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Rabindranath Tagore's 'Bhangagan' : The Influence of Multicultural Melodies and the Nature of Creative Originality

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Abstract

Rabindranath Tagore's Bhangagan represents a distinctive and creative dimension of Bengali music, in which pre-existing melodies from diverse musical traditions were transformed into original artistic compositions. This study explores the sources, nature, processes, and creative significance of Tagore's Bhangagan, with particular attention to the musical environment of the Jorasanko Tagore family. The study examines how Tagore's early exposure to Hindustani classical music, Bengali folk traditions, regional Indian melodies, and Western music contributed to the development of his distinctive musical language.

The research focuses on the major sources of Tagore's borrowed and transformed melodies, including Dhrupad, Dhamar, Khayal, Thumri and Tappa, as well as Baul, Kirtan and Ramprasadi traditions. It also examines the influence of regional musical traditions from Karnataka, Gujarat, Punjab, Madras and Mysore, alongside Scottish, Irish and other Western melodies. The study demonstrates that Tagore's Bhangagan was not merely an act of imitation or reproduction. Rather, he transformed existing melodic structures through new lyrics, rhythmic patterns, melodic modifications, emotional expression and aesthetic interpretation, thereby creating compositions with an independent artistic identity.

The study further argues that the musical environment of the Jorasanko Tagore family, together with the influence of musicians and family members such as Jyotirindranath Tagore and Indira Devi Chaudhurani, played a significant role in shaping Tagore's early musical sensibility. His engagement with diverse musical traditions reveals an openness to cultural exchange and a remarkable ability to assimilate external musical elements into a distinctly Bengali artistic framework. Thus, Tagore's Bhangagan may be understood not simply as the borrowing of melodies but as a process of creative transformation through which diverse musical sources were integrated into the unique aesthetic language of Rabindra Sangeet. The study ultimately highlights Bhangagan as an important manifestation of Tagore's musical creativity, cultural synthesis, and artistic individuality.

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Discussion :

The Inspiration for Rabindranath Tagore's Bhangagan : The Musical Environment of the Jorasanko Tagore Family : From the time of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, the Jorasanko Tagore family of Calcutta occupied a prominent position at the summit of elite society in wealth, status, fame, and cultural prestige. Even before Dwarkanath, his paternal uncle Ramlachan Tagore had cultivated and appreciated kalowati music and used to invite renowned kalowati musicians to hold musical gatherings at the Tagore household. Dwarkanath became an accomplished patron and practitioner of the family's musical culture. Although born in India, his intellectual outlook was shaped to a considerable extent by European ideas. He was a leading figure in many progressive developments in India. Raja Rammohan Roy, a pioneer of modernity and an important figure of his age, was his close friend. Dwarkanath had considerable respect for Indian music. Alongside music, he was also familiar with Persian ghazal. His interest in European music led him to cultivate Italian and French music.

> Max Müller wrote of Dwarkanath : "He was extremely fond of music and greatly enjoyed Italian and French music. He used to sing, and I would play the piano along with his singing. In this way, our days passed very pleasantly. He had a fine singing voice."[1]

The Tagore household remained vibrant with musical practice of one kind or another day and night. It was as though even the air of the house was imbued with music. Every member of the family was deeply attached to music. Renowned masters of various forms of Indian classical music stayed at the household and performed there, finding great satisfaction in doing so, because the members of the family were all discerning listeners.

> Sri Indubhushan Ray, in Rabindra Sangeet Parichay, states: "From the time of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, the glory and prosperity of the Jorasanko Tagore family expanded further. Debendranath was particularly influenced by Rammohan in composing Brahmo songs in the Dhrupad style, and later Rabindranath was influenced by Rammohan's music. Rammohan initiated the composition of Brahmo songs; later Debendranath himself took the initiative in composing music and simultaneously encouraged his sons and nephews in various ways. In course of time, through Maharshi's dedicated efforts, the Jorasanko Tagore household became a pilgrimage centre of the musical world. Although Maharshi himself practised classical music, he also had considerable affection for Bengali Baul, Kirtan and Kabigan traditions. Because of Debendranath's love of classical music, many eminent singers found a place in the Tagore household, among whom Yadubhatta, Bishnu Chakravarty, Shyamsundar Mishra and Radhika Goswami are particularly noteworthy. Apart from these Bengali artists, the famous singer Moula Bux of Baroda also lived at the Tagore household for some time. Another singer named Srikanta Singh exerted considerable influence on the Tagore family. He was a friend of Maharshi."[2]

Maharshi Debendranath not only arranged proper education for his sons but also created opportunities for the women of the household to become proficient in music. Several music teachers were appointed to teach music to the boys and girls. Bishnu Chakravarty was the first music teacher; he taught them in the manner of classical music, set melodies to Bhangagan, and performed them in song.

