An in depth analysis of Raga Gaavti with new compositions

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ABSTRACT

This research analysis provides a detailed and thorough description and portrayal of Raga Gaavti with the help of two new and original compositions which assist and facilitate in exploring the new and pristine dimensions of the Raga. The compositions have been rendered in the Taal Teentaal which comprises of 16 beats. Raga Gaavti, is an evening Raga and is not amongst the catalogue of popular Ragas and is played and sung quite rarely. These compositions provide an intricate and detailed depiction of the Raga thereby exploring its new and vibrant facet. Furthermore, a comparative analysis is performed between Raga Gaavti and Raga Bheem, which could be seen very similar to each other.

Keywords: “Raga”, “Teentaal”, “Swara”, “Taal”, “Raga Gaavti”, “Raga Bheem”

1. INTRODUCTION

In the Indian Classical Music, a Raga is a beautiful amalgamation of musical notes leading to melodic and rhythmic patterns in which variations are improvised within a prescribed framework of typical progressions, which when sung or played on a musical instrument is exceptionaly pleasurable to the ears. (Brahaspati, 2002) The word Raga is derived from the Sanskrit word “Ranj” which literally means to delight or please and gratify. A Raga exquisitely produces a blissful divinity. Every Raga has some unique distinctiveness associated with it and several moods such as serenity, love, patriotism, devotion, gallantry, bravery, aggression etc. can be produced by different Ragas (Swarganga, 2013).

Every Raga of the Indian Classical Music (the North Indian Hindustani Classical Music and the South Indian Carnatic Music) is ascribed by a definite set of rules and attributes which invariably distinguish one Raga from the other (Ragopedia, 2012). These attributes and rules tend to allot a specific domain to each Raga and the musician who sings or plays these Ragas has to strictly abide by these parameters. This is one of the most unique feature of the Indian Classical Music which makes it stand apart of the musical traditions or type of music prevalent in the rest of the world. Each Raga is established on a scale along with a given set of “swaras” or notes. These swaras emerge and develop in an emblematic pattern to produce acoustic melodies and distinctive musical ornamentation. Based on the rules of Indian Classical Music, some of the major attributes of a Raga are as follows:

• **Notes (swaras)** - Each Raga possesses a definite set of notes which have to be adhered to. Rules suggest that here must be at least 5 notes or a maximum of 7 notes (full octave) in a Raga. Ragas can use both flat and sharp notes and the number of notes within each scale can vary. The exclusion of a jarring or dissonant note or prominent emphasis on a unique note or the transition from one note to another and the use of microtones along with other refinements characterize the distinction of one Raga from another (Swarganga, 2013).

• **Aaroh & Avroh** - Every Raga must have an “Aaroh” and an “Avroh” The ascending order of musical notes is called the Aaroh and the descending order is known as Avroh (Batish, 2003)

• **Vadi & Samvadi** - Every Raga must have the “Vadi” and “Samvadi” notes. The most prominent and frequently used note of the Raga is known as the ‘vaadi’, the note which braces or harmonizes the dominating note is known as the Samvadi (Iitsra, 2012)

• **Jaati** - Jaati provides the number of notes in the Aaroh and the Avroh of the Raga. The Jaati is basically is derived from the permutation and combination of “Audav”, “Shaadav” and “Sampurna” attributes. The Audav has 5 notes, Shaadav has 6 notes, Sampurna has 7 notes. Thus there are 9 Jaatis based on Audav, Shaadav, Sampurna, in the Aaroh and Avroh (Pranpay, 1992)

• **Thaat** - The Thaat is basically the parent scale, which comprises of 7 notes. This is perhaps a system to classify Ragas and presently in Hindustani Classical Music 10 Thaat classification of Ragas have been adopted

• **Pakad** - A Raga can be illustrated by phrases of notes known as ‘pakad’ which express the progression known as ‘chalan’ of the Raga (Shukla, 2005)

• **Samay or Timing** - Each Raga has a particular time at which it can be performed. Perhaps, it is so because specific notes are supposed to be more effective at that distinct time (Chandrakantha, 2012)

RAGA

A Raga is a beautiful amalgamation of musical notes leading to melodic and rhythmic patterns in which variations are improvised within a prescribed framework of typical progressions, which when sung or played on a musical instrument is exceptionally pleasurable to the ears. The word Raga is derived from the Sanskrit word “Ranj” which literally means to delight or please and gratify (Iitsra, 2012).
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Bandish: Bandish or Gat is a fixed, preset melodic composition in the Hindustani Classical Music. It is basically a specific portion of a Raga which is performed with rhythmic accompaniment (that is by a percussion instrument) such as by Tabla or Pakhavaj and if desired with a melodic accompaniment (a perpetual drone) by Sarangi, Violin or Harmonium in Vocal Music accompaniment. There are different ways of regulating the segment of a composition. A Bandish provides the literature ingredient in the music, for traditional structured singing or playing an instrument.

