

Introduction

Indian classical music is more than sound—it is an expression of emotion (bhav). In the second stage of Visharad studies, learners are expected to dive deeper into the philosophy of music, focusing on how emotions (rasa and bhava) are expressed both vocally and instrumentally. This module, known as Bhav Sangeet, is a cornerstone of advanced musical training, bridging technical mastery with emotional depth.

A famous quote by Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande encapsulates this idea:

“Sangeet ka prana hai bhav”—the soul of music is emotion.

Historical Context of Bhav Sangeet

The roots of Bhav Sangeet can be traced back to the Natya Shastra of Bharat Muni, which identified nine rasas (Navarasa)—love, valor, compassion, wonder, laughter, anger, disgust, fear, and peace. These rasas formed the basis of dramatic and musical expression.

Over centuries, saints like Meerabai, Surdas, and Tulsidas enriched Bhav Sangeet through their devotional poetry, while dhrupad and khayal singers emphasized emotional depth in ragas. Instrumentalists too—on instruments like the sitar, sarod, and tabla—developed techniques to mirror the same expressions without words.

Bhav in Vocal Music

In vocal music, bhav is communicated through:

1. **Voice Modulation (Swar-lagav):** A singer must place each note with the correct weight and feeling. For instance, in Raga Yaman, meend (glides) are essential to create a sense of calm and devotion.

2. **Bol-Bhav (Expression of Lyrics):** In khayal or bhajan singing, the meaning of the words must be expressed through proper emphasis, pauses, and emotions. For example, in a bhajan of Meerabai, the singer must portray longing (viraha bhav).
 3. **Alaap and Taan:** The slow elaboration (alaap) allows the artist to bring out subtle emotions, while fast taans can express excitement or joy.
 4. **Gamak and Ornamentation:** Small variations and oscillations in notes enhance the emotive quality of the raga.
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Bhav in Instrumental Music

Instrumental music has no lyrics, yet it is equally capable of expressing bhava through:

1. **Tone and Resonance:** The deep sound of the sarod conveys gravity, while the sitar creates sweetness and delicacy.
2. **Alap and Jod:** Just like in vocal music, the slow opening section (alap) sets the emotional mood, while jod and jhala bring energy and liveliness.
3. **Layakari (Rhythmic Play):** A tabla solo or a sitar improvisation in various layas (tempos) can evoke different emotions—slow tempo reflects peace, while fast tempo excites the listener.
4. **Techniques:** Meend (glides), gamak (oscillations), and krintan (plucking) on string instruments or specific bayan-dayan modulations on tabla help convey emotional nuances.

A beautiful example is Pandit Ravi Shankar's sitar in Raga Desh, where one can feel the emotion of longing and festivity.

Importance of Bhav Sangeet in Visharad–Part 2

By the time a student reaches Visharad–Part 2, they have already gained technical proficiency in ragas, taals, and compositions. Now, the challenge is not just *to sing or play correctly* but to make the audience feel.

- In vocal music, students are trained to integrate rasa theory with performance.
- In instrumental music, students must demonstrate how sound alone can carry the emotional message.

Thus, Bhav Sangeet transforms a student from a technician to a true artist.

Modern Relevance of Bhav Sangeet

Bhav Sangeet is not confined to classical music—it is alive in many forms today:

- Bollywood music often blends classical ragas with emotional depth. For instance, songs like “*Albela Sajan*” (*Bajirao Mastani*) retain strong classical roots and rely on bhava for impact.
- Fusion music by artists like Zakir Hussain and Shankar Mahadevan shows how Indian bhava can merge with jazz or world music.
- Meditation and therapy: Many ragas (like Raga Yaman or Raga Darbari) are used in music therapy for their emotional impact.

This proves that bhava is universal—it transcends language, culture, and even instrument.

Test your knowledge of Bhav Sangeet!

- 1. Who wrote the *Natya Shastra*?**
- 2. Name any two techniques used to express bhava in vocal music.**
- 3. Which instrument is known for its deep, resonant bhava—sitar or sarod?**
- 4. Which famous saint-poetess is associated with devotional bhajans full of viraha bhav?**

(Answers: 1. Bharat Muni 2. Swar-lagav, Bol-bhav 3. Sarod 4. Meerabai)

Conclusion

Bhav Sangeet is the heart of Indian classical music—it transforms sound into emotion, technique into art, and performance into an experience. For students of Visharad–Part 2, mastering bhav means stepping into the world of true artistry, where every note is not just sung or played but felt and lived.

As Pandit Ravi Shankar once said:

“In Indian music, we don’t play notes—we play feelings.”

So, whether you are a singer or an instrumentalist, remember: without bhav, music is only sound. With bhav, music becomes divine.

💡 *What is your favorite example of bhava in music—classical, film, or fusion? Share in the comments below!*
