CHAPTER 5

Varnams For Voice Training

This chapter is the crux of the dissertation and analyses objectively ways in which varnams as a composition may be used for training the voice. The uniqueness of varnams is highlighted and the way in which they help in training the voice will be presented with the aid of notations, graphs and audio presentations.

5.1 Advantages of using Varnams vis-à-vis other compositions for Voice Training

The varnams as a composition has all exercises interwoven within itself for voice training. It is not necessary to pick out lines from a varnams to practice certain aspects of voice training but just singing different varnams regularly will impact a range of vocal activities.

5.1.1 Varnams vis-à-vis Abhyāsa gāna

The foundation for training in Carnatic music is laid by what is today termed as ‘abhyāsa gāna’ comprising of graded svara exercises, janta svaras, dātu svaras, alankāras, gītas, jatisvara, svarajati and varnams.

Of these svarāvali, janta and dātu are designed to introduce students to the svara varieties and sthānas or positions. Alankāras introduce svara patterns as well as the sulādi talas. Gītas are simple songs where sāhitya is introduced for the first time and for each svara there is a syllable or sāhitya akshara. Rendered as svara or as akara without syllables these exercises can only be used as a preliminary training exercise for the voice.
Jatisvaras and svarajatis are predominantly used in dance recitals but there are some svarajatis, particularly those of Śyāma Śāstri, that are used widely in vocal music. These however are very few in number and consequently showcase only a few rāgas and svara patterns and offer limited scope for exhaustive voice training.

Varnams on the other hand are used as abhyāsa gāna as they range from the very simple to complex. They are used both as practice exercises and in the performing tradition. This is because of the intrinsic value of varnams in training the voice both in terms of voice production as well as musical development.

**5.1.2 Varnams vis-à-vis kritis**

In the history of our music compositions first appear in the Asūtapadis of Jayadēva (12th century A.D) wherein rāga names and tālas are mentioned. The tévārams predate this (6th and 7th centuries A.D) but only names of Panns (rāgas) are specified and no tālas are mentioned. Today after nearly ten centuries, these are rendered in many different ragas by different musicians in the absence of knowledge of the original form.

This was followed by kīrtanas or songs with devotional content, a kind of sacred musical form with pallavi, anupallavi and multiple caranas. The compositions of Purandaradāsa (16th century), Tarangams of Nārāyana Tīrtha (17th century), and the Divyanāma and Utsava Sampradāya songs of Sri Tyagarāja (18th century) fall in this category. The above are meant mainly for congregational singing have simple tunes and are highly repetitive. They
were meant to create a feeling of bhakti or devotion in the minds of the listener and were not designed to prepare a student for classical music.

**Kritis** as they are rendered today are compositions that emerged sometime in the 18th century and the composers who really established it and gave shape to it was the musical trinity. Śyāma Śāstri, Tyāgarāja and Muttuswāmi Dīksitar

- Of the musical compositions rendered in Carnātic music, **kritis** form a major part. A flexible composition both for the composer and the singer, the kriti lends itself to differing kālapramāna or tempo, moods, rāga bhāva and sāhitya bhāva. This being the case there is too much diversity and variety in this form for it to be used in voice training. It is however an invaluable source for understanding rāga nuances and can definitely be the basis for creative rāga elaboration - Varnāms on the other hand have a more structured format and appear similar at least on the exterior with most composers adhering to the format of purvāngam with pallavi, anupallavi and muktāyi svara and uttarāngam with caranā sāhitya and ettukada svaras. The intrinsic part will however vary based on the skill of the composer.

- While the purport of the kriti is to bring out the essence of the rāga and elevate the listener with the rāga and sāhitya - the varnām is a conscious effort to create lot of vowel extensions with limited sāhitya as well as multiple svara patterns, janta, dātu etc. to train the voice for excellence in later performance. Such creative svara combinations are unparalleled in any other composition.

- Kritis have a mixed kālapramānam i.e. a single sangati may have a combination of multiple speeds or tempi - Unlike a varnām that can
be rendered in three speeds, one cannot render a kritis in three speeds. The varnam thus helps in training the voice for both slow and fast rendition. Muscle movement in the throat area is strengthened with these exercises.

