

Swadheenabhartrika Nayika From the Ashtanayika-S in the Compositions of Khayal Music: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

Hindustani vocal music uses various themes for compositions like Mahakavya-s, Bhakti, philosophy, Nayika-bheda, etc., adding poetic beauty to the art music. Ashtanayika is one of the prominent themes widely used in compositions. These Nayika-s depict various situations in which women relate to their beloved. The Bandish-es express this theme beautifully, and generations of music connoisseurs have enjoyed the emotions they express.

It is interesting to analyze the depiction of women as Nayika in Hindustani music compositions. Especially the Swadheenabhartrika, as she is having her beloved in subjection. How do the composers see such a superior woman? How do they describe her? What type of Raga-Tala-Laya is chosen to make them more impactful? Furthermore, what is the thought behind such a depiction? Such triggering questions led us to conduct an analytical study of this Nayika.

In the present research paper, the depiction of Swadheenabhartrika is analyzed from poetic, musical, and philosophical perspectives. The research also attracts the attention of composers, vocalists, and connoisseurs towards the poetic beauty of the Bandish-es, which is often neglected in classical music.

Keywords

1. **Nayika:** The word 'Nayika' in Sanskrit is synonymous with 'heroine' in English, which also includes a woman of merit. However, since the heroine in Sanskrit literature and plays is mainly in a romantic role, writers like Bharata have used the word Nayika in the sense of 'female lover'. The heroines in Hindustani music Bandish-es use this very meaning.

2. **Ashtanayika:** Bharata and later authors have distinguished the heroines in eight different situations or states - known as Avastha - that come in the relationship with her hero or Nayaka. The heroines depicting these eight states are collectively called Ashtanayika. The eight

Nayika-s are Swadhinpatika, Vasakasajja, Khandita, Kalahantarita, Virahotkanthita, Vipralabdha, Proshitapatika, and Abhisarika.

3. **Bandish:** The term is usually used to refer to elemental compositions a vocalist employs to launch musical improvisations/elaborations. However, the word composition would only be a loose translation of Bandish. Every single musical composition is not accorded the status of a Bandish. A Bandish is a composition that, due to its inherent completeness, can claim to be a map of total musical growth, comparable to a seed carrying within the complete potential of a whole form.

4. **Raga:** Raga is a creative, improvisation-oriented, and entertaining structure of Swar (notes) and Shritis. A Raga has definite characteristics like notes, phrases, ascend-descend, Vadi, Samvadi, Pradhan Ang, etc. The format of improvisation of a Raga is bound by traditions to ensure the creation of beauty and bliss.

5. **Vaggeyakara:** The one who composes Bandish is known as Vaggeyakar, as he composes the lyrics and music for it.

Discussion

The concept of Ashtanayika has been used as a theme in Indian painting, literature, sculpture, and classical music as archetypal states of the romantic heroine. Legendary vocalist and Vaggeyakara Pt. Ramakrishnabua Vaze mention in his book 'Sangeet-Kala-Prakash' that to compose a Bandish, we must have at least one of the eight Nayika-s.¹ This triggers a researcher's mind to search for the inclusion of this Ashtanayika theme in the compositions of Hindustani music. The present study is in the same direction, where a particular emotion is analyzed from the Ashtanayika theme's perspective.

A) Introduction of the eight Nayika-s of Ashtanayika theme:

Natyashastra by Bharata is the first text that mentions the eight Nayika-s and gives their description. Many poets and writers in the medieval period later followed the theme and used it in their creations with slight variations. This research paper also takes Rasikapriya by Keshavadasa, who elaborated on the same theme. First, let us know about all the Nayika-s from the Ashtanayika theme. It can be noted that there is no particular sequence for them, and various texts use their names with slight variations.

1. **Swadhinapatika or Swadhinabhartrika:** Swadhinapatika is a heroine who enjoys the fact that her hero is close to her and she has complete control over him.

2. **Vasakasajja:** Vasakasajja is the heroine who beautifies herself and prepares to welcome the hero as he is about to arrive or has already arrived at her home.

