Cultivation of art in any society is an important aspect of culture. In fact it is art which enriches culture. History of art is generally the history of the people. Aspirations, woes, worries, values, beliefs, practices, all these aspects of human life, are very well mirrored in art, whether folk or classical. Sanskrit lexicographers define 'Kalā' thus:

\[ \text{Kalyate vā jñāyate iti kalā} \]

That which can be perceived or known is Kalā (art). Here the question arises, what do we perceive through art? Indian thinkers reply that to perceive life is the aim of art. It helps in creating bridges of understanding between man and man, between man and society, between society and nation and between nation and the whole world. Art helps in achieving emotional integration of the people. Its cultivation in any society refines thought and behaviour of the people. In India its creation is a festive occasion for the artists in particular and people in general. This blending of art and life has imparted richness and variety to both. When one enters into the realm of Indian art, he glimpses a world of radiant beauty, rich in aesthetic and spiritual experience. It lifts individual and society to the highest aesthetic level. Commentator of Kāmasūtra says:

\[ \text{Viśrāntir yatra saṁbhoge sā kalā na kalā matā} \]

\[ \text{1 Kālpatrakṛta Brahmaḥ Padāraṇī Kālaka 1: Vācaspatisya Bhāṣa Sanskrit Abhidhānam, Vol. III, p. 447 and Šabdakalpadrum, P.58.} \]
i.e., That which ends in sensual pleasure is not art, but that which lifts the soul to the eternal joy is art.

In Indian tradition the highest philosophic concept of art is expression of Satyam, Śivam and Sundaram, i.e. Truth, Benevolence and Beautiful. This philosophic concept of art is accepted in one way or the other by all the Indian artists throughout the ages of history.

The Sanskrit word Kalā is translated into English as Art. In English language it is derived from the Latin word Ars, which is a product of the word Ar, whose primitive significance is to put or join things together.

Arts are classified in two divisions: (1) Imitative and (2) Non-imitative. The imitative arts imitate nature. These are: Sculpture, Poetry, Painting and sometimes Acting and Dancing. Non-imitative Arts are Architecture, Music, etc. They are also known as shaping or space and time arts respectively.

Sidney Colvin assigns Architecture, Sculpture Painting, Music and Poetry under a group naming them as five greater arts, which he collectively calls as Fine Arts. Since we are concerned with Painting, Music and Poetry the definitions stated by him are given below:

Music may be defined simply as a speaking or a time art, of which the business is to arouse emotions by successions and combinations of regulated

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2 लीयादेवा भाल्या परवान्देभा कल्मा मंत्य (जनमहृत्ति दक्क - कामयूष).


Sound. Painting is defined in general terms as a shaping or a space art of which the business is to express and arouse emotions by the imitation of all kinds of natural objects reproducing on a plane surface the relations of their boundary lines, lights and shadows, or colours or all three of these appearances together.

Poetry is defined as a speaking or a time art of which the business is to express and arouse emotions by imitating or evoking all or any of the phenomena of life and nature by means of words arranged with musical regularity. The English word music is a derivative of the French word ‘muse’. In Sanskrit it is called ‘Gāna’, Gīti or Saṅgīta. It is a combination of sweet tunes which pleases and soothes the minds of living beings. It originates in the succession of tones that produce agreeable and pleasing sensations. According to Indian tradition, definition of these arts are as under: Sāraṅgdevī defines music as:

“Gītām, Vādyam tathā Nṛtyam trayam saṅgitam uchyate”

i.e. vocal music, instrumental music and dance is called Saṅgīta (music).

The invention of music is attributed to Nārada, Someśwara, Hanumāna and Kallinātha. Mythically it is created from the four mouths of Brahmā. It is a known fact that Indian music is closely connected with human life from the very beginning of its creation. People of every nation or society made music their means for progress and prosperity; in social, cultural, political, religious and spiritual spheres of life. India was not an exception to this. In ancient India, all rites and ceremonies were connected with music.

Music has a great effect on the human mind and other animic world.

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5 शास्त्री, रायों तथा गृहदेव, विषयं संगीतमुष्टिः, Sāraṅgdev, SR, 1:21
Rhythm and harmony has a great effect on all living beings. It could charm one to the heights of submission, as the Gopīs and cows were charmed by the flute music of Lord Kṛṣṇa and moved towards him.

