

Comparing Hindustani Khyāl and Ṭhumrī  
Text-Setting Practices to Western Musical Traditions

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## Comparing Hindustani Khyāl and Ṭhumrī Text-Setting Practices to Western Musical Traditions

Over time, text-setting practices in Western classical vocal music have been defined to place emphasis on the clarity of the sung text and the ease with which vocalists can sing given words and phrases intelligibly. Because many Western classical composers choose to set texts written by prominent poets and librettists, extra care is taken to preserve the emotional meaning and intelligibility of the set text. Since many Western classical composers consider their role when writing vocal music to support the needs of the text and allow its meaning and structure to drive the resulting musical setting and form, some composers, notably William Albright and Evan Chambers, have renamed the practice as “*servicing* the text” rather than “*setting* the text.”<sup>1</sup>

In Western art music, maintaining textual integrity requires special treatment on several levels. The text’s overall formal structure, either provided through its rhyme scheme, shifting narrators, or emotional arc, must be reflected in the composed musical form by highlighting shifts in perspectives through harmonic changes or by mimicking phrase structures to correspond with rhyming lines. Nineteenth-century art song composers often derived form based on the poetry’s emotional content; strophic forms were used when successive stanzas had similar sentiments, and through-composed forms were used when stanzas presented new emotions.<sup>2</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the famed poet and playwright whose work was set by countless German and Austrian composers, believed that simpler musical settings were more likely to reflect the true nature of the set poem, rather than elaborate musical settings which were likely to reinterpret the poem’s character.<sup>3</sup> Hence, composers often support emotional narratives in the

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<sup>1</sup> William Albright, *Composer’s Guide to Servicing the Text*, accessed December 15, 2017, PDF.

<sup>2</sup> Ian Rumbold, “Through-composed,” *The Grove Dictionary of American Music, Oxford Reference Online* (2001), accessed December 19, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027904?rskey=NJwj20&result=1>.

<sup>3</sup> William V. Porter, “Vocal music,” *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2017), accessed December 19, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/art/vocal-music>.

text with matching musical settings; for instance, meditative and reflective texts are often set to music having slow, free rhythms with lower metric density in the accompaniment and greater space between sung words and phrases. In modern practice, composers frequently try to use more imaginative settings to broaden the text's significance. Some composers instead choose to set text to music with highly contrasting emotional associations, using irony to highlight the text's meaning rather than corresponding musical sentiments, as heard in William Bolcom's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.<sup>4</sup>

In order to preserve broader textual clarity, care must be taken to ensure localized intelligibility of each individual word. This proves to be a challenging feat because texts are written in countless different languages, each with their own unique stress and pitch contour patterns. Because of this, text-setting practices vary widely between musical cultures, and composers seeking to set texts in other languages must exercise special caution to preserve linguistic and musical idiosyncrasies of non-native idioms.<sup>5</sup>

Vocal practices in Indian classical music vary widely between geographic regions. North Indian (Hindustani) vocal music generally focuses on longer, pure notes with some ornamentation moving between them, as opposed to South Indian (Carnatic) vocalists who carefully use extensive ornamentation to differentiate between ragas.<sup>6</sup> Within Hindustani classical music, vocal practices vary between the more historical *dhrupad* genre, which is

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Michael Hahn, "Behind the Mask: A Semiotic Analysis of William Bolcom's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*," 2013, Master of Arts Thesis, Pennsylvania State University.

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan King, "Text-setting," *The Grove Dictionary of American Music, Oxford Reference Online* (2001), accessed December 19, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000051057?rskey=unW2WZ&result=1>.

<sup>6</sup> Regula Qureshi et. al, "India, subcontent of," *The Grove Dictionary of American Music, Oxford Reference Online* (2014), accessed December 19, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043272?product=grovemusic>.

generally more meditative with restrained ornamentation<sup>7</sup>, and the modern *khyāl* genre, which is more highly ornamented with florid runs and rapid passagework<sup>8</sup>. *Khyāl* singers are trained in various *gharānās*, or schools of practice, which each differ in their use of ornamentation, improvisation techniques, and vocal control. For example, the Agra *gharānā* is closer to *dhrupad*-style singing, uses extensive rhythmic play, and greater usage of vocal range and power, while the Kirana *gharānā* uses less ornamentation and instead focuses on melody and long, sustained pure pitches.<sup>9</sup> Further complicating matters, India has twenty-two official languages and hundreds more spoken in various regions within the subcontinent. These languages differ significantly in their speech and vocal production patterns, structures, and scripts, causing text-setting issues to vary depending on whatever language is being set in the composition.<sup>10</sup>

