

Appreciating Hindustani Music
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Lecture 10
The World of Raga 2 - Strong and Weak notes

In the last lesson we saw that every raga is associated, can be captured at a very fundamental level with a scale of ascending and descending swaras called the Aaroha and Avaroha. And I ,again to emphasize, it is just the skeleton of the raga. Now how do we flesh out the raga? What are some of the- can be called- the design aspects of raga as it were?

You know some of these are that you know though some notes in the raga have to be highlighted and relative to other notes. There are some swaras on which phrases may end and others swaras on which they may not end some swaras on which from which phrases begin. So, in this and the next video we will look at these aspects.

So, now, when a raga includes a set of notes, every one of those notes is critical right it has to be included and other notes have to be kept out it is not up to the creative musicians whim or, it is not up to a musician to say that I will skip one note or use another note. Then you are not performing Hindustani music.

[Music] if it is Bhoop [Music] you have to use all the notes you cannot say that I am going to try and sing Bhoop without the Gandhara or without the Dhaivt you cannot do it nor can you say let me try to bring in another note. So, that sort of thing is not allowed right. So, that is very fundamental.

Of course if you are using Bhoop to create a film song or a bhajan then that is up to you, but when you are singing Bhoop as a- in Khayal or Dhrupad then that is a freedom you do not have. But though every note as I said is critical you have to use it some notes are to be highlighted. The typically we we talk of two swara every raga we identify two swaras- in every raga there are two swaras which have to be highlighted the most important swara and the next important swara.

So, we and these are called vadi and samvadi. These are called vadi and samvadi this is the most important or it has to be highlighted this is next in importance. We have certain parameters which are used in a standard description of raga. The first of course, is Aroha Avaroha and then comes vadi samvadi.

Amongst these swaras which is the most important and which is the swara that is next in importance. In the case of Bhoop for instance it is Ga and Dha again Yaman Ga and Ni Gandhar and Nishad. So, Yaman has a scale of the scale of Yaman is this [Music] [Music] this is the scale between we sing Yaman its.

[Music]. So, the Gandhar is highlighted constantly [Music] and Ni [Music] [Music]. So, Ga and Ni are vadi samvadi for Yaman and if you listen to some of the many compositions in Yaman we will bear it out they will typically highlight the Ga you will we will see later on the composition

every composition in Khayal especially we have what is called the Mukhda, the first part of the first part of the composition which lands on the first beat of the cycle.

And that is the refrain basically. And that we- that typically very often in many compositions it is on Ga for instance [Music]. So, [Music]. So, Gandhar is highlighted again [Music] or [Music] again Ga or [Music] yeah [Music]. So, we have a wide variety of compositions and very often you find typically you know in the Yaman the composition will highlight the Gandhara right in the beginning.

Now, vadi and samvadi again they are concepts that are found in medieval treatises onwards even earlier from the 8th century onwards itself and they are actually part of a quartet this a quartet of concepts which is vadi samvadi So, vadi samvadi anuvadi vivadi this is an ancient quartet of concepts and these are they continue to be irrelevant there is you know in the context of vadi is compared to the king of a realm.

And samvadi is compared to the minister who assists the king, right. The king- it is the king's realm right he dominates over the realm and he rules the kingdom. And so, also the vadi swara is it dominates over the raga and the minister the samvadi is supposed to assist the king right. And so, the samvadi assists the vadi swara.

Anuvadi is the rest of the subjects who go along with the king, you know, strengthening his will and letting him lead the way, but vivadi is the enemy of the state and should not be permitted into the realm into the kingdom into the raga. This is a verse, in Sangeeta Makaranda. Vaadiswarastu raajaasyaan mantriisamvaadirucyateSwarovivaadivairi syaad anudvaadi cha bryavat. This is Sangeeta Makaranda of Narada.

