CHAPTER III

COMPARATIVE IMPROVISATION

Although this dissertation is primarily concerned with the various aspects of musical improvisation to be encountered in Hindustani classical music, it will not be out of place to investigate, at this juncture, the rudiments of improvisational areas and methods, if any, existing in other genres of music prevalent in India. Among other things, such inquiry will help to reinforce all the principles discussed in the preceding chapters relating to Hindustani music. This is because such a study will endeavour to throw light on the extent of similarities and differences in improvisation as are also present in other musical systems in comparison with that in Hindustani Music and hence discuss them as well in some detail. For this purpose, three broad, principally vocal forms / categories that are inclusive of their instrumental music counterparts as well, have been chosen as sole, fundamental constituents of Hindustani music, and the nature and scope of improvisation inherent to them are to be illustratively examined and compared with respect to one another.

These three forms are: dhrupad, khayaal and thumri. And, this chapter will, in accordance, devote itself to the comparison of improvisation as found in the following groups:

I. Hindustani music and Western music,

II. Hindustani music and Carnatic music,

III. Khayaal and dhrupad,
IV. Khayaal and thumri, and

V. Classical music and light music, including folk and tribal genres.

I. **Improvisation in Western Music** ---- Here, by the expression ‘Western music’ is meant western classical or ‘serious’ music, as opposed to country, pop, rock and other lighter varieties. The almost universal characteristic of western music is that there is a clear division of work between the composer and the performer in the creation of the music. A composer conceives a musical idea and sets it down in notation on paper. The performer on his part, produces musical sounds in conformity with the notated wishes of the composer. Thus, the performer is basically the interpreter of the music composed by another person who may in fact, be quite distant from him both in space and in time. Thus, for example, music composed and notated by sixteenth and seventeenth century composers like Monteverdi (1567 -1643) in Italy are available today and may be played or sung by competent performers anywhere in the world. This division of labour holds good for almost all types of Western music ---- whether chamber music like a sonata or orchestral music like a symphony or concerto, whether for solo voice like a lied or for several voices like a choral, whether for religious music like a mass or passion or for, say, dance music like a suite.

It can be seen from the aforesaid that, since the performer or group of performers (with or without a conductor) must adhere strictly to the notation written by the composer, there is very little scope for improvisation in western
music. However, this is not to say that there was never any improvisation in western music.

Previously, there was a fair scope for improvisation in some areas of western music, but it decreased with the passage of time. Thus:

1. Before the advent of formalized harmony and counterpoint, i.e., before the 10th century A.D., western music was mostly melodic and not notated. Therefore, performers were often themselves composers and could extemporize their tunes whenever they felt like it.

2. The growth of notation was a direct outcome of the increased use of harmony (simultaneous sounding of two or more notes) and counterpoint (simultaneous playing / singing of two or more melodies) in the period beginning with the 11th century A.D. By the 16th century musical notation had become standardized. Since the different musicians in a group ( instrumental ensemble or vocal choir ) were required to perform different notes at any given moment in time, it became imperative that each musician stick to his “part” or his score meticulously, and not indulge in improvisations on his own as this would create jarring and undesirable harmony. In spite of this restraint on extemporization, the following areas were still open for personal improvisation on the part of the performer in his capacity as the interpreter of the composer’s music:

   a. **Dynamics** ---- the volume and changes therein to be utilized in the performance of the music were left to the performer, who could either
study the notated music and decide beforehand what level of volume
would be employed where (in this case, there was no improvisation in
this respect during the performance) or employ suitable dynamic levels
as the performance progressed, according to his mood at the moment.

b. **Phrasing** ---- the grouping of notes within a single breadth (for a singer
or wind instrument player) or a single bow ( for a stringed instrument
player ).

c. **Ornamentation** ---- the employment of specific embellishments like the
grace note, the turn, the trill, the mordent, etc.

d. **Basso Continuo** ----- the filling out of the bass or the lowest ( in pitch )
line : this was generally left to the performer himself by the composer.
The performer was expected to supply a suitable harmonic background
(technically called, “realizing the bass”) to the melody or melodies
being performed in the upper registers. As the bass line was not, as a
rule, written out by the composer, the performer could, and did,
improvise as the recital progressed. Often, the composer would indicate,
by means of certain numerals written below the notation, the kind of
bass chords he desired. This was known as “figured bass”, but the actual
conversion of the composer’s desires into musical notes was effected by
the performer through improvisation.

