

# THE CLASSIFICATION OF RAGAS

Raganga, Bhasanga, Kriyanga and Upanga

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The existence of classification of *ragas* on the basis of scientific principles, under various headings, is easily testified to, by the evidence of treatises written during the ancient period. The reference to the *raganga*, *bhashanga*, and *kriyanga ragas* is first noticed in Matanga's *Brhaddesi*, the earliest text to define the concept of *raga* in a melodic connotation. Matanga's work as available in print is incomplete, but the relevant portion has been quoted in the following lines by both Kallinatha and Simhabhupala in their commentaries on *Sangita Ratnakara*<sup>1</sup> written by Sarangadeva.

रागाङ्गादिशब्दानां निरुक्तिर्मतङ्गोक्ता द्रष्टव्या । यथा-

“ग्रामोक्तानां तु रागाणां छायामात्रं भवेदिति ।

गीतज्ञैः कथिताः सर्वे रागाङ्गास्तेन हेतुना ।

भाषाच्छायाश्रिता येन जायन्ते रनद्धशाः किल ।

भाषाङ्गास्तेन कथ्यन्ते गायकैः स्तोतिकादिभिः ।

करुणोत्साहशोकादिप्रभा या क्रिया ततः ।

जायन्ते च यतो नाम क्रियाङ्गाः कारणात्ततः ॥

[Kall. Com. on S.R. Ch. II. P. 15

See also Simhabhupala's Com.  
P. 18.]

Sarangadeva following a different school of thought, describes under the category of *desi ragas*, the four kinds of *ragas* viz. *raganga*, *bhashanga*, *kriyanga* and *upanga*.

अथ रागाङ्ग भाषाङ्ग क्रियाङ्गोपाङ्गनिर्णयम्

केषांचिन्मतमाश्रित्य कुर्वते सोढुलात्मनः

रञ्जनाद्रागता भाषारगाङ्गादेरपीष्यते ।

देशीरागतया प्रोक्तं रागाङ्गादि चतुष्टयम्

[S.R. Ch. II. 2.1]

The six varieties of *ragas* viz. *grama*, *raga*, *uparaga*, *bhasha*, *vibhasha*, and *antarabhasha* are collectively referred to as *marga ragas*.

कामरागाश्चोपरागा भाषाविभाषिकाः

तभैवान्तर भाषाख्या .....

रागास्त्वन्तर भाषान्ता मार्गरागा भवन्तिषट्

ततो गन्धर्वलोकेन प्रयोज्यास्ते व्यवस्थिताः ॥

By the time of Matanga, *desi* music emerged as an attractive blossoming of the *marga* music. *Marga ragas* conformed to the strict rules of science and the *desi* are the provincial variations of the *marga ragas*. The term *desi* connoted (देशत्विनामकामचारप्रवर्तितम्) i.e. anything that caters to the taste and enjoyment of the people. Though *marga ragas* had long become out of vogue, the study of *desi ragas* as expounded in *Sangita Ratnakara*, reveals that each of these four categories of *desi ragas*, is related to the earlier system of *marga ragas*. Sarngadeva states clearly that the *marga ragas* form the source material for the *desi ragas*.

तत्रादौ कामरागाणां केषांचित्लक्ष्म चक्षमेह ।

वेशीरागादि हेतूनां छोषाणां तत्र तत्र तु ॥

[S.R. II. 2.20]

The light thrown by Brhaddesi on this subject, serves to establish the continuity in the tradition of the *raga* system. Matanga explains the development of the three class of *ragas*, *raganga*, *bhashanga* and *kriyanga* and he has left *upanga* category and the reason for the omission, according to Kallinatha is that these are already implied in the *raganga ragas* themselves.

