the uttaraardha in order to cover the entire gamut of the raga as also to contrast with the notes of the sthayi. In such cases where the mukhdaa of the sthayi is situated in the notes of the uttaraardha its following lines generally do conform to the rule of dwelling in the poorvaardha. Even so, the antara is almost always situated in the uttaraardha (upper tetrachord) of the ashtak.

The convention regarding vistaara is that the notes of the poorvaardha are elaborated and dwelt upon during the treatment of the sthayi and those of the uttaraardga during that of the antara in khayaal. However, these overlap greatly in practice, so that it is common to hear the notes up to the madhya saptak (मध्य सप्तक), i.e. up to Ni and even above it being sung or played in the course of sthayi elaboration, and the notes of the poorvaardha and sometimes even below being performed in the course of antara elaboration.

3 In Chapter V ----- Techniques of Improvisation.
respectively. This technique of shifting for contrast known in Hindustani music as *samvaadi yamak* (यमक)\(^4\) —— from one part of the *saptak* (सप्तक) to another derives from a well recognized convention of considering the octave to be divisible into two symmetrical parts —— the *poorvaardha* and the *uttaraardha* —— that may be regarded as parallel to each other.\(^5\)

The following practical example, though highly simplified for the sake of convenience, illustrates the concept of planned improvisation: ——

Suppose that the Raaga Puriaadhanaashri (राग पुरियाधनाश्री) is to be presented by one who has diligently learnt the *swara-vistaara* (स्वर विस्तार) numbers 1, 4, 7, 10, 13 and 16 of the *raaga* given at the of the fourth part of Pt. Bhatkhande’s “Kramik Pustak Maalika”, after having studied the description of the *raaga* given earlier in the book. For the sake of ready reference, these particular *swara-vistaararas* are reproduced below:

2. \(S, NrNd, P, md, S, NrGrS, mGrS, P, Nd, P, mG, mrG, NrGmdmG, GrS.\)
4. \(mdmGrS, mdNdmGrS, mdNrNdPmGrS, mdNrGrŚNdP, dmGrS, NrGmdNrGrŚmGrŚNdPmGrS, meGP.\)
5. \(SRS, Nr NrGrŚ, NrGrśrG, rŚ, P, mG, mrG, rŚ, rS, NrGmdNrŚ, S, NrS.\)

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\(^5\) Vide Vamanrao H. Deshpande in “Indian Musical Traditions” translated by S. H. Deshpande (1973) at page 37.
16. \( \text{NrGmNdPmGrS, NrGmNdGrSNdPmGrS,} \)
\( \text{NrGmNdGrSmGrSNdPmGrS, NrGmNdGrSmGrSNdPmGrS.} \)

Thus, the above may constitute the performer’s entire stock of prelearnt phrases in \textit{raga} Puriaadhanashri.

Now, further suppose that he will present an elaborate \textit{badhat} following the method of \textit{swar – aalaap (स्वर-आलाप)}.\(^6\) Having presented a suitable \textit{vilambit / badaa khyaal bandish / composition}, executions of planned improvisation by rearranging the prelearnt phrases, given above, may be accomplished as \textit{vistaar}; for example, as follows: ----

1. \( S, \text{NdP, mP, dP, mdS, NrG, NrGmGr, rS, mukhdaa (मुखड़ा)} \). Like a refrain, the \textit{mukhdaa} is that fixed part of a composition which, as it leads up to the \textit{sam (सम)} or the starting point of the \textit{taala}, it also denotes resolve or completion of a musical elaboration.

2. \( \text{NrG, mGr, mG, rGP, NrGmDP, mdNdGmGrGP, dmG, mGrSNrS, mukhdaa.} \)

3. \( \text{G, mdNdmdG, mGGPiP, NdPmdNdP, mGP, md, P, NrGmNdP, mdG, mG, NrGmmdGrS, mukhdaa.} \)

It may be noted that each phrase in the above improvisations can be traced, in toto, to the prelearnt stock of Puriaadhanaashri phrases listed above. All that has been done is that the phrases have been put in new contexts.

\(^6\) \text{In swara – aalaap (आलाप), as distinct from raaga – aalap (राग आलाप), each note of the raaga is taken one at a time and elaborated upon. Thus, the individual notes of the raaga gain precedence over the raaga structure and as a result, its ethos.}
Sometimes, a prelearnt phrase has been suitably split and used either as such or in combination with the whole or a part of another prelearnt phrase. Again, sometimes, the relative durations of some notes of the prelearnt phrase have been changed to effect improvisations. In all cases, the improvisations have inspiration in prelearnt musical material, i.e., in the existing musical vocabulary of the performer. The same process is followed in improvising taanas (तान), sargam (सरगम) patterns, paltaas (पल्टा), and so an.

B. **CREATIVE IMPROVISATION:** This is improvisation that transcends prelearnt phrases and idioms. In creative improvisation, the performer explores, consciously or unconsciously, new possibilities of the raaga beyond mere permutations of prelearnt material. True artistes have an heightened creative urge---- an urge from within that prompts them to express their emotions in ways yet uncharted. The whole history of art, including music, stands testimony to this timeless truth. This is the reason why, for instance, there are differences in the style of khayaal singing of the present day as compared to that of half a century ago, even among musicians belonging to the same gharana (घराना). As will be seen in subsequent chapters of this dissertation, there are both psychological\(^7\) and sociological\(^8\) reasons for creative improvisation.

The importance of creative improvisation in Hindustani music cannot be over emphasized : without such improvisation, music would be stagnant. There

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\(^7\) In Chapter III ----- Psychological Considerations in Improvisation.
\(^8\) In Chapter IV ---- Sociological Context of Improvisation Aesthetics.
is, after all, a finite limit to the number of meaningful permutations that planned improvisation can bring about.

Moreover, a high art form such as Hindustani classical music cannot, and indeed does not, base itself on the mechanical craftsmanship of permutating notes and prelearnt material alone. As a living expression of the deepest human emotions and transcendental perceptions, it involves, inevitably, the free manifestation (within, of course, permissible boundaries) of originality and creativity in the truest sense.