In *khyāl* performances, the vocalist combines improvisation with composition. The singer begins with the *badā khyāl*, a slower, more expansive performance. *Khyāl* texts used in the composition (*cīz*) are divided into two halves, the *sthāyī* and the *antarā*. Before moving on to the *antarā*, the singer will improvise and develop the presentation of the *rāga* by performing highly ornamented figures (*gamaks*) or runs (*taans*) characteristic to the particular *raga* being sung. The vocalist may intersperse the *cīz* text with vowel sounds, *sargam* (Indian solfege

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Widdess, “Dhrupad,” *The Grove Dictionary of American Music, Oxford Reference Online* (2001), accessed December 19, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000048152?rskey=SkNmYL&result=1>.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Widdess, “Khayāl,” *The Grove Dictionary of American Music, Oxford Reference Online* (2001), accessed December 19, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000048142?rskey=wY1umt&result=1>.

<sup>9</sup> Bonnie Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity within North India’s classical music tradition*, Cambridge University Press (1984): 102.

<sup>10</sup> Regula Qureshi et. al, “India, subcontent of,” *The Grove Dictionary of American Music, Oxford Reference Online* (2014), accessed December 19, 2017, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043272?product=grovemusic>.

syllables), or *nōm-tōm* rhythmic pulsations. After completing improvisations on the antarā section, the singer will then move on to the *chhōtā khyāl*, a faster and shorter composition.<sup>11</sup>

Khyāl texts often pertain to love or religious devotion, often describing Lord Krishna and Radha. They also commonly use heavy imagery and symbolism. The choice of khyāl cīz texts is normally based on the characteristics and mood of the rāga being presented. For example, the text written below is used in a cīz sung in rāga Miyan ki Todi, which is said to express loving adoration, as corresponding with the sentiment of the text.<sup>12</sup>

*Oh my beloved, please come to us.*

*I have been your servant for many ages. You are my beloved, oh lovely and princely one.*<sup>12</sup>

This differs from the occasional Western practice of using a contrasting musical setting from the sentiment of the text to channel irony, rather than a direct emotional correlation, as referenced earlier with Bolcom's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. Nevertheless, Indian aesthetic theory states that music can express multiple and conflicting emotions at the same time, and sometimes different cīz texts with contrasting sentiments can be sung in the same rāga.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Western classical vocal music which prioritizes the text, the most important feature of a khyāl performance is the rāga in which the composition is being sung. Frequently, khyāl vocalists will sing words from the text out of order or blur them through extensive use of ornamentation rather than focusing on textual clarity and intelligibility.<sup>14</sup> This may be because

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<sup>11</sup> Bonnie Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity within North India's classical music tradition*, Cambridge University Press (1984): 30-33.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, translated by B.D. Yadav: 12.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*: 12-13.

<sup>14</sup> Bonnie Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity within North India's classical music tradition*, Cambridge University Press (1984): 13.

most cīz texts used in khyāl performances were written by musicians rather than poets, with the exception of the Hindu poet and musician Ghananand who wrote numerous song texts.<sup>15</sup> As a result, greater care was taken in constructing the cīz melodic structures to highlight the unique characteristics of the rāga, rather than using a high quality text and focusing on its poetic structure. In essence, Western art songs tend to use the surrounding music as a means of delivering the text, while khyāl performances generally use text as a vehicle to deliver the rāga.

In contrast, singers performing in the lighter classical genre *ṭhumrī* give greatest priority to presenting the text clearly and understandably. Unlike other classical genres, *ṭhumrī* singers caution against singing words out of order for fear that the text will lose its meaning and become unintelligible. Furthermore, an improvised *ṭhumrī* passage is known as a *bol*, a term deriving from the Hindi verb meaning “to speak” (*bolna*).<sup>16</sup> *ṭhumrī* singers may use various melodic formulas to highlight specific words within the context of a performance, often setting a word using the same pitch material each time it is repeated. For example, in Rasoolan Bai’s recording of “Ras Ke Bhare Tore Nain” in rāga Bhairavi, she repeats the word “sāvāriyā” numerous times, often using the same melodic phrasing<sup>17</sup>, as seen in Figure 1 on the next page.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.: 21.

