



SUNADA
MUSIC, MUSIC THERAPY & MORE...

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From the Editor's Desk

A great poet once said "if winter is here, can spring be far behind?" Indeed spring is here in all its vivacious and vibrant colours. There is some unexpressed happiness in everyone's faces. The very clichéd but beautiful expression that spring brings with it all new hopes and widens our horizons. Recognizing this mood at the time of these new beginnings, we will be talking about the effect of Lullabies on babies and children. Whenever I ask anyone about what Raga appeals most, pat comes the reply that Mohana Raga is most pleasant and appealing. Here we are presenting some more facts which will give a better insight into this Ragam which will help us to explore the reasons for this effect in a more scientific manner in our later issues taking into account the frequencies of the notes used in this Raga. Happy reading...

KS Vasantha Lakshmi,

Founder & Editor

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HAPPY SHREE RAMA NAVAMI TO OUR READERS

GENRES OF MUSIC- LULLABIES

By

KS Vasantha Lakshmi

Right from the time of conception, a foetus is subjected to the sounds of the outside world. These sounds could be muffled because of the presence of the amniotic fluid in the mother's womb. These sounds are sometimes nice and could be harsh unpalatable noises. Every mother across the cross section of all the societies in the world would have sung if not a least hummed a little ditty to put her baby to sleep or even calm down. Even before a baby is born they can hear sounds from the outside world. From around 18 weeks the pre-term baby reacts to sudden noises and will settle when the mother is calm and resting. The baby is rocked by the mother's movement and reassured by the sound of her voice and the steady beat of her heart. It is understandable that when the baby is born these combined elements of voice, rhythm, and rocking are so comforting and reassuring.

What does the dictionary say about the word "Lullaby"?

Lullaby is a quiet, gentle song sung to send a child to sleep. The other synonyms are cradle song, soothing song, gentle song, quiet song. These are usually remembered by people as "songs sung by my mother". People sometimes even say, "She lullabied us, she fed us" when they fondly remember their mothers.

As can be seen there can be millions of examples and in fact each family could even have its own tailor made lullaby. It is almost impossible to give sufficient examples. However, I am giving a few used in the west and some of Indian Music.

The most famous one is "Rock-a-bye baby on the tree top" There is "Chopin's Nocturne", "Softly on your pillow" by Sara Mulletti, "Hush my little baby" and "Little people", "Goodnight" by Beatles and many more. "Bach for

babies” is a very well known classical music Lullaby. The examples are unending.

Similarly, in Indian music, we have “Chandamama door ki”, the most famous Hindi lullaby. In Carnatic Music, the lullaby takes a slightly serious position. Raga Neelambari is supposed to be a very good sleep inducer. Many lullabies are composed in this Raga. The most famous one is “Uyyalaloo gavayya” in Neelambari and the other one by Annamacharya, “Jo achyutananda jojo Mukundaa”. There are hundreds of such songs in almost all the languages spoken not only in India but all over the world, as the first music a child hears is that of his mother’s voice.



EFFECT OF MUSIC ON ME



By Aruna Venkatraman,

Dubai

I have been trained to learn Carnatic music from a very early age. As a child I could not understand the positivity that music brought into my life.

As years went by, the encouragement given to me by my family especially by my parents & by my husband enabled me to realize how much music has contributed to the enrichment of my life.

Playing a musical instrument or simply listening to music has positive effect on the brain function. It has improved my mood, increased intelligence, enhanced my learning skills, improved concentration, reduced stress levels and also more importantly has helped me think very positively.

For me music is an art, entertainment, pleasure, meditation & a medicine for the soul & body. Overall music has helped tremendously improve the quality of my life.

Mohana Raga

An attempt to explain scientifically

By



Buddhavarapu Suryakkumari, Educationist

Hyderabad

One of the most pleasing and pleasant ragas in Carnatic music is Rag Mohana. The meaning of Mohana is beautiful /attractive. This raga is bewitching.