When the *chaya* or flavour of *grama raga* forms an essential *anga* or limb, it is a case of *raganga raga*. The presence of the *chaya* of the *bhasha ragas* as an ingredient, has given rise to the *bhashanga ragas*. Those that are capable of creating the feelings of *karuna*, *soka*, *utsaha* and so on, are termed *kriyanga ragas*. The *upangas* are closely allied to the *raganga* and in a sense are included in the concept since these have the affinity of *anga chaya* between them. Parswadeva<sup>1</sup> defines *kriyanga ragas* in an interesting manner. Even as *tanas* are performed by the attractive manipulation and action on the strings, *kriyanga ragas* are justified in view of their capacity to create different moods. Aumapatam's<sup>2</sup> definitions of these *ragas* reveal certain important characteristics.

रागच्छायानुकारित्वाद्रागाङ्गानि विदुर्बुधा ।

रागे मनोगते चापि शनैर्य उपलभ्यते ॥

सक्त भाषाङ्ग इत्युक्तः क्रियाङ्गस्त्वय कथ्यते ।

रागे जातेऽपि शनैर्कर्मतागतिविधानतः

क्रियांगस्योपलब्धिः स्यादुपगन्तव्यं वक्ष्यते ।  
उपसामीप्यतो वृत्ते रागानामप्युपगता ॥

According to this work, *ragangas* partake the *chaya* of *grama ragas*. *Bhashanga raga* is first conceived in the mind and gradually manifests itself (प्रकटीकरण). *Kriyanga raga* shines on account of the various movements. (गतागतिविधानतः) When a *raga* bears affinity or closeness to the *grama raga* it is an *upanga raga*. It is evident from a study of these descriptions that the degree of resemblance between *ragas*, has been considered as the main criteria for these classifications. A knowledge of Sarangadeva's exposition of the *grama ragas* etc., is useful for understanding the chronological distance and the degree of resemblance between the *desi ragas*.

Sarangadeva<sup>2</sup> speaks of 30 *grama ragas* in all, which are derived from each of the *sa-grama* and *ma-grama*, and from the combination of both. *Ragas* that are born from *jatis* are referred to as *grama ragas*, and are based on five *gitis* viz. *suddha*, *bhinna*, *gouda*, *vesara* and *sadharana*. *Upa ragas* are so named because of their close adherence to *grama ragas* and are somewhat like the *upanga ragas*. Sarngadeva mentions 8 *upa ragas* and 20 *ragas*. Of the 30 *grama ragas*, fifteen are described as originators of *bhasha ragas* viz. *bhasha janaka ragas* (भाषाजनकरागाः). According to Yastika, only 15 are capable of creating the *bhashas*. Matanga mentions in this connection, only 6 *grama ragas* as eligible to generate *bhashas*, while Kasyapa and Sardula speak of only 12 and 4 *grama ragas* respectively as generators of *bhashas*.

*Bhasha* represents an interesting variety of *ragas*. According to Kallinatha, *bhasha* is that which indicates the elaboration of the *grama raga*. These are to be understood as different varieties or forms of expounding the *grama ragas*. Matanga states that *bhasha* denotes the *alapa prakara* of the *grama raga*. *Vibhasha*, and *antara bhasha* also connote the different modes of the projection of *grama ragas*.

तथा चाह मतंगः ग्रामरागणामेवालापप्रकारा भाषा वाच्याः  
भाषा शब्दोऽत्र प्रकारवाची" इति । फवं विभाषान्तरभाषा  
शब्दावपि तत्तदनन्तरोत्पन्नालाप प्रकारवाचकावित्यवगन्तव्यं  
तासामपि रञ्जनत्वात् रागत्वं च बोद्धव्यम् ॥

These *ragas* are capable of creating a pleasant effect (*rakti*). *Bhashas* are of 4 kinds in Matanga's view viz. *Mula* or *mukhya*, *svarakhya* or *sankirna*, *desakhya* or *desaja* and *uparagaja* or *chayamatra*.

भाषा मुख्या स्वराख्या च देशस्या चोपरगजा । चतुर्विधा मतंगोक्ता . . .

- (a) *Mukhya* is a variety of *bhasha* which is not governed by rules regarding *svara*, *desa* or any external factor. Thus, it does not have for its existence any external source.

- (b) *Svarakhya bhasha* is that which derives its format from its *svaras* and named after them.
- (c) *Desakhya bhasha* is named after the region of its origin. *Andhri* is an example.
- (d) *Uparagaja* is known as *chayamatra* according to Yastika and has the *chaya* of the other three varieties of *bhashas*.