3. The freedom to improvise the bass line ---- the basso continuo --- was
appropriated by the composer from the classical period ( 1750 A.D.)
onwards. From this time, the composer wrote out the full bass line and expected the performer to play exactly what was written.

4. By the time of the late classical period, and especially by Beethoven’s (1770-1827) time, the composer wrote out, in detail, the exact dynamic levels, ornamentation as well as phrasing required of the performer at different places in the composition, so that the performer lost these three areas of improvisation as well.

5. However, up to Beethoven’s time, the soloist of a concerto enjoyed a special area of improvisation, vīz., the cadenza. A concerto is an instrumental orchestral composition in which a soloist is set off against the orchestra, and there is a constant dialogue between the two. Customarily, at certain predetermined places, the soloist plays a highly florid and technically difficult passage to show off his virtuosity. This passage is known as the cadenza. Formerly, the cadenza was improvised upon by the soloist, who used the main themes or subjects of the composition as the basis upon which to build a brilliant and flamboyant improvised edifice on a grand scale. Later, it became the practice of performers to write out the cadenza on their own beforehand, so that at the time of the performance it was no longer improvised. In the post-Beethoven period, however, the composer did not allow the performer the liberty of creating his own cadenzas: he wrote them out himself.

6. However, true improvisation, or the spontaneous creation of an entire piece by the composer performer, was not, and even today is not,
common in western music, although it was not entirely unknown. Many
great composers like Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms were known
to be master improvisers, who could sit at the keyboard (organ,
harpsichord or piano) and play a completely new sonata, with full
harmony and balance, on the spot. However, it must be noted that in
public performances, performers as a rule present pre composed works
of composers and do not resort to improvising or improvised music.

Today, therefore, the scope of improvisation in western music remains
minimal, restricted only to the exact tempo at which a composition is to be
played, as envisaged by the composer. Although the composer often not only
indicates the general tempo of the piece, but also actually prescribes the exact
speed by means of metronome directions, yet the performer conventionally
enjoys a degree of liberty in this respect.

There are, however, two areas of music ---- serious music ---- in the
western world where a measure of improvisation is to be encountered. The first
is in certain kinds of experimental music practiced by modern composers and
performers, where the composer actively seeks improvised passages of the
performer. The other is in jazz, where the player, who creates music on the
spot, follows a cycle of predetermined chords and improvises from modulating
from key to key in the same order as that of the basic chords. In the process, he
uses a good deal of syncopation ( i.e. , ‘off - beat’ accents or the deliberate
accentuation of notes occurring on the weak pulses of the rhythmic line ),
special ornaments and also, very importantly, the special quarter notes so
characteristic of jazz. Nevertheless, improvisation in jazz is fundamentally different from that in Hindustani music because in jazz, there is hardly any holding or Sustaining of notes as in Hindustani music and the frequent chord changes of jazz are beyond the scheme of Hindustani music or simply not possible in it because of its non employment of harmony.

II. **Improvisation in Carnatic Music**

The art music prevalent in South India, popularly known as Carnatic music, which is believed to have developed into a system in its own right after the period of Shaarangdeva (i.e., 13th century A.D.) is also improvisational, although to a much lesser extent than Hindustani music.

The modern concert pattern in Carnatic music, viz., *raagam–taanam–pallavi*, was formulated and established in the early part of the 20th century by Ariyakudi Ramanuj Iyengar, who hailed from Tamil Nadu. As per this presently universally followed pattern, there is a clear dichotomy between *raaga* development and *taala* development. Just as *dhrupad* singers in Hindustani music first present a full-fledged or *poornaanga aalaap* (पूणाळा आलाप) in which the *raaga* is treated in a variety of ways before starting the *dhrupad* proper, after which the rhythmic aspect or *layakaari* takes over, so too in Carnatic music, in the *raagam-taanam-pallavi* (रागम्-तानम्-पल्लवी) pattern, the *raagam* and *taanam* constitute the development of the *raaga*,

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1 I am grateful to Prof. Dr.M.R.Gautam, former head of department of music at Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi, ex-vice chancellor of Khairagarh University, Khairagarh, and famous scholar-vocalist, for his kind assistance and guidance to me in preparing this section of this chapter.

