



## Musings on Classical Music



### Some Prominent Terms in Musical Parlance

**RAGAM** :Free improvisation of pure melody(alapana) based on swaras without rhythm in successive melodic phases, quite within the stipulated framework of the raga with its arohana & avarohana, i.e., ascending & descending scales. Each raga has all the seven or six or five notes in varying combinations - called sampoorana, audava-shadava, etc & enjoys a distinct 'raga swarupa'. Carnatic music enjoys the most systematised raga-melodic structures. Hence called "Ranjayatee iti ragah".

**TANA** :Without percussive help, rhythmic pulses brought out delineating the various phases & tempos, the fineness and beauty of a raga to display & portray its panoramic potential. Veena is the ideal instrument for tana since all its seven strings blend to give a harmonious nada(sound) in the crescendo.

**SWARA KALPANA** :Improvised swara permutations as are appropriate to each raga. Solfa syllables alone are used to elaborate & pleasing combinations depend on the expertise of the artiste. Raga alapana has no rhythm but swara kalpana is subjected to the strict discipline of rhythm(tala)

**TALA** :Rhythm. Time-cycle contain one or more sub-time measures. There are 128 talas. Each is a rhythmic arrangement of beats, etc., in cycles.

**PALLAVI** :The first section of a kriti or kirtan, which has normally a pallavi, anupallavi & charanam. A few have 'samashiti charanams' where there is no distinct anupallavi.

Pallavi also represents the distinct manodharmic sangita using a short phrase or idiom & giving full scope to exposition of raga-tala intricacies, swara kalpana, etc. This type of special rendition demands a high level of expertise

**RAGAMALIKA** :A garland of ragas with or without lyrics.

**PADA, JAVALI** :Modern padams depict musical forms best suited to bring out the infinite captivating graces. Javalis slightly differ from padas in its erotic content.

**TILLANA** :A composition with jatis, brisk in tempo interspersed with swaras, katos and lyrics. Often in middle & fast tempos. Best suited to dances to whip up tempo after the sublime, padas.

**ALAPANA** :Extempore, innovative, creative improvisation of raga.

**ABHYASAGHANAM** :Practising music

**AROHANA** :Ascending order of notes - sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, da, ni either in full, or with omissions or in jumbled series according to the prescribed notes of each raga.

**AVAROHANAM** :Same as in arohana but in descending order. If arohana takes the rendition uphill, avarohana brings it back downhill. Taken together, raga swarupa or shape is evolved.

**BANI** :Style of rendition.

**BHAVA** :Emotion, feeling, the soul of lyric or raga.

**CHITTASWARA** :Solfa syllables (swaras) pre-set by composer as distinct from swara

prastara, which is improvised. Chittaswara is ornamentation to bring out the innate beauty of raga in the context of the flow of the song.

MANGALAM :Traditional end of concert or chorus - a propitious finale.

NIRAVAL :Niraval is phrasing, developing and expounding the lyric bringing out the subtleties & beauties, and variations of the raga.

VADI :Most important note of a raga.

VAKRA :Jumbled notes in arohana or avarohana.

VARJA :Notes omitted in arohana or avarohana which conduces individual raga swarupah.

LAKSHANA GITAM :Song which illustrates or portrays the basic features of a raga.

VARNAM :Composition with limited words & maximum of notes to bring out raga lakshana & raga bhava.

SAPTA TALAS :Druva, Matya, Rupaka, Jampai, Tripata, Ata & Eka talas(7).

SHADANGAS :Laghu, Druta, Anudrata, Guru, Pluta & Kakapada(6) - which distinguish individual talas.

LAGHU :One beat & counting or time-measures with fingers - as many as is fixed for each tala.

DRUTA :Beat of the hand & visarjita or turning it - 2 aksharakalas.

ANUDRUTA :Beat of the hand alone - 1 aksharakala.

AKSHARAKALA :Unit measure of talas. Thus,

Druva tala has 14 aksharas.

Matya tala has 10 aksharas.

Rupaka tala has 6 aksharas.

Jampai tala has 10 aksharas.

Tripata tala has 7 aksharas.

Ata tala has 14 aksharas.

Eka tala has 14 aksharas.

AVARTA :One full cycle of any tala comprising one or more of the shadangas having the respective aksharakala.

VAGGEYAKARA :One who composes & sings his own creations.