Each Bengali devotional and festival song composed by Maharshi Debendranath was written in the style of Hindustani classical music. Under his influence, his sons Dwijendranath, Satyendranath and Jyotirindranath composed many Brahmo songs by adapting Hindustani classical songs. His father's encouragement was particularly helpful to Rabindranath in this musical environment.

> Rabindranath wrote in Jibansmriti: "Once, during the Maghotsava [Magh 1293], I composed many songs in the morning and afternoon. Among them was the song 'Nayan tomare pay na dekhite, royecho noyone noyone.' Father was then at Chinsurah. Jyotidada and I were summoned there. Seating Jyotidada at the harmonium, he asked

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> me to sing each of my new songs one after another. Some songs had to be sung twice. He said, 'If the king of the country knew the language of the country and understood the value of literature, he would reward the poet. Since there is no possibility of that from the king, I must perform that duty myself.' Saying this, he placed a five-hundred-rupee cheque in my hand."[3]

This was the first occasion on which Rabindranath received a reward for singing. Thus, in the environment in which young Rabindranath grew up, no door was closed. Eastern and Western musical currents flowed there with equal vitality.

Among those who helped music exert a formative influence on Rabindranath during his childhood, the singers Sri Bishnu Chakravarty and Srikanta Singh, as well as Sri Yadubhatta, deserve particular mention. All of them were accomplished practitioners of Hindustani classical music.

> Rabindranath wrote of an unnamed singer: "Early in the morning he would pull me out of the mosquito net and make me listen to his singing. Those who are not inclined toward disciplined learning learn through spontaneous delight; in the morning melody, the flute would proceed— 'Banshi hamari re."[4]

During his childhood, Rabindranath also learned Panchali songs from an employee named Kishori Chatterjee. The young Ravi held Yadubhatta in deep respect and was fascinated by his creative genius.

> Rabindranath said: "He was much greater than the ordinary ustad. To describe him merely as a singer would be to diminish him. He possessed genius; music took form within his consciousness. The distinctive character found in his compositions cannot be found in any other Hindustani song."[5]

> Rabindranath also said: "We grew up in our family amid the practice of music from childhood. In my case, one advantage was that music entered my entire nature with extraordinary ease."[6]

Early Influences and the Formation of the Bhangagan Tradition : From the period of his stay in England until the composition of Valmiki-Pratibha, the influence of Baul, Bhatiali and Kirtan in his songs was relatively limited, while the influence of Hindustani raga music was very strong. Apart from Valmiki-Pratibha, Bhanusingher Padabali, Ramprasadi songs and several Western melodies, most of the Brahmo songs he composed until the age of twenty-two or twenty-three did not employ melodies from Kirtan, Baul or related traditions.

> Rabindranath recalled: "The songs I was accustomed to hearing in childhood were not the songs of the amateur groups; within me, a framework of kalowati music had formed spontaneously. I cannot be compared with those who are excessively fastidious about the purity of ragas and raginis. That is, although I had some understanding of the subtle details of melody, my mind was not bound by their conventions. Yet a general impression of the form and aesthetic essence of kalowati music had gradually become firmly established within me."[7]

At that time, accomplished singers and composers were sheltered at the Tagore household, including Ramapati Bandyopadhyay, Yadubhatta and Rajchandra Ray. His elder brothers composed Brahmo songs for the Maghotsava by adapting their songs and incorporating ustadi melodies and rhythmic patterns. Rabindranath himself also referred to composing Bengali songs by adapting songs of ustads such as Tansen. Subsequently, he became encouraged to compose Bhangagan. These sources included Dhrupad, Dhamar, Thumri, Khayal, Tappa, Bhajan, Gat-based melodies, regional music, Western music, folk music and light music. It is difficult to determine the exact number of Bhangagan compositions because many songs may still remain unidentified. However, Dr Ashis Basumallik's research-oriented book Rabindranather Bhanga Gan mentions approximately 280 Bhangagan compositions in its introduction or preface, constituting about 12.5% of the poet's total musical

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compositions. Earlier compilations and studies, meanwhile, refer to 235 Bhangagan compositions in Indira Devi Chaudhurani's list.

