

Time Of Singing or Playing Ragas and Raginis According To “Sangitarnabachandrika” The Ancient Text of Odissi Music

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Abstract—The time theory of Indian raagas associates specific raagas with particular times of the day or night, seasons, and emotions. This theory is rooted in the Indian philosophical understanding of time as cyclical and connected to natural rhythms. The author of “Sangitarnabachandrika” the ancient text of Odissi Music has opened the discussion of this topic with a quotation from Sangitakaumudi where the season recommended for singing Raga Vasant is stated to be from Sripanchami to Viṣṇusayana day (roughly from February to middle of June). Our author has bitterly remarked this as blind tradition, for, according to the definition of Raga Vasanta quoted by him, the season for singing the Raga is Spring. Similar recommendation of the same S. Kaumudi for singing Mālavasri during the period from Viṣṇusayana day to the day of Durgapuja (roughly 1st part of October) has earned the same caustic remark of our author.

Index Terms—Ragas, Music System, Classical, Definition, Festival, Seasons

According to definition, Malavaśrī is to be sung in autumn and not during rains. The author has then quoted stanzas from unnamed sources (but mostly found to be from S. Damodara, S. Kaumudi, S. Ratnamālā, Kohaliya), the gist of which is given below: -

Morning - 1. desākhyā 2. Lalita 3. Pathamañjarī 4. Vibhāsa 5. Bhairavi 6. Kāmōda 7. Gondakiri 8. (Bhairava according to S. Kaumudi)

Noon-1. Varadi

Evening- 1. Karnata 2. Mālava 3. Nata (4. Sri according to S. Kaumudi)

S. Damodara opines that Hindola and Vasanta are delightful in spring and that singing of Nata, Goudi, Varādi, Gurjari and Desi in the forenoon and of Bhairavi and Lalita in the afternoon is prohibited.

According to another unnamed authority (believed to be S. Ratnamālā) the all time Ragas are

1. Vasanta 2. Ramakeri and 3. Surasā Gujjari.

According to another school quoted by the author, Ragas should be sung according to the following time table -

Within 3 hours both before and after sunrise 1.

Desaksi 2. Suddhabhairavi

3. Salangabhairavi.

Within the 3 hours ending at noon.

1. Suddhavarādi 2. Dravidavarādi

3. Nāgabarādi

Noon

1. Malahari 2. Āhāri 3. Andolikā

4. Ramakrti 5. Chhāyānati

6. Kuranji

Within the 3 hrs following noon

Goda etc

Nine hours after midday

Suddha Bangala Nātikā

But what is the harm if Ragas are sung out of time? Well, the Gandharvas (the celestial Ostads or maestros) do all possible harm to the singer.

But have not different authorities differently prescribed different time even for the same Raga? Well, in that case follow the tradition adopted by the cultured persons of your country.

Is there any exception to the rules of time? Certainly! If a king orders you to sing Bhairava at 8 pm and Malava at 8 am you can do it with impurity. Supposing someone sings Rāgas out of time owing to ignorance or greed and without the king's licence, is there any atonement that can ward-off the danger from the Gandharvas ?> Any Puja or offerings to mitigate their wrath?

No, nothing of the sort Gandharvas, you know, are musicians. If you think you have erred with regard to time, then just tune up your instruments or Tambura

and sing Raga Surasa Gurjari, that will atone for all faults.

Lastly one question. Is there any harm to one who listens to untimely singing of Ragas, say, while passing through the street or by arrangement? If so, is he to atone for it? Well, if he is a singer himself, let him sing Raga Madhyamādi, if not, engage an Ostad to do so for him.

The last law quoted by our author is said to have been framed by the famous Narada. In supersession of all the rules relating to time of singing Ragas and notwithstanding anything contained in any other law, it provides that any Raga can be sung in the night after ten Dandas! Fine liberalism indeed!! A modern Narada would perhaps frame a more liberal law like

आकाशवाण्यामस्माकं तथा च दूरदर्शने ।

अकाले रागगानेऽपि दोषस्तत्र न विद्यते ॥

We have given above an unorthodox summary of the rules quoted in S. Chandrika relating to time of singing Ragas. With this we come to an end of all that our author has reproduced in respect of the constitution of Ragas.

