

ISSUES FACED BY STUDENTS FOR UNDERSTANDING MUSIC AND SOLUTIONS TO OVERCOME IT

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Abstract

Music is a subject that connects with one's soul. The students who take up music as a learning programme vary from those students who do not get the opportunity of being selected to learn other programmes of their choice, to those students who want to take up music as a career. This article focuses on the learning difficulties faced by those students who learn music as a programme from entry level without having any basic knowledge in music and solutions that can be adopted by students and teachers to overcome the difficulties.

Objectives: The objectives of this article is to bring out the learning difficulties faced by Entry level learners in Karnataka Music and the methods that can be adopted by students and Teachers to overcome the difficulties. Some factors are associated with understanding of the musical aspects by the individual while some factors are associated with their personality and attributes. The factors related to musical understanding are covered in this paper.

Research Methodology: Practical experiment is taken up as the Research Methodology approach by conducting experiment with some of the students and applying the relevant techniques and modern technologies.

Keywords: Karnataka Music, Learning difficulties, Sruti, Laya, Pitch, Sthayi

INTRODUCTION

Our human body comprises of 7 Chakras – Muladhara, Svadhishtana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishuddha, Agya and Sahasrara. While each chakras have its own features, Vishuddha is the chakra that connects one with another through speech and singing. It is also associated to Vaasanaa Palan, the Karmic imprint associated to an individual. That is, not everyone would get the opportunity to learn music even though a person craves for it. If the karmic imprints associated with the individual soul is so strong to learn music only then the individual gets an opportunity to learn music. This is also associated to the other factors that prevents an individual from learning like personal factors, not getting appropriate Guru to learn, transport facilities associated to learning,

There are certain institutions offering Music as a subject of study. Some institutions offer the programme for students with zero level of knowledge in music while some institutions have a basic aptitude to assess the knowledge of music of students. It is quite a common feature that the institutions which selects the students based on their aptitude in music bring up the musical knowledge of students in a faster and advanced manner while institutions which offer music as a subject for those who are actually interested to learn music without assessing their knowledge in music. In this aspect, when the students learn music right from the beginning and achieves the next levels as performer or researcher or teacher, it also gives immense happiness to the teachers as the ultimate purpose of teaching has been achieved in this respect.

MUSICAL ASPECTS

IDENTIFICATION OF THE RIGHT PITCH

The pitch of students varies from one to another. It is the range that the students can take up for singing without affecting their vocal cord. The pitch varies from male to female. Vocal cord is inversely proportional to the frequency of singing. Vocal cord is thick for men and hence the men's voice has lesser frequency and appears base ranging from Sruti C to D. Vocal cord is thin for female and hence the women's voice has higher frequency and appears shriller ranging from Sruti G to A#. In a course, the teachers teach classes for the students as a whole and remedial classes are conducted for the students seeking individual attention. If the teacher is a male, the pitch of teaching is usually C or C#. Even when the teacher performs in Sruti D, the teacher conducts classes for the students in C or C# which shall be a common pitch for the entire students. Similarly, when the teacher is a female, the teacher teaches for the entire classes in G or G# based on the

strength of the students even though the teacher performs concerts in Sruti A. In this context, it is quite difficult for the students to identify their individual pitch. A one-to-one singing and discussion with the teacher would help the students to identify their pitch. In the initial stage the students would be able to sing only Madhya Sthayi, that is Svaras from Madhya Sthayi Shadja to Madhya Sthayi Nishada. The teacher teaches and makes the student sing from Mandra sthayi Panchama to Tara Sthayi Panchama to identify their individual pitch. The students need to constantly practice in the sruti whenever he or she practices individually.

ABILITY TO REPRODUCE IN THE APPROPRIATE SRUTI

In the initial stage it is quite difficult for the students to sing in the Sruti of the teacher due to the variations in the pitch of male and female. Hence it is always advisable that male teacher teaches male students and female teachers teach female students so that the students can try to imitate the teacher's method of production of the voice. It is not possible to learn from the teachers of same sex always. There are applications such as Audacity, Audio Speed and Pitch Changer (<https://vocalremover.org/pitch> being the link of the application) which reproduces the recording in the sruti required by the user. This can help the students in the initial stages. However it has its own drawbacks related to tonal reproduction and it cannot replace the teacher exactly. A close observance of the singing would help the student match with his/her voice.

ABILITY TO IDENTIFY THE ALIGNMENT OF SRUTI

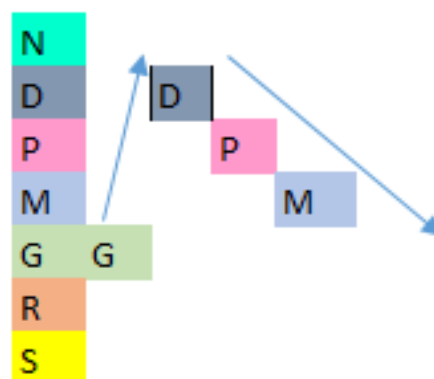
Music is correlated with listening skills. For music, Sruti is considered as Maatha and Laya is considered as Pitha. Awareness of whether is singer sings matching Sruti is required. In the initial stage the student must voluntarily check if the svaras S and P aligns with Sruti and try to match with Sruti. Gradual efforts must to made to match the remaining svaras.

ABILITY TO SING IN TARA STHAYI

Some students tend to increase their voice while pitch needs to be increased especially while Tara Sthayi svaras to be sung. In this context, the teacher has to gradually show the student that the student tries to increase the volume rather than increasing the pitch. Bringing the volume to normalcy and trying to gradually sing Tara sthayi would help achieving the results.