Rabindranath's practice may therefore be understood as following rather than imitation. His Bhangagan constitutes an innovative artistic form within Bengali music, in which melodic structures from various parts of India and abroad were reflected through original creation. The rich musical heritage of the Jorasanko Tagore household, together with the musical interests of Maharshi Debendranath, Jyotirindranath Tagore and other family members, profoundly influenced Rabindranath. He assimilated melodies from Karnataka, Gujarat, Madras, Punjab and Sikh devotional traditions, as well as Scottish and Irish melodies. At the same time, he drew inspiration from the melodic structures of Baul, Kirtan, Ramprasadi, Bhatiali and Hindustani classical forms such as Dhrupad, Dhamar, Khayal, Thumri and Tappa.

Indira Devi, in Rabindra Sangeeter Tribeni Sangam, writes regarding Bhangagan:

> "A song may be adapted in two ways: first, by placing one's own words upon another's melody; second, by placing one's own melody upon another's words. In this case, examples of placing one's own words upon another's melody are much more numerous. Examples of setting another's words to one's own melody are extremely rare, although they are not entirely absent. For convenience, I have divided the first category into two groups: first, adaptation of songs in non-Bengali languages; second, adaptation of songs in the Bengali language."[9]

Rabindranath's Bhangagan, however, was never merely an act of imitation; rather, by taking an original melody as a point of departure, he transformed it through new words, new rhythmic structures and new emotional expression into an entirely independent creation.

In his essay 'Music and Emotion' in Sangitachinta, Rabindranath wrote:

> "They wish to make melody stand above the words of the song; I wish to make the words of the song stand above the melody."[10]

This research examines the historical context of musical practice at the Tagore household, Rabindranath's sources of inspiration, the influence of folk and Western melodies, and the originality of his Bhangagan. It becomes evident that Rabindranath did not merely collect foreign or regional melodies; rather, he transformed them and thereby gave rise to an entirely new Bengali musical language. Even when he adopted an existing melody, his objective was the expression of a new emotional and aesthetic idea.

This becomes still clearer in the poet's own words :

> "It is not enough merely to produce certain melodies from the throat; what is necessary are those melodic arrangements through which emotion is expressed."[11]

Jyotirindranath Tagore and the Prehistory of Bhangagan : Rabindranath Tagore remains a luminous presence in the world of music, still shining in the musical firmament like a fixed star. His creations continue to reveal new paths of artistic exploration. He has often been regarded as a poet of the full range of human emotion, and through his songs he expressed almost every dimension of human experience. In composing music, Rabindranath consistently demonstrated individuality. At times he was drawn to the beauty of language and the resonance of words; at times to the enchantment of melody; and at other times to the rhythmic movement of verse. From these impulses emerged songs whose appeal remains enduring. Another expression of his individuality lies in the numerous Bhangagan compositions created on the melodic foundations of pre-existing songs, each distinguished by its own artistic character.

Jyotirindranath Tagore was also actively involved in the family practice of composing Brahmo songs on the basis of Hindustani melodies. In his memoirs, Rabindranath wrote :

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> "When we liked a song by a singer, we would copy it and sit down to compose a Brahmo song from it. In this way, many great ustadi melodies and rhythms entered Brahmo music."[12]

Before Rabindranath, his elder brother Jyotirindranath Tagore had already composed several Brahmo songs by adapting Hindustani originals. Since the practice of composing songs by placing words upon Hindustani classical melodies had long existed within the family, Rabindranath was encouraged by this tradition. From then onward, he became attracted to original songs from different regions and countries. He drew melodies from Baul music, North Indian and South Indian traditions, and European and Scottish music, and composed songs in the manner of those melodies. These compositions came to be known as Bhangagan.

Rabindra Sangeet Based on Regional Indian Melodies : When Rabindranath's elder brother Satyendranath Tagore was stationed in southern India for professional reasons, Rabindranath travelled to and visited those regions. In particular, he heard songs sung by performers in Gujarat, Maharashtra and the Dravidian regions. These regional musical traditions provided him with inspiration for many compositions. He composed numerous songs by following the melodic idioms of different provinces. Collecting diverse melodies became almost an artistic passion for him.