Aarohana: (Ascent): Sadjamam, chathusruthi Rishabham, Anthara Gandharam , panchamam ,chatusruthi Daivatham Sadjamam

Avarohana: (Descent) Sadjamam, chathusruthi Daivatham , Panchamam ,Antara Gandharam, Chatusruthi Rishabaham ,Sadjamam

SA – 100; RE – 111.1; GA- 125; PA – 150 (Constant) DA – 166.6; SA :

SA – 100; DA -166.6; PA – 15; GA – 125; RE -111.1; SA - 100

A Janya ragam of Harikambhoji, the 28th Melakarthagam, it is an audavaragam. Audava Raga means a Mode with five notes or Penta Note Raga with five notes on the ascent and five on the descent. Mohana's notes when shifted using Grahamedham, yield 4 other major ragas namely Hindolam, Suddhasaveri, Udayaravichandrika also known as Suddhadhanyasi and Madhyamavathi.

Grahabhedam (Scale Change) is a step taken in keeping the relative note frequencies same, while shifting the Shadjamam (base pitch) to the next note in the raga. Harikambhoji is in the first half of the 72 Melakarta Ragas (Ragas which have all the seven notes). These are also known as Sampurna Ragas. It is categorized as belonging to the 5th Chakra (cycle) by the Bana Chakra. Bana means arrow. The Hindu God of Love Manmatha wields a bow and arrows made of five types of flowers. The first is the Lotus Arrow (Padma Bana), the second one is Mango Arrow (Amra Bana), the third is made of Ashoka Bana (Saraca asoca), the fourth is the Jasmine Bana (jassamine Oleoceos) and the fifth one is Blue Lotus (Neela Padma Bana). The fifth chakra in Yoga is called the ‘Vishuddha Chakra’ which is supposed to purify the throat area. Although in the Melakarta Raga classification there are twelve chakras, the fifth chakra, to which Mohana Ragam belongs, does really clear the voice and throat. This relationship is yet to be scientifically explored. The picture given below is just as a general guide.



Mohana Ragam's equivalent in Hindusthani classical music is Bhoop or Bhopali.

All beginners of Carnatic Music compulsorily learn Varaveena, a small composition known as Geetham, in Mohanaragam in praise of Goddess Saraswathi . The popular Mohana raga Varnam by Sri Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar, “Ninnukori” needs no introduction. Many great composers like Thyagaraja, Annamacharya, Swathitirunal, Mutthuswamideekshitar, Purandaradasa and GN Balasubramanyam, to mention a few, have composed great Krithis in this Raga.

Mohana Ragam’s mouldability is such that it is suited nicely for romantic, devotional as well as folk songs. Famous film music composers like S Rajeswara Rao, Pendyala , Pingali Nageswara Rao, KV Mahadevan and Illayaraja used this raga to compose many songs which are popular even today. Who can forget P. Susheela’s “Chandana Charchita” the Ashtapadi from the film Srikrishnadevaraya. The melody of this raga is so sweet that it makes one feel happy and creates an ambience of peace.

Lord Krishna plays the magic flute. The popular tunes attributed to him are mostly in Mohana Raga with a few digressions.



Face to face

Dr. Lakshmi Suresh

General Physician & Specialist in Tropical Diseases, Chennai

Q. What drew you to pursue music despite your busy schedule as a doctor?

A: I did not pursue music. It came to me, without any effort of mine. My paternal grandmother was the one who first noticed that I have a good voice and an ear for music, when I was hardly five years old. This prompted her to teach me, Adhyatma Ramayana Telugu compositions, set to various Carnatic classical tunes in the form of music. I was able to sing those songs without any discord. This was my first venture, which made me passionate about music.

Secondly, one of my paternal uncles', who was a professor of psychology, was an A-grade artist in Carnatic music of All India Radio Vijayawada. My paternal Aunt, who was also a medical doctor, was called the Nightingale of Stanley, when she was a student of medicine in Stanley Medical College, Chennai. Thus, music was a part of daily life in our family. Perhaps the gene of my parental lineage may be one of the causative factors for my natural instinct for music. It was an added advantage for me to be closely associated with great legends of music both from north and south India, due to my father who worked in All India Radio as a Station Director at various places.