3. **Khandita:** Khandita is a heartbroken heroine whose pride in belonging to her lover is broken due to unavoidable circumstances or events, primarily due to the feeling of betrayal.

4. **Kalahantarita or Abhisandhita:** A heroine whose lover does not come to meet her due to jealousy or differences is Kalahantarita. Some treatises describe her as the one who separated from her beloved due to a quarrel.

5. **Virahotkanthita or Utka:** Virhotkanthita is the heroine who is not reunited with her lover (Viraha), longs for union (Utkanthita), and waits for her lover.

6. **Vipralabdha:** Vipralabdha is the heroine who is upset when her lover does not show up despite her reaching the meeting place as per her lover's message.

7. **Proshitapatika, Proshitpriya, or Proshitabhartrika:** Proshitapatika is a heroine whose lover lives abroad or far away for a very long period.

8. **Abhisarika:** Abhisarika is the heroine who, unable to bear her lover's separation, sets out to meet him.

B] Swadheenabhartrika Nayika in major treatises:

It is necessary to see one ancient and one medieval period treatise to get a clear idea of this Nayika. The Natyashastra describes a heroine who has complete control over her beloved. The following lines are from Natyashastra, which describe this Swadheenabhartrika Nayika -

Suratātirasairbaddho yasyāḥ pārśve tu nāyakaḥ |

Sāndrāmodaguṇaprāptā bhavet svādhīnabhartṛkā || (Natyashastra, 22, 215)²

Medieval period poet Keshavadasa also describes this heroine with his interpretation. He calls her Swadheenapatika instead of Swadheenabhartrika, which means the same. As per Keshavadasa, she has so many qualities that Nayaka is so impressed by them that he stays all the time with her.

Kesava jāke guṇa bāṁdhyo, sadā rahai pati saṅga |

Svādhīnapatikā tāsu koṃ, baranata premaprasaṅga || (Rasikapriya, 7, 4)³

It depicts a lady subduing her beloved, which is rare in Indian art. Let us now see how this relationship is shaped in the classical music compositions.

C] Depiction of Swadheenabhartrika Nayika in the Hindustani music Bandish-es:

In conventional Indian literature, women are depicted as devoted to their beloved and submissive. That is why the Nayika over-powering the Nayaka is a rare novelty. Although such a heroine is depicted relatively less, it is found in Khayal Bandish-es. The Nayaka is shown as fulfilling all the wishes of the Nayika, bringing her new clothes and ornaments, applying Mehendi or Mahavar to her, and obeying her commands. Though few, such a depiction is fascinating and opens a new dimension in the lovers' relationship.

We will take five samples of Khayal Bandish-es portraying various shades of this Nayika:

C.1. Raga Bihag, Madhyalaya Teentaal:

Laṭa urajhī surajhā jā bālama,
Hātha meṃ mehandī lagī|
Māthe kī bindiyāṃ gira gaī seja pe,
Apane hātha saajā jā bālama||⁴

This is a famous Bandish in Raga Bihag, known to and performed by almost every vocalist. However, do they know that this is a Swadheenabhartrika? Scarcely. The heroine has applied Mehendi to her hands, which is still wet, so she cannot do anything with her hands. Meanwhile, a tuft of her hair comes loose and starts bothering her. Now, she asks her beloved to set it right. Again, in the Antara of this composition, she asks him to reapply the fallen Bindiya on her forehead. Perhaps this is an excuse or a maneuver to call him closer and make him touch her. This shows that he is in her control or 'Swadheena.' That is why we can call her a Swadheenabhartrika. The Shuddha notes of Bihag with a touch of Teevra Ma and the medium-fast pace of the composition help to show these emotions aptly.

