CHAPTER 2

EVOLUTION OF THE RAGA SANKARABHARANA

The raga system of Karnatic Music as it is observed is very vast and complex in nature. The complexities and intricacies could be understood only through systematic and methodological study in particular when it is related to the ‘King of ragas’, SANKARABHARANA. Therefore to accommodate the proper understanding of this vast raga the chapter has been dealt in two parts - the ‘History of Raga SANKARABHARANA’ and the ‘Raga Lakshana of SANKARABHARANA’.

2.1 HISTORY OF RAGA SANKARABHARANA

SANKARABHARANA has a remarkable historical background, being mentioned in almost all treatises starting from ‘Sangita Ratnakara’. Tracing back the history of the raga SANKARABHARANA, it was mentioned during the Pannisai period, which is the oldest form of Indian Music forms the base for Karnatic Music. The basic Pannisairaga was HARIKAMBHOJI and SANKARABHARANA was obtained using the method called ‘modal shift of tonic’. The explanation by Prof. P. Sambamurty in the book South Indian Music volume 6 highlights the following regarding Pannisai:

“The harp was the principal instrument used at that period. It was tuned to Suddha Mela HARIKAMBHOJI and was played on open strings. Scales like SANKARABHARANA were played on the harp with a Shift of Tonic note. This accounts for the fact that the highest note touched in Tevaram hymns in SANKARABHARANA raga (pann PAZHAM PANJARAM) was only Tara Shadja. Hymns in PAZHAM PANJARAM were played by taking the M string of the harp as the tonic note”

“Among the Palai-s of ancient Tamil Music ‘Kodipalai’ corresponds to the Scale of SANKARABHARANA, and among the Panns, ‘PAZHAMPANJARAM’ is SANKARABHARANA. Since the fundamental Scale for ancient Tamil music was HARIKAMBHOJI or Madhyama Murchana of Madhyama Grama and again the Madhyama Murchana of HARIKAMBHOJI is the raga SANKARABHARANA”
Following the pannisai period, it is interesting to note that eight ragas were prevalent even before Sarangadeva’s era, which corresponded to our raga SANKARABHARANA. The history according to Sanskrit tradition traces back to Natyashastra of Bharata. This is considered to be the oldest of the Lakshana Granthas of music. This mainly deals with dramaturgy, though seven chapters starting from the 29th chapter are about music in detail. Bharata defined two Gramas in music: Shadja Grama and Madhyama Grama. He also defined seven Murchanas as follows:

- Uttara Mandra
- Ranjani
- Uttarayatha
- Suddha Shadja
- Matsarikritha
- Ashwakrantha
- Abhirudghatha

There are seven Murchanas starting with Madhya Sthayi Shadja to Madhya Sthayi Nishada. Of these the Second Murchana starting with Nishada forms the raga SANKARABHARANA of today. Bharata defines Eighteen Jatis: Seven for Shadja Grama and eleven for madhyama grama. Of these Arshabhi Jati of Shadja Grama is the predecessor of today’s SANKARABHARANA. As such, the Jatis described by Bharata are considered to be the precursors of present day ragas. ‘Naradiya Shiksha’ also gives the references of RAJANI, and so do the Dattilam. Sangita Sara is another Lakshana Grantha, which was the first Treatise to deal with ragas in great detail. It was written by Vidyaranya of Vijayanagara kingdom. He describes 15 MELAS and SANKARABHARANA is one of them. The other ragas are GURJARI, VARATIKA, SRIRAGA, BHAIRAVI, AHIRI, VASANTHA, SAMANTHA, KAMBHOJI, MUKHARI, SUDDHARAMAKRIYA, KEDARAGOULA, HEJJAJJI and DESAKSHI. Most of these MELAS are found in the 72 mela system today. Perhaps this was one of the first Lakshana Granthas where in the name SANKARABHARANA is mentioned for the Murchana RANJANI. Sangita Sara is one of the important Lakshana Grantha for a Musicologist, as it is the first work dealt with the importance of ragas.
The next major work which entails some description about mela ragas is Svara Mela Kalaanidhi of Ramamathya. Mentioned in this work are names of 20 MELAS and svaras taken by them. The 20 MELAS and the corresponding present day Melakartas are as follows:

1. MUKHARI
2. MALAVAGOULA (MAYA MALAVA GOULA)
3. SRIRAGA
4. SARANGA NATA
5. HINDOLA
6. SUDDHA RAMAKRIYA (PANTUVARALI)
7. DESHAKSHI (SHOOLINI)
8. KANNADA GOULA (VAGADHISWARI)
9. SUDDHA NATI (CHALA NATA)
10. AHIRI (KIRAVANI)
11. NADA NAMA KRIYA (DHENUKA)
12. SUDDHA VARALI (SUBHA PANTUVARALI)
13. RITIGOULA (VANASPATHI)
14. VASANTHA BHAIARAVI (VAKULABHARANAM)
15. KEDARAGOULA (SANKARABHARANA)
16. HEJJUJJI
17. SAMA VARALI
18. REVAGUPTHI
19. SAMANTHA and
20. KAMBHOJI

Most of the other ragas became major Janya ragas of present day Karnatic music. The ragalakshana of SHANKARABHARANA, according to Svaramela Kalaanidhi is as follows:

“SANKARABHARANA raga (of adhama class) is Sampurna, and has Shadja as Amsa, Nyasa and Graha, it rests in the shade of SAMANTHA.”

Even Venkatamakhin supports the Chaya of SAMANTHA in SANKARABHARANA. Raga Tala Chintamani describes this raga as an Adhama raga, with Shadja as Graha, Nyasa and Amsa. It closely resembles SAMANTHA raga and should be sung during later hours of the day. KEDARA mela in Sadragna Chandrodaya is equivalent to the raga SANKARABHARANA. It is explained as follows:
“SANKARABHARANA with Shadja as Graha, Nyasa and Amsa has all seven svaras. It is adorned by Mudritha Gamaka. It is best performed at sunrise.”

Almost the same description has been given in Raga Manjari and Raga Kaumudi. The Treatise Raga Mala portrays the raga SANKARABHARANA as follows:

“The Putra Raga, son of NATANARAYANA named SANKARABHARANA (sankarabhushana) taking full mela of MADHUVANTHI is rendered with the Mudritha Gamaka. It has S performing the three functions of Graha, Amsa and Nyasa. It is best sung at dawn.”

The explanation by Dr. Hema Ramanathan is as follows:

“The mela of MADHUVANTHI described in Raga Mala corresponds to the 29th Mela of 72 Mela scheme. Since the raga drops two svaras, the author uses the phrase ‘not leaving out any svara’ to leave no doubt that SANKARABHARANA takes all the seven notes.”

The Raga Vibodha of Somanatha also describes the raga SANKARABHARANA as a Sampurna mela, that which has ‘S’ as Graha, Nyasa and Amsa and a raga that should be sung at dawn. The explanation in Ragalakshana sangraha for Raga Vibodha is as follows along with the svara phrases

“SANKARABHARANA is to be rendered thus:
SM GM RG RSSMGM RG GR G
M P SD NS SD PM GMRG GR GM PS DPM GR
R GG RG MP M P G MM R GR PG MR SM GS RG RSR”

Govinda Dikshitar’s Sangita Sudha is yet another Treatise which dealt with almost 264 ragas and gave raga lakshanams for 50 ragas in detail and SANKARABHARANA is one among them. This is the work along with two other works Ragalakshana and Maha Bharatha Choodamani which partially omitted the Nishada. In Hema Ramanathan’s book the lakshana of the raga according to Sangita Sudha goes as follows:
“The raga SANKARABHARANA is now described along with its mela (set of svaras). Panchashruti Rishabha and Dhaivata, Antara Gandhara, Kakali Nishada, Suddha shadja, Madhyama and Panchama --- this is the mela SANKARABHARANA. Its Nyasa, Graha and Amsa functions are performed by Shadja. It is pronounced to be a Sampoorna Raga by experts.”

