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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SWARAS IN CARNATIC MUSIC



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Abstract:

This research examines the role and significance of Swaras within the realm of Carnatic music. Swaras can be likened to octave notes, akin to a well-designed structure. At the heart of this systems the Shadja, commonly known as the tonic note. The other notes ascend or descend at specific intervals from this foundational point. Essentially, Swaras work like letters in a language; their combination forms melodies, much like words create sentences. Within the context of Shruti, once a tonic (Sa) is established, the perfect fifth (Pa) follows suit. Each of the five primary notes has two variations, culminating in 12 distinct musical positions across an octave.

Keywords: *Carnatic Music, Swara, Tala, Compositions, Ragam, Pedagogy*

Introduction: Although any seven-note scale would theoretically be useful in lessons, Mayamalavagowla would obviously always remain a better choice for a basic study on Shankarabharanam along with other scales as it provides enough information for learners to be familiar with contained Swaras without the stress of preciseness at the beginning but on making a proper knowledge regarding twelve note gaps that occur in an octave allowing the correct perception of the tonics for performing rhythmic sound (laya).

Fundamentals of Carnatic Music

While any seven-note scale can theoretically serve for instruction purposes; tradition dictates that Mayamalavagowla remains preferred for teaching foundational concepts related specifically to Shankarabharanam along with other scales enabling learners' familiarity with contained swaras without undue emphasis on precision initially—instead fostering robust understanding regarding twelve note gaps present throughout an octave facilitating accurate tonic identification while performing rhythmically correct (laya).

Beginner's Level of Carnatic Music

Beginners (Starting Level of Carnatic Music) Many years of research and teaching in Carnatic music for beginners had revolved around essential lessons Sarali Swaras, Janta Swara, High Pitched Swaras, Low Pitched Swaras, Alankaras, and Daatu Swaras. Typically for the children to study, lessons will coincide with a ragam known as Mayamalava Goula Ragam, the 15th parent scale out of 72 parent scales, for which Purandara Dasa scientifically certified as perfect for beginners. All lessons except Alankara adhere to Adi talam (rhythmic cycles). The Alankara lesson teaches 7 different talas (suladi talas) of five Jaatis (35 talas).

Major Elements of Carnatic Music:



Image 2: Carnatic Music

Shruti – Pitch

Sthayi - Octave

Swara - Notes

Laya - Rhythm

Shruti: The interaction between Shruti (pitch) and Laya (rhythm) is a fundamental tenet of this music form which allows Shruti to be primarily a harmonization between Sadjamam (the first note) and Panchamam (the fifth note) to signify that swaras are not immutable entities but interconnected components that are closely integrated with Shruti itself.

Sthayi : Musically, an octave signifies the interval that connects two pitches, with one frequency being double that of another. This creates an eight-note span, which can be further seen in the Western major scale, from low to high pitch in Carnatic singing as it ranges of C-D-E-F-G-A-B through S-R-G-M-P-D-N-S.

These ranges include changes from Sa to Sa and a frequency increment as the frequencies are reinforced. This relationship is what creates the values that move downward in octaves. When looked at through different instruments: different features appear, which are determined significantly by their size and construction. This also finally defines their capability and also has to do with Sthayi.

Five types of Sthayi's exist in Carnatic Music:

- 1) Madhyasthayi – Middle Octave - 7 Notes
- 2) Taara Sthayi – Higher Octave - 7 Notes
- 3) Mandrasthayi – Lower Octave - 7 Notes
- 4) Atitaarasthayi – Further Higher Octave - 7 Notes
- 5) Anumandrasthayi – Further Lower Octave - 7 Notes

A pentatonic scale is a kind of rich tapestry (twixt the seven). It is this complexity that enhances our capacity to listen to music as it reveals a vast amount of rhythmic complexities that we find engaging in our audience's performance that serve to navigate them through the journey of music.

Central to true artistry is the act of performing, which is realized in such complex structures containing fundamental nuances in the spectrum of musical colour and texture. Weaved together in these brilliant compositions are narratives that elicit great empathy and contemplation and that tell us about artistry -- in a way that captures the eye of a perceptive listener.

Our recognition of its legacy in art and culture revitalizes children and grandchildren who will inherit these enduring cultural patterns in the future. We respect these roots and protect them with passion so that we can ensure their harmonious continuation beyond this time. All this shared dedication brings us together in the joy of diversity, forming beautifully coloured experiences that interweave with the rest of humanity like a brilliant mosaic.

