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ELEMENTS OF RAGA

In Indian society, music finds expression through classical as well as folk stream. The basis of all classical music is believed to be folk music, which takes the form of classical music upon being bound by certain rules. The tradition of Hindustani classical music in India abounds in various styles as well as forms. The basic melodic structure that defines them is called 'Raga'.

The concepts of Raga and Tala give expression to the main components of music, that is melody and rhythm respectively. If Tala forms the rhythmic foundation upon which a composition is established, then Raga is the core of the composition's melodic configuration and its elaboration spanning different forms and styles of Hindustani classical music. The classical character of Hindustani music is exemplified through the medium of Raga in that it adheres to strict rules, which are not seen in other streams of music.



OBJECTIVE

After studying this lesson, the learner would be able to :

- define Raga ;
- explain the concept of Raga in Indian classical music ;
- state the characteristics of Raga ;
- define the different elements of Raga.

2.1 CONCEPT OF RAGA AND ITS DEFINITION

Indian classical music is basically melodic and Raga is its nucleus. The word 'Raga' is synonymous with Indian classical music. The concept of Raga is almost 2000 years old. The word 'Raga' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Ranj' (to colour, to provide delight). Etymologically it has been defined as 'Ranjayati iti Ragah' i.e, that which provides aesthetic pleasure is called Raga.

Elements of Raga

The Raga can be defined as a melodic structure of musical notes having specific character, and is governed by certain rules. Raga in its true sense was mentioned first in Brhaddeshi (about 8th century A.D.), a treatise written by Matanga.

The Raga has undergone many changes through the ages but its fundamental characteristics have never been disputed. The foremost requirement of a Raga is to provide aesthetic delight to the listener's mind. The Raga is not merely a musical scale, but it is a characteristic arrangement of notes; its full potential and complexity can be realized only in its exposition. Though a musician has considerable amount of freedom while rendering a Raga, one has to stick to its basic principles and characteristics. These characteristics of the Raga have been handed down by great musicologists of India and are still being followed by the practitioners of Indian classical music. These are as follows:

- Ragas are derived from Thatas
- Raga must not omit Shadja (Sa)
- In a Raga, Madhyam and Pancham should never be omitted together
- Raga should have a specific set of ascending and descending notes
- Raga should have Vadi, Samvadi and Anuvadi Svaras
- Raga should have at least five notes (one or two notes can be omitted)
- In Hindustani music system, the Ragas are allotted to different hours of the day and different seasons.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.1

1. Name the Sanskrit root from which the word 'Raga' has been derived
2. What is the foremost requirement of the Raga?
3. What is the utility of Thata ?
4. Which note cannot be omitted in the Raga?
5. Which two notes should not be omitted together in a Raga?

2.2 ELEMENTS OF RAGA

2.2.1 Thata

There are seven Shuddha (pure notes) and five Vikrit Svaras (modified notes) in a Saptak. A set of seven chosen notes out of these twelve notes (seven pure and five modified notes) forms a Thata. In other words, a Thata is a musical scale with the seven notes arranged in their order of ascent (aroha). This is, however, only the skeletal musical structure and is not meant to be sung. Thata eventually gives rise to the Ragas.

According to Pt. Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936), the famous musicologist, there are ten Thatas, viz - Bilawal, Kalyan, Khamaj, Bhairav, Poorvi, Marwa, Kafi, Asavari, Bhairavi and Todi.



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2.2.2 Raga Jati

There are three types of Jatis according to the number of notes used in a Raga:

1. Sampurna - A Raga having seven notes in the Aroha and Avaroha is called Sampurna.
2. Shadav - A Raga having six notes in Aroha and Avaroha is called Shadav.
3. Audav - A Raga having five notes in Aroha and Avaroha Audav.

These main Jatis when permuted and combined give rise to six more Jatis as follows:

1. Sampurna - Shadav - A Raga having seven notes in Aroha and six notes in Avaroha is called Sampurna - Shadav.
2. Sampurna - Audav - A Raga having seven notes in Aroha and five notes in Avaroha is called Sampurna - Audav.
3. Shadav -Sampurna - A Raga having six notes in Aroha and seven notes in Avaroha is called Shadav - Sampurna.
4. Shadav - Audav - A Raga having six notes in Aroha and five notes in Avaroha is called Shadav - Audav.
5. Audav - Sampurna - A Raga having five notes in Aroha and seven notes in Avaroha is called Audav - Sampurna.
6. Audav - Shadav - A Raga having five notes in Aroha and six notes in Avaroha is called Audav - Shadav.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.2**

1. What is Thata ?
2. What does a Thata give rise to ?
3. How many Thatas are there according to Bhatkhande ?
4. What is the number and arrangement of notes in a Sampurna Raga.
5. What is the number and arrangement of notes in an Audav - Sampurna Raga?

2.2.3 Aroha

A set of ascending notes in sequence is called Avroha, viz,

Aroha of Raga Bhupali - Sa Re Ga Pa Dha Sa

2.2.4 Avaroha

A set of descending notes in sequence is called Avroha, viz,

Avaroha of Raga Bhupali - Sa Dha Pa Ga Re Sa

Aroha and Avaroha of a Raga show the sequence of notes that has to be followed while singing a Raga. We may see the following examples to understand it :

Aroha of Raga Alhaiya Bilawal-

Sa Re Ga Pa Dha Ni Sa

It is evident from the above sequence of notes that in the Raga Alhaiya Bilawal, Ma is omitted or varjit in the Aroha.

