

CHAPTER-1

I N T R O D U C T I O N

INTRODUCTION

The concept of rāga is the foundation for karnāṭak music. It is not one that pertains to the melodic aspect of music alone - the rāga is not just one of the two elements of music (the conceptulisation of rāga as opposed to tāla), it is the music itself. This concept is not static, and is subject to changes from time to time, and individual interpretations even during a particular period, depending upon the performer's aesthetic insight. It is an organic phenomenon and is essentially related to the contemporary vision. But, this phenomenon is more imbibed than taught. There are virtually no aids or adequate well defined terms to communicate even the rudiments of this concept. Rāga ālāpana, if 'taught ' meant usually a reproduction of the teacher's rendition. Rāga-s are imbibed by 'Kēlvigñānam' (a Tamil word meaning empirical knowledge). This is, perhaps the best way of learning, but one yearns to communicate atleast some very basic principles governing this mystic concept. The main aim of this study is to communicate to an average student.

The first chapter deals with 'Rāga lakṣaṇa' as expounded in some treatises and its significance towards contemporary music. The dichotomy between lakṣaṇa and lakṣya has been pointed out through an examination of

the meagre details found in lakṣaṇa grantha-s (even now considered as good sources for unraveling the rāga-s in their full form).

The second chapter examines in brief the impact of the Seventy-two mela scheme on the present day rāga concept.

The distinguishing factor between different systems of music lies in the ornamentation of sounds, very basically understood in terms of Svarasthānas. The concept of Gamaka has been defined from a new angle, based on the study conducted by Karāṁkudi Dr.S.Subramaniam . All complex Gamakas have been split up into some very simple basic movements. This understanding has helped evolve a system of precise notation. It is no exaggeration to say that this is the basis on which entire study on rāga-s has been carried out in this work.

A rāga is understood in terms of some characteristic phrases, but is not always synonymous with those phrases. It is rather, each of the multifarious forms which may be weaved out of those phrases. Some phrases may be typical - exclusively belonging to one rāga, or may belong to different rāga-s - the context determining the rāga. Some typical phrases might reveal a rāga instantaneously, while some, could

be a fragment of a larger phrasal frame work. A rāga, is one, where such phrases combine to form a melodic progression conceived aesthetically, and not numerically. Rāgatva, has for its basis, these melodic principles through which a rāga is unfolded.

A study of 29 rāgas has been made in the last chapter - the core of each rāga being extracted and codified through ideal beginning phrases, sub phrases which repeat as end phrases etc. An attempt has also been made through some rāga-s under study to answer a few questions which often confront a seeker. For instance, in Pūrvikalyāṇi, stylistic differences in the conceptualisation of rāga has been revealed through an analysis of one composition each of Tyāgarāja and Dīkṣitar.

A rāga is understood, and even at times completely revealed through a few phrases. One marvels at the idea of how an artist is able to create new phrases, well within the discipline of rāga. This question has been answered to some extent through examples of phrases in the rāga-s Bilahari and Śahāna. Also submitted along with this paper, are two audio cassettes wherein the phrases taken up for analysis have been sung by me.