2 I owe this information to Shri K.Raghaendra Rao, connoisseur of Carnatic music at Calcutta.
analogous to the poornaanga aalaap of the Hindustani dhrupadist, while, the plaa pallavi part is the song text followed by rhythmic development. That is to say, once the pallavi begins, there is no more elaboration of the raaga.

In the raagam-taanam-pallavi pattern, three clear stages of improvisation are discernable, as follows:-----

1st stage ----- This is the development of the raaga, and being free of any text, as entirely improvised. The raaga elaboration, called aalaapanam (आलापनम्), is done mostly in the madhya and drut layas, i.e., in medium and fast tempi. The raagam part of the recital is in medium tempo and the tanam part, corresponding to the nome-tome aalaap (नोम्-तोम-आलाप) of the dhrupadist, is in fast tempo. In the aalaapanam, the following alankaars or embellishments are employed:

1. **Tiripa Gamak (तिरिप गमक)** ----- This corresponds to the turn of Western music, thus: RSNS, GRSR, etc. In the higher notes, it turns into a whirl, where a note, such as S, is taken as a nucleus or centre and elaborated upon in a circular manner like ŠŘŠŇŠ, ŇŚRṀŚNDNS, etc.

2. **Aandolita Gamak (आन्दोलित गमक)** ----- This is a gamak using heavy oscillations, such as $N^UP^N$ etc. The amplitude of oscillation is large often from succeeding to preceding notes, and due to its kinetic (moving) nature, it creates a kind of tonal dynamism. For example, in the Carnaatic Todi (तोडी),
where the G is pronounced incorporating gamak, the sounded note is a continuous oscillation from M to R.

3. **Kampita Gamak (कम्पित गमक)***--- This predominates Carnaatic music, but is seldom used in Hindustani music. This is a type of gamak ornamentation having configurations like Ḍ ṇS RS ṇ Ḍ, ṇ SR GR S ṇ, etc.

4. **Aahata Gamak (आहत गमक) ***----- This is common to both Hindustani and Carnaatic music, and arises when the succeeding note is touched gently, thus: P – D, P – D, etc., the D being sounded for a very short duration of time.

5. **Plaavita Gamak (प्लावित गमक) ***----- This is the Carnaatic equivalent of the meend, being actually short jumping *meends*, achieved by jerking upon a note and going on to another note of longer time interval.

The following characteristics of Carnaatic articulation must be kept in mind -----

a. Carnatic *meends* are shorter than Hindustani ones.

b. Unlike Hindustani music, Carnaatic music requires every note to be inflected and oscillated upon, and

c. Oscillation in Carnaatic music has a higher speed than that in Hindustani music.

As a result of the generally fast tempo in Carnaatic music, the scope of improvisation becomes limited compared to Hindustani music, where a considerably slower tempo affords veritably unlimited scope for effective improvisation.
During the second stage ---- The Kriti (कृति) or textual composition stage. The kriti corresponds to the dhrupad of Hindustani music, and is a literary composition set to a raaga and tala and has three segments, viz. pallavi (पल्लवी), anupallavi (अनुपल्लवी) and charanam (चरणम्). The pallavi is akin to the sthaayi of a dhrupad, and is sung at the very start of the kriti. Here, the composition is sung with note variations that are mostly themselves pre composed. Sometimes, the performer himself adds variations in the singing of the text as improvisations. These variations in the composition, pre composed or improvised, are known as sangatis (संगती). The anupallavi is like a second sthaayi, sung after the pallavi. The charanam consists of more than one stanza (sometimes even four). Any one of these is selected for executing improvised boltaanas called neraval (नेरवल).

Improvisation can occur in any part of the composition, subject, however, to two very important principles ----

1. Unlike in Hindustani music, in Carnatic music there is no concept of sam (सम). Instead, there is the eduppu (एडुप्पु) or the uthaav (उठाव) (i.e., the particular point in the taala cycle from where the composition begins). It is from this point each improvisational cycle commences.
2. In Carnatic music, there is a one-to-one correspondence between the syllables of the text and the points of the taala at which they occur. That is to say, if in the composition a letter of a word occurs at a particular maatraa, it
should do the same (i.e., occur at the same maatraa ) even during improvisation.

These two constraints greatly inhibit the scope of improvisation in Carnaatic music as compared to Hindustani music.