Indira Devi wrote in Rabindra Sangeeter Tribeni Sangam :

> "It would not be an exaggeration to say that almost every fine melody the poet heard wherever he went, or every song that others brought to him from different parts of the country and abroad, he offered at the altar of worship. The need to provide new songs for the Maghotsava may have been one of the reasons."[13]

Consequently, melodies from Karnataka, Mysore, Gujarat, Punjab, Madras and other regions became part of Rabindranath's musical corpus.

Karnataka : In 1882, Rabindranath adapted a Kannada song received from his beloved niece Indira Devi, thereby creating the first significant synthesis of a South Indian melody in his song composition. About a decade later, in 1893, he received a collection of Karnataka-based melodies from his musically accomplished niece Sarala Devi.

Shortly before his marriage, while staying at the beautiful Bombay harbour of Karwar, Rabindranath heard songs performed by a group of dancers. He heard and learned songs in the Kannada language from them and subsequently adapted them. These examples are presented first because they were among the early South Indian melodies incorporated into his musical experience, closely connected with memories of his youth and his encounters with music beyond Bengal.

Original Song	**Bhangagan**
Sakhi ba ba	Boro asha kore
Purnachandranane	Aji shubhadine
Chari barsha parjanta	Sakatore oi kandiche

Gujarati : One of Rabindranath's Brahmo songs based on a Gujarati bhajan is 'Kotha acho prabhu'. Another song, 'Akhil Brahmandapati', composed by Dwijendranath Tagore, was also set to the melody of a Gujarati bhajan and became well known in the Brahmo Samaj. Rabindranath likewise used the melody of that bhajan in three songs : 'Eki andhakar e Bharat bhumi', 'Nami nami Bharate' from Valmiki-Pratibha, and 'Jao re ananta dhame kalo chhaya'. Another Gujarati bhajan, 'Kinhe dekha Kanhaiya', was adapted by Rabindranath into 'Kakhon dile poraye'.

Madras and Mysore : During her long residence in Mysore for professional reasons, Sarala Devi brought back beautiful songs. Among them were the melodies associated with 'Eki labanye purna pran' and 'Anandoloke mangalaloke', the latter being perhaps the best known. Its original melody, 'Kayo Sri Gauri', was set by Sarala Devi to a well-known Vedic verse beginning 'Sangacchadhvam'. Another

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popular South Indian devotional song, 'Namami Mahishasuramardini', was adapted into 'Bhaja re bhaja re bhava khandane', a Bhangagan by Dwijendranath.

Regarding a Mysorean devotional song collected by Sarala Devi, she said :

> "When I went to Mysore, I brought back a basket filled with an extraordinary collection of flowers. I could not rest until I had emptied the basket of songs at Rabimama's feet. He selected the melodies one by one and, enchanted, made them his own by giving them his own words. Only then did I feel completely fulfilled. 'Anandoloke mangalaloke', 'Esho he grihadevata', 'Eki labanye purnapran', 'Chirabandhu chironirbhar' and others are songs he set to my melodies."[14]

After hearing several Madras songs from the voice of a Madras-origin student at Santiniketan, Rabindranath adapted them into the following songs.

Original Song	**Bhangagan**
Niducharanamule	Baje karun sure
Unknown	Bedona ki bhasay re
Vrindavan Lola	Nilanjana chhaya
Meenakshi me mudam	Basanti he bhubanamohini

The melodies of 'Chirasakha he, chhero na' and 'Chirabandhu chironirbhar' are also widely known as Mysorean. However, their original songs have not been identified. In addition, 'Pranamami anadi ananta' was adapted by Jyotirindranath from a Madras devotional song.

Punjabi or Sikh Bhajan : Rabindranath composed a number of songs based on Gujarati bhajans and Punjabi or Sikh devotional couplets. Regarding Sikh bhajans, Indira Devi wrote:

> "We also found some beautiful Sikh bhajans. Among them the most beautiful is 'Baje baje ramya bina'. In my view, this is the king of Bhangagan, in the sense that, with as little alteration as possible, the foreign has been transformed into the native, like the two faces of the same gold coin. Of course, the language of the original song— 'Badai badai ramya bina badai'—gave him this opportunity."[15]

According to what was heard from Kshitimohan Basu, however, Rabindranath received only the words of the first line; he himself added the remaining two lines while maintaining continuity with the original. Some Punjabi or Sikh devotional songs are listed below.