Further, the pattern of Raga alapa was also given as follows:

“Akshiptika starts at Madhyama in Madhya sthayi, descending to the Madhya sthayi Rishabha, and ascending to Madhyama in Tara sthayi and singing a few varied tanas, the singer must rest at the tara sthayi shadja itself. The raga vardhani should go to Tara sthayi Dhaivata starting from Tara sthayi Rishabha, then descend to Madhya sthayi Shadja and singing a few varied tanas, one should rest at tara sthayi shadja itself. Vidari should start from Tara sthayi Nishada then descend to Madhya sthayi Rishabha then ascending to Madhya sthayi Madhyama and then should go to Tara sthayi shadja after a few varied tanas and it goes on describing the Shadja Sthayi and Panchama Sthayi and Rishabha Sthayi and should finally conclude with Shadja sthayi.”

Omitting Nishada in descending phrases seemed to be a prevalent tradition at that time and was mentioned in this book also similar to ‘Lakshana Granthas’, a book of Prof. Bhagya Lakshmi. As such, the phrase “S D P” wherein there is no Nishada is very much popular while singing the raga SANKARABHARANA even today which shows us the chastity of the raga. Chaturdandi Prakasika was the foremost Lakshana Grantha of 17th Century, during which there was a proliferation of several other works like Sangita Parijatha of Ahibala. Sangita Parijatha described SANKARABHARANA as possessing Tivra Gandhara and Nishada and the other Suddha svaras. Also stated in Ragalakshana sangraha of Hema Ramanathan is that the remaining description in Sangita Parijatha was incomplete.

The raga Lakshana of SANKARABHARANA in Chathurdandi Prakasika of Venkatamakhin is stated as follows:

“With Shadja as Nyasa, Graha and Amsa the raga SANKARABHARANA is complete. It is sung in the evening. It is the 29th mela in the Mela Prasthara. It is questionable that this raga with Antara Gandhara and Kakali Nishada is placed under SREE Raga Mela in Svara Mela Kalaanidhi. It is the king among ragas.”
Evidently, Venkatamakhin clearly disagrees with its classification as an Adhama Raga in Svara Mela Kalanidhi. This raga according to Raga Tatva Vibhoda also possesses Tivra Ga and Ni and commences with S. Sangita Saramritha of King Tulaja (1728—36) accepts the 72 mela system of Venkatamakhin and describes 19 of the then famous ragas in detail of which SANKARABHARANA was one. There is very detailed description of the history of the raga in the book ‘Ragas of Sangita Saramrita’ by T.V. Subba Rao and Prof. S.R. Janakiraman. It states the following:

“In the 4th sloka of the Dvitiya Prakarana of the Ragavivekadhyaya, Sarangadeva mentions SANKARABHARANA as the first of the Raganga ragas and we find Kallinatha’s commentary on Sangita Ratnakara giving the following account:

“Yadayam Madhyamadischet syan mandrasvara mudritha
chayatharena yuktasyat SANKARABHARANA stha.”

As per K.V Ramachandran’s view, Saranga Deva in the above verse says that the Alapa starts with Madhyama. The mandra sancharas were with muted and half muted nuances of sound. The term Chaya or Kaku means an inflection, modulation or stress and were of six different kinds. Some of these were more common for certain ragas especially SANKARABHARANA. Of these Chayas referred to above, the first one meant an elusive extension of one note to the other etc.

According to Somanatha the raga was Lord Siva himself, dancing in Red silk, ashes on forehead and lotus garland around his neck. He who chose red peepal among the trees, and Sama among Vedas was said to have chosen SANKARABHARANA among ragas to express himself.

SANKARABHARANA was famous even before Sarangadeva’s age (13th century) and stands athwart through the centuries, timeless and eternal like Himalayas or Sanskrit language. Rightly Subbarama Dikshitar in his Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini said that according to elders SANKARABHARANA was greatest among ragas.”It also continues to elaborate the tremendous history of this beautiful kingly raga as follows:
“Parsvadeva (11th century) mentions SANKARABHARANA as a Raganga sampurna
in his book Sangita Samaya Sara. Narada’s Sangita Makaranda mentions it as a Raga to be
sung at noon and describes it as Napumsaka Raga. Brihaddharma Purana refers to Mallara as
one of the Six Primary ragas, and so is the case with Hamsavilasa. Somanadha who wrote
Ragavibodha in 1609 mentions a MALLARU Raga and put SANKARABHARANA as its
Janya. Ragatatva Vibodha of Srinivasa Pandit and Panditharadhya Charithra of Palkuriki
Somanadhakavi also mention the raga SANKARABHARANA. Raga Tarangini of Lochana
Kavi mentions the raga KEDARA as one of the 12 MELAS and SANKARABHARANA as its
Janya.” It should also be duly noted that innumerable sankirtanas of Annamacharya (1424 –
1503) are found in the raga SANKARABHARANA. History of the raga is illuminated with
some of the following explanations.

“It is ridiculous that Ramamathya could mention the raga SANKARABHARANA as
the Janya of SREE raga, rightly was he abused by Venkatamakhin. Either Ramamathya was
confused or as Mr. Ramaswamy Iyer puts it “who knows what was the sort of manuscript of
Svara Mela Kalanidhi, copied by different, indifferent copyists should have fallen in the hands
of Venkatamakhin.”

SANKARABHARANA has been described as the 29th mela by Venkatamakhin with
Shadja, Pancha Shruthi Rishabha, Antara Gandhara, Suddha Madhyama, Suddha Panchama,
Pancha Shruthi Dhaivatha and Kakali Nishadham. By assigning one Shruti to Shadja, five
Shrutis to Rishabha and Dhaivata each three Shrutis to Gandhara and Nishada, one Shruti to
Madhyama and four shruthis to Panchama 22 Shruthis can be totaled. ‘Raga Rajasya Melakaha’
is the noteworthy expression found in his Treatise.

In the 57-59 of the raga Prakarana of Chaturdandi, Venkatamakhin describes
SANKARABHARANA very briefly as Sampurna and that which is to be sung in the evening,
with Shadja as Graha, Amsa and Nyasa. There is the Lakshana Geetha of
SANKARABHARANA in Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini in which it is described as
DHEERA SANKARABHARANA, adjusting for the KATAPAYADI formula. It is said to be
a Raganga Raga with a lot of Bhashanga and Upanga Janyas listed under the initial sahitya
letters of the first 6 Avartanas comprising the Dhruva, which give a clue as to the svaras taken
by the raga SANKARABHARANA are ‘Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Di Nu.’
The evolution of the raga finally culminates with the analytical study of position of the raga in 72 Melakarta Scheme. The explanation in the book ‘Ragas of Sangita Saramritha’ is mentioned below:

“An analytical study of 72 Melakartas will surely enable us to understand the most deserving place for SANKARABHARANA has, with its present practical stature being full of musical aesthetics. As per the Mela Prasthara of Venkatamakhin, out of the 72 Melas, 32 are devoid of Vivadi Dosha. SANKARABHARANA is one such raga without Vivadi Dosha. Late Mr. M.S. Rama Swamy Iyer rightly and appropriately chose to designate them as ‘LAGHU’ Melakartas opposed to the ‘BRUHAN’ Melakartas comprising the entire fold of 72 Melakartas. Hulugu Krishnamacharya says,” Laghu Melakartas are all equally capable of being rendered as melodic structures. But from the minute study of their component notes, with regard to principles of melody, which have been observed as essential, traditionally, we are sure to be convinced that they are not all equally melody stuffed.”Further study of the 72 MELAS will reveal that out of the Trinity, maximum number of ragas, which were full-fledged homogenous heptatonic scales were used by Tyagaraja. Muthuswamy Dikshitar has used more number of Melas, but they are not fully heptatonic in nature because he followed Asampoorna Mela Padhathi. It is also to be noticed that Syama Sastry has used very limited number of ragas.

There is no wonder that SANKARABHARANA is the most widely used raga, in keeping with the observation that the number of MELAS collectively used by Trinity themselves is very limited. Historically, SANKARABHARANA is the first scale to attract mankind with all Tivra Svaras. It is the Nishada Murchana of Shadja Grama and it was called RANJANI or RAJANI, which is a well accepted fact.

