

Manodharma is a form of improvised music and is created on the spot during the performance, but within the confines of strict grammar of music, as codified in the raga and/or the tala. It can be likened to speakers resorting to impromptu speech while reading from their prepared texts. Every carnatic concert has one or many music pieces that showcases the singer's prowess and intellect in the form of Manodharma sangeetham. It serves as an important and integral aspect of Carnatic music.

Based out of Manodharma, Individual styles are developed. Manodharma has many aspects and performers develop distinct styles based on his/her musical values, interpretation and understanding. There is ample scope for manodharma when rendering raga alapana, tanam, neraval, pallavi, swaram and also kritis. The manodharma is cultivated after several years of constant learning, assimilating and experimenting with various forms of compositions like varnams, kritis, javalis, etc and also by listening to consummate artistes. Manodharma plays such a significant role that a capable artiste may never render a raga the same way twice. To bring out the quintessence of a raga, one has to resort to the exclusive and distinct raga prayogas of the raga which are mostly taken from the 'set compositions' like varnams, kritis etc. Unless, these prayogas are brought out in the raga alapana, the identity of the ragam can seldom be established. For a beginner to identify a raga, these "exclusive" prayogas are of immense assistance. Keeping in mind, the "lakshana" (swarupa) of the raga, its jeeva swaras and also the special prayogas, the artistes develop the raga, weaving patterns after patterns, using various combinations of swaras.

The caliber and finesse of a musician is often judged by his/her ability to bring out the excellence of a raga. Many musicians of the recent past, such as G. N. Balasubramaniam, Madurai Mani Iyer, Rajarathnam Pillai, Karaikkurichi Arunachalam, excelled in their application of manodharma bringing in many a sweet combination of notes of melodies, while limiting themselves to the confines of the raga concerned, embellishing the raga with their ability to produce melodic prayogas

Raga Alapana

Alapana is a form of melodic improvisation that introduces and develops a raga (musical scale) in Indian classical music. As a term that is Sanskrit in language, alapana means "to speak, address, discourse, communicate". The flavor of the raga is outlined in the alapana by rendering the raga's permitted notes in structures and phrases unique to the raga (known as "raga lakshanam"). Alapana typically precedes a song that is going to be sung in the same raga.

Alapana is rendered in different speeds, with a gradual increase in tempo. Likewise, the complexity of the patterns increases steadily as the alapana progresses.

Alapana is divided into three parts:

- Akshipthika
- Ragavardhini
- Magarini

In Carnatic music, alapana, sometimes also called ragam, is the exposition of a raga or tone - a slow improvisation with no rhythm, where the raga acts as the basis of embellishment. In performing alapana, performers consider each raga as an object that has beginnings and endings and consists somehow of sequences of thought.

In a Carnatic music concert, the alapana introducing a major composition may last 45 minutes or more, while those preceding other compositions are proportionately shorter. Performers and instrumental accompanists often render the alapana together and individually (for example, vocalist's phrases are shadowed by that of a violinist, and later the violinist may perform solo).

Taanam

Taanam (Sanskrit तानम्) is one of the methods of raga improvisation in Carnatic Classical Music tradition, suited mainly for vocal music and veena.

It consists of improvising a particular raga with repetition of syllables like *aa, nam, tham, taa, na, thom, tha, nom* etc. Use of rhythmic pulse has an important place in taanam exposition, and the singer is sometimes joined by the mridangam artist, since this is said to enhance the effect of the performance. The tradition of mridangam artist accompanying during taanam is usually credited to the custom of Kerala based carnatic musicians.

There are various tanams like Chakra Tanam, Vakra Tanam, Aja Tanam, Gaja Tanam, Markata Tanam, Vadhya Tanam etc.

Taanam is the second part of a Raagam Taanam Pallavi, and comes immediately after the raga is sung but before the pallavi is about to begin. Among these three modes, taanam is rarely sung very elaborately when compared to raga and pallavi, the reason usually cited for this being that taanam singing requires a lot of physical stamina, sound knowledge of the fundamentals of classical music, good practice and experience.

Tanam singing is regarded as a dying art today with musicians not having the patience or the aptitude to take up such scholarly rigorous pursuits

Niraval

Niraval also known as **Neraval** or **Sahitya Vinyasa** is considered to be one of the important features in the extempore improvisation aspect (*Manodharma Sangita*) of Carnatic music.