3rd stage ---- This is the stage of kalpanaswaras (कल्पनास्वर) or sargam. The artistes show their imagination through the use of improvised sargams. Sometimes, though, kalpanaswaras can be planned or pre composed, but often, they are creative. There are two recognized techniques of creating kalpanaswaras ----

1. Using “Sarvalaghu” (सर्वलघु) , which refers to the mixing of rhythmic metres or chhandas(छन्द). Here, different jaatis (जाति) of taala are mixed, producing plenty of syncopations and cross-rhythms.

2. Sargams may be fitted to the Bols or rhythmic syllables of the mridangam (मृदंगम्), akin to swarparan (स्वरपरण) of Hindustani music.

However, too much use of kalpanaswaras is thought of as exhibitionistic since it is rhythm oriented.

III. Improvisation in Dhrupad ---- An old song form popularly associated with Raja Man Singh Tomar of Gwaalior who reigned from 1486 to 1516, with a lyrical text eulogizing a religious deity or a king, or describing romantic love, was based on some salagsuda (सालगसूड़) type prabandhas (प्रबंध).

Dhrupads structurally have either two or four ‘charans’(चरण) or sections, víz.
sthaayi and antaraa, and sthaayi, antaraa, sanchaari and aabhog respectively, both tonally and textually. Improvisation is restricted to bol-baant( बोलबाँढ ) in various layas or speeds and their myriad combinations all the time delineating the raaga in toto.

The recital of a dhrupad singer normally consists of a full-blown aalaap followed by a dhrupad and/or a dhamaar( धमार ) composition. The aalaap is devoid of any text, though one school of thought has it that the phrase “Om Anant Hari Narayan” ( उँ अनंत हरि नारायण ) was formerly used in the aalaap. The aalaap begins at a slow tempo and gradually progresses to a considerably fast tempo towards the end. It has two distinct parts, known as anibaddha aalaap ( अनिबद्ध आलाप ) and Nibaddha aalaap ( निबद्ध आलाप ).

The former is free elaboration of the raaga without any obvious periodicity of rhythm, and the latter has a regular, discernable rhythmic pulse incorporated into it. The whole aalaap ---- anibaddha as well as nibaddha ---- is divided into several sections, each section presenting a single or a small group of related ideas. Each section or charan( चरण ) ends with a particular rhythm based phrase generally known as the mukhadaa( मुखड़ा ). For example, a typical mukhadaa in an aalaap in the raaga Bihaag ( बिहाग ) may be:
S – S – S – ƤN SM G – S. This rhythmic phrase occurs each time the artiste wishes to convey the fact that he has ended one improvisational idea or passage and is about to start another.

In the case of a *dhrupadist*, two points stand out very clearly, and must be scrupulously followed by him if he is to keep his form pure;

1. The voice production in *alaap* and *dhrupad* must be such as to result in a full-bodied, deep and sonorous voice. This entails long years of special voice culture.

2. The *dhrupadist* must restrict himself to a few ornaments only like *meend*, *gamak*, etc. He cannot use typical *khayaal* or *thumri* ornaments like *murki* or *khatkaa*, nor may he indulge in *taanas*.

In spite of these limitations, the *alaap* offers ample scope for grave, soulful and emotional improvisation, that can range from the majestic to the heroic to the passionate.

In the *dhrupad*, the improvisational emphasis is on rhythmic elaboration. The artiste indulges in various kinds of *laykaari*, often executing complex cross rhythms with the percussionists ---- the *pakhaawaj* ( पखावज )player. Here, it is important to note that the *pakhawaj* player rarely restrics himself to the *thekaa* ( ठेका ) or the *thapia* ( ठपिया ) of the *tala* ; he indulges in *saath sangat* ( साथ संगत ) with the *dhrupadist* or he performs improvisations on his own in rhythmic counterpoint to those of the *dhrupadist*. Hence the *dhrupadist* must have a very strong sense of *taala* himself, and cannot afford to
depend on the *pakhaawaj* player for assistance in this respect. Since improvisation in the dhrupad proper is restricted to the elaboration of rhythm by means of *laykaari*, it is generally not continued for a long time so as to prevent monotony. The dhrupad itself may be sung in one of four specific *baanis* (बानी) or styles, *viz.*

a. *Gourhar Baani* ---- this is primarily in slow tempo with the use of delicate *meends*,

b. *Dagur Baani* (डागर बानी) ---- this is primarily in medium tempo, with few *gamaks* or *meends*, and almost straight articulation of the notes,

c. *Khandaar Baani* (खंडार बानी) ---- here, there is the use of heavy *gamaks*, and

d. *Nouhar Baani* (नौहार बानी) ---- here there are many skips or *chhoots*.

