

MANODHARMA SANGEETA

Before we attempt an account of *Gamakas*, it is better to place Indian music as an essentially *Manodharma Sangeeta* (or, "individual-imagination (intuition) -driven-music" – in its perspective.

Indian, and in particular, Carnatic, classical music is most often performed by single individuals (with accompanists, as in the case of a typical concert). This contrasts with Western music in which mostly, groups of people sing, or an orchestra with segments of instrumentalists, performs in harmony according to given detailed notations for the music, melodic ornamentations as such not usually having a dominant role which is taken over by the concept of harmony which has historically been the subject of development by great classical composers of the West. Indian classical music has been developed more in accordance with the cultural discipline which emphasizes the identification of one's individual self with the cosmic supreme. However, the practice of singing in choirs with traces of harmony has been in vogue since time immemorial - in the South, for example, even as early as during the *Cilappadhikaram* days. Sadly, this tradition has largely fallen into disuse, confined nowadays as it is mostly to *Devaaram* singing in some temple processions by trained *Odhuvans* of *Tamizh Naadu* and group *Bhajan* singing.

In *Manodharma Sangeeta*, the hallmark of Indian classical music, the items are rendered by the individual with an effort to give expression to his or her own creative ideas, 'ex tempore', that is, distinctly and spontaneously for the occasion and time of presenting the item. The individual singer (or the instrumentalist when playing solo) is expected to display his (or her) creative ideas according to well-established rules. This he should do while reverently adhering to the composer (*vaag-geya-kaara*)'s original intentions in prescribing melodic patterns to suit *the Bhaavas* (emotion, feeling) he seeks to express through words and *Raaga*-music. (More on *Bhaavas* below.)

GAMAKA AS AN ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF INDIAN MUSIC.

Gamakas are one of the primary/essential aspects of *Manodharma Sangeeta* which has 22 microtones or "*shrutis*". (Microtones are of course used in Western classical music, although relatively sparingly, due to the difficulties of incorporating them along with harmonic chords but they are used much more frequently in non-classical music especially in electronic music). The shakes and quavers used in Western music do not have the rigorous rules of the Indian classical system which is based on the *Raaga* (or colour/ emotional quality) concept. This is a unique aspect of Indian classical music, especially, Carnatic music.

Every *Raaga* has to be necessarily rendered with the appropriate *Gamakas* for the *Svaras*, since *Svara* is not a discrete note, but a scale degree and all its associated melodic movement, or *Gamaka*. There are different types of *Gamaka* which are available for use and each *Svara* of *Raaga* may be employed by a musician according to well-defined rules and with flexibility and elaboration limited only by the musician's creative imagination.

The other primary features of *Manodharman Sangeeta* may not be discussed in detail in this brief article on *Gamakas*. Suffice it to say they are, primarily : *Bhaava* and *Raaga*, and, for compositions like *Varna*, *Keertana/Kriti* ,*Tillaanaa* or other type of item, additionally, *Taala*. The other elements of a composition (not discussed here) are *Sangatis* and *Kaala*, and other specialized techniques of sophistication.

The *Bhaava* aspect, as noted earlier, is applicable sentiments contained in the words (*saahitya*) of a lyric. There are also specially suitable *Bhaavas* for which particular *Raaga* can be used with effect for a song, with or without time measure - pathos by use of *Raaga Sahana*, rejoice using *Vasanta*, poignancy using *Kaanada*, anger/heroism using *Athaana*, for instance. *Bhaavas* are expressions of love/devotion (and suppliance) to the deity if a deity is focussed, humility, compassion, and other feelings/emotions. Most often the *Bhaavas* in lyrics are broadly formatted by the composer himself who indicates appropriate choices of *raaga sanchaaras* (or musical phrases) for the lyrics in desired contexts in order to emphasize them (the *Bhaavas*) and the performer may build up on the format using his innovative imagination even as he conforms to the tradition imbibed from his *Guru/s*.

All the aspects are duly taken care of by an adequately knowledgeable and creative performer (and further, for a vocal singer, gifted with a melodious voice) who is well-trained and skilled. The music thus becomes a memorable spirit-impacting experience which is mutually rewarding to both the audience and the performer, in terms of the enduring peace, tranquillity, strength and joy which are obtained. A performer cannot hope to entertain and please the audience unless in the first place, he himself enjoys as he performs. It is very evident that although Bhaava, Raaga and Gamaka concepts are discussed in separate terms for analytical understanding of Indian classical music, they are truly interwoven such that each cannot be separated from the others, given the idiom of the Manodharma-sangeeta.

