

Appreciating Carnatic Music
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Lecture - 22
Classification of raga-s (Audava, Shadava & Sampurna)

I spoke about, attempts to classify ragas, and I suggested that, one board classification, that very relevant in today's Carnatic music, is that between traditional ragas with strong character and newer creations whose melodic character, is quite in defined, beyond the swaras, and beyond the notes comprises the ragas. There is nothing really for musicians to take care of.

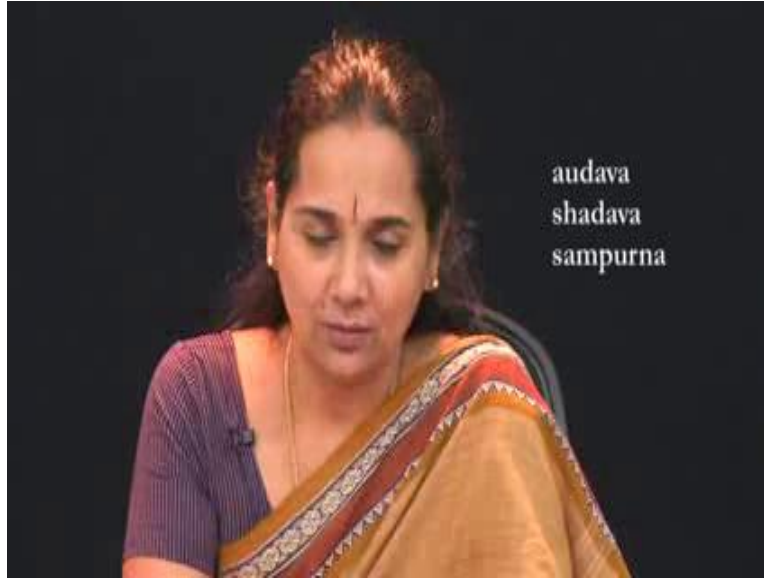
And so, to that extent, they are far less challenging and far less fulfilling to performer, to you to listen to. It is not to say that; this new creation are not melodies or that pleasant to listen to. They can be very melodies, they can even move person. But in terms of the, demands of the musicianship, on the artistry of music, of musicians, these ragas do not compare that well with traditional ragas.

One way of classifying wide range of ragas that we have, would obviously be in terms of the swaras, the notes that occur in them. And there are two ways of doing this, one is in terms of actual swaras, that each raga takes, and that is what the melakartha system is. Mela system of classification uses, we will see that later.

But the more, superficial ways of the looking at the swaras, and using that as classification tool, is to see the number of swaras that each raga has. As I mentioned, there is a requirement of minimum of five swaras in any raga, exception apart, exception is very few. Any raga for viability, should have at least five swaras. So, we have ragas with five swaras, we have ragas with six swaras and we have ragas with seven swaras.

And there are technical terms for these, ragas with five swaras are called audava ragas, ragas with six swaras is called shadava ragas, and ragas with seven swaras, all the seven swaras are called sampurna ragas.

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In the early lesson on raga and swara, I have demonstrated quite a few of these ragas, mohanam hamsadhvani and hindolam. These are all the examples of the audava ragas, ragas that have only five swaras.

Mohanam for instances is (Singing Starts: 04:00) (Singing Ends: 04:11) this is mohanam. Hamsadhvani is (Singing Starts: 04:16) (Singing Ends: 04:31) Hindolam is (Singing Starts: 04:34) (Singing Ends: 04:41). These are all audava ragas. We have shadava ragas, also with six swaras (Singing Starts: 04:49) (Singing Ends: 04:56) Malayamarutham, (Singing Starts: 04:59) (Singing Ends: 05:07) Sriranjani. And then of course, we have sampurna ragas with all seven swaras.

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And then we have combination of these, we have ragas which have five swaras in aroha and six in avaroha or seven in the avaroha we have. And those raga is called audava-shadava or audava-sampurna.

We have ragas, which have six in aroha and seven in the avaroha, we have many-many of these combinations. We even have ragas like saramathi, which has seven swaras in the aroha and five in the avaroha (Singing Starts: 05:56) (Singing Ends: 05:07) this is saramathi. (Singing Starts: 06:10) (Singing Ends: 06:31) there is a great composition by Thyagaraja in this raga (Singing Starts: 06:37) (Singing Ends: 08:47) this was saramathi. A sampurna audava raga, it takes seven in the aroha and five swaras in the avaroha.

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But we also have ragas, which are called vakra. They have zigzag kind of movement (Singing Starts: 09:14) (Singing Ends: 09:34), it doesn't go like that. (Singing Starts: 09:36) (Singing Ends: 09:26). So just slight, a twist in the tale, that gives certain flavor to the raga and these are called vakra ragas. And we have plenty of such vakra ragas in Carnatic music.

Some, very major ragas have vakra sancharas, vakra phrases. Bhairavi, for instances, bhairavi is very major raga (Singing Starts: 10:28) (Singing Ends: 10:34), without this vakrathva the crookedness (Singing Starts: 10:37) (Singing Ends: 10:45) there is no bhairavi, without that vakra phrase, you cannot say (Singing Starts: 10:50) (Singing Ends: 10:53) This is also occasionally we can sing it.

But the life of this raga, is in (Singing Starts: 11:00) (Singing Ends: 11:21). Ananda Bhairavi another raga, as a same phrase (Singing Starts: 11:29) (Singing Ends: 11:46). So many traditional ragas have this, crookedness inbuilt, in their movement, in their way they move.

And even actually, even in ragas which are otherwise, we have categories them sampurna or shadava or audava. The phrases, and I am talking of traditional ragas, the phrases, many of the important phrases have crookedness. If you take shankarabaranam for instances (Singing Starts: 12:29) (Singing Ends: 12:40).

Now there are many phrases, very important phrases, which are essentially involve in jumping notes. If you take this swara sequence, it is actually part of famous composition (Singing Starts: 12:58) (Singing Ends: 13:07) So there is skip of pa (Singing Starts: 13:09) (Singing Ends: 13:15) this is completely vakra. (Singing Starts: 13:17) (Singing Ends: 13:20), instead of that, (Singing Starts: 13:20) (Singing Ends: 13:27) this is straight, (Singing Starts: 13:29) (Singing Ends: 13:36).

The first part of this line of swaras, showcases the vakra sanchara, vakra phrases of shankarabaranam. In fact, very important phrase in shankarabaranam, which captured in another great composition is (Singing Starts: 13:57) (Singing Ends: 14:03) just this, is very ivocative of shankarabaranam.

So though, we speak of aroha avaroha. These are actually, just pedagogical devices, and they should not really shackle the musician. Once he or she wants to engage to the raga creatively artistically. In fact, performers are not, all the time thinking of aroha or avaroha when they are performing a raga. That would be very shackling, very restricted.

And ragas in fact, as is said aroha avaroha, these are just way of talking of raga, describing of raga. Even at beginner's level, teaching the raga, to teach a raga, you probably you talk of aroha avaroha. Though, in fact traditionally, a couple of generation ago, that was also not the case. Aroha and avaroha has come into some importance, only as a relatively recent phenomenon.

This concept of aroha or avaroha, or ascent and descent, was also not a part of musicological discussion, until after the eighteen century. It is fairly new concept, because earlier ragas were entirely understood according to the phrases. And by the time of late eighteen century, by after eighteen century, the attempts of musicologist to talk about, scales and the number of possible scales, that had gained a strong hold on the imagination of musicologist.

And then ragas, the scale, that raga has, that started gaining more prominence, in the minds of musicians and musicologist.