The nature of improvisation will naturally follow the particular *Bani* of the composition.

Following is a sensitive account of comparison between the ornamentation in *khayaal* and *dhrupad* by Wim Van Der Meer in his book “Hindustani music in the 20th century”³: “When comparing some of the *khayaals* that are directly derived from dhrupads the differences are small, and to a large degree part of the ornamentation, whereas the ornamentation in

³ at page 53.
dhrupad is very broad, usually containing very slow and majestic mindas, that of khayaal is more jerky, often in the form of murki. Especially the passage from one note to the other is done in a different manner; in dhrupad the noted are linked slowly, ‘blended’ as the masters call it, while in khayal the passage itself is done in legato, often preceded by a murki or similar ornamentation. In fact, in dhrupad murki is avoided, the permitted embellishments being mainly minda, andolita and kana, that is, ornaments that are essential in raaga development. A murki can be included in dhrupad only when it is performed slowly. Murki and similar ornamentation such as khatkaa, zamzamaa etc. are also instrumental in forming a distinction between khayaal and dhrupada, although many khayaal singers hold on to a restricted use of such ornamentation. A good murki is brief, soft and brisk, and suits a thin voice (especially female) much better than a sonorous (male) voice. The role of murki is not relevant to raga development, it should be judiciously used in a performance ‘to sprinkle it with flower petals’. In some schools there are so many murkis in a performance that a definite influence from thumri is felt…..”

IV. **Improvisation in Thumri** ---- Since thumri as a form is distinct from khayaal, just as dhrupad is too, its contents and presentation are also quite different from those of khayaal. Again, as khayaal is more lyrical and improvisational than dhrupad, thumri is so too in comparison to khayaal. But the major difference between (a) khayaal and dhrupad and (b) khayaal and thumri is that whereas both khayaal and dhrupad are forms of pure raaga music, thumri is not so: it is only raaga-based music and not pure raaga music like
the former forms, and has therefore been popularly categorized as “Light-classical music”. The thumri is much more lyrical than any ‘classical’ song form (here thumri encompasses all similar forms such as daadaraa (दादरा ), kajri (कजरी), chaiti (चैती), jhoola (झूला), etc., so that the confines or rules of the raaga are not strictly adhered to. Thus, notes and note phrases alien to the basic raaga of the composition are also incorporated quite freely to enhance the appeal of the piece. Much more importance is attached to the text of the composition than khayaal, as a result of which the words, and the sentiments expressed by them, become prominent ---- hence the tradition of Bol-banaav (बोल-बनाव) instead of aalaap as the main mode of development. The subject of the text is mostly romantic love, often dwelling upon the “viyog paksha” (वियोग पक्ष) (pathos) of ‘shringaar’ (शृंगार) rasa (रस), although compositions of the “sanyog paksha” (संयोग पक्ष) are not entirely uncommon. Improvisation in thumri, therefore, is angled at appealing to the sentiment rather than the disciplined intellect. (Please refer to Vidushi Sawita Devi’s thumri recital in CD).

Embellishments used in this genre are of a lighter nature than those used in pure classical music. And although almost all known varieties of ornaments, with the only exception of gamak, are used to some degree in thumri, it abounds mostly in khatkas and murkis. The purab-ang (पूरब अंग) thumri
which has a more relaxed pace, happily employs *meends* in its long *alaap*-like passages in the course of *bol-banav*.

Initially, (as mentioned in Fakirulla’s Persian text “Raaga Darpan” ---- around 1665 A.D. ---- the *raagas* in which *thumri* was traditionally sung were mostly derived from folk music e.g. *Barvaa* (बरवा), *Pahadi* (पहाड़ी), *Kafi* (काफी), *Jhinjhoti*, *Jangala* (जंगला), *Multani* (मुलतानी), *Bhairavi* (बैरवी), *Sindhu Bhairavi* (सिंधु बैरवी), *Sindhu Kafi* (सिंधु काफी), *Sindhu Multani* (सिंधु मुलतानी), *Multani Kafi* (मुलतानी काफी), *Multani Barvaa* (सुलतानी बरवा), *Saavani Barvaa* (सावनी बरवा), *Des* (देस), *Pilu* (पीलू), *Gara* (गारा), *Bihari* (बिहारी), *Kalingadaa* (कालिंगदा), *Khammaichi* (Khamaj) (खमाइची [खमाज]), *Paraj* (परज), *Dhaani* (धानी), *Sindhu* (सिंधु), *Loom* (लूम), *Bihaag* (बिहाग), etc. Since there was considerable influence of popular folk music on the earlier *thumri*, the popular ‘*harkats*’ (हरकत) of the folk and light forms quite easily found their way into this form, thus. The use of *khatkaa*, *murki* and some light but intricate *tappa* (टप्पा) *taanas* that were popular in some folk forms also became part of *thumri* embellishments.