**Kriti - Vātāpi Ganapatim bhajéham**

**Pallavi- (Three sangatis are shown with speed variations)**

1. g , r, r s n l p r, n l r, s n s r ||
   Vā | tā pi gan | a patim bha jé ham. ||
2. g , s r g, r s r s n l p r, n l r, s n s r ||
   Vā ... | tā pi gan | a l patim bha jé ham. ||
3. g p g r s r g r s n s r s n l p r, n l r, s n s r ||
   Vā .... | tā... pi ga n | a patim bha jé ham..

**Varnam - Sāmi ninné kōri**

**Pallavi:**

sō , , n sō d n p , - m p m g m , l p , - d n p , - d n l sō rō - sō n d p d n ||
Sā ... | .... mi ... | . ni ... | l n nē ... | - kō ... ... | ri ... ||
sō , - s | sō d p m p , p m g r - s r g - s l n | - p | d | n | s , - p m l g r - g m p , d n ||
cā ... | l a ... ma ru ... | l u ... | l kō ... ... | n n a | l ... - d i . r ā ... ||

**Anupallavi:**

s , - d d p m - d p , m - g p g , m r l g m p - d d p m p | l d n sō n sō , rō gō ||
tā ... ... | ma ... sa ... ... | l mu ... | sē ... ya ... || ... ... ka ... ||
mō gō rō - sō sō rō sō n | d p d n | sō rō sō , l sō d p - p , m g r l | s m g m p , d n ||
da ... ya ... jū ... | da ... ra ... | l ... ku ... ... | l mā ... rā ... ||

There can be many sangatis for a single line of a kriti and varying speeds are combined unlike a varnam where there is uniformity in
speed and there are no sangatis. The variation in the speed in the above notation is shown with a line underneath the svaras to indicate a double speed

- Kritis usually have profusion of words unlike a varnam which has very little sāhitya - Varnāms are interspersed with a lot of vowel sounds which are useful for voice training and breath control.

- A kriti does not carry the tag of uniformity as different artists and teachers render the same kriti differently. This is because of lack of documentation and recording facilities - On the other hand since there is strict adherence to the dhātu or musical setting even in the pallavi and anupallavi of a varnam, there are hardly any differences in the rendition of varnāms irrespective of pātāntara and belonging to differing schools of music. Thus there can be a uniform basis for voice training.

- The value of varnāms for voice training vis-à-vis other musical compositions is sometimes underestimated and varnams may be treated as yet another type of composition that a beginner has to traverse before moving on to the kriti and the crest jewel of Carnātic music, the rāgam tānam pallavi. Voice training through varnāms can be made challenging and interesting by a creative artist or teacher.

5.2 Varnāms as Abhyāsagāna or as Voice Training Technical Form
The voice can reproduce faster and easier certain patterns and phrases that have been tried out before rather than the first time. This is possible with the use and practice of varṇams.

H. Yōganarasimham writes in the biography of Mysore Vāsudevachar82 that ‘Patnam Subramanya Iyer started with the varṇam ‘Maraci’ in Begada which was his favourite rāga. This one varṇam alone took three months. Vāsu had to do each avarta in three degrees of speed forward and backward and also do the rāga alapana within the compass of each avarta. In this way rāga ālāpana and niraval came in for intensive practice in due course’

First of all learning a varṇam or any other composition has to be done in a slow pace over a period of time. Learning in this manner will result in better assimilation and better memory when the song has to be recalled. Learning in a hurry will result in forgetting it in a hurry as well.

Practice in multiple speeds helps in training the voice for rendering both slow and fast musical phrases. Developing the rāga, singing kalpana svaram and niraval based on patterns within the varṇam help in developing creativity. A detailed analysis of this is in chapter 6.

At first fairly simple varṇams in rāgas where flat notes may be used are introduced. Later on the nuances of the rāga are introduced through varṇams in other major and rakti rāgas. The value of varṇams for abhyāsa or practice is clearly recognised.

82 Carnātic Music Composers pp.53
Until the point varnams are introduced, it is usually a single svara or note, for a unit of tāla but with varnams the concept of kārvai or sustained notes that may not always coincide with the tāla beat, is introduced. The concept of gamakas and subtle sruti variations and inflections of the voice is introduced. The voice is introduced to a new regimen of practice.

5.2.1 Uniqueness of Varnams

In the period after the prabandhas, elaborate rāgam tānam pallavis and kritis started being composed and sung. Composing a varnam was taken more as a challenge and it is more of a technical composition as the stress is more on the rāga lakshanam or the grammar of the music.

