

Appreciating Carnatic Music
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Lecture - 09

Lecture title: Understanding Rag -2 (RAga & Swara)

(Music Starts: 00:21) (Music Ends: 06:30)

We just heard an AlapanA of rAga [Suryakantham](#) on the violin rendered by V.V. Subramaniam, one of our foremost musicians in Carnatic music. This is a rAga which must evoke some profound moods in any one who listened to it. What mood did it evoke in you? Did it evoke one or were there multiple moods that it evoked in you and do you think a rAga or any piece of music at all must necessarily evoke a mood in the listener?

To many of us it is a given that music does evoke images, it evokes moods - any kind of music at all and certainly classical music. The music material is so used that it charges the atmosphere, charges the musical space and the listener is able to gain access to some coherent images, coherent emotions.

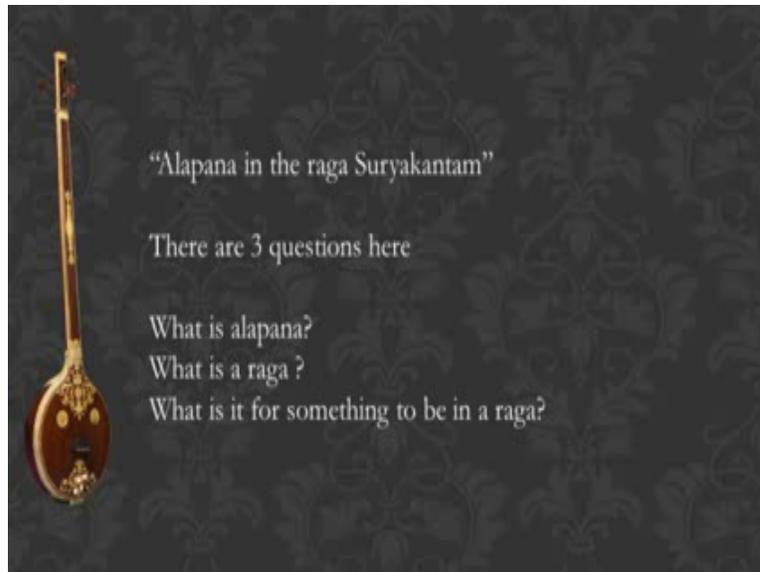
We signed off our last session with a mention of the association of rAga and mood. In fact, the very word rAga itself does not have any musical meaning. The meaning of the word rAga, etymologically, does not have anything do with music per se.

RAga in Sanskrit and in some Indian languages like Marathi it is associated with emotion, with passion. In fact, in modern Marathi, rAga is used in the sense of anger and in Sanskrit definitely, the context in which “rAga” is used - rAga virahita, or we have word “vairagya” which means dispassionate.

So, the word rAga really means passion and the musical idea of rAga is that, it evokes some emotions, some mood. It colors the mind of the listeners in certain ways which is why it is called rAga.

Now, I just said that, we heard an alapana in rAga [Suryakantham](#), now for a complete novice to carnatic music and, I expect there are few such among our learners - There will be three questions, what is alapana? and What is it for an alapana or anything to be in rAga. Of course, What is a rAga?

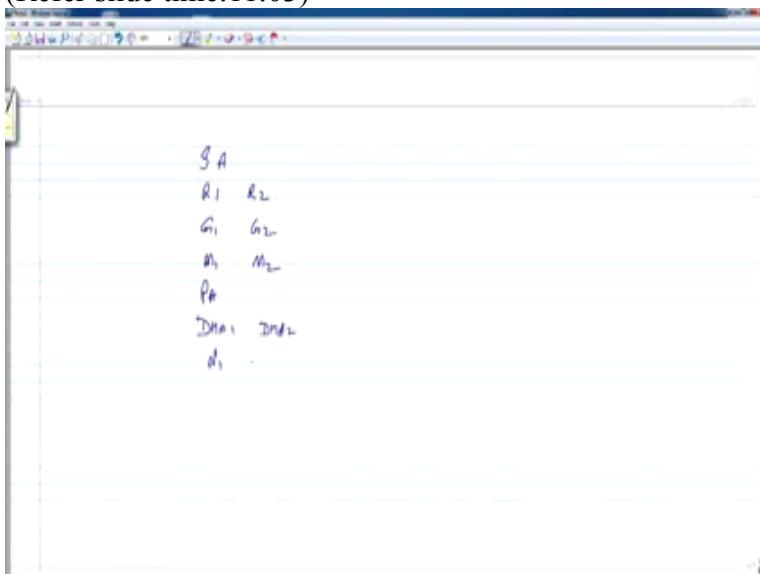
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And this is what we are trying to understand: what is a rAga first of all; because as I said, rAga is the fundamental. It is of fundamental importance as far as content of Carnatic music goes and along with tAla, the rhythmic aspect it forms a grid upon which Carnatic music is mounted.

