

## **Gāna Rasa-The Aesthetic Beauty in Karnāṭaka Classical Music**

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**Abstract:** India is a land of rich cultural heritage. Music is an ancient art form and Indian music is distinctive with respect to its evolution, development, extempore and importantly a perfect amalgam of philosophy, psychology, spirituality and aesthetics. Music comprises of the melodic, rhythmic and lyrical components within the two broad streams of vocalisation and instrumentation in Indian music. Voice is an excellent means of expression and communication and singing voice is considered as the first instrument which impacts and harmonises listeners' minds. Karnāṭaka classical music holds its position high with respect to improvisation, compositional forms and distinctive in approach. Voice and other melodic instruments are capable of producing svaras and lyrical components set to specific tāla. Melodic instruments emanate the musical and lyrical aspects but listeners often familiarise by the melody and inherent rhythm. Vocal and instrumental in Indian music are concurrent and especially in Karnāṭaka classical music, melodic instruments replicate the vocal techniques (gāyaki style) creating an impact on the listeners. This research study analyses enjoyment of music or the aspect of gāna rasa, the aesthetic beauty with reference to Karnāṭaka classical music. Admiring the aesthetic beauty excluding the subjectivity factors exists from centuries though the perception and comprehension of aesthetic beauty is highly subjective.

**Keywords:** Gāna rasa, Aesthetic beauty, Karnāṭaka classical music

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### **I. GAPS IN LITERATURE**

Though some studies have been conducted related to the aesthetic experience of Karnāṭaka Classical music, many aspects pertaining to gāna rasa from the point of view of performer and connoisseur are partially covered. The factors influencing gāna rasa, the role of classically trained voice in exposing and enhancing gāna rasa, perception and comprehension of gāna rasa relating to performer and connoisseur, the possibilities for further study relating to gāna rasa and so on are wide gaps needed to be filled. The other aesthetic aspects of gāna rasa in a performance such as the role of prosodical beauties, the pitch, tempo, instrumental accompaniments, sound equipments, technological advancements and its impact on gāna rasa, etc and several other factors enhancing the aesthetic effect are not dealt in depth. This study aims at analysing the shades of gāna rasa experienced in Karnāṭaka classical music. In order to facilitate further research on gāna rasa, these gaps needs to be addressed.

#### **Research Objectives**

- The study of gāna rasa is beneficial from the perspective of a performer, connoisseur or those who are involved in preserving and archiving Karnāṭaka classical music since several factors of gāna rasa are less discussed. The study intends to facilitate and enable those who are inclined towards Karnāṭaka classical music and its appreciation.
- Though it is hard to measure the intensity of aesthetic delight, the study of gāna rasa is based on the parameters like,
- The melodic aspects and accuracy in the articulation of the same with respect to voice of the performer, supporting gāna rasa.
- Performer's ability to bring out the essence of particular rāga through mellifluous voice in the process of rendering improvised, composed music or any musical presentation.
- The proportionate amalgam of lyrical and musical content imagined by the composer and the way in which the performer expresses the same with voice or instrument.
- The role of accompaniments in the process of supporting the main performer and as a team performance, its overall effect in enhancing the experience of gāna rasa by contributing due share through creativity and spontaneity.

- The linguistically void aspects where the music leads the lyrical contents and their role in creating the aesthetic appeal.
- Devotional elements in the lyrical contents of Karnāṭaka classical music compositions and their role in enhancing the effect of gāna rasa.
- Acoustical factors including sound equipments, ambience and mindset of those who are involved in the process of experiencing gāna rasa.

#### **Scope of the study**

- The study of gāna rasa is less explored and hence there is ample scope to analyse gāna rasa from various factors of Karnāṭaka classical music in further studies.
- The terminologies used in this study are defined considering the authors' view of twentieth century Karnāṭaka classical music scenario. Thus, the study of Gāna rasa is not pertaining to the ancient treatises.
- Innovation and experimentation is an integral part in the process and development of music. Hence study of gāna rasa can include latest developments related to various musical concepts and presentation techniques.
- The term rasa in the study pertains to the aesthetic beauty with respect to Karnāṭaka classical music only. The definitions of rasa as explained in other allied art forms are not considered for this study.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

- The study is basically an exploratory analysis since the term 'gāna rasa' is not analysed in depth by uncovering the various factors influencing gāna rasa, perception and comprehension of gāna rasa from the point of view of a performer and connoisseur.
- Since it is not a case study, audience opinions are not collected and analysed in the form of samples or questionnaires. Hence the outcome of the study is suggestive and not quantitative with reference to musical experience.
- The subjectivity factors exist in assessing the enjoyment of Karnāṭaka classical music. It is unfeasible to quantify the level of enjoyment/bliss derived. This influences some of the aspects or parameters in determining gāna rasa.
- The findings of the research is based on representative samples such as interviews, discussions, available archives of audio and video which are not statistically analysed.

#### **Significance of the study**

GĀNA RASA- THE AESTHETIC BEAUTY IN KARNĀṬAKA CLASSICAL MUSIC is a holistic comprehensive study of the significant parameters which influence the enjoyment in the contemporary Karnāṭaka classical music context. The significance of this research is that it is an attempt to study the enjoyment of music considering all essential parameters in the process of enjoyment applicable in the existing Karnāṭaka classical music scenario including the factors which have not been considered in prior research.

