

Appreciating Hindustani Music
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Lecture 19
Extending the Raga Corpus- Winds from the South.

We have been discussing systems of classification of ragas in Hindustani music and we saw that mela and raganga paddhati are two systems that are in use in contemporary performance practices. The raga ragini system is of historical interest and is no longer used. Now, both mela and raganga- they serve as tools to make the large number of ragas manageable, to create some connections between them to see how one raga is similar to another or another raga or different from another raga.

So, all these things really help to make the large number of ragas manageable for the performer. Raga the raganga and mela paddhati also have pedagogical value and certainly raganga is more useful more insightful from the performance point of view. And as I mentioned both mela and raganga are used simultaneously depending on the context. The Hindustani music, world of Hindustani music does not see an either or situation here. It is not as if you have to belong to one camp or the other.

Most musicians freely use both systems of classification. Took really get a hold on the large number of ragas that are in practice, because you see the two systems of classification as I have mentioned before pivot around different aspects of ragas. The mela system revolves around the notes that are used in ragas.

So, in the one might say physical aspect of the raga just what notes are used whereas, raganga revolves around the phrases the chalan, the phrases and their Ucharan more importantly right, how they are rendered.

The same phrase let us say let if we have ni pa you can render it in different ways that the Ucharan can be different and that makes for different ragangas. Now, both have limitations. both mela and raganga paddhati they have limitations hm. The not every raga can be unproblematically classified under a mela you know or under the mela system or under the raganga system there are always problems.

And as far as the raganga paddhati goes who is to say how many ragangas are there right? so, again as I have mentioned there are differences of opinion about the number of ragangas, but the performance tradition as I said uses this in a very pragmatic way. There is no seeking after the perfect classification system and we do not have musicologists also trying to offer a perfect classification system for ragas.

Perhaps this is just recognition of the fact that ragas are really quite unclassifiable. each raga is unique and coming up with a perfect classification system will be impossible. The raganga

paddhati is certainly more useful for the performer because it does give insights into how a certain phrase has to be handled. So, if you know that it belongs to say Kanada Ang then thereby we know that the Gandhara the Ga occupies a certain position on the shruti gamut, and that it has to be shaken in a certain way. So, Raganga Paddhati does offer insights to the performer.

The Mela system does have a more- a weaker presence and most musicians pay lip service to it it is not dismissed, but it is not treated with great seriousness. In Carnatic music on the other hand the 72 Mela system has a considerable hold.

You will remember that when the 72 Melas were propounded this was in the 17th century most of those 72 had no practical application that is there were no ragas in circulation at that time that used many of those scales or portions you know, derivatives of those scales. In fact, Venkatamakhin himself only named 19 of those 72 Melas. The naming of the rest of them came later his successor he named the rest of the 72. So, remember again that in the earlier treatises when Mela system was being propounded, the number of Melas were much smaller 19, 12, 23 in keeping with the requirements of performance tradition. And Bhatkhande again, he carried forth that approach to the Mela system and he only propounded he said that we only need 10 Melas or 10 Thaats to account for to or to classify all the prevalent ragas in Hindustani music.

But what happened with in Carnatic music is that though the many of the scales were not in use, many of the scales or their derivatives were not ragas even though that was a case. It was only a matter of time before these new and exotic scales or their derivatives began to be rendered as ragas.

See its we have hundreds and hundreds of possible scales in various combinations whether Sampurna that is 7 all 7 up and down or 5 and 7 or 5 and 5 if you know the Audava Shadava Sampurna scheme, if you take that there are hundreds of scales possible. But there are only there is only a fraction of ragas, fraction of that is actually found as ragas. So, all these other possibilities as I said it was only a matter of time before Carnatic music musicians started rendering these scales as ragas. So, in essence the new exotic scales were given life. Life was breathed into these scales and they emerged as ragas and even today many of lots of these new ragas are in circulation and many of them are quite captivating. Though, they do not have the challenge inbuilt in them that traditional ragas have and therefore, they are less interesting. That is these newer ragas. So, to say that were essentially crafted out of new possibilities of scales, they have no they had no definite personality they were just scales and could be treated anyhow and as opposed to ragas traditional ragas that have evolved in the musical community over many over a longtime through the work or through the music of many musicians.

So, the newer scale based ragas are contrived they are contrived and that makes them less interesting. Now in Hindustani music the creation of new ragas from new concocted scales is relatively less prevalent hm. As I said one can think of a hitherto unused unheard of scale and render it as raga. one can do that, and this is what has happened to to quite in extent in Carnatic music. And we do have a few stray cases in Hindustani music, but by and large Hindustani musicians have not gone down this path. Well established ragas are preferred and

novelty by way of new scales is not that enthusiastically sought after. and this is perfectly fine and healthy because you see a raga is not a scale as I have said many times and one cannot really bestow personality upon a scale at the individuals level.