The whole concept of creative improvisation can be considered from another viewpoint. Since every known possibility of musical improvisation has already been found and categorized by the ancient pandits (पंडित) who documented the grammar of Hindustani classical music, there hardly remains any likelihood of discovering or introducing something fresh in the field of improvisation (i.e. if elements of non-Indian / foreign music are not introduced in the name of novelty) today.

Yet, there may be areas in which creativity and individuality maybe possible for, after all, every musician is an individual, and may therefore, have some features uniquely his own in the music he produces. For example, a certain inherent physical advantage (as in the case of renowned vocalist, Parween Sultana) or a handicap (as in the case of the path-breaking vocalist, Kumar Gandharva) not only affects the basic music – making raw material such as their voice / sound production, breath control and tonal quality but usually goes a long way in shaping the final musical output of the artiste. While
Parween Sultana has been facilitated by a voice which can easily traverse three saptaks and with a little more effort another half saptak which is much beyond the normal human voice range of two, or, if better, two-and-a-half saptaks, Kumar Gandharva, on the other hand, had to rethink, design and develop his customized style of singing, and therefore restrict his choice of improvising in accordance with a major drawback of less lung capacity. Evidently, the whole process of having to deal with their peculiar physical attributes has resulted in very individual and customised choices of improvisation and, consequently, also the styles of these iconic artistes. Such examples are not rare. Of course, there certainly are other important factors also involved in the culmination of the creative styles of these artistes, such as, their heightened aesthetic sensibilities and their fecund imagination, but we shall discuss these phenomena separately.

Again, using the very same old known tools of improvisation at unconventional places may also result in a novel creative style. But, this may not always be true, for aesthetic appeal, so very important for any improvisational tool to be desirable ---- even acceptable ---- is not easily achievable. The simple reason for this is that not every combination of ideas (which again are very limited in our case) in any form of art, does eventually measure up to the standards of recognized aesthetic norms or even unorthodox aesthetic appeal, for that matter. Yet, there always is, and perhaps will always be, a possibility of creating a new effect by combining ideas (improvisational tools), old and established, with bold and adventurous steps into new pastures
of imagination and artistic experience by artistes who have already had a firm and intensive formal grounding in the time – honoured shastras (शास्त्र) and practices of Hindustani music.

The above discussion on the meaning, concept and scope of creative improvisation may now be illustrated by means of the following practical examples: ----

1. In Raaga Kedara (राग केदार) : SM, GP, mPDM, mNDP, DPM, RmŚ-DPM, mPDM.

2. In Raaga Baageshri (राग बागेश्वर) : MgR, RgMg-RS, ṯnSMg, Rg, RgM, nDMP, MPD, MDnŚ, (Ś)nD, MDnD, MPnMg, g-RSR-S.

These subtle deviations from the orthodox structure of the raagas can be structurally pleasing and aesthetically stimulating and, at the same time, original if used judiciously, i.e. only after creating adequate and suitable context for such creativity by unambiguously etching and establishing the raagaroopa (राग रूप) or the basic form and personality of the raaga first. Otherwise, such originality may amount to waywardness and be perceived as capricious and undesirable by the cognoscenti. In example 1, the note combination RmŚ-D... is new and unconventional since it is an on-the-spot creation achieved with the requisite care and artistry mentioned above. Similarly, in example 2, the note combinations RgMg-RS, Rg, nDMP,
MPD_MDnS and MPnMg- are also at once unconventional and new and fulfill the above-stated conditions if executed with caution.⁹

⁹These creative improvisations were made by the authoress in the course of public performances.
In the preceding two chapters, it has been seen how improvisation in Hindustani music results from the unique psychic personality of the individual performer and that it must, or ought to, conform to the sociocultural background of the music to be acceptable as aesthetic.

Since, however, the performer’s very personality is moulded in an environment existing as a result of the abovementioned sociocultural background, it follows that, barring enforced or experimental improvisations resulting from his exposure to, or perception of, non-Hindustani music, the major part of his improvisations will exhibit certain clear characteristics of having emanated from this background.

An example of a successful ‘experiment’, now widely accepted and followed by many performers as an integral part of a recital, is Ustaad Abdul Kareem Khan’s employment of sargam (सरगम) during badhat (बढ़त) and taana (तान) stages of elaboration, in the manner of Carnatic musicians, who were his inspiration for this step. Another example of such ‘experimental’ improvisation, not yet widely adopted by musicians today, is the use of broken chord phrases or passages by Ustaad Ali Akbar Khan on his sarode.
Apart from these special cases, the improvisations of almost all Hindustani music performers follow certain well-defined paths, employing standard “stock techniques” developed over the ages in response to the sociocultural influences stated before. The purpose of this chapter is to enquire into the nature of some of these improvisational techniques. But, before we delve into the techniques of improvisation, it is necessary to examine the major areas where improvisation is employed. There are two basic modes of employing improvisation:

A. Improvisation relating to the *bandish* (बंदिश) or composition, and

B. Improvisation free of the constraints of the composition, i.e., improvisation relating basically to the *raaga* and *taala* structure in question.

*Alankaars*, or more precisely, *Alankaran*,¹ which are recognized tools of embellishment, and *taanas*, etc., may be used in either of the two abovementioned categories in the course of improvising.

A. **Bandish - related Improvisation** --- This kind of improvisation which further decorates the composition has immense aesthetic appeal. There is a set composition of the song, irrespective of the song-form, with fixed structure and configurations. Variations can be made by altering some areas of these configurations without changing the basic structure. Now, these areas will have to be such as not to disturb the characterization of the *raaga* to which the song is set. Also, a conscious effort will be required to keep the aesthetic balance of the

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¹ Alankaara and Alankaran are often considered synonymous; however, some musicologists draw a distinction between the two ---see Appendix I.
composition intact. For example, consider the *mukhdaa* or the first lime of a *madhya laya* (मध्य लय) or medium tempo composition in *raaga* Hameer (हमीर)

set to *jhaptala* (झप्ताल, a cycle of 10 beats), which goes as follows:

**Ex. 1**: ----

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\[ \begin{array}{ccccccccc}
G & M & D & 3 & N & D & P & D & G & M \\
Ea & ra & ma & Ka & ra & ta & ra & Ka & ro & Ea \\
7 & 8 & 9 & 10 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 & 6 & 7
\end{array} \]
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Now, this can be improvised upon in subsequent repetitions in a number of ways, such as ----

a. by varying note lengths,
b. by substituting notes,
c. by varying direction,
d. by varying order of notes,
e. by varying ornaments,
f. by varying rhythmic patterns,
g. by varying timbre and vowels,
h. by varying the background sound screen and / or reference note, and
i. by varying volume (dynamics).

