

Affective Analysis of North Indian Ragas

(A Methodical Inquiry)

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Experimental psychology and such other disciplines are today paying greater attention to arts in general. Various art-forms and modes of artistic expression are being examined and analyzed objectively. This has considerably reduced unnecessarily and disproportionately mystified areas of thought. In a small measure Musicologists in India are pursuing the same methods with reference to problems like meaning of Music, (Deva and Nair, *Sangeet Natak*, 10, 54 'Form in Music'). Rightly, these attempts have not been claimed to be exhaustive, and no conclusions are put forward as final. I however feel that the crucial question of methodology is to be discussed afresh before such attempts are made on a larger scale. There are some important considerations which necessitate the present avocacy for a methodological review.

Firstly, experimental psychology, when confronted with valuational aspects, starts with a handicap if its valuational assumptions are not relevant enough. Affective analysis of any artistic activity starts by assuming that certain enquiry objects are artistic. This basic assumption naturally sets the tone of the whole process. It is in this regard that North Indian (henceforth referred to as Hindustani) ragas are to be comprehended with the utmost possible conceptual precision before they are subjected to any investigation. A proper conceptual decision prior to the use of methods of experimental psychology is a precondition that must be fulfilled.

Secondly, in itself 'Music' is too broad a category to justify undifferentiated application of similar methods irrespective of the nature of music involved. No doubt music is universal in certain aspects. But it is so only at a highly abstract level. The level is too abstract to warrant application of the same objective methods of experimental psychology in every case. Unless qualified by ethnomusicological particularity, Universality of the method is too broad and hence deceptive. Hence, the methods used by western Musicologists will have only a limited universal validity. This is so because experimental psychology as applied to arts involves, as said earlier an initial conceptual decision regarding the valuational aspect of the phenomenon.

In the light of these general remarks let us examine the problem referred to in the title of the paper.

Affective analysis is analysis of the behavioural pattern of an organism that emerges after experiencing impact from an external stimulus. The analysis can of course be of the physiological as well as the psychological aspect. Obviously, the external stimulus is viewed here as a constant and is assumed to remain unaffected by the receptor organism— or more precisely by the process of originating the stimuli. Affective analysis of both physiological and the psychological types is thus an analysis of one end of a bipolar process. As opposed to this, we have what is called an effective analysis. It includes analysis of both the originator and receptor of the stimuli.

Now the question is whether it is valid to consider Hindustani raga a result of an unidirectional process? Does not the audience response account for a significant qualitative difference in the emergence of a raga? Western music does acknowledge the effective existence and aesthetic role of a music score. The fact that a score exists results in a possibility of having total music available even before a performance. Hence there is more of execution than interpretation and more of presentation than elaboration in it as compared to a Hindustani raga. This means that methods used for music that is mainly written and music that essentially belongs to oral tradition cannot be the same. Improvisation is one consequence of audience response. It results in a performance that is dynamic and unpredictable. The dynamism is a condition that accompanies the realization of Hindustani raga in all its stages or phases. A play-back of a recording is really a use of origination of a stimuli which is only halfway to performance. It is a recital and to that extent is too limited or narrow a version of Hindustani raga. Experimental psychology uses here a seed-form instead of a form. The precondition regarding a conceptual decision of evaluative nature that lies at the basis of our enquiry is not met with. Music belonging to a tradition where score reflects the entire or a very large portion of music may follow the method of 'play-back' without harm because there the qualitative gap between play-back and performance is practically negligible. On the other hand, music having an oral tradition loses qualitatively in a play-back as it becomes a recital and not a performance. Raga in a recital is different from raga in a performance because in the latter, valuational features of improvisation and audience-response are present. Affective analysis of a Hindustani raga thus suffers from a defective investigational start. The essential dynamism and unpredictability of a Hindustani raga makes it necessary to reconsider the western procedure used to analyze both types of affective responses.

Another comparatively minor point is regarding the basic Musical Unit to be used in effective analysis of Hindustani raga. It is quite possible that a drut Cheej in a particular raga may seem to be an ideal unit. It is definite, short and due to the comprehensibility of the word-content, ideally amenable to methods like that of Hefner's adjective circles. But here again is a weakness in the conceptual decision. A Cheej can at the best contain seeds of a raga. The essential, final or total form of a Hindustani raga merges in its elaboration. A Cheej has structural seeds, the skeleton of the possible total form, but nothing more. It is better than a mere presentation of aroha-avaroha but still it can hardly be accepted as a full picture of the Raga as such. This will be less so in ragas which are aprachalita or anavat (i.e. rare), which for all practical purposes do not have much scope for imaginative elaboration. In case of these ragas even one Cheej may reflect the total picture of a raga to a very great extent. These ragas are structurally so rigid that the channels of elaboration are fixed and limited. These are most 'Predictable' ragas.