<sup>16</sup> Chloe Zadeh, “Formulas and the Building Blocks of *ṭhumrī* Style – A Study in ‘Improvised’ Music,” *Analytical Approaches to World Music* 2.1 (2012): 16.

<sup>17</sup> Rasoolan Bai, “Raskey Bharey Torey Naina,” recorded 1964, track A1 on *Rasoolan Bai*, EMI. Compact disc.

**Figure 1:** Repeated settings in Rasoolan Bai’s “Ras Ke Bhare Tore Nain” in rāga Bhairavī<sup>18</sup>

a. Excerpt from 7:07–7:14

b. Excerpt from 7:59–8:03

c. Excerpt from 8:59–9:06

The most obvious reason for using this specific melodic progression is to emphasize recognizable patterns of the rāga. The passage highlights the characteristic descent of rāga Bhairavi, notably the pattern Ś-n-d-P, using n and ī to ornament the “tonic” Sa.<sup>19</sup> Some suggest that rāgas used in ṭhumrī performances are often more formulaic than ones used in khyāl, increasing the usage of key melodic phrases that are associated with particular rāgas. For instance, though Rāga Bhairavi provides greater performance flexibility using both shuddh and komal Re, as well as other borrowed tones in ṭhumrī performances, it has especially distinctive characteristic phrases that make it immediately identifiable.<sup>20</sup> Usage of more easily identifiable rāgas allow ṭhumrī performers to focus less energy on highlighting the characteristics of the rāga and more time on emphasizing the clarity of the text, unlike khyāl performers whose main

<sup>18</sup> Transcriptions cred: Chloe Zadeh, “Formulas and the Building Blocks of ṭhumrī Style – A Study in ‘Improvised’ Music,” *Analytical Approaches to World Music 2.1* (2012): 23-24.

<sup>19</sup> Joep Bor, *The Raga Guide: A Survey of 74 Hindustani Ragas* (Monmouth, Wales: Nimbus Communications, 2002), 34.

<sup>20</sup> Chloe Zadeh, “Formulas and the Building Blocks of ṭhumrī Style,” *Analytical Approaches to World Music 2.1* (2012): 30-31.

priority is showcasing the rāga itself. The use of repeated musical phrases, particularly when sung with the same word, also allows the listener to more clearly identify the text’s syllables rather than focusing on new pitch patterns.

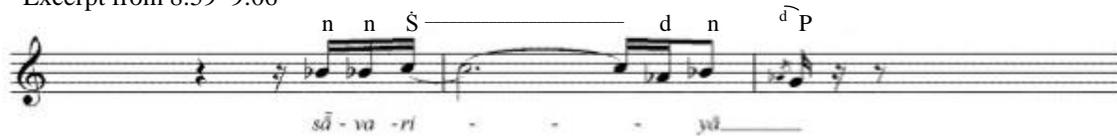
It takes careful practice to set text to a repeated musical phrase that is both conducive to the rāga’s characteristic patterns and the word’s specific syllabic nature. Referring back to Figures 1a and 1c (shown again below), the choice of pitch contour based on the vowel shapes of the word “sāvāriyā” is a noteworthy example.

**Figure 1 (reprint):** Repeated settings in Rasoolan Bai’s “Ras Ke Bhare Tore Nain”

a. Excerpt from 7:07–7:14



c. Excerpt from 8:59–9:06



The vowel “-i” in the “-ri-” syllable is spoken higher in the nasal cavity, in contrast with vowels in the syllables “sā-” and “-va-,” which are deeper vowels spoken lower in the chest cavity. As a result, the “-ri-” syllable is naturally spoken at a higher pitch than “sā-,” “-va-,” and “-yā.”<sup>21</sup> The move to a higher pitch (n to Š) when singing “-ri-” thus matches the natural pitch contour of the word, as present in both examples. The lengthened note on this syllable lasting three-and-a-half counts, though, goes against the natural rhythm of the word, which normally lengthens the “sā-” and “-yā” syllables, shortening “-va-” and “-ri-” as passing syllables.

<sup>21</sup> William Elford Rogers, “Phonology: Vowels,” *Furman University*, accessed December 18, 2017, <http://facweb.furman.edu/~wrogers/phonemes/phono/phvowel.htm>.

