

**Melakarta** is a collection of fundamental ragas (musical scales) in Carnatic music (South Indian classical music). *Melakarta* ragas are parent ragas (hence known as *janaka* ragas) from which other ragas may be generated.

In Hindustani music the Thatt is equivalent of *Melakarta*. There are 10 *thaats* in Hindustani music, though the commonly accepted *melakarta* scheme has 72 ragas.

A *melakarta* raga is sometimes referred as *mela*, *karta* or *sampoorna* as well.

### Rules for *Melakarta*

Ragas must contain the following characteristics to be considered *Melakarta*.

- They are *sampoorna ragas* - they contain all seven *swaras* (notes) of the octave in both ascending and descending scale
- They are *krama sampoorna* ragas - that is the sequence is strictly ascending and descending in the scales, without any jumps or zig-zag notes
- The upper shadjam is included in the raga scale (ragas like *Punnagavarali* and *Chenchurutti* are not *melakarta* as they end with *nishadham*)
- The ascending and descending scales must have the same notes

Each *melakarta* raga has a different scale. This scheme envisages the lower Sa (*Keezh Shadjamam*), upper Sa (*Mael Shadjamam*) and Pa (*Panchamam*) as fixed *swaras*, with the Ma (*Madhyamam*) having two variants and the remaining *swaras* Ri (*Rishabam*), Ga (*Gandhaaram*), Dha (*Dhaivatham*) and Ni (*Nishaadham*) as having three variants each. This leads to 72 seven-note combinations (scales) referred to as the *Melakarta* ragas as follows.

The 72 *melakarta* ragas are split into 12 groups called *chakras*, each containing 6 ragas. The ragas within the *chakra* differ only in the *dhaivatham* and *nishadham* notes (D and N), as illustrated below. The name of each of the 12 *chakras* suggest their ordinal number as well.<sup>[1]</sup>

The 72 *melakarta* ragas can be divided into two parts. viz., **suddha Madhyamam** and **prati Madhyamam** ragas. When a given *suddha madhyamam* raga's M1 is replaced by M2, we get the corresponding *prati madhyamam* raga. See Katapayadi sankhya for more information on how to derive the various *swaras* of a raga from its *melakarta* number.