#### **Introduction to Gāna Rasa**

Rasyatē Āsvādyatē Iti Rasah<sup>1</sup> - means rasa is that which is enjoyed like tasty food. In the context of art experience 'rasa'<sup>2</sup> has been interpreted in many ways like delight, taste, relish, pleasure, flavour, emotion, imaginative experience, and so on. Its reference is found in Rig Vēda, Upaniśads and also in a few ancient treatises on chemistry and medicine. The word rasa encompasses wide range of meanings: sap, juice, elixir, nectar, fluid, liquid, potion and so on though not applicable for the study. The present study is based on the definition stated by Sāmbamūrthy P, which is as follows: "Gāna Rasa"<sup>3</sup> is the emotional feeling or pure aesthetic pleasure experienced when music unconnected with words as such is heard". A similar definition of gāna rasa has been quoted by Bhāgyalekshmi M A, as follows: "Gāna Rasa is the aesthetic feeling experienced only through the medium of music. It is the aesthetic pleasure one experiences while listening to a piece of music"<sup>4</sup>. While the nava rasas can be experienced by listening to a good raga, certain musical compositions can evoke all rasas including gāna rasa.

Hence, Gāna rasa refers to the enjoyment of music experienced by performers and connoisseurs of Karnāṭaka Classical Music.

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<sup>1</sup> Sampathkumārāchārya, 2012:560

<sup>2</sup> Satyanārāyana R, 2004:18

<sup>3</sup> Sāmbamūrthy P, 2001:313

<sup>4</sup> Bhāgyalekśmi M A ,2006:60

### Definition and meaning of “Gāna Rasa”

‘Gāna rasa’ refers to the enjoyment of music experienced by a performer, connoisseur or those who are involved in the process of preserving and archiving Karnāṭaka Classical Music. Though the terms ‘gāna’ and ‘rasa’ are described in various textual traditions over many centuries, in this study the term ‘gāna rasa’ is used in the context of current Karnāṭaka classical music scenario as explained by the contemporary authors of twentieth and twenty first century. The study progresses considering the definition by Sāmbamurthy P which is as follows: ‘Gāna Rasa’ is the pure aesthetic joy felt by listening to absolute music unconnected with words. It is the emotional feeling or the aesthetic pleasure experienced when music unconnected with words is heard<sup>5</sup>. Similar definition has been illustrated by another scholar where, Gāna rasa is the aesthetic feeling experienced only through the medium of music. It is the aesthetic pleasure one experiences while listening to a piece of music, predominantly when one hears a favourite raga or a tune<sup>6</sup>. Hence, “Gāna rasa” refers to the enjoyment of music experienced by performers and connoisseurs of Karnāṭaka Classical Music.

### Aesthetics:

“Aesthetics” is a Greek term “Aisthetikos”<sup>7</sup>, where in “tikos” means ‘relate to a body of empirically arrived ideas through serious observation and experience’. It is a branch of philosophy which deals with the nature of appreciation of beauty in an art form. Aesthetics also means “sōundaryōpāsāna” or “sōundaryaprajña” or “sōundarya āsvadana”<sup>8</sup>. Abhinava Gupta regards such an aesthetic absorption as “Ānandāsakti”<sup>9</sup> and as the power of bliss.

### Aesthetics in Indian perspective:<sup>10</sup>

In Sanskrit literature, the term ‘aesthetics’ has been understood as the elucidation or “rasa āsvāda”, i.e the joy resulting from a beautiful art form like music, dance or drama. The piece of music heard transforms the listener from mundane to the ultimate level of satisfaction. As stated earlier, the term “Aesthetics” derived from the Greek “Aisthetes” equivalent to the “vīkśya Śāstra” which means ‘a very careful and detached perception’ (Dey, S C 1990:125). According to the context of Indian aesthetics, it is ‘divine’ and results in ‘ānanda’ and also considered as the supreme state of happiness. Thus aesthetics correlates to the creation, convention, pleasure and appreciation of an art form.

### Karnataka Classical Music in the context of this study

Matanga’s “Brihaddeshi” is the first work to mention the term “Karnāṭaka”. It means a dēsi rāga by name, ‘Karnāṭa’ (v375). ‘Karna’ means ‘ear’ and ‘Ata’ is ‘that which obsesses’. The music that lingers in the ears can be understood as “Karnāṭaka music”. The region to the south of Vindhya was also called as “Karnāṭaka” and the music that existed in that particular region came to be known as Karnāṭaka music. The entire region of the southern part of India was called ‘Karnāṭaka’ during the Vijayanagara reign. However this study is pertaining to Karnāṭaka classical music or the classical music of South India prevalent over the twentieth and twenty first centuries.

### Experience of Gāna Rasa

Gāna rasa is subjective, conceptual, hard to express in a concrete way and most importantly it is not possible to measure or quantify. However, in certain situations the experience of gāna rasa is observed in the following ways:

- Shedding tears when a good sangati is heard, but that is ānanda bāshpa and not the tears of sorrow.
- Anirvachaniya, means that which cannot be explained in words and its equivalents, but can only be experienced.
- Chitṭa Dravīkarana, meaning, all the clogged emotions melts and liquefies in the process of rasānubhava, when great music is heard.
- A listener experiences horripulation, feel of thrill, experience of dhyānāvastha or transformation to meditative mode which is also a post gāna rasa experience.