The well known Rāgas of Indian music had the powers to perform deeds, delight and captivate; like producing rains, lighting lamps, creating fire, etc. Snakes could be enchanted with the tunes of a pipe (Been), deers could be captured by hunters with the sweet tunes of music. Music is a wonderful therapy for various diseases too, particularly sound which has a deep effect. It lifts the heart to self-realization. It is a training of Ātman through ears. It is helpful in purifying heart, head and hands i.e. deeds. Its vibrations create a divine atmosphere whenever sung or played. It has an everlasting effect on human beings, birds, animals and plants. Amir Khusrav, Haridās, Tānsen, Paṇḍit Baijanātha, Rājā Mānasimha and Gopāla Nāyak, were some of the great musicians who flourished in the Sultanate and Mughal periods and were masters in creating sweet and divine atmosphere through music. In Indian history we come across various mythical miracles performed by them. An interesting myth of Humayun is worth noting. It is said that when he invaded Cāmpāner, he instructed his army to continue fire and destruction, until he changed his clothes from red to green. The famous maestro Pandit Baijanātha was in Cāmpāner immensely absorbed in his music, when the soldiers carried him along with his carpet to the Chhāvaṇī, camp of Humayun. Humayun enchanted by his music gave him a boon, on which Paṇḍit Baijnātha humbly requested him to change the colour of his clothes. Thus Cāmpāner was saved through the musical talents of Paṇḍit Baijnātha.
Another episode is of Tāna Misra. He was a favourite musician of Akbar’s court. Tānsen, at the request of Akbar, sang Rāga Dīpaka, and enormous heat was produced in his body. The only remedy left was someone to sing Rāga Malhāra. In search of a singer to sing Malhāra, Tānsen reached Gujarat. Vaḍanagara a town in North Gujarat which was famous for musicians and dancers, fulfilled his need. Tānā and Rīrī, two sisters well versed in music were fetching water from the well. They were singing a beautiful melody. Tānsen being attracted by the sweet tunes of these young girls, went with his retinue near the well and requested them to sing Malhāra. They fulfilled his desire and the firy heat in his body ultimately calmed. There is a picture of Tānsen in the National Museum, Delhi, in which his body is painted black, due to his singing of Deepak. Thus the myth has a historical proof. There is a Samādhi of these two sisters Tānā and Rīrī at Vaḍanagar (North Gujarat).

Painting in India is as old as her civilization. It remained a popular art of masses and classes. Ample references in Pāli, Buddhist, Jain cannonical, and classical Sanskrit literature are available to corroborate this statement. In Indian tradition, painting is defined as:

\[ \text{Cittām trāyate iti citrāh} \]

that which sustains our mind is called painting. According to Citrasūtra of Viṣṇudharamottara:

\[ \text{Kalānām Pravarām Citrām dharmakāmarth mokṣadām} \]

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6 Tānsen sang Rāga Dīpaka and obtained dark complexion, *Lalit Kala Vol. 3-4, p.120*

7 बिंचाच्च पायले हस्ति वित्तः
C. Sivamurti has translated these verses thus:

Of all the arts the best is Citra. It gives the fruit of Dharma, Artha, Kāma and Moksa. Wherever it is established, in a house it is the harbinger of auspiciousness. Just as Sumeru is the best of mountains, as Garuḍa is the foremost of the birds, as the king is the chief among men, similarly the best of Citra is the most praiseworthy among the fine arts.

Indian painting has a long history of two thousand years and furnishes an intensive catalogue of the religious, cultural and emotional life of the people. We find earliest paintings in India in the Bāgh and Siṭtānvaśal caves, but the documentary history of Indian paintings begins with Ajaṅṭā. We have epigraphical record of the three dynasties viz. the Cālukyas of Badami, the Vākāṭakas and the Imperial Guptas who encouraged this art. It is an important source to know the social and cultural history of India for 700 years.

In the history of Indian poetics, Kāvyā - poetry has been defined by many writers on poetics, emphasizing its various aspects. Many of these definitions are affected by the author’s personal views about the essence of poetry. Early authors gave importance to Śabda and Artha i.e. word and its meaning, others gave importance to Rasa, Guṇa, Ritī, Dhvani, Alamkāra, Vyāngya and Sphoṭa. So far as painting is concerned, we may give importance to Rasa.
The Rasa School of Bharata made Rasa the soul of poetry. Viśvanātha, the author of Sāhitya Darpana, says:

\[ Vākyāṁ rasātmākaṁ kāvyam ^9 \]

i.e. Rasa is the soul of poetry. In Indian tradition, poetry is not merely mirror or criticism of life, but nectar of the soul. Bhavabhūti, a celebrated poet of Sanskrit literature says:

\[ Idāṁ kaviḥyaḥ purvebhyaḥ namovākam pruṣasmahe \ 1 \\
\text{Vindema devatāṁ vācaṁrātmanah kalām}^10 \ 2 \]

i.e. Having made an obiesance to former poets, we pray for this that we attain the immortal Goddess of speech in a phase of the supreme soul. In other words, poetry is the nectar of the soul.

