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# CARNATIC MUSIC THEORY YEAR II

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BASED ON THE SYLLABUS FOLLOWED BY GOVERNMENT MUSIC  
COLLEGES IN ANDHRA PRADESH AND TELANGANA FOR CERTIFICATE  
EXAMS HELD BY POTTI SRIRAMULU TELUGU UNIVERSITY

ANANTH PATTABIRAMAN

EDITION: 2.1

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<https://beautifulnote.com/theory>

## **Preface**

This text covers topics on Carnatic music required to clear the second year exams in Government music colleges in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. Also, this is the second of four modules of theory as per Certificate in Music (Carnatic) examinations conducted by Potti Sriramulu Telugu University. So, if you are a music student from one of the above mentioned colleges, or preparing to appear for the university exam as a private candidate, you'll find this useful.

Though attempts are made to keep this text up-to-date with changes in the syllabus, students are strongly advised to consult the college or university and make sure all necessary topics are covered.

This might also serve as an easy-to-follow introduction to Carnatic music for those who are generally interested in the system but not appearing for any particular examination.

I'm grateful to my late guru, veteran violinist, Vidwan. Peri Sriramamurthy, for his guidance in preparing this document.

**Ananth Pattabiraman**

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## **About the author**

Ananth Pattabiraman is a musician. At *Kuyil*, a startup he co-founded, he makes mobile apps for Carnatic music.

*Carnatic apps can be found at <https://kuyil.org>*

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## Technical Terms

### *Bharatham*

Music (*Ghandharvam*) was brought to Earth (*Bhoolokha*) by Bharatha Muni. So the word Bharatham is attributed to music. In that, *Bha* stands for Bhava, *Ra* stands for Raga and *Tha* stands for Thala. These three are the most important aspects of our music.

### *Ghandharvam*

It refers to music (*Sangeetham*). It's derived from Ghandharva Ghanam, the music performed in heavens by Ghandharvas.

### *Thouryathrikam*

Vocal Music, Instrumental Music and Dance, all the three combined together is referred to as Thouryathrikam.

### *Nadham*

When *Prana* and *Agni* are combined together, *Dwani* is born. This dwani is Nadham. In the word Nadham, *Na* refers to prānam, *Dha* denotes agni. Combination of these two is referred to as Nadham in Shastras. Nadham exists in *Mandhra*, *Madhya* and *Tara* Stayis. Nadha gives birth to *Swaras*, Swaras form *Swara Stanas* and *Shrutis*, and they give birth to *Ragas*.

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## 16 Suddha-Vikrutha Swarandragada Sthanas

There are seven basic swaras, known as *Sapta Swaras*:

1. Shadjam (Shortly *Sa*, notated as *s*)
2. Rishabam (*Ri*, *r*)
3. Ghandharam (*Ga*, *g*)
4. Madyamam (*Ma*, *m*)
5. Panchamam (*Pa*, *p*)
6. Dhaivatam (*Dha*, *d*)
7. Nishadham (*Ni*, *n*)

Of these seven swarams, *Shadjam* and *Panchamam* are fixed. They are known as *achala swaras*. Five other swaras, known as *chala swaras*, allow two basic variations in their shruti:

Rishabam	:	<i>Suddha</i> Rishabam, <i>Chatushruti</i> Rishabam
Ghandaram	:	<i>Sadharana</i> Ghandaram, <i>Anthara</i> Ghandaram
Madyamam	:	<i>Suddha</i> Madyamam, <i>Prati</i> Madyamam
Dhaivatam	:	<i>Suddha</i> Dhaivatam, <i>Chatushruti</i> Dhaivatam
Nishadam	:	<i>Kaisika</i> Nishadam, <i>Kakali</i> Nishadam

This way we get 12 basic swarasthanas, known as *Dwadasa Swarasthanas*.

$$2 \text{ achala} + 5 \times 2 \text{ chala} = 12$$

While the Madhyamam takes two swarasthanas as mentioned above, the other four swarams—*Ri*, *Ga*, *Dha* and *Ni* actually allow three variations each, rather than two. But, the shrutis of *Ri* and *Ga* overlap in a certain way that we get only four distinct swarasthanas for this swaram pair. Similarly, shrutis of *Dha* and *Ni* overlap resulting only in four distinct swarasthanas instead of six.