<sup>5</sup> P Sāmbamūrthy, 2001: 2

<sup>6</sup> Bhāgyalekshmi M A, 2006: 60

<sup>7</sup> Kriśna T M, 2015:6-7

<sup>8</sup> Mysore University, English to Kannada Dictionary, 1999:13

<sup>9</sup> R Satyanarayana, 2004: 17

<sup>10</sup> <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/191346>

### Various factors influencing Gāna Rasa

“Beauty resides in the eye of the beholder”<sup>11</sup>. Nature is not beautiful in itself but it is in the imagination of an artist who contemplates and perceives it. Unless the person listens to Karnāṭaka classical music, he lacks the exposure and ability to perceive and enjoy it. This lack of exposure and interest is due to various social and personal factors.

Factors influencing the exposition of gāna rasa depend mainly on the following:

- Features of Karnāṭaka classical music performances that evoke Gāna Rasa.
- The connoisseur’s potential to comprehend the activity of perception and comprehension of Gāna Rasa, the aesthetic beauty in Karnāṭaka classical music.

There are many factors related to the performance which evoke gāna rasa namely,

**Gamaka-** Gamakas are basically embellishments, ornamentations and oscillations an artist produces, with a note in a raga to beautify the phrase or a musical piece in Karnāṭaka classical music.

**Rāga-** Rāga is a special series of musical sounds with svaras that uses five (aūdava), six (shādava) or seven (sampūrna) svarās but there are many characteristic phrases, appropriate melodic embellishments attached to the svaras, used in the right kālāpramāna and right conventions of the range of sthāyi. There are certain conventions to be followed in a rāga such as the graha , aṃsa, nyāsa, characteristic phrases, kāla pramāna, gamaka to be employed and so on. Gāna rasa is experienced provided all these conventions are adhered to in addition the performer’s capability in bringing the brilliant exposition of the rāga.

**Tempo-** Rhythm is a part and parcel of an individual’s life may it be heart beat or the footsteps taken. It is considered as an important aspect in the perception of gāna rasa in Karnāṭaka classical music. The compositions, the raga to which they are set with a perfect amalgam of tempo creates an impact on the connoisseurs.

**Planning and execution** - greatly influences success of the concert. The performer has to plan according to the occasion, venue, audience mindset and so on.

**Repertoire-** is equipping self with reservoir of various compositions. Sometimes artists may have to perform few unexpected requests from the connoisseurs. So performers should be well equipped with ample compositions to fit any situation.

**Ideal balance of manōdharmā and kalpita sangīta-** in performing the manōdharmā or improvisation aspects like rāga ālāpana, neraval, kalpana swara, etc, the artist should be aware of the right length to be sung, appropriate timing with respect to the duration of the composition a

**Accompaniments** - play an important role in the exposition of gāna rasa and in exact tempo required to suit the composition performed. All the performers on stage share an equal footing and thus help building a great rapport between the artists on stage and the connoisseurs.

Shrōta meaning, a listener in Sanskrit is an individual or group of people who listen and try to understand the essence. Connoisseurs (shōtru) are classified as follows,

- **Experienced listeners-** Listener possessing a passion to listen and he who has habituated himself to hearing a particular genre (Karnāṭaka Classical Music in particular) of music for years is an experienced listener. They are either learned musicians or simply listeners who have grasped the nuances of Karnāṭaka music listening to the stalwarts over decades.
- **Critics as listeners-** A good piece of music is observed by a critic differently. It takes shape according to the observation made by a critic. So a Karnataka classical music critic is a listener who thinks differently and learned with respect to theoretical and practicality aspects.
- **Curious listeners-** Listeners attend the concert to find unique and special features attracting them. Such listeners are curious about the performer’s abilities in handling the rāga or a tough composition, rare raga technicalities, their body language and confidence, grace and etiquette, and overall performing skills. They often try to imitate their favourite musician.
- **Mediocre listeners-** Those listeners who are able to understand various aspects presented by the performer and experience the aesthetic beauty.
- **Less informed listeners** - Strange happiness is experienced by few listeners who feel the aesthetic felicity just by hearing raga phrase or ālāpana, some perceive it in a composition, the lyrics or rāga bhāva beholding the composition, some experience gāna rasa in the performer’s voice, modulations or even by the bow on the violin or just the soft touch of the strings on the vīna. They are unaware of the technicalities but enjoy the tonality in the performer’s voice or instrument and rhythm within the composition, so on.

<sup>11</sup> Sathyanaarayana R, 2004:13

### **Classically trained voice as a medium of expression**

Effective and impressive voice is an essential attribute for musicians to express the musical thoughts in an ideal manner. Music is created through seamless voice texture, accurate pitch adherence and suitable svara embellishments, articulation and modulation. A trained mind is desirable in order to cultivate voice. Abhiruchi(taste) in a particular classical genre initiates an individual to perceive and appreciate that particular type of music. Guidance under an able Guru regarding systematic practice with right methods, self study and fair listening habits lends a perfect backing towards a musician's sangīta sādhanā and rasa pratipādana. A performer needs to understand certain nuances of the rāga and required expressions to substantiate the composer's point of view within a particular composition rendered which is a challenging task.