So, as I said vadi samvadi are you know very are part of standard descriptions of raga . So, Yaman as I said would be described as it has all the Suddha swaras except Madhyam which is Tivra and the Gandhar Ga is vivadi and Ni is the samvadi this would be a very preliminary description of Yaman.

We have another set of concepts which also have to do with the strength of swaras, but they are not it is not the identical concept you know ,we have this concept of Alpatva. Alpa means less right small Bahu is more. In ragas there are some swaras sometimes you know which are supposed to have- be very less. Their presence is very very very diminished, very less. We I would not say weak-weak gives another idea. They are important that weak that diminished presence of that swara is important. It is not weak, but it is diminished. Bahu is, of course, more. So, vadi and samvadi will of course, have Bahutva right they will occur very frequently in the raga exposition.

But that does not mean that the other swaras. So, in Yaman Ga and Ni are vadi and samvadi that does not mean Re Dha or Pa and Sa are there for, Alpa or they are they are diminished no in a raga like Yaman every swara has Bahutva in the sense every swara has can be highlighted. But of course, not at the expense of vadi and samvadi; vadi and samvadi, relatively they should be more dominant, but it does not mean that Re has a has a diminished presence or it is weak.

But in a raga like Bihag [Music] this is the Aroha [Music]. So, the Dha is there [Music] you cannot this will destroy Bihag the Dha is just a flicker. And that flicker is important it is critical [Music] the Re also [Music]. So, the Re the Re and the Dha are they have Alpatva a flicker of it when we come from Sa from Ni to Pa the Dha is a flicker again from Ga to Sa the Re is a flicker and that that flicker is important no more no less. And that is Re and the Re and the Dha are supposed to have Alpatva in Bihag.

So, in medieval descriptions of raga we have this concept of amsha which is the same as the vadi. Amsha is supposed to be the most important swara in the raga and that is what we speak of as the vadi. We also have references to categories of Graha and Nyasa in the ancient treatises. So, amsha which is equal which is equivalent to the concept of vadi we also have this Graha and Nyasa these are all categories found in medieval text onwards and they continue to be of significance, Graha is the swara on which phrases may begin right in in contemporary music that is, we describe Graha as the swara or the notes. That there are a few notes on which phrases may begin.

There are some notes on which they may not begin right. So, again to take Bihag though typically phrases would begin with Ni and Ga [Music] that is more rare- Sa [Music] [Music] this is not that appropriate. It is not, you know, it will not be, it is not a crime to sing it, but the better way is to start the phrase on Ni.

Again [Music] that is better than [Music] this is almost not- does not sound right [Music] this though you know because it is part of the Aroha it should be alright, but it does not really bring out the flavor of the raga. You have to start on Ga or Ni preferably or Pa not so much on Sa and Ma those are not preferred Graha swaras. So, swaras on which the phrases may begin. Now, Nyasa swara is also a very important category where phrases may end [Music]. So, Nyasa swara because its where phrases end typically that note could be highlighted right because when you rather than the note on which you begin phrases because that is just going to be the beginning of the phrase, but where you end, that is going to highlight that swara. So, Nyasa swara and vadi are sometimes quite the same , but again the concepts are different. We have these two ragas which are quite different. But they sound very alike you know Tilak Kamod and Desh they have a lot in common, but one of the very important different distinguishing features is this Nyasa swara.

So, Tilak Kamod the Nyasa swara is often the Sa after the prominent Ga right [Music]. The Re is there- just a flicker. So, the Sa is a Nyasa swara or the swara on which it ends [Music].

Whereas, these the same melodic region melodic area [Music] you stop on the Re. Re is a very important Nyasa swara.

[Music] [Music]. So, this Nyasa swara is actually a very important consideration in handling the swaras in a raga. So, we will listen to a a composition in Desh. Desh is also associated with monsoon there are many compositions in Desh that describe the monsoon and this is also one such -it says the the woman in this is describing the gathering clouds, the lightning and the thunder and her desire to be with her beloved.

[Music]