Taan: A Taan is an improvised vocal or instrumental musical expression where musical notes rendered with speed interlacing different patterns. Taans can be very scientific, technical, and procedural and depicts the training, practice and adroitness of a musician in merging intricate patterns of the notes with variations in the rhythm.

Teentaal: A Sixteen beat cycle divided into 4 parts with a division of 4-4-4-4. Each division contains 4 beats: 1:2-3-4/6/5/7-8/9/10-11/12/13-14/15-16. The first beat is known as the Sam, 5th beat is known as the Doosri Taal. 9th beat is known as Khali and the 13th beat is known as the Teesri Taali.

- **Melodious** - A Raga must be pleasant sounding and must be able to enchant the listener with its melody
- **Improvisation** - Improvisation is crucial and indispensable feature of Indian Classical Music which depends upon the imagination, originality and ingenuity of a particular artist. A great artist possesses the proficiency to communicate, deliver and inculcate within his audiences the mood, ambiance, sentiment and face of any Raga. (Sadarang, 2006) Although the above terms attribute to a Raga, a Raga it is basically a tonal multifarious module. The listener can have to listen to several pieces of the Raga in order to recognize the Raga. Each Raga is presented in several varied manners depending upon the Gharaana of the artist, the artist's own nature, his musical temperament, the ambiance and perhaps also his disposition at that time. It also relies on the form which he opts to execute the Raga in, that is whether it's Khayal, Dhruupad, Thummi, Bhajan etc. The presentation is also diverse in case of vocal and instrumental form of presentation

In this particular manuscript the Raga presentation is discussed specifically from the instrumental point of view and under the Imdadkhani Gharaana of Sitar and Surbahar of the Hindustani Classical Music. The presentation of a Raga is started with Alaap. The Alaap is the opening section of a typical North Indian Classical Music performance. It is a form of melodic improvisation that commences, establishes and develops a Raga. Instead of utterly emancipated improvisation, the Alaap segment is performed schematically by the route of “Vistart”, where the notes of the Raga are initiated one at a time so that phrases never traverse further than one note above or below what has been covered before (Swaranga, 2013). The Alaap is followed by Jod (Under the Instrumental Music, when a sturdy and secure pulse is introduced, into the Alaap, it is called Jod), Jhalal (When the Tempo has been significantly increased, or when the rhythmic component overhauls the melodic, it is called Jhalal), Thok Jhalal and if desired the artist may conclude his solo part with free random Taans which help to elaborate the Raga with fast rhythmic patterns. A Taan is an improvised vocal or instrumental musical expression where musical notes rendered with speed interlacing different patterns. Taans can be very scientific, technical, and procedural and depicts the training, practice and adroitness of a musician in merging intricate patterns of the notes with variations in the rhythm (Swaranga, 2013).

This complete section of the Raga is explored and improvised without the accompaniment of a percussion instrument. After this section the role of the percussion instrument comes into play. Under this particular segment, the Bandish (or composition) or Gat is demonstrated. Depending upon the Gharaana or the temperament of the artist, the artist may exhibit several types of Bandishes with tempo variations. These Bandishes are regularly decorated with Taans of several types and tempos and other modulations and improvisations. Finally, the Raga is concluded with Jhallah.

Bandish or Gat is a fixed, preset melodic composition in the Hindustani Classical Music. It is basically a specific portion of a Raga which is performed with rhythmic accompaniment (that is by a percussion instrument) such as by Tabla or Pakhavaj and if desired with a melodic accompaniment (a perpetual drone) by Sarangi, Violin or Harmonium in Vocal Music accompaniment. There are different ways of regulating the segment of a composition. A Bandish provides the literature ingredient in the music, for traditional structured singing or playing an instrument. In the style of Bandish, the Bandish is divided into three sections:

- **Sthail or Asthaai**: The initial or the first body phrase or line of a fixed melodic composition which is repeated.
- **Manjha**: The second part of the composition or Bandish which travels mainly in the lower octave (Pathak, 1990)
- **Antara**: The third part of the composition or Bandish which develops in the middle or higher octave.