Now rAga at a basic level - this is something just you saw last session - basically, rAga means certain swaras are in it and certain swaras are not there in it. We must always bear in mind that, when we speak of swaras it is just the skeleton of the rAga. RAga is much more than the swaras that comprised it and that also something we will see later on.

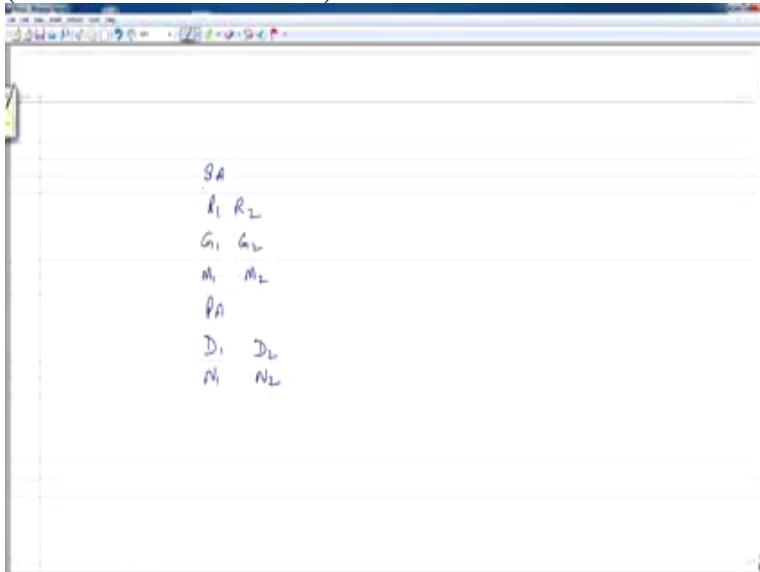
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For a moment, we will revisit the twelve swaras thanas, schema we have sa, ri one, ri two, g one g two, ma one, ma two, pa - there is no variants dha one dha two ni one ni two. Now the rAga

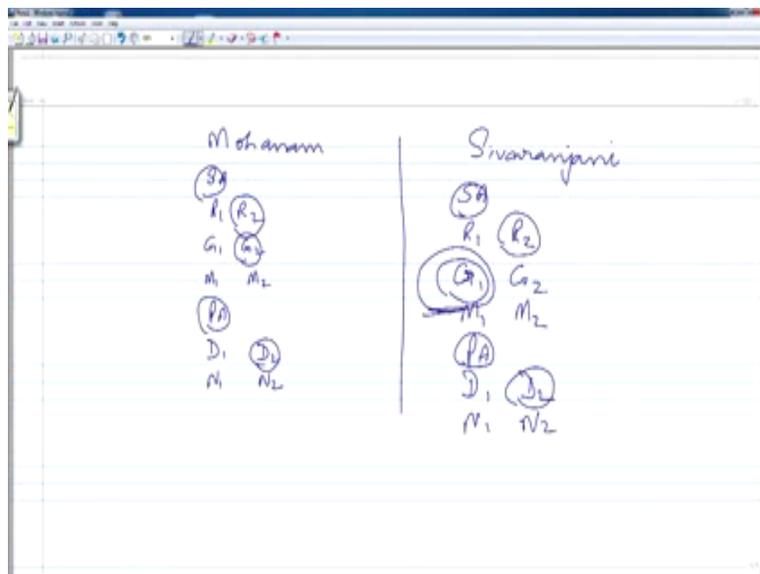
that we just heard [Suryakantham](#) the swaras. In this are (Singing Starts: 11:41) (Singing Ends: 13:05) Now, let us go back to Mohanam, that we saw in the last session: the swaras were

