A Challenge to the Antiquities

What Saraha, Kāhṇa-pāda, Jayadeva and others did in their lyrics was not an innovation. Behind it was a historical force, which in course of time produced these lyricists. Bengali poetry, from its inception, was espoused to music, both vocal and instrumental. It would not be safe to adopt George Thomson's attitude and say that this musical accompaniment was introduced in the same way as in the case of ancient Greek and Irish poetry. Nor would it be right to hold that this accompaniment occurred only in 'popular and merely natural poesy' ('la poesie populaire'), as Montaigne, in a different context, put it. In its long preparatory phase, Bengali poetry strove to express itself through music, but it took time to gather the necessary momentum. It was not an easy and unquestioned acceptance of a legacy. The old Indo-Aryan predecessor, i.e., Sanskrit, did not give something ready-made to the later Indo-Aryan, and the whole purpose of the latter had to be achieved through persistent and independent effort. It should be remembered in this connection that classical Sanskrit poetry was meant to be recited, and not sung. We should, however, try to understand the attitude of Vedic poetry to music, for the point has a bearing upon our subject.
The Rgveda, when sung, turned into the Sāmaveda. There are references in the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda (6-1-6; 7-5-10) and the Kauśitaki Brāhmaṇa (29-5) as regards the place of dance, music and musical instruments in some Vedic rituals. But it has not been ascertained whether any reciprocity between these arts was prescribed in the Sāmavedic rites. However, the view of Matanga in this connection, referred to by Kallinātha, the renowned commentator of Saṃgīta-ratnākara, throws light on the point. Matanga holds that the music in the Sāmaveda is, in esse, recitative music (gītāpradhāna āvṛtti). Moreover, those who have specialised in the subject have informed us of details regarding the austerities observed in the Sāmavedic customs. These austerities, it can safely be conjectured, did not allow the singer to emancipate his heart in its emotive totality. Tethered to a frugal tonality, gnomic in objective impact, these Sāmavedic versicles do not strictly fall within the species of musical lyrics. Nor do they comprise the supple crescendo and diminuendo of the Indian classical music. The "Śāman chant" was only conceived of as a downward series of notes from the highest (āvarohakrama). The avarohakrama itself without āroha cannot be termed as 'rāga' proper. Since it is pretty difficult to discover the complete musical structure of the Sāmaveda from its numerical notation, it is not safe
to declare categorically that the liturgical notes, e.g., Krusta, Pratham, Dvitiya, Trtiya, Chaturtha, Mandra and Atisvarya correspond typically to Madhyama, Gandhara, Rsabha, Sadja, Misada, Dhaivata and Panchama. The seven secular notes, combined with srutis (microtones), compose a definite 'rāga-rūpa' (the melodic corpus), a conjecture of the existence of which in the Śāmaveda would carry a fallacy of prochronism. It would not be irrelevant to point out here that etymologically the word 'rāga' is charged with a colourful import and it receives its form from contact with lyrical verse:

vichitravarṇalakāre vīśeṣo yo dhvaneriha/
grahādisvarasandarbho ranjako rāga uchyate/

(The sound volume which is formed with a transilient series of ornamental notes and which, beginning with a proper starting note, produces a well-knit pattern of colourful notes, is called rāga).

Vema-bhūpāla defines 'rāga-kavya' (a poem based on rāga) as follows:

svarasya raktirūpatvādguḍityātmā rāga uchyate/
kāryam tada ragabhūtam rēgakāvyamudāḥṛtam/

(That which colours a musical note and has the spirit or soul of a song is rāga. Rāga-kavya gives body to the spirit and makes it effective).
The emergence of some sort of lyric, in the proper sense of the term, came about the 2nd century A.D. These lyrics were termed 'dhruvā', "a class of songs, to be sung during the performance of a rūpaka". These songs, background music as they were, contained lyrical moods, wrought with a coherent yet flexible melodious pattern. They were, curiously enough, to be composed only in Sauraseni Prākṛt:

bhāṣā tu sūrasenām dhruvayāṃ samprayojayet

This injunction that dhruvā songs were to be composed in Sauraseni only implies that the full-fledged musical poetry of a purely secular nature was neglected, if not prohibited, by the patrons of Sanskrit. Sanskrit drama gradually reached a stage where it gave due recognition to the indigenous languages, although after a process of literary filtration. The most pronounced example of this accommodating attitude is Kālidāsa, who set the songs in Mahāraṣṭrī, the Prākṛt par excellence. Why is it that not even one of the extant songs attributed to Kālidāsa is in Sanskrit? It is evident that classical Sanskrit poetry was intent upon a classicism which would dominate over lyricism, and, therefore, the breach between music and poetry widened more and more. Was it not, then, a conscious innovation on the part of the un-Sanskritic school of poetry that bridged the gulf to hasten the birth of unprecedented poetic forms?
The marked difference regarding vital points of departure, among Sanskrit, Prākrt and Apabhramśa is clear even from their respective names. Here we are urged to draw an analogy. Something very similar to this took place "when the Latin of everyday intercourse (popular Latin, vulgar Latin) had so far diverged from literary Latin that it was necessary to find a name for the former". The term Apabhramśa originally meant 'speech fallen off (from the norm), vulgar speech'. Here we must remember the phonetic character of vulgar Latin. "The speaker of vulgar Latin more frequently takes the attitude of listener rather that that of speaker. It may therefore be assumed that his phonetic expression is regulated more by the sensorial than motor and articulatory aspects of his organ of speech. We must see the relation of vulgar Latin to classical Latin somewhat as the relation of a dialect to the written language. Is it strange that in the course of centuries two different phonetic structures were evolved? For in each case typical situations are continually arising that require different adjustments. The man who speaks the written language, or reads it aloud, the educated society man, the teacher, the orator, the actor, all these are forced towards greater
clarity, articulation...the speaker of vulgar Latin, the peasant, the working everyday man, towards greater sound volume. The diction of written language attempts to arrange the phonetic body objectively and plastically, as though there were an eye in the ear... Both types of speaker wish to be understood and believed; but, to reach the same goal, the speaker of classical Latin prefers the visually more objective, the speaker of vulgar Latin the acoustically more objective method.\(^{15}\)

The excerpt is rather long, but relevant. It also applies, almost word for word, to the phonetic change that took place while old Indo-Aryan evolved into new Indo-Aryan languages. Sanskrit leaned towards rational clarity; its descendants definitely sought emotional expression. The qualities of regularity, uniformity, precision and balance which have been declared necessary by Matthew Arnold for a perfect prose-style,\(^{16}\) may be regarded as the *conditio sine qua non* of any good Sanskrit poem as well. Apabhramśa poetry, in a spirit of healthy reaction, set a programme of alliance with music. Music, dance-music and instrumental music rapidly paved the way for its transformation into new prosodic arrangements. From the identity of names, noted overleaf, it would not be rash to deduce that many of the Apabhramśa metres emerged from either dance rhythm or from
the accompaniment of instrumental music:

(1) Ghatta (pataḥavadyam)

(a) nibaddhamartham prathamaṃ geyam
    karāḥbhyaṃ cha, vādayet /
    anibaddhan tataśchārdham karābhyaṃ
    vādayedhi ya //
    punaranibaddha khaṇḍasya vādyād
    ghattā nigadyate/

    — Vema-bhūpāla

(Ghattā as beating on drum):

At first one should beat the drum with both hands while performing the regular portion of the song. Next he should perform the irregular or unschematic portion by beating the drum with the hands. Once more he will have to beat the remaining of the unschematic portion on the drum).

(Note: It may be noted that the instructor Vema-bhūpāla emphasises more the unregulated portion of music and tāla so as to signify the mysteriousness of song and tāla).

(b) Ghatta(tāla)

pingala kāha ditthau chhanda ukīthau ghattā
    māttā vāsaṭṭhi kari/
    chaumatta satta gana nāhi pāa bhana tinni
    lahu aṣṭa ghari//

    — Pingala

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(A ghattā has 62 mātrās. There are 7 gaṇas of 4 mātrās each in both the feet with 3 lagnus (uuu) at the end of each).

(2) Chārcharī (nrtya)

(a) yadṛṣakakramenaiva nartakayo vinivesītā/
varṇatālāṇvite vādiya vādyamānetha vādake///
praviśya yugmaśo rāṇgam gāyantaścharcharīṁ
muhūh/
dvīpadimathābā gānavastūchita padottārām///
śṛngāravarṇanopetām vasantasamayotsave/
kurvanti nartanaṁ saśā charcharīti nigadyate///
—Vema-bhūpāla

(Chārcharī as dance)

Female dancers in chārcharī are arrayed in the same order as that of rāsa, a circular dance connected with the loves of Kṛṣṇa. The instrumentalists are to accompany it with ornamented tala. The dancing couples are to enter the stage and they should sing the chārcharī-song instantly. The song that befits the couplet or its spirit would be in the nature of couplets. Such a dance, which is based on love sentiment and performed during the spring festival, is called chārcharī.