In contrast, Example b moves quickly from the “-ri-” syllable and instead lengthens the syllable “-yā,” more closely matching the natural spoken rhythm of the word. Though the pitch contour goes against the natural vowel contour of the word, rising on “-yā” rather than “-ri-,” the move to a higher pitch on “-yā” helps to provide a tonic accent on the syllable, again helping to more closely match the natural stress patterns of the word. This is similar to the fall on the “-ri-” syllable (from  $\acute{S}$  to  $d$ ) in Example c, which emphasizes the syllable “-yā” by moving up to  $n\acute{i}$ , providing a tonic accent.

b. Excerpt from 7:59–8:03



It is interesting how in every sung instance of the repeated word, Rasaloon Bai chooses to draw out the syllable “-yā” using a descending melismatic figure (sometimes lengthened with an extra “-ā” syllable).<sup>22</sup> The longer duration spent on the melismatic figure helps to provide an agogic accent on the “-yā” syllable, again helping to more closely mimic the natural stress patterns of the word. In addition, the longer vowel “-ā” is much more conducive to lengthening, sitting lower and deeper in the chest. On the other hand, the shorter vowel “-a-” in the syllable “-va-” (sounding like “-vuh-”) loses clarity when lengthened, sitting in the middle limbo portion of the vocal range between the deep “-ā” and the nasal “-i-” (sounding like “-ee-”), which are longer vowels that are more easily drawn out using melismatic figures.<sup>23</sup> Hence, in all repeated instances of the word “sāvāriyā,” Rasaloon Bai lengthens either the “-ā” or “-i-” vowels, never lengthening the “-a-” vowel present in the syllable “-va-.” This is similar to Western text-setting

<sup>22</sup> Rasoolan Bai, “Raskey Bharey Torey Naina,” recorded 1964, track A1 on *Rasoolan Bai*, EMI. Compact disc.

<sup>23</sup> William Elford Rogers, “Phonology: Vowels,” *Furman University*, accessed December 18, 2017, <http://facweb.furman.edu/~wrogers/phonemes/phono/phvowel.htm>.

practice, which tends to favor drawing out longer vowel sounds using melisma or lengthened notes rather than shorter vowels.<sup>24</sup>

It should also be noted that the passages given in Figure 1 are sung at nearly the top of the Hindustani classical female vocal range (generally C#3–E5), while the same passage would be in the middle of a Western classical soprano’s range (approximately C4–C6).<sup>25</sup> One advantage that the Western classical vocal range has is greater projection in the higher register. Yet Hindustani singers are able to compensate through a difference in vowel placement within the body. Hindi is spoken at a higher overall pitch than English, and vowels are placed higher in the body, resonating through the head and the nasal cavity. While the Hindustani singing voice is placed lower in the chest, the discrepancy between vocal range and vowel placement interestingly adds clarity to sung words. The higher placement of vowels adds definition, while the lower vocal register further increases the text’s intelligibility by being at a range in which humans are better able to detect subtle nuances simply because the majority of everyday sounds fall within this range.<sup>26</sup>

Similarly, consonants in spoken Hindi have greater nasal resonance. Unlike English, in which consonants are often formed loosely in the lips, consonants in Hindi are generally formed tightly in the front part of the lips. When producing the letter “t,” Hindi speakers will place the tip of their tongue forward towards the back of the teeth, while English speakers may place their

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<sup>24</sup> Randolph Johnson et. al, “Music and Lyrics Interactions and their Influence on Recognition of Sung Words: An Investigation of Word Frequency, Rhyme, Metric Stress, Vocal Timbre, Melisma, and Repetition Priming,” *Empirical Musicology Review* 9, no. 1 (2014), accessed December 17, 2017, <http://emusicology.org/article/view/3729/3619>.

<sup>25</sup> Reena Esmail, “Hindustani Music: The Four-Syllable Darling and Text-Setting in Hindi,” *New Music USA*, published October 24, 2014, <https://nmbx.newmusicusa.org/hindustani-music-the-four-syllable-darling-and-text-setting-in-hindi/>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

tongue tip more backward in the mouth.<sup>27</sup> This prevents Hindustani singers from swallowing consonants, which Western classical singers must train extensively to prevent because it is so common in spoken English. Some consonants in Hindi are also more greatly voiced than in English, such as the “bh-” consonant versus the simple “b-” sound.