Coming to the limited description of the raga by King Tulaja, it is called as Swamelaja, Sampurna. In addition, some description of the svaras and so on was given. It is here we find that the raga is a Sarva Kaalika Raga, which is different from its traditional explanation as Evening Raga. It is again Subbarama Dikshitar who gives the phraseology of SANKARABHARANA. Just as it is said that music is the finest of arts, SANKARABHARANA is the finest of all ragas. In fact SUBBARAMA DIKSHITAR says that SANKARABHARANA is the best of all ragas.
Following on to the present day, SANKARABHARANA is a MELAKARTA, 29\textsuperscript{th} in the series of 72 Melas. ‘DHEERA’ was added to its name to incorporate it into the KaTaPaYadi formula. On the whole, the history of this raga is elaborate being mentioned in all the famous Lakshana Granthas and it can be deduced with great conviction that is not a raga merely resting on scales but a raga with absolute aesthetic intrinsic melody.

2.2 RAGA LAKSHANA OF RAGA SANKARABHARANA

SANKARABHARANA is a very famous raga found not only in Karnatic music but all kinds of world music. Sarangadeva referred to this raga as “Poorva Prasiddha raga” as it is an ancient raga. SANKARABHARANA etymologically means “The ornamentation of Lord Sankara”. There is an interesting explanation of how the name befits the literal meaning, in the paper ‘The splendor of SANKARABHARANA’ by V. V. Srivatsa which is as follows:

“A popular verse from Lalithopakhyana states that the universe constitutes the limbs of Siva; All speech, his voice, and the moon and the stars are his ornaments. Embellishments essentially enhance the elementary ethos and are not easily expendable elements. Svaras are the embellishments of a raga. SANKARABHARANA literally means embellishments of Lord Sankara.”

It is the 29th Melakarta Raga. The term Melakarta in Karnatic music refers to a Parent Scale, one which has all seven notes in order without having any extraneous note in its contour. They are seventy two in number. To arrange them in proper order a formula called “KA,TA,PA,YA” di in which the alphabets have been divided into five groups starting with “KA,TA,PA” etc. In this formula the first two letters of the raga are taken to find its position in the list of 72 Melakartas. The prefix “DHEERA” is added to this raga to fit it into the ‘katapayadi’ formula. It is a Raganga raga as it has all seven svaras, and takes the following svara sthanas: Shadja, Chatushruti Rishabha, Antara Gandhara, Suddha Madhyama, Panchama, Chatushruti Dhaivata and Kakali Nishada. The sloka explaining the svara places of this mela in Chathurdandi Prakasika, the Magnum opus of Karnatic music, is as follows:

“Shadja pancha shrutiko RishabhaschAntaraBHIdhaha ||
Gandharasthu mapau shudhao panchashruti Dhaivataha  
Kakalyakhya Nishadaschetye thavathsvara sambhavaha  
SANKARABHARANAKhyana raga rajasya malakaha

And the Sloka for “Shruti Nirupana” which is a continuation of above sloka is:

“Shadja ekarshabhe pancha thishroge thveki kaiva me  
Chathusra pe pancha de cha nishade thisra evacha  
Ithyasya shruthayo smadibhir dwavinshati rudhrithah  
Ekona thrimsha bhedoyam Mela prastarake smrithaha

In the seventy two Melakarta scheme, the ragas are again divided into six chakras (a chakra is a group of six ragas) and in each chakra, each raga is given its place. Thus the Mnemonic name of raga SANKARABHARANA is “BANA–MA” which means that the raga belongs to the chakra ‘BANA’ and takes the position ‘MA’ that is it is fifth raga in fifth chakra. ‘The Splendour of SANKARABHARANA’ has very nicely correlated this position of the raga in “Melakarta Chakra” with Lord Sankara and his worship:

“There is lot of quinarial significance in the worship of Lord Sankara. Even the maha mantra “Na Mah: Shi Va yaha:” has five aksharas (similar to the position of the SANKARABHARANA in the seventy two Melakartas). Perhaps, it is the quinarial significance that gave this raga the name SANKARABHARANA. Indeed, a fit medium to sing the glory of Lord Sankara”

RANJANI or RAJANI, the Nishada Murchana of Shadja Grama is none other than today’s Major raga SANKARABHARANA. However, this is not mentioned in ‘Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini’ and is found only in ‘Sangita Sastra Saramu’ written by Prof. S.R. Janakiram. Apart from that, Prof. S. R. Janakiram also mentions the samvadi svaras found in this ragas in his book:

“The history of the raga shows that ‘S - P’ & ‘S - M’ are Samvadi dwayam. Apart from this, Chatussruti Dhaivata is a Samvadi of Chatussruti Rishabha and Kakali Nishada is a
In this book he also explains how the Nishada Murchana of Shadja Grama has become the raga SANKARABHARANA. The explanation given is:

“Historically observed, the instrument Vina was used as a drone for Samagana. In it, the first string is tuned to Nishada and if Nishada is taken as Adhara Shadja and when the Shadja Grama notes were played they will exactly fit into today’s SANKARABHARANA svara placements. In other words, the Nishada Murchana of Shadja Grama with all Tivra svarams formed a very rakti raga. It was called RANJANI because it was very pleasant. This beautiful raga is none other than SANKARABHARANA.” (This is a transliteration from the book Sangita Sastra Saramu Pg. No 169 which is originally written in Telugu).

Though it was mentioned as an evening raga in the old Treatises, it has evolved into a Sarvakaalika raga today. Generally taken, an evening raga is one which is sung only during the evening after 4’o’clock. On the contrary, a Sarvakalika raga is a raga that could be sung at any time of the day. ‘Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini’ mentions this raga as an evening raga and the lakshana sloka by Venkatamakhin states that:

“SANKARABHARANA poornam, sayam geyancha sangraham”

This means that it is a Sampoorna raga and can be sung only in the evening times and the following are the svara sthanas given in Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini:

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s n s d N m g m p d N s g r s N n s r G m m m G m r G s r G  
S g R G M m g M m R g p M p s d P m p d P  
D d P s D p m p d N p d N s n d p d n S g r S s n d p m g r s  
S d p m g r s d p m p g r s r g m p d n S s r g m p d n s  
R g m r g s r n s d n p m g m p d n S s n d P s d P m g m P g R S  
S n r n s d n P d n s n n d S”
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It is a ‘Sarva Svara Gamaka Vareeka Rakti raga’ which means that all the svaras in this raga can be sung with a Gamakam that improves the aesthetic appeal of the raga. But according
to Prof. S.R. Janakiraman although everybody mentions it as a Sarva Svara Gamaka Vareeka Rakti raga, the Gandhara should never be rendered with kampita gamakas. It is a Naya or Rakti raga. A Naya or a Rakti raga is a raga whose characteristic is brought out nicely in its slow rendering. Being a ‘Panchasvara Murchanakaraka Janaka raga’, it gives other Major ragas KHRARAPRIYA, HANUMATODI, MECHA KALYANI, HARIKAMBHOJI and NATA BHAIARAVI when its “R, G, M, P and D” are taken as Shadja respectively. The very special feature for SANKARABHARANA is that it will give rise to KALYANI if Madhyama is made as Shadja which in turn gives rise to SANKARABHARANA with its Panchama Murchana. Another important feature to be observed in this regard is that the raga KHRARAPRIYA is obtained with Rishabha Murchana of SANKARABHARANA, which in turn gives SANKARABHARANA with its Nishada taken as Shadja. Here we can observe that the raga KHRARAPRIYA was the base for Sama Gana and as explained earlier how the Nishada Murchana of this basic scale of Sama Gana gave rise to the Murchana RANJANI, i.e. SANKARABHARANA. A ‘Murchana Karaka Raga’, is one in which a svara other than the Shadja when taken as the Adhara Shadja with the remaining svaras rendered in the same place result in a new raga. It is considered as a janaka raga with a large numbers of janya ragas which are also as popular as their janaka raga. An interesting explanation of Panns and other divisions of Panns is found in the paper presented by Dr. V.V. Srivatsa titled ‘The Splendour of SANKARABHARANA” which states:

“The renditions of Tevaram or Prabandham, the term Pann signified a Sampurna raga, the term Panniram, a Shadava raga, term Tiram an Audava raga and term Tirattiram a Svarantara raga. In this system there were twenty four panns, of which Pann PAZHAMPANJARAM In, identical with SANKARABHARANA was one. Panns were grouped into Pagal panns and Iarrappanns that is Daytime ragas and Night time ragas. Of these SANKARABHARANA is divided as Pagalpann. Compare this with Narada’s sloka in Sangita Makaranda:

