CHAPTER V
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The study of the rāga-s of the 15th mēla is an attempt to see among the member rāga-s of the same class the individual melodic identity of each rāga. The various melodic features outlined in the Saṅgīta-sampradāya-pradarśini under the ‘Lakṣaṇa’ and ‘Lakṣya’ parts of for each rāga form the main source of material.

The first chapter has initially pointed out how in the Mēla-rāga classification some mēla-s have a large number of rāga-s and the 15th mēla had the largest number of rāga-s, at least in the classification tradition outlined in the Saṅgīta-sampradāya-pradarśini. The melodic features of the 31 rāga-s under the 15th Mēla were analysed in the Second and Third chapters. A comparative study of the rāga-s based on the Mūrchana and melodic phrases was taken up. This chapter will present concluding observations on the 31 rāga-s.

The basic nature of ‘Rāga’ is known by the melodic path that a song based in it takes. The melodic structure is broadly built up through ascending movement which proceed from lower to higher pitches and descending movements, from higher to lower. Sometimes melodic structure of a song is dominated by descending movements such the ascent taken care of by leaps from a svara to its fifth or sixth above and then the descent being gradual and detailed. Songs in Gauḍīpantu and Rāmakali could be cited as examples for this. As a contrast we also see ascending movement dominated melodic structures with a leap from a note to its fourth or fifth below. ‘s n \ g’ in Mēgharaṇjani, ‘s \ m, m’ in Gauri are interesting examples.

The potency of a rāga lies in the large number of alternate paths that it offers in ascent or descent. Mere step by step ascent in pitches or step by step descent through pitches would make music too plain or that would be practically not music at all.

Sometimes the movements are in tetrachords, within the pūrvāṅga and within the Uttarāṅga. Such rāga-s offer very little of movement between two tetrachords, e.g., the Gīta in Lalita rāga.
Dropping a svara (which is part of the raga) in a movement seems to be another very important feature of melodic structures. Even a five-note raga like Mēgharaṇjani omits ‘ri’ in some descending movements and sometimes ‘ma’ (ś n ģ) and ‘ga’ (ś r m), in some ascending movements.

The rāga-s of 15th Mēla taken up in this work have been primarily based on those described in SSP. Some compositions of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣītār in these rāga-s not notated in SSP have been taken from the DKM. Outside the SSP tradition there are some compositions which have also been taken into account.

With regard to the rāga-s we have seen that in SSP there are mainly three sections, the Gīta, Prabandha and other earlier songs constituting the first, the songs of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣītār making up the second and the Saṅcāri and songs of later composers coming under the third. It has also been shown that the perception of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣītār with regard to most rāga-s is slightly or grossly different from that learnt from the Gīta etc.

For instance, in Maṅgalakāśiki, the Gīta takes the movement ‘s r g m d p’, but Dīkṣītār has maintained ‘s r m g’. In Gujjari, Dīkṣītār uses a phrase ‘m g / d p m g’ not found in Gīta and avoids the use of ‘g m p d n s’ seen in Gīta although incorporating ‘p d n s’. In Ārdradeśī ‘m d p m g r’ is preferred and not ‘m p m g r’. In Saurāṣṭra he avoids the use of ‘d s s r’. In Pūrvi he uses ‘p n p m’, ‘g m p n s’ and ‘m g m d m’, not found in Gīta. In Gauḍijapantu, ‘s r g r s’ and ‘m , p g r’ used by him were not there in Gīta. In Rāmakali he avoids the use of ‘p g r s’. In Pāḍi he prefers ‘r m p d p n s’. In Kannadabāṅgāla, the Gīta uses ‘s r m g m g r’ while Dīkṣītār uses ‘s r m g r s’. And while in Gīta ‘g m d s’ and ‘m d’ movements are not seen Dīkṣītār seems to use them. In Rēvagupti he even drops ‘ri’ in one phrase ‘p d s g p g .’. In Gauḷa too he scrupulously avoids ‘r m r s’ and does not drop ‘ga’ in pūrvaṅga region during descending movements. This way Dīkṣītār seems to be particular about his form of Gauḷa which avoids certain phrases seen in Gīta and in the composition of Tyāgarāja.

In contrast Subbarāma Dīkṣītār, in his Saṅcāri, has chosen to include phrases from the Gīta tradition and from Muttusvāmi Dīkṣītār’s compositions. The fact that Muttusvāmi Dīkṣītār composed songs in almost all the 31 rāga-s except two or three (Mēcabauli, Nādarāmakiya and Rāmakali) suggests that he had definite leaning towards these rāga-s and had a clear idea of the musical image of the rāga-s.
It was pointed out above that the concept of rāga itself stands for a large number of possible melodic features, like phrases that form the source for compositions. The larger the melodic information that a rāga can store, the greater is its depth. From the compositions analysed it was seen that in each rāga there are many alternate possible movements during ascent and during descent. For instance, in the compositions in the rāga Chāyāgauḍa we see two distinct melodic lines - ‘s r s m g’, ‘m g s’, ‘p d s’, ‘s n d n d m g s’ and ‘r m p’, ‘p s’, ‘s n d p m g r’. In Gujjari again we have two - ‘s r g p d s’ and ‘s r g m g m p d n s’. In Pūrvi ‘p n p m’, ‘g m p n s’, ‘m g m d m’ are possibilities. In Mālavaṇḍacama we find ‘p n s’, ‘s r g m’ ‘d p s’, ‘d p n s’, ‘p m p n s’, ‘m d n’ in ascent. In descent we have ‘d p’, ‘m g’, ‘r s’, ‘s n d p’. In Pharju in ascent the possibilities are - ‘g m d’, ‘p d s’, ‘g m p d n’, ‘s g g m’, ‘p s’ and in descent - ‘s n d n s’, ‘s g r s’, ‘g m r g r s’. In Malahari we come across ‘s r p m g r s’, ‘s r g r s’, ‘s r m g r s’ but ‘s r m p’ is never to be found.