The following example illustrates many such modes ----
Ex. 2: ----

In this short piece of example I have used several devices, such as varying the note length, substituting notes, varying direction, varying the order of notes, varying or introducing ornaments and varying the rhythmic pattern (however fleetingly) to improvise upon the original form as set out in Ex. 1. But, for a clearer idea of each of these and more such devices it is necessary to examine each of them separately.

Ex. 3: ---- Varying note lengths (compare with the corresponding section of Ex.1):

Ex. 4: ---- Varying or substituting notes:
Or

Ex. 5: Varying direction:

Ex. 6: Varying order of notes:

Ex. 7: Varying ornaments:

Here (Ex. 7), the notes N Š N have been used within half a **maatraa** (मात्रा) (in the 7th beat), in quick succession. This phenomenon is called the
employment of the ornament ‘murki’ (मुर्की), which could also be written like this -N\textsuperscript{NS} N. A murki produces a rapid flash of brilliance in the midst of an otherwise plain or placid musical line.

Murkis create a delicately flashy, gay musical environment. Furthermore, the ornamental kana (कण), which literally means a speck, is employed to the note (D)\textsuperscript{G} in the latter half of the 9\textsuperscript{th} maatraa. It can be likened to the grace note (acciaccatura or ‘crushed’ note) of Western music. A kana may either be a prefix (D\textsubscript{G}) or a suffix, e.g. P (D) P. This phenomenon is achieved by slightly touching upon or gliding from the neighbouring notes, either above or below, before taking the principal note meant to be embellished.

Ex. 8: ---- Varying rhythmic patterns (compare with the corresponding section of Ex. 1):

\begin{align*}
\text{ma} & \quad \text{Ka} & \quad \text{ro} & \quad \text{Ea} \\
3 & \quad 4 & \quad 5 & \quad 6 & \quad 7 \\
\end{align*}

(g) Varying timbre and vowels: --- Variation of the tone which mostly go hand in hand with the variation in volume output, induce an element of drama and emotion even without any change in volume. The sound can often be made ‘breathy’ or narrower, yet the volume maintained by bringing the sound source close to the mike in these days of public address systems and sound technology.
Similarly, the sound may be broadened as and when desired by dilating the aperture of the sound source e. g. the mouth or the embrochure of wind instruments, thereby creating an effect of resonance. Conversely, an ‘intimate’ and even a ‘conspiratorial’ tone can be obtained by such alteration in the timbre and ‘smooth’, ‘sweet’, ‘caressing’ or ‘rough’ sounds administered at will, mostly with the help of the mike.

In vocal music, changing the vowel fixed at a particular spot of the composition or even otherwise, can alter the sound production considerably, thereby effecting remarkable improvisation in tone colour. Any given note ---- more poignantly the higher ones ---- when pronounced with different vowels will sound quite different in tone. For example, if the note Ni (नी) is sung with the help of aakaar (आकार), or the vowel ‘aa’, it will sound much more ‘open’ and ‘rounded’ than when it is sung employing the vowel ‘ee’ in the same voice by the same person. The ‘ee’ sounding Ni will invariable be shaper and more brilliant albeit less voluminous than that sung with the same effort in aakaar.

(h) **Varying the background sound screen and / or reference note : ---**

The background screen of Indian classical music comprises the drone of mostly two taanpuras (तानपुरा) tuned to the tonic and some other note or notes --- madhyama (मध्यम), panchama (पन्चम), or nishaada (निषाद), depending on the nature of the raaga being performed. In vocal music there may also be in all
likelihood, a melodic accompanying instrument such as the *saarangi* (सारंगी), the violin or the harmonium to follow the main artiste, optionally. This background screen is sometimes thickened with the introduction of the *swarmandal* (स्वरमण्डल) which has a large number of strings attuned to the notes of the *raaga* being performed, adding the element of the play of interrelationships between notes when they coincide with one another from across the forefront performance and the background sound screen. This often adds colour and liveliness to the performance as a whole. Fresh experiments in this sphere, such as introducing unconventional ‘following or accompanying instruments’ like the flute or the guitar and also the employment of different techniques of accompaniment, such as the use of counterpoint and countermelodies for complementing as well as contrasting as desired, and also the chords of Western music, especially in the case of a growing propensity for ‘fusion music’ experiments today, have added another dimension to the conventional countenance of Indian *raaga* music which has always been and will remain melodic in principle.

Changing the reference note on the other hand, has been known to alter the characteristic of the melody entirely even as the notes remain the same. For example, let us take the scale of *Maalkauns* (मालकौंसं), a pentatonic *raaga*, which goes thus : S g M d n. Now, if the reference note is shifted to g we get the scale of *raaga* Durgaa (दुर्गा) even though the notes remain the same.
Only, one will be inclined to imagine that the note g has become the tonic, S and the rest of the notes will automatically establish their relationships with the new S. Thus, by successively shifting the tonic to the remaining notes of the given scale (Maalkauns), viz., M, d and n, we get the scales of other pentatonic ragas, viz., Dhani (धानी), Bhoopali (भूपाली) and Megh (मेघ) respectively.²

(i) **Varying volume (dynamics)**: This is also an important medium of improvisation since its increase and decrease can express drama and emotional nuances that the artiste wishes to convey. Variations in dynamics, either gradual, crescendo like or sudden and contrasting are effective means of expression so very integral to music.

However, this area had been relatively unexplored until lately, say the last 50 years or so, in Hindustani music as compared to Western music which has done it much earlier. However, it is still not a part of the composition in Hindustani music as it is in post-Beethoven Western music. Western classical music, for that matter, is essentially all meticulously precomposed and written down to the minutest detail, which Hindustani raaga music has not had much need to explore and develop perhaps owing to its characteristic aesthetic of form and development.