Original Song	**Bhangagan**
Gaganome thal rabichandra	Gaganer thale rabichandra
Eh hari sundar	Eh hari sundar
Badai badai ramya bina	Baje baje ramya bina

Thus, wherever he travelled—to Karnataka, Mysore, Madras, Gujarat, Punjab, Lucknow and elsewhere— he listened to local songs with an open mind and composed new songs in related melodic idioms.

Rabindra Sangeet Based on Western Melodies : In his childhood, Rabindranath composed several songs by placing words upon melodies played by his elder brother Jyotirindranath on the piano. The Tagore household possessed a collection of Irish melodies by Thomas Moore. Young Rabindranath developed a strong desire to sing these Irish compositions properly. Thus, it may be said that he encountered Western music within the family even before travelling to England.

Sri Indubhushan Ray states in Rabindra Sangeet Parichay:

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> "Rabindranath became acquainted with Western melodies in childhood through his elder brother Jyotirindranath's musical practice. In order to enrich his musical resources, the poet, on the one hand, accepted much from Indian and indigenous music; on the other hand, he also drew extensively from Western music."

Indira Devi, recalling Rabindranath in her memories, said:

> "In reality, our first conscious acquaintance with our brother's musical life abroad took place during our stay in England. We arrived there with our mother around 1877, and father and Rabikaka came in 1878. From that time he became acquainted with Western music, and I have heard that they were fascinated by his melodious and powerful high voice of the upper register, which there was called 'tenor'. At that age I could not fully appreciate it, but I remember that he sang popular songs of the time such as -
>
> 'Won't You Tell Me, Molly Darling',
> 'Darling, You Are Growing Old',
> 'Good-bye, Sweetheart, Good-bye'."
>
> Irish poet Thomas Moore's Irish Melodies had become very popular at the time."[16]

Shantidev Ghosh, in Rabindra Sangeet Bichitra, notes:

> "After returning home, I sang these and other English songs to relatives and friends. Everyone said, 'Why has Ravi's voice changed so much? It has become somewhat foreign, somewhat unusual."[17]

During his stay in England, Rabindranath enjoyed Western music extensively alongside his studies. About two years after returning to India, he became absorbed, under Jyotirindranath's inspiration, in composing the musical drama Valmiki-Pratibha. Three songs in this musical drama were composed to Western melodies, two of which were used as songs of the band of dacoits.

> Indira Devi wrote in Rabindra Sangeeter Tribeni Sangam: "Since the poet spent some time in England in his early life, it is natural that a Western influence should be noticeable in his early songs and musical dramas. For example, in Valmiki-Pratibha and Kal Mrigaya, the melodies of the Kali invocation 'Kali Kali bolo re aj' are taken directly from an English song, Nancy Lee, in which a sailor praises his beloved wife. Many songs of Kal Mrigaya are adaptations of English, Scottish and Irish melodies. The melody of 'Go where glory waits thee' belongs to Thomas Moore's Irish Melodies."[18]

In addition, Ben Jonson's famous song 'Drink to me only with thine eyes' was adapted into 'Kato bar bhebechhinu apna bhuliya'.

A list is provided below, according to Rabindrasangeeter Tribeni Sangam, of the songs in 'Kalmrigaya' and 'Valmiki Pratibha' that were composed using the melodies of certain English, Scottish, Irish, and other songs.

"Kalmrigaya

Rabindra Composition	**Original Melody**
O dekhbi re bhai, ay re chhute	The Vicar of Bray
Tui ay re kachhe ay	The British Grenadiers
Phule phule dhole dhole	Ye Banks and Braes
Mana na manili	Go Where Glory Waits Thee
Sakali phuralo	Robin Adair

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Mayar Khela

Aha, aji e basante Go Where Glory Waits Thee

Valmiki Pratibha

Kali Kali bolo re aj Nancy Lee

Mori, O kahar bacha Go Where Glory Waits Thee….”[19]

In some emotionally charged songs, he followed the Western practice of using a chorus or a refrain sung collectively at the end of each line. Examples include the ‘Joy he, joy he’ section of ‘Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka’ and the ‘Joy joy Narottama’ section of ‘Mat Mandir Punya Angan’.