GAMAKA DESCRIPTION.

In the words of Ravi Shankar, the world-famous sitar player who contributed greatly to popularising Indian classical music in India and abroad, writing in his "My Music - My Life", "the gamakas , or grace notes--the many different ways of sounding, embellishing, and resolving notes--are the subtle shadings of a tone, delicate nuances and inflections around a note that please and inspire the listener. . . . The ornaments are not arbitrarily attached to a melody; rather, they seem to grow out of it."

Gamakas greatly help to bring out the Bhaava(s) of a Raaga. Each Raaga in its comprehensive definition, or 'Lakshana' in Sanskrit, is associated with rules for the use of Gamakas for its notes, and not all of the notes in a Raaga may be sung with Gamakas. (An example illustrates this point: The Bahudaari raaga has the ascending notes - Aarohana – sgmpdns , and Descent - Avarohana : snpmgs. The svaras ga and dha are not rendered with gamakas, although ga may find a subtle place in a gamaka for 'ma' as ma = gpg, and dha in only in Arohana, as in ni = dsd . Also these gamakas are not appropriate for the descent, and this differential gamaka availability produces a beauty that can only be experienced by actual listening!)

GAMAKA TYPES.

With the above borne in mind, it is useful to note briefly about the types of Gamakas. The specific types of Gamakas depend on the manner of quivering or shaking, inter-svara transitory phrases and svara overtones. They come in various forms and are incorporated into Raagas, giving each note a unique characteristic and a delicate beauty when performed.

Incidentally, a keyboard type of instrument cannot produce these life-giving Gamakas for the svaras and musical phrases and hence for Raaga-music - except to a small degree of approximation, that too only at the hands of a very dexterous performer. Hence, it is that a harmonium or piano is not a good, let alone ideal, instrument for playing Indian classical/ Carnatic music. The harmonium, which is still widely used in India, even for classical music (playing skills are easily acquired) is a relic of the past. Christian missionaries introduced the harmonium in their church music as they were unable to comprehend the Gamakas which endows Indian classical music with its unique beauty.

In the srgm notation of compositions, Gamakas may be indicated by use of marks for the type of Gamaka, at the appropriate places but listening to them and innovating wherever admissible is considered more advisable than the composer or Guru writing down all Gamakas, only the very essential ones being shown in the notation, and the others being left to the creative ability of the performer, rather like the Kalpanasvaras that are to be left to his or her imagination, ex tempore. Attempts to accurately represent the Gamakas in Carnatic music compositions have not yielded satisfactory results, because of the elusive and extremely subtle character that would only be properly left to practice under the guidance of the master musicians.

The Carnatic oral tradition has established ten Gamaka types through a process of acceptance and evolution by thoughtful Gurus of musical theory and practice . On the other hand, the classic treatise on Indian music, "Sangeeta Ratnaakara" defines some more, in all, fifteen variants of Gamakas (including one mixed, or Mishrita, type imaginatively combining two or more of the others).

The Carnatic gamakas in vogue, which differ basically in the manner of their quiver/shake, to produce musical effects each with a distinct, subtle beauty are named below, with their classes in which they are grouped. The classification is as per the renowned flautist, T. Viswanathan – late professor of music at the Wesleyan University (U.S.) and an inheritor of the music traditions of both the great Veena Dhanammal and the legendary Bharatanatyam T. Balasaraswati, his sister - who distilled this classification based on traditions and his own knowledge:

Gamaka class	Type	
A. ULLASITA/JAARU (Slides)	Irakka-jaaru	Descending slide.
	Etra-jaaru	Ascending slide
B. GAMAKA* (Deflections) non-repeated tones (non-repeated) tones	Nokku	Stress from above on successive,
	Odukkal	Stress from below on successive
	Kampita	Oscillation
	Orikai	Momentary flick, at the end of
the main to a higher tone		
C. JANTA (Stresses) above. tones	Ravai	Turn from
	Sphurita	Stress from below on repeated
	Pratyaaahata	Stress from above on repeated
	Khandippu	Sharp dynamic accent
tones		

*Not to be confused with the use of the generic Gamakas which we are discussing.

ILLUSTRATION OF GAMAKAS

Raaga NATAKURINJI and Raaga MUKHARI with reference to stanzas in Swati Tirunaal's Raagamaalika Kriya "Bhaavayaami" Pallavi in Saaveri.

