

CLASS-IV

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1

RAGA

The Indian music system is very closely related to nature. The standard notes of Indian classical music are set according to the sounds produced by animals and birds in a certain conditions and environments. In this lesson we will learn about ragas.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able:

- differentiate between swaras and ragas ;
- identify Janaka Ragas and Janya Ragas and
- demonstrate 2 Ragas-Māyamālava Gowla, Dheera Shankarabharana.



Fig. 1.1 Goddess Saraswati



Notes

1.1 SWARAS AND RAGAS

We learn about Raga which is the core of Indian music. A raga is a series of notes systematically arranged which can bring out different experiences in a musician or a listener. The whole structure of Indian music is built around the concept of raga. First we will discuss about swaras.

I. SWARAS

Every raga has a route which is arranged by:

- an Aarohanam (swaras arranged in ascending scale) and
- an Avarohanam (swaras arranged in descending scale).

In general, raga is a combination of the following swaras:

- sa - Shadjam,
- ri - Rishabham,
- ga - Gaandharam,
- ma - Madhyamam,
- pa - Panjamam,
- dha - Dhaivatham,
- ni - Nishadham.

The number of ragas include 72 Melakartha ragas, but many ragas are derived from these 72 Melakartha ragas. The ragas that are derived from any of the Melakartha raga is called Janya raga and the parent raga is called Janaka raga. Melakartha ragas are the parent ragas.



A Melakarta raga is one which has all 7 swaras and has Aarohanam and Avarohanam in the correct sequential order (eg. Maya malava gawla, Kalyaani, Sankarabhavanam etc.).

For a Janya raga, it is not necessary that it should contain all 7 swaras and may have its Arohanam / Avarohanam in the sequential order (eg. Mohana, Hamsadhwani, Sree ragam etc.).

With regard to the 7 swaras as mentioned above, please also understand that these 7 swaras are extended to make 12 more swaras and named 'Dwadasa swaras', with two different versions (minor & major) of swaras ri, ga, ma, dha and ni with just one sa and pa (as these two are basic swaras).

List of Dwadasa swaras are as given below. These used in different variations of combinations make up the 72 Melakarta ragas -

- Sa - Shadjam
- Ri - Suddha Rishabham, Chathusruthi Rishabham
- Ga - Sadharana Gandharam, Antara Gandharam
- Ma - Suddha Madhyamam, Prathi Madhyamam
- Pa - Panchamam
- Dha - Suddha Dhaivatham, Chathusruthi Dhaivatham
- Ni - Kaishiki Nishadham , Kaakali Nishadham

Note: You can relate this easily if you look at the keys of an octave in a piano / harmonium. It's a fact, these 12 swaras together make an octave in all types of music everywhere.



Notes

II. RAGAS

We will now learn about Raga, which is the core of Indian music. A raga is a series of notes systematically arranged which can bring out different experiences in a musician or a listener. The whole structure of Indian music is built around the concept of raga. Even folk melody songs are set in some raga or other. Some folk melodies are in mixed ragas i.e., one part of the stanza being in one raga and another stanza in another raga. However a combination of swaras which are pleasant to listen are known as ragas.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.1

Match column A with column B

A	B
1. Aarohanam	(i) Ragas
2. Avarohanam	(ii) Derived ragas
3. Systematically arranged swaras	(iii) Major and minor version
4. Janak ragas	(iv) Melakarta raga
5. Janya raga	(v) ascending scale
6. 'Dwadasa swaras'	(vi) the parent ragas
7. Mayamalava gawla	(vii) descending scale

1.2 TYPES OF RAGAS

The Ragas are of two types especially in Carnatic music; Janaka raga and Janya raga. This division of ragas into Janaka and Janya was given by Vidyaranya.

I. Janaka Raga

A Janaka raga is also known as a Mela Raga, a Melakarta Raga, a Raganga Raga and a Sampurna Raga. There are totally 72 Janaka Ragas

Features of a Janaka raga:

- A Janaka raga has all the seven swaras in order in both the aarohana and the avarohana.

Example - Mayamalavagawla

- It has only one variant of each swara.
- The variants present in the aarohana are present in the avarohana too.

II. Janya Ragas

Ragas derived from Janaka ragas are Janya ragas.

