

Carnataka Sangeetha Vikasa “ A trip down memory lane”

Carnataka Sangeetha Vikasa – the Blossoming of Carnatic Music.

Here is a brief description of the Evolution of Carnatic music as it is sung today. This Classical music Form dates back to over 3000 or more years. Researchers and musicologists have worked on giving this great art form a structure and formulae which have made it easier for any novice to comprehend. We will take a few important events from SamaVeda to current that resulted in Carnatic music.

1500 to 1000 BCE : Sama Veda

According to Hindu mythology Music originated from Samaveda which dates back to 1500 to 1000 BCE. **Naradiya Shiksha (1.5.3; 1.5.4) explains that each Swara in the Sama Veda was derived from the sounds made by a bird or an animal in its appropriate season. Here are the animals or birds and their corresponding sounds that conform to the Sapta Swaras.**

Name of the Current Swara	Swara	Corresponding Sama Veda Swara	Corresponding swara of the bird/or animal
Madhyama	Ma	svarita	heron
Gandhara	Ga	udatta	goat
Rishabha	Ri	anudatta	bull
Shadja	Sa	svarita	peacock
Nishadha	Ni	udatta	elephant
Daiwatha	Dha	anudatta	horse
Panchama	Pa	svarita	koel

The swaras were in the order of M, G , R , S, N, D P and in the Avarohana, or descending order.

Parivrajaka Upanishad mentions the saptaswaras thus : Sage Narada while taking his usual rounds of the 3 worlds descended into the Naimisha forest. He fascinated the people, animals and the saints in the forest with his songs on Lord Vishnu called Sthavara and Jangama that are set in musical notes sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha and ni, which arouse detachment to worldly pleasures and generate peace.

2nd Century AD: Silappadigaram written by Ilango Adigal.

This famous play about the story of Kannagi and Kovalan is a treasure house of music and dance. In this literary work the author describes music based on logical, systematic and scientific calculations in the arrangements of the seven dancers on the stage to represent the notes and **Panns**. Vadavaraiyai Mathaaki is the song that was popularized by Smt.M.S.Subbulakshmi and is part of this epic’s Kuravai Koothu- Aichiyar Kuravai.

Aichiyar Kuravai is a type of dance in which 7 girls form a circle clapping one other's hands. This dance has a peculiar musical significance. The 7 notes of the musical scale are arranged in a circle and the 7 girls are called by the names of the 7 musical notes *kural, tuttam, kaikkilai, uzhai, ili, vilari and taaram*.

Pann:

The other name for Pann is Raga. Originally the songs were written in Pann. The first Pann was called the Mullai Pann and was in a pentatonic scale or a Audava Raga S R G P D S as in the Mohana Raga. Eventually M and N were added to get a different Pann called Sempaalai Pann which would be our current Harikamboji Raga. In tamiz music a Melakarta Raga was called Thai Niram and a Janya raga was called Sai Niram. Talam was called PaaNi. PaaNi Moondrottu was the name for Rupaka tala.

5th Century AD: Brihaddesi a classical Sanskrit text on Indian classical music written by Matanga Muni :

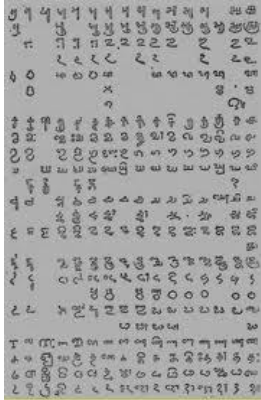
Ref: <http://www.ragaculture.com/history.html>

