

Reflections on the Raga : The Joy of Nand

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The raga Nand is also known as Anandi Kalyan. Pandit Ramashray Jha (2011) describes it as a lively and pleasing rāga, though its joy is somewhat tempered by a wistfulness, probably because of the lyrics of the various *bandish*-es that exist in it. Lyrics, it is felt, cannot be ignored as a factor determining the mood, and it is expected that all competent composers or *vagyakār*-s take into account this aspect of rāga *bhavā* while composing the *bandish*.

Nand appears to be a rāga of recent provenance, as it does not find mention in the older texts¹. Parrikar (2002), in fact, attributes its conception to Mehbood Khan 'Daraspriya', whose vilambit bandish in this raga "*E bare saiyyan tohe sakal bana dhoondun*" has attained exemplar status, having been adopted by vocalists from a number of *gharana*-s.

My personal encounter with this raga, however, was not through this *bandish* but a much simpler one "*Jānu nāhīn kaun desa biramaye*", which I learnt at school. It is one that has kept me company over the years providing me with a basic template to recognize the raga. Of course, Lata Mangeshkar's familiar "*Tu jahan chalega*", from the film 'Mera Saaayan', provides another means of identifying Nand. It was much later that I came across Amir Khan's rendition of the well-known Daraspriya bandish alongside his own "*Mana baira baira cāhata*". The raga in its various delightful renderings has kept me company and occupies a high rank among my favourite ragas.

The tones constituting the rāga are the natural notes (*shuddha swara*) including the *shuddha maddhyam*, but the *tivra maddhyam* is also used, in conjunction with the *pancham*, in descent. Nand is a rāga of the middle octave with 'Pa' forming its focus. 'Re' is omitted in ascent but emphasized by at the end of a characteristic descent that ends in a *mīndh*, namely 'D P^{MGR} _S'. This 'P\R' glide can be regarded as the raga signature, although this feature is notated in different ways by different sources. Pandit Jha indicates characteristic melodic movement of the raga as: 'S G m D P^{MGR} _S, G^{RG} m, m G P, G M P D N^{DP}, D^P M P^{mG}'. Other characteristic phrases include 'SGm_G/P' and 'R\N D P.', both with glides, as well as 'GmPDNPDM'. So much for the grammatical and pedagogic aspects.

On first hearing Kumar Gandharva's "*Rājan aba to ājā*", I was at a loss to place it as Nand, even though the liner notes clearly identified it as such. While Parrikar (2002) speaks of Amir Khan's rendering of the Daraspriya *bandish* as not being "fully in sync with the gestalt of the raga" and "not suited to his style", Nand here is, at least, melodically identifiable. This is not the case with Kumarji's Nand and it has left me

to wonder why it sounds different from the other renditions². After all, if these renderings are of the same rāga, the melodic sequence forming the rāga’s signature should be the same for both. If it was not melody, was it the timbre of Kumarji’s voice or was it the tempo that made it sound different? This question lodged in my brain, like an ear-worm, has bothered me over the years.

Magriel’s, recently published, *Songs of the Khayal* (2013) with its detailed transcriptions of well-know performances in various rāgas, including those of Nand, has enabled me to examine this issue with some confidence. In addition, the availability of pitch-extraction software that allows the tracing of melodic contours has aided me in the analysis³. My findings are presented below, even though it is likely to draw ire from the lovers of Kumarji’s music.

Kumarji’s rendition is in *drut tīn-tal* and is for around six-and-a-half minutes. The *sthāyī* of the *bandish* is “*Rājana aba to ājā re/ thira na rahata kajarā ānkhan mē*” while the *antarā* is “*aba nā sahū re piyā/ chaba torī ā gaī ānkhan mē*”. The presentation of the *bandish* is mainly through the *mukhdā* which is repeated a number of times and also varied; the second line of the *sthāyī* figures only twice in the presentation. The first line of the *antarā* is sung one-third of the way into the recital and repeated and varied while its second line only appears once. The recital concludes with the entire *sthāyī*. Thus, the analysis here focuses mainly on the *mukhdā* and the first line of the *antarā*.

According to Magriel’s transcription, in the *sthāyī*, the words “*Rājana*” is sung to the tones ‘P \^{MPGR}S’ while “*aba to*” is sung as ‘/S G M/P’ and “*ājā*” as ‘G/P’ while “*re*” is intoned as ‘D\M’. Both “*Rājan*” and “*aba to*” are repeated in a similar fashion while “*ājā*” is sung for the second time with the “*ā*” extended as ‘mG_/P’ while “*jā*” is sung as ‘P/D’ and “*re*” as ‘D\M’⁴. Thus on this basis, the *mukhda* embodies Nand’s signature phrase indentified by both Jha(2011) as well as Parrikar (2002). However, Magriel’s transcription of one *āvartan* of the *sthāyī* is based on playing it at half speed and to the ordinary listener, this ‘P\R’ *mīndh* is far from discernable.