Original Melody	**Bhangagan**
Auld Lang Syne	Purano sei diner kotha
Go Where Glory Waits Thee	Ohe dayamoy
Drink to Me Only	Kato bar bhebechhinu

Among these Bhangagan compositions, ‘Purano sei diner kotha’ and ‘Phule phule dhole dhole’ are based on Scottish melodies. ‘Ohe dayamoy’, ‘Mana na manili’ and ‘Sakali phuralo’ are based on Irish melodies, while ‘O dekhbi re bhai’, ‘Tui ay re kachhe ay’ and ‘Kato bar bhebechhinu’ are based on English melodies.

Rabindra Sangeet Based on Hindustani Classical Melodies : Even before Rabindranath’s birth, the Tagore household was regarded as an important centre for the practice and patronage of raga-based music. Whereas other accomplished musicians contributed to the development of Hindustani music by producing disciples, Rabindranath contributed through his musical compositions. From the earliest period of his creative life, Hindustani raga music repeatedly appeared in his songs. Consequently, he undertook the composition of many Bhangagan works inspired by Hindustani classical music.

> A discussion in Sangitachinta states: “If you can assimilate Hindustani music and harmonize it with the distinctive character of Bengali, you will be able to let the river of melody flow like the ocean; otherwise, there will only be a flood of musical sound, but it will not quench the thirst of the thirsty.”[20]

The numerous Rabindra Sangeet compositions inspired by Dhrupad, Dhamar, Khayal, Thumri and Tappa bear witness to this process.

Dhrupad-style Music : Dhrupad was among the forms most favoured by the poet, and he composed a large number of songs in this style. Most of the ustads who visited the Tagore household were Dhrupad practitioners, and many of Rabindranath’s Bhangagan compositions were adapted from their songs.

In Rabindra Sangeet, the established performance conventions of Dhrupad are not followed literally. Since Dhrupad traditionally employs four sections or tuk, it provides scope for extended poetic composition and melodic setting; Rabindranath deeply absorbed this principle of maintaining harmony between words and melody. Among the six broad categories of Rabindra Sangeet, a large proportion of Dhrupad-style songs belong to the Puja category. Some Dhrupad-style Rabindra Sangeet compositions set in Chautal, Surphaktal, Teora and other rhythmic cycles are discussed below.

Original Song	**Bhangagan**	**Raga**	**Tala**
Pratham adi shiva	Pratham adi tab	Sohini	Surphaktal
Nadavidhya parabrahma	Vishwabeena-rabe	Shankarabharanam	Tala-ferata
Tanu milan de	Kar milan chao	Sri Raga	Teora
Nachat tribhangaye	Bipul taranga re	Bhimpalashri	—
Dusah dukh-dokh	Bahe nirantar	Nishasag	Jhaptal
Phuli ban ghan	Aji mama mon	Bahar	Chautal

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Khayal-style Songs : Khayal is a highly significant branch of Hindustani music. In his own Khayal-style Bhangagan, Rabindranath never favoured excessive ornamentation or unnecessary displays of taan. Another characteristic can be observed in his adaptations: as in Dhrupad, he sometimes transformed a two-line original Khayal into a four-line song.

Rabindranath first received encouragement to adapt Khayal from his family environment, principally through the quiet encouragement of his elder brother Jyotirindranath. Documentary evidence indicates that Jyotirindranath adapted the two-line original Khayal 'Payeliya mori baje re' into 'Paye paye baje re', which later became the four-line Rabindra Sangeet 'Ekhono tare chokhe dekhini'. Some examples of Khayal-style Rabindra Sangeet are given below.

Original Song	**Bhangagan**	**Raga**	**Tala**
Lagi more thumak	Anandadhara bahiche	Malkaush	Trital
Erima sab ban amua	Ore bhai phagun legechhe	Paraj Bahar	Trital
Rimi jhimi rimi jhimi	Rim jhim ghan ghan	Mallar	Trital
Jago mohan pyare	Mon jago	Bhairon	Trital
Sundar lagori hoi	Mandire mama ke	Adana	Ektal
Baj rahi sakhi are	Kotha hote baje	Desh	Trital

Dhamar Songs : Dhamar is not the name of a specific song; rather, these songs are composed within the Dhamar tala. Although the rhythmic divisions of Rabindranath's Dhamar compositions are somewhat different, all of his Dhamar songs are described here as Bhangagan, meaning that they were composed under the inspiration of songs by earlier composers.