(Note: Here also we recognise the beautiful adjustment between the dance and the song, vocal and instrumental alike. The singing
of a couplet or several couplets is prescribed, but no strict rule has been laid down as to the number of couplets. This lends mysterious suggestiveness to the matter, and the whole composition has an indeterminate yet esemplastic form.

(b) Charchari (desi-tala)

viramānta drutadvandvānyastavante laghustathā/
——Vēma-bhūpāla

—the scansion by Vēma-bhūpāla

(Charchari as a metre derived from the folk)

Eight fast-moving pairs, with the stress on the second in each case, and ending with a short syllable, is called the charchari tāla).

(Note: H. A. Popley defines the 'virāma' as 'rest used for lengthening the druta and laghu by any fraction'. In Bhakti-ratnākara 'druta' has been defined as 1/2 of a mātrā and 'anudruta' or 'virāma' as 1/3 of a mātrā. All this implies that it is a pause in time-measure only to quicken the rapidity of rhythm).

Sonority and lyricism being the sole end, some of the talas have trangressed their allotted positions. For instance, ghāṭa does not always need to remain fettered within 62 mātrās,
but can assume a different metrical shape in order to adapt itself to the versicoloured shift of thematic and structural emphasis.

Dhāhil, for instance, while paying homage to the goddess Sarasvatī in his Paumasirichariu, (the biography of Padmaśrī) writes the following verse in the ghatta metre:

panamibi jaya-sāmini
naya sura kāmini
vāgesari sīya kamala kara/
panayahuṇ sabhābhiṇ
jiye pabhābhiṇ
kavihiṇ payatṭaha vāni vara/

( I worship you, thou heavenly nymph with lotus-like hands, you who pervade the world and whose influence is great among the poets, and who render their speech excellent).

But Puspadanta, another Jaina poet, while describing the city of Magadha in his Nāyakumārachariu (the biography of Nāgakumāra), expresses his sense of wonder in a quick-moving ghatta which is much akin to the 'dohā' metre:

tahiṇ puravaru
nāmeṇi rāyagihu
kaṇaya rayana
kodihiṇ ghaṇiu/
(There is a well-built royal mansion where there are crores of gold pieces and gems. It seems as if paradise has fallen there from the sky).

It is interesting to note that a change in theme here produces a change in metre. The latter poet is not ready to describe a city in the manner in which the former describes the goddess. This points to their preference for 'inner form' to 'outer form'. 'A'illaha' or 'adillā' again, a tāla of 16 mātrās, has been permitted by poets to take any shape, only for achieving melodious effect:

suha suhaim vinieppiuunu (?) iha pathvara ssare/
suanu vivihavittai susamchiagunanamoahare//
adilā hoi āhiriāi naangi bhaśai/
sajamuehim pāeihim samāddhasamehim karna saa//
(srutisukhāni paryālochya iha prastārasāgare/
sutanu vividhavṛttāni susaṃchitaganamanohare//
adilā bhavati abhiryā natāṅgī bhaśayā/
sayamakai pādaih samādhasamanah kuru saa//)

Note: adilalakkhanam anidiththāupena/ 22
The note shows that the Apabhramśa was even ready, if necessary, to sacrifice the narrowly conditioned intelligibility of language to its indefinite mysteriousness. The very word anidittharūpa (inchoate form) denotes this. This mysteriousness was achieved by skilful interaction of assonance, rhyming and alliteration. The example given by Virahānka may be quoted:

\[ \text{ghoreṇī gumagumei bhamarāhum sarantīa/} \\
\text{pam̄kaamsakulehim salilehi sarantīa//} \\
\text{bhamarabharonamshim kusumehi sarantaru/} \\
\text{viṣaśi anā bhūsuva vamsahu sarantaru//} \]

Apart from other alliterations, the word-play of sarantīa and sarantaru is interesting in the sense that the meaning here does not get the upper hand, and that the sound has been given prominence. This is true of the major portion of Apabhramśa poetry and its successors. A word or two must be remembered here as to the change in the basis of metres that took place in the transitional period. The predominance of musical mātṛāvṛtta or moric metre may be said to be this epoch-making feature. Formerly, the dictum of Nirukta, 'yadaksaraparimāna-tachchhhandam' had to be adhered to. But popular mātṛāvṛtta introduced measurement by time.
(ii) Rhyme and Refrain

The conceptions of yatl and yamaka meanwhile underwent a fundamental transformation which hastened the advent of the end-rhyme. The whole matter made itself felt in stanza-construction through couplet-combinations. The dvipadās... appear to have been song metres sung in the dhūmālī tala of 8 matras...There yati is musical and it coincides with the tālagana and the beat of the drum. This being so, many poets were tempted to introduce a yamaka in this place to heighten the sound effect. The story is fascinating and it tempts us to investigate the surmise that the end-rhyme is a folk-invention. Admitting that aid to memory is something that popular poetry cares about, one should not be led to infer that the end-rhyme is an invention 'of the people'. The following folk-verses will emphatically contradict the contention that the device is 'doubtless of a popular origin'.

