UNIT 2  KARNATAK MUSIC – AN INTRODUCTION

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2.1 INTRODUCTION

Uptill now we have been discussing the Indian Music in all its varied forms. We understood what is meant by music. How our music derives its roots from our ancient vedic chants. And linking all our performing arts into one cohesive, fabulous totality is Bharata’s Natyashastra – a treatise on the Science of Dramaturgy wherein the entire gamut of all the three performing arts is put under one term – naatyaa. You also learnt that to the Indian mind no drama can be performed without there being music and dance in it. Bharata also states that he has not created any new arts, all that he has done is to CODIFY the diverse practices prevalent in this country by selecting the most common aspects present in all these diverse practices. At this time, it is evident that raaga as such had not made its appearance. Yet he mentions terms like svara, vaadi, vivaadi, samvaadi etc. These terms are valid even today.

Now here the question arises Bharata is reputed to be a Kashmiri, or at least a north Indian. Many of the references in the Natyashashtra lead us to conclude that Bharata followed the Aryan traditions and practices. Then how can the entire treatise be applicable to the entire country?

In answer to this question your attention is drawn to many references that Bharata has given to the practices prevalent in other parts of the country of special interest are the pravrittis which had a long history of establishment. In these the Daakshinaatyaa pravritti – the southern style is described as that which had a preponderance of music and dance.

We also became acquainted with the Dravidian or the ancient Tamil culture and society where there was a great love for the two arts music and dance. The grammar Tolkappiyam, belonging to an era before Christ also reveals these arts. It is the Sangam Literature and more so the great epic Shilappadikaram that give us a storehouse of data that points to the high level of development and standardisation of the arts music and dance in the south in that era.
A systematic study of both the northern and southern practices, proves the fact that each was aware and appreciated the other. Most importantly they had many common elements. Thus we may say that there was a common musical tradition available in the entire country.

In the unit on Hindustani music you learnt that due to the Persian influence brought in by the Muslim invaders there appeared a deviation in this musical tradition in the form of Hindustani music.

Systematic study reveals that the south did not come under this alien influence and retained the earlier tradition. Yet there were changes and developments in that system also. The southern tradition also developed and expanded. Of special importance is Venkatamakhiin who introduced the system of Melakartaas and 72 raagas or pans.

Today the southern tradition popularly called Karnataka music – is equally vigorous and popular. A study of this tradition is fascinating more so when you compare and contrast the two and come to a conclusion that eventually there is ONE MUSIC IN INDIA.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to:

- Recognise the southern – Karnataka – system of music by its characteristics;
- Know the various types of musical compositions; and
- Compare and contrast the Karnataka system with the Hindustani system.

2.3 RAAGA IN KARNATAK MUSIC

With the advent of Venkatamakhi’s ‘Chaturdandiprakaashikaa’ (1650 AD), the entire approach to music in South India, underwent a radical change. In this work, he classified all the raaga-s of Karnataka music within the framework of seventy-two melakartaa-s or 72 janaka or major raaga-s. The classification of raaga-s into janaka (major) and janya (minor) raaga-s is the most scientific system of raaga classification. Janaka means generic and janya means generated. There are 72 janaka raaga-s based on the 12 svaras of the sthaayi. Whereas the number of janaka raaga-s is fixed, the number of janya ragas is practically unlimited. This classification of 72 melakartaas brought about a more rational arithmetical classification.

The 72 janaka raaga-s or melakartaa raaga-s are arranged according to a definite plan. This plan of arrangement helps one to give the svara-s taken by any one of the 72 melaraaga-s without difficulty. The fixed notes (achala svara-s) sa and pa are present in all the 72 melakartaa raaga-s and serve to give a certain fixity to their melodic character.

The Scheme of 72 Melakartaas

The 72 melakartaa raaga-s are grouped under 12 chakra-s, each chakra comprising within it 6 mela raaga-s. The scheme is divided into two halves. In the first half which includes chakra-s I to VI and the mela-s 1-36, the shuddha madhyama occurs as a constant note and in the second half, which includes chakra-s VII to XII and mela-s 37-72, the prati madhyama occurs as a constant note. For
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this reason, the first six chakra-s are referred to as the shuddha madhyama chakras and the second six chakra-s as the prati madhyama chakras.