When the songs of the Dhamar composers whose melodies Rabindranath adapted are examined, it becomes apparent that most of them concern Holi. For example, Adarang composed the Dhamar 'Aju rang khelat Hari Brajme rangras', while Brajrang composed 'Aju Brajme Saiya khelogi hori'. Rabindranath's Dhamar compositions, however, differ from the original Hindustani Dhamar in certain respects. In subject matter, most became Brahmo songs or vehicles of prayer, such as 'Nutan pran dao pran sakha'. Dhamar appears not only in the Puja category but also in several other categories of his songs.

According to the cited source, "Following the melodies of Hindi Dhamar, Rabindranath Tagore composed 14 Bhangagan songs; in addition, the number of his original Dhamar compositions was."[21]

Original Song	**Bhangagan**	**Raga**
Mai to na jaun	Amriter sagore ami	Kamod
Ayo phagun bar mon	Sudhasagartire	Kanara
Harash jag lal	Harashe jago aji	Hambir
Sotan mad mat	Nutan pran dao	Nachari Todi
Aji rang khelat hori	Jage nath jochhona rate	Behag
Daf bajat mohan	Ke re oi dakichhe	Alahia

Tappa-style Songs : Tappa was originally a form of Punjabi folk music. It was associated with the songs of camel drivers and attracted the attention of Shori Mian, who contributed to its incorporation into the classification of Indian classical music. Tappa-style songs were associated with Punjabi camel drivers. Rabindranath composed several Tappa-like songs through his own creative ability rather than through direct imitation or simple following of Hindustani Tappa. Nevertheless, the influence of Hindustani Tappa is evident in these compositions. Unlike Hindustani Tappa, Rabindranath did not employ taan, bol-taan and similar ornamentation extensively. He did, however, use the attractive, lightly developed gitkari effect characteristic of the style.

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Original Song	Bhangagan	Raga	Tala
Be pariya tare	Ke bosile aji	Sindhu	Madhyaman
Miya be manule	Hriday basana purna	Jhijhit	—
Dekho ri ek bala	Hriday bedana bahia	Sindhu	Teora
Khol ab ghunghat pat	Ailo aji pran sakha	Kedar	Aratheka

Thumri Songs : Thumri is among the more flexible forms of Hindustani art music and is characterized by a wide range of ornamentation. Although the exact period of its emergence is uncertain, it is known that in its early development Thumri was associated with the courtesan tradition.

Among the Bhangagan compositions based on Thumri and Dadra, one particularly notable example is the original song ‘Kinhe dekha Kanhaiya’, heard from Mrs Savitri Krishnan, which Rabindranath transformed into the lyric-rich Bhangagan ‘Kakhon dile poraye’. A second example is the well-known Rabindra Sangeet ‘Tumi kichhu diye jao’, whose original song ‘Koi kichhu kaho re’ was a Lucknow Thumri.

The following examples of songs collected by Indira Devi Chaudhurani through Savitri Krishnan are given below.

Original Song	Bhangagan	Raga	Tala
Sange chola deya	Bandhu raho raho	Bhairav	Kaharba
Sakhi, aato andheri	Sakhi, andhare	—	—
Kaun pardes	O keno bhalobasa	Khamaj	Khemta
Maharaja kebaria	Khelar sathi	Pilu	Jat

Rabindra Sangeet Based on Bengali Folk Melodies : Rabindranath was among the first to bring the inexhaustible value concealed within folk music to the educated Bengali society. He was influenced by several folk traditions and continued to incorporate folk melodies into songs belonging to different categories even in his later life. Alongside such adaptation, he also composed several songs by closely following the melodies of folk originals. The principal folk traditions whose influence is particularly visible in his music are discussed below.

Baul-style Songs : Baul music is one of the major traditions of the folk music of Bangladesh. Baul songs frequently concern the philosophy of the body and spiritual realization. Bauls constitute a distinctive devotional community in which Hindu-Muslim divisions do not determine spiritual practice; they search within themselves for the ‘maner manush’, the person of the heart or the divine beloved. Rabindranath became acquainted with Baul songs during childhood, although he encountered living Baul practitioners more closely after taking charge of his family’s estates at Shilaidaha.

