

Appreciating Carnatic Music
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Lecture - 14
Gamaka-1

(Music Starts: 00:16) (Music Ends: 02:16)

Perhaps the most, striking feature of carnatic music is, its texture. The texture of the music, is characterized by oscillation and shakes and many other movement, that are generally called by the term Gamaka. Now, if we recollect, we saw that two fundamental ways of making music are Melody and Harmony.

Now, when you take a single note, for instance, (Singing Starts: 03:03) (Singing Ends: 03:06) Now, this is G, the pitch G, on a standard western scale, (Singing Starts: 03:19) (Singing Ends: 03:21). When you have, when you adopt the harmonic way of making music single note, can take on many colours.

If you look at this, I will use this online keyboard, this is G. (Video Starts: 03:39) Now when you have harmonic, harmony at your disposal, or been you are trying to create music, using harmony. The single note G, can take on many colours, depending on what other notes are used, to accompany it as harmony. And I am using E as its harmonic accompaniment, now this how it sounds.

Suppose, I have take D and E as the harmony, this is the basic swara. The basic pitch, we are using G and these two are the harmonic accompaniment. So, it sounds like or if I were to take say, this then it will sound like this, or if I have take this and this sound like this.

So, many possibilities exist in harmony. When, with a single note, you have a single note and it assumes as many colours, as you vary the harmonic accompaniment. In melody, what you do with single note, when your music is melodic. As it is in the case of carnatic music, what can you do with single note, this is G (Singing Starts: 05:15) (Singing Ends: 05:18) not much melody is possible, what, one thing you can do is, vary the loudness and softness. And that in fact it is important aspect in carnatic music performance.

But in terms of music making, single note cannot achieve much (Singing Starts: 05:44) (Singing Ends: 05:51), this loudness, softness, (Singing Starts: 05:53) (Singing Ends: 06:03). This is what, we can do it at most, then your music is melody with the single note.

In the movement from one note to the another, there much variation is possible. So, if want take two notes, (Singing Starts: 06:21) (Singing Ends: 06:36), this is one (Singing Starts: 06:39) (Singing Ends: 06:43), it is more gentle. (Singing Starts: 06:44) (Singing Ends: 06:58) Which is two notes, movement between these two notes, there is much possibility lies here and when we have more than two notes of course the possibility increase.

Now gamaka, as I said, is essentially various ornamentations, as this called, that is applied to notes to swaras, which gives it a completely different flavor and feel. Let me demonstrate, what gamaka can do to the certain set of notes. I will take a tune, this is a very well, this is a very famous song. It was a great, it went viral in you tube few years ago.

The tune is like this, I am sure, all you there, would have identified this tune. (Singing Starts: 08:09) (Singing Ends: 08:20) This, I am sure, you know what song is, (Singing Starts: 08:24) (Singing Ends: 08:29) this is a Kolaveri song, in terms of note it is. (Singing Starts: 08:35) (Singing Ends: 08:49)

Now the same notes, just these notes (Singing Starts: 08:54) (Singing Ends: 08:59). These are the notes, if I were to use the gamakas (Singing Starts: 09:05) (Singing Ends: 10:00) this is what gamaka, can do to set of notes.

So, what then is gamaka, gamaka is s generic name. Now, when I just say (Singing Starts: 10:17) (Singing Ends: 10:20) this is one kind of gamaka, (Singing Starts: 10:22) this the swara, but we sing it as (Singing Ends: 11:11). So, there are many kinds of this ornamentation. (Singing Starts: 11:16) (Singing Ends: 11:30). So, generic term for, all this ornamentation is gamaka.

So, it is swaras, it is notes, that are sung or performed with gamaka. The notes that has gamaka or the ornamentation, but it always on the context of the raga. The raga determines, what kind of gamaka, a particular note will have, in a particular context, in a particular context of a phrase.

In the context of the raga again, we saw earlier raga essentially, admits of certain swaras and excludes others. So among those swaras, that a raga has, some of those swaras will have gamakas, some of them will not have gamakas. Both are equally important to ragas identity. And what gamaka, a swara, will have, that again depends on the context.