The tones used for “*Rājana*” over the various cycles are ‘GR _S_’, ‘P_RS_’, ‘MPRS_’, ‘DP_R_S_’, or ‘nP_R_S_’ etc. Thus, the descent to the *shadja* via the *rishabh* is presented in all the repetitions of the word. However, the glide that indicates the *mīndh* is not evident to the ordinary listener as ‘Pa’ and ‘Re’ are often not linked to each other, and where joint, the second tone follows the first far too quickly. In the case of the next two words “*ājā re*”, or rather “*jā re*”, the continuous and gradual rise from ‘Pa’ to ‘Dha’ and then the drop to ‘Ma’ conveys the *mīndh* as does the entire phrase “*aba to ājā re*”, sung around 15 seconds into the piece, where the melody ascends from the *rishabh* in the lower register all the way as ‘Ḡ/m\Ḡa/ ^MP.’ and then onto the last two words sung as ‘P/D’, now in the middle octave. Here, the word “*Rājana*” that follows is also sung with a glide ‘M/P/D\M\RS_’.

Besides the *mukhḍā*, the first line of the *antarā* also receives attention in the *barhat*. Magriel’s transcription indicates “*aba*” as being sung to ‘P/Ṛ,’ “*nā*” to ‘N’ and “*sahun*” as ‘PD\P’ while “*re*” is ‘P/Ś’ and “*pīyā*” ‘Ś^NŚŚ’. Here, too, the abruptness of the rendering, though dramatic, does not possess the gentle gradualness that one expects from a *mīṇḍh*. There are variations of this line, which is sometimes ornamented. Some of these do convey the gradual descent required of such an aesthetic melodic device, but these are too few to establish Nand.

Since analyzing this recording by itself would not be enough to reach an understanding of the rāga, two other recordings of Nand, the Daraspriya *bandish* sung by Kesarbai Kerkar in vilambit tinal and the *ek-tāl bandish* “*mana baira baira cāhat*” sung by Amir Khan, both transcribed by Magriel, are also discussed. Moreover, this provides us with a comparative perspective by contrasting the manner in which they convey Nand to the one discussed above.

Kesarbai’s recording is around four-and-a-half minutes long and consists only of the *sthāyī* “*E bāre saīyān /tohe sakala bana ḍhū ḍhū*” without the *antarā*. Her rendering is leisurely with a gradual ascent from the first syllable “*e*” which rises without a break from the *shadja* to the *dhaivata* via the *gandhara* and the *maddhyam* to descend in a *mīṇḍh* from the *gandhar* to the *rishabha* (‘G\R’) while singing the word “*bāre*”. Thus, the characteristic melodic signature of the raga is brought forward at the outset. “*Saīyān*” which follows is sung in by stretching the word. It is sung to the tones ‘GmP’ in an ascent and the last syllable, the “*yān*” is extended by ascending again from ‘Ga’ beyond ‘Pa’ to ‘Dha’ and then down to ‘Ma’(tīvra) and then again ascending again to ‘Pa’ quickly touching ‘Dha’ and quickly dropping down from *rishabh* to the *shadja* to a repeat the word “*bāre*” with a leisurely but shorter “*saīyān*” following in a melodic repetition. The next word “*tohe*” is sung to ‘GmGGm’. The second line begins with “*sakala*” sung to ‘GPMD’. The word “*bana*” is first sung touching ‘Ni’ to descend to the *tīvra madhyam*, the second as a descent from the *pancham* via the *gandhar* to the *shuddha madhayam*. Lastly, the word “*ḍhū ḍhū*” is sung to ‘GmGM/PDP’. Thereafter the *mukhḍā* is repeated and the *barhat* follows with *ākar tān*-s mainly in the upper tetrachord with ‘Pa’ as the focus ‘such as ‘P D M P G, ‘D N P D M G P’ etc. with only one or two instances of the ascent from the *shadja*, namely, ‘S G m^PG P D N\ P D’. The *tān*-s with their gradual descents provide the lilting effect that seems to form the essence of Nand. The *prayogā* ‘P D Ś Ṛ Ğ Ṛ Ś Ṛ N D P’ pointed out to by Parrikar is heard in the latter portion of the rendition, a little after two minutes. This is followed by quicker ascending-descending *tān*-s before the piece ends.

Amir Khan recording of the rāga consists of the Darasapriya *bandish* in Jhumra tāl, sung for approximately sixteen-and-a-half minutes followed by the *ek-tāl bandish* for over seven-and-half-minutes. In both cases, only the *sthāyī* has been sung. The latter has been transcribed by Magriel and we will discuss this recording in some detail.