A critical study of the Indian poetics reveals a fact that aesthetic theory pertaining to poetry is equally applicable to painting, sculpture, dance and music.

Origin and Development of Bhakti Movement:

It is essential to know in brief here about the origin and development of Bhakti movement in India, which inspired devotional poetry, music and painting in the medieval period.

The thinkers and Saints of Hinduism have ascertained three avenues for achieving ultimate reality, i.e. union with Brahma. These are Jñāna, Bhakti

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9 वाक्य रसात्मक काव्यं Viswanath SD. Adyaya III.2.3.
10 विनेमदेवता वाक्यरात्मानः कलाम् Bhavabhūti, UR, Act 1 verse 1.
and Karma. These avenues are closely connected with each other. So far as music is concerned, it is necessary to know about the Bhakti movement in India. What do we mean by Bhakti? The word Bhakti is derived from the Sanskrit root Bhaj, meaning to render services to God. Bhakti is rooted in the Vedic Samhitas but it was well systematised during the Purānic period. The roots of Bhakti, as pointed out by Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar, are seen in the Nārāyaṇīya Parva of Mahābhārata.

“Nārada is represented to have gone to the Badarikāśrama to see Nāra and Nārāyaṇa. The latter was engaged in the performance of religious rites. Nārada asked Nārāyaṇa whom he worshipped while he himself was the supreme Lord. Nārāyaṇa told him that he worshipped his original Prakṛti (form), the source of all that is and that is to be.”

In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Bhakti is thus described:

As the wingless nestlings wait for their mother, as the hungry calves long to be fed, as the lovelorn damsel waits for her lover, so, lotus eyed, does my mind yearn for Thee...... To hear about Viṣṇu, to sing of Him, to remember Him, to fall at His feet, to worship Him, to bow to Him, to serve Him, to be His friend, to dedicate oneself to Him is the nine fold Bhakti.

Nārada in the Bhaktisūtra, defines Bhakti as of the nature of intense love. Śāndilya in his Bhaktisūtra explains Bhakti as the attachment towards God.

Hinduism in the medieval period was divided into two broad streams Jñānā

11 Bhandarkar, R.G., Vaisnavism, Śāivism and other minor Sects, P. 6
12 बहरे शोदने विन्योः स्वर्गे पुल्लेवनय।
Mārga and Bhakti Mārga. Jnānā i.e. Knowledge is floated by the Vedantin Ācāryas like Śankarācārya, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka and Vallabha. In the history of Bhakti movement, Vallabhācārya’s contribution is worth mentioning. His theory is known as Śuddhadvaitavāda and his religious sect is known as Puṣṭi Sampradāya. He preached two types of Bhakti: Maryādā Bhakti and Puṣṭi Bhakti. Maryādā Bhakti means to render services to God according to the rules prescribed in the scriptures and Puṣṭi Bhakti means to surrender oneself completely to the Lord and in return the Lord will take full care of his devotees. His son Gokulanāth created a circle of eight devotional poets known as Aṣṭachhāpīyā poets. They were Kūmbhanandāsa, Śūradāsa, Kṛṣṇadāsa, Parmānandadāsa, Govindaswāmī, Chhitaswāmī, Caturbhūjadāsa and Nandadāsa.

All these poets of the Vallabha School have composed devotional songs to be sung in various seasons and various hours of the day. These songs, in a traditional manner, are sung in the Vaiṣṇava temples and Havelīs, even today. They have contributed to a large extent in enriching Havelī Saṅgīta which mostly consisted of Dhrupad and Dhamār.