This leads us to an important consideration of the validity of treating all ragas as subjects of an effective analysis. It can presumably be accepted that individual musical notes by themselves do not affect. It is because they gain contextuality that they appear to cause changes of both physiological and psychological nature. (Rasa-theory can enter into picture only through the accompaniment of word-content.) But the problem is: Can we maintain with equal force that Darbari and Nat-Bilawal affect us? The threefold musicological classification of Bhatkhande (Based on ragas taking shuddha Re, Dha; komal Ga, Ni; and komal Re, Dha; respectively) is structural. As far as the affective aspect is concerned Yaman and Gaudsarang, or Yaman and Chayanat can hardly be treated as similar. Same point can be made about ragas in other thātas too. What is necessary is a raga-classification put forward with an affective bias. It seems that in this context the raga-oriented classification may be used with a qualification. What are known as jod-ragas should be left aside. Varieties of Kanada, Malhar, Sarang, Shri, Bilawal may thus be omitted and primarily mood-oriented ragas like Jogiya, Darbari, Bhairavi be taken up for investigation. I am aware that this sounds speculative but at the present moment it is better to be speculative than being categorical in an easy manner. Jod-ragas are intellectually conceived. They are more concerned with structural manipulations than building up of a mood. That this is so is reflected in the ordinary responses reflected in the critical or appreciative terminology used by musicians and music critics.

We can also take a cue from the folk-melodies like Pilu, Pahadi, Mand, Gara - melodies that are called dhun-ragas. These ragas have definite identifying phrases but

otherwise they have a loose structure. It is curious that only certain Raga-like structures are discernible in folk-music. Pending greater field-work and more rigorous analysis it is to be kept in mind that as mood-music relationship is likely to be an ethnomusicological and ethnopsychological phenomenon, Dhun-ragas will be a good starting point for affective analysis than the deliberately structured Jod-ragas, or others that are not primarily mood-oriented.

Adjective-scale methods or adjective-circle methods vis-à-vis Hindustani ragas pose one more problem. The methods are developed in a system that has recognized and given a considerable weightage to 'programme Music'. Music with clear-cut descriptive purpose therefore must play a great role in channelizing responses. This will be consequently reflected in the methodology of affective analysis. Hindustani ragas follow a different method of construction, presentation and realization of the ultimate expression. Except for the seasonal ragas like Malhar, Basant there is no possibility of having a descriptive content associated with the core of a raga. As told earlier, it is the descriptive aspect that distinguishes programme music from music that is configurational. It seems therefore imperative to evolve new methods of analysis or modify the existing ones if they are to be used with benefit in the context of Hindustani Raga.

In another context I have concluded that Music has only two moods - a mood of elation and dejection (Neitzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian bi-polarity will come to mind easily.)

Responses to music can be grouped under these two categories and thus far a universal or a generalized statement is possible. Further variations in individual responses are of course possible but they will have to depend on the individual associations. Adjective-scale or Adjective-circle methods will have to consider this possibility too. A theoretical position or a conclusive statement that avers a universal, intrinsic relationship of correspondence between music and mood is possible only to certain point. Beyond that the individual associations subgroup themselves in various ways and defy a general statement. The question involved is not that of/a having a more detailed or exhaustive list of response-indicating adjectives. The question is of recognizing the existence of limited validity of the Universal element in Music and correspondingly to evolve a more comprehensive and inevitably intricate methodological complex.

Does the melodic realization of Hindustani raga warrant a difference in the method to be affectively analyzed? Perhaps so. Because harmonization or melodic

progression are the causes of differing musical features. Harmonization means simultaneous use of various instruments: therefore greater variety of operative tonal and instrumental symbolism: therefore greater possibility of associational aroused of allusive emotions. Thus harmonized music; may be the cause of more fruitful use of adjective-scale and other analogous methods. On the other hand, melodic progression seems to be more intense but less varied as far as its allusive potentiality is concerned. This too may be the reason why a different approach will be necessary for the proposed affective analysis of Hindustani ragas.

The position taken above may be summarized as follows:

(1) Any investigatory activity in experimental Psychology starts with a conceptual decision taken about valuational aspect.

(2) Affective analysis concentrates only on one pole of a two-way process of music realization. Therefore it presumably starts with an investigatory handicap. Effective analysis is a way out.

(3) Hindustani raga is realized in a performance and not in a recital. It is a dynamic, improvised, unpredictable entity and as such cannot be subjected to methods applied to music having different characteristics.

(4) Methods of affective analysis used with reference to Western music seem to have doubtful utility in case of Hindustani raga because (unlike Western music) it does not possess the characteristics of having descriptive content, instrumental symbolism, and written versions.

(5) Essentially, mood-music problem is the core of affective analysis. Mood-music relationship being ethnocentric rather than Universal and bi-levelled rather than mono-levelled. The adjective-scale and analogous methods have to be suitably modified. Alternatively new methods have to be evolved after taking into consideration the nature of music involved in the inquiry undertaken.