² Such “tonal shifts” or transposing the tonic were often used by the late Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. Ajoy Chakraborty, the contemporary singer of the same gharana (Patiala), also engages in transposition. This technique, known and practiced in India for a long time, is called shadja parivartan (षड़ज परिवर्तन), and is not necessarily restricted to the Patiala gharana alone. For instance, the sitarist Dipak Choudhury (disciple of Pt. Ravi Shankar), who was presenting Yaman and was being accompanied by another sitarist, directed the accompanist, at a stage during the performance, to sound the note P loudly and rhythmically, against which background the artiste played phrases of Yaman, which now sounded like phrases of Bilawal ( ), due to the temporary shadja parivartan having taken place.
Nevertheless, lighter Indian classical song forms such as *keertan* and *Sufi* have always had the freedom of exploiting the drama inherent in the myriad variations of sound dynamics which they have been traditionally using to great effect. That is to say, dynamic control is optional in the case of Indian music presentation and not indicated in the composition. Although quite a few relatively recent Hindustani musicians have instinctively and naturally incorporated volume control in their music, such as tapering off their voices / sounds so as to sometimes create an echo effect as also, dramatically decreasing or increasing volume in the higher notes, a more conscious use of this phenomenon came into practice probably with the modern day musicians’ facility with the use of a variety of the almost magical microphone that has revolutionized the sound scenario the world over since its advent about a century ago.

Some pioneers in this regard are vocalists Pandits Omkarnath Thakur, Kumar Gandharva and Begum Parween Sultana (whose vocalization of the echo effect is quite famous), instrumentalists, *Ustaads* Bismillaah Khan and Vilaayat Khan and Pt. Nikhil Banerjee are also known for their intelligent use of dynamics.

**B. Free Improvisation** ---- In a Hindustani music performance, the *bandish* itself is presented, in toto, only a few times. In fact, in a *bada khayal*, the complete *bandish* is often sung no more then once only. The rest of the recital consists of improvisation, followed by more and more improvisation,
with each improvised episode leading satisfactorily to the mukhdaa, sam (सम ) or some other convenient point in the bandish. This can be called “free” improvisation. All the ways of improvisation. All the way of improvisation outlined in page 5.3 apply here, too. The primary requirement here is that there must be proper development of the raaga within the tala framework. For this purpose, the artiste must obviously first have a thorough grasp of the character of the raaga itself. Free improvisation consists of alaap (आलाप ) / vistatar (विस्तार), layabaant (लयबांट) and taana.

**Aalaap / Vistaar** ----- Literally meaning introduction, the aalaap is that taala-less elaboration ( vistaar ) of the raaga which clearly enunciates the raagaroopa ( राग ॠप or the personality / characteristics of the raaga ) in part or full measure, while vistaar means expansion or elaboration.

Beginning with vilambit or slow elaboration of a raaga through systematic resting upon important notes and note phrases, and gradually gaining momentum and speed, the aalaap is well an independent song form in its own right, but when performed to the accompaniment of the taala in the course of the development of the song / music form, it becomes synonymous with vistaar and is called aalaapi in the Maraathi language in which many good books on the subject are available. In accordance with the demands of the gaayaki and the raaga being performed,
embellishments such as the khatka (खटका), murki, gamak (गमक) and some others may be used as required in the course of aalaap.

In vocal music, aalaap is done in two ways: in aakaar or with articulation of the vowel, “aa” and with the help of meaningless syllables phonated and named, nome - tome (नोम तोम). Conventionally, in the medieval period, when dhrupad was the main form of vocal raaga music, aalaap was done elaborately before commencing upon the composition, after which the emphasis would shift to rhythmic permutations. Done in meaningless nome- tome syllables the aalaap was structurally divided into four sections, viz. sthaayi, antaraa, sanchaari (संचारी) and aabhog (आभोग).

In the present times of the supremacy of the khayaal, a less elaborate aalaap is usually being done before the beginning of the song composition even by performers of aalaap pradhan gharaanaas like the Gwaalior and the Aagraa. Mostly, a short aochar (औचार) or pakad (पकड़) of the raaga lasting about a few minutes is done by way of giving just an idea of the nature of the raaga following which composition is taken up either partially or in toto, and only then this variety of the aalaap, which is bound by the taala of the composition and is also called “badhat” or “vistaar” and even “aalaapi” (आलापी ) in Maharashtra, begins.
This *taala* bound *aalaap* has to be rounded off before the commencement of the “*mukhdःaa*” of the composition in one or more *taala - aavartans* (ताल आवर्तन) or rhythmic cycles so that the *sam* (beginning of the *taala* cycle) is arrived at together with the tablla (percussion) accompaniment. In *khayaal* singing, such *vistaar* (*aalaap*) may be done either in *aakaar* or in *bol* (बोल), i.e., by deploying the words or syllables of the words of the *bandish*. It is then aptly called “*bol - aalaap*” (बोल आलाप). Similarly, when the same is done using solfa names e.g. S, R, G, etc., it is called “*sargam - aalaap*” (सरगम आलाप).

Here, too, various embellishments such as the *meend* (मीड़), *gamak*, *khatkाा*, *kana*, etc. are used according to individual taste and training, in order to express and beautify. It may be noted that sometimes, even if the *aalaap* is *taala* bound, it may or may not be *laya*-bound. That is to say, it may be free of any constraints of the rhythmic progression of the musical piece, only arriving at the *sam* along with the *mukhdःaa* of the *bandish*.³

“Within the framework of a single rhythmic cycle or a bunch of them the artist plans an aesthetic focus towards which he leads his listeners and builds up a tension along the way. The climactic (sic) focus appears just at the point preceding the refrain of the *cheez* (चीज) which is sung repeatedly. To build up the

³ This point is treated again in chapter VI: Improvisation in the Gharaanas.
tension in the listener, to keep it mounting up to a point and then to resolve it, thus bringing the listener’s mind to an equipoise on the *sam* beat, is a great principle of musical aesthetics. This is what is called ‘coming to the *sam*’ in musical terminology. ( ‘Samavastha’ (*समावस्था*) --- *sam* position ---- literally means a state of mental equilibrium or equipoise )”. V. R. Deshpande.4

**Layabaant** ---- The distribution of the time cycle into various rhythmic sections and subsections by the performer at will is known as *layabaant*. It is usually done after finishing with the *vilambit* (*विलम्बित*) portion of the *raaga vistaar* and before embarking upon the *drut* (*दृत*) or the fast portion, i.e., the *taana* and the other fast passages, as an intermediary or ‘bridging’ stage between the two. In vocal music, this may be done in *aakaar, bol* or *sargam* (*सरगम*), or in all three of them, depending upon the preference of the performer. Varieties of *chhoots* (*छुट*) *sapaats* and *behlavaa* (*बहलावा*) patterns are often exploited here to great advantage.

