

Carnatic Music Ragas and Their Role in Music Therapy

Authors : Raghavi Janaswamy, Saraswathi K. Vasudev

Abstract : Raga, as the soul and base, is a distinctive musical entity, in the music system, with unique structure on its construction of srutis (musical sounds) and application. One of the essential components of the music system is the "tala" that defines the rhythm of a song. There are seven basic swaras (notes) Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Da and Ni in the carnatic music system that are analogous to the C, D, E, F, G, A and B of the western system. The carnatic music further builds on conscious use of microtones, gamakams (oscillation) and rendering styles. It has basic 72 ragas known as melakarta ragas, and a plethora of ragas have been developed from them with permutations and combinations of the basic swaras. Among them, some ragas derived from a same melakarta raga are distinctly different from each other and could evoke a profound difference in the raga bhava (emotion) during rendering. Although these could bear similar arohana and avarohana swaras, their quintessential differences in the gamakas usage and srutis present therein offer varied melodic feelings; variations in the intonation and stress given to certain swara phrases are the root causes. This article enlightens a group of such allied ragas (AR) from the perspectives of their schema and raga alapana (improvisation), ranjaka prayogas (signature phrases), differences in rendering tempo, gamakas and delicate srutis along with the range of sancharas (musical phrases). The intricate differences on the sruti frequencies and use of AR in composing kritis (musical compositions) toward emotive accomplishments such as mood of valor, kindness, love, humor, anger, mercy to name few, have also been explored. A brief review on the existing scientific research on the music therapy on some of the Carnatic ragas is presented. Studying and comprehending the AR, indeed, enable the music aspirants to gain a thorough knowledge on the subtle nuances among the ragas. Such knowledge helps leave a long-lasting melodic impression on the listeners and enable further research on the music therapy.

Keywords : Carnatic music, allied ragas, melakarta, gamakam

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