

IMPORTANCE OF MANODHARMA SANGEETA IN CARNATIC MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Manodharma Sangeeta the concept of spontaneous and creative music is at times called the soul of Carnatic music. In contrast to written music, Manodharma takes the form of improvisation, guided by the raga (melody) and tala (rhythm), revealing to audiences a space wherein musicians may demonstrate their individuality, creativity, and emotional depth. In this article, we will be exploring the concept of Manodharma Sangeeta its various aspects (Raga Alapana, Niraval, Kalpana Swaras, Tanam, Ragam Tanam Pallavi) and how it contributes to shaping the questioner or the listener and also the performer. Other aspects, such as the pedagogy of Manodharma, the need to balance tradition and innovation, and the significance of their need to keep the dynamic and living character of Carnatic music intact, are also discussed.

Keywords: *Manodharma Sangeeta in Carnatic Music, Raga Alapana, Niraval, Kalpana Swaras, Ragam Tanam Pallavi, Improvisation, South Indian Classical Music, Creativity in Music, Indian Classical Performance*

Introduction

Carnatic music, the traditional classical form from southern India, is renowned for its intricate melodies and complex rhythms. A distinctive feature of Carnatic music is Manodharma Sangeeta, which introduces spontaneity directly into the art form. This element, absent in formal concerts, brings a unique identity to each performance. The term Manodharma, derived from Sanskrit, signifies "mental creativity" or "concepts formed by the mind." This approach allows artists to improvise within the established rules and structure of a raga, creating a distinctive experience for each rendition.

In contrast to Western classical music, where much less improvisation is utilized by comparison, Carnatic music relies heavily on the spontaneous interaction and embellishment of regular composition and improvisation. Kritis (compositions) compose the backbone of a Carnatic concert, yet it is through Manodharma that the musician's true artistry and depth of understanding are fluent.

To this end, this article discusses the significance of Manodharma Sangeeta in the context of Carnatic music, delving into its various aspects, the skills necessary for its performance and appreciation, its evolution over the years, and its relevance (or lack thereof) in modern times.

MANODHARMA: THE LIFEBLOOD OF CARNATIC MUSIC

Manodharma Sangeeta is not ornamental but an intrinsic component of a Carnatic performance. It allows musicians to convey the raga in their own unique way while still maintaining the grammar and sensibility of the tradition'. For a Carnatic Musician, Manodharma would be the assessment of the completion of the composition of permutations that the artist creates around a raga, as well as interpreting a, wherein they must recognize a composer without the notation or through the medium of a raga that they ultimately discover in just a few minutes.

A Manodharma less Carnatic concert would appear dry and unbridled. Manodharma provides a spontaneous, colourful experience to the listener, which changes with each performance, even though the same raga or composition may be repeated. This spontaneity transforms the concert and gives the audience a deeper spiritual and emotional bond with the performer.

Manodharma Sangeeta — the Salient Features

Manodharma Sangeeta has multiple improvisational segments, each possessing distinctiveness, utility, and technicalities. These include:

1 Raga Alapana

Raga Alapana is the non-rhythmic melodic improvisation that begins and develops a raga. It establishes the emotional mood of the piece and opens up the artist's translation of the raga. No lyrics, no tala, no composition—this is the pure unfurling of raga essence.

Importance:

- Acts as a sort of meditative exploration of the raga.
- Shows the breadth of the artist's raga wisdom and ingenuity.
- Sets the listener up for the next piece of music.

2. Tanam

Tanam (template name) If Raga Alapana is an extension, tanam is defined by rhythmic syllables like ta, nam, tom, and aanam. It connects the purely melodic Alapana with the rhythmic elements that come next in a Ragam Tanam Pallavi.

Importance:

- Eases the artist's ability to manipulate rhythm within melody.
- Traditionally used in veena playing, adapted vocally too.
- Historicizes the concert field in a dynamic way.

3. Niraval

Niraval refers to the improvisation of a particular line in a piece, with the original lyrics remaining intact. Within the change of the raga and tala, the line is repeated with variation on the melody and rhythm.

Importance:

- Mingles lyrical, melodic, and rhythmic improvisation.
- It gives a depth to the bhava (emotion) of the piece.
- Scales both creativity and skill.