**Taana** ---- *Taanas* are fast and generally uninterrupted passages comprising the notes of the *raaga* arranged in various attractive configurations or clusters, and make for extremely pleasant and exciting listening. Dr. M. R. Gautam defines it thus : ‘The word *taana* used in Indian classical music, especially in Hindustani

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music today, denotes specific melodic figures, note patterns and characteristic idioms of raagas”.\(^5\) Formed by rapid succession or variations of notes, the taana may also be equated with fast vistaar of the raaga, its main difference from aalaap being its high tempo of sounding the notes. This drastically shortens the duration of individual notes. It has been described as follows: “As regards the florid type of alankaar known as taana, probably there is no listener of Indian music who is not familiar with this flourishing means of embellishment. Our singing, especially our methodical singing, is so full of taana that it has probably came to be equated with taanabazi (तानबाजी), which means, indulgence in or predominance of taanas………”.\(^6\)

There are quite a few types of taanas, e.g., alankaarik (अलङ्कारिक), sapaat, chhoot, etc., which are used in the manner of “culmination of the climax” generally in the final stages of the song. Rendered in gamak style, they assume considerable depth and fullness. In plucked strucked instrumental music, taana are known as todaas (तोडा). Executed in a variety of layas, they assume chougun (चौगुन), athgun (अठगुन) or even solahgun (सोलहगुन) ---- i.e., quadruple speed, octuple speed or sixteen – times speed ---- in vilambit laya (विलम्बित लय),

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\(^5\) Vide Dr. M. R. Gautam in his article “The Origin and Development of Tanas” published by the Sangeet Research Academy, Calcutta, in its annual magazine, Gharana issue.

\(^6\) Vide Baburao Joshi and Autsher Lobo in “Introducing Indian Music” (1965).

\(^7\) See Appendix II for description of different types of Tanas.
whereas in *drut, atidrut* (अतिदुर्त ) layas they are mostly executed in *dugun* (दुगुन) or double speed or *baraabar* (बराबर ) or same speed *laya*. Again, their use in generating cross – rhythmic or fractional – rhythmic patterns is not uncommon.

Amongst all varieties of *taanas*, the *alankaarik taanas* (अलंकारिक तान) hold an important position because while they are extremely pleasant to hear, they also provide a vast scope for variation and permutation. In the case of *sampoorna* (सम्पूर्ण) and straight *raagas* such as Bhairav (भैरव), Yaman (यमन), etc., this feature becomes especially apparent. But, in the case of *vakra raagas* (वक्र राग, those with a zig-zag pattern of movement ) such as Gaud Saarang (गौड़ सारंग), Desi (देसी), Darbaari (दरबारी), etc., only a limited variety of these would be possible. Similarly, the scope of such *taana* - related improvisations gets limited or curtailed by the *raaga jaatis* (राग जाति) and their combinations such as *audav* (औडव), *shaadav* (षाडव), *audav-shaadav* (औडव-षाडव), etc.

In vocal music, a *taana* may be sung in *aakar*, *sargam* or by incorporating the words of the bandish. Then, it will be called *aakaar taana* (आकार तान), *sargam taana* (सरगम) and *bol taana* (बोल तान) respectively. According to Messrs. Joshi and Lobo, “the attraction of *taanas* lies mainly in
the display of vocal technique and rhythmic dexterity. *Taanas* create a spectacular and flamboyant effect, which has a superficial appeal especially to the lay listener. The musician on the other hand finds it easier to acquire proficiency in *taanas* and still easier to impress the listeners by his pyrotechniques than by other more important, vital aspects of music.”

In the task of free improvisation, the artiste may employ several methods, as under -----

1. Developing the *raaga* with slow and systematic progression of the notes and sometimes the characteristic phrases of the *raaga*. This has been discussed in the section “*Aalaap*”, above.

2. Halting on specific notes, i.e. sustaining particular notes for a long duration, discussed below.

3. Adding short ornamental notes or phrases before or even after (although this is rare) the sustained notes referred to in 2. above. This is discussed in detail below.

4. Introducing a variety of tools for time management and tempo progression such as *layakaari* (लयकारी), etc., in the intermediate stage (of *laya*) of progression before or as a prelude to transition to the *drut* portion, discussed in the section “*layabaant*”, above.

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8 Vide Baburao Joshi and Autsher Lobo, supra.
5. Using, as alternatives, the lyrics or text of the bandish, “aa” or some other suitable vowel or sargam or tonic solfâ names as the medium of development, as stated earlier in the “alaap” etc. sections.

6. Executing various kinds of taanas, discussed above.

**Sustaining notes** ---- Resting on, sustaining or prolonging the articulation of a note is a fundamental characteristic of Hindustani music, and is one that separates it from most other kinds of music in the world. In the elaboration of a raaga, the artiste exploits the inherent melodic tension that exists in particular note relationships in that raaga. In every raaga, there are some notes that give a feeling of completeness or finality. For instance, any phrase or passage that ends on the tonic of the middle register --- the Madhya saptak shadja (मध्य सप्तक षड़ज) ---- feels to the listener as a complete phrase or passage, one that does not necessarily need anything else to follow it to reach a satisfactory conclusion. On the other hand, every raaga has some other notes that give the impression to the listener that the phrases or passages ending with them are not final ---- they need something more, at least perhaps one more phrase, to follow to reach a satisfactory conclusion of the musical (melodic) idea. These notes may be said to create melodic tension, in the sense that they require another melodic phrase to round off the idea. Consider, for example, the following passage in Raaga Yaman : 

\[ N, ND-DN, NmDN, NR-CN, NGR-NR-NDN, NR, GR, RNDR-NR, RDNRS. \]
Here, each phrase ending in Ṯ or ṛ gives an unresolved feeling, a feeling of incompleteness. The total musical idea is brought to a satisfactory conclusion only when the last S is sounded. It may thus be said that in Yaman, Ṯ and ṛ are the tension creating notes in this passage, and S is the tension resolving note.