Merging of folk and Classical : There were two types of music – the folk and the Samagana. Folk music had several notes and was very regional. Samagana had only 3 notes called Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita. that were played on an instrument called Vana Veena. Eventually the number of notes were increased to 4 and it was 5 for a very long time, then six and seven. The notes were added to increase the melody of the song. Samagana music was prevalent only during vedic chanting, Yagnas or in Sanskrit plays. Around 3rd or 4th century many kings embraced Buddhism which was anti-vedic, anti-ritualistic period. During this period yagnas and Sanskrit plays diminished and the classical musicians started expressing their creativity in different forms. They started adapting folk notes one by one into their classical and highly structured music. Musicians started to improvise by merging folk and classical music. This improvisation is called Bhasha and the technicality of all this is discussed by Matanga Muni in his work Brihaddeshi. In his work he talks about scientifically categorizing and melodically structuring the notes into different ragas. The Ragas are called jaatis. The names of the Ragas as described by Matanga Muni depict the times and the region where it was written. Brihaddesi is a large literature as the name suggests but only about 500 verses are available. The first three chapters talk about Shruti, Swara, Murchana, Desi, Tana, Varna, Nada, Alankara, Jati, Geeta and Raga. This book also clarifies several issues related to Shruti.

7th Century AD : Kudimiyamalai Inscriptions on the Stone in Pudukottai district by King Maheswara, disciple of Rudracharya

Ref: http://templedarshan.blogspot.com/2010_01_01_archive.html

Ref: http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/9646/10/10_chapter%202.pdf



Kudumiyamalai is a place near Pudukottai in Tamil Nadu. Here at the temple to the right of Valampuri Vinayakar you can find the musical commentary in Pallava Grantha inscriptions in the rocks.

Prof. Sambamurthy describes these inscriptions as the “first record to mention the solfa names of the seven notes... where the srutis are designated by resorting to the vowel changes in the name of the note and reduced to a mnemonic system of absolute notation.”

The Kudumiyamalai inscription is a music notation on sankirna jati or ragas. Most of the ragas of the inscription are found in the Saivait sacred hymns.

The following are the major contribution by the inscriptions –

- The 1st musical notations were written in these inscriptions.
- New ragas emerged by the combination of shrutis and swaras instead of swaras alone.
- The concept of 22 shrutis and Vivadi swaras was described.
- Talks about gamaka and their importance, fingering techniques and the disappearance of Yazh replaced by Veena.

The inscriptions are arranged in seven sections. There are several subsections to each section. Each subsection has 16 groups of 4 swaras each. It is also mentioned that the first and 2nd musical notes are intended for the 7th and 8th strings of the instrument – denoting the ancient instrument Yazh with 7 or 8 strings.

The combination of swaras under each section has a specific heading and they have their corresponding Raga of today as mentioned below.

Heading	Approximate corresponding Raga
Madhyama Grama Catusprahara Svaragama	Harikamboji
Sadja Grama Catusprahara Svaragama	Karaharapriya
Shadava Catusprahara Svaragama	Nadanamakriya
Sadharita Catusprahara Svaragama	Pantuvarali
Panchama Catusprahara Svaragama	Ahiri
Kaisika Madhyama Catusprahara Svaragama	Mechakalyani
Kaisika Catusprahara Svaragama	Mechakalyani

There is a mention on the extreme right end of the bottom of the inscription, of the author as King Maheshwara, disciple of Rudracharya and the svaragamas are made for the benefit of the students of Rudracharya.

Carnataka Sangeetha Vikasa (part 3) : contd....

Between 350BC to 200 AD Southern Indian Territory was ruled by the Pandyas, Cholas and the Cheras. This territory included the present day Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and Northern Sri Lanka. This period is also known as the Sangham period where many poetry and literary works were written. The literary works consisted of great grammatical works called Tolkappiyam, 10 anthologies called Patthu paattu, the 8 anthologies called Ettu thogai and the eighteen minor works such as Silappadigaram, Manimegalai, Jeevaka Chinthamani etc.. The references to ancient musical tradition can be found in these literatures. Many of these poems were set to music in Panns. The Tamil literature mainly consisted of nature worship where as the North Indian literature concentrated on Vedic Hinduism.