TO SING THE SVARASTANAS IN ITS POSITIONS:

Sustaining the svaras for 1 to one and half avartana helps student to sing svarastanas in its positions. Care should be taken to stop the practise when the voice warbles up and continue the practise after some time. Especially when students find difficulty when svaras of zig-zag patterns are sung. In this scenario, it is better for the students to visualize the svaras and identify whether the pitch level has to be increased or decreased while singing. For Example, To sing G D P M, the students can picturize the svaras sung in increasing and decreasing order and can sing accordingly.



RECOGNIZING THE SVARAS AS ITS POSITIONS ARE SUNG:

The teachers can adopt the method of making the students identify the svara by singing the akara of the svara. In this situation, the student may find difficulty to identify the svaras in the initial stages. Sustaining of svaras helps the students identify the svaras in this context.

PRONOUNCIATION OF D AND G, R AND N AS SIMILAR:

For the initial learners, the pronunciation of the svara D and G sounds similar as it ends in Akara while the svaras R and N sounds similar as it ends in ikara. However, observing the reproduction of the svara by the teacher and attempting to sing matching it would help students to perfect it.

DIFFICULTY TO INTERPRET IF WHAT THEY ARE SINGING IS CORRECT

The students need to listen to more of expert performances of music. This would help sharpening the listening skills. There are some applications like Riyazapp which can exactly point out if their way of singing varies from the Teacher's method of singing. But students should not get regularly adapted to this method.

TALA

PUTTING THE TALA IN REGULAR INTERVALS

In the initial stages, students find difficulty to put Tala at regular intervals. They can get practiced to using Jalra App/Metronome and practice the Tala. Listening to more of concerts can help the Laya concept merged within them.

THE PRACTICE OF SINGING AND PUTTING TALA SIMULTANEOUSLY

In the initial stage, student can be made to just learn singing and practiced to it. Music is one of the art in which simultaneously two actions takes place – related to melody and rhythmic part. The students can be made to recite the rhythmical aspect of the tala in Jati pattern like Ta ka Di mi - Ta ka ja nu, etc., with uniform intervals multiple times and then efforts can be made to practice singing and putting the tala together.

RAGA

IDENTIFICATION OF SOME RAGAS AS SIMILAR AND UNABLE TO OVERCOME WITH LEARNING OF A NEW RAGA

In the initial stage, students may learn two or three compositions simultaneously. They need to practice Arohana and Avarohana multiple times and practise lots of Alankaras in these ragas once basic ideas are provided by the teacher. Lack of practice of a composition makes a student feel that this composition is similar to the other even though the raga may be completely different from the other. In this background, adequate practice is the only remedy to overcome the situation.

ADAPTATION OF WRONG PRACTISES

SINGING IN NASAL VOICE

Some students adopt the practice of singing in nasal voice. In the initial stages, production of the nada may sound similar to the original note. But a close examination needs to be made by the learner. Repeated practices in nasal voice can affect the normal production voice gradually. Karnataka Music practice lies in singing with normal voice so that it gets produced from Nabhi, Hrt and Kanta as mentioned by Sri Thyagaraja in Sobillu Saptasvara – “NabhiHrt Kanta rasana”.

LEARN IT RIGHT THE FIRST TIME

Certain students would have practiced the initial classes in a different manner giving extra gamaka wherever it is not required, etc., In the initial stages, it is better to sing the notes without applying any gamaka. Individual attention given to the student can help the students identify their mistakes and rectify accordingly.

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AS UPPER OCTAVE AND LOWER OCTAVE ARE SUNG

Some students adopt the method of having the facial expressions of raising the abdomen and head portion while singing upper octave and reducing the abdomen and head portion. Both of these needs to be avoided. A pitch that the student can sing comfortably from Mandra Sthayi Shadja to Tara Sthayi Shadja to be identified. Appropriate practices of Mandra Sthayi and Tara Sthayi exercises to be done. It must be ensured that while singing, the changes to be adopted only in the throat area and the other expressions must be avoided.

BREATH CONTROL

Some students find difficulty in Breath control methods. In the initial stage, sustaining of svaras to one or one and a half avertana helps to increase the breath control as one tries to sing in the same svara for a long period. As a first step, the duration can be made to 1 avertana. The maximum duration of seconds that the learner can sustain a svara to be noted. This can be gradually increased thereby obtaining the breath control over the voice.

RENDERING VARIOUS SANGATIS

The students may find difficulty to sing various sangatis. As a remedial measure, the practice of svara, followed by practicing the svaras in akara and singing of them in sahitya can be adopted. A practice in lower speed can be adopted first followed by practicing in the normal tempo as students can get to understand the pattern in rendering the sangati. A slow practise in the initial stage of Svaras followed by Akara practise of it and then trying out the sahitya can help the student get it right. But patience need to be followed to practise the method for the entire composition.

COMMON REMEDIAL MEASURES THAT CAN BE ADOPTED BY TEACHERS

Patience need to be adopted by teachers in handling students of initial level of learning. The students may not be able to adapt to the advanced methods of learning in the initial stages. The teachers have to understand the teaching aspects from students' perspective and conduct the classes accordingly. One-to-one discussion with the students can help the teachers understand the difficulty faced by the students in understanding musical aspects and train them accordingly.

CONCLUSION

There are various courses covered by the institutions for shaping up the individual in terms of theoretical (Historical, Traditional, modern, other genres) practical, etc., Much efforts are also being brought over in terms of the syllabus of the programme by the Universities so that it would be very highly useful for the students as one goes to higher education or takes up music as a career. It is the student who has to identify the value and the efforts taken up by the teachers in shaping up the curriculum. Thus, learning of Music is an art form which requires patience, persistence in practice methods which must be adopted by the students. Similarly, the teachers must adopt the practice of teaching taking into consideration about the level of the students and handle them with patience.

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