The words of the *sthāyī* are “*Mana baira baira cāhat/ tumare darasa dekhana ko o balamā*”. The first line is repeated twice. Again indicating in a simplified manner, in

Magriel's transcription the word "mana' is sung by descending from 'ma' to 'Ga' , whereas the first "baira" is an ascent from 'ma' via 'Dha' followed by descent to 'Pa'. While both these movements are through a *mīndh* , it is in the singing of "baire" that this is evident even to the untrained ear. The second "baire" is sung through a descent from 'ma' via 'Re' to the *shadja*. Thus, this initial melodic fragment shows the characteristic Nand movement. The "cāhata" that follows is sung by ascending gradually from the *shadja* to 'Ga' and then to 'ma'. In repeating the line, "mana" is now sung by descending from 'ma' to 'Ga' , the first "baira" ascending from 'ma' to 'Dha' and then dropping to 'P', and in the second "baire" there is a drop from 'ma' via 'Re' to 'Sa'. The word "cāhata" that follows now sticks to the *shadja* but rises in the last syllable to 'ma'. "Tumare" is sung through a rise from 'Sa' to 'ma', "darasa" that follows is broadly sung to 'Pa' and only drops at the last syllable to 'Ma'. In enunciating "dekhana" there is a rise from 'Sa' to 'Ni' via 'Pa' and 'Dha', while "ko" is extended and sung by resting on 'Pa'. The "o" follows as a short upward from 'Ga' to 'Ma' before "balamā" also is sung ascending from here to 'Pa', then 'Dha' and dropping to 'Ga'. Thus, one sees broadly the predominance of an arched contour rising from 'Sa' to 'Pa' or 'Dha' or, at times, even 'Ni' before dropping down to 'Re' or 'Sa', both in the case of the *mukhdā* and the second line of the *sthāyī*.

In the *sargam tān*-s that follow, beginning with 'SGmPDNṁP.ḠṁDPM\R_S', the upper tetrachord is explored with phrases such as 'PDNPNPDMP' etc. before the *tār* 'Sa' is reached and intoned for long on the word "baira" and 'Re' touched at the end. The word "balamā" is sung varied with gradual ascent and descent, in an intervening passage before embarking on *sargam tān*-s, once again. There are a few such passages where the tones in the upper tetrachord are sung with the descent M\R_S, a few times, before commencing the next set of *tān*-s. These are followed by *ākār tān*-s towards the end where the *tār pancham* is reached. While the repetitions of the *mukhdā* intersperse these passages, the *mukhdā* sung slowly in *ākār* clearly brings out the melodic signature of the *rāga* with its ascent to the *pancham* and the characteristic descent via the *mīndh* to 'Re' and then 'Sa'.

Having examined the melodic features of the *raga* in some depth through three recordings, we are now in a position to sum up the discussion. To the ordinary listener without musical training, Nand reveals itself through its ascent and its particularly appealing descent. The attractive *mīndh* that follows at the end of the characteristic melodic phrase is what identifies the *rāga* and imprints itself on the mind of such a listener. This feature is clearly brought out in Kesarbai's rendition of the Daraspriya *bandish*. In the case of Amir Khan's recording in *ek-tāl* this feature is also clearly discernible. However in the case of Kumar Gandharva's rendition, this does not come out to the extent needed to clearly indicate Nand, though the tones employed are those that constitute the *rāga*.

Since Parrikar has expressed some reservations regarding Amir Khan's interpretation of Nand, and not just the Daraspriya *bandish* sung in Jhumra, we need to address this matter as well. Perhaps, the continuity and fluidity required is absent

in the manner that the *ek-tal bandish* has been presented by Amir Khan. The octave range spanned by his voice is something remarkable and here, in Nand, it rises from the *shadja* of the *mandra saptak* to the *pancham* of the *tār saptak*. Even though Nand is a *rāga* of the middle octave, this wide gamut should not detract from the performance and the *tān-s* at the end of the performance, while executed in the high octave, do not jar. But despite the existence of octave equivalence, instances of ‘octave jump’ such as moving from the middle ‘P’ to the lower octave ‘P’ to continue the phrase in the lower octave and end it on the lower ‘ṃ’ or ‘Ḡ’, though a sign of virtuosity, do not work⁵.

Since melody, as an element, cannot be considered in isolation without considering rhythmic aspects, we need to discuss these features as well to understand whether this is also a contributory factor in our ability to identify the *rāga* in these three recordings. The *tāl* to which each of these *bandish-es* is set and the *laya* to which each sung are different. The former in the case of both Kumar Gandharva and Kesarbai Kerkar is *tīn-tāl*, while the second Amir Khan *bandish* is in *ek-tāl*. But as far as tempo goes while Kesarbai has opted for the *maddhya vilambit*, Kumarji’s rendering is faster being in *drut laya*. It would appear that the former is better suited to bring out the affective aspects of the *rāga*, especially the *mīndh* where the glide is more evident at this tempo. Although Amir Khan has chosen the *drut laya* his style of extending the syllables does not affect this form of ornamentation.

