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ANALYTICAL STUDY ON INDIAN CLASSICAL RAGAS AND THEIR SIMILARITIES WITH OTHER MUSICAL GENERS

Author

Dr Mohasin Khan

Guest Lecturer (Sitar)

Department of Music and Fine Arts,
Karnatak University, Dharwad.

ABSTRACT

Musicology is the important study which every musician should take up in order to possess a complete hold on music. History of music becomes an interesting and important study. The concepts like swaras, ragas, taalās are continuously evolving with the time and so does the classical music. We can easily make out the changes in the style of rendering the classical ragas observing the contemporary musicians and comparing them with the stalwarts of yesteryears. This change in the practical aspects of music rendering has been happening since a long time. The theoretical aspects has changed, the learning methods has changed, lot of additions and deletions has been done with respect to concepts. The systematized structure has been formatted by the contemporary musicologists with the intention of making the knowledge more tangible which seems complex in its original form. The study of Ragas makes one understand the process of changes adopted to create a systematic classifications and divisions of Ragas according to their types, prahar (the time of playing or singing), the number of swaras it contains, its structure of Aarohana and avarohana etc.

Key words: Ragas, Etymology, History, Evolution and Classification.

Introduction

Bhartiya shastriya sangeet or Indian classical music is popularly classified into two genres. Viz. Hindustani Shastriya Sangeet and Carnatic Shastriya Sangeet.

Both the genres inspite of being unique and different in its own ways also carries similarities with each other. The concepts like Nada, swara, shruthi and taalās are the base for both Hindustani and carnatic music. The concept of Ragas is same in both the systems though the style of handling a raga with respect to rendering is different. It is interesting to notice that western classical music system follows the concept of Scale which is nothing but a raga's basic structure.

The term raga is in Sanskrit. As per the Paninian grammer the term is derived out of a verb called “ranj raage” which means “entertain”. The term Raga has various definitions written by many musical scholars and musicologists. A few are noted below:

1. “योऽसौ ध्वनि विशेषस्तु स्वरवर्ण विभूषितः द्य रञ्जको जनचित्तानां सच राग उदाहृतः ॥” (Brihiddeshi by Matanga)
2. “योऽसौ ध्वनि विशेषस्तु स्वरवर्ण विभूषितः द्य रञ्जको जनचित्तानां स राग इति कथोबुध्येः ॥” (Sangeetaratnakara by Sharngadeva)
3. “रन्जकं स्वर संदर्भो राग इत्यभिदीयते” (Sangeet parijatha by Ahobala)

A summarized understanding extracted from the above definitions of the term Raga can be quoted as “The melodically structured phrases containing swaras and which are entertaining to the ears of the audience is called as Raga”. Every raga has an assigned set of notations formed by the combination of prakriti and vikriti swaras. The swaras are arranged in ascending and descending order called Arohana and avarohana.

History of Raga:

The concrete and fixed structure of a raga was not followed from the beginning. There is a process of evolution from which the ragas are having their solid form currently. At the time of Bharatha, the author of the famous scripture called “Bharatha naatya shaastra” which was written 2,000 years ago, the concept of Raga was still raw and were called as “Jaathi”. Jaathi means category. The Jaathis were classified into two types. Viz. i) Shuddha Jaathi and ii) Vikruthaa Jaathi.

Shuddha Jaathi was further classified into 7 types. Viz. 1) Shaadji, 2) Aarshabhi, 3) Gaandhari, 4) Madhyama, 5) Panchami, 6) Dhaivati and 7) Naishadi.

“शुद्धाः स्युर्जातयः सप्त ताः षड्जादिस्वराभिधाः ।
षड्यार्षभी च गान्धारी मध्यमा पञ्चमी तथा ॥
धैवती चाथ नैषादीर् शुद्धतालक्ष्म कथ्यते ॥” (Sangeet Rathnakara by Sharangadeva)

They were called as Shuddha Jaathis as they had the following qualities:

1. Their dominant note was final note – Nyasa swara.
2. Their semi –final note - Apanyasa swara.
3. Their fundamental note – Amsha swara.
4. Their Initial note- Graha swara.
5. No note in the higher registrar and yet complete.

Vikrutha Jaathis are formed by the omissions of Nyasa, apanyasa, amsha and graham swaras one by one through which 4 vikrutha jaathis are formed. Similarly, if any two of them are omitted then 6 jaathis can be formed, if any three of them are omitted then 4 jaathis can be formed and if all the four are omitted then one jaathi can be formed. The sum total of these gives the scope for forming 15 vikrutha jaathis.