‘Sankarabharanaha poorvau - ----- sthadaivacha |
Yethe ragasthu gaathrayaha prathah kalaha visheshathaha” |

And the explanation still continues as below:
“Please note the word ‘Visheshataha’, which implies that the best effect emerged when sung in the morning. However, there was no absolute rule stating that singing this raga at other times is barred.” The lakshana sloka by Venkatamakhin:

“Sankarabharana poornam sayam geyancha sangraham”

In other words, it means that, SANKARABHARANA is a raga fit to be rendered in the evenings. Thus, it became a Sarva Kaalika raga or an all time raga. Some examples of Tevarams and other compositions that can be in this raga are:

1) Mayakootta Nammazhvar (Thiruvai mozhi)
2) Alaneezhalugunda (Sambandhar)
3) Parshu paniyar (Sambandhar)
4) Uttrumai servadu (Sambandhar)
5) Talaiye nee vanangai (Appar)
6) Battimayyum Adimaiyum (Sundaramoorthy Nayanar) etc

(a complete list of Tevara hymns in this raga and its janyas is provided in the appendix)

It belonged to KODIPALAI and was called PANN PAZHAMP AJARAM in ancient Tamil music. The basic scale for traditional Tamil music was HARIKAMBHOJI and the Rishabha and Dhaivata were of Trishruthi in nature. The raga SANKARABHARANA could be obtained by ‘Kural Tiribu’ (which is the ‘Modal Shift Of Tonic’ also known as ‘Graha Bheda’ in Karnatic music) of the basic scale of Pannisai ‘HARIKAMBHOJI’ with only difference of Panchashruthi Rishabha and Dhaivata in the later raga. One interesting point here is that Trishruti R and D, and Antara Gandhara Trishruti Dhaivata have Samvadi relationship. This is the reason R and D and R and G can be sung together in KALYANI where as in SANKARABHARANA we cannot do this because of the Pancha Shruti nature on R and D.

The Hindustani equivalent of this raga is ‘BILAVAL THAT’ and its Western counter part is C Major Scale. The mela with Suddha svaras is called Suddha Mela which is equivalent to the Natural Scale of Western Music. This Natural Scale of Western Music is nothing but the raga SANKARABHARANA. The only difference between both scales is the Trishruti Rishabha in Western Scale. The explanation is true in regards to ‘BILAVAL THAT’ of Hindustani Music as well, which is similar to SANKARABHARANA. It is similar to the LYDIAN MODE in Greek
music. It is similar to ‘IONIAN’ in Ecclesitic scale and is called ‘MEIA’ in ARABIC music. It is counted as one of the sixteen Suddha Madhyama Melas of ‘Battees _ Mela scheme’, which was in vogue during the 16th century. All the svaras in this raga are Raga chaya svaras and jiva svaras. Ragachaya Svaras are those Svaras which showcase the characteristics of that particular raga. R and D are dirgha kampita svaras. Dirgha kampita is a kind of embellishment given to notes which is an elongated waving movement of a note. Gandhara should never be sung with a Kampita Gamaka but it is a very strong Nyasa Svara. A Nyasa svara is a svara where in a Sangathi or a Prayoga in the raga ends. Dhaivata should never be rendered as Nyasa. Madhyama is a natural Nyasa Svara. The Gamakam given to Rishabha in the sanchara ‘srgm’ is called NOKKU and it is represented by ‘w’. The other Gamaka from ‘Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini’ which can be demonstrated in raga SANKARABHARANA is Khandippu and it is seen in the Prayoga “gm dpp rss”. This is represented by symbol surd. (These are some of the gamakas explained in Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini. Ref: article by Smt. Vidya Shankar in Music Academy Journal 2004).

This is also a raga that has a pair of Symmetrical Tetra Chords which are separated by an interval of a Major Tone. The explanation of Major Tone is as follows:

“If two svaras are separated by a single svarasthana then it signifies that they are separated by a Major Tone, but if they are adjacent to each other, then it is said that they are separated by a Semitone.”

For example in this raga,

Shadja and Chatushruti Rishabha are separated by a Tone,
Chatushruti Rishabha and Antara Gandhara are separated by a Tone
Antara Gandhara and Suddha Madhyama are separated by a Semitone
Suddha Madhyama and Panchama are separated by a Tone
Panchama and Chatushruti Dhaivata are separated by a Tone
Chatushruti Dhaivata and Kakali Nishada are separated by a Tone and
Kakali Nishada and Shadja are separated by a Semitone.

This raga is one of the six ragas containing Symmetrical Tetra Chords. The other five ragas are MAYAMALAVAGOULA, KHARAHARAPRIYA, KANAKANGI, HANUMATODI and CHALANATA. The raga with Symmetrical Tetrachords is that raga in which the Uttaranga in the Murchana is a mirror image of the Purvanga. Normally in an
Arohana and Avarohana of a raga, the part having ‘srgm’ is called ‘Purvanga’ and “pdns” is called ‘Uttaranga’. It is quite interesting to observe the progression of the intervals in this raga. There is a Chattussruti interval in between “S – R2”, “M1 - P” and “P - D2.” The interval between “R2-G3” and “D2-N3” is Trishruti and a DVishruti interval exists between “G3-M1” and “N-S”.

The Suddha Madhyma in this raga plays a very important role of bridging the Purvanga and Uttaranga which have all Tivra svaras. There is an interesting point illustrated by Dr. V. V. Srivatsa and is stated below in his words:

“Some scholars opine that the Madhyma Svara is indicative of a generic change and that the Prati-Madhyma version is effeminate form of the Suddha Madhyma raga. KALYANI is the Prati-Madhyma version of SANKARABHARANA, though not a mirror image. Of all the pairs of Suddha Madhyma and Prati-Madhyma ragas, SANKARABHARANA and KALYANI are the best and find successive position in the list. MAYAMALAVAGOULA and PANTUVARALI form a distant second, if at all and KIRAVANI and SIMHENDRAMADHYAMAM or HARIKAMBHOJI and VACHASPATI come further down in the ratings. NATABHAIRAVI is not as famous as SHANMUKHAPRIYA and BHAVAPIRYA is less popular than TODI.” This makes SANKARABHARANA a unique raga.

Another significant feature in the gamaka pattern in the svaras of this raga is absence of kampita gamaka for Nishada. This character of plain Gandhara and Nishada distinguish this raga from its Prathi Madhyma counterpart KALYANI. It is probably the only raga with its Madhyma Murchana giving the Prati-Madhyma counterpart. This is one of the Major ragas having a vast scope for elaborate raga Alapana and all other aspects of Manodharma Sangita. Every kind of musical composition including Slokas and Viruttams will easily fit well into this raga. All the Navarasas can be evoked easily and it is very much suitable for Operas and Dance Dramas.

The prayoga “SDP” in Avarohana will add to its beauty. This Prayoga has been used several times in the Sanchari given by Subbarama Dikshitar in Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini. The second line of Pallavi in the Adi Tala Varnam “Sami Ninne” has this Prayoga prominently.
‘S,  SDPM P,  PMGR’
Cha la ---- ma ru----- lu.

Datu Svara Prayogas like “S M G R” “S P M G R” “S D P M G R” “S P M P G M R G S R” etc. and Janta Prayogas are common and they increase the melody of the raga. The Adi tala varnam “Sami Ninne” starts in Svaraksharam as in:

“S ; ns dn P ; ;”
Sa ------ mi

The phrase ‘sddpm’ can be observed in the beginning of Anupallavi in the Adi Tala Varnam which is a very nice Datu Svara Prayoga found in the raga.

‘S,  DDPM DP, M ’
Tha -------- - ma sa mu seyaka.

Aahata Prayogas like “SRRGGMMPPD” and Pratyahata Prayogas like “S n n d d p” and so on are also very common and are considered ranjaka prayogas. These patterns can be observed in ‘Svararagasudha Rasa’ a composition of Tyagaraja. The raga is used in a wide variety of compositions ranging from Geethams, Varnams, Kritis, Javalis, Padams and Tillanas so on and so forth.

