Janya Ragas

Janya ragas are derived from the melakarta ragas. The simplest way to generate a janya raga is to leave out one or more of the swaras in the arohanam and/or avarohanam. For example, if we drop out the Ma and Ni in the arohanam of Dheerasankaraabharanam, we end up with Sa - Ri - Ga - Pa - Da - Sa for the arohanam and a sampoorna avarohanam. The resulting raga is called Bilahari. Thus, Bilahari is described as a janya raga of the 29th melakarta Dheerasankaraabharanam with an arohanam - avarohanam of Sa - Ri - Ga - Pa - Da - Sa, Sa - Ni - Da - Pa - Ma - Ga - Ri - Sa. This means that when going up the scale, one may use only the notes of the arohanam, namely, Sa, Ri, Ga, Pa, Da and Sa whereas, all seven notes can be used in descent. Thus, when a Ma or Ni is used, one has to necessarily descend (using notes from the avarohanam).

Dropping out more than two swaras results in a scale that is very limited and experience suggests that it is virtually impossible to create a distinct raga swaroopam with the remaining swaras. However, there are some ragas which use only four swaras in the arohanam or avarohanam as in the case of Navarasa Kannada, derived from the 28th melakarta Harikaambhoji, with a structure of Sa-Ga-Ma-Pa-Sa, Sa-Ni-Da-Ma-Ga-Ri-Sa. Just like a complete arohanam or avarohanam is called sampoornam, one with a single swara dropped out is called shadava and one with two swaras left out is termed oudava. Allowing the arohanam and avarohanam to be sampoornam, shadava or oudava independently, the following possible arohanam - avarohanam types can be constructed.

(1) **sampoorna - sampoorna**
(2) **sampoorna - shadava**
(3) **sampoorna - oudava**
(4) **shadava - sampoorna**
(5) **oudava - sampoorna**
(6) **shadava - shadava**
(7) **shadava - oudava**

(8) oudava - shadava

(9) oudava - oudava

The first case evidently refers to the melakartas themselves and does not generate any janya ragas. The example of Bilahari belongs to the 5th or oudava - sampoorna case. Using the sampoorna - shadava case as an example, there are 72 sampoorna arohanams and six shadava avarohanams for each, leading to total of 432 janya ragas of this type. By the same argument, there are 432 janya ragas of shadava - sampoorna type. Following this procedure, one can arrive at a total of about thirty thousand independent janya ragas. However, a large number of these are not in use since they do not have distinct raga swaroopas. This brings us to the important observation that it is not just mathematical jugglery that produces ragas. As the saying goes, 'Ranjayathi ithi Raga' - that which is beautiful is a raga. Ragas are produced through experimenting with the possible combinations, looking for distinct swaroopas. This process has been conducted for centuries by composers and musicians to arrive at the few hundred or so janya ragas currently in use.

The type of janya raga we have considered so far, namely, what is derived by simply dropping notes from a melakarta raga, is called as an Upaanga raga. There are alternate means of generating janya ragas. The arohanam and/or avarohanam can use a twisted progression. For example, we can construct a janya raga from Dheerasankaraabharanam using the arohanam Sa - Ri - Ma - Da - Ni - Ga - Pa - Sa and a simple sampoorna avarohanam. The resulting raga is called Katanakuthoohalam. A janya ragam employing a twisted arohanam and/or avarohanam is termed as a Vakra ragam. We can also mix notes from two melakartas in the arohanam and avarohanam to produce janya ragas. For example, the ragam Bhairavi uses Chatusruthi Dhaivatham in its arohanam and Suddha Dhaivatham in its avarohanam. This type of structure is indicated by the term Baashaanga ragam. A ragam can be Baashaangam or Upaangam but not both. The Vakra characteristic can be combined freely with both types. The result is that a very large number of combinations are possible and only the ability to create a distinct swaroopam dictates what combinations are actually used in creating janya ragas. The

description of a janya raga usually indicates the melakarta from which it is derived, whether it Vakram or not, whether is Upaangam or Baashaangam, and if it Baashaangam, the swaras which make it so. The arohanam and avarohanam provide further details (like sampoorna, shadava or oudava). The term varja is sometimes used to indicate missing swaras. For example, the raga Sriranjani has an arohanam - avarohanam of Sa - Ri - Ga - Ma - Da - Ni - Sa, Sa - Ni - Da - Ma - Ga - Ri - Sa and is derived from the 22nd melakarta Kharaharapriya. It is thus described as a Panchama varja raga, derived from Kharaharapriya. Consider another example, Malayamaarutham. It is a Madhyama varja raga derived from the 16th melakarta Chakravaaham. The designation of the parent ragam as Chakravaaham is subjective since the Madhyama varja raga derived from the 52nd melakarta Raamapriya is identical to Malayamaarutham. The problem is that Chakravaaham and Raamapriya differ only in Ma and since Malayamaarutham is Madhyama varja, it can be derived from either. In such cases, the gamakas used in the janya raga have to be studied to decide which of the melakartas is appropriately described as the parent raga. This problem is compounded in the case of Baashaanga ragas which are anyway derived from multiple melakartas. In any case, the assignment of a parent melakarta is somewhat subjective and various experts often ascribe different parents for a given janya raga. A well known example is the ragam Mohanam, which has an arohanam - avarohanam of Sa - Ri - Ga - Pa - Da - Sa, Sa - Da - Pa - Ga - Ri - Sa, using Chatusruthi Rishabam, Anthara Gandharam and Chatusruthi Dhaivatham. Various authors have classified it as a janya ragam of Harikaambhoji (melakarta no. 28) and Mechakalyaani (65) and more are possible. It is a matter of individual viewpoint as to which is the parent ragam. As long the distinct swaroopam is maintained, it really does not matter what is assigned as the parent ragam.