These Vikrutha Jaathis can be called as modified categories. Another type of modification can be made in Shuddha jaathis. They are called as “Samsarga vikruth jaathi” or combined modifications.

Samsarga vikruthi jaathi was classified into 11 types. Viz. 1) Shadja kaishiki, 2) Shadjodichyava, 3)Kaishiki, 4) Shadja madhyama, 5) Gandharodeechyava, 6) Raktagandhari, 7) Madhyamodichyava, 8) Kaarmaravi, 9) Gaandharapanchami, 10) Aandhri, 11)Nandayanti.

**“विकृतानं तु संसर्गाज्जाता एकादश स्मृताः ।
स्यात्षड्जकैषिकी षड्जोदीच्यवा षड्जमध्यमा ॥
गान्धारोदीच्यवा रक्तगान्धारी कैशिकी तथा।
मध्यमोदीच्यवा कामारवी गान्धारपञ्चमी ॥
तथा ‘न्धी नन्दयन्तीति तद्धेतूना ब्रुवे।.....”** (Sangeet Rathnakara by Sharangadeva)

The eleven samsarga vikruthi jaathis are formed by the combination of two jaathis as described below:

1. Shadja kaishiki is formed by the combination of shaadji and gandhaari.
2. Shadja madhyama is formed by the combination of shaadji and madyami.
3. Gandhara panchami is formed by the combination of gandhaari and panchami.
4. Aandhri is formed by the combination of aarsshabhi and gandhaari.
5. The fusion of Shaadji, gaandhari, and dhaivati forms shadjodichyava.
6. Naishadi, panchami and aarsshabhi are combined together kaaramaravi.
7. Nandayanti is the union of Gandhaari, panchami and aarshabhi.
8. Gaandhari, dhaivati, shaadji and madhyami are merged together to form gandharodeechyava.
9. Madhyamodhichyava is formed by the replacement of panchami in place of shaadji in the Gandharodeechyava.
10. The replacement of Nishadi in place of dhaivati will give raise to rakthagandhari jaathi.
11. Kaishiki jaathi is the combination of Shaadji, Gandhari, Madhyama, panchami and naishadhi,

This was the era where the scales were called as Jaathis. At the end of this era the concept of “Graama” started. The word Graama is in Sanskrit which means group of houses or a township. Hence, group of musical notations were also called as Graama.

**“ग्रामवत्ग्राम इत्येवं उपचारो विवक्षितः।
यथा जनसमूहस्य लोके ग्राम इति प्रथा ।
तथा स्वर समोहोत्र ग्राम इत्युपचर्यते॥”** (Chaturdandi prakashika)

The above classified Jaathis were tabulated into two groups or Graamas called. Viz. 1. Shadja graama and 2. Madhyama graama. According to Sharangadeva, the author of the most adored and broadly accepted musicologist The four Jaathis starting with the name *Shadja* i.e *Shaadji*, *shadja kaishiki*, *shadjodeechyava*, *shadja madhyama* and the jaathis *naishadhi* and *dhaivathi* together forms Shadja graama and the rest of the jaathis are Madhyama grama. In his words:

**“चतस्रः षड्जशब्दिन्यो नैषादी धैवती तथा।
आर्षभो चेति सप्तैताः षड्जग्रामस्य जातयः ॥**

शेषाः स्युर्मध्यमग्रामेण पूर्णत्वाद्यधुनोच्यते|....” (Sangeet rathnakara)

It is interesting to notice that the classifications like Audava raga or pentatonic scale, shadava raga or hexatonic scale, sampoorana or complete scale, audava-sampoorana etc which we use now were in use even before the scales were termed as Raga.

As per Sangeet rathnakarakara's opinion, the jaathis kaarmaravi, gandhara-panchami, shadja-kaishiki and madhyamodeechyava are always complete or sampoorana, the jaathis shadji, nandayanti, andhri, gandharodheechyava and aarshabhi are complete-hexatonic or sampoorana – shaadava, the rest viz. gaandhari, madhyami, panchami, dhaivathi, naishadhi, shadjodichyavaa, shadja- madhyama, raktagandhari and kaishiki are always complete, hexatonic and pentatonic.