New Variation	Existing Shruti in Dwadasa Swarasthanam
Shatshruti Rishabam	= Sadharana Ghandharam
Suddha Ghandaram	= Chatushruti Rishabam
Shatshruti Dhaivatam	= Kaisika Nishadam
Suddha Nishadam	= Chatushruti Dhaivatam

This way we get 4 additional swarasthanas, however aligning with existing 12, hence 16 swarastahans.

*Shodasa (16) Suddha-Vikruta Swarandaragada Swarastanas (in ascending order of shruti)*

1. Shadjam
2. Suddha Rishabam
3. Chatushruti Rishabam = Suddha Ghandaram
4. Shatshruti Rishabam = Sadharana Ghandaram
5. Anthara Ghandaram
6. Suddha Madyamam
7. Prati Madyamam
8. Panchamam
9. Suddha Dhaivatam
10. Chaturshruti Dhaivatam = Suddha Nishadam
11. Shatshruti Dhaivatam = Kaisika Nishadam
12. Kakali Nishadam

<i>Carnatic Swarasthanas</i>						
		Ni3	Kakali			
Dhaivatam	{	Shatshruti	Dha3 · Ni2	Kaisika	}	Nishadam
		Chatushruti	Dha2 · Ni1	Suddha		
		Suddha	Dha1			
		Pa	Panchamam			
Madhyamam	{	Prati	Ma2		}	
		Suddha	Ma1			
		Ga3	Anthara			
Rishabam	{	Shatshruti	Ri3 · Ga2	Sadharana	}	Ghandharam
		Chatushruti	Ri2 · Ga1	Suddha		
		Suddha	Ri1			
		Sa	Shadjam			

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*This table shows how 16 swarasthanas are arranged in 12 distinct pitch positions. At the bottom of the table is Sa, and each row above is in rising pitch. Correctly numbered short forms are also provided.*

# Raga Thrayodasa Lakshanas

The thirteen characteristics of a Raga, mentioned in the Sanskrit works on music which established the *swarootpa* or melodic entity of the raga, are known as Raga Thrayodasa Lakshanas. They are:

*Graha, Hamsa, Mandra, Thara, Nyasa, Apanyasa, Sanyasa, Vinyasa, Bhahutwa, Alpatwa, Sampoorana, Shadava, Audava.*<sup>1</sup>

## *Graha Swaram*<sup>2</sup>

The note on which the Raga is commenced. Starting note of a *Sangathi* or Item or Ragam. There may be One, Two or even more Graha Swaras in a Ragam.<sup>3</sup>

## *Hamsa/Jiva Swaram*<sup>2</sup>

The note which revealed the melodic entity or the Swarootpa of the Raga (Soul of the raga). To show the Swarootpa of the Raga in an *Alapana* or *sangathi*, this note is sung repeatedly, very often. This can be considered as the main swara of the raga. There can be one or more hamsa swaras in a raga.

## *Nyasa Swaram*<sup>2</sup>

Ending note of the raga; the note on which the Raga was concluded.

## *Mandram and Tharam*

The lowest and highest notes respectively, beyond which the *raga sancharas* should not extend. Mandram defines the notes that are singable in the Mandra Stayi for the particular Raga. The swaras lower than that should not be sung/performed. Similarly, Thara Swaram defines the notes in Thara Stayi which are allowed in the raga.

## *Apanyasam*

A Raga Alapana is done in different sections or parts or stages. Apanyasam is the starting note of each section.

## *Sanyasam*

The ending note of each section in the raga alapana.

## *Vinyasam*

In each section of the Raga alapana, Vinyasa is the note used to show the *raga kaLa/chhaya* or the essence of raga.

- 
- 1 In addition to these, there is a lakshanam called *Anthara Marga* mentioned in some texts. This refers to the introduction of a note or chhaaya not belonging to the raga. See *South Indian Music* by Prof. Sambamurty.
  - 2 Graha, Hamsa, Nyasa Swaras are mandatory for the raga. If not specified Shadjam assumes the role of these three.
  - 3 Graha Swaram is also spelled as Gruha Swaram.