An interesting combination of Datu svara and Janta svara phrases can be observed in the geetham ‘Govinda Hare Madhusoodana’ in Matya tala which goes as:

‘RRN SSD  NNP DDM  PPG  MMR  G;;
Sree    rama   see   thabhi  Ra -------- ma.

This could also be sighted as an example of Avarohana prayoga which is one of the Dasavidha or Panchadasa Gamakams. It is a Tristhayi raga which can easily be sung in all three octaves. Panchama Varjya Prayogas and rendition of svaras without gamakam will give a Western tinge to the raga. This is clearly visible in the Nottu Svarams of Dikshitar like ‘Shyamale minakshi’. ‘Chalamela’ the Ata Tala varnam of Swati Tirunal portrays this Western
tinge in the last Chitta Svaram of the Varnam. This Varna is said to be originally composed by ‘Vadivelu’ one of the Tanjavur Quartet. He attributed the Varna to the king. This similar trend is seen in the last Charana Svaram of the Ata Tala varnam ‘Enda Neramum’ composed by Ponnayya Pillai.

It is one of the twenty seven ragas in which the Trinity has composed abundantly. The list of those ragas includes both the janaka and janya types. TODI tops the list in number of compositions and SANKARABHARANA takes the second position (Ref: The paper ‘The Splendour of SANKARABHARANA’ of Dr. V.V.Srivatsa) It is the Raganga raga where we can see extensive use of Shadja. Though the origin of the raga traces back to Rig Veda, it is the raga that has remained unchanged since its inception till today. S, G, M and P are major Graha Svaras. Graha Svara is a note where in any composition is started.

Madhyama in this raga can be treated in three different ways. It goes a bit softer when rendered as a Nyasa svara prayogas (that is when Madhyama is sung as resting note) like “SRGM and rgm gMm”. This is demonstrated in second sangathi of the Pallavi of the Kriti ‘Svararagasuddha Rasa’ a kriti by Saint Tyagaraja. It comes in its own position without any Gamakam in Sancharas going into Panchama such as ‘G M P, R G M P’. The 3rd Ettukada svara in the famous Adi Tala Varna ‘Sami Ninne’ starts in Madhyama where in the svara Madhyama comes in its own position without any Gamakam. And further, the M becomes a bit sharp in Sancharas like “g mP dpm, ndp m” so on and so forth. The Kakali Nishada in this raga appears slightly tivra. Gandhara should never be rendered with a kampita gamakam. The Deergha kampita rendition of R and D is very common and their lighter rendition is very rarely seen. “S N p – S D P m G” G M r G are some Ranjaka Prayogas. It is suggested that, ‘D G’ & ‘D R’ Prayogas should be avoided as they can give a tinge of KALYANI.

There were three kinds of classifications given by sage Narada in his Sangita Makaranda. The first of these is classification based on time during which to render the ragas like morning ragas, afternoon ragas and evening ragas. As such, SANKARABHARANA was classified under afternoon raga by Narada. The other type of classification done by Narada is based on the Rasa bhava of the ragas in which the ragas are classified into categories including feminine ragas (Stree Ragas), masculine ragas (Purusha Ragas) and napumsaka ragas. The original Sloka is stated below:
“Roudresyadbhuto thadha veere pumragou prageeyathe |
Shringara Hasyam karuna stree ragaou prageeyathe |
Bhayanakecha beebatche shanthe gayannapumsake |”

And Narada has classified SANKARABHARANA under napumsaka raga. The sloka is:

“Kaumodaki cha Savericha thadhaivacha |
Balahamsa ha sama vedi SANKARABHARANAntha tha. |”

The sloka in Rasa Kaumudi is as stated below:

“SANKARABHARANAragaha shadjathraya manoharaha |
Geya sooryodaye nityam mudithabhid bhooshithaha |”

The ragas that create Vira and Adbhutha Rasa are to be rendered at sunrise and SANKARABHARANA is of the same and the similar expression could be observed in the sloka from Sangraha Choodamani which is:

“Roudra svara yuthamdeheera SANKARABHARANA shubham |”

Dr. V. V. Srivatsa is of the opinion that the raga has undergone a lot of metamorphosis and his explanation in this regard is:

“Kshetrayya and others composed many padams in this raga. Hence it can be constructed that over the centuries SANKARABHARANA underwent a metamorphosis and assumed a stature of generating Virtuality, all nine rasas.” With regard to these rasas evoked, he gave the following list of compositions indicating different rasas composed by different composers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th>Composer</th>
<th>Rasa (emotion)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Aa re KosalaDesAdipa”</td>
<td>GOVINDACHARYA</td>
<td>Vira rasa (valor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Ripu bala khandanure”</td>
<td>VENKATAMAKHIN</td>
<td>Roudra rasa (anger)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Emi neramu”</td>
<td>TYAGARAJA</td>
<td>Karuna rasa (sympathy)</td>
</tr>
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<td>“Eevaraku joochinadi”</td>
<td>TYAGARAJA</td>
<td>Haasya rasa (humor)</td>
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<td>“Iko namma swami”</td>
<td>PURANDARADASA</td>
<td>adbhuta rasa (wonder)</td>
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<td>“Dakshinamoorthe”</td>
<td>MUTHUSWAMY DIKSHITAR</td>
<td>Shanta rasa (tranquility)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Evade vadu”</td>
<td>KSHETRAYYA</td>
<td>Shringara rasa (beauty)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The second kind of classification is Suryamsha ragas and Chandramsha ragas. In this category, SANKARABHARANA is classified as a ‘Suryamsharaga.’ According to Ramamatya, SANKARABHARANA was classified under Uttama raga and Matanga classified it under suddha raga. It has also been mentioned in other old treatises like Sangita Samaya Sara, Sangita Ratnakara and Sangita Saramritha. The existence of this raga name in Sangita Saramritha is very ably explained in the book “The History of South Indian Music” written by R. Ranga Ramanuja Iyengar. An excerpt from the book is as follows:

“This is a sixth mela taking the notes of Panchashruti Rishabha, Antara Gandhara, Suddha Madhyama, Panchashruti Dhaivata and Kakali Nishada along with Shadja and Panchama.”

Shadja is Graha, Amsha, and Nyasa and it is mentioned as an evening raga. The other Melas mentioned are, NATA, MALAVAGOULA, VELAVALI and SUDDHARAMAKRIYA. It was one of the 108 ragas used by Annamacharya. The famous ‘Alarulu Kuriyaga’ is sung in SANKARABHARANA and another rare song rendered in this raga is ‘Chepatti mammu gavu’. On the whole, it can be stated that SANKARABHARANA is a famous Sarvakalika Rakti raga which has not changed during the course of time. An interesting fact enunciated by Dr.V.V. Srivatsa regarding the number of compositions done by the Trinity reveals the following fact:

“The compositions of Trinity, in the current era, serve as beacon lights to wayfarers and exponents of Karnatic Music. There are only twenty seven ragas in which there are compositions by Trinity and the ratio is 4: 2: 1 by Tyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Syama Sastri’s respectively. Out of these twenty seven ragas SANKARABHARANA is the Second raga with the most number of compositions following TODI which tops the list”
In an old Tamil Treatise on Music Abhidana Chitamani, it was mentioned that ‘Venba’ (a kind of poetic phrase) could be sung only in raga SANKARABHARANA. There is a unique explanation of the raga based on Sonographic analysis done by Dr. V.V. Srivatsa:

“The expositional scope of each raga can be visualized from the graphic of Sonographic pattern of each raga. An Audava raga like Abhogi gives an inverted cone pattern indicative of limitations in exposition and development. Scope is limited to the lower half of the octave, despite Abhogi being a Tristhayi raga. With an added ‘N’ to it, SRIRANJANI has got much better scope. An asymmetrical pattern shown by ragas like NILAMBARI is indicative of rendition difficulties.”

