



CHAPTER 8

TAAL OR TALAM AND RAGA OR RAGAM IN INDIAN MUSIC



0680CH08

TAAL IN HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC

Keharva Taal

Matra: 8

Vibhag: 2

Tali: on 1 matra

Khali: on 5 matra

Taal signs	X				0			
Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Bols	Dha	Ge	Na	Ti	Na	Ka	Dhin	Na

Dadra Taal

Matra: 6

Vibhag: 2

Tali: on 1 matra

Khali: on 4 matra

Taal signs	X			0		
Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6
Bols	Dha	Dhin	Na	Dha	Tu	Na

Teen Taal

Matra: 16

Vibhag: 4

Tali: on 1, 5, 13 matra

Khali: on 9 matra

Taal signs	X				2				0				3			
Matra	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Bols	dha	dhin	dhin	dha	dha	dhin	dhin	dha	dha	tin	tin	ta	ta	dhin	dhin	dha

Objective:

Understand the concept of *raga* and rhythm in North and South Indian classical music.

DO YOU KNOW

In Hindustani music's *tala* system, the first *matra* is called *sam*.

DO YOU KNOW

Mridangam maestro Sangeetha Kalanidhi and Padma Bhushan awardee, Palghat Mani Iyer, gave his first performance when he was 10 years old. He trained under Thanjavur Sri Vaidyanatha Iyer. Mani Iyer introduced the concept of actively supporting the musical phrases on the mridangam rather than merely providing rhythmic support. He accompanied many leading artists of his time. His fans also enjoyed his thani avartanams (solos). Many of his students became popular performers.

**Talam in Carnatic Music**

In Carnatic music, *talam* is used to keep the beat. Each *talam* has a fixed number of beats and is repeated. This is known as *talam* cycle or *avartanam*. The parts of a *talam* are known as *angams*. The three *angams* are:

Laghu—This is a clap followed by counting of fingers. It can be 3, 4, 5, 7 or 9 beats. It is represented as | followed by the number of beats (as subscript).

When the *laghu* has three beats, we call it *tishra jaati*.

When the *laghu* has four beats, we call it *chaturashra jaati*.

When the *laghu* has five beats, we call it *hhanda jaati*.

When the *laghu* has seven beats, we call it *mishra jaati*.

When the *laghu* has nine beats, we call it *sankeerna jaati*.

Dhrutam—This is a clap followed by the wave of the hand. It has two beats. It is represented as O.

Anudhrutam—This is just a clap. It has one beat and is represented as U and it is less used in comparison to the above two.

Let us see how the *laghu* and *dhrutam* are presented in the form of *tala*.

Rupaka Talam—This *talam* has one *dhrutam* followed by one *laghu*. The *chaturashra jaati rupaka talam* therefore, is a cycle of six beats (4 + 2). It is represented as O |₄.

Adi Talam—This *talam* has one *laghu* followed by two *dhrutams*. It is a cycle of eight beats (4 + 2 + 2). It is represented as |₄ O O.

Interesting Terms

Carnatic Music Term	Hindustani Music Term
Ragam	Raga
Arohanam	Aroha
Avarohanam	Avaroha
Gamakam	Gamak
Layam	Laya



Ragas in Indian Music

There are two different styles of classical music in India—Carnatic or South Indian classical music, and Hindustani or North Indian classical music. The *swaras* in each style have been explained to you in the earlier pages. Carnatic music uses instruments like the *veena*, violin, flute, *nadaswaram*, *mridangam*, *ghatam*, *kanjira* and *morsing*. The compositions are usually in the Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil languages. Hindustani music uses instruments like the *tanpura*, *sitar*, *sarod*, *sarangi*, *santoor*, *tabla*, and *pakhawaj*. Songs are composed usually in Hindi, Sanskrit, and Brijbhasha.

[Watch](#) videos to understand *raga* and *tala*.

