

Research Papers



RAAG CONCEPT IN INDIAN MUSIC : A DELIBERATION

DR. ARCHANA M. AMBHORE

Associate Professor In Music
SMT. R.D.G. College For Women,
Akola

Abstract

This paper describes the Raga concept in Indian Music, it also describes about comparative study by different scholars. The concept of Raga is therefore a product of thought or an idea of settings of abstract idea of tones, transfered in concrete form. Raga means a basic melodic and grammatical construct born out of the entire gamut of musical notes subjected to a process of intentional selection and further exploited with a view to enable the artist to produce melodic patterns of infinite variety.

'Raga is the soul of Indian Music'. The one word which expresses all that is worth knowing about our music is the word 'Raga'.

A Raag is a sanskrit word, literally means 'colour hue' but also 'beauty, melody'. It is also spelled raga, raag rag, ragam, is one of the melodious used in Indian classical Music.

According to Joep Bor,

"Tonal frame work for composition and improvisation".

According to Nazir Jairazbhoy,

"Ragas as separated by scale line of ascent and descent, transilience, emphasized notes and register, and intonation and ornaments.

Raga is defined as, 'the act of coloring or dyeing -the mind in this context) and 'any feeling or passion especially love, affection, sympathy, vehement desire, interest joy, or delight."

According to Bharat Kosh -

“तत्र हरिद्रारागं, रोचना रागं, काम्पिल्य रागं,
रीति रागं इति सात्विकस्य कुसुम्भ रागं, लाक्षा रागं,
अक्षीब रागं मंजिष्टारागं इति राजसस्य, कर्दम रागं,
कषाय रागं, सकल रागं, मीलीरागमिति तामसस्य” ।

(Ramkrishna Kavi, Bharat Kosh, Pg. 543)

Definition of Rag by Ancient Scholars :

This term first occurs in a technical context in the Brihaddeshi -

यो ऽ सौ ध्वनि विशेषस्तु स्वरवर्णविभूषितः

रंजको जनचित्तानां स च राग उदाहृतः ॥

(Matang - Briddeshi, Shlok No. 264)

'A combination of tones which, with beautiful illuminating graces, pleases the people in general
In detail -

"That which is a special dhwani (tune), is bedecked with swara (notes) and Varna and is colorful or delightful to the minds of the people, is said to be raga"

- Said Matanga in Brihaddeshi.
The Definition by 'Kumbh'

‘विचित्र वर्णालंकारो विशेषो यो ध्वनेरहि

ग्रहादिस्वरसंदर्भोरंजको राग उच्यते । (३३)

('Sangitraj', Padollas 2, Pg. 24)

'Kumbha' defined in his 'Sangitraj'

He quoted that 'Varna', 'Alankar', 'Graha', 'Swar' etc. to defight the minds of the people, is said to be 'raga'.

After this Somnath, Ahobal, Shrikanth and Pt. Vyankatmukhi expressed their opinions

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but the common thing is, 'to delight' minds of the people.
'Ranjakatva', this characteristic makes raga respectable.

Comparative study of the quotations of Ancient Scholars.

१.स्वरवर्णविभूषितो यो ध्वनि भेदो रंजकः स राग इह ।
-सोमनाथ, राग विबोध, चतुर्थ विवेक, पृ. १०१
२.'रंजकः स्वरसंदर्भोरागइत्याभिधीयते ।'
प. अहोबल, संगीत पारिजात, पृ. ९७
३.सुरासुराणां नरकिन्नराणां मानसरंजनेन ।
रागोभवेत् पंकजकणशब्दतुल्यो व्युत्पत्तिमादाय च योगरुढः ।।
रम्यध्वनि विशेषस्तु सर्ववर्णविरजितः ।।
स रागो गीयते तज्ज्ञैर्जगमानस रंजकः ।।
श्रीकंठ, रस कौमुदी रा.अ., पृ. १३
४.रंजयति मनांसीति रागाः ।
वेंकटमुखी, चतुर्दशप्रकाशिका, राग प्रकरण, पृ. ५६
५.वर्णचतुष्टके ऽप्यतिशयेन रंजकत्वाद्वागा इत्युच्यन्ते
राग शब्द प्रवृत्तिनिमित्तमुक्तं काश्यपेन -
चतुर्णामपि वर्णानां यो रागः शोभनो भवेत्
स सर्वोद्दिश्यते येषु तेन रागा इति स्मृतः ।
(सिंहभूपाल, संगीत रत्नाकर - भाग २/७)
६.यैस्तु चेतांसि रंज्यन्ते जगत्त्रितयवर्तिनाम्
ते रागा इति कश्यप्ते मुनिर्भरतादिभिः
(झीं. डेलहरप, खसर खीरपसठपल, झस. ७१)
७.यो ऽयं ध्वनिविशेषस्तु स्वर वर्ण विभूषितः ।
रंजको जनचित्तांना सः रागः कथितो बुधैः ।।
(Abhinav Rag Manjiri, Pt. V.N. Bhatkhande)
Compostion of sound, included swara,
varna, creates aesthetics, and amuses human
being is called Raag.