*Bahuthwam*

The note that is used frequently in the raga. It has two sub types: *Alanganam* and *Abhyasam*. Sancharas revolve around these note.

*Alpathvam*

The note that is used sparingly in the raga. Two subtypes: *Langanam* and *Anabhyasam*.

*Langanam*

The swara is pronounced, but the note sung is actually the neighbouring tone. So though the Langana Swara appears to be performed, the actual shruti/frequency of that swara is rarely performed. It's like creating an illusion of that swara being sung, while the actual swara sounded is different.

*Anabhyasam*

A note that's completely omitted or rarely performed.

*Sampoornam<sup>4</sup>*

A raga consisting of all 7 Swaras in both *arohanam* and *avarohanam* is called a Sampoorna Raga. All the sapta swaras are used when performing this raga.

*Shadavam*

A Raga constituted of 6 notes.


*Audavam*

A Raga constituted of 5 notes.


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4 Audava, Shadava & Sampoorna, are disputed by some musicologists. They are not considered to be parts of Raga Lakshanas by them.



# Raga Lakshanas

## Māyamalavagowla

- 15th Melam. 3rd Chakram 3rd Ragam
- Real name: *Mālava-gowla*. *Maya* added according to 72 Melakarta scheme.
- Moorchana: *srgmpdnś-śndpmgrs*
- Sampoorna ragam. Has many janya ragams.
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Suddha Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Suddha Madyamam, Panchamam, Suddha Dhaivatham, Kakali Nishadham
- Ancient ragam.
- All Basic lessons taught in this raga.
- Jiva Swaram: *g, n*
- Hamsa Swaram: *g, p*
- Items starting in : *s, g, m, d, n, ś*
- Suitable to be sung at the beginning of the concert
- Hindustani Equivalent: *Bhairav*
- Compositions:
  - Sarali, Janta, Alankaras, Dhattu
  - Kritis:
    - *Thulasidala Mulache*—Rupakam—Tyagaraja
    - *Māyādeetha Swarupini*—Rupakam—Ponnayya Pillai

## Malahari

- 15th Mela Janyam (Mayamalava Gowla)
- Arohanam: *srmpdś*
- Avarohanam: *śdpmgrs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Suddha Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Suddha Madhyamam, Panchamam, Suddha Dhaivatam.
- Audava-Shadava Ragam.
- Varja Ragam (*g* varjam in Arohanam, *n* varjam.)
- Upanga Ragam.
- Compositions start with: *r, m, p, d*
- Purandara Dasa composed *Pillari Geethams* in this raga.
- Graham: *s, m, d*
- Less scope for elaborate alapana.
- Compositions:
  - Geethams by Purandara Dasa
    - *Sri Gananadha*
    - *Kunda Gowra*
    - *Keraya Neeranu*
    - *Paduma Nābha*
  - Kritis
    - *Pancha Māthanga—Rupakam—Dikshitar*

## Mohanam

- 28th Mela janyam (Hari Kamboji)
- Arohanam: *srgpdś*
- Avarohanam: *śdpgrs*
- Swarastanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Panchamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatam
- Upanga Ragam
- Varja Ragam: *g, n* varjam
- Audava Ragam
- Jiva Swaras: *r, g, d*
- Most Suitable for slokas, padyas.
- Has many compositions.
- Compositions start with: *s, g, d*
- Hindustani Equivalent: *Bhupali*
- Compositions:
  - Geetham:
    - *Vara Veena*
  - Varnam:
    - *Ninnu kori*—Adi—Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar
  - Kritis:
    - *Rama Ninnu Nammina*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Nannu Palimpa*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Evarura*—Chapu—Tyagaraja

## Kalyani

- 65th Melam. 11th Chakra, 5th Raga.
- *Mecha Kalayani* according to 72 Melakarta scheme.
- Moorchana: *srgmpdnś—śndpmgrs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Prati Madyamam, Panchamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatham, Kakali Nishadham.
- Major Ragam. Many Janyams.
- Most famous Prati Madyama Ragam.
- Sarva Swara Gamaka Vareeka Rakti Ragam.
- Heavy Scope for Raga Alapana.
- All swaras have Raga Chaya
- Many Kritis Start on *g, ś*
- Compositions:
  - Geetham:
    - *Kamala Jātala*
  - Varnam
    - *Vanajākshiro—Adi—Ramnad Srinivasa Iyer*
    - *Vanajākshi Ninne—Ata—Pallavi Gopalayyar*
  - Kritis:
    - *Amma Rāvamma—Kanda Chapu—Tyagaraja*
    - *Nidhi Chāla Sukhama—Misra Chapu—Tyagaraja*
    - *Kamalāmbām Bajare—Adi—Dikshitar*