There are broadly three main variations of the Bandish depending directly upon the tempo:

- **Vilambit Bandish**: A slow and steady melodic composition (Yadav, 2009)
- **Madhyalaya Bandish**: A medium tempo melodic composition (Yadav, 2009)
- **Drut Bandish**: A fast tempo melodic composition (Maankaran, 2004)

In this particular manuscript, two new composition of Drut Bandishes have been rendered in Raga Gaavti in the Taal Teentaal and are specifically designed to be played by an instrumentalist. However, they can be sung as well if decorated appropriately with words after subsequent understanding. These compositions can be ornamented with Taans and other vibrant improvisations and modulations. Consequently, practice and understanding of these compositions may lead to opening of several new dimensions and facets of the otherwise rare Raga Gaavti. However, in the field of Vocal music late Ustaad Nazakat Ali Khan & Ustaad Salamat Ali Khan (of Pakistan) as well as in Sitar Late Ustaad Vilayat Khan extensively explored and performed this Raga.

Section 2 of this manuscript provides a detailed description of the notation mapping used in the writing of the composed renditions. These notations can be easily understood by a musician who wishes to play or sing these new compositions. The major attributes associated with Raga Gaavti are presented in the Section 3. Section 4 presents a comparative analysis between Raga Gaavti and Raga Bheem (Jha, 1978), which otherwise pose to be very similar to each other. An informative and sequential study is made in this particular section. The two new compositions based upon the taal Teentaal are presented in section 5. Finally, the conclusions are drawn in section 6.

### 2. NOTATION MAPPING

This section provides a detailed dictionary of the notation used to depict the different notes (Swaras) ascribed to read the composed music. The corresponding Western Equal Tempered notes are also mentioned along with the Indian Classical Music Swara notation:

- **Sa** - Shadaj (Western Equal Tempered: C)
- **Re** - Komal Rishabh (Western Equal Tempered: D♭)
- **Re** - Shuddha Rishabh (Western Equal Tempered: D)
- **Ga** - Komal Gandhaar (Western Equal Tempered: E♭)
- **Ga** - Shuddha Gandhaar (Western Equal Tempered: E)
- **Ma** - Shuddh Madhyam (Western Equal Tempered: F)
- **Ma** - Teenva Madhyam (Western Equal Tempered: F♯)
- **Pa** - Pancham (Western Equal Tempered: G)
- **Dha** - Komal Dhaivat (Western Equal Tempered: A♭)
- **Dha** - Shuddha Dhaivat (Western Equal Tempered: A)
- **Ni** - Komal Nishad (Western Equal Tempered: B♭)
- **Ni** - Shuddha Nishad (Western Equal Tempered: B)

**Lower Octave** or the Mandra Saptak is depicted by a single quote (‘) before the Swara. For example: *Sa*, *re*, *Re*, *ga*, *Ga*, *Ma*, *ma*, *Pa*, *dha*, *Dha*, *ni*, *Ni*.

**Higher Octave** or the Taar Saptak is depicted by a single quote (‘) after the Swara. For example: *Sa*, *re*, *Re*, *ga*, *Ga*, *Ma*, *ma’, *Pa*, *dha’, *Dha*, ‘ni’, ‘Ni’.

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3. MAJOR ATTRIBUTES OF RAGA GAAVTI

Some of the major attributes (these attributes are discussed in detail in the introduction section of the manuscript) of Raga Gaavti are as follows:

- **THAAT**: Khamaj (Chandranantha, 2012)
- **VAADI**: Shadaj (Some connoisseurs consider it to be Pancham) (Swarganga, 2013)
- **SAMVAADI**: Pancham (Some connoisseurs consider it to be Shadaj) (Swarganga, 2013)
- **JAATI**: Audav-Sampurna
- **AAROH**: 'ni Sa Ga Ma Pa ni Sa' (Swarganga, 2013)
- **AVROH**: Sa' ni Sa', Dha Ma Pa, Ga Ma Re 'ni Sa
- **SAMAY OR TIMINGS**: 4th Prehar of the day: 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. (but in common practice it is sung or played till the second Prehar of the night: 9 p.m. to 12 a.m.)

4. A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN RAGA GAAVTI AND RAGA BHEEM

The rich inheritance of Indian Classical Music traces back to several centuries. This legacy provided us with thousands of ancient Ragas and many a times situations arise where two or more Ragas appear very similar to each other leading to controversies and confusion amongst the followers of the Indian Classical Music. Perhaps, the line or the parameters dividing these similar Ragas need a detailed scrutiny for differentiation. One such example can be traced between Raga Gaavti and Raga Bheem, which display close kinship to each other and also it is difficult to differentiate these two very similar Ragas. However, the following distinguishing parameters aid in differentiating the two Ragas (Jha, 1978). Perhaps, they also explain the similarity amongst the Ragas to support the belief that how similar these Ragas are to each other.