“Few Rakti ragas which are Melakartas too, present symmetrical patterns and a structure like a tower of a pandal, such ragas have Symmetrical Tetrachords, examples being MAYAMALAVAGOULA, KARAHARAPRIYA, HANUMATODI and the grand old SANKARABHARANA, which have immense scope for exposition”

If Ragaalapana techniques are observed SANKARABHARANA is a raga which has variegated Akshiptika patterns. When observed in the angle of compositions in this raga, the first types of compositions are Geethams. We can find ‘Ripu bala Khandanure’, a Lakshana Geetham in the raga SANKARABHARANA written by Venkatamakhin which is set to Matya Tala in which the ragalakshana is explained in terms of name as ‘DHEERA SANKARABHARANA’ and the names of different Janya ragas like ‘SUDDHA VASANTAM’, ‘NAGADHWANI’ and others are mentioned as its Upanga Janya ragas and ‘BILAHARI’, ‘BEGADA’ and few others are mentioned as the Bhashanga Janya ragas of SANKARABHARANA. The other Geetham is ‘AA Re Re Kosaladhipa’ in Triputa Tala and is found in ‘Sangraha Choodamani’. The interesting feature observed in both Geethams is that both Geethams start with ‘r g m p d p p m g’. There is also a Geetham set to Simhanandana Tala in this raga which commences as ‘Aa Re Dasharadha Raja Nandana’. In ‘Pallavi Swarakalpa valli’ which is a book having a compilation of Compositions of Vina Kuppayyar there is one more Geetham in Triputa Tala which goes as “Dhara Dalitha Champaka”. In this Geetham there is ‘Solvate’ in the middle of the Geetham which is a rare feature. The ‘sol’ used is ‘Thaa kki nanthari tha nam’. Viditha Madanu Vilasanure’ is another Geetham found in ‘Gayaka Parijatham’ Of Tachuru Brothers set to Triputa Tala. This Geetha is also found in ‘Pradhamabhyasa Pusthakamu’ which is an appendix of ‘Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini’ of
Subbarama Dikshitar. There is a Sanchari given in Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini by Subbarama Dikshitar set to Matya tala. ‘S;;; N S N’ is Jatiswaram set to Trisra Eka Talam composed by Tanjavur Ponnayya. ‘S;; D’ is another Jatiswaram set to Misra Chapu of the same composer. There is Jatiswaram composed by Vina Seshanna set to ‘Sankeerna jati Triputa Talam. The composition goes as “G;; M G R S N” in which the rare feature is the Tala. “S, Sn PD N’ is a Jathiswaram composed by Vina Krishnamacharya in this raga set to Adi Tala. This is a huge piece with nine charanas in it. All his compositions could be seen in the book ‘Gana Manjari, edited by Dr. Alamelu Govinda rajan published by Kalakshetra. ‘Sami yemira Sarasana’ is a Swarajathi composed by Dasu Sriramulu a less known composer from Andhra region. This is set to Chapu Tala. The Swarajati starts in a swaraksharam in Adhara Shadja. Next in the order of compositions are the Varnams. There are 2 kinds of Varnams in general and they are Pada Varnams and Tana Varnams. Pada Varna is a Varna used for dance and goes in vilamba Laya. On the other hand Tana Varna is used in Music and goes in Madhyama kala. The different Pada Varnams are:

1. “Samiki Sari Evvare” in Adi Tala
2. “Pannagendra Sayana” in Rupaka Tala, is an “Ashta Raga Malika” Varnam written by Swati Tirunal and has SANKARABHARANA as the basic Raga.

The interesting feature of another Pada Varnam ‘Manavi Chekona Rada’ is that it is set to Madhyama Kala or medium tempo in contrast to the above mentioned varnams which are in Vilamba Laya that is slower tempo. Subbarama Dikshitar has composed a Tana Varnam ‘Ra Rapu seyaga Rada’ in Ata Tala. “Indu mukhi ni samaya enazhal ni samaya” is a Mani PravalaVarnam in this raga composed by Swati Tirunal set to Khanda Jati Ata Tala. There is a raga Mudra in the Charana Sahithyam of this Varnam which comes as Anubandham. The languages used are Sanskrit, Malayalam and Tamizh. some interesting points to be noted in the very famous Khanda Jati Ata Tala Varnam ‘Chalamela’ composed by Swati Tirunal are that, firstly this Varnam is originally composed by Tanjavur Vadivelu who attributed it to Raja Swati Tirunal and secondly this Varnam starts with the Vishesha Prayoga ‘S N P” and the Muktayi Svara ends with a Makuta Svara having Srotovaha Yati pattern.

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  D N
  P D N
  M P D N
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Yati Prana is one of the Tala Dasa Pranas wherein the arrangement of the notes or Jatis is explained in a particular Tala. This is of six types, of which Srotovaha Yati is one. A Srotovaha Yati is a progression of svaras in which the starting will be narrow and extending in width towards the end like a river. This can be observed in above Svara structure. Thirdly the Charana starts with a Svarakshara as could be observed below.

“P ; ; pm gr gm G”
Pa pa-------- ja thi

And finally the third Chitta Svara has a beautiful Nyasa of the Svara Panchama. This feature can also be observed in the Chittasvaras of the Tamizh varnam “Enda Neramum” composed by Ponnayya Pillai. For example:

‘P dpm P mmp ggrsnd P dnsr s P’ and goes on.

The Varnam ‘Enda Neramum’ set to Ata Tala composed by Tanjai. K. Ponnayya Pillai is another good composition in this raga. This Varnam also has similar trends as in the varnam mentioned above. For example there is a Srothovaaha Yati pattern in the beginning of Mukthayi Svaram which goes as follows:

M pm pmgr “gmP
R gmP
S r g m p”

In the Ettukada or Charana Svaras the 3rd Svara has interesting patterns woven around the phrase ‘dPm’. Palghat Parameshwara Bhagavathar has composed a Varnam in this raga which is not very much in vogue. There is one more Ata Tala Varnam by Patnam Subrahmanya Ayyar “Niluparani Mohambutho ma Ramani”. Yet another Ata Tala Varnam composed by Madhurai Subrahmanya Ayyar “Undan Pada Pankaja” (ref: Varna Sagaram Page no: 188 &
An interesting feature observed in this varnam is that it has six Charanasvaras. It is a Tamil composition. The next set of compositions to be observed is Pre-Trinity compositions:

There is an Ata tala kriti ‘Hari Pada Teerdhame’ composed by Thallapaka Chinnayya in addition to numerous Purandara Dasa kritis, Thevarams and Divya Prabandhams. There is a Tarangam called ‘Sri Vasudeva Prabho’ composed by Narayana Teertha in this raga set to Misra Chapu and traditionally it is believed that the 12th Ashtapadi ‘Pashyathi Disi disi’, which is set to Tripura Tala, should be sung in SANKARABHARANA. ‘Vande Govinda Rajam’ is another beautiful composition of Margadarsi Seshayyangar in SANKARABHARANA. The word Margadarshi is attributed to his name as he was felt as torchbearer of including the ‘Prasa’ and other things into musical compositions moving away from the then prevailing music based on ‘Chandas’. He was living a century before the Musical Trinity around 16th century. His Mudra was ‘Kosala’. The explanation by Dr. V.V. Srivatsa of different compositions is as follows:

“There are two outstanding compositions of Krishna Swami Ayya in SANKARABHARANA. The first kriti is ‘Sharade sadashraye’ in Trisra Eka. Secondly, ‘SHANKARABHARANA shankha chakra dhara SANKARABHARANA sayana Sankara’ in Eka Tala has a commendable sahitya structure. Ayya addresses Lord Vishnu as ‘Sankara’, the cause of comfort. Ramaswamy Dikshitar composed a piece that has profound credence with seven Charanas named ‘Shambho Jagadisha Pahimam’ and it is also mentioned for sahithya par excellence. ‘Elagu Daya Vachura’ is a simple and sweet composition of Pallavi Gopalayya which is popularized by Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer.” Dr.V.V.Srivatsa has done extensive research on the raga SANKARABHARANA and analyzed different compositions of Trinity. Some of his excerpts are mentioned below:

“We have 42 compositions by the Trinity in this raga, duly excluding 35 Nottusvara passages by Muthuswamy Dikshitar” In Tyagaraja’s compositions we can see the preponderance of Svara Panchama usage in kritis such as ‘Yeduta Nilachithe, Sundareswaruni, Manasu swadheennamaina and Pari palaya’ etc. The prominence of the Svara Gandhara can be observed in the compositions like ‘Emi neramu’, ‘Svara Raga Sudha Rasa’ and ‘Vara Leela Gana Lola’ and ‘Gatha Moha sritha pala’. A rare emphasis on the Svara Nishada can be found in the compositions like ‘Ee Varaku’ and ‘Valla gadanaka’.
Similarly, a predominant usage of Panchama and higher Shadja in Muthuswamy Dikshitar compositions can be seen. Examples of this are ‘Naga Lingam’ ‘Sada sivam’ and ‘Sundereswaraya’. There is trend towards Mandra Sthayi in the composition ‘Akshaya Linga Vibho’. The swara Gandhara is given importance in the kriti ‘Gurumurthe’.