## Shankarabharanam

- 29th Melam. 5th Chakram, 5th Ragam.
- *Dheera Shankarabaranam*, according to 72 Mela scheme.
- Moorchana: *srgmpdnś–śndpmgrs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Suddha Madyamam, Panchamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatham, Kakali Nishadham
- Major Raga. Many Janya Ragas.
- All swaras are Raga Chaya Swaras.
- Sarva Swara Gamaka Vareeka Rakti Ragam
- Heavy Scope for Raga Alapana
- Hindustani Equivalent: *Bilaval*
- Compositions start with: *s, g, m, p*
- Compositions:
  - Geetham:
    - *Govindhachuda*—Matya Thalam
  - Varnam:
    - *Sami Ninne*—Adi—Veena Kuppaiyyar
    - *Chalamela*—Ata—Swati Tirunal Maharaja
  - Kriti:
    - *Swara Raga Sudha*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Akshaya Linga Vibho*—Misra Chapu—Tyagaraja
    - *Saroja Dhala Netri*—Adi—Syama Sastri

## Natakuranji

- 28th Mela Janyam (Harikamboji)
- Arohanam: *srgmndn pdns*
- Avarohanam: *śndmgs* or *śndmgmpgrs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Suddha Madyamam, Panchamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatam, Kaisika Nishadham
- Ubaya Vakra Ragam
- Varja Ragam: *p* varjam in avarohanam.
- Gamaka Vareeka Rakthi Ragam
- Tri-Staayi ragam.
- Karuna Rasam.
- Suitable to be sung in the evenings.
- Prominantly used in dance-dramas.
- Raga Chaaya swaras: *g, m, d*
- Compositions start with: *s, m, n*
- Nishadham - Nyasa Swaram and Kampita Swaram
- Compositions:
  - Varnam:
    - *Chalamela Jese*—Adi—Srirangam Rangaswamy Nattuvanar
  - Kriti:
    - *Manasu Vishaya Nata*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Kuvalaya Dhala Nayana*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Bhudamasrayami* (Navagraha Kriti)—Jampa—Muthuswamy Dikshitar
    - *Needhu Murthini*—Adi—Pallavi Gopalayyar
    - *Mamavasadha*—Rupakam—Swati Tirunal

## Dharbar

- 22nd Mela (Kharaharapriya) Janyam
- Arohanam: *srmpdnś*
- Avarohanam: *śn, dpmrg, g, rs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Sadharana Ghandaram, Suddha Madyamam, Panchamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatam, Kaisika Nishadham
- Krama Shadava - Vakra Sampoorana Ragam
- Varja Ragam: *g* varjam in arohanam
- Upanga Ragam
- Compositions start on: *r, p, d*
- Compositions
  - Varnam:
    - *Chalamela—Adi—Thiruvotriyur Tyagayyar*
  - Kriti
    - *Yochana Kamala—Adi—Tyagaraja*
    - *Naradha Guru Swamy—Adi—Tyagaraja*
    - *Rāmabhirama—Chapu—Tyagraja*

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## Khamboji

- 28th Mela (Harikamboji) Janyam
- Arohanam: *srgmpdś*
- Avarohanam: *śndpmgrs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Suddha Madhyamam, Panchamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatham, Kaisika Nishadam
- Shadava–Sampoorna Ragam
- Varja Ragam: *n* varjam in arohanam
- Bashanga Ragam: Kakali Nishadham occurs as *Anyā swaram*
- Raga Chaya swaras: *m, d, n (kaisika)*
- Nyasa Swaras: *g, m, p, m, d*
- Allows elaborate alapana.
- Tristayi ragam
- Bakthi Rasam. Suitable for Slokams, Padyams, Nrutya-natakams
- Compositions:
  - Varnams:
    - *Sarasija*—Ata Thalam—Swati Tirunal
    - *Kamalakshi*—Jampa Thalam
    - *Tharuni*—Adi—Fiddle Ponnusamy
  - Kriti:
    - *O Ranga Sayi*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Sri Subramanyaya*—Rupakam—Muthuswamy Dikshitar