The detailed characteristic features of these Jaathis were quoted by Bharathha in his Naatyashastra which are extrapolated to the Raga system as well. They are 1) Graha, 2) Amsha, 3) Tara, 4) Mandra, 5) Nyasa, 6) Apanyasa, 7) Alpatva 8) Bahutva, 9) Shadava and 10) Audava.

Adding to these 10 characteristic features of Jaathis, Shangradeva classifies Nyasa into Vinyasa, sanyasa and antaramarga which makes it totally thirteen lakshanas or features of Jaathis.

Rathnakarakaara writes mentioning the above features as:

**“ग्रहांशतारमन्द्राश्च न्यसापन्यसकौ तथा ।
अपि संन्यासविन्यासौ बहुत्वं चाल्यता ततः॥**

**एतान्यन्तरमार्गेण सह लक्ष्माणि जातिषु ।
षाडवोडुवितो कापीत्येवमाहुस्त्रयोदश ॥”** (Sangeet rathnakara)

The meaning and explanation of the above mentioned characteristic features:

1. **Graha:** The first note of the starting part of a musical composition is called Graha swara. There can be one or two Grahas for Jaathi.

**“गीतादिनिहितस्तत्र स्वरो ग्रह इतीरितः ।
तत्रांशग्रहयोरन्यतरोक्तावुभयग्रहः ॥”** (Sangeet rathnakara)

2. **Amsha:** The fundamental note of a Jaathi presented delightfully is known as amsha swara. It is also called as jeeva swaras.
3. **Taara:** This is concerned with the higher octave notes or Taara- saptak swaras of a particular jaathi. The limitations of the taarasthayi or taara saptak of Jaathis cannot be generalized as each of it has a separate quality with respect to the swara sancharas.
4. **Mandra:** Similar to the above mentioned quality the Mandra-saptak swaras differ from scale to scale.
5. **Apanyasa:** This refers to the swara extension given between each of the 4 stages of Aalapana called Aakshiptika, raagavardhini, vidaari, makarini and muktaayi.

6. **Sanyasa:** This refers to the small extension of swaras given in between two Apanyasas.
7. **Vinyasa:** The process of rendering Apanyasa and Sanyasa in small phrases is called vinyaasa.
8. **Bahutva:** The emphasis on repeating of one particular swara and strengthening the Alaapana is called as bahutva.
9. **Alpatva:** The opposite of Bahutva. The less repetition of the swara during a rendition.
10. **Nyasa:** The final note in which the musical composition is concluded is called as Nyasa. This feature also cannot be generalized by quoting one swara.
11. **Shadava:** The scales containing six notes or swaras are called as Shadava or Hexatonic scales.
12. **Audava:** The scales containing five notes or swaras are called as Audava or pentatonic scales.
13. **Antaramarga:** Except the position of the Amshaswara and others, including the rare notes intermittently in order to create an artistic variety.

The Jaathis mentioned by the old musical scriptures were later termed as Ragas. The characteristic features of Jaathis can be directly adopted as the qualities of Ragas as well. The ragas are rather believed to be the melodic phrases composed using the notations mentioned in the scale. The structure of the raga is often misunderstood with the structure of its Aarohana and avarohana. However, the reference of the Aarohana and avarohana is important in order to know the prakriti and vikriti swaras before phrasing the melody of a particular raga.

The creative combination of the swaras with aesthetic applications of its features like nyasa, bahuttva, taara, mandra and amsha without the Thaalas or rhythms and yet in a Laya is called as rendering a raga. After the end of the Jaathi and Grama era, the further technical classifications of Ragas continued but also the old classifications were retained as they were. However, the other details like prahaar were included. The information about when to play a particular raga, the appropriate time of the day is called as prahaar. The ragas were also classified accordingly as morning, evening and night ragas.

The healing qualities of Ragas has been discovered as well. The impact on the brain resulted by the vibrations created by the raga after listening will be tremendously healing and has been proved to have cured many mental and physical medical issues as well.

Hindustani classical music has separate vocal and instrumental tradition of music popularly known as Gayan and Vadan parampara. However, carnatic music does not have separate vocal and instrumental traditions. The musical compositions which are taught in vocal tradition is adopted and taught through instruments as well. However, the handling of the ragas and its sancharas are same incase of both vocal and instrumental.

The evolved form of Jathis- Ragas.

After the ragas evolved to its full form the classifications were made in a different way. The ragas of Hindustani classical music system and Carnatic classical music system were done differently.