Raga is based on a scale. Every scale has notes (*swaras*) in ascending (*arohana*) and descending (*avarohana*) order. Imagine a staircase made of *swaras*! The notes in the scale change according to the *raga*.

Notation Scheme

When writing the notes in the higher octave (*taar saptak*), the notes are represented by a dot on top like this, $\dot{S}$. The notes in the lower octave (*mandra saptak*) are represented by a dot below like this, $\underset{\cdot}{N}$. The notes in the middle octave (*madhya saptak*) are represented by just the *swara* like this, *S*.

Jaatis of Raga

Let us know another interesting terminology used for a specific set of notes in *ragas*. If a *raga* has five notes it is known as *audav jaati*. If a *raga* has six notes it is known as *shadav Jaati*. If a *raga* has seven notes it is known as *sampoorna jaati*.

ACTIVITY 1: RAGA BHOOP

The *raga bhoop* has the following notes:

Aroha/Arohana: S R G P D Ś

Avaroha/Avarohana: Ś D P G R S

The *raga hamsadhwani* has the following notes:

Aroha/Arohana: S R G P N Ś

Avaroha/Avarohana: Ś N P G R S

If you decorate a scale by using *gamakas* (ornamentations), repeating certain notes, and playing special phrases, it can become a *raga*. Each *raga* is ornamented with important notes and special phrases.

Raga in Sanskrit means something that colours the mind. Every *raga* evokes certain emotional responses in the mind. This is called *rasa*.

Watch the video on *raga* and *rasa* to understand more about *ragas* and their moods!

In Indian classical music, composition refers to the structured arrangement of musical elements such as melody (*raga*), rhythm (*tala*),

and lyrics (if any). Compositions in Indian classical music are typically called *bandish* in Hindustani classical music and *kritis* in Carnatic classical music.

ACTIVITY 2: LEARN A SWARAMALIKA IN RAGA BILAWAL

A composition sung in a *sargam* (*swaras*) is called a *swarmalika*. The *swarmalika* can be composed using different *ragas*. **Listen** to the *swarmalika* in *raga bilawal*, set to *teentaal*.

Swarmalika

Raga: Bilawal

Tala: Teentaal

Composer: Traditional

Aroha: S R G M P D N Ś

Avaroha: Ś N D P M G R S

Sthayi

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
S	P	M	G	R	G	R	S	S	R	S	N	D	N	S	-
S	G	R	M	G	P	M	G	G	M	P	M	G	R	S	-

Antara

P	Ś	N	D	P	M	P	D	N	-	Ś	-	Ṛ	Ṛ	Ś	Ś
Ś	Ṛ	Ḡ	Ṛ	Ś	N	D	P	Ś	N	D	P	M	G	R	S



Interesting Term

The predominant mood of Raga Yaman is shringar or love. There are many popular film songs composed in this raga! Try to find some popular songs based on this raga. Learn and sing them.

ACTIVITY 3: LEARN A BANDISH IN RAGA YAMAN

Watch this video to learn a *bandish* in *Raga Yaman*.

The *aroha* or ascending notes in *raga yaman* are, N R G $\acute{M}$ D N $\acute{S}$.

The *avaroha* or descending notes in *raga yaman* are, $\acute{S}$ N D P $\acute{M}$ G R S.

Note that the $\acute{M}$ is higher than the regular M that you have sung before. This small shift in one note alters the mood of the song!

The song describes Lord Krishna playing the flute and the *gopikas* of Vrindavan dancing to its melody.