The manner of interpretation and the shift of emphasis from structural limits to free improvisation in Hindustani music is one of the main differences between Karnatak music and Hindustani music. These brought in their wake a host of ancillary changes in aalaapa and tāṭāla, which ultimately resulted in two almost separate systems of music. Karnatak music does not follow the elaborate ‘time theory of raaga’ as in Hindustani Music. Nevertheless, it accepts the fact that raaga-s have a deep association with emotions. There are raaga-s capable of producing joy, a feeling of sadness, agitation, etc.

Karnatak Music Compositions:

In Karnatak Music, a study of the structure of its present form - kriti, keertanam, varnam, padam, jaavali, etc. makes it fairly clear that this music is maintaining the ancient traditions of the prabandhas more closely and rigidly than Hindustani music. Just as in prabandha gaana strict adherence to the structure of the composition is compulsory, so also in Karnatak music, though to a lesser degree, adherence to the forms of the compositions even in improvisation while rendering kriti-s, etc. is still required.

Kriti

The kriti is the most highly evolved amongst art musical forms. It is the most important of the melodic group of compositions. The composer enjoyed ease and freedom in the expression of his musical thoughts in this form. The only ideal present in the mind of the composer during the composition of a kriti, is the delineation of the raaga bhaava in all its varied and rich colours.

The term ‘kriti’ refers to the composition whose claim to permanence lies principally in its music and not in its saahitya. The motive behind the kriti is principally the creation of aesthetic enjoyment.

The pallavi, anupallavi and charana are the minimum and essential anga-s of a kriti. There may be one or more charana-s. The pallavi is sung first, followed by the anupallavi. The pallavi is repeated at the conclusion of the anupallavi. The charana is next sung.

Kritis have also been enriched by the introduction of sangati-s. Sangati-s are variations on a musical theme, developed step by step.

Keertanam

Scholars have restricted the term ‘keertana’ to those set of compositions whose saahitya-s have a special spiritual value. Thus in a keertanam, the saahitya is of primary importance. In a keertanam, the portrayal of bhakti rasa is important. Keertana-s are older than kriti-s. Kriti is a development from the keertana. The keertana had its birth about the latter half of the 14th century. The kriti in its fully developed form appeared about four centuries later.

The keertana is strictly speaking a sacred form. Its saahitya may be of a devotional character, or may relate to a theme from the Puraana-s. The music as well as the rhythm of a keertana are simple in character. The music is used herein only as a vehicle to sing the glories of God. The anupallavi is a dispensable anga in a keertana. The motive behind the keertana is the creation of bhakti rasa or the feeling of devotion.
Varnam

Varnam-s are scholarly compositions. They are elaborate melodies filled with raaga bhaava. The constituent anga-s of a varnam are:-

i) The poorvaanga, comprising the pallavi, anupallavi and the muktaayi svara.

ii) The uttaraanga, or the ettukadai comprising the charana and the charana svara-s.

The poorvaanga and uttaraanga are of almost equal length. They represent two balanced halves of the composition.

Varnam-s are of two kinds –

a) Taana Varnam and b) Pada Varnam

a) Taana Varnam - Taana Varnam-s are compositions played or sung at the commencement of a concert. In a taana varnam, the pallavi, anupallavi and charanam alone have saahitya. The other portions are sung as solfa (svara) passages.

On account of the taana style of development, and the preponderance of phrases in this form, this composition is called taana varna. The wide dispersal of the saahitya syllables is a characteristic feature of the taana varna.

b) Pada Varnam - Pada varna-s are called chauka varna-s and Ata varna-s are the compositions heard in dance concerts. The entire composition herein has saahitya. The words of the saahitya have less vowel extensions. The music is in a somewhat slower tempo and is intended to give full scope to convey the bhaava-s. Because of its affinity to the padam, both in tempo and the theme of the saahitya, this composition is called pada varna.

Padam

Padam-s are scholarly compositions. The term ‘pada’ was originally used to signify a devotional song. In the musical parlance of the modern period, the term is restricted to the type of composition which belongs to the sphere of dance - music and which treats of the various aspects of naayaka - naayikaa (the hero and the heroine) relationships. Although strictly a dance form, yet the pada is sung in concerts of art music, on account of its musical excellence.