The Raga classifications as per Carnatic tradition.

The Carnatic classical music follows the interesting method of classification of Ragas into two types. Viz. 1) Janaka raga and 2) Janya raga. These two types are further classified according to their characteristic features. The detailed classification is made as under:

1. **Janaka Raga:** Janaka ragas are also known with different names. Melakarta raga, karta raga, melaraga, raaganga raga, sampoorna raga are the few other names of the Janaka raga.

These ragas are called as Sampoorna ragas as it contains all the swaras Sa, Re, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha and Ni in its arohana and avarohana in the ascending and descending order. The word Janaka means “father”. This is called so because infinite ragas were formed on the basis of Janaka ragas. There are 72 types of Janaka ragas. These are further grouped into 12 chakras called Indu, netra, agni, veda, baana, rutu, rishi, vasu, brahmha, dishi, rudra and aditya respectively. Each chakra contains 6 mela karta ragas. (12X6). The combinations of vikriti swaras creates 72 ragas with 7 notes in both Aarohana and avarohana.

2. **Janya Raga:** The ragas birthed out of Janaka ragas are called as Janya ragas. They are also called as Asampoorna ragas. Janya ragas are sub-classified into Upanga ragas and Bhashanga ragas.

Janya ragas are formed by eliminating one or two swaras from arohana or avarohana or both from the melakarta raga. Hence they are also called as Varjya ragas. Varjya means elimination.

Due to this eliminations the different combinations of janya ragas are formed.

In an Arohana or avarohana if there are 4 swaras excluding the higher octave shadja then its called as swarantara, if there are 5 swaras then its called as Audava, if there 6 swaras then they are called as Shadava and if there are all the seven then they are called as sampoorna.

Hence the combinations like Audava- Audava i.e 5 notes in both arohana and avarohana , Audava-Shadava i.e 5 notes in arohana and 6 notes in avarohana, Audava- swarantara, swarantara- audava, swarantara-shadava, swarantara – swarantara , audava- sampoorna etc are formed.

If the janya ragas extracted out of a particular melakarta involves the swaras from other melakarta ragas in its arohana or avarohana then its called as Bhashanga raga. If one swara is adopted from the other melakarta then its called as eka- swara Bhashanga raga. Similarly, if two swaras are adopted then its called as dwi- swara bhashanga raga and so on.

If the Janya ragas carry the swaras only from their respective melakarta after eliminations of one or two swaras, not adopting any of the swaras from a different melakarta then they are known as Upanga ragas. If a particular swara repeats in arohana or avarohana of a Janya raga then such ragas are called as Vakra ragas. If one swara is repeated then it is called as eka-swara vakra raga, if the repetition is of two swaras then its called as dwi-swara vakra raga and so on.

It is important to know the raga sanchara of a raga before attempting the lyrical based or extempore compositions. The sanchara of a raga can be learnt through the observation of several composition of great masters composed in the same raga. Raga sanchara is also introduced with the swaras of a raga when new raga is being taught or introduced. Hindustani system follows the concept of Pakad –chalan which is similar to the introduction of Raga sanchara.

Sri Venkatamukhi , a musicologist during 1640s created the melakarta and janya classification system for carnatic music. It is believed that Pandit. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande(1860-1936) created the “Thaat” system as the parent scale for Hindustani music after learning about Venkata mukhi’s melakarta system.

It is also believed that the concept of lakshana geethas of carnatic system is adopted in Hindustani system as well. Lakshana geethas are the musical compositions in which the lyrical part carries the characteristic features about the raga in detail, theoretically.

Considering the prakriti and vikriti swaras Bhatkhande formatted ten thaats consisting 7 notes in each, arranged in Aarohana order. The ten thaats are Bilaawal, Kalyan, Khamaj, Bhairav, Poorvi, Marwa, Kafi, Asaveri, Bhairavi and Todi.

The thaats are constructed with the combinations of 12 swaras Shadja, Komal Rishabha, Shuddha Rishabha, Komal Gandhara, Shuddha Gandhara, Komal Madhyam, Shuddha Madhyama, Teevra Madhyama, Panchama, Komal Daivat, Shuddha Daivat, Komal Nishadha, and Shuddha Nishadha.