So, if for an instance, there is a very famous kriti, which you have heard earlier in the course. (Singing Starts: 13:01) (Singing Ends: 13:10). Here the notes are the same actually I sang earlier, (Singing Starts: 13:15) (Singing Ends: 13:23) this is the notation for this line. So, the ga as you can see there are three kind of ornamentations for it, within the single line. (Singing Starts: 13:34) (Singing Ends: 13:41). This is a different kind gamak. (Singing Starts: 13:44) (Singing Ends: 14:10)

So, the ga, within the single line, has three different ornamentation. So, to say and three different gamaks are applied to the same swara, same swara, in fact, when we discuss gamaka, and we talk of swaras being given gamakas or swaras are being given ornamentations.

There is fundamental element, it is quite misleading actually, this note as if we have the swara, then we apply the gamaka, that is not how it is, that is not how it is taught, that is not how it is absorbed and that is not how it is heard.

The swara and the gamaka are an integrated whole. They are separate, we can talk of them in situations like this, when we are trying to understand music, that we have the gandhara (Singing Starts: 15:15) (Singing Ends: 15:18) this the swara (Singing Starts: 15:19) (Singing Ends: 15:28) In that movement, you cannot actually hear the asp, pitch of the gandhara itself, (Singing Starts: 15:39) (Singing Ends: 15:41) this is the pitch, you cannot really hear it anywhere. This, (Singing Starts: 15:43) though we say ga (Singing Ends: 15:49) this is the ga.

Why do we say that this is ga, (Singing Starts: 15:52) (Singing Ends: 15:55) though, that particular pitch of gandhara is not really heard? We sing because this gadhara, this movement exists between ma and ri. (Singing Starts: 16:07) (Singing Ends: 16:12) So, that is where the gandhara is, that is where the ga is.

So, talking of swaras and then gamakas which, we say are applied on the, there is of element of it is. As I said misleading, to talk about it like this, if we have a clearly in our heads, this is only an attempt to analyse the music and has no truth beyond that. That it is no reflect, the way the music as to be heard, or music as taught, or music as performed.

A teacher teaching, this kriti, as for instance, when ever say. Ok this is the gandhara, sing the gandhara and then apply the ornamentation, that is absurd. That is not been possible, if you do it that way, you will not even get the sound, (Singing Starts: 17:12) (Singing Ends: 17:14) you have to hear it, and absorb it and produces it as is.

So, the swara and the gamaka are actually an integrated whole. Even when you listen to music, (())17:33 or a informed listener, is not going to sit back and say ok this is the gandhara and this is the particular gamaka apply to it, that is not how it works.

So, gamaka as I said, this is a generic term. Gamaka is a generic term, for this various kind of ornamentations is that, are applied to swara. That can be seen, has been applied to swaras, which is why, we get these kinds of musical sound. How do you analyse this. (Singing Starts: 18:14) (Singing Ends: 18:18). How could you describe, how to analyse it, if you want to? A musician, a performer, does not have to, a listener also does not have to analyse it.

But, when we are trying to describe this music, and understand it in a course like this is, one way to go about it. (Singing Starts: 18:42) (Singing Ends: 18:46). There is no single pitch here, this is the gandhara I may say. (Singing Starts: 18:53) (Singing Ends: 18:57). Even here (Singing Starts: 18:58) (Singing Ends: 19:05) the plain notes are just this.

(Singing Starts: 19:06) (Singing Ends: 19:10) But context of the raga like kharaharapriya, which is a major raga in carnatic music, (Singing Starts: 19:19) (Singing Ends: 19:30) this is how we can understand this music.

Like we have gandhara, but the gandhara is treated with this kind of gamaka. (Singing Starts: 19:48) (Singing Ends: 19:53). This is a different kind of gamaka, and all these gamakas have names. We do categorize them, we can talk about some of the major gamakas, that we hear in carnatic music.