To understand a pada and to enter into its spirit, one should have knowledge of the types of naayikaa-s (heroines) and naayaka-s (heroes), etc. Shringaara and bhakti are two themes that provide a fund of material for the Indian composers to draw their inspiration from. The implied bhaava-s underlying the pada-s are made explicit through appropriate abhinaya in dance concerts. Madhura bhakti method of approach to God is one of the primordial concepts of the Hindu mind. The union of the individual soul with the universal soul, the poetic conception of love, the ideal of spiritualized love, the sufferings of love, the expectation of happiness or the failure to realize the goal are some of the themes found in the pada-s.

The pada has three sections - pallavi, anupallavi and charana. There may be two or more charana-s. The music is slow and dignified and flows in a natural manner. The musical piece is replete with raaga bhaava and a sustained balance is maintained between the words and the music throughout. The signature (mudraa) of the composer may occur in the pallavi, anupallavi or the last charana.
**Jaavali**

Contrasted with the *pada*-s which are songs of divine love, *jaavalis* are songs treating of worldly love. They are songs of an erotic nature, mundane and sensuous in concept and spirit. They are popular because of their bright, attractive and catchy music. The music is generally in *madhyamakaala*. *Jaavalis* are in attractive *raagas* like *Pharaz*, *Kaapi*, *Behaag*, *Khamaas*, etc. The language is usually colloquial.

*Jaavali*-s are pieces belonging to the sphere of light classical music. They are rendered during the second half of a concert programme. They are also used in dance concerts. *Jaavalis* are usually set in *Aadi*, *Roopaka* and *Chaapu* *taala*-s.

The *jaavali* had its birth in 19th century. The word “*jaavali*” can be traced to the Kannada word ‘*jaavadi*’, which means a kind of erotic, luscious poetry. The fluency of musical flow is a characteristic feature of *jaavalis*. This form corresponds to the *ghazal* of Hindustani music. The *jaavali* has the sections: *pallavi*, *anupallavi* and *charana*-s. There may be one or more *charana*-s.

**Tillaanaa**

*Tillaanaa* is a short and crisp form. It is principally a dance form. On account of its brisk and attractive music it is also sung towards the close of a music concert. It is one of the liveliest of musical forms. It came to be composed by classical composers who lived in the 18th century. In a music concert after the long, drawn-out *pallavi*, it comes as a pleasing variety. In a dance concert also, it comes as a pleasing variety after the *abhinaya*.

In *tillaanaa*-s intended as concert forms, the composers have paid attention to the *raaga bhaava*. Herein, all kinds of rhythmical solfa syllables occur. In *tillaanaa*-s which are intended as dance forms generally medium tempo is adhered to and the drum syllables mostly occur. The rhythmic syllables are so arranged so as to give scope for display of a variety of foot work.

*Tillaanaa*-s have only one *charana* wherein the signature of the composer occurs. The *saahitya* of the *tillaanaa*-s that normally follow the *anupallavi*, may be in Sanskrit, Telugu or Tamil. *Taraanaa* is the counterpart of *Tillaanaa* in Hindustani music. *Tillaanaas* are usually composed in *Aadi*, *Roopaka* or *Chaapu* *taala*-s.

### 2.4 TAALA IN KARNATAK MUSIC

In the field of *taala*, Karnataka music follows the old system where *maatraas* (beats) are divided into *laghu*, *dhrutam*, *anudhrutam*, *guru*, *plutam* and *kaakapaadam*. One of the reasons for the maintenance of the old traditions in Karnataka music may be the knowledge of Sanskrit among most of the musicians.

In Karnataka music, a *taala* consists of a cycle or *aavartana*. In the present day, Karnataka music follows the *Sooladi Sapta Taalas*. There are seven *taalas* – 1) *Dhruva* 2) *Mathya* 3) *Roopaka* 4) *Jhampa* 5) *Triputa* 6) *Ata* 7) *Eka*.