Few concepts relating to harmonic principles in Karnataka Classical Music:

**Grahabhēda-** In the realm of music, the inclination for finding new scales is primordial.<sup>12</sup> It is a highly technical aspect showcased by performers with great skills in executing a particular rāga with its enormous scope for improvisation. It is a method of deriving new scales by shifting the tonic note of the existing scale<sup>13</sup>. The connoisseurs comprehend in different ways when highly technical aspects are performed by scholarly musicians. The shift of rāgas from the original to another and vice versa is perceived by the learned connoisseurs with ease. The less informed listeners can recognise the shift or change from the original tune to another through keen observation. This gradually heightens the effect of gāna rasa in the listeners. Preparedness from the connoisseurs to achieve gāna rasa is in one's own heart, if the process of grahābhēdam is observed carefully, he can experience it to the fullest. Musicians should be adept in executing grahābhēda and repositioning to the principal rāga resulting in enhanced musical experience. It is carried out in any of the manōdharmā singing aspects like ālāpana, neraval or swara kalpana in Karnāṭaka Classical Music.

**Consonance, dissonance and Gāna Rasa-** Indian music is based on melody and to establish melody it is necessary to have a rāga based on perfect consonance. The tambūra provides successive consonance.<sup>14</sup> Similarly few svaras simultaneously played or sung, create less or not so pleasing effect when heard. Such svaras are dissonant in nature.

The blend of harmonic principles with the Karnāṭaka classical music compositional forms or improvisation techniques provide a unique aesthetic enjoyment to both the performer and connoisseur in varied intensity levels depending on their readiness in perception and comprehension.

### **Perception and Comprehension of Gāna Rasa**

Music is an art with pervasive charm. Musical perception is the cognition of the pleasant svara patterns. It helps in expressing the two way emotions between a performer and connoisseur. Indian music and perception of gāna rasa is a living and subjective form of art where the tradition, inheritance and association have always been a priority in its initiation and comprehension. It is not only stimulating or poignant but a medium of elevated pure ecstasy, especially Karnāṭaka classical music due to its numerous rāgas and enormous compositional forms set to various tālas. In music performances, the connoisseurs are introduced to various facets of Karnāṭaka classical music. The improvisation and compositional forms with right equilibrium between the performer's talent in expressing the musical ideas and the readiness of the connoisseur in comprehending the same, helps in cherishing gāna rasa. A passionate perceiver carefully listens to music and comprehends in a unique way.

### **Connoisseurs' approach towards perceiving Karnāṭaka classical music:**

Music is a combination of insight and expression liberating human minds from superfluous, disagreeable sensations and edge towards actuality. It is innate and sublime abiding the notes and moods, consonance, the pulse or bounce. In India, music is considered as transcendental or supreme and beyond entertainment which results in the aesthetic delight of gāna rasa to both performer and connoisseurs relying on the prowess towards music perception and its comprehension. Taste (abhiruchi) is desirable for an aesthetic experience in music or any other art form. It facilitates a listener's mind in perceiving and comprehending the aesthetic pleasure, gāna rasa. Response to good music is perceived and comprehended by connoisseurs in the following ways,

- Through conduct and actions like nodding, applaud, ānanda bāshpa (tears of joy), horripilation and other sighs and gestures.
- When the performer successfully sets the ambience and required rapport with the connoisseur at the initial stage of the performance, the connoisseur is able to enjoy thoroughly. The planning of performance selection of rāgas, tālas, tempo, rendering the compositions and manōdharmā(improvisation) aspects

<sup>12</sup> Sāmbamūrthy P, 1999:76

<sup>13</sup> [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/166887/19/9\\_chapter3.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/166887/19/9_chapter3.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Sāmbamūrthy P, 1999:116

comfortably fills connoisseurs' heart and soul gradually and elevate them to the greater level of perception that is gāna rasa.

- Few listeners enjoy the musically coloured structures, the style of singing and playing or even the rapport between the performers and connoisseurs without restraint which adds to the aesthetic felicity derived.
- Recollecting and comparing the observations of earlier musical experiences and appreciating the aesthetic pleasure is another way of perception and comprehension.
- Music pursuers critically analyse the musical pieces performed and try to interpret them while some incorporate and implement for their personal interests.

#### **Factors influencing the perception and comprehension of Gāna Rasa**

**Mellifluous voice:** A melodious voice plays an important in the process of appreciating the aesthetic beauty in Karnāṭaka classical music. Similarly the balanced tone of instrument creates an impact and thus leads the listener to enjoy gāna rasa.

**Ambience:** plays a significant role in perception and comprehension of gāna rasa. Traditionally Karnāṭaka music concerts are organised with a stage or platform where the artists squat and perform, with the idol of some deity at one corner or in front beautifully decorated with sweet smelling flowers and brightly lit lamps filling the atmosphere with a sacred and holy touch. This divine touch bestowed stirs the artists in exhibiting the best and the connoisseurs to perceive the aesthetic bliss, gāna rasa.

**Concert planning-** Conceptualising a concert is predominantly based on the purpose for which the performance is organised. Sometimes performer should plan and perform depending upon the ambiances as explained above to cherish the aesthetic delight. The performer should sense the listener's mind set and execute the concert planning so that the rapport improves and hence gāna rasa is experienced by both.

**Connoisseur's willingness to perceive-** Connoisseurs' willingness to listen to live concert is the pre requisite to appreciate gāna rasa from the connoisseurs' point of view. Hearing a live concert is a magnificent experience since the listeners get to watch the musician's creativity and spontaneity. Guided listening and creating awareness among audience among some of the musical concepts will initiate more progressive listeners to Karnāṭaka classical music. A listener needs a stimulation or initiation to enjoy the aesthetic beauty. Each listener is unique in perceiving and hence the music influences them accordingly. There are several generalised factors for a listener to comprehend a concert as a good one. Though the level of perception varies from person to person, an attempt can be made on investigating the parameters for comprehending a musical performance as ideal. It is hard to quantify a musician's performance since each and every performer is distinctive in approach and it varies from time to time.

