

**Appreciating Hindustani Music**  
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**Lecture 13**  
**Raga and Time Association**

One of the intriguing and endearing aspects of Hindustani music is the association of ragas with times of the day and night. Association in the sense that it is prescribed that every raga be performed at a particular, during a particular duration in the day or in the night. There are also raga and season associations. Now, these are said not found in Carnatic music, I mean, ideas are there of course, both Carnatic and Hindustani spring from common sources. So, the idea that raga and time are associated is there, but it is not followed and and it is not extensive, it is not like every raga is assigned a particular time in Carnatic music whereas it is so, in Hindustani music. And some ragas are associated with some seasons. So, this as I said is a very colorful aspect of this tradition. Now, the idea that ragas have to be performed at certain times of the day or at certain seasons for optimal effect or for auspiciousness also is found in medieval texts onwards.

The raga season association was possibly an earlier association Abhinavagupta of the 10th century for instance quotes an earlier authority Kashyapa. He says "Raga Prekholita should be sung in spring, so, should Malavapanchama. Takka raga, Gaudakukkubha, Bhinnashadja, Kaishika and Bhinnapanchama, are favoured in summer and the subsequent seasons". Now, this authority that he is quoting Kashyapa was probably he possibly lived in this 7th and 8th centuries. so, this idea has been there from that time.

But perhaps the earliest text to talk about a raga time association that is time during the day was Nanyadeva; he was a king of Mithila during the 11th century. When he prescribed that every raga be sung at a particular time you know the raga should be performed at certain duration certain times of the day.

What he had in mind was that it was more auspicious to do so, that and its even linked to punya or as we call these days good karma. Now, this then so, morphed into an association that we talk about- the mood of the raga is best brought out when you sing or you perform it at its assigned time.

Now, how is the raga time association schematized? The 24 hour day is divided into 8 Prahara. 8 Prahara of obviously 3 hours each. There are 8 Prahara 3 hours. So, the 24 hour cycle is divided into 8 Praharas each of 3 hours and every raga is assigned a particular Prahara. you have 4 Praharas in the during the day and 4 in the night. Now what is day ? Day is- the day begins with sunrise.

So, the first Prahara of the day is from sunrise to 3 hours after sunrise and the first Prahara of the night is after sunset. That the concept of Prahara is general it is not specific to music it is used in

other disciplines also like astrology. So, as I said every raga is assigned a particular Prahara and for instance Raag Yaman we say that it has to be performed at the first Prahara of the night Raath ka pratham prahara or Din ka you know dvitiya prahara whatever, this is how we talk about in the raga time association.

So, now though you know this idea has been there for many centuries that raga every raga is optimally performed at a particular time. There was no attempt to give a rationale for it. why is it that you know Raag Bhairav should be sung at dawn or Puriya Dhanashree should be sung at dusk or Raag Malkaun should be sung at midnight?

There was no it it was just prescriptions of individual ragas and the first person who tried to make sense of it really was Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande. he, Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande was what we call a Yugapurush you know he shaped his work, shaped Hindustani music of the 20th century his and couple other great visionaries.

Now, for Bhatkhande the raga time association was one of the very important distinctions between Carnatic and Hindustani music and so he emphasized it. See, that was also the time when classical music as such was being defined and given shape to, as India moved into modernity.

So, he was trying to list out the differences between Carnatic and Hindustani music and this was one of the few- that though, you know, the idea of raga time association is also there in Carnatic music hm it is not unknown.

But it is not; it is not extensive and it is not really practiced we do not bother about it in Carnatic music, though we may say like raga like Bilahari is a morning raga, but no that does not stop us from performing a performing it at night, whereas, definitely even today nobody would perform Bhairav in the night. it is just not done. Except by, you know, rebels of which we do not have many. At least I do not know of anybody who performs Bhairav in the night or Yaman in the morning. That does not happen.

So, Bhatkhande suggested he that ragas can be divided into three categories depending on the swaras that occur in them. That is, he practically, he basically argued or suggested that why a raga gets assigned, has been assigned a particular time of the day or night is because of the tonal content. When ragas have komal Re and komal Dha.

So, that is a standard notation to indicate that its komal, this line underneath. this is part of Bhatkhandes notation system in fact. So, when you have ragas which have komal Re and komal Dha and Shuddha Ma- and Shuddha Ma- then these are ragas that are to be sung at day break. These are typically ragas that are sung during the day break whereas, if you have komal Re komal Dha and Ma teevra- again this is the notation for the augmented Ma in Bhatkhande system- these ragas are sung at dusk when the sun sets. So, you have the first category of ragas with just komal Re and komal Dha, and the second category of ragas; komal Re and komal Dha are day break or sunset depending on the Ma.

Then the next set of ragas will have Shuddha Re and Shuddha Dha. Then the ragas that come after this will have komal Ga and komal Ni. So, he suggested that suppose we start in the

evening, during sunset we have Re Dha komal and Ma teevra ok; this is the sunset ragas which move to Re Dha with Ma teevra.