## Hamsadwani

- 29th Mela (Dhira Sankarabarana) Janyam
- Arohanam: *srgpnś*
- Avarohanam: *śnpgrs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Panchamam, Kakali Nishadam
- Audava Ragam
- Varja Ragam. *m, d* varja swaras
- Upanga Ragam
- Raga Chaya swaras: *g, n*
- Sarva swara gamaka varika rakthi ragam
- Veera Rasam
- Janta and Dhatu proyogas bring beauty to this raga
- Compositions start with: *s, g, p*
- All swarams are nyasa swarams (Sarva swara Nyasa Ragam)
- Tri-Stayi ragam
- Compositions:
  - Varnam:
    - *Jalajaksha*—Adi—Manambuchavadi Vengatasubiar
  - Kritis
    - *Vatapi Ganapathimbaje*—Adi—Muthuswami Dikshitar
    - *Ragunayaka*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Vinayaka Ninnu*—Adi—Veena Kuppiar

## Begada

- 29th Mela (Dhira Sankarabarana) Janyam
- Arohanam: *sgrgmpdps* or *sgrgmpdn, dps*
- Avarohanam: *sn, dpm, grs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Suddha Madyamam, Panchamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatham, Kakali Nishadham
- Shadava-Sampoorna Ragam
- Vakra Ragam. Arohanam vakram.
- Upanga Ragam
- Tristayi Ragam
- Gamakavarika Rakthi Ragam
- Can be used to perform in Musical Dramas.
- Raga Chaya Swaras: *m, d, n*
- Nyasa Swaras: *p, m*
- Suitable to be sung at any time, especially in the afternoons
- One can begin a concert with the varnam in Begada.
- Patnam Subramanya Iyer achieved great mastery over this raga, hence the name Begada Subramanya Iyer
- Compositions:
  - Varnam:
    - *Intha Chalamu*—Adi—Veena Kuppaiar
  - Kritis
    - *Nadhopasana*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Nee Padha Pankaja*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Tyagarajaya*—Rupakam—Muthuswamy Dikshitar
    - *Manasunanera*—Rupakam—Patnam Subramanya Iyer
  - Javali
    - *Idhi Neeku*—Chapu—Dharmapuri Subbarayar

## Vasantha

- Janyam of 17th Melam, Suryagantham
- Arohanam: *sgmdnś*
- Avarohanam: *śndmgrs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Suddha Rishabam, Anthara Gandaram, Suddha Madyamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatham, Kakali Nishadam
- Audava–Shadava Ragam
- Upanga Ragam
- Auspecies Ragam.
- Ancient Ragam.
- Gamaka Varika Rakthi Ragam.
- Tri-Staayi Ragam
- Suitable for Padyams, Viruthams, Dance Dramas.
- Varja Ragam: *r*, *p* varjam in arohanam, *p* varjam in avarohanam.
- Raga Chaya Swaras: *g*, *m*, *d*, *n*
- Nyasa Swaras: *m*, *d*
- Compositions start on: *s*, *g*, *m*
- Compositions:
  - Varnam:
    - *Ninne Kori*—Adi—Thachur Singarachari
  - Kriti
    - *Seethamma Mayamma*—Rupakam—Tyagaraja

## Sri Ragam

- 22nd mela (Kharaharapriya) Janyam
- Arohanam: *srmpnś*
- Avarohanam: *śnpmrgrs* or *śnpdnpmrgrs*
- Swarashanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Sadharana Ghandaram, Suddha Madyamam, Panchamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatam, Kaisika Nishadham
- Upanga Ragam
- Audava – Vakra Sampoorana Ragam
- Gana Ragam
- Ancient and Auspicious Ragam
- Many prominent composers composed many kritis in this ragam
- Suitable to begin a concert with this ragam
- Compositions:
  - Geetham:
    - *Meenakshi Jaya Kamakshi*
  - Varnam:
    - *Sami Ninne Kori*—Adi—Karur Devudu Iyer
  - Kritis:
    - *Endaro Mahanubhavulu*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Sri Varalakshmi*—Rupakam—Muthuswamy Dikshitar