#### **Role of Vocal music and Instrumental music in the perception and comprehension of Gāna Rasa**

**Vocal music-** A few are blessed with good voice but many can cultivate the same through practice or sādhana. It is an integral part of a musician. A sweet, melodious voice capable of drawing out the vital aspects of a rāga with suitable embellishments or gamakas is appreciated and considered as an important attribute to arouse the effects of gāna rasa while performing.

- One of the important features of vocal music is with respect to lyrics recognition. The lyrical structures are clearly heard if presented with perfect pronunciation and articulation.
- Inflections, rhythmic patterns, metrics or prosodic brilliance like yamaka(a type of shabdhāṅkāra where in a particular word repeatedly occurs either in the beginning, in between or at the end of a composition), svarākshara(the lyrical word begins with the same alphabet with the correlating svara ) , yati (the angās or parts of the tāla in various combinations combined together to create a special effect)and prāsa(where the consonants between the two vowels in a metre is the same, mudras(signature of composers beautifully merged in the lyrical structure) , madhyamakāla sāhitya(lyrical pattern in a higher speed brilliantly inserted in the sāhitya or the lyrics which gives a special effect), śittēswarās(svara combinations with prolific patterns) along with sāhitya (lyrics), solkaṭṭu svaras (rhythmic syllables introduced along with svaras and bits of lyrics )and so on magnificently woven into body of the composition. Melody and rhythm are well expressed in instrumental music.
- The language and lyrics are expressed better along with the above said components. Melodic instruments adopting gāyaki style can implement few vocal techniques which add to the melodic content of performance.
- The manōdharmā component which is lyrics based or sāhitya based like neraval with essential musical framework creates various moods which are significant for vocal renditions. Tāna- a branch of manōdharmā (performer's creativity) mainly involves a few syllables which creates excitement in the listeners due to the

tempo, the rhythmic patterns, the presenting skills, the violinist's replication and the percussionist's anticipation helps in magnifying the level of perception of gāna rasa in the listeners.

- Tukhdās or lighter compositions usually sung towards the end of the concerts are enjoyed more in vocals creating a deeper impact especially in less informed connoisseurs.

The aesthetic delight differs in accordance with the musical forms which a connoisseur listens in a Karnāṭaka classical music performance like thillānās (a combination of rhythmic patterns like solkaṭṭ us, jati patterns diverse svara combinations and lyrics), tarāna (a similar musical form to thillana in Hindustani classical music comprising the Hindustani version of the above mentioned components of thillana), dhuns (a lilting instrumental composition without lyrics played in a rāga and freely interpreted with foreign notes too for melodic effects), nagma (rare instrumental composition in Karnāṭaka classical music by Mysore composers) are to quote a few lighter musical forms.

**Instrumental music** -has its own charm with respect to captivating audience<sup>15</sup>. It is a fascinating experience to hear tānas on saraswathi vīna. According to the music history, ghana rāgas like Nāta, Gōwla, Ārabhi, Varāli and Srī derived their identities by experimenting the phrases on the vīna and resulted in unique and exquisite impact.

- When a rāga ālāpana (absolute music) is heard on any stringed or wind instrument, the pure aesthetic pleasure derived is gāna rasa.
- Instrumental music is pure or absolute music and emphasises on gāna rasa aspect since there is no language barrier. The listeners enjoy music without linguistic divide, acquaintance and cognizance. Including classical music, any genre of instrumental music is generally enjoyed by the listeners. Instrumental music has a universal appreciation since it has a broader range extending from five to seven octaves whereas a trained and brilliant voice reaches only three octaves.
- Instrumental music attracts more audience due to the tonality, timbre, sound quality or resonance and also the grace and playing techniques. With faultless acoustical features, and flawless music, an instrumentalist creates an aura and hence gāna rasa is experienced.
- Fast tempo or high speeds attainable in instruments are pleasing to hear. Especially varnas create an energetic atmosphere in the performance and extends a vibrant opening when heard in different speeds due to their colourful arrangement of svaras. Instrumental accompaniments add to the texture of a music concert since a concert is incomplete without instrumental accompaniments.

Hence vocal and instrumental music are interdependent in exhibiting a productive teamwork which in turn helps the connoisseurs to experience the aesthetic delight gāna rasa.

### Philosophical base in few Karnāṭaka classical music compositions and exposition of Gāna Rasa

Philosophical base in Karnāṭaka classical music is understood through the lyrics and the message conveyed by the composer, the performer's ability in understanding the composer's view points and presenting in the most likeable manner in order to experience and evoke gāna rasa in the connoisseurs. Though the theme for composing includes social, spiritual, moral and value based aspects, most of the compositions in Karnāṭaka classical music are based on *bhakti* either in praise of the Lord or total surrender (śaranāgati) to attain liberation from the mundane and finally gaining salvation or mōksha. Achieving gāna rasa either through melodic content or lyrical content could be the right path towards attaining liberation and salvation through music.