I may cite few memorable events of this advantage which influenced any musical journey a great deal. When I hardly four years old, noticing my urge to listen to music, I was allowed to sit by the side of the great maestros like Bismillah Khan Saheb, in the studio of A.I.R. Madras, when he rendered a one hour concert of soul stirring Shenai. Though I was too young and did not know anything about the classicism of music or technical aspect of the instrument, I was transported to a different world of bliss, which is still evergreen in my memory. Similarly, I had the opportunity of listening to Pt. Ravishankar's sitar, sitting close to him at A.I.R Nagpur. I attended several night concerts of famous artists like Smt. Hirabai Barodeker, Padmavathi Saligram, Badegulam Ali Khan, and other artists of repute and had the privilege of personal contact with them.

One of my father's friends took me to the famous Bharathanatyam Icon, Smt. T. Balasaraswathi, under whom, for a short spell of time, I learnt a few varnams, especially the Begada Varnam. She was a good vocalist in Carnatic and a perfectionist. Begada (Cream) is like Meegada. She used to say, and she insisted that every note should be sweet and melodious – like cream. She felt I should pursue music as my career.

Last but not the least, I'll be failing in my duty if I do not mention about Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna. I knew Dr. Balamuralikrishna right from my childhood and we were almost like family. He had great regards for my father. Every day he used to come to our house and sing the newly composed songs to be rendered the next day, for my father's approval and valid suggestions. I took part in these sessions, which helped me gain the subtle intricacies in the light-classical music. I am not a trained

musician, and whatever I could imbibe in music, is just by listening and the close association with the great legends of music both of North and South Indian classical music. At no time, I made attempts to pursue music, but music came to me.

Q: How did you start this unique work of writing songs?

A: It is again a strange phenomenon, a divine dispensation. I am neither a musician nor a poetess. I cannot claim to be proficient in any language because I had no regular schooling due to the frequent transfers of my father. I have not learnt my mother tongue Telugu, in a regular manner, and my knowledge in that language, is what my mother taught me in my childhood. I loved to learn Sanskrit. The little knowledge I have in Sanskrit is self-taught. After I finished my house Internship at Andhra Medical College, Vshakhapatnam, I went back to Delhi, where my parents lived. I was in search of job, when I met a professor of dermatology in Irwin hospital, Delhi, who offered to give me a job as a research-assistant in a project of Leukoderma research, sponsored by one of the reputed Pharmaceutical companies.

One day there was a traffic jam and my bus was waiting for the signal to move on. I was getting restless but couldn't help. So, I started murmuring some tune, when suddenly without any premonition, or preplanning, lyrics with tune started coming out like a fountain from within, I realized I composed a song in Telugu which came Denovo. It was a pleading song from Radha to Lord Krishna to come home as it is already dark and that she is waiting for him. Later I was told that the tune was Raag Telang. This was the beginning of my composition of songs. The trend continued and I composed not less than about 20-30 songs, mainly in Telugu, in devotional, philosophical and romantic genres. This episode ended there and never revived till late in my life, as I had to leave Delhi, and settled at Chennai to work in a hospital, where I held several posts during my tenure and voluntarily retired as a superintended of communicable diseases hospital, due to ill-health after serving for over three decades.

During my service in the hospital, especially when I was a resident medical officer, I was staying in the residential quarters within hospital premises. I was on call duty for all the 24 hours, and I could not leave the quarters without permission from my chief and that I can only be away from the hospital for one hour at a time. It is during this period I was drawn to Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and became an ardent devotee of him. We had a very good team of singers. We had a harmonist, Tabla player, Flautist, all of them came voluntarily with pure devotion and sincerity. This time it is the devotion that sprung from heart in the form of about 60 to 70 bhajans.