History of Raag :

The question arises that when was the raga evolved. There is a crises in scholars opinion. some are agree with Matang's period 1 and some are agree with Matang's yastik. It is very difficult to tell firm the time of origin of raga.

But in the dictionary of south Indian Music, 'Raga' word relate to Kalidas' period.2

The Pandits discussed 'Kashyap's Raag', indetailed it proves that there should be book of Kashyap in on 'Rag'. These scholars were in the discussion3 Matang, Nyanya Dev, Abhinav, Sharangdev, Kallinath, Sinhabhupal, Kumbha etc. Everbody referred kashyap in his book. 'Kashyap' describes Raga -

चतुर्णामपि वर्णानां योगा रागः +शोभना

स सर्वोद्दिश्यते येन तेन रागा इति स्मृतः ।४

This definition of Kashyap proves that 'Raga' definition evolves in 4th/ 5th century.

There is another book which discusses Raga and it is 'Sangit-Ratnavali', by somraj, it was wrote in 1180. There are nine Adhyay. In the first Adhyay, there is general discussion, in the second, swara, gram, in the third adhyay, prabandha Varnan, in fourth, 42 rag described, in the fifth Adhyay (chapter) description of Deshi rag.5

Example of Somraj's rag -

वसंतो गुर्जरी चैव देवशाखा च तोडिका, पंचमश्च धनासी च रागो गौडश्च
सप्तमः
षड्जादि स्वरयोगः स्यात्पदादी च स्वराक्षरम् । यत्र श्री सोमराजेन सोम
कीर्तिरसकीर्तितः
अत्र चंचत्पुटस्तालो नान्दीनाम तथापरः । सिंहनन्दन संज्ञस्तु प्रोक्तः
प्रतापशेखरः
जगमंगल इत्यनः सोम बहुभ एव च । सोम कीर्तिः क्रमणैने वसन्ता दिषु
सप्तसु
सोमकीर्ति प्रबन्धोऽयं गीयमानो यथाविधिनेतुः श्रोतुश्च गातुश्च
जायन्ते सर्वसम्पदः ।'ङ्क

Raga and present thinkers :

Present period is developed period of Raga. Near about all thinkers agree with this, Rasa and Bhav is Soul of Raga, and other characteristics are body part of 'Raga-Purush'6

Dr. Premrata sharma said - "There are two parts of Raga, first is Swaradeha and other is Bhav deha."7

The concept of Raga is, therefore, a product of thought or idea of settings of abstract ideal of tones, transferred in concrete form". 8

A Raga is a psycho-material object, because it originates first in the form of impressions (Samskaras) in the depth of the mind, and then rises above the plane of the subconscious or unconscious mind and menifesto itself in the outside world in the materialised form and is perceived by the senses".9

For Strangways said, 'Raga, an arbitrary series of notes characterized, as far as possible as individuals, by proximity to or remoteness from the note which marks the tessitura (general level of the melody) by a special order in which they are usually taken, by the frequency or the reverse with which they occur, by grace or the absence of it and by relation to a tonic usually reinforced by a drone."10

"Raga are different series of notes within the octave, which form the basis of all India

melodies and are differentiated from each other by the prominence of certain fixed notes and by the sequences of particular notes."11

"A Raga is a melodious combination of musical notes which succeed one another. Its effect depends upon the nature of the notes combined. It is like a mixture, the quality of which depends upon nature of its ingredients."12

"A Raga appears not a mere grouping of swaras of some selected swaras, but an intimate unity of accents that make for musical experience, and it would not be improper if we speak of it as a kind of euphorganism. The best Hindustani Musicians incline to the view that a raga is like a living entity and that it is therefore to be handled with the care and love which a live organism demands."13

Raga is the soul of Indian Music, The one word which expresses all that is worth knowing about our music is the word Raga."14

Technically, then Raga means a sweet combination of musical tones coming one after another in succession. 15

Music is a performing art. As it is performing art, change is the most important, as Pt. Sharang Dev said -

‘यद्वा लक्ष्य प्रधानानि शास्त्राण्येतानि मन्वते ।
तस्मात्लक्ष्य विरुद्धं यत्तच्छास्त्रं नेयमन्यथा ॥’¹⁶

In this way our musicologist told us to be alert and be with the time.