1. The Raaga Natakurinji is a derivative (Janya) of a basic Melakarta, ARIKAMBHOJI. It has for its:

AAROHANA(ascent): srgmndnpdns and
AVAROHANA(descend): sndmgs/ sndmgmpgrs.

There are some other slightly different variations of representing the ascent and descent of this Raaga, but the underlying method of all representations is to indicate in the srgm notation and bring out the possible permutations and combinations for producing sancharas of this Raaga whose main emotions are Shringaara (love) or other elegant emotions.

Before trying to master Gamakas in any Raaga, whether in an Aalaapanaa or a composition, it is essential for a classical music practitioner / student to have a thorough grasp of the sanchaaras of a Raaga and the characteristics of the Raaga as regards the Jeeva svaras and sanchaaras, Kampita svaras (that is, only those svaras that admit of the possibility application of 'shaking' as distinct from those that should always be sung flat without bending or shaking), Nyaasa svaras (that is, those at which a phrase or line in a composition can pause for additional beauty to the presentation). This grasp CANNOT BE REALLY OBTAINED THROUGH ANY AMOUNT OF STUDY OF SPECIAL LESSONS AND BOOKS, BUT will come normally through listening to music -vocal and instrumental - rendered by :

(a) MASTERS OF OLDEN DAYS - examples, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Ayyangar, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, MS Subbulakshmi, GN Balasubrahmanyam, Dwaram Venkataswami Garu, Mysore Chowdiah , Musiri Subramania Iyer, Balamurali Krishna, ML Vasanthakumari, Veenai Sambasiva Iyer, DK Jayaraman, DK Pattammal - some of them in our midst today – whose recordings including full length recitals are available in the market and from music collectors/connoisseurs; and

TOPRANKING MUSICIANS OF PRESENT DAY –for example, Sanjay Suahbrahmanyam, Sudha Raghunathan, TV Gopalakrishnan, Nithyasree, TM Krishna, Mandolin Srinivas, Vijay Shiva, Sowmya, Ganesh-Kumaresh. (Their full list is long and growing).

Now, back from the above IMPORTANT aside, we turn to Naata-kurinji, the theme we were discussing:

The sanchaaras with Kampita Gamakas (marked by) may be illustrated thus:

On the lower octave: SSdN*S;;; sr*sddnsR*R*gM;;; sdn*sR*GM;;;

Middle octave: srgM* gmgsr*gM* GpmgS mgmgS gmNddNPDN*S;;;;;

S(l)S(u)ndN*S;;;

Higher octave: S;;; SR*S;; n*sr*gmgsS;;; SmgsS;; n*sr*gmpmgS;; etc.

Descent : SR*S; dn*srsnd mgmndnS,,, mgmgS; rgM*gs sR*sndndm,, N,d S, SR*;;;S

(S(l) = S-lower, S(u) = S-upper

The reader would do well to listen, in this context, to the Kritis "Bhaavayaami Raghuraamam" sung by MS Subbulakshmi (you may go to [musicindiaonline](http://musicindiaonline.com) for listening online) - in its stanza beginning with "Dinakara-(a)nvaya-tilakam" (that is I Charanam). This stanza describes the valorous acts of Sri Rama in killing Subahu and subjugating Parasurama, besides the chivalrous act of liberating Ahalya from her cursed existence as a stone. The Naatakurinji raaga is apt in this context, what with its brilliantly executed musical phrases with graceful gamakas (some of them found above) being used with the svaras and lyrics to express an admiring astonishment at Sri Rama's warrior qualities of chivalry and valour. The kampita used for Ma, Irakka Jaaru for R, and Odukkai for N, are particularly impressive. The gamakas of the various types are woven with simple Mdhyaama to second and third durita Kaala pramaanas (fast tempo rhythms) - at once in keeping with the Laya (here, Roopaka Taala measures) and the Raaga requirements, without violating the lyrical import - that is, with low or high frequency svaras to go along with subdued or deepened

sentiments, respectively. 'Effortless and inspired intuition' (or anaayaasa kalpanaa), will be at work to realize such a lyric-Raaga-Bhaava-Gamaka-laya coalition.