Features of a Janya raga:

- A Janya raga usually does not have all the seven swaras. It has either five or six swaras in the ascending scale/descending scale/both.
- Even if a Janya raga has all the seven swaras, the swaras are not in original order and/or the sequence of Swara will be different from the original.



Notes



Notes

Janya ragas are classified into the following groups:

- **Upanga raga:** A raga which has five or six notes in its ascending and/or descending scale(s) taken from its parent raga.

Ex: Hamsadhwani (Derived from Dheerashankarabharana, the 29th Melakarta).

- **Bhashanga raga:** A raga which has five or six notes in its ascending and/or descending scale(s) taken from its parent raga and one, two or three swaras not present in its parent raga.

Ex: Bilahari (Derived from Dheerashankarabharana, the 29th Melakarta. Its Avarohana has the N3, but N2 is used in the raga too).

- **Upanga Vakra raga:** The same as Upanga raga, but with the swaras not in order.

Ex: Vasanta (Derived from Suryakanta, the 17th Melakarta).

- **Bhashanga Vakra raga:** The same as Bhashanga raga, but with the swaras not in order.

Ex: Ananda Bhairavi (Derived from Natabhairavi, the 20th Melakarta. Its aarohana/avarohana is as follows: S G2 R2 G2 M1 P D2 P N3 S/S N2 D2 P M1 G3 M1 P D1 P M1 G2 R2 S. Notice that there are three swaras in this raga which aren't present in the parent raga: G3, D1 and N3).

All Ragas are made up of the following components:

- **Arohana** - A set of notes (scale) used to play ascending melodies.



- **Avarohana** - A scale used to play descending melodies.
- **Vadi** - This is the most important note in a raga (the tonic, in Western terminology).
- **Samavadi** - The second most important note (the dominant).
- **Komal Swar** - Komal means soft and swar means "note". Any of what western theory would call "flattened" notes included in the raga.
- **Teevra Swar** - Any "sharpened" notes included in the raga.
- **Varjita Swar** - Any notes that should not be used when playing or composing using a particular raga.
- **Samaya** - The time of day when the raga would be played/sung.
- **Taal** - A rhythm or beat associated with the particular raga.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 1.2**

Fill in the blanks

1. A ----- usually does not have all the seven swaras.
2. ----- is a set of notes (scale) used to play ascending melodies.
3. Any "sharpened" notes included in the raga is known as -----.
4. A rhythm or beat associated with the particular raga is called -----.
5. ----- is the most important note in a raga.



Notes

1.3 Practice of Mayamalava Gawla and Dheera Shankarabharana

To learn all these practically you need to go to a guru/teacher who is well-versed and also practice it daily.

Let us learn the basic components of the following Ragas:

- Mayamalava Gawla and
- Dheera Shankarabharana

Raga: Mayamalava gawla (15th Melakarta Ragam)

- Arohana: S R1 G3 M1 P D1 N3 S
- Avarohana: S N3 D1 P M1 G3 R1 S

Raga: Dheera Shankarabharana

- Arohana: S R2 G3 M1 P D2 N3 ?[a]
- Avarohana: ? N3 D2 P M1 G3 R2 S[b]



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- A raga is a series of notes systematically arranged which can bring out different experiences in a musician or a listener.
- Every raga has a route which is arranged by an Aarohanam (swaras arranged in ascending scale) and an Avarohanam (swaras arranged in descending scale).
- Ragas are of two types especially in Carnatic music namely - Janaka raga and Janya raga. This division of ragas into Janaka and Janya was given by Vidyaranya.

A Janaka raga is also known as:

- a Mela Raga,
- a Melakarta Raga,
- a Raganga Raga and
- a Sampoorna Raga.

There are totally 72 Janaka Ragas

Ragas derived from Janaka ragas are known as Janya ragas.

The components of all rags:

- Arohana
- Avarohana
- Vadi
- Samavadi
- Komal Swar
- Teevra Swar
- Varjita Swar .
- Samaya
- Taal



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What is other name for Janaka raga.
2. List features of janaka raja
3. What are the main features of Janya raga
4. What precautions can be taken while learning Ragas?

Notes



Notes



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

5.1

1. - (v)
2. - (vii)
3. - (i)
4. - (vi)
5. - (ii)
6. - (iii)
7. - (iv)

5.2

1. Janya raga
2. Arohana
3. Teevra Swar
4. Taal
5. Vadi