In general practice the connoisseurs believe that Raga Bheem belongs to Kaafi Thaat as this Raga uses both the Gandhaars (that is, Komal Gandhaar and Shuddha Gandhaar) and Komal Nishaad. Rest all the notes are Shuddha. Whereas, Raga Gaavti belongs to the Khamaj Thaat as it uses only one Komal Swara, which is Komal Nishaad and the rest of the Swaras are Shuddha. Furthermore, the Jaati of Raga Bheem is believed to be “Audav-Sampurna” as in the ascending notes of this Raga, Rishabh and Dhavat are excluded and in the descending notes all the Swaras are used. The Jaati of Raga Gaavti is also “Audav-Sampurna”. The Vaadi (most important) Swara of Raga Bheem is Pancham and the Samvaadi (second most important) Swara is Shadaj. In the case of Raga Gaavti, the Vaadi and Samvaadi Swaras are Shadaj and Pancham respectively. Perhaps, some connoisseurs believe that just like Raga Bheem the Vaadi and Samvaadi Swaras of Raga Gaavti are Pancham and Shadaj respectively. In the Aaaroh (ascending flow) and Avroh (descending flow) of the Raga Bheem, the Shuddha Gandhaar is used quite prominently and also more often. Thus, the connoisseurs believe that the traits of this Raga are more appropriate to the characteristics of Thaat Khamaj instead of Thaat Kaafi. Besides, Komal Gandhaar is used as the Vivadi Swara (Dissonant note) in the higher octave and even if one excludes the use of Komal Gandhaar in this octave, it hardly produces any effect on the face and structure of the Raga. Thus, it is more appropriate to include Raga Bheem under the Khamaj Thaat. Perhaps, in practice Raga Gaavti is closest to Raga Bheem. The only major differentiating parameter between the two is the limited use of Komal Gandhaar in the higher octave in the Raga Bheem, whereas the use of Komal Gandhaar is totally excluded in Raga Gaavti (Jha, 1978).

The appropriate time to sing or play Raga Bheem is the third “Prehar” of the day (Timings: 12.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.), but in common practice it has been found that musicians sing or play this Raga till the second “Prehar” of the night (Timings: 9.00 p.m. to 12.00 a.m.). Raga Gaavti is sung or played in the fourth “Prehar” of the day (Timings: 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m.). However, the common practice is to extend its timings till the second “Prehar” of the night (9.00 p.m. to 12.00 a.m.).

5. COMPOSITIONS

In this segment, two new compositions (Drut Gats) are rendered in Raga Gaavti in the Taal Teentaal (Table 1 and Table 2). Perhaps, even the vocalists can sing them provided they decorate it with appropriate words and thus subsequently modulate it with improvisations, but strictly remaining under the rules of the Raga. These compositions have been kept simple yet aesthetically beautiful so that professionals and even students can understand the basic concept and structure of the composition and then later modify and improvise it within the framework of the Raga. Both the compositions have been composed in Taal Teentaal which is one of the most popular Taal in North Indian Classical Music. The structure and

| Table 1 Raga Gaavti, Drut Gat (Composition 1), Taal-Teentaal |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| *i* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| **Sthai** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sthaai | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra |
| **Manjha** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Manjha | *Pa* | 'ni | Sa | Ga | Ma | Pa | Ga | Ma | Re | 'ni | Sa | Ma | Pa | Ga | Ma | Pa |
| **Re** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Re | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra |
| **Antra** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Antra | Ma | Pa | ni | - | ni | Da | Ra | Da | S | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | S | Ra | Da |
| **Sa’** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sa’ | Da | S | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da |
| **Re’** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Re’ | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra | Da | Ra |
framework of this Taal is simple yet very exquisite which enhances the sheer beauty of any composition thereby making an acoustically vigorous impact on connoisseurs as well as common masses.

6. CONCLUSION

The inherent traits of Raga Gaavti are discussed under the scaffold of the two new and original compositions. These renditions if understood, practiced and improvised within the framework and limitations of Raga Gaavti, will lead to an exquisite melodic structure of the Raga with aesthetic beauty and splendor. Both the compositions are rendered in the Teentaal and it is one of the most commonly used Taal in the North Indian Classical Music. The rendition composed within this Taal automatically enhances the beauty of the Raga within its context of the 4-4-4-4-beats.

Nevertheless, Raga Gaavti is extensively close and adjacent to Raga Bheem, yet there exists a differentiating parameter, which is the exclusion of Komal Gandhar in Raga Gaavti.

From the present contribution, it can be concluded that the simplicity and sheer beauty of this Raga will eventually lead to its extensive popularity in the near future. Improvisations and new compositions help in exploring the new facets of Raga, which is the basic temperament of a musician.

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