

Appreciating Carnatic Music
Online course
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Lecture 68
Ghatam

We will move on to Prasanna he will talk about Ghatam and his approach. So, a Ghatam generally called as Ghata in Sanskrit which means clay pot or mud, so that is how the name was derived to the instrument. So, Ghatam is also prevalent in other parts of India it is called Matki or Ghajini in Rajasthan, Nout in Kashmir.

So, first I will explain the structure of the Ghatam - it has three parts. This is the body of the Ghatam, this is the neck and this is the mouth. So, the body produces the sound like this sharp sound or treble and neck part closely matches with the shruti or the shadjam and the mouth part has the bass sound.

So, Ghatam is a unique instrument - like we have the syllables the basic syllables in all percussion South Indian instrument is the same Tha Thi Thom Num. So, this is how it is played in Ghatam, Tha is played like this, Thi, Thom, Num I will use the thumb, the basic lessons in Ghatam start likes this

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So, there are other nuances of the Ghatam which produces different tones when we keep the Ghatam at different positions for example Thom, here it is different sound when it played like this and this is used to match the toppi of the mridangam, base of the kanjira.

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So what do you exactly do when you playing that,?

yeah it is like we cover the resonance part with belly part of the Ghatam which suppresses the resonance inside the belly so that we do not get full sound and we are kind of try to inhale, so that our stomach or belly goes in, the breath control is involved, when we play this and we can have the support of the other hand to push the Ghatam.

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So, this produces the sound and ok, we can use the mouth to play the base also. It depends on the particular artist who specialises in playing this style because it produces the great resonances like

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So simply you can play like this or like this or you can have control over the air inside the Ghatam

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So, these are the different techniques used in Ghatam.

And there are two schools of fingering techniques by Sri Palani Krishna Iyer and by Umaiyalpuram Sri Kothandarama Iyer. So, they have a different fingering technique approach and ok my Guru as specialist in blending both these types which will use; which we call as a Gumiki similar to the tone which is used in I mean used in mridangam.

We have a fingering technique called double Gumki which uses the both parts like this, to be precise it will go like this

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This is widely used by my master and it is a great variety of sound and when it is used in right permutation and combination in a Korvai or in a fingering technique in a concert it gives us more pleasure of playing the instrument.

Are there different types of Ghatams?

Yeah, the most preferred Ghatam is made in a place called Manamadurai near Madurai the southern temple city of Tamilnadu. So, the basic raw material the clay we can find it in the Vaigai river.

So, they will take the clay and they will dry it and they will make the clay with raw sand and with some fine particles of fine metal particles which gives us the tonal sound and they make the normal clay pot which is the normal process to make a pot and the pot is dried for two or three days and it is placed in the heat furnace. It is about the Manamadurai Ghatam, it is the normal process for all the Ghatams.

What is the difference between the Manamadurai Ghatam and the other Ghatam that is Madras Ghatam?

It is Madras Ghatam, the clay which is found in the Vaigai river - it is proved to be like a unique clay. So, the sound which is produced from that play that kind of Ghatam is totally different from; you have played in both the Ghatam, yes and this is the Madras Ghatam, which is light in weight and easy to carry and it produces more sound.

It needs less effort to play - Mana Madurai Ghatam is bigger in size that is much bigger in that is heavier in size and the clay walls are thicker than this Ghatam and we need huge amount of practice and expertise to produce sounds from that Ghatam.

I started with vocal music, so I learnt vocal and I had some time left in between. So, I thought I will start learning mridangam.

And I happened to see my Guru in one of my concerts in the year 2000 and the tonal quality and the way he was presenting in the concert, ok, I got very attracted to it and I decided to switch over to Ghatam. So, have you found it to advantage of learning mridangam and Ghatam. Yes, like I find it is a great boon that I was able to learn vocal, mridangam and now Ghatam.

And during when I play concerts it is help us, easy to listen to the Kriti and enjoy the bhava of the Kriti and even the Kalpana swaras when the vocalist sings and we can accompany them. We can easily adapt to their style and the prominent thing is we can enjoy other person's music and we can play together.

We cannot do much to tune the shruti. We can reduce the shruti by a bit - by play dough which is used by children to make different toys or something. So, we can put the clay in inner part of the; we cannot increase the pitch no, it is only for decreasing the pitch, that too by a fine tuning process, we cannot do much about the pitch.

Before Mr. Kalaimamani S. Krishnan sir lecdem we will go on play few avarthanams
(Music Demonstration Start Time: 10:59)

Thanks Prasanna it is very nice of you doing the very excellent presentation of the Ghatam in detail