Varnams have certain unique features:

1. A lot of vowel extensions are used and are suitable for voice training.
2. Innumerable svara patterns and combinations particularly in the muktāyi svara and caranam ettukada both for voice training and kalpana svara
3. Many varnams range from the mandra sthāyi to the tāra sthāyi
4. There are fewer words compared to a kriti. The emphasis is not so much on the text or sāhitya but on the svara combinations used in a particular rāgā.
5. This composition can be sung in varying speeds – first, second and third- unlike a kriti.
6. Different tāla gatis may be used such as tiśram, miśram and khandam
7. Varnams may be used to familiarise the student with some rare rāgas
8. Typical rāga sancāras and rare or ārsha prayogas of a rāga are found in varnams.

9. Unlike kritis, varnams have remained relatively unchanged.

10. Varnams may also be used to strengthen the ‘kāla pramānam’ or the laya aspect.

5.3 Varnams to Increase Vocal Range

A singer is usually most comfortable in the madhya sthāyi of the chosen sruti or pitch. To reach below the ādhāra sādja becomes progressively harder as one reaches the mandra pancamam. Similarly going above the tāra sādjam is usually difficult as one touches above the tāra gāndharam.

The voice thins out and often the singer uses a false voice because of lack of confidence. Singing varnams regularly particularly in a slow speed will help increase the vocal range as the voice would have traversed these reaches in the varna sancāras.

As such, the grammar of music does not require very high notes or very low notes. A reasonably good tonal range should suffice for the singer. Even if a composition requires one to reach low in the mandra or high in the tāra sthāyi, one is not required to hold a sustained note but just touch the note and then move on to the next note above or below it.

If a singer has a natural range of about two octaves, with regular practice one can reach a range of at least two and a half octaves. Some musicians are more comfortable in the higher octave while some can reach the lower octave with ease. The practice of varnams will help musicians gain
equal strength in all the octaves. The tonal quality changes with the change in octave. Training will ensure that this transition is smooth.

5.3.1 With Mandra Sthāyi Sancārās:

A study of varṇams reveals that a large number of these compositions begin and hover around the lower reaches of the madhya sthāyi or middle register and the mandra stāyi or the lower register.

One of the finest examples for mandra sancāras is the Bhairavi ata tāla varṇam Viribon of Pachimiryum Adiappayya. The pallavi begins with -

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s , , r n, , d , n , s , r , , g s , r , l
ā - - - - - - Vī - ri - bō - - - - - - l
 g r g g r , , g g r g m p d - m p g r s l
 nī - - - - - - ni - - - - - - - - l
 n s m g r s - n s r g s r n d n ||
nne - - - - kō -l-- - - - rī - - - l
 s g r n s n d p n, 
 - - - - - - -`

A few observations can be made from the first āvarta or tāla cycle of the varṇam:

- There are lot of kārvais or spaces between syllables
There are mandra and madhya sancarās to stabilise the voice and establish the base for further singing.

The key rāga phrases are introduced at the beginning so as to establish the rāga bhāva.

The syllables are split in a way that the actual words are not clear because of the distance between syllables. This is more because varṇaṁs help train the voice and the stress is on the mandra sancāras and not the words.

Mandra sādhanā or practice in the lower octave has a special role to play in strengthening breathing patterns. The idea that mandra sādhanā improves singing in the higher ranges are true not directly but in that it improves breath control and strength and volume. This is the reason why teachers of music have always advocated mandra sthāyi practice. Mandra svaras use the chest register and the sound that is thus produced has a deep resonance.

The Nāradīya Śikṣa stresses the importance of practice in the mandra sthāyi as that strengthens the voice.

\[
\text{Mandra} \; \text{Saṅkramaṇa} \; \text{Pūrvaṃ} \; \text{Saṅkramaṇa} \; \text{Sāmya} \; \text{Svayam} \; \text{Vidhi}
\]

\[
\text{Saṅkramaṇa} \; \text{Māṇḍra} \; \text{Sāman} \; \text{Vṛtā} \; \text{Vṛtā} \; \text{Vṛtā} \; \text{Vṛtā} \; \text{Vṛtā} \; \text{Vṛtā}
\]

(One should sing at least seven māṇḍras in the mandra octave and only after that can one sing according to their own wish.)

It is recommended that this mandra practice be done in the early morning as that will clear the voice and make it powerful. Although NaS was meant for chanting sāman, classical music is believed to be the fifth veda and many of the rules are applicable to both streams.