Avaroha of Raga Alhaiya Bilawal-

Sa Ni Dha Pa Dha Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Ma Re Sa

The above set of notes shows the descending order of the Raga Alhaiya Bilawal.

2.2.5 Pakad

A specific sequence of notes, that is peculiar to each Raga, is called the 'Pakad' by which a listener instantly recognizes the Raga. It can be translated as 'catch phrase' in English. For example, Pakad of Raga Yaman - Ni Re Ga Re Sa, Pa Ma Ga Re Sa

2.2.6 Vadi Svara

The most prominent Svara in a Raga is known as the Vadi Svara. Its position in a Raga is as important as that of a king in his court. It is also known as 'Jeeva Svara'. In other words, it is the most important component of a Raga. It gives character to a Raga. This Svara is used or projected most frequently in the phrases of notes during the exposition of a Raga. For example, 'Ga' is the Vadi Svara of Raga Yaman.

2.2.7 Samvadi Svara

The most important note next to Vadi Svara is called Samvadi Svara. The interval between the Vadi and Samvadi Svaras is either four or five notes, e.g, Samvadi Svara of Raga Yaman is 'Ni'.

2.2.8 Anuvadi Svara

Apart from Vadi and Samvadi Svaras, all other Svaras in a Raga are Anuvadi, i.e, the Svaras that follow (the Vadi and the Samvadi).

Even though their role in a Raga is to follow Vadi and Samvadi Svaras, Anuvadi Svaras have their own importance in a Raga. In the exposition of the Raga, these Svaras help in improvisations through different kind of permutations and combinations.

In the Raga Yaman, Sa, Re, ¹Ma, Pa and Dha are the Anuvadi Svaras.

2.2.9 Vivadi Svara

Vivadi Svaras are the Svaras which are not used as regular Svaras in a particular



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Raga, but are incorporated in certain combinations of notes. Vivadi Svaras are used sparingly to enhance the beauty of the Raga. Frequent use of Vivadi Svara may change the character of the Raga. For example, in Raga Bihag, Teevra Ma is used as Vivadi Svara in the following phrase - 'Ma' Pa Ga Ma Ga

2.2.10 Samay

A unique feature of the Hindustani music system is in the allotting of the specific hours of the day as well as seasons to Ragas. Traditionally, the six main Ragas and their Raginis were allocated the six seasons. The Raga Samay or time period specified for singing different Ragas is divided into eight parts of day and night. These are known as 'Praharas'. There are four Praharas of the day and four Praharas of the night of three hours duration each in which Ragas are classified under three categories 1. Ragas having use of Re & Dha Shuddha 2. Ragas having the use of Re & Dha Komal 3. Ragas having the use of Ga & Ni Komal.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 2.3**

1. Define the term Aroha.
2. What is meant by Pakad ?
3. Name the most important note in the Raga.
4. What is the interval between the Vadi and Samvadi Svaras ?
5. What do you understand by Anuvadi Svaras ?

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

The concept of Raga is unique to Indian classical music and it is almost 2000 years old. The word Raga has been derived from the Sanskrit root 'Ranj' (to colour, to provide delight).

Raga can be defined as a melodic structure of musical notes having specific character and is governed by certain rules. Raga in its true sense was mentioned first in Brihaddeshi, a treatise written by Matanga. It is one of the oldest components of Indian classical music which has undergone many changes through the ages, but its fundamental characteristics have never been disputed. The foremost requirement of a Raga is to provide aesthetic delight to the listeners' mind. The elements of Raga are Thata, Raga Jati, Aroha, Avaroha, Pakad, Vadi Svara, Samvadi Svara, Anuvadi Svara, Vivadi Svara, Samay.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. What do you understand by the term 'Raga' ?

2. Write in detail about the concept of 'Raga' in Indian classical music.
3. What are the rules to create a 'Raga' ?
4. What are the main elements of 'Raga' ?



ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

2.1

1. Ranj
2. to provide aesthetic delight to the listeners' mind
3. Ragas are derived from Thatas
4. Shadja
5. Madhyama and Panchama

2.2

1. Thata is a musical scale, with the seven notes arranged in their ascending order
2. Thata eventually gives rise to Ragas
3. Ten
4. There are seven notes in ascending order and seven notes in descending order
5. There are five notes in ascending order and seven notes in descending order

2.3

1. A set of ascending notes in sequence is called Aroha
2. Pakad is a specific sequence of notes peculiar to each Raga
3. Vadi
4. The interval between the Vadi and Samvadi Svaras is either of four or five notes
5. Apart from Vadi and Samvadi Svaras, all other Svaras in a Raga are Anuvadi, i.e, the Svaras that follow (the Vadi and the Samvadi)



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GLOSSARY

1. Raga - Raga can be defined as a melodic structure of musical notes having specific character and is governed by certain rules.
2. Aroha - A set of ascending notes in sequence is called Aroha
3. Avaroha - A set of descending notes in sequence is called Avaroha
4. Pakad - A specific sequence of notes that is peculiar each Raga is called the Pakad
5. Vadi Svara - The most prominent Svara in a Raga is known as Vadi Svara
6. Samvadi Svara - The most important note next to Vadi Svara is Samvadi Svara
7. Anuvadi Svara - Apart from Vadi and Samvadi Svaras, all other Svaras in a Raga are Anuvadi

SUGGESTED ACTIVITY

1. To listen to the rendition of prescribed Ragas by various renowned artistes.
2. Consult Kramik Pustak Malika part I and II by Pt. V.N.Bhatkhande.