The **Tolkappiyam** mentions five landscapes or Thinais, based on the mood, the season and the land. The poems are set to music using a different Pann and musical instrument called Yaazhi and a percussion instrument called Parai according to the mood of the poem. Tolkappiyam also mentions the musical form known as *Paattu Vannam* and various types of songs like Asiriapattu, Neduven pattu, Adivarai, Seer, Ahaval Osai and Velloisai, which are classified on the basis of the musical quality, metrical structure etc.

The Sangam literature mentions several types of musical instruments. Here are the names of the instruments.. as listed in Tirumurai dated 6th to 11th century.

Akuli, Idakkai, Ilayam, [Udukkai](#), Yezhil, Kathirikkai, Kandai, Karathalam, Kallalaku, Kalavadam, Kavil, Kazhal, Kalam, Kinai, Kinkini, Kilai, Kinnaram, Kudamuzha, Kuzhal, Kaiyalaku, Kokkarai, Kodukotti, Kottu, [Kombu](#), Sangu, Sachari, Sanchalam, Salari, Siranthai, Silambu, Sinam, Thagunicham, Thakai, Thadari, Thattazhi, Thathalagam, Thandu, [Thannumai](#), Thamarugam, Thaarai, Thaalam, Thuthiri, Thunthubi, Thudi, Thuriyam, Thimilai, Thondagam, Naral Surisangu, Padagam, Padutham, Panilam, Pambai, Palliyam, Parandai, Parai, Paani,

Paandil, Pidavam, Perigai, [Mathalam](#), Mani, Maruvam, [Murasu](#), Muravam, Murugiyam, Murudu, Muzhavu, Monthai, Yaazl, Vangiyam, Vattanai, Vayir, [Veenai](#), Veelai, Venkural.

Some of the *panns* and their equivalent Carnatic ragas were:

- *Panchamam – Ahiri*
- *Pazham Panchuram - [Sankarabharanam](#)*
- *Meharahkkurinchi - Neelambari*
- *Pazhanthakka Ragam - [Arabhi](#)*
- *Kurinchi - [Malahari](#)*
- *Natta Ragam – [Panthuvarali](#)*
- *Inthalam - Nadanamakriya*
- *Thakkesi - [Kambhoji](#)*
- *Kausikam - [Bhairavi](#)*
- *Nattappadai – [Gambheeranaattai](#)*

Between the 6th and 11th century Ad **Tirumurai** was written in Tamil language by Shaiva poets. Tirumurai consists of 12 volumes.

Tevarams are the first 7 volumes of Tirumurai. Tevarams were composed by the 3 Nayanmars Appar, Tirugnanasambandar and Sundarar. The tevarams were in praise of Lord Shiva, set to different Panns and sung in temples. Even today, Tevarams are very popular and Tevaram enthusiasts are very particular about the Pann or Raga that it is sung in. *Tevaram* poems also used *santham* (rhythm) such *asthaana-thana-thaanaa-thanaa* in their lyric.

Tiruvachagam and Tirukovayar composed by Manikkavachagar make the 8th and 9th volume of Tirumurai. Tirumandiram by Tirumalar is the 10th volume and the 11th one is compiled by Karaikkal Ammayar, Cheraman Perumal and others. Shekkizar's Periya puranam is the 12th volume of Tirumurai.

Just like Tevarams **Divyaprabandhams** were written by Vaishnava poets in praise of Lord Vishnu. Divyaprabandhams is a collection of 4000 verses written in Tamil before the 8th Century AD by the 12 Alvars and set to music by Nathamuni between 9th and 10th Century AD. The hymns are still sung extensively even today.