1 harae nai bābāeṁ burui enā
erem juri bābām ōnam kanā
satu bābā ghet me melā taṇḍi chālāme
erem juri bābā upel bāhā//

—— Santhali folk-song

("Now I am no more in my teens", the son tells his father, "and naturally you are in search of my bride. Go the fair with fried barley, and there you will find her in bloom like
an upel flower.

2 gāḍā nāde nādere kaumbid bāhāh
dejakh tegi sauri verma hasuren
siht gochhail tegi gāte sārāsauti
gutugalām tegi gāte bermay rakahpe//

— Santhali folk-song

Kaumbid flowers are in bloom along the river-banks. The sun went down as I climbed on the tree, my friend! Deep night fell as I gathered the flowers in my skirt. And then again the sun rose as I made a wreath with those flowers).

3 eha beti bahut adhīnī mere bābal dhol baro/
ehā bara landā meri beti bara samblādā//

— Punjabi folk-song

(The modest girl: "please fetch me a bridegroom, father".
The father: "I have already brought a handsome bridegroom for you").

4 ẓagmā phutitāk taglā rāi yāi
čum baraa nukbu khamu anāku
halahalini bazār kanāā āraa —
chumnaku bujakha/
eākhāli kopam eri chagnam
tagmā alugoni buchchā
The above poems, all expressing the mood of lyrical expectation, and endowed with subtle cadence, are still lacking in the end-rhyme. The end-rhyme, therefore, is not something invented 'by the people' but innovated 'for the people'. Troubadour poetry solves the riddle and helps us to realise that all those innovations like stanza-construction and rhyme must have come from some cult-conscious sect which acted as a mediating link between the people and the elite. Similarly, the patronless Apabhraṃśa vernaculars secured prestige, not from the pro-Vedic section, but from the anti-Vedic religious reformers who also needed the patronage of the general masses.
The Jaina poet-reformers came to the fore. They did not, or rather could not, neglect the folk-mind pregnant with all its rich potentialities. In order to reach the masses, these religious reformers pushed on to their poetry. Phonetically sensitive, these poets availed themselves of the popular devices of Apabhraṃśa poetry. The names of Chaturmukha, Svayambhū, Puṣpadanta and others, the leading Jaina poet of this interim period, will be remembered here with due reverence. What they derived from popular poetry was its 'mnemonic' genius. The variety of memorable speech seen in the stanza-forms of these poets was largely due to alliteration, assonance and antyānuprāsa (end-rhyme), because these devices have a plastic force. Nathuram Premi, while narrating the literary history of the Jainas, has informed us of the most significant of these esemplastic stanzaic patterns. Paddhatiṇī, which is known as the immediate predecessor of the Bengali payār form of verse:

"Apabhraṃśa poetry has employed sandhi in lieu of sarga. In each sandhi there should be many kaṭavakas. Each kaṭavaka consists of 8 yamakas whereas one yamaka is made of two padas(couplets). A pada, if it is to be composed in paddhatiṇī, would be set in 16 mātrās. According to Ācharya Hemachandra, 4 Paddhatiṇī or 8 lines make a kaṭavaka. In the end of one kaṭavaka there should be the dhruvaka or a ghattā."
The existence of ghattā at the end of kadavaka leads us to infer that this was in the nature of choral refrain and the word must have come from 'ghāta' (to strike). This means that originally it was linked with group-songs and dance and the word signified the beat on the drum or cymbal when the leader paused and gave the sign to strike in with some familiar refrain. And later the stage came when 'the original homogeneity of the folk' began to break up. As the people's laureate stepped forward from the singing and dancing crowd, and gave his short improvisations, so the actual habit of individual composition sprang from choral compositions and performances. This is the way how the Indian lyric, in its truest sense, was born. The Jaina poet-teachers made use of it in their Sharita-kāvyas (biographical narratives). This is the way in which proto-Bengali lyric also came into existence. It sprang from choral poetry, occasional and festal in character. The neo-Buddhist reformers then transmuted it into religious lyrics.
NOTES

2. 'Of Vain Subtleties or Subtle Devices' in John Florio's translation of Montaigne's Essays, Gresham Publishing Co. Ltd., p. 127.
4. P. V. Kane, History of Sanskrit Poetics, Bombay, 1951.
6. Rājaśekhara's attitude towards music is particularly significant in this connection. He nullifies the claim of the inextricable bond between music and poetry in the Vedas and states, 'however, on the authority of Draupadi that the science of music which is both an Upaveda and a part of the Sāmaveda, and which is accessible to all caste alike should be called the fifth Veda' (Rājaśekhara, Kāvyā-mīmāṃsā, Ed. C. D. Dālāl and Paṇḍit R. A. Sāstry, II.i. 25). The point is to be noted that music, as implied in the statement, is not a part and parcel of the Sāmaveda, but only incidental to it.
Both the definitions have been quoted from Bharata-Kosa, Ed. Rāmakṛṣṇa Kavi, Tirupati, 1951.