Shyama Sastry’s composition ‘Saroja Dala Netri’ starts in higher Shadja where as an unequal distribution of notes can be observed in ‘Devi meena Netri’. Another important feature to be observed here is that the above composition starts in Svaraksharam. Additionally, it is interesting to note that the raga is not used in the opera ‘Nowka Charitramu’ of Tyagaraja. We can observe a literary beauty of ‘Prasa’ in the kriti ‘Yeduta Nilachithe’ in charanam.

“Taraana dorakani paraaku na yeda
Nuraama jesithe suraasuralu metthura ipudu
Ee haraami tana melara”

There is one Tyagaraja kriti in this raga set to simple Adi tala ‘Rama Ramana rara’ in which there are several lyrical beauties. This is a kind of composition which could be taught even to the early kriti learners. There is an Alankara of ‘atishayokthi’ in this piece. In the Anupallavi of the composition the sahitya goes as:

“Samana mevaru vinuma manavini
Tamamu pogada taramaa ahipatikini”

The meaning could be explained as it is not even possible to praise the qualities of lord Rama even to ‘Ahipati’ that is Adisesha who is the serpent on which Lord Vishnu lies upon and who has thousand tongues. Thus the above explained alankara ‘Atishayokti’ could be seen here. ‘atishayokti’ is exaggeration of things. Another interesting feature found here is that there is a mixture of ‘Urdu’ words such as ‘tamamu’ which means ‘in totale’. (this kind of Urdu usage is also seen in ‘eduta nilachite’ where in charana it goes as ‘ee HARAMI’ tana which means not being Loyal) There is also nice prasa found in the charanam of the composition ‘Rama ramana’. Most of Muthuswamy Dikshitar’s compositions are dedicated to Lord Siva (8 out of 11) and two are on Ambal and one on Hanuman.

The pieces on Siva are:
1. Nagalingam  
2. Akshaya Linga Vibho  
3. Brihadeeswaraya  
4. Gurumurthe  
5. Sada Sivam  
6. Sundareswaraya  
7. Dakshinamurthe  
8. Tarakeswaraya

There is one on Hanuman ‘Pavanatmaja’, which is also a rare composition. ‘Parashakthi parakela’ is a Telugu composition set to Rupaka Tala. This composition could be seen in older version of ‘Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini’ of Subbarama Dikshitar. It is interesting to note that he also composed in Telugu different from ‘Sanskrit’ which is the Language he normally used for his compositions. There are structural similarities observed in the following compositions of Tyagaraja and Muthuswamy Dikshitar as in

1. Kamalambikaya and Emi Neramu  
2. Akshaya Linga Vibho and Manasu Swadheena

The two famous established compositions of Shyama Sastry include ‘Saroja Dala nethri’ and ‘Devi Meena Netri’, which belong to the Navaratna Malika Group and start with the former one. The explanation regarding these compositions given by Dr. V.V. Srivatsa is as follows:

“The kriti ‘Saroja Dala Netri’ serves as a medium for Shyama Sastry to affirm his implicit faith in Goddess Devi by the expression ‘Nee padambujamule sada nammina’, akin to ‘Ni Pada Pankajamule sthiramani Nammithi’ in his AHIRI Raga kriti. The other song, ‘Devi Meena Netri’ has a near twin – Navaratna Malika kriti named ‘Devi Ni Pada Sarasa’ in KAMBHOJI. Both kritis start with the same words and nearly the same svaras. Shyama Sastry uses “P M M G G M M” in SANKARABHARANA and “P D M M G G P D D S” in KAMBHOJI to make a clear distinction between the two ragas. The grandeur, splendor and serenity are very well perceived in the passage ‘Bala Nive Gathi chala nammina’, in the kriti ‘Devi Meena Netri’.

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Dr. V.V. Srivatsa feels that the creativity of Trinity has reached its zenith in their pieces in SANKARABHARANA. He made an interesting observation with regards to the flow of music in their compositions:

“Tyagaraja swami judiciously combined bhava exposition with raga development by means of a string of Sangatis. His compositions are characterized by both simple and complex structures. Muthuswamy Dikshitar stresses raga revelation, with a ‘Vilamba Kala Pallavi’, a suitable Anupallavi, a dynamic Madhyama Kala and a charana with a small passage with Tara sthayi svaras. Shyama Sastry adapts both techniques in “Devi Meena Netri”. There are sangathis a plenty in Pallavi and raga bhava dominates the charana. Perhaps, the creativity of Trinity has reached its zenith in compositions in SANKARABHARANA”.

Analysis of Swati Tirunal’s compositions in this raga results in three known compositions which are prominent. In the first one named ‘Kalaye Parvathinatha’, lyrics indicating the name of the raga SANKARABHARANA is mentioned: “Mukuta Virajitha Gangam, Baahu virajitha Bhujangam”. The second kriti is on cosmic dancing of Lord Siva named ‘Nrityati nrityati Samba shivo’. It is expressive of the theme of the song with repeated use of ‘Sol’, i.e. repeated use of ‘Trikita Thom’. The third composition ‘Rajivaksha Baro’ is the only composition in the Kannada language. Post Trinity compositions such as ‘Sankaracharyam’ and ‘Nannu karuninchi’ of Subbarama Dikshitar and ‘Bagu Meeraganu’ by Vina Kuppayya depict a Herculean theme. The kriti “Adiya Pada” of Gopala Krishna Bharathi has a different ‘Sol’ pattern which is cleverly interwoven with the lyrics of the song and three excerpts are mentioned below:

Salokadi padaviyum tandem tandem’ – wherein
solkattu “tandem” also means ‘I give’.

‘Nandi maddalam poduvum tagum tagum’ – wherein
the solkattu ‘tagum’ also means ‘befitting’.

‘Tiru chitrambalattanum taam taam enru’ – wherein the
solkattu “Taam taam” conveys the meaning ‘He himself.’
When a detailed study of musical prosody in different compositions set to this raga is done, the kriti “Akshaya Linga Vibho” stands first in order with ‘ksha’ kara Prasa with ‘Na’ kara Anuprasa in the madhyama kala sahitya of the kriti. There is Srothovaha Yati pattern in the kriti ‘Buddhi radu’ of Tyagaraja in the following manner:

“Amrita panamu
Vaagamrita panamu
Bhaktula vagamrita panamu”

The other kind of prosody that can be observed is Svarakshara. Some examples are in Ata Tala varnam of Tanjavur Vadivelu,

pa pa m gr gm G ------
Paa paa --- ja------ thi.”

1. All of the following are found in ‘Akshaya Linga Vibho’

‘S D’ in ‘sadastha kalpaka’
‘P D’ in ‘padadi samyutha’
‘P D’ in ‘padambuja bhava’
‘S D’ in ‘Sada siva sachidananda maya’

2. And finally there is a Suchitha Svarakshara of

‘S D’ in ‘Sada Siva Mupasmahe’.

The following are kritis composed by Mysore Vasudevachar in this raga:

1. Bhaja Manasa Saraswathim set to Adi Tala: This kriti starts in ‘Madhyama’ and the interesting feature is that all three parts (pallavi, anupallavi and charanam) of the
composition start in ‘Madhyama’. The sahithya of the composition portray Sangitam as a combination of melodic exercise of ‘Bhava, Raga and Tala.