**Figure 2:** Use of consonants in Hindustani text-setting<sup>28</sup>

- a. Excerpt from Girija Devi’s “Be dardi balam” in rāga Pīlū (5:23–5:28)<sup>29</sup>

The musical notation for 'Be dardi balam' is shown on a single staff in treble clef. Above the staff, the phonetic transcription 'm R P m n P P N' is aligned with the notes. Below the staff, the text 'be - da - r - di' is written with hyphens under each syllable. The notes are: a quarter note for 'be', a quarter note for 'da', a quarter note for 'r', and a half note for 'di'. The 'di' note is marked with a '(b)' and has a long horizontal line extending to the right, indicating a sustained sound.

- b. Excerpt from Bhimsen Joshi’s “Sajan tum kahe ko neha lagaye” in rāga Tīlaṅg (6:56–7:02)<sup>30</sup>

The musical notation for 'Sajan tum kahe ko neha lagaye' is shown on a single staff in treble clef. Above the staff, the phonetic transcription 'N Ś n Ś n P M G M P Ś n Ś' is aligned with the notes. Below the staff, the text 'sa - ja - n' is written with hyphens under each syllable. The notes are: a quarter note for 'sa', a quarter note for 'ja', and a half note for 'n'. The 'n' note is marked with a '3' and has a long horizontal line extending to the right, indicating a sustained sound.

Consonants in Hindi often are treated as their own syllable, rather than being linked at the end of a vowel sound, as shown in Figure 2a. This provides greater clarity to the entire set word, rather than just the vowels. This contrasts with Western practice, which extends vowel sounds as long as possible before finally closing off the sound with the consonant at the very end of the

<sup>27</sup> Neema Mishra et. al, “An Overview of Hindi Speech Recognition,” *Einstein College of Engineering* (2010), accessed December 18, 2017: 4.

<sup>28</sup> Transcriptions cred: Chloe Zadeh, “Formulas and the Building Blocks of Ṭhumrī Style – A Study in ‘Improvised’ Music,” *Analytical Approaches to World Music* 2.1 (2012): 22-24.

<sup>29</sup> Girija Devi, “Be dardi balam,” released 1993, *Girija Devi: Songs from Varanasi*, Nimbus. Compact disc.

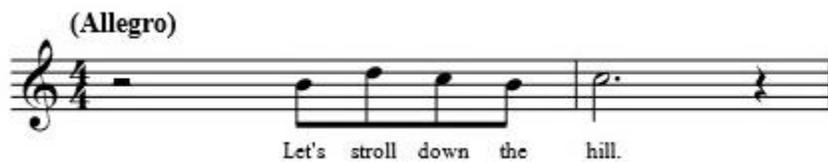
<sup>30</sup> Bhimsen Joshi, “Sajan tum kahe ko neha lagaye,” released 2002, *Ṭhumrī – Classical Vocal and Instrumental*, Sagarika. Compact disc.

note's duration.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the nasal resonance of consonants like “m-” and “n-” in Hindi allow them to be sustained melodically, as seen in Figure 2b.

Furthermore, consonant clusters are far less common in Hindi than they are in English.<sup>32</sup> Western classical singers must use special preparation when singing consonant clusters, such as in the word “stroll,” as seen in Figure 3. Composers setting English texts must be careful to precede the word with a short rest and lengthen the following vowel sound because the singer will need extra time to prepare and produce the given consonant cluster sound. This is much less commonly an issue in Hindi texts because consonants in Hindi tend to be separated as individual syllables rather than being lumped to form a single cluster.

**Figure 3:** Sample examples of setting consonant clusters (“stroll”) in English

- a. “Poor” text-setting example with inadequate time to prepare and voice consonant cluster



- b. “Better” text-setting example with sufficient time to prepare and voice consonant cluster



Similarly, the rhythmic placement of syllables in Hindustani does not necessarily follow the natural stress of the words, unlike in Western music in which stressed syllables are often

<sup>31</sup> Randolph Johnson et. al, “Music and Lyrics Interactions,” *Empirical Musicology Review* 9, no. 1 (2014), accessed December 17, 2017, <http://emusicology.org/article/view/3729/3619>.