In other words the rāga-s become a repository of of possible svara movements and there is very little freedom allowed to a composer or a performer to compute or supplement new movements.

Again as pointed out above dropping a svara or two in a movement is another feature suggested by rāga. While such a feature is easily understood in a Sampūrṇa rāga, we find that even in Śaḍava and Auḍava rāga-s a svara is seen to be dropped in ascending and descending movements. In an Auḍava rāga like Mēgharaṇjani (omitting ‘pa’ and ‘dha’) we come across ‘m g s’ (in Gīta, although Dīkṣitar uses ‘m g r s’), ‘s r m’ and ‘s n g’. In Dēvaranji (omitting ‘ti’ and ‘ga’) ‘s p m p’, ‘p d s’, ‘p n s’, ‘p n d p’, ‘p m d p n’, ‘s n s d p’.

In a Śaḍava rāga like Bauli (omitting ‘ma’), the ascending movements invariably drop ‘ni’ and it occurs in special movements like ‘s n s’ and ‘s n d p d’. The descending movement is more or less ‘s d p g r s’ (in Gīta though). In Pādi ‘r m p d p n s’ and ‘p d p r s’ are possibilities, especially with respect to Pūrvāṅga. Gauḍa offers ‘p m g m r s’, ‘s r, g m r s’ and ‘p m r g m r’, as the possibilities. In Lalita we have the possibilities of ‘m d s’, ‘d m d r’, ‘m d n d’, ‘d m d n s’(rare) and ‘g m d n d m d n s’ but a phrase having continuous svara movement, namely, ‘s r g m d n s’ is not there.
Thus with the possibilities of large number of svara combinations existing in Auḍava and Sāḍava rāga themselves due to dropping of svara-s the possibilities that are there in each Sampūrṇa rāga are still more.

Further, as pointed out above, there are some rāga-s that have movements involving svara-s belonging to the tetrachords. Among the 31 rāga-s there are many which are dominated by a melodic ascent in the pūrvāṅga based on ‘s r m’ (omitting or dropping ‘ga’). Such rāga-s are Sālaṅganāta, Chāyāgauḷa, Guṇḍakriya, Gaudipantu, Sāvēri, Gauri, Pāḍi, Kannādaṁbaṅgāla, Malahari and Gaula. Rāga-s dominated by ‘p d s’ combination in the uttarāṅga are – Sālaṅganāta, Chāyāgauḷa, Mēcabaṇli, Pāḍi, Rēvagupti, Kannādaṁbaṅgāla, Malahari, Árdraḍēśī, Dēvaraṇji, Sāvēri and Rāmakali.

Rāga-s like Gujjari, Nādarāmakriya, Mēcabaṇli, Maṅgaḷakaisiki (with ‘ma’ too dominating), Rāmakali, Pharujju, Vasanta, Rēvagupti, Māruva and Bauli are more dominated by Gāndhāra in their pūrvāṅgas. Rāga-s with ‘ni’ being prominent in the uttarāṅga are Gaula, Pāḍi, Guṇḍakriya, Gauri, Gaudipantu, Pūrvi and Árdraḍēśi.

Hence among the 31 rāga-s the possibility of svara phrases overlapping between rāga-s is quite large. Yet the way the possible phrases combine or are expressed in a composition becomes unique to that rāga. But what is strange is that among the rāga-s cited above - as instances for, dropping svara-s, providing multiple possibilities for svara movements, svara-s dominating its pūrvāṅga and uttarāṅga regions etc., - one rāga is conspicuous by its absence and that is Māyāmāḷavagauḷa. Māḷavagauḷa seems a rather synthetic or artificial rāga since it is characterised more by ornamental svara patterns that can be imposed on it. Dāṭu combinations – ‘d n p d m p g m’ or ‘n d n p d p d m p g’, ‘sm g d p n’, ‘r n s d n p d m’ – seem to dominate the combinations. In fact ‘r n s d n p d m’ occurs in the Kīrtana in Gujjari too. Only melodically rich phrases that could be traced to Māḷavagauḷa are ‘s n g r s’ and ‘m g d p m’. Apart from these this rāga does not offer many possibilities by way of svara combinations and dropping of svara-s.

With ‘Rāga-s’ being brought closer due to the sharing of similar svara movements and being distinguished by movements unique to each, the other factor that plays an important role in distinguishing them is Gamaka. This point has adequately been taken care of in the third section of the fourth chapter. Earlier chapters, second and third made detailed analysis of each rāga with respect to phrases and gamaka-s.
However the thrust in this thesis has been more on the compositions notated in SSP and more attention could have been given to rāga-s seen in other traditions. The work could have also given more attention to the corresponding rāga-s in the Hindustani System and also the use of Mālavagula scale in the other systems in World music.