This is something the personality of a raga is something that accrues over many years within the community. So, how about the repertoire of ragas then? Is it stagnant? I mean does not it grow? Because certainly in Carnatic music the repertoire the number of ragas has increased exponentially because of this propensity to create new ragas out of new scales. In Hindustani music as I said it is not so prevalent.

So, how then what about the repertoire of ragas? Is it static? Certainly not. The repertoire of rather the ragas that are being performed today, that corpus, is not the same that was performed 100 years ago, and that was not the same that was performed 200 years ago. So, the corpus of ragas does change, ragas change subtly very subtly, but they do change themselves. I want to go over two ways in which the repertoire of ragas is has been increased in Hindustani music.

And one of them is ragas that are imported from Carnatic music. There has been give and take Carnatic music has taken ragas from Hindustani music and Hindustani music has taken ragas from Carnatic music.

What they do with it is quite different and I will talk about how a couple of Carnatic ragas that are basically South Indian in origin how they have been worked upon, how they have been assimilated into the Hindustani tradition. The two ragas are Hamsadhwani and abhogi Kanada. Abhogi is the name of the Carnatic raga and it has given a Kanada ang in the Hindustani tradition and that is very interesting how this little extra feature is inbuilt or is kind of inserted into the raga into abhogi to give it a very distinctly Hindustani flavor. Both abhogi Kanada and hamsadhwani are well integrated into the Hindustani tradition, Hindustani performance tradition. And they are performed in all three genres that is khayal dhrupad and instrumental music. Let us take hamsadhwani first hm hamsadhwani is a pentatonic, audava raga. So, is abhogi we will come to that later, but hamsadhwani is goes like this. The basic scale is this [Music]. This is the bare skeleton of the scale Carnatic music the way Carnatic music treats ragas is very different- the raga lakshanas or the way we handle ragas is very different from how you handle them in Hindustani music.

So, the concept of vadi, samvadi, nyasa swar they are there, but in a very different form especially vadi samvadi are not really part of how ragas are treated in Carnatic music. So, in Carnatic music hamsadhwani goes like this [Music].

So, the Carnatic music really is more very very much more phrase oriented , very dense clusters of tight knit phrases that is how a Carnatic music goes you know the ragas are explode like this. Now, when hamsadhwani was taken up by Hindustani musicians what they did was they made rishabha ri the nyasa swara and also the vadi vadi samvadi of hamsadhwani are rishabha and ri and pa.

So, it sounds like this if you sing it in Hindustani in the in the Hindustani idiom (Refer Time: 16:19) there there is a khayal idiom to more specifically [Music]. So, this [Music] this prayoga or this combination this pa sa phrase is very very important in the Hindustani hamsadhwani

which is not so in Carnatic. And again the stopping on the ri in such a very deliberate manner its again the way hamsadhwani has been given a form in Hindustani music [Music]. So, that is how Hamsadhwani has assumed a very very distinctive form in Hindustani music. See though in Carnatic music, when we sing hamsadhwani we do not really you know think of ri as a nyasa swara or you know or is a vadi and all that, we do not do that because as I said it is very phrase oriented (Refer Time: 18:23) clusters of phrases and much more than Hindustani music, but if you actually analyze hamsadhwani as it is sung in Carnatic music it does seem that, ri can be ri is a favor place of ending swaras though you know it is not as if ga is not or pa is not but it does seem that way. And it seems that when the Hindustani musicians took took hamsadhwani from Carnatic music they listen to it with that those lenses right and they were able to give a very typical Hindustani flavor to hamsadhwani.

The story of abhogi is also very interesting abhogi is another you know pretty old raga in Carnatic music and that is also pentatonic the basic scale of abhogi is [Music] these are some phrases of abhogi [Music].

So, when it was adopted into Hindustani music it was given a Kanada ang. the Kanada ang one of the Kanada ang is this ga ma ri phrase with a particular oscillation of ga. the Kanada ang one of the main aspects of it is this [Music]. So, that is Kanada ang [Music] so [Music] so [Music]. So, this is how abhogi which was taken from Carnatic music is given the Kanada ang and it was assimilated into Hindustani music in a much more interesting manner that is it was not just that you take the scale of the raga that is hamsadhwani or abhogi, but you actually invest that scale with a particular personality. And that is what that happen in the case of hamsadhwani and abhogi Kanada.

The other strategy for through which new ragas have come into circulation in Hindustani music is the astonishing phenomenon of jod ragas and we will look at this in the next video.