<sup>32</sup> Nisheet Shrotriya et. al, “Durational Characteristics of Hindi Consonant Clusters,” *Central Electronics Engineering Research Institute*, accessed December 18, 2017, <http://www.asel.udel.edu/icslp/cdrom/vol4/109/a109.pdf>.

placed on downbeats.<sup>33</sup> In khyāl practice, there is a flexible relationship between the *tāla*, or rhythmic cycle, and the text, since most cīz texts used are prose rather than metered poetry.<sup>34</sup>

The same cīz text may be sung in different tālas by different performers, as seen in Figure 4.

**Figure 4:** “Kaun gat bhai” versions in various tālas<sup>35</sup>

a. Teentāl example

Kau - na ga - ta bha - i li mo - ri re

pi - ya na pu - che e - ka hu ba - ta

b. Ektāl example

Kau - na ga - ta bha - i li mo - ri

i re pi - ya na pu - che e - ka hu ba - ta

Referring back to the previous “Ras Ke Bhare Tore Nain” example, Rasaloon Bai repeats the word “sāvriyā” approximately thirty to forty times over the course of ten minutes, always using similar melodic phrasing, though progressively adding variation in the beginning of the

<sup>33</sup> Randolph Johnson et. al, “Music and Lyrics Interactions,” *Empirical Musicology Review* 9, no. 1 (2014), accessed December 17, 2017, <http://emusicology.org/article/view/3729/3619>.

<sup>34</sup> Bonnie Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity within North India’s classical music tradition*, Cambridge University Press (1984): 14.

<sup>35</sup> Transcriptions adapted from Bonnie Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity within North India’s classical music tradition*, Cambridge University Press (1984): 24-26.

word to add novelty and drama.<sup>36</sup> Extensively repeating the word helps to provide greater clarity to the text, providing the listener with more opportunities to understand the word. The singer may also stress different syllables each time the same word is repeated, allowing the listener to grasp different aspects of the word's pronunciation. The difference in levels of emphasis between stressed and unstressed syllables is lower in Hindi than in English.<sup>37</sup> Because patterns of word stress are generally more even, Hindustani singers are less likely to swallow unstressed syllables and are more easily able to change patterns of stress without reducing the text's intelligibility.

The choice of repeating the word “*sāv̄ariyā*” as opposed to other words in the text is also emotionally significant. The text of the song is listed below with its translation:<sup>38</sup>

**Text:***Sāv̄ariyā, sāv̄ariyā**Ras ke bhare tore nain sāv̄ariyā***Translation:***O dark one, O beloved..**Your eyes are full of sweetness, o beloved*

The word “*sāv̄ariyā*” is steeped in deep religious connotation, often being used to lovingly refer to Lord Krishna with his dark complexion. Thus, extensive repetition of word “*sāv̄ariyā*” heightens and reinforces its special meaning in context of the other words in the song.

In khyāl performances, phrases of cīz texts are also repeated, though perhaps in a less obvious fashion. Often, the text's meaning is blurred by interspersing text phrases with sargam

<sup>36</sup> Rasoolan Bai, “Raskey Bharey Torey Naina,” recorded 1964, track A1 on *Rasoolan Bai*, EMI. Compact disc.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Shoebottom, “The Differences between English and Hindi/Urdu,” *Frankfurt International School* (2017), accessed December 18, 2017, <http://esl.fis.edu/grammar/langdiff/hindi.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> Rasoolan Bai, “Raskey Bharey Torey Naina,” recorded 1964, track A1 on *Rasoolan Bai*, EMI. Compact disc.

or nōm-tōm syllables.<sup>39</sup> Yet repetition helps to provide localized clarity to specific words rather than larger phrases, which are otherwise muddled through ornamentation that often goes against natural vowel contours and stress patterns of the text. Rather than repeating combined melodic and text structures, khyāl performances often repeat words using new melodic phrasing. In essence, the repeated text helps to provide a blank canvas for presenting new melodic patterns within the rāga, providing an extra thread of continuity to unify the composition besides remaining in the same rāga.