Before we pass on to the next topic Rasa, some observations on the definition of Ragas given in S. Chandrika seem necessary. It has been seen that definitions of only 19 Ragas have been given in the treatise. Some are of opinion that when the treatise was compiled (i.e. last decade of the 17th century A.D.) the Ragas defined therein were actually in Vogue in Orissa in the defined. forms. Their opinion seems to be based on the following verse given in S. Chandrika as an introductory to the definitions

संगीतसार-हरिनायक-रत्नमाला-

गीतप्रकाश-मुखदर्शितवर्मनेव ।

सद्वैणिकैः सह विचार्य तथानुभूय

देशानुगुण्यविधिना हि विविच्यते तत् ॥

This apparently shows that the definitions were arrived at after due deliberations with good Viṇā players and in the way shown by other previous authorities. But scrutiny proves that all the definitions in S. Chandrika have been reproduced verbatim from S. Nārāyaṇa. Even the above verse is there in S. Nārāyaṇa (Vide page 16). The definitions are the same, word by word, as in Stanza Nos 204 (Velloyari), 200 (Dhanasi), 232 (Mallāra), 237 (Malava), 239 (Hindola), 247 (Lalita), 132 (Sriraga), 180 (Goudi), 163 (Todi), 172 (Rāmakeri), 178 (Velāvali), 150 (Kamoda), hemistich following 135

(Karnāta), 160 (Gurjari), 165 (Mālavaśrī), 157 (Varādi), 174 (Prathamānanjari) and 230 (Madhyamādi) of Ch. I of S. Nārāyaṇa.

It is again found that S. Nārāyaṇa, originally composed by Puruṣottama Misra around 1645 A.D., has itself reproduced the definitions verbatim (except that of Varadi) from S. Sara of Hari Nayaka (Mahapatra). The exact year of composition of this S. Sara, remains yet unfixed. Even then, it could not be very much earlier than the beginning of the 16th Century A.D. Hari Nayaka (Mahapatra) says that he belonged to the family of Sriranga Mahapatra, grandfather of Mukundadeva (Mahapatra) whose last year of ruling Orissa was 1568 A.D. So Hari Nayaka (Mahāpātra) seems to have been an elder contemporary of Mukundadeva. Even if he was elder by 50 years, his S. Sara could never have been composed before 1460-1470. There is therefore a clear gap of at least two centuries between the composition of S. Sara and S. Chandrika which has given the definitions of Ragas exactly as they are found in S. Sara. Is it possible that all the Ragas retained their respective melodic forms intact for over two centuries?

Apart from this, the definitions of Ragas given in Hari Nayaka (Mahapatra)'s S. Sara are faithful, short summarisations of their counterparts in S. Ratnakara of Sarāṅgadeva (around 1250 A.D.), though they are not verbatim reproductions.

Thus, in reality, S. Chandrika has given us definitions of Ragas that were defined similarly in about 1250 A.D. Could the Ragas have retained their melodic forms intact for about four hundred and fifty years? Can we be credulous to the extent of believing it ?

Even when S. Ratnākara was being written, forms of Ragas were changing. For example, the Amsa or Sthayi Svāra of Raga Varati, according to definition, is Dhā (Vide St. 85-Ch. II of S. Ratnākara) but the author has remarked (Vide St. 349 - Ch VI) that the Vina players were making Re the Sthāyī Svāra. He has given quite a few such remarks. Kallinātha (about 1450 A.D.), the great commentator of S. Ratnākara, has recorded his observations on the contemporary Deśi Rāgas (Vide commentary on Stanzas 159-160 of Prakaraṇa II Chapter II). That many Ragas defined in S. Ratnākara were changing and some had already changed form is evident from the observations.

It is therefore extremely doubtful if the Ragas defined in S. Chandrika were current in Orissa in the forms concerned.

Another question that arises is-in view of the lack of indication in the definitions of the Ragas as to the natural, flat or sharp notes to be used in the respective Ragas, can these be of any use? Can even the respective scales be discovered now?

The answer is, although the definitions are apparently silent on the type of Svaras (in terms of natural, flat and sharp) that are to be used in the Raga concerned, it is not very difficult to discover them. It has to be remembered that in the Grama Murchhanā system the so-called 'Vikrti' of the later Mela-system (which continues even now in present-day music) was neither conceived of nor necessary. Svaras were automatically assuming the state of naturals, flats or sharps (as we now understand them) by change of Murchhanās or by change or transposition of the tonic note.