The magic of music transforms us on joyful journeys that inspire awe and elevate us. Melodies take us into new dimensions by encouraging creativity and building bridges across all divides, fostering unity and empathy within the community. We shall inspire each other to flourish and bring warmth, transforming lives in countless ways and giving hope for generations to come. Let us create a world where there is only hope and promise, where opportunities abound.

Each of these journeys forms precious memories, and these memories are imprinted deeply in your heart and mind, echoing in your memory forever like a symphony of life intertwining itself.

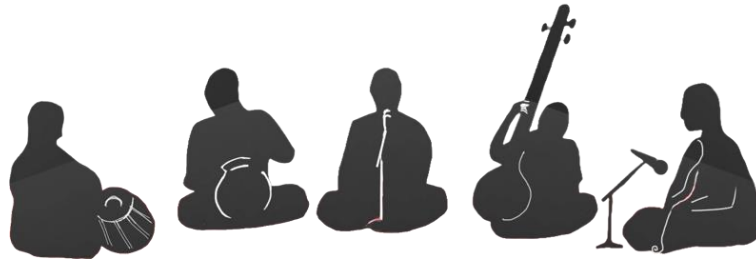


Image 2: Carnatic Music

Swara: The word 'Swara' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Svar', which means sound. There are different forms of sound. But the sound which is soothing to ear and which is musical is known as "Swaras." Each Swara is associated with animals and birds.

Sapta Swara:

S Shadja

R Rishabha

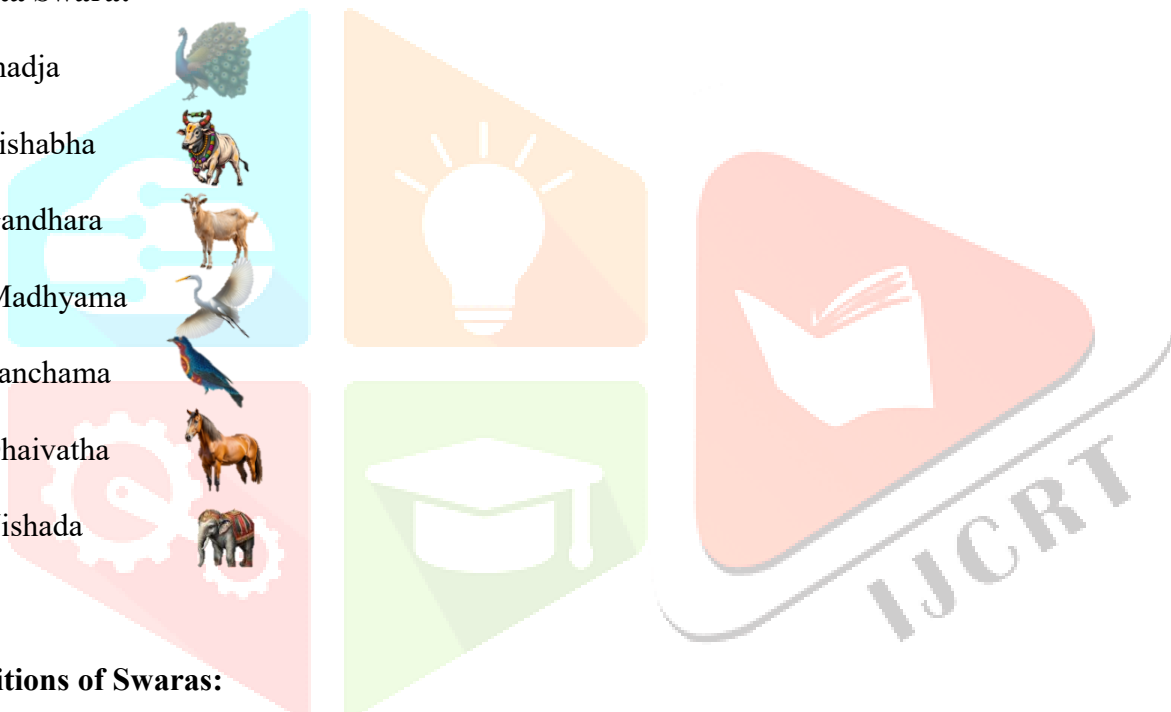
G Gandhara

M Madhyama

P Panchama

D Dhaivatha

N Nishada



Positions of Swaras:

At this point it is enough to say the five Swaras—Ri, Ga, Ma, Da, and Ni—have their corresponding positional variants, higher and lower than they are present. These changes take place in the seven-note system called Sapta Swara and produce many possibilities, including combinations and arrangements. Illustrative examples of these combinations arise through conversations about two Ragas (each with seven notes), where uppercase letters indicate higher varieties and lowercase letters correspond to lower versions—a concept closely resembling what Western music theory calls the "double harmonic scale." Beginners might have difficulty grasping intervals associated with these notes:

Beginner comprehension may struggle with understanding intervals linked to these notes:

Ascending: S r G m P d N S

Descending: S N d P m G r S

Shankarabharanam

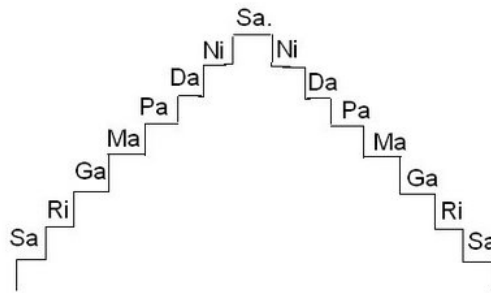


Image 1: Scale

This scale closely resembles Western classical major scales but is viewed as more approachable for learners:

Ascending: S R G m P D N S

Descending: S N D P m G R S

Carnatic music was written in the south of India circa 12th century A.D. and it is a traditional musical style characterized by its long-established structure, but is improvisational. Although vocal performance is vital to its nature, the form includes different types of instrumental accompaniments, such as violin or mridangam (a double-headed drum) with veena (a plucked string).

There's plenty of devotional material featured in its repertoire — with scores on Hindu deities that tap into the close cultural connection between Hindu mythology and South Indian society, with performances often taking place in concert halls or temples on festive occasions. On a personal level Carnatic music has shaped my life for the better while it has opened a much deeper relationship between my culture and soul throughout my 30-year learning journey, delivering priceless insights into not only music but life itself.

Sapta Swara's -7 chakras in the body:



Image 3: 7 Chakra's

S Root Chakra – Muladhara

R Sacral Chakra - Svadhisthana

G Solar Plexus Chakra - Manipura

M Heart Chakra - Anahata

P Throat Chakra - Vishuddha

D Third- Eye Chakra - Ajna

N Crown Chakra - Sahasrara



The Transformative Power of Swara: *Image 4: Origin of Swara's*

This imaginative journey facilitates the learning of Manodharma Sangeeta – including Aalap, Kalpana Swaras, Neraval, and Raga Tana Pallavi. The swaras provide a key to effortlessly understanding the sahitya in any music you encounter.

Improved Clarity in Singing: By practicing the swaras frequently, singers can achieve clearer language in their singing as these swaras serve as the basis to sharpen their voice.

Strengthened Breath Support: Practicing swaras regularly builds control of breath, which is key to sustained singing.

Vocal Agility: The practice of Swaras allows singers to smoothly switch notes, enhancing performance fluency.

Improved Diction: The practice of Swaras leads to better diction, which helps learners improve their singing diction and create the sound they want to achieve.

Precision in Pitch Accuracy: Working with the Swara with accuracy is beneficial as it helps to produce the right shruti (shruti and pitch) for a more harmonious sound.

Note Positioning Insight: Understanding Swaras helps deepen the sense of note placement on a deeper level, which further complements the overall sound experience.

Carnatic Music Compositions:

Saralevarse: Sarale Swara's are simple rules put forth for students in a first -class Carnatic Module. The music and rhythms are usually set to the Mayamalavagoula ragam and are usually simpler for inexperienced singers to perform. Saint Purandaradasa invented these basic lessons in sixteenth century, and although there are numerous options, teachers teach 8-16 variations in such a single lesson.

Jantivarse: Janti-Swara's provide an additional collection of arrangements, consisting of the same type of Swara in pairs, sung under varying conditions as per the Sarale Swara's teaching rules.

Conclusion: In conclusion, what we observe truly reflects the essence of our inner selves. It illustrates how Swara embodies the letters of an alphabet, with each one contributing its distinct emotional resonance. Additionally, it aids in enhancing vocal agility, supporting breath control, ensuring pitch precision,

clarifying the understanding of Swara positions, and improving diction clarity. These subtle differences flow through all sorts of forms and experiences, covering vast landscapes that echo with deep melodic tones. With their complex designs, they showcase amazing depth and intricacy, breathing life into our understanding and fostering connections. This connected journey invites us to explore on a deeper level, giving us glimpses of beauty and awe while encouraging us to join in. Together, we unlock endless opportunities and create paths that light up the adventures waiting for us!

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