2. Smara Ramachandram set to Adi Tala.

3. Harini Smarinche Bhagyamu set to Khanda Jati Triputa talam: In this piece there is a question and answer pattern in the Pallavi. The first line questions “Who can get the divine fortune of singing about Lord Hari?” and as an answer “devotees who always keep Him in their hearts”

4. Rama devi Mamavathu set to Rupaka Tala

‘Yaro Endrennamale’ is a ‘Rama Nataka Kirtanam’ composed by Arunachala Kavirayar in this raga. The Kirtanam refers to the incident of ‘Siva Danurbhangam’ in RAMAYANA. It is interesting to observe the apt usage of the raga SANKARABHARANA for describing the scene related to Lord Siva. This raga has been mentioned in several old treatises including Sangita Ratnakara, Sangita Makaranda and Sangita Samaya Sara, Brihaddesi, Svara Mela Kalaanidhi and many other literary works of Indian music. Description of the raga SANKARABHARANA would remain half finished if the usage of the raga is not discussed in relation to Devarnamas. ‘Haridasa Kirtana Tarangini’, a book published nearly 80 years back would reveal 32 Devarnamas set in the raga SANKARABHARANA elaborating the popularity of this beautiful Raga. Some famous Devaranamas are ‘Deva Banda Namma Swami Bandano’, and ‘Iko Namma Swami’. SANKARABHARANA as a Raga is very apt for rendering Pallavis. This being a Rakti raga can be widely used for this. Some famous Pallavis are:

‘Sharavana bhava guhane’
‘Mahima teliya tarama’

And it forms the base raga for the Chatur Raga Pallavi evolved by Kunrakkudi Krishna Iyer. The Pallavi mentioned below has four Raga names, the other ragas being TODI, KALYANI and DARBAR.

“SANKARABHARANA
Anai AzhaitTODI vadi KALYANI DARBARukku”
There is a chauka kala pallavi in this raga which has two pada garbham which goes as:

“chakkaga nee bhajana cheyu variki
Takkuva phalamu galada Sri Rama dinadinamu”

The two pada garbham one is at Bhajana and second pada garbham is at Galada. In this pallavi three places could be used for singing svarakalpana first at ‘Chakkaga’, secondly at ‘takkuva’ and finally at ‘Sri rama’

This raga was also prevalently used in the Pre Trinity compositions named Padams by Kshetrayya. The most famous Padam is ‘Evvade Vadu Nannu Pavvalinchina Vela’. The other composer who composed Padams in this raga is Muvvalur Sabhapathi Iyer. He composed the famous Rajagopala Padams and examples in this raga are ‘Darijoochi’ and ‘Maname bhooshanam’. There are other Padams composed in Tamil which are ‘Nalla Nalla Nilavu’ composed by Ghanam Krishnayyar and ‘Manadariyamal’ by Muthu Tandavar. ‘Nenu nee danara’ is a Telugu padam composed by Dasu Sriramulu in this raga set to Adi Talam. There is one more Padam by same composer set to Misra Chapu Tala which goes as ‘Kamandhakaramu kappena’. Most of the compositions of Dasu Sri Ramulu have been set to tune by Voleti Venkateswarlu and N. Ch. Krishnamacharyulu. Acharya Dokka Srirama Murthy is a composer from Pithapuram Samsthanam in Andhra Pradesh who composed Kirtanams and Varnams in 72 Melakartas which is not known to musical world. The piece he composed in DHEERA SANKARABHARANA in his 72 melaraga kritis is “dheera sankarabharana Raga mun” set to Adi tala. ‘Siva Sankara Hara’ is another composition done by Peri Ramamurthy Sastrulu an unknown composer from Andhra which is set to Rupaka Tala. Kochcharlakota Ramaraju is another less known composer from Andhra who composed thematic kirtanams on ‘Sri Rama Karnamritam’ in which there is an extensive usage of the raga SANKARABHARANA. ‘Dude Sitarama Sastry’ is a lesser known composer from Andhra who composed a varna in this raga which goes as ‘Sami Rademira’ which starts in swaraksharam and nice datu svara prayogas could be observed in the Muktyai Svaram of the Varna. There is also a Srotavaha Yati pattern that could observed in the third charana svaram which goes as ‘M P , G M P , R G M P , S R G M P’. There is a Daru in Prahlada Bhakthi Vijayam, the Opera in this raga, which has several proverbs and rhetorical beauties and is composed by Tyagaraja. It is interesting to notice that there is no Javali found in this raga but
there are several of them in its Janya ragas such as Bilahari, Behag etc. Tillanas follow next in line which are very few in number in this raga. ‘Nadru Dheem Dheem’ composed by Srirangam Rangaswami Nattuvan and ‘Tatta Dheemtha Dirana’ by Ponnayya Pillai are two to name. There is one more Tillana composed by Vina Seshanna ‘Nadir Nadir dhi tillana’ set to Adi Tala. ‘Ennai allayya’ is a Koteeswara Iyer’s composition in this raga set to Adi talam, who is said to have composed in 72 melakartas. “Kamalamba Annaye” is a composition of Papanasam Sivan in this raga set to Adi Tala. There is very nice ‘Prasa’ in the composition. All 3 parts that is Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam start with the same word ‘Kamala’. ‘Madhava puviyadil’ is another Sivan’s composition on Lord Vittala. These are in addition to the very famous kriti ‘MahaLakshmi’ set to Misra Chapu Tala. The other compositions of Sivan include ‘Sundara Rupa’, ‘Pathi Padam’, and ‘Akhilanda’ ‘Karunai Malaradi’ Set to Adi Tala. Abhayambika is another piece in the raga by the composer. ‘Naa Thalli Neeve yani’ is a Telugu composition of Smt. Ambujam Krishna in this raga. The piece is on Goddess Seetha which is a rare feature. There are few Kirtanams like ‘Dehi Thava pada bhakthim’ etc. on Goddess Seetha of which above are a few to name. ‘Pathi nee andre’ is another composition of Ambujam Krishna set to Adi tala in which Anupallavi has repeated use of the word ‘Pathi’ in the second line as could be seen in the words ‘Sripathi, Bhoopathi and Jagat Pathi’ all of them rhyming with the beginning of anupallavi ‘gathi neeve’ which means ‘he is the destination’ who is the ‘pathi’ that is King of ‘Sri’ meaning Lakshmi ‘bhoo’ means Mother Earth and ‘Jagath’ means Universe. ‘Valar vandu’ is another composition of the composer in this raga on Lord Siva set to adi tala.

There is Raga Mudra in Periyasami Turan’s composition in the raga SANKARABHARANA set to Adi Tala. The piece is ‘Thayinai Kkaanaada’. The raga mudra is there in the end of 4th line in Pallavi. Another composition is ‘Chudar Vadi Vela’ set to Adi tala. The composition ‘Ma Madhura Meenakshi’ starts in ‘Swaraksharam’ in ‘Madhyamam’ and this piece is set to Chapu Tala. The raga is the starting raga in his Ragamalika ‘Pichchai Edikka’ set to Misra Chapu Tala. The other ragas used in this ragamalika are ‘NAYAKI’ ‘NATA’ ‘SRI’ ‘TODI’ ‘KHAMAS’ ‘DHANYASI’ ‘DHENUKA’ “SURATI’. ‘Tharuna Midu danayya’ is another composition of Turan in this raga set to Jhampe Tala. The above list shows us the variations the composer has brought in his creations.

Muttaiah Bhagavatar has composed Ashtotthara Kirtanams based on Siva ashtotharam and Chamundi Ashtotharam and 108 kirtanams each on Lord Siva and Mysore
Chamundeswari based on their ‘Ashtothara Shata Namavali’. Of these 73rd on Chamundi is based on 73rd nama ‘Chandra Rekha Vibhooshitayai Namaha’ and Kirthana goes as ‘Chandra Rekha vibhooshithe Champeya Hare’ which is set to Adi Tala.

There are ‘Sri Venkateswara Pancharatns’ composed by ‘Thachuru brothers’ of whom the 4th one ‘Srinivasa mupasmahe’ is in the raga SANKARABHARANA set to Triputa Tala. The other 4 being ‘Sesha Saila Vasam’ in TODI, ‘Sesha Chala Nayakam’ in BHAIRAVI, ‘Srinivasa Prabho’ In Kambhoji, and the last one ‘Sri Venkatesa Manisham’ in KALYANI. They are set to ‘Adi’, ‘Rupaka’, ‘chapu’ and ‘Jhampe” Talas respectively.

On the whole, it can be said with certainty and conviction that SANKARABHARANAM is a raga that has attracted several composers starting from ‘Pannisai’ period to current contemporaries and befits the place given by Venkatamakhin as ‘Raga Rajasya Melakah’