2. The Raaga Mukhari is a derivative of the 22nd Melakarta Raaga, Kharaharapriya and has:

ASCENT: srmpdnds

DESCENT: sndpmgrs

{Note:In the phrases nds, pds, pdnds, Chjatus-shruti Dhaivata should be used and in mpdp, dpdp, mndp, sndp shuddha Dha must be used. Although, as a Kharaharapriya janya, Naatakurinji has a prominent Chatus-shruti dhaivata, which occurs frequently in its sanchaaras (see below), the shuddha-dhaivata (shown in the Descent svaras above – which is the same as for Natabhairavi) occurs not as a prominent note, with its usage relatively restricted to sanchaaras involving pdp and ndp (see below). It is pertinent to note here that the Raaga Bhairavi - a Janya of Natabhairavi - has both the Dhaivatas as well as the other notes as Mukhari, but Bhairavi gives much more prominence to the Shuddha Dhaivata than its other Dha. Upon reflection, this fact helps to understand the predominant emotional quality of Bhairavi is devotion and supplication, whereas that of Mukhari is pathos or else compassion. }

Sanchaaras of Mukhari (Brief Illustration) :

MADHYAMA & LOWER OCTAVES: S,,,,,nnnDS;;; RRgS; ddS; R*MP
;mN*dP;; Pm*pdP,mgR; rgrgrgS rmPP pD,p mpdpmgR; rmN*N*D DrsndP;;
rmpdndS;;

UPPER OCTAVE: S;;; ndsR;; R;;; SRSRmgR; (R ;Rmmgrsrgrgrs srNDSS;;
dsRR;) rMgr; R;;rPmgR;; srmgrsS;sR ,sND DESCENT TO MADHYAMA :
dsrsndP;; (rmpRsnDP;) rmPPPndP;; mp mpdp mgR;; rpmmpmgR;; rgsrgrMgrS
R,,pmpmgR;;
RRgS rGssnDM,pdndDDS;;;

{Note: In the above applications (Prayogas), ndp goes with shuddha dhaivata as in the Aaroha, nds s has chatus-shruti dhaivata, as in Avarohana. ndp or pndp or pnds can be used with a quaver in n as sn}.

Listening to the stanza commencing with

"Kanakan-mruga-roopa-dhaarak-" of the illustrative Kriti, we find a profuse use of Gamakas, almost all the Gamaka types being deployed in order to bring out the Raaga in its full colour with shades, to produce the effects of poignancy coupled with wonder at the chivalrous Raama alleviating it. The Gamakas are carefully chosen without impairing the basic emotion of pathos and at the same time carefully adhering to the Taala measure and packing a single Svara with its Gamaka tones - s(U)p instead of P, Rpmgr instead of Rmgr, for example, - in order to avoid monotony of repetition while at the same time bringing out the nuances of the Raaga.

These and the other stanzas forming the whole of the composition of Svati Tirunaal are, it is easy to see, are greatly embellished in rendering, by the well-spun Gamakas both in the imaginatively repeated lines and in the Chittasvara, in such a manner as to fully bring out the emotions (Bhaavas) pregnant in the numerous Raaga-lyric combinations. The overall effect of the individual-intuition based music has an inexplicable, enduring quality in terms of the tranquillising effect on both the appreciative audience and the committed performer him(her)self.

It is extremely important for one, right from younger years if possible, to make a regular habit of attending wholesome entertainment, such as in Music Festivals, Temple and "Sabha" recitals especially in India, and abroad : the US, Singapore, Malaysia, Canada, wherever the listener is located. Augmented by help through discussions with musicians and musicologists, talented friends, and attending music lecdeems (lecture- demonstrations), and help from the WWW and guidebooks/notation books, healthy habits of spare time use in "Cutcheries" and events like contests, an aspiring student can learn music rich with Gamaka-laden, pleasing classical music. If

music is NOT a main line of pursuit, it will be highly rewarding to be a knowledgeable and appreciative listener and patron of our musicians who are among the TRUE representatives of our cultural heritage.

The main occupations will only become more productive for such listeners, since they will develop high levels of concentration and mental endurance and concentration which, as the practically wise know, can be used in the main occupations for their self-advancement! Indeed, there is no better and more cost-effective ways than music, to develop these potential abilities of a person than CLASSICAL music. A couple of years of regular learning from a well-trained music teacher and habit of attending (full) concerts as well as spare-time listening to good music with hi-fi systems as a hobby of one hour in a 24-hour day is well recommended for such aspirants. (Light and film music especially of the present genre is rarely good for the spirit or the intellect, as it is churned out in the belief that such music with vulgar lyrics are unavoidable in order to pull large masses to the box office, and in the absence of the above wholesome habits and hobbies, the resultant vacuum will be swiftly filled by harmful ones.)