Now let us examine the definition of Raga Malav as given in S.

Chandrika. It runs as -

रि-प-हीनष्टकवंश्यो ग-भूरिः स-ध-कम्पितः ।

नि-न्यासांशग्रहः सायं निशि वा मालवः शुचौ ॥

This shows

- (1) Malava is devoid of Re and Pa Svaras, i.e. it is an Ouduva or pentatonic Raga.
- (2) It belongs to the genus or family of Takka Raga.
- (3) Its Graha, Amsa and Nyāsa Svāra is Ni.
- (4) There is profuse use of Ga in it
- (5) The Svaras Sa and Gā have 'shakes' i.e., have Kampita Gamaka.
- (6) It is sung in the evening or in the night in Suchi or Sngara Rasa i.e., sentiment of love.

So, When Re and Pā are not to be used in Malava Raga, it will omit them and will have

Sa Gā Mā Dha Ni (and the higher Sa if you think in terms of octave)

But No, it will not be like the above because the Amsa or the tonic is Ni. So the Murchhana will be Ni Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha (Ni - higher if you think in terms of octave). The raga will omit Re and Pa from the above and will use. Ni Sa Gā Mā Dha (Ni-higher)

With the Sruti intervals. the above will be

Ni Sā 5 Gā 4 Mā 7 Dhā 2 (Ni-higher) It is almost equivalent to our.

Sā 4 Re 5 Mā 4 Pā 7 Ni 2 (Sa-higher)

This pentatonic scale is like that of Badahamsa of Hindustani system, provided Ni flat is not used in Avarohana (descent). It is also similar to the scale of Madhyamavati of Karnatakī (southern) system. Re and Ni will have Kampita Gamaka (Shake) (or Khatka, according to the Northern system). Ma will be profusely used. This will reinforce Sa which is a consonant of Sa.

One may ask now, how is one to know whether the Rāga belongs to the Sadja Grama or Madhyama Grāma? well, the word टक्कवंश्यः is there to guide us in the matter. It will be necessary to find out what Takka Raga is. Mālava, defined as belonging to the Takka genus, will imbibe the character of Takka and will have other traits specially mentioned in its own definition.

Unfortunately, S. Chandrika does not define Takka Rāga. Even S. Sara of Hari Nayaka or S. Narayana the source book of S. Chandrika disappoint us. So we have to go to S. Ratnakara, the source of definitions of Ragas given in S. Sara of Hari Nayaka. There we find, Takka has the 'first Murchhanā' i.e., of Sa and it is born out of Sadjamadhyama or Dhaivati Jati which are parent melodies of the Sadja Grama. So, Malava, a species of Takka, will have Svaras of the Sadja Grama.

It is unfortunate that some Orissan writers have thoughtlessly written that, Raga Mālava is to be sung with flat Re and flat Dha because Takka Raga, its progenitor had these!

Rasa

We now come to the next topic Rasa. It has been introduced with a verse which is only a metrical recast of the following verse found in Bharatanatyāsāstra, namely,

यथा वीजाद् भवेद् वृक्षो वृक्षात् पुष्पं फलं यथा ।

तथा मूलं रसाः सर्वे तेषु भावा व्यवस्थिताः ॥ ३८॥

B.N.S. - Kashi-8

The author has then quoted two stanzas with his comments in between them as follows -

शृङ्गारहास्यकरुणरौद्रवीर भयानकाः ।

वीभत्साद्भूतशान्ताश्च नव नाट्यरसाः स्मृताः ॥

एतदनुसृत्य भरतेन महर्षिणाप्युक्तम् -

एते नवरसाः प्रोक्ताः द्रुहिणेन महात्मना ।

etc.

But in the Kasi, Baroda and Orissa editions of the Bharatanatyasastra we find :-

शृङ्गारहास्य---

वीभत्साद्भूतसज्जो चेत्यष्टो नाट्ये रसाः स्मृताः ।
एते ह्यष्टौ रसाः प्रोक्ता दुहिणेन महात्मना ॥

B.N.S. Ch. 6.

It is controversial if Santa can be accepted as a Rasa in the sense of flavour or sentiment in the dramatic art though critics like the great Acharya Abhinava Gupta, the commentator of Natyasāstra and Mammata, the great rhetorician, have accepted it in poetry. But it is beyond doubt that it had not been accepted as a Rasa in the Natyasāstra. So the above hemistich with the words नवनाट्यरसाः and एते नवरसाः are corrupt ones. Eight Rasas were recognised in the Bharatanatyasastra.