## Saveri

- 15th Mela (Mayamalavagowla) Janyam
- Arohanam: *srmpdś*
- Avarohanam: *śndpmgrs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Suddha Rishabam, Anthara Ghandaram, Suddha Madyamam, Panchamam, Suddha Dhaivatam, Kakali Nishadam
- Audava–Sampoorna Ragam
- Gamakavarika Rakthi Ragam
- Ancient Ragam
- Tristayi Ragam
- Good scope for elaborate alapana.
- Raga Chaya Swaras: *r, m, d*
- Nyasa Swaras: *m, p, d*
- Karuna Rasam.
- Suitable for Slokams, Padyams, Viruthams and for Musical Dramas.
- Many compositions commence on *s, p, d* and some on *g* too.
- Compositions:
  - Geetham:
    - *Janaka Sudha*—Rupakam
  - Varnam:
    - *Sarasuda*—Adi—Kothavasal Venkataramayyar
  - Kritis:
    - *Rama Bhana*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Thulasi Jagadh Janani*—Rupakam—Tyagaraja
    - *Sri Rajagopala*—Adi—Muthuswamy Dikshitar
    - *Enta Nerchina*—Adi—Patnam Subramanya Iyer

## Sri Ranjani

- 22nd Mela (Kharaharapriya) Janyam
- Arohanam: *srgmdnś*
- Avarohanam: *śndmgrs*
- Swarasthanas: Shadjam, Chatushruti Rishabam, Sadharana Ghandaram, Suddha Madyamam, Chatushruti Dhaivatam, Kaisika Nishadam
- Shadava Ragam
- Panchama Varja ragam (*p* varjam)
- Upanga Ragam
- Raga Chaya Swaras: *r, g, d, n*
- Nyasa Swaram: *m*
- Mesmerizing ragam
- Hindustani Equivalent: *Bagesri*
- Compositions start with: *s, r, m, n*
- Compositions:
  - Kritis:
    - *Brocheva Revare*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Sokasuka*—Rupakam—Tyagaraja
    - *Sri Dhundhurge*—Kanda Ekam—Muthuswamy Dishitar

## Hindolam

- 20th mela (Natabhairavi) Janyam
- Arohanam: *sgmdnś* or *smgmdnś*
- Avarohanam: *śndmgs*
- Audava Ragam
- Panchama Varja Ragam (*p* varjam)
- Sarvaswara Murchanakara Janya ragam
- Upanga Ragam
- Tri-stayi ragam
- Jiva Swarams: *d, n*
- Hamsa swaram: *m*
- Doesn't provide scope for elaborate alapana.
- Compositions start with: *s, m, n*
- Hindustani Equivalent: *Malkouns*
- Compositions:
  - Kritis:
    - *Samajavaragamana*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Manasuloni*—Adi—Tyagaraja
    - *Nirajakshi*—Rupakam—Muthuswamy Dikshitar
    - *Mamavathu Sri*—Adi—Mysore Vasudevacharya

# Varna Lakshanam

## Varnams

Varnams are scholarly compositions belonging to *abhyasa ganam* category. They are like the pillars amongst abhyasa ganams.

In learning music, varnams are the foundations of ragams and gamakams. Students should learn varnams very carefully and thoroughly because they learn about gamakas from here only. If a student fails to properly understand and master gamakas, which are the essence of ragams, it will set a very wrong foundation that will affect the student's entire progress in music.

The composition of varnam is of very high standards. It has the raga bhavam, raga ranjaka prayogas, rare sancharas, dhattu and janta phrases in appropriate places. Analysing and understanding of these aspects are the first steps in manodharma sangeetham (Raga Alapana, Kalpana Swarams etc.)

All the students learning vocal and instrumental music should practise varnams in three speeds. This will help them establish their fingering (instrumental) and bring control to their voice (vocal). In the varnam's composition, all sort of exercises are present. So the students will gain the ability to sing/perform all kind of prayogas.

Though varnams belong to abhyasa ganam category, due to their high standards, they are suitable to be performed in the concert. We have the tradition of singing/playing a varnam at the very beginning of a concert.