As *thumri* grew in stature and became integrated into the realm of *Darbaar* (दरबार) music through the efforts of the Shori family of Oudh and
Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, the influence of classical raaga music too crept into it. Thus, some of the ornaments of khayaal gaayaki (ख़याल गायकी) too quite naturally merged with it lending it a more serious character as is still witnessed in the developmental aspect of the Benaras school. Similarly, the folk element in thumri becomes more pronounced in the course of laggi (लभ्दी) towards the end of a song, when the meter of the taala [Chaanchar (चाँचर) or Deepchandi (दीपचन्दी) mostly] changes to a considerable fast Kaharvaa (कहरवा) of mere four or eight beats, and all improvisation must thereafter conform to its limits. This is quite akin to the fast tempo of folk songs.

Thus, we see that improvisation in thumri and such other light-classical genres is geared towards the sole purpose of “adaayagi” (अदायगी) of the words in the text, or expression of the various sentiments hidden therein. Hence, any display of virtuosity must not distract from this basic purpose.

V. Improvisation in Light Music-----Hindustani light music is predominantly lyrical in nature and structurally simpler than its classical counterpart with fewer and less rigid rules, especially those concerning its melodic structure. The taalas used herein are also much less complex than those used in khayaal and the majority of thumris, not to speak of dhrupad and dhamaar, and are mostly short in meter, e.g. Kaharvaa (कहरवा), Daadaraa (दादरा) and Roopak (रूपक) having four, six and seven beats respectively.
Perhaps due to this relative structural, and of course developmental, simplicity, it is referred to as “Sugam Sangeet” (सुगम संगीत), literally meaning ‘easy music’. Yet, it is a sophisticated form with a great many finer points and is commonly regarded as “urban” as against the ruralness of folk music.

Since the text of the song is often given equal importance, if not more, than the melody it is set to — as against the case in some genres, such as the ghazal (ग़ज़ल) — in light music, the tune is designed to highlight the sentiments expressed in the lyrics. And, although the sthaayi – antaraa format of melodic structure is adhered to, there are, almost always, more than one antaraas so as to accommodate several stanzas (generally two to four) of the poetic text. However, the system of raaga is not followed, although the tune may sometimes be based on them — i.e. on one or a combination of raagas. Even so, where the basic melody is concerned the rules are lax; any more / notes or note phrases which the composer may fancy, are freely incorporated in order to enhance the beauty of the composition. Thus, we see that the aesthetic content of music (both melodic as well as poetic) holds prime position in this genre.

Hindustani light music has of late, i.e. over the past few decades, imbibed quite a few outside influences, the main out of which is that of western music, as is evident in the harmonic experiments of contemporary choral music and even more markedly in the use of western orchestration and famous western tunes in popular film music. The use of broken chords has permeated
even into regular raaga music performances of quite a few leading classical instrumentalists, not to speak of its adaptation in the lighter forms! However, since film music is based on situations in the story / narrative it is not tied down by restrictions of form : any form, whether Indian or foreign, that the situation / scene may demand, is naturally used, and this opportunity is often blatantly exploited for the plain commercial purposes of filling the coffers, sacrificing all considerations for authenticity, in the name of creative licence by the Indian cinema. Nevertheless, Hindustani light music has retained its traditional form, such as the geet ( गीत ), ghazal and bhajan ( भजन ), which are also established poetic forms independent of their appropriation in music.

*Geet* is the main representative of modern Hindi musical verse and has a wide variety of poetic meter, rhyming scheme and musical embellishment to go with it.