The use of repeated gestures provides systemic organization to a composition, with certain specific motives acting as structural landmarks. In Western music, certain melodic phrases and harmonic progressions, such as rising gestures towards the dominant or I-V chord progressions, signify beginnings of phrases, while falling gestures towards the tonic or V-I chord progressions signify phrase endings. Similarly, in Indian classical vocal music, certain gestures represent particular points in a phrase. Rapidly ascending figures, especially common in the ṭhumrī genre, often indicate phrase beginnings, while highly ornamented figures descending towards the tonic indicate phrase endings.<sup>40</sup> Such repeated systems of organization help to provide greater structure within the composition. In addition, use of repetition can help performers play with listeners' expectations by repeating a phrase with different variations than before or by continuing phrases after a conventional closing gesture.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps this is reflective of human memory and learning as a whole. Everyday speech contains similar formulas such as sentence stems which signify beginnings of thoughts.

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<sup>39</sup> Bonnie Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity within North India's classical music tradition*, Cambridge University Press (1984): 23.

<sup>40</sup> Chloe Zadeh, "Formulas and the Building Blocks of Ṭhumrī Style – A Study in 'Improvised' Music," *Analytical Approaches to World Music* 2.1 (2012): 41.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*: 43

Furthermore, groups of words are repeated as short phrases which are combined to form larger ideas. Sentences are made more intelligible for both speakers and listeners by identifying its shorter phrase segments. Since Indian classical music is passed down orally, the use of repetition is perhaps heightened, following more closely to patterns of speech.<sup>42</sup>

In modern practice, Western classical vocal music interestingly tends to shy away from extensive repetition. Occasionally, texts will contain a highly emotionally charged word that demands special treatment and will thus be repeated to add to the dramatic nature of the composition. But the number of repetitions of a specific word or phrase will normally be limited to a maximum of three or four times, in contrast with ṭhumrī performances which repeat phrases nearly thirty or forty times.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps this is because Western classical vocal compositions tend to use texts derived from an external source, like a poet or librettist, rather than by the composers themselves. As a result, the composer feels a sort of obligation to stay true to the writer's intentions by maintaining the narrative and flow of the text. On the other hand, khyāl compositions frequently use texts written by the composer, and less care is devoted to preserving the clarity of the text in favor of highlighting the musical characteristics of the rāga.<sup>44</sup> In addition, audiences at Western classical concerts are frequently presented with program notes which include the full text used in the composition. In contrast, Indian classical concerts generally do not include program notes or any written presentation of texts used in khyāl or

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<sup>42</sup> Chloe Zadeh, "Formulas and the Building Blocks of Ṭhumrī Style – A Study in 'Improvised' Music," *Analytical Approaches to World Music* 2.1 (2012): 10-11.

<sup>43</sup> Randolph Johnson et. al, "Music and Lyrics Interactions," *Empirical Musicology Review* 9, no. 1 (2014), accessed December 17, 2017, <http://emusicology.org/article/view/3729/3619>.

<sup>44</sup> Bonnie Wade, *Khyāl: Creativity within North India's classical music tradition*, Cambridge University Press (1984): 21.

ṭhumrī compositions.<sup>45</sup> Western classical composers may then rely on listeners following along with the written text as a guide, as opposed to ṭhumrī performers who must use repetition or other means to add clarity to the text’s delivery.

In conclusion, Western classical composers prioritize the clarity of text when setting vocal music by using rhythms and pitch contours that closely align with stress patterns and vowel shapes in the text. Khyāl composers, on the other hand, more loosely pair texts with musical settings because the primary focus is to highlight the rāga rather than the text itself. In khyāl performances, the relationship between tāla and stress patterns of the text is much more flexible, and ornamentation used to denote characteristics of the rāga may possibly blur the text’s clarity. Still, certain phonological features of Hindi aid in its intelligibility, such as the greater nasality of vowels, the greater stress and speaking time given to consonant sounds, and relative lack of consonant clusters compared to English. Ṭhumrī composers capitalize on these traits and combine them with specific figurations that further aid in the text’s ability to be understood. This implies that certain text-setting tools may be relevant to specific languages, like devoting an entire syllable to a consonant sound in Hindi, which is uncommon in English. Nevertheless, other text-setting patterns may universally aid in text intelligibility, including pitch contours that align with vowel placement within the body, rhythms that match word stress patterns, and repetition of text phrases, as these are used in both Western and Indian classical vocal music.

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<sup>45</sup> Reena Esmail, “Hindustani Music,” *New Music USA*, published October 24, 2014, <https://nmbx.newmusicusa.org/hindustani-music-the-four-syllable-darling-and-text-setting-in-hindi/>.

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