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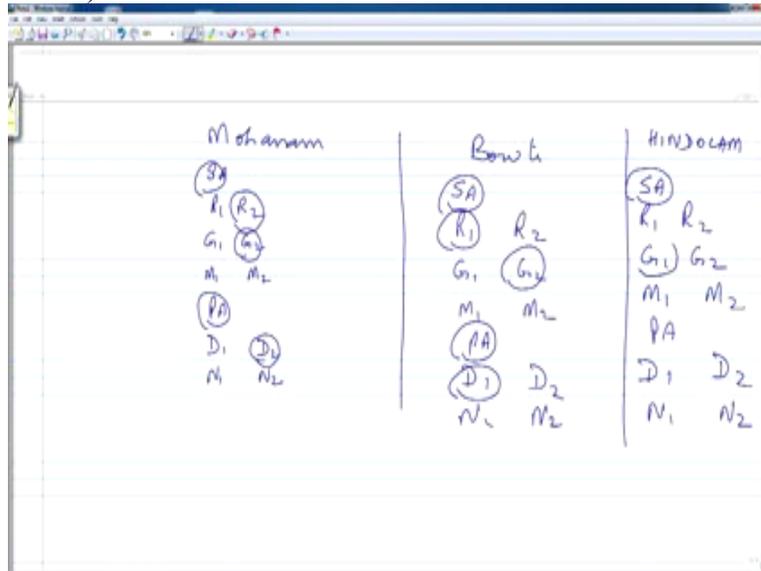
(Singing Starts: 13:15) (Singing Ends: 13:27) h

Here, suppose I just... I did change the [Gandhara](#) last time and showed how the mood completely change this. (Singing Starts: 13:40) (Singing Ends: 13:41)



Consider there is (Singing Starts: 13:44) (Singing Ends: 14:03) this is Sivaranjani, the mood is completely different only because other variant of Ga is used (Singing Starts:14:12) (Singing Ends:14:24) this is Mohanam (Singing Starts: 14:26) (Singing Ends: 14:36).... Sivaranjani.

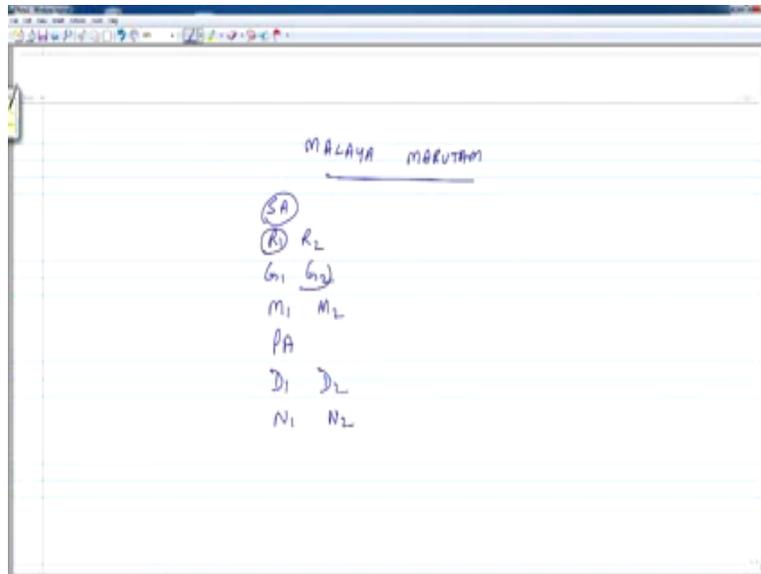
If suppose I change the Ri of Mohanam - it sounds different (Singing Starts: 14:47) (Singing Ends: 15:06) Ri and Dha - if it is changed. (Singing Starts: 15:09) (Singing Ends: 15:28) Suppose I take entirely different set of notes from Mohanam (Singing Starts: 15:37) (Singing Ends: 15:38) Mohanam. Now (Refer Slide Time: 15:40)



(Singing Starts: 15:40) (Singing Ends: 17:07)

All this demonstration, is just to show you, how what we speak of as rAgas are, at a very basic level, made of swaras. And how many different combinations of swaras are possible and how the presence of one or another swara can change and determine mood of that rAga.

As we saw, there are rAgas which have all the seven notes, all the seven swaras. There are rAgas that have only five swaras like Mohanam or Hindolam, which we saw last. There are rAgas which have six swaras. (Singing Starts: 18:04) (Singing Ends: 19:05) (Refer Slide Time: 19:00)



There are six swaras and then we have combinations. You can have five swaras in the Aroha and seven swaras in avaroha, seven swaras in Aroha and five swaras in the avaroha.

Now all this determine the rAga: that is rAga admits of certain swaras certain swaras make up that rAga and those swaras have to be used, you cannot skip one are the other. And only those swaras may be used and some swaras are allowed in Aroha sequences, in certain rAgas for certain instances, rAga [Bilahari](#). (Singing Starts: 19:58) (Singing Ends: 20:11) So here, this aroha is five (Singing Starts: 20:14) (Singing Ends: 20:19) and avaroha is seven. So we have this kind of rAgas also. So, we will take a look at this technicality later, but the point that I want to make here is, swaras are basic building blocks of rAgas.