It is popularly believed that Bhakti cult originated in South by the saint poets and Alavārs. Rāmānanda, a revolutionary saint brought Bhakti from the South to the North. Rāmānanda is considered the first exponent of Bhakti movement in the North. The salient features of the Bhakti movement can be summarized as under:

According to the popular Hindi couplet:

भक्ति दुराविव उपवी साये रामानंद।
प्रणट कियों कवितर्वन संसदीय गव भव।

i.e. Bhakti originated among the Dravadians. Rāmānanda brought it (to the North) and Kabir spread it over the seven continents and nine divisions.
1. Instead of Sanskrit, local dialects became the tool of religion. Sanskrit was discarded by the Muslim rulers of India and was not a spoken language. The Vedāntin Ācāryas wrote their commentaries in Sanskrit on the Pṛasthānatrayi i.e. Upaniṣads, Brahmaṣūtras and Bhagavadgītā, which were not easily accessible to the masses. For better understanding of religion, adoption of local language sounded essential. It is worth mentioning here that saints and Sādhus never composed commentaries in Sanskrit but composed Bhajans and Padas in the local dialect, praising their Lord through Bhakti.

2. The saints and Sādhus preached worship of one God-monism instead of worshipping number of Gods and Goddesses. This one God could be Rāma, Krṣṇa, Pāṇḍuraṅga or Viṭṭhala.

3. They preached two types of Bhakti: (i) Nirguṇa Bhakti, and (ii) Saguṇa Bhakti. They also advised chanting of Bhajans and Padas instead of reading Sanskrit scriptures. Generally all these Bhajans are composed into classical Rāgas and Rāginiś.

4. The fourth important aspect of the Bhakti movement was acceptance of a Guru. One could not achieve realization without the aid of a Guru. Guru was essential for spiritual training. The meaning of Guru in the Hindu tradition is, one who eradicates darkness, removes illusions, doubts and despairs. In one of the couplets, a great mystic poet, Kabir, has praised importance of Guru thus:

\[
\text{Guru and Govind are before me, whom do I bow to?}
\]
\[
\text{Greatness to you Guru, through whom I know Govinda}^{14}
\]

\[14\] गुरु गोविंद बैरे में, कौन श्रूंगरे प्राप्त \।
बलिश्वरी गुरुकुल का पापी जिने गोविंद राम ते वालाप ॥
5. The fifth important aspect of the teachings of these saints and Sādhus was to cultivate Abhedabhāva. Abhedabhāva means not to believe in caste and creed barriers, untouchability, differences of rich and poor, educated and uneducated, etc.

6. The last important aspect of their teachings was to be in the company of saints i.e. Saṅtasamāgama i.e. company of saints and Sādhus was essential to refine one's thought and behaviour for the better understanding of religion and life too. Their company was considered benevolent.

Saints and Sādhus, the exponents of the Bhakti movement flourished in all the regions of the country during the medieval period. They gave new life and light to Hinduism which was decaying. They inspired people to forget woes and worries and to face boldly the difficulties in life. They revolted against the outward and pseudo practice of religion. They opened the doors of religion for all the classes of the society. Most important point worth mentioning is that these Sādhus and saints themselves, belonged to the downtrodden classes of the society, however, complete devotion and refinement in their composition is expressed.

The great exponent of the Bhakti movement in the North was Rāmānaṁda. He flourished during the 14th century A.D. in Prayāg. He moved throughout India and preached principles of Bhakti. He made Banaras a centre for his teachings. His sect is known as Rāmāvat or Rāmānandī. In his preachings, he made Rāma his Lord, opposed caste system, idol worship, moving in places of pilgrimage, taking bath in holy rivers, etc. He preached pure Bhakti of Rāma.
Kabir and Nanak were fervent disciples of Ramananda. They preached Nirguna Bhakti. Kabir's life is woven with myths. He originally belonged to the Brahmin community and then was nursed by Niru, a Muslim weaver. Right from his childhood, Kabir expressed mystic sentiments. He moved in the company of saints and Sadhus and educated himself. His Dohas and Padas form a rich heritage of Indian culture. He composed his Dohas and Padas in classical Rāgas. Nanak, born in a Kṣatriya family, established Sikhism to unite the Kṣatriyas. He revolted against caste system, idol worship, visiting Tirthas and taking bath in the holy rivers. He accepted Sat as his God. He composed devotional songs which were sung in classical tunes. He was always accompanied by his disciple Lahanā who played with Sarangi. His Bānī is called Japajī and is preserved in the first Mohalla of Guru Granth Sahib.

Sūrdāsa is an important jewel in the saintly tradition of North India. He was the first among the eight Aṣṭacchāpa poets of the Vallabha sect. He composed devotional songs in Vraja dialect which are sung in Vaiṣṇava temples and Havelis even today. His compositions are collected in Sūrsāgara. Raidāsa belonged to a cobbler caste, however, he praised Lord Kṛṣṇa in his devotional songs, and preached Advaita Bhakti. His Padas and Bhajans are in Hindi and Vraj dialect. Tulasidāsa by composing Rāmacaritamānasa preached Rāma Bhakti.