For instance, in the kriti, *Nāda-sudhā-rasambalanu*<sup>16</sup> set to rāga, *Ārabhi*, highlights the introduction of *sangatis* by *Tyāgarāja* and variations in rendering with the values as effects and unfolding of *rāga bhāva* and *sahithya bhāva*. He believes *Rāma* as the embodiment of the *Rasa* of *Nāda*. *Tyāgarāja* compares the *parabramha vāchaka* or *Ōmkara* and *Srī Kōdanda Rāma* to the nectar. He symbolizes the *sapta svaras* to the bells of *Rama's kōdanda* (bow), *Vara Rāgamu Kōdandamu*, the threads connected to the sides of the bow are the three *gunas Duranaya Dēshyamu Trigunamu*, the arrows fired are like the *tāla* and *laya* or rhythm *Niratagati Sharamura* and the constant spells of *Rāma nāma* is the great deed in one's life. The learned listener can visualise the image of the Lord with all the above expressions and achieve an aesthetic delight *gāna rasa*.

- *Sogasugā-mridaṅga-tālamu jatagūr̥ci-ninu-sokkajeyu-dhīruḍevvado*<sup>17</sup>, here *Tyāgarāja* defines what the composition type called kriti or kīrtana is, *Nigamaśirōttamu galgina nijavākulatō svarasuddamuto-navarasa-yuta, kritiche*. Kritis which expounds the true words of Upaniśads marked by correct placement of svaras, rhythmic turns and pauses, which reflect true devotion and *vairāgya* dripping with juice of grapes and rich in *navarasas*. *Tyāgarāja* first named a compositional form as *kriti* (*navarasa yuta kriti*) in this composition.. Karnāṭaka classical music is a magnificent merge of *dhātu* (*svara shuddamuto*) and *mātu*

<sup>15</sup> P Sambamurthy, 2001:169

<sup>16</sup> *Srī Tyāgarāja Yōgavāibhavam, part 1, 2001:12*

<sup>17</sup> *Srī Tyāgarāja Yōgavāibhavam, part 4, 2004:66*

(*yati vishrama sadbhakti virati drakshārāsa* ) which combines with the rhythm of *mridanga*(*mridanga tālamu*) and the *navarasas*, serves an aesthetic delight, *gāna rasa* (*sokkajēyu*). Here *Tyāgarāja* convinces himself by declaring that no musician ever exists with all the above prospects to please the *Lord Srī Rāma*.

- In the composition *Nādalōludai Brahmānanda Mandavē Manasa*, a *Kalyana Vasanta rāga* kriti, *Tyāgarāja* addresses his mind to achieve *mōksha* by following the path of *Nādayōga*<sup>18</sup> or *Brahmānanda* through *Nādōpāsana*.
- In a kriti by *Mysūru Vāsudēvācārya*, *Gāna Sudhā Rasa Pānamu Jēse Manavulē Dhanyulu Ē Bhuvilō*, set to *Kharaharapriya rāga*, the composer feels blessed on the earth having relished the nectar of music. Music equivalent to nectar should be relished in order to experience *gāna rasa* without which it cannot be perceived.
- *Sri Purandara Dāsa*, the Father of Karnāṭaka classical music, composed innumerable songs with philosophy which are applicable to various facets of life till date. The basic lesson in *abhyāsa gāna*, *Kereya Nīranu Kerege Chelli* is a popular composition taught to the students at the preliminary levels of teaching. *Haridāsās sang mundige* (allegory) or compositions which are filled with riddles creating enigmatic experience. *Mundiges* express superficial meaning in outlook but possess vast hidden philosophy. The *sāhithya* (lyrics) not only entertain a listener causing a pleasing effect but enlightens one's thoughts.
- Special compositions like *mundiges* which trigger the listener's intellect and force him to think are appreciated only when sung or recited. As said earlier, singing is a powerful mode to create aesthetic delight in the receivers since they get to enjoy both melody and lyrical beauty.
- Contemporary composers like *Sri Dr M Bālamurali Krishna*, have composed various *varnas*, *thillānas* rendered in music concerts emphasizing on the *rāgabhāva* usually set in slow, medium or fast tempos. A *varna* in *Shanmukhapriya rāga*, *Ōmkara Pranava Nādōdbhava Śruthi Laya*,<sup>19</sup> Lord Krishna is addressed as an embodiment of music (*Murali Gāna Swarūpi*) which is the source of the power (*śakti*) of the three worlds (*tribhuvana*) and that which is born out (*udbhava*)of the primordial sound (*pranava nāda*).In his *Gatibhēda priya rāga mālīka thillāna*, the *rāga mudra* occurs at the end of each section. The whole composition is set in different *nadais*. The *pallavi* and *anupallavi* are set in *chaturasra nadai* and the four *charanas* are set in *tisra*, *misra*, *sankīrna* and *khanda nadais* respectively. *Pallavi* and *anupallavi* are set to *Gurupriya rāga* and the four *charanas* are in *Rasikapriya*, *Gāyakapriya Sunādapriya* and *Kharaharapriya* respectively. Competent performers with their ability in flipping *rāgas* help the audience experience the aesthetic joy.