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## Structure of Varnams

- The Sahityam part of a varnam is very minimal, and mostly of bhakti or srungara rasam.
- Varnams are compositions under *Chitra-Thara Margam*. They have four aksharams per kriya.
- A varnam has two parts. First part is known as *Purvangam* and it is followed by *Utharangam*.
- Purvangam consists of
  - Pallavi
  - Anu Pallavi
  - Mukthayi Swarams
- Utharangam consists of
  - Charanam
  - Etthugada Swarams (also known as Charana Swarams or Chitta Swarams)

## Etthugada Swarams

- Varnams usually have four or five etthugada swarams.
- First and second etthugada swarams are of one avartham length each.
- First etthugada swaram is mostly made up of *Dheergams*.
- Third etthugada swaram is usually two or three avarthams long. It has mostly short notes, with no dheerga swarams.
- Fourth etthugada Swaram is usually four avarthams long. It has a mixture of dheergam and short notes. This one has janta, dhattu proyogas and rare sancharas of the ragam.
- Understanding and practising etthugada swarams is the first step in learning *kalpana swarams*.

## Types of Varnams

There are three types of varnams: *Thāna* Varnam, *Padha* Varnam, and *Rāgamālika* Varnam

## Thana Varnam

- Sahityam only for Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam.
- Learned after learning Geethams, Swarapallavi and Swarajathi.
- Melody of a thana varnam takes phrases that are used in thanam rendition. The emphasis is on the melodic and rhythmic combinations rather than sahitya.
- Thana varnams are usually set to Adi, Ata, Tripura thalams.
- Composers who wrote thana varnams:
  - Pacchimiriyam Adiyappayyar
  - Veena Kuppayyar
  - Pallavi Gopalayyar
  - Patnam Subramanya Iyer
- Compositions:
  - *Viriboni*—Bhairavi—Ata—Pacchimiriyam Adiyappayyar
  - *Ninnu kori*—Adi—Ramnad Srinivasa Iyyangar

## Padha Varnam

- Mostly used in Dances
- Set to slower tempos, to facilitate performing abhinayams in dance
- Sahityam for All the parts of the varnam (Pallavi, Anupallavi, Mukthayi Swaram, Charanam, Charana Swarams)
- Padha Varnam is in a form that emulates that of Padham, with emphasis on Sahityam
- Composers who wrote Padha Varnams:
  - Govinda Swamy Iyer
  - Pallavi Seshayyar
  - Mysore Sadhasiva Rao
  - Srirangam Moolai Veettu Rangaswamy Nattuvanar
- Compositions:
  - *Chalamela*—Adi—Srirangam Rangaswamy Nattuvanar

## Ragamalika Varnam

- Pallavi - One Ragam, Anu Pallavi - One Ragam, Mukthiyai Swaram - Two Ragams.

- Charanam - One Ragam, Chitta Swarams - Each in Different Ragas.
- Compositions:
  - *Valachi Valachi* (Navaragamalika Varnam)—Adi—Patnam  
Subramanya Iyer

## Way of Singing Varnams

- First the Purvangam is performed, followed by Utharangam
- In the Purvangam, each avartham is performed twice in first speed (4 aksharams per kriya). Once the Mukthayi swaram is performed this way, the entire Purvangam is repeated at second degree of speed, in the same manner. Once second speed is over, the entire purvangam is performed at the third speed, and concluded by the performing a portion of pallavi at the first speed.
- Once the Purvangam is over, Utharangam can be performed either at a fixed speed (Madyama Kalam) or in 2 or 3 speeds.
- In Utharangam, Charanam is performed first followed by First chitta swaram.
- After each chitta swaram, Charanam is repeated again before progressing to the next chitta swaram
- Varnam is concluded by performing Charanam or a portion of it, after reciting all the etthugada swarams