Raga Yaman

Chhota Khayal — Kanha Bansuri

Sthayi

Aaj Bajaaii Kanha Bansuri

Moha Layi Sagari Brija Naari Pyari

Antara

Brindavana Ki Kunja Galina Mei

Sanga Brihabhaana Dulaari Pyari

Teen Taal

Sthayi

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
X				2				0				3			
						P	$\acute{M}$	GR	S $\acute{N}$	D	N	R	$\acute{G}$ $\acute{M}$	P	$\acute{M}$
						Aa	ja	Ba	ja	ii	Ka	nha	Ban	-	su
P	-	R	R	G	-	P	$\acute{M}$	G	R	S	N	R	$\acute{G}$ $\acute{M}$	P	$\acute{M}$
ri	-	-	-	-	-	Aa	ja	Ba	ja	ii	Ka	nha	Ban	-	su
P	-	R	R	G	P	$\acute{M}$	D	P	-	$\acute{M}$	$\acute{M}$	G	-	$\acute{P}$ $\acute{M}$	GR
ri	-	-	-	-	Mo	ha	la	yi	-	Sa	ga	ri	-	Bri	ja
R	G	R	S	-	S										
Naa	-	ri	Pya	-	ri										

Antara

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
X				2				0				3			
								-	P	- $\acute{S}$	$\acute{S}$	$\acute{S}$	$\acute{S}$	$\acute{S}$	-
								-	Brin	-da	-	va	na	ki	-
-	ND	N	$\acute{R}$	N	ND	P	-	-	$\acute{M}$	DN	$\acute{S}$	$\acute{S}$	$\acute{S}$	$\acute{S}$	-
-	Kun	ja	Ga	li	na	mei	-	-	Brin	da	-	va	na	ki	-
-	ND	N	$\acute{R}$	N	ND	P	-	-	$\acute{M}$	D	$\acute{M}$	DN	$\acute{R}$ N	N	ND
-	kun	ja	Ga	li	na	mei	-	-	San	ga	Li	ye	--	Bri	kha
P	-	R	R	RG	PR	P	$\acute{P}$ $\acute{M}$								
bha	-	na	Du	la-	ri	Aa	ja								

DO YOU KNOW

Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande developed the notation system in Hindustani classical music. He was a lawyer by profession, and had a great memory and intellect. He toured the whole country to meet musicians and collect compositions from them. In spite of many hardships, he collected many different compositions and documented them in *Kramik Pustak Maalika* (six parts) according to the notation, he developed.



Learn a *Bandish* on Guru in *Raga Yaman* (*Kramik Pustak Maalika* — Part I)

Sthayi

Guru Bin Kaise Gun Gaaye, Guru
Naa Maaney To Gun Naahi Aaye
Guniyan Mey Vey Guni Kahavey

Antara

Maaney To Rijhavey Sabko Charan
Gahe Saadikan Ke Jab Aavey
Achapal Taal Sur

Taal – Teentaal

*s denotes the extension of a word.
*- denotes the extension of a swara in the Hindustani music notation system.

Sthayi

Dha dhin dhin dha	Dha dhin dhin dha	Dha tin tin taa	Ta dhin dhin dha
		P P N D Gu ru bi na	P D P - Kai - Se -
Ṁ R Ṁ Ṁ Gu na gaa -	P - - - Ye - - -	P N D P Gu ru naa maa	- Ṁ G R ne to -
G R GMP R Gu n naa hee	S R S - Aa - ye -	S S R R Gu nee ya n	G Ṁ Ṁ - mey - vey -
P P - N Gu ni - ka	Ṁ D P - Ha - ve -		

Antara

		P - P Ṁ Maa - ne -	G - R - To - Ri -
G P Ṣ D Jha - vey -	Ṣ Ṣ Ṣ Ṣ Sa ba ko -	Ṣ Ṣ Ḡ Ṛ Ch r n Ga	Ṣ Ṛ Ṣ - hey - Saa -
N D Ṣ Ṣ di - ka na	N N Ṁ P Ke - Ja b	P G P - Aa - ve -	G R S S A ch pa l
SR GG PD NṢ Ta - - la	ND PM GR SS - - - sur		

The Trinity of Carnatic Music

Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri are known as the trinity of Carnatic music. They are considered the pioneer composers of Carnatic music. Tyagaraja's *Mudra* (signature word) was *Tyagaraja*, Muthuswami Dikshitar's was Guruguha and Shyama Shastri's was *Shyama* Krishna. Tyagaraja's songs were mostly in praise of Lord Rama. Muthuswami Dikshitar was a scholar in Sanskrit, and sang *kritis* in praise of all deities. Shyama Shastri composed scholarly compositions on Goddess Kamakshi.