Again, as the elaboration of the raaga proceeds, other resolution centres (notes) in the raaga gain prominence. Consider the following passage, again in Yaman:

NRGm, mGmDm, mRGmNR, mGmRGmDm, GmDN, DmGRGm, DmGmP.

Clearly, here m, ṛ and Ṯ are the tension creating notes, and the last P rounds off the passage, becoming therefore the resolution note for the time being.

In the way in which the performer highlights this musical tension ---- the play of incomplete ideas leading finally to a logical and aesthetic conclusion --- lies his skill and artistry.

Using ornaments ---- Known as ‘alankankaars’ or ‘alankarans’, ornaments or embellishments may relate either to a single note or a group of notes, i.e. a musical phrase.⁹ Scores of such melodic figures can be achieved through judicious permutation and combination of the notes. Any random selection of the notes may not lead to a significant configuration by simply combining them. Each of the alankaara names --- Meend, kana, khatkaa, etc., suggests a definite configuration which is both aesthetic and calculated. The alankaran nomenclature

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⁹ See Appendix I on Ornamentation.
is apparently wide and varied enough to be able to cover the entire gamut of ornamentative melodic possibilities. Therefore, to achieve a pattern worth the name, the notes must be artistically and logically knit together in a significant form. Some commonly used ornaments are stated below:

1. **Khatkaa** — Vidwaans (विद्वान) are in disagreement about the definition of the two closely associated and often confusing *alankaars* of the Hindustani system, namely, the *khatkaaa* and the *murki*. However, despite controversies the majority of them agree that the *drut* (fast, duple or quadruple tempo) use of a “circular” group of four (and, rarely, five) adjacent notes, such as RSNS, SRNS or NSRS, may be called a *khatkaaa*. In the Bhatkhande notation system, the note on which a *khatkaaa* is to be applied is put within brackets, e.g. (s) or (p). Thus, a ‘circular’ configuration of four notes starting from the note enclosed within the brackets or from either of the two notes preceding or following it is formed.

   One may say, it is a melodic ornament that may be likened to the “turn” in Western music although its scope is wider than that of the turn. Rendered in a quick effort with force and somewhat jerkily, it immediately creates an atmosphere of gay abandonment and lightheartedness. Thus, such ornaments abound in light music of various kinds.

   Another view which is less common among academicians but well-known among practicing musicians is that a *khatkaaa* is a note rendered twice in rapid
succession and accented upon before moving on to another note without break, e.g., S-SR, R-RG and so on.

2. **Murki** --- The *murki* has often been compared with the Western ornament “changing notes” (e.g. $P^D_M P$, $S^R_N S$ or $P^D_M P$ etc.) since it too is formed by a circular combination of three or four adjacent notes rendered briskly in rapid succession. It thus makes for a pleasantly startling listening when added to a musical phrase. For example, the notes SRGM if rendered quickly in permutations like RGSR, RGMG, GMRG, or those like RGGS, SRGGR or SRGRG etc. which are relatively uncommon although accepted as *murkis* will draw attention at once, partly due to their sudden occurrence in an otherwise relatively slow and predictable musical phrase, and partly due to their attractive phrasing, and together evoke a somewhat amorous (romantic) and “playfully restless” response in the listener.

Interestingly, a fairly popular point of view has it that since the word *murki* literally means a ring, it has to be a “circular” patterned melodic ornament of mostly four or at least three notes beginning and ending on the same note, e.g. SRS, SṆRS, SRṆS, etc. This is quite akin to the well-known description of the *khatkaaa*! Yet another school of musicologists\(^\text{10}\) believes that the only difference between the *khatkaaa* and the *murki* is that of their number of note content. According to them, in *murki*, a *drut* (double tempo) semicircle of three adjacent notes is formed, e.g. RṆS or DMP etc., and while writing is indicated by putting

\(^{10}\text{For example, Pt. Harishchandra Srivastava, in “Raga Parichay”, Part-I, Allahabad, 1966.}\)
the embellishing notes on the left side and above the principal note as a ‘kana’ of two notes, e.g. RNs, DMp etc.

However, whatever be the controversies, all are unanimous about the fast tempo and brilliant nature of this ornament.

3. **Meend** ---- Meend (मीड़) or glide is of vital importance where Indian music is concerned. It is not merely an ornament but is also rather an integral part of the musical construction, inasmuch as it is taken to be an artistic mode of linking the notes together. Hindustani classical music is essentially melismatic and linear, depending greatly upon the continuity of the melodic line., often by linking one note to the other without any break. The *meend* mostly spans over more than one note difference (like SR, ND, etc.) and covers longer note spans, often in the manner of a slow, smooth wave, e.g., GMD-MP, or even the simple PR and is indicated the sign of a tie as shown above. To illustrate, SGNPPNGS (a group of notes) if joined by a tie, produce a continuous melody without any jerk or emphasis on any particular note in between. Thus a *meend*, in the process of gliding from one note to another also touches, however faintly, all the indicated intermediate notes, and herein lies its artistic effect. The maintenance of ‘aans’ (ऑँस) or continuity which the *meend* accomplishes, is of important value to an Indian music performer --- vocalist or melodic instrumentalist. As Messrs. Joshi and Lobo have put it, “Because of its embellishing quality and linking capacity,
meend is very freely used both in serious and light varieties of music and is rightly regarded as an indispensable alankaara of vital importance to Indian music”.

4. **Gamak** ---- although the ancient texts seem to ascribe almost all forms of ornaments and possible embellishments to the term gamak, in the present times however, gamak has come to mean an emphatic, often guttural, oscillation or fluctuation in pitch between two notes.