Three types of subdivisions or *anga*-s figure in the above mentioned *taalas* viz. *laghu* (consisting of a beat and finger counts), *dhrutam* a beat and a wave and *anudhrutam* - a beat. The *laghu* is of 5 varieties or *jaati*-s viz *tishra jaati* (*laghu* of 3 counts) *chaturshra jaati* (*laghu* of 4 counts) *mishra jaati* (*laghu* of 7 counts) *khanda jaati* (*laghu* of 5 counts) and *sankeern jaati* (*laghu* of 9 counts).

Due to the variable values of the *laghu*, five types of a particular *taala* are available.
Thus, the seven soolaadi taala-s when performed in five jaati-s give rise to thirty-five taala-s.

A smaller but nevertheless important group of taalas are also used frequently in Karnataka music - the chaapu taala-s, particularly mishra chaapu (7 counts) and khanda chaapu (5 counts). These taalas are of characteristically quick movement and are derived from folk music. Each consists of two angas, a shorter one plus a longer one in asymmetrical relationship - mishra chaapu being 3+4 and khanda chaapu 2+3. These taalas are not thought of as being structured by anudhrutam, dhrutam or laghu.

In Karnataka music, a single taala cycle or taala aavartana can be sufficiently long to accommodate a complete musical idea. However, two or more cycles are often combined into a longer phrase. The completion of a phrase is usually signalled by a recurring melodic phrase. That phrase always appears at the same place in the taala cycle and thus marks an important structural point in the taala. This important structural point in the taala cycle where the main phrase of a musical piece begins - is named ‘eduppu’ in Tamil or ‘groha’ in Sanskrit.

Speed is called as ‘kaala’ or ‘laya’ in the Karnataka system of music. Once the basic speed is established there is no acceleration of the taala counts. An increase in speed is achieved by an increase in the rhythmic density. A favourite procedure is to present a melodic or rhythmic pattern and then double it in speed while the taala continues in constant pace. The two most common doublings are a speed twice as fast (dvikaala) and a speed four times as fast (chatushkaala). A trikaala pattern goes through the three stages of presentation in first speed, then in dvikaala and finally in chatushkaala.

2.5 SELFASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Fill in the blank spaces with appropriate words given below:

(a) __________ classified all the ragas of Karnatak music within the framework of __________ or __________ or __________ ragas.

(b) In Karnatak music maatraas are divided into ______ ______ ______

(c) The ______ and ______ are the minimum angas of a ______.

(d) In a keertanam the ______ is of a primary ______ so is the portrayal of ______

(e) A pada is a ______ and treats of various aspects of naayaka – naayikaa relationships.

2. Write 5 to 6 lines on the Scheme of 72 melakartaas.

3. Write briefly on the Taala System in Karnatak music.
**Answer:**

1. a) Venkatamakhi, 72 melakartaas, 72 janaka, major
   
   b) laghu, dhrutam, anudhruvatam, guru, plutam, kaakapadam
   
   c) pallavi, anupallavi, charan, kriti
   
   d) saahitya, importance, bhakti, rasa
   
   e) devotional song, naayaka-naayikaa

2. Venkatamakhi in his Chaturdandi prakaashikaa (1650 AD) introduced this scheme wherein he classified all the raagas within the framework of 72 melakartaas or 72 janaka or major raagas. The classification of raagas into janaka (major) and janya (minor) raagas is the most scientific system or raaga classification. Janaka means generic and janya means generated. The 72 melakartaa raagas are grouped under 12 chakras, each chakra having 6 mela raagas. The scheme is divided into two halves – first includes chakras VII to XII and melas 37 – 72.

3. Karnatak music follows the old system where maatraas (beats) are divided into laghu, dhrutam, anudhruvatam, guru, plutam and kaakapadam. A taala consists of a cycle or an aavartana. It follows the Soolaadi Sapta Taalas – 1)Dhruva, 2) Mathya, 3) Roopaka, 4) Jhampa, 5) Triputa, 6) Ata and, 7) Eka. Again laghu is of 5 varieties or jaatis – tishra jaati (3 counts), chaturashra jaati (4 counts), mishra jaati (7 counts), Khanda jaati (5 counts) and sankeerna jaciti (9 counts).