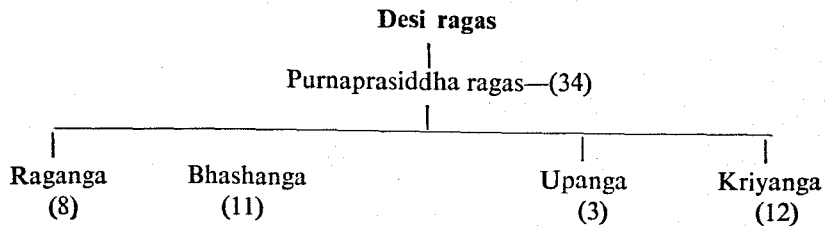
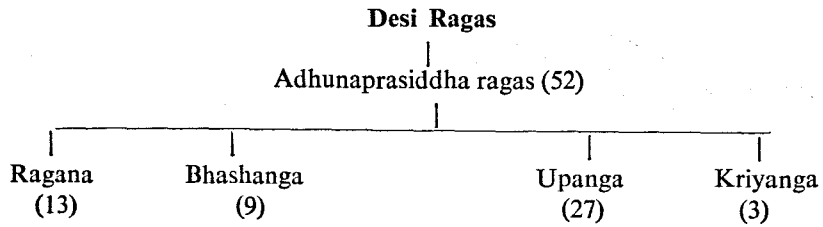
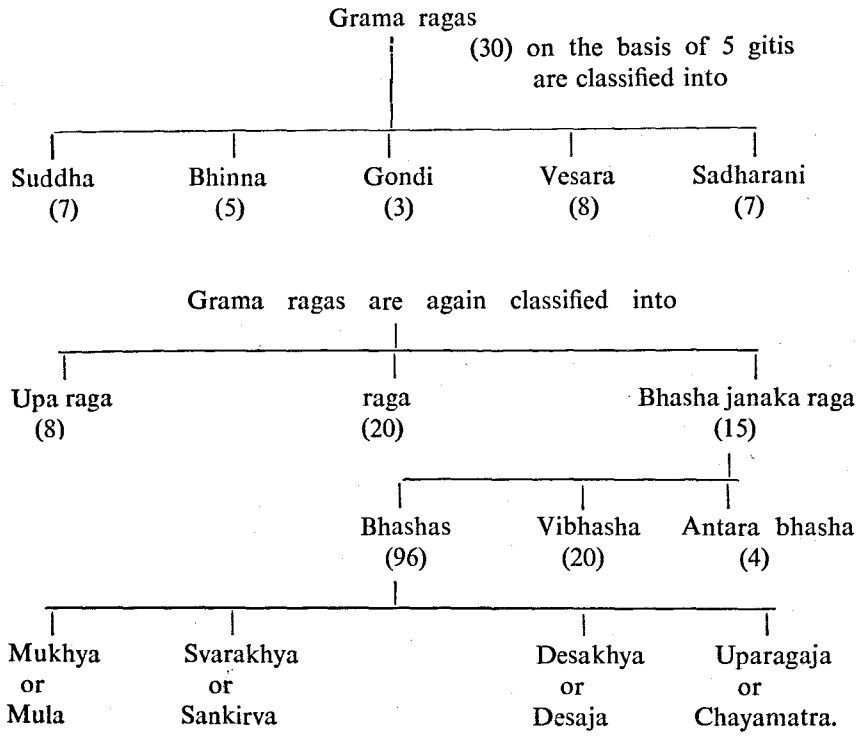
Thus from the *grama ragas* developed the *bhasha*, *vibhasha* and *antara bhasha*, which not only bear a certain degree of resemblance to the *grama ragas*, but are separated from them by a chronological distance. Only later, the *ragas* came to be classified as *raganga*, etc. and all of these are related to the *grama ragas* and *bhashas* in some measure or other. According to the earlier musicological conception the following are to be pointed out :

- (a) *Ragangas* bear the maximum degree of resemblance to the *grama ragas*.
- (b) *Bhashangas* relate to the *chaya* of *bhashas*, which represent the 'alapa prakara' — the free imaginative exposition of the *raga* that conduces to *rakti* or enjoyment.
- (c) *Kriyngas* relate to those *ragas* which by characteristic movements create emotional effects.
- (d) *Upangas* are closely allied to *ragangas* and hence are not separately mentioned by Matanga and Umapati's definition of this lends support to this fact.