ACTIVITY 4: LEARN A GEETAM IN RAGAM KALYANI

Listen to the audio to learn the *swaras* (notes) and the *sahitya* (lyrics) of the *geetam* in *Ragam Kalyani*. A *geetam* is a composition in Carnatic classical music, in praise of a God or a Goddess. This *geetam* is composed in the *ragam kalyani* and is set to *triputa tala*. *Triputa tala* is a seven beat rhythmic cycle divided as 3+2+2. The notes in *Kalyani* are the same as the notes in *Shankarabharanam*, except for M. The M in *Kalyani* is higher.

Lyrics

Kamala Jaadala
Vimala Sunayana
Karivarada Karunaambudhe
Karuna Sharade Kamalaakaanta
Keshi Narakaasura Vibhedana
Varada Velaapura Surottama
Karuna Sharadhe Kamalaakaanta

This song is about Lord Vishnu who is the protector of the universe.

Kamalajaadala

Ragam: Kalyani

Tala: Triputa

Composer: Purandaradasa

Arohanam: S R₂ G₃ M₂ P D₂ N₃ S

Avarohanam: S N₃ D₂ P M₂ G₃ R₂ S

Ś Ka	Ś ma	Ś la	N jaa	D	N da	Ś la
N Vi	D ma	P la	D Su	P na	M ya	P na
G Ka	M ri	P va	P ra	D da	D Ka	N ru
D naam	P	M bu	P dhe	G	R	S
Ḍ Ka	Ṇ ru	Ḍ na	G Sha	R ra	G dhe	,
M Ka	P ma	,	M laa	G	R	S
R kaan	,	,	S ta	,	S	,
G Ke	M	P shi	M Na	P ra	D kaa	P
N su	D ra	P Vi	D bhe	P	M da	P na
G Va	M ra	P da	P Ve	D	D laa	N
D pu	P ra	M Su	P ro	G	R tta	S ma
Ḍ Ka	Ṇ ru	Ḍ na	G Sha	R ra	G dhe	,
M Ka	P ma	,	M laa	G	R	S
R kaan	,	,	S ta	,	S	,

This song describes his compassion and glory.

Singing Techniques

Gamakas are special decorations that musicians use to make their music sound more beautiful and expressive. The pitch of the note is modulated by oscillating or gliding to the next note.

Here are some vocal warm-ups in *Ragam Kalyani*. **Listen** to them and practise.

1.

Ś	N	D	P	M	G	R	S
S	,	,	,	S	,	,	,
G	R	S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M
S	R	G	M	P	D	N	Ś
2.

Ś	N	D	P	M	G	R	S
S	,	,	,	S	,	,	,
G	R	S	Ṇ	S	S	Ṇ	S
S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M	P	M
G	R	S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M
S	R	G	M	P	D	N	Ś
3.

Ś	N	D	P	M	G	R	S
S	,	,	,	S	,	,	,
G	R	S	Ṇ	Ḍ	Ṇ	S	Ṇ
S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M	P	M
G	R	S	Ṇ	S	S	Ṇ	S
S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M	P	M
G	R	S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M
S	R	G	M	P	D	N	Ś

4.

Ś	N	D	P	M	G	R	S
S	,	,	,	S	,	,	,
G	R	S	Ṇ	Ḍ	P	Ḍ	Ṇ
S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M	P	M
G	R	S	Ṇ	Ḍ	Ṇ	S	Ṇ
S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M	P	M
G	R	S	Ṇ	S	S	Ṇ	S
S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M	P	M
G	R	S	Ṇ	S	R	G	M
S	R	G	M	P	D	N	Ś