Characteristics of Raga (Rag Lakshan)

ग्रहांशो तारमन्द्रीच न्यासोपन्यास एव च
अल्पत्वं च बहुत्वं च षाडवौडविते तथा ।
(नाट्य शास्त्र २८, ७०)

According to Natyashastra there are ten Rag/Jati Lakshans. i.e. Graha, Ansh, Nyas, Apanyasa, Tar, Mandra, Alpatva, Bahutva, Audavatva, Shadavatva.

Raagini - 'Ragini' is a term for the 'feminine' counterpart or 'wife' to a raga. The raga-ragini scheme from about the 14th century aligned '6 male' ragas with '6' wives.

Ragas and their seasons :

Many Hindusthani (North Indian) ragas are prescribed for the particular time of a day or a season. When performed at the suggested time, the raga has its maximum effect. For example, many of the malhar group of ragas, which are ascribed the magical power to bring rain, are formed during the monsoon.

However, these prescriptions are not strictly followed, especially since modern

concepts are generally held in the evening. There has also been a growing tendency over the last century for North Indian musicians to adopt south Indian ragas, which do not come with any particular time associated with them. The result of these various influences is that there is increasing flexibility as to when ragas may be performed.

Since ancient times there is a tradition to sing raga according to season. Here is Pt. Shrangdeo in Sangitratnakar in chapter II.

उद्भूतः कैशिकी खड्ज मध्यमाभ्यां ग्रहाशंसः ॥४५॥

वीरे रौद्रऽद्भुते गेयः शिशिरे शंकर प्रियः ।

दिनस्य मध्यमे यामे द्वितीये गौ कैशिकः ॥४७॥

अपव

धग्रहो धैवतीखड्ज मध्यमा जाति संभव ॥४२॥

धांशो मान्तस्तथा गौड पंचमः पंचमोऽङ्गितः

भयानके च वीभत्से विप्रलम्भे रसे भवेत् ॥४४॥

उद्भटे नटने गेयो ग्रीष्मऽहनी मध्यमाययोः ।

After that Pt. Damodar stated the relation between the original six ragas and their raginis with six seasons in Sangit Darpan, line 27, Pg. 77

श्री रागो रागिणी युक्तः शिशिरे गीयते बुधैः ॥

वसंतः ससहायस्तु वसन्ततो प्रगीयते ॥२७॥

भैरवः ससहायस्तु ऋतैः ग्रीष्मे प्रगीयते ।

पंचमस्तु तथा गेयो रागिण्या सह शारदे ॥२८॥

मेघ रागो रागिणी भिर्युक्तो वर्षासु गीयते ।

नह नारायणो परागः रागिण्या सह हेमके ॥२९॥

There are differences in opinion but there is a tradition of raga and season.

Ragas are perfectly scientific, Systematic but when we associate these ragas with the hours of day and night or with the seasons of the year, this aspect of our music has, unfortunately, no scientific basis. It is not for the ragas to produce the effect of sunrise, noon, sunset or mid night, just as it is not their function to raise wind, bring clouds and rain, light lamps or Bhairav gives us the idea of morning or Yaman of evening, it is by virtue of association of ideas, of deep rooted habits which have become second nature with us.

CONCLUSION :

1) It is very difficult to state firmly the time of origin of raga.

2) Ragas are different series of notes within the octave.

3) I am on this conclusion that the association of a particular Raga with a particular time or season is purely a matter of 'samskar', deep rooted habit, custom or tradition.

4) 'Raga', is the word, which found firstly in

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Matang's Brihaddeshi.

5)Raga means a basic melodic and grammatical construct born out of the entire gamut of musical notes subjected to a process of intentional selection and further exploited with a view to enable the artist to produce melodic patterns of infinite variety.

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