   This may be somewhat stylized, for there is possibility of variety arising from differences peculiar to individual conception, style and quality of sound production. For example, in the phrase SG, SG, MGRS, the notes SG, SG, if produced with somewhat exaggerated accent on one or both notes in immediate succession it will be called a gamak. In vocal music, it is produced through force from the diaphragm, abdominal muscles and lungs to achieve that deep - throated guttural and resonating effect.

   The introduction of gamak to any group of notes, or even to a single note (which will invariably have to rely fully or partially upon another lower note or part of some upper note ) adds considerable weight to it. For example, the notes ḌḌṇṢṇṇḌḌṇSR if rendered in this style will appear much deeper, sonorous and weighty. A gamak may be short or elaborate, but is always a serious sounding ornament.

   For example, if G has to be produced with gamak, it will start with somewhat forceful emphasis on a preceding note (as in the melody concerned ) or

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11 Vide Baburao Joshi and Autsher Lobo, supra.
an indeterminate pitch within, say, R or S etc. and connect itself smoothly and quickly to a succeeding note or some higher indeterminate point before embarking upon the principal note, i.e., the one to be embellished.

5. **Behlaavaa** ------ A slow *taana* or a taken (executed) on the lines of an *aalaap* is called *behlaava*. In this the *laya* is neither as fast or *drut* as a *taana* nor is it as slow or *vilambit* as that of the *aalaap*.

   The notes are shaken (with mild or heavy *gamak*) during this process at an intermediate tempo.

6. **Vakra Swara** (वक्र स्वर) --- means crooked notes, e.g., SR, SG. Here R is *vakra*.

7. **Kana** ---- These are grace notes generally corresponding to the acciaciatura in Western music. In Hindustani music they are known as “*kana*”, meaning “a speck”, and “*sparsha*” (स्पर्श), meaning “a touch”. These ornaments are not as elaborate as the *gamak*, *khatkaaa* or the *meend*, but they are, nevertheless, important. *Kanas* or *sparshas* are produced by lightly touching upon or gliding from the neighbouring notes, either above or below, before taking the principal note, which is to be embellished. They are of the nature of suffixes or prefixes, e.g. P\(^D\) P or \(^D\)P. Here, D is the grace note of the principal note P.

   The *sparsha* is even wispier than the kana, gliding ever so quickly and lightly to touch upon the neighbouring note so as to occupy a minute fraction of the time of a single *matra*. 
Kanas or sparshas adorn the main note to which they are appended and are, therefore, included in the essential group of alankaars.
When a performer of Hindustani classical music engages in improvisation, he draws upon, either consciously or unconsciously, several mental faculties for the purpose. A study of these faculties and the manner of their utilization for improvisation will therefore help in understanding improvisation itself. This chapter will devote itself, accordingly, to an analysis of improvisation from the viewpoint of psychology.¹

Improvisation draws heavily on the intellect (not to be confused with the level of intelligence) of the performer, for it is, to a large extent, a ‘learnt’ art, and learning falls basically within the purview of the intellect. Of the many types of learning to be encountered in psychological theory, viz. classical conditioning, operant conditioning, escape learning, active avoidance learning, cognitive learning, latent learning, insight learning and imitation, four specific kinds appear to be specifically relevant to improvisation in Hindustani music. These are: --- operant conditioning, cognitive learning, latent learning, insight learning and imitation.

1. **Operant Conditioning:** Here, if a person sees that a particular action of his gives rise to a positive and desirable psychological reward for him, he will be encouraged or more likely to indulge in similar action under like

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¹ Much of the material in this Chapter traces itself to the standard and classic textbook, “Introduction to Psychology” by Morgan, King and Robinson, Sixth Edition (1979) published by Tata Mcgraw-Hill.
circumstances in future. Technically, the reward is known as the ‘reinforcer’ and his act is known as the ‘response’. In operant conditioning, the reward or reinforcement is contingent upon the response; it is automatically / naturally triggered by the favourable response, i.e. it recurs only when the desirable response occurs.

This principle of operant conditioning has a significant place in the performance of Hindustani music, since in such music the quality of the relationship between the artiste and the audience in a concert is of great importance in determining the quality of the music itself. Unlike Western classical music, Hindustani classical music calls for a good deal of artiste - audience interaction. If the audience expresses its positive appreciation or enjoyment of the performance, the performer is encouraged to scale greater heights in his art.

The commonly encountered manners of expressing appreciation by the audience in a typical Hindustani music concert are head – nodding, swaying, hand movements (gestures) denoting wondrous pleasure / appreciation or emphasizing the sum or a tihai,\(^2\) applause, vocalization of short voluntary or involuntary syllables or phrases of appreciation, such as, waah!, aah! , kyaa baat hai! , and the like. Even the facial expressions of the listeners can, and do in fact, suggest to the artiste whether or not the audience is following and appreciating his / her music. All this feedback - response from the audience amounts to reinforcement or reward to the artiste for his efforts.

\(^2\) Ibid, at page 148.
Moreover, when he gets such positive and desirable response from his audience, he is spurred on to present more improvisations and also attempt unique / novel ones in an inspired flight of imagination. The feeling of satisfaction and achievement he gets from his perception and awareness of such audience behaviour works as a powerful stimulant in itself. On the other hand, if his audience engages in negative activity, such as, failure in expressing appreciation at the right places, expresses patently insincere appreciation at the wrong places, stares unseeingly with wandering attention, engages in talking among themselves, worse, sits disinterestedly with dead – pan expression on their faces or even walking away in the middle of the recital, the performer feels deeply frustrated and even concerned about the fate of his performance, and this directly affects the quality of his improvisations as well as his entire presentation.

2. **Cognitive Learning:** Cognition refers to the process through which information coming from the senses is “transformed, reduced, elaborated, recovered and used” (Neisser, 1967).³

In this form of learning, mere exposure to certain events and their relationships in a given environment is sufficient, without any reinforcement or reward, to cause the learning of the events, their relationships and associations. In the context of Hindustaani music, the artiste has already learnt the interrelationships of musical phenomena and events like notes, intervals,

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³ Ibid, at page 189.
ornaments, volume of sound, phrases, taanas, etc. by having experienced them as a student and during his practice or riyaaz (रियाज़) privately.