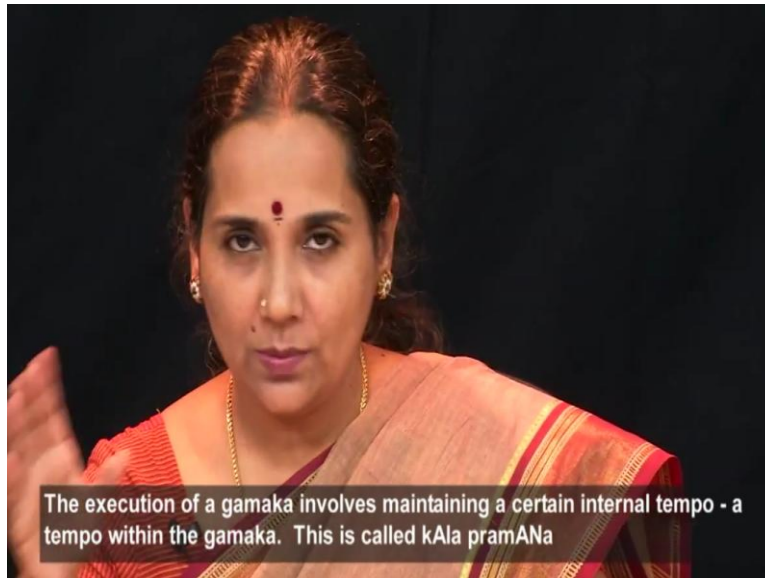
Beyond the certain point, we cannot possibly talk about all the subtle movement, that the that characterises carnatic music. We cannot exhaustively describe carnatic music, by talking of all the gamakas. There are many subtly movements, that must have remained beyond description.

Gamaka, is in the context of the raga, gamaka has applied to the swara in the context of a raga. The same swara in the raga may have different gamakas, given the context, and not all swaras in the raga will have gamakas. Simply from the point of view of, how one can receive the music in, if every swara is given some kind of ornamentation. Then this is going to get to ornate and to difficult to absorb.

So, anything at all can be relished, when there is something to contrast, to give relief. So we have plain notes to like (Singing Starts: 21:23) (Singing Ends: 21:34) so ri and ma are mostly plain. (Singing Starts: 21:36) (Singing Ends: 21:47). If, you are going to shake everything. (Singing Starts: 21:50) (Singing Ends: 21:59). This may get little too heavy and not quite aesthetic.

So, the other, one important aspects of gamaka is the, that it has an internal tempo. There is internal, what is called kAla pramAna, which is essentially translates into tempo. So, this movement, shaking or pushing or pulling or gliding, whatever the kind of ornamentation. There is certain tempo that is appropriate, to its delivery.

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The same example (Singing Starts: 22:50) (Singing Ends: 22:54) if you are going to sing (Singing Starts: 22:56) (Singing Ends: 22:59) that won't work. (Singing Starts: 23:03) (Singing Ends: 23:06). This also, will not be appropriate, this is not how it is done.

These is tempo, for the gamaka, and only when it is delivered, with that tempo, will be effective. And once, in the context of the raga, particular swara has to be treated with certain gamaka. It is not optional, this is not as if, musician can have decided, ok now I will sing with ornamentation, and now not with ornamentation.

When we say, that raga is basically made of swaras. That as is said, is only at the surface level, the swara with the gamaka, that is what constitutes, comprises the raga. And how do you know what gamaka to apply, when, or whether to apply or not apply. You just know it by, when you have learnt new compositions, when you learnt and when you heard so much of music by master. You absorb it and you know it.

And there is really no right or wrong, when we speak of ragas. And I mean something there are clearly wrong, if you sing, any alien note in kharaharapriya, for instance kharaharapriya does not have the does not have ri one, if you sing ri one that is clearly wrong.

But there are certain gray areas. For instance, (Singing Starts: 24:54) (Singing Ends: 24:59), now those kinds of ga, the kind of gamaka, that you apply. Sometimes there are gray areas and we have, master musicians, for anybody who is aficionado, the most you can say is that, is not appropriate. You cannot say that is incorrect. Appropriateness, what the Tamil word for it is porutham, the Sanskrit word will be auwchitya, it is uchitha, it appropriate that it has porutham in the context. That is what you can talk about.

And really in art, this is, this can only be an art stick. You can have right and wrong to a certain level. But beyond that, when artistry sets in, the art stick become that much more, not very objective. And yet that will be mostly, some agreement that it is not quite appropriate this alright it will work. That sort of judgments does happen all the time in art and in carnatic music especially.

(Music Starts: 26:28) (Music Ends: 30:43)