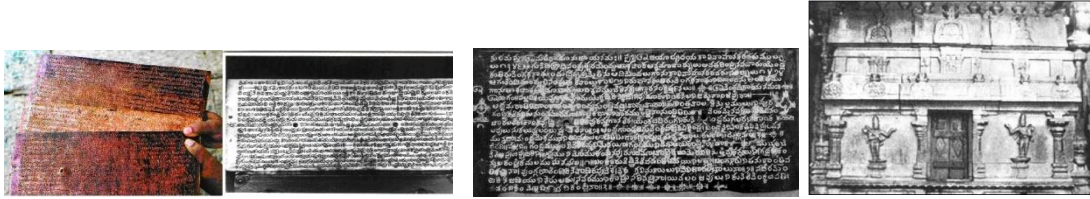
Jayadeva's Gitagovinda was written around 12th Century AD. This not only was famous for poetic excellence but was also set to appropriate Raga and Tala according to the mood. Jayadeva's Gita Govinda has 12 chapters. Each Chapter has 24 divisions called Prabandhas. Each prabandha contains groups of eight verses called Ashtapadis . In the introduction the poet says that he is going to compose a prabandha. A prabandha not only is a poetry but it is also a musical piece. Gita Govinda prabandha is more like a song. These songs have lot of musical details that sarangadeva a great musicologist devoted a full chapter on prabandha songs in his sangita-ratnakara, an ex-haustive treatise on musicology. Several Music related texts from Orissa as in Sangita kalpalata, Sangitaarnavachandrika and Gitaparakasha etc. cite Gita Govinda as

examples because of their musical value. The ragas used were Malavagauda, Gujjari, Ramakeri, Vasanta and so on and tala used were vasantatilaka, Sragdhara, Sikharini, etc;

Ref: <http://orissa.gov.in/e-magazine/Orissareview/2010/May-June/engpdf/36-41.pdf>

You can listen to Jayadeva's ashtapathis on youtube. Some famous ones are Chandana Charchita, Lalitha Lavanga, Priye Charusheele, Radhika Tava Viraha etc..

Annamacharya : 1408 to 1503 : Annamacharya a great devotee of Lord Venkateswara of Tirupathi has composed and sung 32,000 Sankirtanas, 12 *Satakas* (sets of hundred verses), Ramayana in the form of *Dwipada*, *sankirtana Lakshanam* (Characteristics of *sankirtanas*), *Sringara Manjari*, and *Venkatachala Mahatmamyam*. He is also known as "Pada Kavitha Pitamaha". His works were mainly in Telugu and Sanskrit. He wrote his compositions on palm leaves and later his son Tirumalacharya got them engraved on copper plates. The copper plates were stacked away for about 400 years in a rock built cell opposite the Tirupathi Devasthanam hundi and rediscovered in 1922. They retrieved about 2500 copper plates consisting of about 14000 compositions. Since the language was very difficult to comprehend legend has it that many were sent to scholars residing in nearby villages and some got lost in the process and stories have it that some were melted and used for other products.



Although not much is known about the musical aspect of these compositions, the copper plates mention the ragas in which they are sung. The importance is given to Sahitya rather than the musical aspect. We do not know what talas were assigned to these sankirtanas. The Musical form has influenced the structure of Carnatic music compositions greatly and his Sankirtanas are sung regularly in Carnatic concerts. There are about 100 ragas mentioned. Most of the ragas like Abaali, Amarasindhu, Kondamalahar etc are rare or extinct. The other commonly used ragas are Shankarabharanam, Mukhari, Kamboji, Devagandhari, Sri and might have undergone subtle changes over a period of time. Legend has it that Saint Purandaradasa who is about 70 years younger to Saint Annamacharya visited him and paid his respects calling him the incarnation of Lord Venkateswara and his sankirtanas are Sacred hymns.

Smt M.S.Subbulakshmi popularized Sri Annamacharya's compositions around 1978. Some famous ones are Bhavayami Gopalabalam, Srimannarayana, Muddugare yashoda, Jo Achutananda etc.

Ref : <http://www.svasa.org/annamacharya1.html>

<http://swaramaadhuri.weebly.com/annamacharya1.html>