Music being a practical art, the scientific treatment of it is always based on principles of practice. Divergent views naturally spring up in view of changing musical practice and this state of affairs is more prominently evident in the analysis of *raga lakshana* during the subsequent centuries.

The treatment of *melas* and *janyas* in *Sangita Saramrita* of Tulaja<sup>1</sup> and the *Raga Lakshana* manuscript of Sahaji II, reveals a very interesting stage in the evolution of *ragas*. In these works, the continuity of the traditional significance of the concepts of *raganga* etc., is fully recognised and *melakartas*, for example are described in terms of *bhashanga*, *upanga* and *kriyanga* while many *janyas* are termed as *raganga* also. So the theory that a *raganga* connoted a *melakarta raga* is a later one and was not in vogue during the 18th century. It is definitely a post Tulaja development, which got crystallized in *Anubandha to Chaturdandi Prakasika* and approved by Subbarama Dikshitar also. For instance in the list of *ragangas*, Tulaja mentions *janyas* like *malava sri*, *devamanohari*, *jayantasena*, *madhyamadi*, *dhanyasi*, *suddahvasanta*, *gaula*

## Classification of Grama ragas in Sangita ratnaka



$$52 + 34 = 86 \text{ ragas.}$$

and *ghantarava*. Similarly *bhairavi* and *chayanata* both *melakartas* are listed as *upangas*. Among the *bhashangas* figure *velvali*, *kannada bangala*, *nagadhvani*, *ahari*, *ritigaula*, *ananda bhairavi*, *abhor*, *nagagandhari*, *hindolam*, *hindola vasanta* and others. It is evident from Tulaja's treatment that the presence of some melodic affinity was taken as the basis of the classification into *raganga* etc. It is to be noted that in North Indian musical system, *ragangas* denote a group of *ragas* in which the presence of a common basic pattern of musical phrase (*anga*) is the distinctive feature.

With the development of new *ragas* of art music the meaning of the concepts of *raganga* etc., had undergone change. With the emergence of the *mela* system of *raga* classification on the basis of *svrastanas* instead of musical phrases and the theory of the supremacy of the *melakarta* in defining the *janyas* grouped under the *raganga* which once reflected a *grama raga* with special characteristics, came to be identified with the *melakarta* having a regular ascent and descent. Subbharama Dikshitar in his *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini* and *Anubandha to Chaturdandi Prakasika* have called the *Melakartas* as *raganga ragas* and the *lakshana gitas*, in the 72 *melaragas* are also described as *raganga raga lakshana gitas*.

अथ रागांगरागाणि नामान्युच्यन्त आदितः  
कनकाम्बरिरागः स्यात्केनच्युतिरतः परम् ॥

*Bhashanga* lost its original significance of bearing a certain affinity to the ancient *bhashas*, has come to denote a *raga* taking additional *svrastana* not utilised in the parent *raga* and *upanga ragas* are understood as faithful derivatives of the *melas* in the sense the additional *svrastanas* are not entertained in them. Since all *ragas* in some measure or other produce degrees of emotional states the *kriyanga ragas* as such no longer seem to be meaningful both from a practical and theoretical point of view.

#### NOTE

1. Sangita Ratnakara, Ed. by Pandit S. Subramanya Sastri, Adyar Library Publication, 1759.
2. Sangita Samayasara, Parswadeva, III.
3. Aumapatam —
4. S.R., II, 7, 8, 47.
5. S.R. Composition By Kallinatha, II. p. 10. Prose.
6. Ibid., II, 13, 44.
7. Sangita Saramrita, Tulaja, Music Academy Publications.