Q. When did you start producing these as professional recordings?

A: There was neither commercial nor professional element in bringing about the recordings. Few years back I was down with breast cancer and underwent treatment in Adyar institute of cancer. While I was recovering I happened to visit a temple at Sholinganallur, a small hamlet at the outskirts of Southern end of Chennai city. The deities installed at the temple are not so popular in the iconic list, which made me curious to know about them. The Swamiji who founded the temple, told me in detail about these deities and their importance. I will not go into detail regarding this, as this is out

of context here. I'll mention names of deities of those temples which are unique. Maha Pratyangira Devi is the principle goddess of the temple. Adharvana veda describes extensively about her. There are other like, Mathra Varahi, Lord Sarabheswara, Neela Saraswathi, to mention a few of importance. Swamiji a sakthi upasaka, and he taught me a manthra of Maha Pratyangara Devi, and instructed me to recite, 16 times a day so that cancer will not again recur in me. I did so, and it is nearly sixteen years since I had cancer and survival so long without any signs of recurring cancer.

As a gesture of gratitude I compose songs and dedicated it to her, that resulted in bringing out the compact Disc. These numbers are frequently played in the temple. The sale proceeds of recordings are added to the revenue of the temple funds. The composer of Background music is a great musician of repute from Sri Lanka, who was called Ilayaraja of Sri Lanka. His son-in-law is a Mridangam and Tabla player, who contributed a lot to the project. The studio recording was done by another musician, who plays keyboard as well as violin, a student of Kalakshetra. The singer is young girl, who took state award in music and had the honor of receiving it from the late President "Sri Abdul Kalam".

Q: What genre of songs did you like writing?

A: Purely devotional and philosophical. Some are light, classical and a few are based on Carnatic ragas.

Q: When did you start working on songs as a therapeutic alternate substitute?

A: The idea stuck me when I was still as student of medicine. Later Dr. Sripada Prikapani, was a well-known musician of Carnatic classical, a musicologist, and above all an efficient cardiologist. I had the privilege of being his student. While teaching Cardiology, he always used to say, that a person who has musical knowledge will be a better person to become a cardiologist, as his ear is well tuned to variations in pitch, octaves, rhythm, rate, and tonal quality of sound, which would enable him to detect even the slightest variation in the heartbeat and its functions, while hearing through a stethoscope. This inspired me a lot and I wanted to be a cardiologist. In my later years, when we started using ultrasound scanning for diagnostic purposes, I always use to contemplate on using the same sound energy for therapeutic purposes. I knew few instances where music therapy worked wonders. One lady who was teaching Veena to students, and earned her living was afflicted with Leprosy. The students and the society shunned her. One well-wisher suggested to her about a sadhu, who was also a veena player, advocating music therapy for ailing humanity. She approached him, and Sadhu suggested to her to play Ragam Ramapriya, every day in the morning hours for about 45 days. Faithfully she followed the instructions, and within the stipulated period. She totally got cured from her disease, and once again she resumed her teaching profession. Sometimes facts are stranger than fiction.

I can cite another example. There was this lady in Bangalore, who was an ardent admirer of Dr. Balamurali's music. When she was in labor pain, and delivery became very difficult and doctors were perplexed. She requested them to play Balamurali's songs and when she was lost in enjoying the

music. She had a normal delivery. Such is the divine power of music, and music therapy will go a long way in curing chronic and incurable diseases.

Q: What is your opinion of your spirituality when healing?

A: One's own personal faith, dedication, sincerity and the spirituality is the cause for healing. Drugs and other measure may only complement the spiritual healing

Q: How did you feel after completing such a unique and satisfied task?

A: Heavenly Bliss.

Q: What inspired you to take up this unusual work and even spend your money to produce these recordings?

A: Pure love for god and devotion. Spending money for a noble cause is a service to god as well as humanity.

Q: What is the ultimate aim of all these recordings and how would you work?

A: I do not work for projecting my musical knowledge or for any popularity.

The Almighty, the indweller in me is the composer and performer. I am just a tool in his hands. The music lovers may enjoy or reject my work. I am not affected by either of it. I feel that I am ordained from the heavens above to do this work. It is known only to the all knower, I just follow my inner voice.

For Online and Face to Face(F2F): Lessons, Therapy & Music Lessons

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