Some compositions are set to *rāgas* which are considered apt to convey the emotions of longing, yearning or desiring to see or meet someone. *Jāvalis* with *shrngara* theme are usually set in *rāgas* like *Khamāch* or *Kāpi* supporting the lyrics and facilitates the listeners to achieve the aesthetic experience. Dancers portray the emotions through *abhinaya* (facial gestures) with which the audience easily recognize and relate the situations with befitting melody and achieve the sensorial aesthetic pleasure. For a passionate listener who perceives music only when they understand the philosophy behind the lyrics, words are the best way to express emotions and thoughts but singing adds a new dimension which is dependent on the performer performing. The widely discussed philosophical question related to music and emotions is that of how music expresses emotion. They are centred with the emotional responses of the listeners towards music. So for an ardent music appreciator, words would make a difference but music would act as a medium that carry the feelings.

### Possibilities and limitations in understanding Gāna Rasa

Responding to music is an inherent quality of all human beings. When music is heard, there is a natural reaction, a flash of recollection and relativity or connection with the past association with music or situations. The query that every music lover has in mind is what music mean to him. Music is perceived differently by listeners. Musical taste (*gānābhiruchi*) differs from person to person. The connoisseurs consider few parameters on the basis of which they judge music and the resulting aesthetic experience to be good, mediocre or satisfactory with respect to intricacies, tonal quality, skills, vocalisation, intensity, tempo, integrity and sustainability, innovativeness, and so on. These parameters are not fixed and hence vary in comparison with other genres though the concept of music appreciation is universally accepted. The means and modes through which it is defined, achieved and experienced differ on factors like various regions, culture, ethnicity, language, theme and the like. The intensity of happiness derived by connoisseurs on hearing a particular genre of music cannot be quantified. Taste is different than music itself and questioning an individual's choices and preferences seems to be inappropriate since that's what the individual enjoys the most and which is unchangeable. Musical experience defines an individual's personality and the music cherished. It's a natural instinct in people to praise

<sup>18</sup> *Srī Tyāgarāja Yōgavāibhavam*, part 1, 2001:20

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.rasikas.org/forums/viewtopic.php?t=31357>



their favourite musicians and set their own priorities towards listening . Only a saḥrdayi observes music for the sake of its own which is the ultimate goal of musical perception that is achieving the aesthetic experience of gāna rasa.

It is hard to judge listener's views and opinions because of conditional thinking, media influence, subjective perceptions or biased opinions or pre determined factors. Excluding these subjective elements, the appreciation of true aesthetic beauty in music exists from centuries. It is hard to generalise the intensity of enjoyment derived by the listeners but parameters play significant role and can be generalised since the ultimate enjoyment derived by the receiver is the same but at different intensity levels. Considering the subjectivity researching upon new ideas like gāna rasa creates new dimension of musical experience.

### III. CONCLUSION

- This study is an attempt in analysing the aesthetic experience derived from presenting and listening to Karnāṭaka classical music by receptive and responsive connoisseurs. Though researches regarding the aesthetics of Karnāṭaka classical music have been conducted earlier, 'gāna rasa' the musical experience and appreciation from the point of view of performer and listener is partially covered or less discussed. Various factors influencing gāna rasa, voice as a medium of expressing gāna rasa, harmonic principles influencing the experience of music appreciation, factors responsible for the perception and comprehension of gāna rasa, philosophical base and its significance in appreciating music, various possibilities and limitations in understanding the aesthetic delight gāna rasa are the areas considered for the study. The various components that support towards the aesthetic experience are explained. The research throws light on the following outcomes. To sum up:
- The study is inclined towards Karnāṭaka classical music appreciation from both the performers' and connoisseurs' perspective. Lack of consideration in the prior researches pertaining to musical experiences of the performer and connoisseur is the reason behind study. Apart from the subjectivity factors influencing the musical experiences, there is a need to fill the gap through research on innovative ideas with which a new dimension of music or musical insight is achieved by studying themes like *gāna rasa*. Data is procured on the basis of personal observations by listening to performances of prominent performers in the field, both live and recorded from the view point of a performer as well as a connoisseur. Personal interviews are conducted and consolidated for the thoughts and views on the individual areas of specialisation and performance. It is a holistic comprehensive study of the significant parameters influencing the enjoyment through Karnāṭaka classical music. The study includes certain factors which are not considered in the previous studies on musical appreciation in contemporary Karnāṭaka classical music scenario.
- Investigating the various facets of Karnāṭaka classical music performances, the enjoyment of music experienced by the performers and connoisseurs is gāna rasa. The ultimate satisfaction derived with perfect balance between technicality and aesthetic sense results in the experience of gāna rasa. The capacity of an artist to portray the essence and the equally passionate listener to comprehend to the music heard is the highlight of the study. Gāna rasa and related aspects in various literary sources are analysed though the study is based on the definition illustrated by Sāmbamūrthy P<sup>20</sup>. Aesthetics and its Indian perspective where ānanda or the bliss is the outcome of any art form especially in Karnāṭaka classical music is focused in this study. Saḥrdaya or the de-individualised state of a connoisseur which initiates the experience of gāna rasa in a connoisseur and the way the aesthetic delight is experienced are all part of this study. The relation between the performer and the connoisseur, the tuning and compatibility required for the perception of gāna rasa is also dealt with since the connoisseur is of prime importance in experiencing aesthetic beauty. The lyrics suiting musicality introduced with rhythm enhances the level of gāna rasa and plays a significant role in the exposition of aesthetic delight in poetic works too. When sung with apt intonations, the effect of gāna rasa is heightened. Aesthetic beauty in the Vēdās is based on śandahs and svarās. Seven principal śandahs arouse different rasās and three svarās control pitch variations. The most popular hymns are Puruśa Sūkta, Śree Sūkta and Rudram through which aesthetic beauty of simple melody with lyrics is depicted because the vibration behind the sounds of these hymns are considered to be positive and elevating for all with or without introduction to its meaning, content or other aspects. This can be considered as aesthetic appeal which can be compared to that of gāna rasa.
- Several factors influencing the aesthetic beauty gāna rasa depending on the proficiency of the musician and the connoisseur's ability in comprehending the same is discussed. The various aesthetic materials supporting the experience of gāna rasa like rāga, gamakās, alaṅkāra, sthāya, tempo are also studied. The dedicated performer, the qualities needed to help the audience achieve gāna rasa and the inclined audience, the variety audience group with difference in thoughts and preferences, their importance in achieving gāna rasa, the distinction in happiness derived through live concerts and recorded audio or visual performances