He gradually became deeply attracted to Baul music. In the original song ‘Chanchal chikur adho’, learned from a Bengali folk artist, Rabindranath demonstrated his individuality in the composition ‘Bedhechhi premer pashe’. Between the original song and the Bhangagan, he created a connecting passage that was absent from the original melody. The central principle of Baul spiritual practice is love; through love, the human being approaches the divine. The Baul line expressing the inability to continue walking in the dust and heat of the road finds an echo in Rabindranath’s song:

‘Therefore, your joy is mine;
That is why you have come down here.’

The influence of Baul music on Rabindranath’s compositions was not as extensive as that of Kirtan. Nevertheless, he absorbed the spirit of Baul music deeply.

> Rabindranath wrote: “I have adopted Baul melodies in many of my songs. And in many songs, whether consciously or unconsciously, Baul melodies have blended with other

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> raga-ragini traditions. From this it will be understood that at some point the melodies and words of the Bauls became naturally integrated into my mind."[22]

During the anti-partition movement in 1905, Rabindranath composed three patriotic songs in the Baul style.

Original Song	**Bhangagan**
Harinam diye jagat matale	Jodi tor dak shune
Ami kothay pabo tare	Amar sonar Bangla
Mon majhi samal samal	Ebar tor mora gange

Ramprasadi Songs : In discussing the melodic tradition of Bengali songs, the melodies of Ramprasad must be mentioned. Rabindranath composed several Bhangagan works influenced by the Ramprasadi tradition. Inspired by Ramprasad Sen's song 'Ma-er emon-i bichar', he composed three songs: (1) 'Shyama ebar chhere cholichhi ma', included in the musical drama Valmiki-Pratibha; (2) 'Mora milechhi aj mayer dake', a song belonging to the Swadesh category; and (3) 'Ami shudhu-i rinu baki', belonging to the Bichitra category.

Inspired by other Ramprasadi melodies, Rabindranath also composed songs such as 'Dekhbo ke tor kachhe ashe' and 'Priyo tomar dheki'. He composed a total of five songs in the Ramprasadi melodic style. Among them, 'Dekhbo ke tor' appears in the play Chirkumar Sabha.

Kirtan-style Songs : Rabindranath accepted Baul, Kirtan, Ramprasadi, Bhatiali and Sari melodies as vehicles for expressing his deepest thoughts. Among them, the greatest number of songs occur in a mixture of Kirtan and Baul melodies.

> Regarding Kirtan, he said : "Kirtan is the close union of the play of rasa in life with the play of rasa in music. He also said: Kirtan is like a necklace of jewels around the neck of a beautiful woman. One who is truly appreciative does not isolate each jewel to examine it separately; rather, by assimilating the jewels, one perceives the whole form as it vibrates in many ways— that whole is what he seeks to see."[23]

The influence of Kirtan is also considerable in Rabindra Sangeet. In Kirtan-style Rabindra Sangeet, he did not employ the complex rhythmic patterns characteristic of Kirtan. Instead, he used simple rhythmic cycles of approximately six to ten matras. He also did not employ tala-ferata, one of the characteristic features of Kirtan.

Original Song	**Bhangagan**
Kshamo aparadh ohe dinanath	Aj jemon kore gaichhe akash
Jai go sadare asha nagare	Ekbar tora ma boliya dak

Additional examples of Kirtan-style songs include 'Na chahile yare pawa jay', 'Hridayer e kul o kul', 'Bane jodi phutlo kusum', and 'Majhe majhe tab dekha pai'.

Rabindranath Tagore composed many Bhangagan works using the melodic structures of original songs from different countries and regions. Yet Bhangagan should not be understood as mere copying of another song. In some cases, although a particular composition began under the influence of a specific song, Rabindranath transformed the new work so extensively and independently that it can no longer be regarded simply as a Bhangagan.

Nevertheless, compared with other musical traditions, the influence and expression of Hindustani classical music appear more prominently in his compositions. In terms of the number of Bhangagan works, Hindustani adaptations are considerably more numerous than those based on folk or Western melodies.

Rabindranath arranged and assimilated the previously discussed regional, Western, Hindustani and folk musical traditions in diverse ways. As a result, alongside his Bhangagan compositions, we have also inherited access to many of the original melodies. Without his creative transformations, many

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of these source melodies might have remained unknown to us. The mystery of creation resides in the relationship between material and expression. When harmony is achieved between material and expression, the potential for creation becomes manifest. Rabindra Sangeet represents a full expression of such harmony.

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