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# Biographies

## Veena Kuppayyar

- 1798-1860, Thiruvotriyur.
- Son of great veena maestro Sambamurthy Sastry.
- Expert in Veena. Mastery over Sanskrit and music since childhood.
- Direct & best known deciple of Saint Tyagaraja.
- Guru Bhakti: Named his last son after his guru => Thiruvotriyur Tyagayyar, became a well-known musician too.
- Well respected by fellow Vidwans.
- Aquired the title of *Gāna Chakravarthy*.
- Worshipped Radha-Rukmani samedha Venugopala swamy. Saint Tyagaraja once visited Kuppayyar's house upon his repeated request. The saint was delighted to see the God's vigraha, and composed *Venu Gana Lolunikana* in *Kedara Gowla* ragam.
- Music:
  - Written many Varnams, Kritis and Keerthanas in Telugu, including group compositions, such as:
    - Venkatesa Pancharatnam
    - Kaalahasteesa Pancharatnam
    - Chamundeeswari Pancharatnam
  - His compositions are full of Ragabhava and Artha-Bhava. His Sahityams often have beautiful word play.
  - Favourite Ragam: *Narayana Gowla*. He composed a very intellectual varnam, *Maguva Ledha Ninne Kori*, in this ragam. Because of this, he is also known as *Narayana Gowla Kuppayyar*.
  - Mudra: *Gopala Dasa*

## Patnam Subramanya Iyer

- Origins:
  - 1845 to July 31, 1902 (Lived 58 years)
  - Born in Tanjavur. S/o Bharatam Vaidyanadha Iyer, Bharata Natya exponent, Samastana Vidwan of the Court of Sarfoji Maharaja.
  - Got married at the of 32. Moved to Thiruvayyaru.
- Music Education:
  - First learnt from his uncle, Merattur Ganapati Sastry
  - Later from Manambuchavadi Venkata Subbayar (Relative and Direct deciple of Saint Tyagaraja)
  - At the beginning Subramanya Iyer's voice was hard and unresponsive. He practised singing in neck-deep water in very early mornings. Later his voice became soft and melodious.
- Music:
  - Took up music profession at the age of 30
  - He was a Pallavi Vidwan and Vaggeyakara (composer).
  - He has composed many Thana varnams, Padha varnams, Javalis, Kritis, and Tillanas. Yet, he would sing mainly Saint Tyagaraja kritis in concerts.
  - Subramanya Iyer's compositions have both Raga Bhava and richness in meaning.
  - Many of his works are in Telugu, some in Sanskrit.
  - Chitta-swarams are particularly very beautiful in his compositions.
  - As a performer, his specialty is Manodharmam. He was unparalleled in singing even rare ragas to a great extent.
  - He was particularly known for his extempore of Begada Raga. Hence he was even known as *Begada Subramanyam Iyer*.
  - He was very famous and well respected during his time. He was supported by many jamindars. He was commissioned to perform regularly in Ramanadhapuram, Vijayanagaram, Mysore and Tiruvanandapuram samasthanams.
  - Mudra: *Venkatesa*

- Contributions:
  - *Kadhana Kuduhalam* ragam (Moorchana: *srmd,ngps-sndpmgrs*)
  - Pallavi in *Simhanandana* thalam (one of the longest of 108 thalams)
- Deciples:
  - Tiger Varadhachariar
  - Mysore Vasudevacharya
  - Thiruvaadi Krishnaswamy Iyer
  - Ramanadapuram (poochi) Srinivasa Iyengar
  - Thirukkodikkaval Krishnayyar
  - Muthialpet Seshayyar alias Kulla Seshayyar
  - Enadi Sisters: Lakshmi, Narayani
  - M. S. Ramaswamy Iyer
  - Selam Meenakshi and her daughters Pappa, Radha
- Subramanya Iyer moved to Chennai (Patnam) to teach Pappa and Radha and stayed there for a long time. Hence the name *Patnam* Subramanya Iyer.



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## Thiruvotriyur Thyagaraja

- 19th Century
- Also known as Thiruvotriyur Thyagayyar
- Son of eminent singer, veena player, and vaggeyakara - Veena Kuppayyar.
- Since childhood he acquired mastery over Telugu language and music. Blessed by Saint Tyagaraja.
- Also a great musician like his father. Has written Varnams, Keerthanas etc.
- His expertise in handling ragas is evident from his compositions.
- He also wrote a book called *Pallavi Svarakalṣavalli*. In his book he has notated many varnams, keerthanas etc.
- Mudra: *Gopala Dasa*

~ End ~

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