Manomohan Ghosh, Prākṛta Sāhitya, Calcutta, 1957, p. 3.

Sāradatanaya, Bhāva-Prakāśāna, Ed. Y. Y. Svāmī and K. S. Rāmaśvāmī Sāstrī Śiromaṇi, Baroda, 1930, 30th Section.

Cited from Bharata-Nātya sāstra (V/1) by Dr. Manomohan Ghosh in his Prākṛt Verses of the Bharata-Nātya Sāstra.


Dhanapāla, Bhavisayattakahā, Ed. C. D. Dālāl, Baroda, 1922.

Both the definitions of Charchari are from Samgītachintāmaṇī by Vema-bhūpāla.

21 Bhakti-ratnākara (5/2981).


23 Cf. "In the oldest Indian metre only the number of syllables is fixed, while the quantity of syllables is only partially determined". M. Winternitz in A History of Indian Literature, Calcutta, 1927, vol.1, p. 61. Or again, to quote E. Vernon Arnold, "verse was measured solely by the number of syllables without any regard to their quantity". Vedic Metre, Cambridge, 1905, p. 19.

24 This is particularly important because the dhunāli tala evolved into dhāmāli, a burlesque about a god and also a type of musical prologue, purely instrumental in character, in Kīrtana of Bengal.


26 Cf. Keith, Classical Sanskrit Literature, Calcutta, sixth impression, 1958, p.47. Keith, however, is vague on this point. While one can understand his observation that 'the tendency to introduce rime in Sanskrit poetry' is seen later
than that in Apabhramśa poetry, one does not comprehend why he implies the latter as the 'popular origin'.

27 From the collection of Maṅgal Mārāṇḍī, a Santhal teacher, the Rural Training Institute, Rikhia, Santhal Parganas.

28 From the collection of Santosh Chandra Majumdar (Vīśva-bhāratī Patrikā, Oct-Dec, 1946, p.117).


30 Quoted from Sākṣara, a monthly journal in Bengali, Education Directorate, Tripura Administration, Āgartalā, Mar, 1960, p.102.

31 Quoted from Prof. Pushker Chandervaker's article 'Worship of Rannade in the Gujarati Folk-lore and Literature' (Folk-Lore, Jan-Feb, 1960).

32 The following books have helped me to establish this point: J.C.L. Sismonde de Sismonde's Historical View of the Literature of the South Europe, tr. T. Roscoe, Henry Colburn & Co., 1823. H. J. Chaytor's Troubadours and Dante, Cambridge, 1912. Script to Print (an introduction to mediaeval vernacular literature) by the same author, Cambridge, 1950.

33 This urge of the Jainas for literature also prevailed, to a large extent, in the Tamil region. Sri S.V. Pillāi, while throwing light on the point, says, "the Jainas were the
apostle of culture and learning. The Jainas...began cultural contact with the people and it was only later that they tried to bring the nobles and the kings". History of Tamil Language and Literature; beginning to 1000 A. D., Madras, 1956. It should not, however, be assumed that the Tamil speaking region had anything to do with the enterprise of the end-rhyme which permeated the poetry of the N. I. A. languages under survey. An authority on Tamil poetry has expressed the opinion that the end-rhyme, considered to be lacking in status in Tamil poetry, was not the agent which form the lines of a poem into stanzaic patterns. "Eībhū", he says, "is the rhyme at the close of the lines used in the languages of Europe. This kind of consonance, however, being despised as wanting in dignity, is hardly to be met with any species of poetry. There are still other sorts of rhyme, which as they are seldom used, I think is unnecessary to explain". Reverend Father C. J. Beschi in A Grammar of the High Dialect of Tamil Language termed Shen Tamil (to which is added an introduction to Tamil poetry), tr. B. G. Babington, Madras, 1822, p. 78.

34 anuprāṣādhiyā gaudaiśādistaṃ bandhagaurovat (such śleṣāgūra is desirable to the Gaudī owing to the