The Thaats are constructed with the saptaswaras in such a way no note is repeated and the each scale is different with different vikriti swaras. For example: If Bilaawal has Shuddha Rishabha then Bhairavi has Komal Rishabha. The details of the swaras involved in the ten Thaats are as under:

1. Bilaawal : Shadja, Shuddha Rishabha, Shuddha Gandhara, Shuddha Madhyama, Panchama, Shuddha Daivat, Shuddha Nishaad.
2. Kalyan : Shadja, Shuddha Rishabha, Shuddha Gandhara, Teevra Madhyama, Panchama, Shuddha Daivat, and Shuddha Nishaad.
3. Bhairav: : Shadja, Komal Rishabha, Shuddha Gandhara, Shuddha Madhyama, Panchama, Komal Daivat, and Shuddha Nishaad.
4. Kaafi: Shadja, Shuddha Rishabha, Komal Gandhara, Shuddha Madhyama, Panchama, Shuddha Daivat, Komal Nishaad.
5. Khamaj: Shadja, Shuddha Rishabha, Shuddha Gandhara, Shuddha Madhyama, Panchama, Shuddha Daivat, Komal Nishaad.
6. Asaveri: Shadja, Shuddha Rishabha, Komal Gandhara, Shuddha Madhyama, Panchama, Komal Dhaivata and Shuddha Nishaad.
7. Marwa: Shadja, Komal Rishabha, Shuddha Gandhara, Teevra Madhyama, Panchama, Shuddha Daivata, Shuddha Nishaad.
8. Purvi: Shadja, Komal Rishabha, Shuddha Gandhara, Teevra Madhyama, Panchama, Komal Daivata, Shuddha Nishaad.
9. Todi: Shadja, Komal Rishabha, Komal Gandhara, Teevra Madhyama, Panchama, Komal Daivata, Shuddha Nishaad.
10. Bhairavi: Shadja, Komal Rishabha, Komal Gandhara, Shuddha Madhyama, Panchama, Komal Daivata, Komal Nishaad.

After studying the forms of Thaats, the following factors can be understood about the characteristic features of Thaats:

1. Every Thaat contains a set of 7 notes extracted out of the total 12 notes.
2. The notations so extracted will be in the Arohana or ascending form.
3. A Thaat cannot include both the vikritis of the same swaras. For example: A Thaat cannot contain Shuddha and Komal Rishabha at the same time.
4. A Thaat will not have Avarohana or the descending part like ragas.
5. The structure of a Thaat doesn't carry any Bhavaa or the feel factors whereas each Raga has designated Bhaava.
6. Thaats are not rendered like the Ragas are, during the performances.

The two genres of Indian classical music Carnatic and Hindustani being the Raga based musical forms, there are similarities in the Parent scales as well as the extracted scales. The parent scale or Thaata Bilaawal is similar to Shankarabharana melakarta raga of carnatic, Kalyan is similar to Mechakalyani, Bhairav is equivalent to Mayamalawagowla, Kafi is the equivalent of Kharaharapriya, Khamaj is equivalent to Harikambhoji, Asavari is equivalent to Natabhairavi, Marwa is equivalent to Gamanasharama, Purvi is equivalent to Kamavardhini, Todi is equivalent to Shubhapantuvarali, and Bhairavi is equivalent to Hanumatodi.

It is interesting to notice that there are western classical music equivalent scales to these Thaats as well. Ionian mode is the equivalent of Bilaawal, Lydian mode is the equivalent of Kalyan, Double Harmonic scale is equivalent of Bhairav, Dorian mode is equivalent of Kafi, Mixolydian is the equivalent of Khamaj Aeolian mode is the equivalent counter part of Asaveri, Phrygian mode is equivalent to Bhairavi.

The Janya ragas of carnatic and Hindustani traditions also carries their equivalent counter parts. Like Mohana raga of carnatic is equivalent to Bhoopali of Hindustani, Hindola of carnatic is equivalent of Malkuns, Hamsadhvani raga has the same scale and name in both genres, Abheri raga of carnatic music is similar to Bhimphalas of Hindustani, Madhyamavathi of carnatic is equal to Megh malhar, Raga Kalyani is the carnatic equivalent of Yaman and so on.

Conclusion

Concluding the study, the Raga system had a detailed process of evolution before its original form which we study currently. The scale of some ragas, their notations will be having their equivalent counter parts in the other music genres too. The ragas are classified into Sampooorna or complete, Asampooorna or pentatonic or hexatonic considering the number of notes the scale. Every musical composition is based on one or the other raga or sometimes two or more ragas in a same composition irrespective of the awareness of the composer.

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