In order to explain the origin or formation of Rasa, the author has quoted the well-known Sūtra from the B.N.S., namely विभावानुभाव etc. He has further quoted the four equally well known and fine stanzas (सत्त्वोद्रेकादखण्डः etc) from Visvanātha's Sahityadarpaṇa on the origin and nature of Rasa. Then follows the stanza रतिहीनस्य शोकश्च etc of the B.N.S. to show the eight Sthayibhāvas (dominant or enduring states) namely, love, mirth, sorrow, anger, energy, terror, disgust and astonishment with the author's comment that Sānta Rasa has no विभाव (determinant).

The author has then given the definition of Srigara Rasa, its character, colour, presiding deity and thereafter the Alamvanavibhāvas etc.

Gist of all that has been given is placed below

Alamvanavibhava - Nayaka etc.

Uddipanavibhava (determinants) - Pleasure garden etc

Anubhavas (consequents) - glances etc

Enemies - the transitory states except disgust, cruelty, indolence, death.

Vyabhicharibhāvas (transitory states) - discouragement etc

Two fold Srigāra - Sambhoga (union) and Vipralambha (separation)

Four fold Separation - Purvarāga, Karuṇa, Pravāsa and Mana.

Three fold Purvarāga - Nili, Manjistha and Kusumbha

Ten states of love - Longing Recollection, Anxiety, Enumeration of qualities, Distress, Sickness, lamentations, state of intoxication or insanity, stupor, death

Four fold Mana - Serious, Light, Medium, Subtle.

Four Types of heroes - 1. Dhīrodatta 2. Dhīroddhata

3. Dhīraprasānta 4. Dhīralalita.

Four Varieties of each of the types - 1. Daksina 2. Dhṛsta 3. Anukūla 4. Satha

Three types of heroines (Nayikas) - 1. Svakiya 2. Parakiyā 3. Sāmānyā.

Eight States of heroines –

1. Vāsakasajjā (dressed up for union)

2. Virahotkanthita (distressed by separation)

3. Svādhinabhartṛka (having her husband in subjection)

4. Kalahāntarītā (separated temporarily by quarrel)

5. Khandita (enraged with her lover)

6. Vipralabdā (deceived by the lover)

7. Proṣṭhabhartṛka (husband staying abroad)

8. Abhisarika (moving to meet the lover)

Definitions of all types, and varieties of heroes and heroines with the eight states of the latter have been quoted. Then the other Rasas have also been defined. Then the time for the Rasas, their Jatis (dynastic origin such as from Gandharvas, Rsis etc., colour, appearance, presiding deities, age, sex, seasons, connected with their mutual incompatibility have all been dealt with. But can Raga music create all the Rasas recognised in poetry and drama? Is it at all meant for that? This fundamental question has not been discussed by our author.

The next topics dealt with are Laya (tempo), Jati (the order of application of tempo) and Māna (the concluding operations of rhythm). The proper place for dealing with these is under Tala but for some reasons the author has placed them here. Layas are three, namely Vilambita (slow), Madhya (medium) and Druta (Fast). These depend on the interval of time between two beats. According to Hari Nayaka, quoted by our author, in medium tempo the interval between two beats is twice that of the fast and half that of the slow tempo.

According to a school not named by the author, Talas (time-measures) Triputa, Upādda, Mantha, Ekātālī and Jhampa go in fast tempo, Tālas Adī, Kudukka, Nissari in medium tempo and Tālas Rūpaka, Adda and Yati in slow tempo. The author subscribes to this school and disapproves of the view that any Tala can be employed in any tempo because he thinks that difference in tempo gives rise to different tālas in some cases. As regards Yati, it is of three kinds, namely Sama, Srotobaha and Gopuchhikā. When the same Laya is adhered to from the beginning to the end of singing or playing any composition it is said to

be in Sama Yati. When the Laya is slow in the beginning, medium in the middle and fast towards the end, it is said to be in Srotovaha Yati and the reverse of this is gopuchhika Yati. Mana is of two kinds, Vardhamānāvarta and Hiyamānāvarta. It is of the first when the conclusion is on the last Kala of the Dhruva (refrain part) but if it is on the second Kala it is Hiyamānāvarta.

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