In Mahārāṣṭra saints and Sadhus revived Hinduism through Bhakti of Viṭthal and Pāṇḍuraṅga. Jñānadeva blended Yoga practice of Nātha Sampradāya and Bhakti of Vārakarī Sampradāya. He wrote a commentary in Marathi on Bhagavadgītā, popularly known as Jñāneśwarī. His compositions
were sung in classical tunes. Nāmadeva, contemporary of Jnānadeva, preached devotion of Pāṇḍuraṅga. Tukārām composed Abhāṅgas which were sung in classical tunes. Samartha Rāmadāsa, Guru of Śivaji, played an important role in motivating people of Mahārāṣṭra. His teachings are composed and the collection of these compositions is called Dāsabodha. Bhakti and Jñāna have been melodiously blended in his compositions. He preached Saguṇa Bhakti of Pāṇḍuraṅga.

In Gujarat, the leaders of Bhakti movement were Narasimha Mehta, Mirābai, Premānanda and Dayārāma. Narasinha was a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He revolted against caste barriers and untouchability. He was a follower of Vallabha sect. His works consist of Padās, Bhajans and Ākhyānas. His Prabhātiyās were popular in Gujarat and are sung even today in the villages of Gujarat. Mythically Narasinha is said to have composed the Kedāra Rāga. Mirābai, the saint poetess of Western India, composed Padās in Rajasthani, Hindi and Gujarati, which were sung in classical tunes. She has expressed tender emotions of woman's heart in her compositions. Her devotional songs are considered at par with the love poems of Sapho of Greece. Premānanda preached Bhakti by playing Māṇa, a copper pot. He composed Ākhyānas based on important incidents on the life of Narasimha Mehtā. In his Ākhyānas, he has mentioned names of Rāgas and Rāginīs at the top of each Kaḍvā. He was a keen observer of human nature. He depicted human emotions in a perfect manner in his compositions. He could easily ponder from one Rāga and Rasa to the other. Dayārāma sang and played on musical instruments. Right from the childhood, he was a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa. He has composed a number of songs praising glories of Lord Kṛṣṇa and has written philosophical work like
Rasika-Vallabha in Hindi, describing doctrines of Vallabha sect. He has also composed Ākhyanas based on pauranic stories. He is very well known for his Garabīs and Rāsas.

The centre of Bhakti revival in Eastern India in the 14th century A.D. was Navadvipa. There was a great impact of Gītā Govinda of Jayadeva, who flourished during the 12th century A.D. The linguistic, the rhythmic and sentimental grace of Gītā Govinda caught the imagination of all the saints and poets of Bengal. Jayadeva has mentioned names of the classical Rāgas and Rāginīs in his celebrated work Gītā Govinda. In the 14th century A.D. Caitanya Mahāprabhu thoroughly revived Bhakti cult in Bengal. He moved at all the important places of pilgrimage and preached his principles. He spent his last days in Jagannāthpurī. He preached the chanting of ‘Hari Bola’. He revised Bhāgvata religion through Kṛṣṇa Bhakti. Saint poet Cāṇḍīdāsa is well known for his devotional poems in Bengali. His passionate love songs are sung even today in Bengal. His inspiration was Rajakini, a washerwoman. Bhakti movement from Nadīā and Jagannāthpurī gradually spread in all the parts of Bengal and enlightened classes and masses equally.

Though these saint poets belonged to different regions, their preachings were common and goal was one. Most of them were Vāggeyakāras i.e. they composed their devotional songs in classical Rāgas. These Vāggeyakāras composed poems as well as sang them in classical tunes i.e. they were poets as well as singers. Their poetic creations if not set to classical tunes were composed in metres. Metres are closely connected with soft and hard syllables,

\[\text{Vāggeyakāra is one who writes the words of the song (Vāk) and sets to a tune (Geya) SR. Eng. Trans. by Dr. Raja C. Kunhan, Vol. 1, Chapter 1, P. 8.}\]
they are thus connected with Tāla and Laya.