Finally, there is also the issue of timbre, which does have a role to play in the affective aspects of most *rāga-s*, and especially for Nand in particular. Timbre though an important aspect of music, is a difficult concept to define. In such a situation, we are, left to fall back on the consideration of the key chosen and the range of tones. Amir Khan’s tonic, according to Magriel is lower than D (approx 140Hz) while Kumar Gandharva’s is lower than F#(approx. 180Hz) and Kesarbai’s is the highest being above G (approx 191Hz)⁶. It should be noted that while both Kesarbai Kerkar and Amir Khan restrict themselves to the *sthāyī*, Kumar Gandharva also sings the *antarā* using touches of the *tār gandhar* and even the *tivrā maddhyam* which leads to touches of falsetto which adversely affects the appeal of the *rāga*. Although, Amir Khan too goes as high as the *tār pancham* in the course of his *ākār tān-s*, it does not stand out as it is the point of inflection in these *tān-s* and fits in quite well aesthetically.

I, therefore, feel that while the recording of Nand by Kumar Gandharva is an unusual interpretation of the *rāga*, it does not convey its *bhava*, mood and aesthetic appeal even though it is grammatically correct adhering to the prescriptions laid down for Nand as it fails in so far as these important aspects are concerned. It was this I discovered that made Kumar Gandharva’s interpretation sound different to my ears. It is an interpretation that does not resonate with me, as the beauty and charm of Nand, to me, lies in the subtle expression of the *bhava* as we have seen with the other artists. But this is a personal preference and a matter that everyone has to decide for himself or herself.

End Notes:

¹ Subba Rao (1965)

² Parrikar (2000) refers to it as ‘among the finest piece of recorded music’.

³ The two software programs that I have relied upon for the analyses are: Sonic Visualizer with the Melodia Plug-in and Tony.

⁴ This is a simplified interpretation compared to the highly detailed transcription by Magriel (p. 454) for which he has formulated an unique system of notation to capture all the details, one which has not been adopted here. Thus, only considering the broad tonal features without the finer details have been considered here, an approach that might invite objections. However, the “ordinary” listener does not discern/perceive these tones which can be heard by the trained musician and, thus, ignoring these details does not detract from the argument.

⁵ For instance, see the third repletion of *mukhdā* where “baire” is sung as ‘PP.Ḡ (~10s) and later as PP.Ḡ (~25s).

⁶ Actually Kesarbai Kerkar’s tonic, has been indicated by Magriel as G+, that is greater than 196 Hz. However, on the basis of hearing, it seems to be around 191Hz. Thus, the G+ appears to be a printing error and the plus sign ‘+’ perhaps needs to be replaced by a minus ‘-’ sign. I have taken ‘Sa’ as of the order of 191 Hz here.

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that I have employed as well for my analysis. My son, Nandan, assisted me in handling Python programs and getting the outputs.

Selected References:

1. Chris Cannam, Christian Landone, and Mark Sandler, *Sonic Visualiser: An Open Source Application for Viewing, Analysing, and Annotating Music Audio Files*, in Proceedings of the ACM Multimedia 2010 International Conference.
2. Jha, Ramashraya, (2011) *Abhinav Geetanjali (Volume 3)*, Sangeet Sadan Prakashan ,Allahabad.
3. Magriel, Nicholas, and Lalita du Perron (2103), *Songs of the Khayal (2 Vols)*, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi
4. M. Mauch, C. Cannam, R. Bittner, G. Fazekas, J. Salamon, J. Dai, J. Bello and S. Dixon, “Computer-aided Melody Note Transcription Using the Tony Software: Accuracy and Efficiency”, in Proceedings of the First International Conference on Technologies for Music Notation and Representation, 2015.
5. Parrikar, Rajan (2000), *On Raga Nand*, <http://www.parrikar.org/hindustani/nand/>
6. Subba Rao B (1965), *Raga Niddhi- A Comparative Study of Hindustani and Karnatak Ragas Vol. 3* , Madras Music Academy.

Selected Discography:

1. **Amir Khan** Rāga Nand – The Legend Lives On CD Track 1 [Magnasound - D3HV0636]
2. **Kesarbai Kerkar** Rāga Nand – Golden Milestones CD Track 11 [Saregama - CDFN 150482]
3. **Kumar Gandharva** Rāga Nand- Rare gems of Classical Vocal Music CD Track 4 [EMI- CDFN 1.5088]