Again Re Dha Shuddha and Ma teevra Ma teevra continues and this is the early night ragas. And then it slowly moves to Ga Ni komal with Ma Shuddha and that become the Shuddha Dha when the Madhyam become Shuddha- it indicates that you know the day is that the night is coming to a close and we are heading towards the morning.

Because morning ragas, according to his analysis mostly- they have the Shuddha Madhyam and evening night ragas have mostly teevra Madhyam and then this continues and you have Re Dha komal and Ma Shuddha and it becomes this is late night and this becomes early morning. And the same cycle. Then this progresses to Shuddha Re and Shuddha Dha and Shuddha Ma when you have late morning ragas and then you have komal Ga and Ni and Shuddha Ma which is the even later morning ragas and then you go into afternoon ragas.

And so, this was his, what should I say, an empirical study of the ragas and an empirical suggestion based on- it is an empirical suggestion. he looked at the ragas he looked at the swaras and he saw these patterns and, you know, the time that was prescribed for them and he discerned this pattern.

So, we have Samay Chakra- this is also an interesting concept. it is a circular ; it is a circular schema, you know, we have a circle basically divided into sectors and each sector standing for one Prahara and the ragas are assigned- that are assigned- to that Prahara are written in that sector. Now, what I have for you is slightly modified- it is a raga Samay Chakra because you know it is not exactly the 3 hour duration.

Now, this Madhyam as I said- Ma is is an important indicator of what time the raga is possibly assigned to. So, Shuddha Madhyam, as is are normally- ragas with Shuddha Madhyam are normally performed in the day and ragas with the teevra Madhyam are normally performed during the night- dusk onwards. So, the Madhyam is called Adhvarshaka. Adhvarshaka means it shows, it indicates. so, whether the Madhyam is Shuddha or teevra depending on that you have an idea what time the raga is likely to be assigned. So, as you see this is a pretty elaborate idea, this raga time association. It is taken very seriously. So, as for raga season association, every raga is not assigned a particular season. it is not recommended that- recommendation does not hold for every raga, but for a few very few really. So, the Malhar kind of Malhar family of ragas is associated with the monsoon- rains. Even raag Desh to some extent is associated with monsoon. We have. And then we have spring. Basant and Bahar, these are two ragas that are associated with spring.

So, these are really very few ragas that have a seasonal association which is really- what should I say- a petering down of this. At a particular time in the history of this music, every raga almost seemed to have had a seasonal association but today what we do have left is association of some ragas with the monsoon and with spring.

Now, you see Bhatkhandes observations and suggestion of the link between the tonal material the kind of swaras that a raga has and the time it is assigned to the many of them are valid but

there are many anomalies too, there are many exceptions too. And there have been experiments, I mean- what is the nature of this association why is it that we want Yaman should be performed only in the first part of the night? Is there any objective? can it hold objectively or is it cultural conditioning?

There have been experiments conducted on listeners, lay listeners, and I do not think so-there has been no conclusive evidence that raag Yaman suggests first part of the night and Brindavani Sarang suggests afternoon you know, these are the time times associated with these ragas. Or Bhatiyar suggests just to pre dawn- it is very hard to vindicate these associations in this manner. So, it seems quite likely and it seems reasonable to say that this is just a matter of cultural conditioning.

So, raga time association is not only not objectively- what should I say- justifiable there- it is not that- there is nothing to say that it has to be sung at- there is nothing to say that a particular raga has to be sung at a particular time apart from just the convention that that is how it should be. And plus it also causes a lot of inconvenience, you know, because most concerts are held in the evenings and so, a large number of ragas are not heard or some ragas are heard much more than other raga, but you know the world of Hindustani music finds its ways and methods to work around this. So, the consideration of time is not very strict. So, if you have a concerts say from 6 to 9 you may even hear Malkauns in it though Malkauns is supposed to be sung around 12 'o clock.

The only thing is you will not hear Malkauns before Yaman because Yaman is is a raag that is supposed to come the first part of the night Malkauns is sometime the third part of the night. So, you may hear a raga the Yaman followed by maybe Jaijaiwanti and then you will have Malkauns.

So, this kind of loosening of the the raga Samay, raga time expectation is there we it is not very stringently followed, but it is not been completely set aside. you will not find a morning raga sung in the evening for instance and the vice versa.

So, in fact, in the last century we had many we had a few musicians who questioned much about the aesthetics of Khayal especially, you had musician I am talking about musicians like Kishori Amonkar and Pandit Kumar Gandharva or Pandit Jasraj also they are they they struck very bold new paths.

But even they did not question the raga time association they respected it, they maintained it. So, as I said, it is cultural conditioning, but we need not dismiss it just because it is just cultural conditioning all music for that matter is cultural conditioning right? If I like this music more than other music it is because of a certain conditioning. So, this raga time raga season association is just one of those quirky aspects of this world which brings color and a certain intrigue and mystique to it and it is not going away anytime soon [Music].