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<sup>20</sup> South Indian Music –Book 3,1999:313

are discussed indicating the importance of listening to live concerts. The attributes of an ideal vocalist is also discussed since mellifluous voice is vital in elucidating gāna rasa in vocal music.

- The vocal music, raga structure and the science behind it is said to be originated from the Vēdās. The anatomy of voice, the maintenance and cultivating of voice to make it adaptable in expressing the nuances of the ragā. Classically trained voice aids to the musical expression with special focus towards voice articulation and modulation influencing gāna rasa. The aesthetic sense running in the minds of the musicians should touch the heart and soul of a saḥṛdayī. Studying one's own voice structure and adopting the voice culture methods avoids unnecessary voice strain hence preserving the voice quality and enhances the experience of gāna rasa.
- Harmonic principles play an important role in production of quality musical sound and they act as vehicles inducing or adding essence to the musical piece. Harmonic and harmony are different (harmonics deals with elements of physics and harmony comprises of musical content), considering vādi, samvādi, vivādi and anuvādi svarās in a rāga and their predominant role in emanating the rasa from that particular rāga is defined. By observing a composition and analysing how the svarās are used in samvāditva, the harmonious blending of svarās and composer's thought about harmonics cannot be compared with western music since their system is different. The technical aspects like sthāya, alaṅkāras, grahabhēda, perfect alignment with the śruti and their role in energising the listener's mind and achieving the aesthetic delight with the limited knowledge they possess and experiencing gāna rasa is studied.
- The aesthetic experience derived by each Karnāṭaka classical music connoisseur is different due to subjectivity factors. Apart from the abstractness a few generalised factors influencing the perception and comprehension of gāna rasa is explained. The connoisseur's musical perception depending upon various ambiances is also dealt with since of late music performances are held in various environments and the atmosphere within which the listener perceives music plays an important role in experiencing the utmost satisfaction. The perfect pitch adherence, consonance, gamakās, alaṅkāras, sthāyi, tempo and the like play significant role and enhance the flavour of the musical piece rendered and creates an aesthetic appeal. Role of Karnāṭaka classical vocal and instrumental music in creating an aesthetic appeal in the listeners, nature of connoisseurs and their perceptions are analysed. Musician and passionate connoisseurs share an equal footing in the process of perception and comprehension of gāna rasa.
- The power of words or sāhithya(lyrics) possess its own place in Karnāṭaka classical music which is a treasure of compositional forms. An ideal compositional form is that which is a perfect blend of dhātu(svara) and mātu(sāhithya or lyrics). It is dipped in the creativity of vocalists with flawless voice or instrumentalists with great skills and playing techniques offered in an explicit manner for the connoisseurs to experience gāna rasa. The composer's joy of imagining is shared through his compositions. The theme pertaining to compositions in Karnāṭaka classical music are based on social, spiritual, moral or values. A perfect equilibrium between the musical and lyrical content evokes gāna rasa in the perceivers. Few popular compositions are briefly analysed on the basis of the rhetoric, prosody, melodic aspects; the composer's imagination with respect to the rāga and correlating lyrical content, the usage of terms nāda rasa, gāna rasa, rāga rasa in relation to the musical and lyrical content resulting in the exposition of gāna rasa enhancing the level of musical appreciation.
- Music is perceived by listeners differently depending on the preparedness and background. It is an individual's approach towards visualising music. The various areas or channels through which the aesthetic delight or gāna rasa is derived, the scope for further research in that particular area is discussed. Researching is a never ending bottomless fit. The search for knowledge is a constant activity and hence various possibilities and limitations do exist. Various aspects like regional limitation, cultural ethnicity, way of thinking, awareness regarding the uncommon parameters and their irrelevance to other genres since each genre is special in its sense, the comparative study of vocal and instrumental music and its impact on the listeners are dealt with in the study. Karnāṭaka classical music today was not the same during yester years. Generations change and as a sign of progress, concepts, style and approach incorporated change resulting in different shades and dimensions which influenced the parameters determining the experience of gāna rasa.

Thus the study of gāna rasa is achieved through various means of expression in Karnāṭaka Classical music components like compositions, improvisation, rhythm, melody, harmony in voice or instrument resulting in the bliss or Brahmānanda. It is a path of self realisation for those who intend to attain salvation through music. A performer through sādhana experiences and communicates to the connoisseur who receives the same with pure, unbiased, readiness of mind to appreciate music in a better way by attaining gāna rasa. Karnāṭaka classical music is value based entertainment. Expressing musically is innate and hence gāna rasa is a state of wordlessness beyond explanation which is cherished through experience only.

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