We find canons of paintings in the texts of architecture and sculpture. The important texts are Samarāṅgaṇasūtradhāra, Aparājitapṛcchhā, Abhilāśītārthacintāmaṇī (Mānasollāsa) and Śilparatna. This is the reason why we do not find any independent text on paintings in ancient India. Architects and sculptors were compelled to use drawings for their creations. We have literary evidences of blending of architecture, sculpture and painting.18

In Indian tradition it is religion that had inspired fine arts. Originally all the fine arts were wedded to a temple, whether it be architecture, painting, sculpture, music, dance or drama. It was the motto of the Indian art to praise the deity of the temple and by this way achieving ultimate aim of life, i.e., union of Ātman with Parmātman.

Coming back to the various arts and their inter-relation, especially the arts concerned here i.e. Poetry, Music and Painting, we observe that they are of different fields and are also operated and approached through different senses i.e. ears and eyes, which in modern term can be called audio-visual arts. We find a close link between them. The seven colours are said to correspond to the seven Svarās and these Svaras have their own deities too. Many scientists believe that the physical bases of sound and light are not necessarily different because they strike our perceptions through different channels of senses. It is not surprising that the pictorial artists talk about tones of colour while musical masters also talk on tonality of musical colours. Various scientific experiments also prove a close connection between light and sound than the

18 Shukla, D.N., Hindu canons of Iconography and Painting, pp. 66-67
mere association or analogous values. In Indian painting we find an excellent example of this, in the Rāgamālā paintings. The idea of associating music with painting is unique in Indian art. These Rāgamālā paintings have been painted from the 14th century A.D. till the 19th century A.D. in different parts of India, and is evident by the large number of available miniatures in collections in India and abroad.

Rāga originally denoted “colour” or “atmosphere”. It is formed by a combination of seven notes of the octave, as a rule its structure must consist of atleast five notes and may utilize all seven notes. Any Rāga can be identified on the basis of emphasis and stress applied on some dominant notes, which are the backbones of its structure. Hence each Rāga has its own identity with emphasis laid on its dominant notes called Vādī and its avoiding the quarelling or discordant note called Vivādī. Compositions are composed with these dominant notes taking them in ascending order or descending, rushing on some notes and lingering over others. When these Rāgas are performed they evoke emotions, feelings of joy, sorrow, love, loneliness, etc.

According to musicians, there is a presiding deity of each Rāga and through meditation one could have them descend in this world. These prayers are Dhyāna formulas of the Rāgas and Rāginiś, they are not visualized by musicians as deities or icons but have elaborate situations of dramatic significance in which they are placed. These melodies are assigned particular hours i.e. a Rāga is called as morning or evening Rāga or any other part of the day. They were also to be sung according to seasons. A certain number of Rāgas are believed to represent various deities of the Hindu pantheon and are depicted
by pictorial representations. All these notes carry emotive feelings of various kinds called eight Rasas and a composer ought to know to work on the particular note to evoke the required Rasa. These Rāgas had a gender too, they were called as Rāga or Rāginī. There were six male (Main) Rāgas and five wives to each, so a family was of six members and the total number which formed a set was of thirtysix. Later one more Rāginī was added to a number of five Rāginīs and hence the total number of the complete set came to fourtytwo. The various exponents of music have ascribed various systems and the family exceeds its numbers of Rāgas or reduces. Some have also Rāgaputras and Rāgaputrīs, thus exceeding the number of members of the family to a large extent. It is the limitation of the human mind; that it cannot conceive abstract ideas, hence it gets pleasure in visual forms and this being the reason how Rāgas have been visualized, anthropomorphized and brought down to Earth on the folios of Rāgamālā paintings.

As explained here Rāga is a musical connotation and Mālā meaning a number of Rāgas linked to form a garland. These Rāgamālās were painted on folios which combined to form a Rāgamālā set. This Rāgamālā set or Rāgamalā painting is a happy blending of three arts: Music, Poetry and Painting. Musical Rāgas expressed in poetical verses were written on the top of the folio just above the picture and they in turn illustrated below the Rāga or the Rāginī, the Nāyaka or the Nāyikā.

In Rāgamālā paintings, iconography of Rāgas, Rāginīs and their Rāgaputras is a unique Indian concept. The word iconography is derived from the Greek word ‘eikon’ and ‘graphia’. Eikon means image and Graphia means writing or
drawing. In Indian tradition icon signifies object of worship. Music is considered a symbolic medium to achieve the highest goal of life i.e. self-realisation, hence in Indian tradition Rāgas and Rāginīs are considered embodiment of the divinity. Poets and singers have their own visualization of Rāgas and Rāginīs and it is surmised that they must have inspired painters to paint them accordingly. Thus we have various pictures of Rāgas, Rāgabhāryās and Rāgaputrās.