4. Kalpana Swaram (Kalpanaswarams)

The improvisational pieces in Kalpana Swara are modelled on the solfa syllables (sa, ri, ga, etc.) towards the end of a composition. You learn how to construct them within a tala and how to showcase the rhythmic creativity and virtuosity of the musician.

Importance:

- Showcases the artist's mastery of laya (rhythm) and raga.
- Adds excitement to a concert; it makes it a lot more dynamic.
- Gives room for mathematical creativity and varied tempos.

5. Ragam Tanam Pallavi (RTP)

Manodharma redefined is the most elaborate and prestigious part of RTP. It can start with a Raga Alapana, Tanam, and Pallavi, which is a line of lyrics that is then expanded rhythmically and melodically with a mixture of neraval and swara improvisations.

Importance:

- The zenith of improvisation in Carnatic music.

- Demonstrates full control over raga, tala, and bhava.
- More often than not, the centerpiece is the piece you've all been waiting for in a concert.

Prevention Training of Manodharma

Manodharma is a process that is both structured and flowing. And although it's built around spontaneity, it requires years of rigorous training, filled with the internalization of musical grammar, compositions, and musical aesthetics.

Foundational Training

Students first learn Varisais, Geethams, and Varnams to understand raga scales and rhythmic patterns. Students are exposed to improvisation only once they have developed a strong base in composition and theory.

Listening and Absorption

Great musicians should be exposed through concerts and recordings. Students imbibe the nuances of Manodharma from doyens such as Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, M.S. Subbulakshmi, and Lalgudi Jayaraman and develop their own idiom.

Guru's Role

Guru is an integral part of life, as he/she not only propels the creativity in the student but also maintains the tradition of the art as he/she hands over the knowledge from generation to generation. And it is often taught by way of imitation, experimentation, and constructive feedback.

Encouraging Individuality

Tradition is honored, but so is individuality. An artist's Manodharma is a reflection of their temperament, imagination, and musical philosophy.

The Power of Manodharma and the Performer–Audience Connection.

One of the distinguishing features of Carnatic music compared with many other classical traditions is the understanding it creates between performer and listener through Manodharma.

Audience interaction: The audience (most of the time a very knowledgeable one) appreciates improvisational brilliance instantly, and the artist continues.

Expectation: Listeners often await familiar phrases, certain raga choices, or surprise turns amid improvisation, and this makes every concert an interactive experience.

This space is technical, abstract, almost mathematical, with no concern for a lyric feeling about music that adds to creativity and clarity.

Preserving Tradition in Modern Contexts through Innovation

Manodharma is not set; it is fluid. Deeply rooted in centuries-old tradition, it also leaves space for personal style and innovation.

Stylistic Evolution

Improvisation has been uniquely voiced by artists across generations. For instance, GNB (G. N. Balasubramaniam) had introduced brisk, vivid ulasana styles, while M.D. Ramanathan's interpretations were meditative and leisurely.

Fusion and Global Influence

In contemporary times, Manodharma has manifested itself in fusions and cross-cultural collaborations. Though some purists regard this with suspicion, many believe it shows off the adaptability and global relevance of their music.

Technology and Learning

Manodharma, as many students now find out, is no longer only accessible in the physical teaching studio; digital tools, online classes, and archival recordings have made it much more widely available. Yet, the unique gift of face-time education and human mentoring is always a pillar.

Issues Teaching and Performing Manodharma

Yet, considering it's so significant, Manodharma is unique in some challenges:

Fear of Improvisation: The open-ended nature of improvisation scares many students, and they fear they will make mistakes. **Over-dependence on Memorization:** A regimented learning system can inadvertently stifle free-thinking. **Standardization of concerts:** It can reduce the risk of improvisation, as according to audience preferences. Overcoming these challenges would include encouraging creativity, risk-taking, and safe spaces for experimentation.

Conclusion

Manodharma Sangeeta is the animating, breathing spirit of Carnatic music. It combines the intellectual and the emotional, the scholarly and the instinctual, and the ancient and the modern. In these improvisational forms Raga Alapana, Tanam, Niraval, Kalpana Swaras, and the RTP Manodharma not only lets the artist be an individual, it makes sure the tradition is alive, relevant, and evolving. Amid an increasingly replicating and standardizing world, it is the unrehearsed creativity of the Manodharma that serves as the enduring human and humanizing heart of Carnatic music a beating, breathing miracle. For both artists and audiences, it is the factor that turns performance into experience and tradition into everlasting art.

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