The *ghazal* is a five couplet Urdu poem meant to be sung and recited and is believed to have been created by Amir Khusro. Lyrical in nature its text is of crucial importance. Stress is therefore laid on correct diction and clear articulation of the words, and the tunes kept simple for the same reason. Thus, any overpowering musical treatment, including the use of embellishments, that may distract from the effect of the text, which is of prime importance, is generally refrained from. The quality of improvisational tools used in this genre is, as a result, lighter and unobtrusive, although the tunes are often raaga based and traditional. Some Persian influence is also said to be often found in such tunes. Embellishments comprise murkis, khatkaas, kanas and meends.
taanas and heavy gamaks are avoided, although some present day performers have adapted raaga music features such as elaborate use of sargam phrases into their rendition.

However, more musical freedom is conventionally allowed to the composer/performer of geet and bhajan, more so in the case of the latter with its popular adaptation into the semi-classical music fold by raaga music performers with their penchant for protracted intricate melodic improvisations. Even so, care is always taken to enunciate clearly the words as well as the bhaava (भाव) or the underlying sentiment of the text which in fact is the mainstay of all lighter song forms. An essential difference between the musical treatment of the two abovementioned forms is related to their respective characters, which is lyricism/romanticism in the case of the geet and bhakti bhaava (भक्ति भाव) or devotional fervour in the case of the bhajan.

Folk and Tribal Music ---- The authoress is indebted to Shri Kankan Bhattacharya, a Kolkata based expert on folk and tribal music, for the discussion that follows. The first formal definition of folk music was given by the International Folk Music Council in 1954 at Geneva. According to the Council, folk music is music practiced by the folk people, and possesses the threefold characteristics of continuity, variation and selection. By folk people is meant anyone related to the agrarian economy. Thus farmers, goldsmiths, locksmiths, carpenters, etc., are all part of the folk populace. By this yardstick, industrial songs do not qualify as folk music. The characteristic of ‘continuity’
implies that a folk tune is constant and handed down over generations, and that it is only a vehicle for words ---- different song texts can be sung to the same tune. ‘Variation’ means a permissible change in the song text by, say, the use of syllables like ‘aha’, ‘re’, etc., Such use depending on the theme of the song. The feature referred to as ‘selection’ ensures that only such tunes survive in the folk music tradition that are capable of being used for singing different thematic songs according to changing times.

Folk music displays some other notable characteristics, like
a. it is “outdoor” music, mainly sung outdoors,
b. the use of associated instruments, such as the ektaaraa (एकतारा), is extremely important, and

c. the themes are closely related to contemporary folk society.

The only improvisation found in folk music is in the narrative ---- in the use of words. The musical constituents of the tune, such as the melody, embellishments used, etc., are fixed. Folk music often demands a particular type of voice modulation or voice throwing. There is also considerable variety as to tempo, as also off-beat rhythm. The thematic material may range from work songs to other types like ballads, narratives, criticism of specific societal practices, religious themes, legends or hero songs. Often, there are non-conscious changes in popular regional songs ---- to that extent the changes are non-improvisational. Sometimes, the changes in the words are improvisational, as in the use of ‘aha’ or ‘re’ syllables consciously applied. There is also the use of “aakhor” (आखर), i.e., uncomposed and unrhythmic statements like
रुक्मिनी कहिन “आ भामा मै तौपे वारी, तूतो है मेरे कृष्ण की प्यारी’ (from a song depicting a dialogue between Satyabhaamaa and Rukmini, wives of Lord Krishna). As Shri Hemanga Biswas points out in his “Loksangeet Samiksha ---- Baanglaa Aashaam“ (in Bengali), there are, in the folk tradition of Bengal and Assam, what he calls ‘bahiraanaa’ (बहिराना) corresponding to the gharaanaa of classical music.

Tribal music, on the other hand, is more primitive. It is a reflection of tribal society, perhaps related to the forest economy. As D.N. Baske says, the form of tribal music is simpler and more primitive than other forms of music. D.D.Kashambi points out in his “An Outline of Ancient Culture in Indian History” that tribal music is akin to chanting, uses three or four notes, has no sthaayi-antaraa structure and is descending in melodic contour. Also, Swami Prajnananda says in his “A History of Indian Music” that the flute is closely associated with tribal music. However, as the finger holes of the tribal flute are set at equidistant intervals, the tones are not pure or natural tones, but are either slightly sharp or slightly flat. There is no improvisation practiced in tribal music.