These informations have already been stored in his mind ---- conscious and unconscious. In a performance, this information is retrieved and processed, resulting in different improvisational phrases and passages. Cognitive learning is directly connected with, and the immediate inspiration of, planned improvisation; although creative improvisation sometimes draws upon this faculty, it transforms the information retrieved due to the superimposition of insight learning discussed below.

3. **Insight learning:** Here, relationships already learnt are applied in novel ways in new situations. In Insight learning, a person suddenly sees a wholly new relationship between events or things. It is thus reorganization of different elements at a basic, conceptual level. It leads to what many psychologists term the “aha” (or “eureka ---- I have found it!”) experience: a new insight to existing things is suddenly perceived with a sense of satisfaction. This kind of psychological activity results in creative thinking, which alone causes creative improvisation. In creative improvisation, new ways of conceptualizing the musical environment are suddenly perceived without preparation. In a seemingly spontaneous way, a new idea emerges into the awareness of the artiste from apparently nowhere. This is insight.

However, psychologists point out that such insight, where a fortuitous set of circumstances trigger off a new idea which “bubbles up” into the
consciousness does not really come from nowhere --- it blossoms in a field which has “been thoroughly prepared beforehand”. Again, psychologists are also quick to warn that insights may be incorrect, needing subsequent evaluation to confirm that they really do represent new acceptable ideas. Thus, creative thinking, which involves a good deal of unconscious rearrangement of symbols (man-made representations of events or items, such as pictures, language, musical phrases, taala, etc.) has five stages ------

a.) preparation --- the thinker collects facts and materials considered necessary for his purpose. In the case of music, the artiste does this by means of cognitive learning, imitation, etc. at many places like as a student, in riyaaz or even while listening to someone else’s performance.

b.) incubation --- the thinker has various mental experiences with these materials, often in the unconscious mind, which, although the thinker dose not realize it at the time, provide clues to new ideas.

For the performer, the incubation period consists of the entire period of his exposure to music right up to the point of performance --- for all his experiences in music are constantly being rearranged conceptually in his mind if he is naturally a creative thinker.

c.) illumination --- this is the insight, the “aha” or “eureka” experience, when the new idea wells up into the consciousness.

d.) evaluation --- the idea is tested to see if it is satisfactory. As stated earlier, not all insights are acceptable. That is to say, in a Hindustani music

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5 Ibid, at page 190.
6 Ibid, at page 191.
concert, the creative performer sometimes comes up with ideas that cause puzzlement in knowledgeable listeners, and sometimes even criticism. If the performer is not a creative artiste, if he engages only in “safe” and time-tested improvisations, he does not exercise insight learning. But for creative artistes, the performance may be of a very high order if the insights are at once grammatically correct and aesthetically appealing, or it may fail to satisfy the audience if they are not so. Unlike other arts, where evaluation can be carried out at leisure by inspecting the existing creation, music in a performance does not result in physical or concrete creations that remain to be evaluated. Hence this stage is not easy, and often quite impossible in a practical performance.

Revision --- in this stage, if the new idea is seen to be generally, but not wholly, correct, it is modified suitable to be made acceptable. This is sometimes encountered in a practical concert where the creative artiste articulates a new insight, a new conceptualization of the musical material, and then, shortly thereafter, presents the same thing again in a slightly modified form. Sometimes, the second presentation is a new insight in itself, but sometimes again, it is a revision of the old insight.

Insight learning or creative thinking mostly involves what is known as “divergent thinking”, involving a variety of thoughts.

It includes “autistic thinking”, which is highly private thinking using symbols and codes having personal meanings (such thinking includes, for example, dreams and fantasies). The performing musician is a creative artiste to the extent he has developed insight learning or creative thinking. It must be
kept in mind, in this context, that although there is some correlation between creativity and the level of intelligence, such correlation is in fact quite low (6). A creative person is not necessarily a person with a high intelligence quotient. As psychologists assert in no uncertain terms, it is the kind of thinking a person dose that makes for creativity.\(^7\)

It is useful and interesting to know that psychologists have identified certain specific personality traits that are usually possessed by creative people (and therefore creative musicians), as follows\(^8\):----

(i) Original persons prefer complexity and some degree of apparent imbalance in phenomena.

(ii) Original persons are more complex psycho dynamically and have greater personal scope.

(iii) Original persons are more independent in their judgements.

(iv) Original persons are more self-assertive and dominant.

(v) Original persons reject suppression as a mechanism for the control of impulse. This would imply that they forbid themselves fewer thoughts, that they dislike to police themselves or others, that they are disposed to entertain impulses and ideas that are commonly taboo.

4. **Imitation:** This refers to the innate capacity that many higher creatures, including humans, have to perceive behaviour in others and reproduce it. Here, the person whose behaviour is perceived and reproduced is the model, and for

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\(^7\) Ibid, at page 191.

the performing artiste he may be his guru (गुरु) or gurus or anyone (or more than one) whose music or manners have positively influenced him.

It will be seen that in the case of most performers, quite a few improvisations can be traced to similar improvisations of their models.

Just as the intellectual faculty of the performer influences his improvisations. They are also guided and limited by his psychomotor attainments ---- the skill or virtuosity he has at his command over his voice or his instrument. No matter how many wonderful ideas arise in his mind, they will be of no interest to anyone unless he is able to articulate them properly. Thus skill in the craft of music is of paramount importance to the performer, which is why riyaz has been accorded so high a place in Hindustani music. Another reason for this is that as the level of skill increases, the performer acquires more and more musical material, thus increasing his musical vocabulary. With increase in vocabulary, he is better able to come up with new ideas or insights. Thus skill is important not only because it is needed to express insight in physical terms, but also because it itself contributes to fostering creativity.

Psychologists have enumerated three stages of skill learning9----

a. the cognitive stage : where the requirements of the task and the component parts thereof are learnt.

b. the associative stage : where the skill is perfected by constant and diligent practice.

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9 Ibid, at page 166.
c. the automation stage: where the skill becomes automatic and “just happens”, without the performer’s thinking about the mechanics of execution.