C.2. Raga Chandrakans, Vilambit Rupak Taal:

Palakana rākhūṅgī nainana jaise kajarā|
Apane piyā pe tana mana vārūṃ, rākhūṃ prema kā paharā||⁵

The Bandish above depicts an ambitious Nayika who wishes to control her beloved in all possible ways. She uses her love as a guarding force to keep watch over him. When she applies 'Kajal' in the eyes, she wants to similarly keep him in her sight. The Nayika is thus subduing her man.

C.3. Raga Shahana Kanada, Madhyalaya Teentaal:

Sundara aṅganā baiṭhī nikasa ke, chīna liyo mana mero hasa ke|
Eka najara meṃ mana basa kino, taim bāndhyo alakana meṃ kasa ke||⁶

Here is a composition that the Nayaka, not the Nayika, renders. He says she has enchanted him with her beauty, smile, and eyes. He feels like her hair is chains, which he is bound now tightly. Here, he accepts that he is in her complete control. Without being rendered by the Nayika, this still can be attributed to a Swadheenabhartrika Bandish.

C.4. Raga Kalyan, Madhyalaya Teentaal:

Aiso sughara caturavā bālamuvā,
Maikā dehī maṅgāya suraṅga cunariyā aṅgiyā, eka raṅga dhaṅga kī|
Le ā de motina kī māla, kara ko lā de kaṅganā,
Paga pāyala rūnajhuna kī||⁷

Here is a Nayika who has a list of things she wants her beloved to bring for her. She asks him for things like clothes of matching colors, a pearl necklace, bangles, and anklets. Whether Nayika fulfills her demands is not mentioned clearly but is understood. Thus, she shows her control over him. This is a shade of Swadheenabhartrika, which appears more frequently in Khayal music compositions. The Bandish 'Man Haravaa' in Raga Shuddha Sarang is similar.

C.5. Raga Darbari Kanada, Drut Teentaal:

Aba nā rahī kachu āsa mohe,
Jo mana cāhe piyā deta hai, sāre sukha more pāsa|
Sāsa nanada jala jala khāka bhaī,
Prīta bhae more dāsa||⁸

This Bandish shows a Nayika who knows and tells that the Nayika has become her 'Dasa,' which means servant. Now, she does not need anything else. More than the pleasure of commanding the hero, she describes her contentment about her life. She does not need anything else when her beloved is with her; that is more than any other pleasure. The notes of Raga Darbari Kanada add a touch of dispassion to the composition and reveal an altogether different state of love, where materialistic things do not matter anymore.

Thus, in the Bandish compositions of Hindustani Khayal, various dimensions of Swadheenabhartrika Nayika are found.

Conclusion

The study of heroines, as depicted in the Bandish-es of Hindustani Khayal music, makes one think about the possibility of numerous shades of the relationships between a hero and a heroine. Most of the Indian literature portrays submissive women who are devoted to the men and are in control of them, sometimes in hegemony as well. It is surprising and exciting to see the Ashtanayika theme have one heroine swimming against the flow by controlling her hero. The analysis of the portrayal of this Swadheenabhartrika Nayika in Khayal compositions gives us the following conclusions:

1. The depiction of women subduing men in Hindustani Khayal Bandish-es is less in number than the depiction of heroines devoted to men. Thus, the Bandish-es of Swadheenabhartrika Nayika is very few.

2. Swadheenabhartrika Nayika has her Nayika in her control. This happens because of love and not because of force. Such a fascinating depiction opens a new dimension in the lovers' relationship.

3. It is clear that the lyrics or poetry used to portray this Nayika is the one who guides the audience to the emotion. This underlines the importance of lyrics in classical music.

4. The selection of Raga plays an important role. A suitable Raga increases the intensity of the emotion. Similarly, Laya and Taal contribute to the Rasa created by such Bandish-es.

5. It is a skill of the Vaggeyakara-s to weave the lyrics and music together to create the intended impact. Though it is a theme from the ancient and medieval periods, it has a modern relevance. That is why even modern Vaggeyakara-s use it in their compositions to please the audience.

Thus, women becoming superior to men is a concept introduced previously. It has been there since ancient times. When in love, when the two become one, the superiority matters the least.

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