Niraval is essentially the extempore construction, elaboration and improvisation of swaras for a particular line in the kriti, within the framework of a talam which brings out the Raga bhava effectively. It is usually just one line from the charanam part of the kriti and has to sit within the framework of a tala and highlight every rasa and bhava singularly.

For example : 4-beat niravals for Shyama Sastri's "sarojadala netri himagiri putri" set to Adi talam (double) in the Raga Shankarabharanam can be

constructed for the line "sama gana vinodhini guna" (like this : gpmgrs | s,ndpMgrs) in the charanam of the song.

Repetition of the line in different ways within the entire range of the Raga phrases brings out the musician's imagination.

Palghat K.V. Narayanaswamy was known and is remembered today as a master of niraval singing.

Ideally, the line taken up for neraval must have a pleasant meaning, and must be descriptive. It should be something that the singer would want to sing over and over again. For example: a line which translates "The killer of Ravana, the monster," would not be an apt choice for neraval as it does not have a pleasant meaning.

Pallavai

In Carnatic music **pallavi** is the thematic line of a song. It is usually one cycle long and repeated twice or thrice in order to give the percussionist the idea of the chosen taalam. Sometimes it is repeated a few more times using different phrases of the Rāgam to which the song is set.

The life of the song, the word *pallavi* consists of a wide range of items that are considered as a single item:

- **pa** is derived from *padam* which means word or phrase;
- **lla** comes from *layam* which means rhythm;
- **vi** is from *vinyasam* which means imagination

In Carnatic music, *pallavi* also forms a part of a special type of rendition called *Rāgam Thānam Pallavi*. *Rāgam* in this context is the initial *ālāpana* of chosen rāgam (elaboration and exploration of its scale). *Thānam* is elaboration of the rāgam using percussion syllables. *Pallavi*, a single line of one *tālam* cycle duration, is chosen for further elaboration of the rāgam in different speeds, octaves, rāgam phrases, etc.

The Pallavi is mainly presented as the piece-de-resistance of the concert. In the Mysore-Bani style of concert presentation usually the Raga-Tana-Pallavi is presented in the same raaga as of the Varnam with which the concert is started.

Kalpanaswaram

Kalpanaswaram is also called swara kalpana, svara kalpana, manodharmaswara or just swaras), is raga improvisation within a specific tala in which the musician improvises in the Indian music solfege (sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, da, ni) after completing a composition.

The kalpanaswaram start may start at any place in the tala, but the artist must end their improvisation at the first note of the first phrase of the composition, at the place in the rhythm cycle, where that note is. To arrive at that note, one has to approach it from the closest note below.

Kalpanaswaram improvisations increase in intensity the more tala cycles used. One complete tala cycle is called an avartanam. While improvising, the musician must abide by the rules of the raga and should sing kalpanaswaram phrases that have been sung over the years. Some ragas omit notes and others have zigzagging ascents or descents. The great musicians develop a vocabulary of phrases in kalpanaswaram as in an alapana, especially when doing kalpanaswaram at low speeds, which allow for more gamaka. The place where the first note of the first phrase of the composition exists in the rhythm cycle is called the eduppu.

Kalpanaswaram is performed in a Carnatic Concert for the main song, the singer chooses to perform the *Raga Alapana*. However in concerts, artists will choose a difficult raga to perform a Kalpanaswaram in. Although there are no set rules, there can be confusion.

Take the Raga Sahana (janya of 28th Melakarta raga Harikambhoji):

- Arohanam : S R G M P M D N S
- Avarohanam : S N D P M G M R G R S

In this raga, when the artist improvises, when ascending in pitch after the Pa (Panchamam), the Ma (Madhyamam) needs to be sung, or the raga will be wrong. So with a raga like Sahana or Anandabhairavi, Purvi Kalyani etc, which have Dhattu (jumping) swarams in their arohanam and/or avarohanam the Kalpanaswaram is harder to master and perform.

In her 1992 dissertation on kalpanaswaram, Josepha Cormack wrote that kalpanaswaram improvisations have been around for at least two hundred years. (Cormack 1992: 30)