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83 NaS Dvitiya Prapataka Ashtami khandika verse 8 Pg 183
Even today in dhrupad singing, it is very important to dwell for a long time in the mandra octave. Known as kharaj sādhana, practice helps one reach the anumandra sadjam. This calls for deep breathing from the nābhi or abdomen. The voice also has a resonance that is developed over a period of time

Rāmasvāmi Dīkshitar’s varṇaṁ in Sankarābharaṇam ‘Rarapuseyaka’ is quite unique as most of the varṇaṁ has only mandra and madhya sthayi sancāras. Mandra sancāras are most suitable for voice training and it is possible that Rāmasvāmi Dīkshitar designed the varṇaṁ for the purpose. The following features may be seen in the varṇaṁ:

- The very first āvarta hovers a lot in the mandra sthayi and the pallavi and anupallavi are mainly in the madhya sthāyi touching the tāra sadjam occasionally.

- The caranam sāhitya ranges from the mandra nisādam to the madhya sthāyi madhyamam

- The second ettukada svara reaches the mandra gāndhāram and the third ettukada has a lot of patterns in the sadjam to madhyamam range

- All the ettukada svaras are within the range of the mandra gāndharam to madhya dhaivatam. There is absolutely no tāra sthāyi sancāram.

Rāmasvāmi Dīkshitar’s varṇams are mainly in praise of Tyāgarāja, the ruling deity of Tiruvārūr. The varṇams have devotional lyrical content.

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84 SSP Part IV Pg. 829
and very few words. Also typically his varṇaṁs have few ettukada svaras and often no sāhitya for the caranṇaṁ ettukada svaras.

Some examples of varṇaṁs with mandra sthāyi sancāras are as follows:

1. The muktāyi svaram of the Bhairavi atā tāla varṇaṁ Viribōn ṣi of Pachimiryum Ādiyapayya has a lot of patterns in the mandra sthāyi.

   * g g r s r s n n d n s r |
   m m p m p d d n n p p p - d d d - n n n n - s s r l |

   2. It is interesting that the third ettukada svaram in the same Bhairavi varṇaṁ begins with svaras in the mandra stāyi. Such a svara pattern is quite unusual. This ettukada, though given in the SSP of Subbarāma Dikshitar, is rarely sung in the concert platform. For the very same reason many singers are not even aware of the existence of this ettukada svara. Apart from starting on the mandra pancamam, this ettukada has some difficult prayōgas, which will be mentioned later.

   p d n s r g m g r s n d p m g r s n d p l |
   m p d n s r ----- |

   The ettukada svara starts in the mandra pancamam and goes down to the mandra madhyamam. For the voice to be clear and audible in the mandra sthāyi a lot of practice is required.

   3. The Sahāna varṇaṁ Karunimpa of Tiruvottriyur Tyāgayyar moves to the mandra madhyamam in the first āvartana

   p, m, g, g m r, g r s, l |
   ka ru nim - - - - - - pa l |
4. The Navarāgamālikā varnām Valaci vacci of Patnam Subramanya Aiyer is a unique one that starts in the mandra sthāyi pancamam. It begins in the rāga Kedāram

\[\text{p()}, \text{n()}, \text{ s \ldots s n} \text{n} \text{ s r s s n} \text{n} \text{l} \]
\[\text{va} - \text{la} - \text{ci} - - - \text{va} - - - \text{ci} - - - l \]
\[\text{s m g m p n p p l m m g g r r s n} \text{ll} \]
\[\text{yu} - - - \text{nna} - - - \text{lnā} - - - \text{pai} - - - ll \]

In the same varnām the muktāyi svaram is in Kalyāṇi and begins in the mandra sthāyi

\[\text{d} \text{n} \text{s r, g – s r g m, - d p m g r} \text{l} \]
\[\text{n} \text{g r - n} \text{r n} \text{d} \text{n} \text{l s r g m p, , ll} \]

The muktāyi svaram continues in the rāga Begada after two avartās of Kalyāṇi and here again there are mandra sancāras

\[\text{n d p m, g r g d m, g r s n, d} \text{l} \]
\[\text{p} \text{s n} \text{r s g r l p m d p s} \text{n r} \text{s} \text{l} \]

5. The Kāmbhōji ādi tāla varnām Tarunōi begins in the mandra sthayi

\[\text{p(), d(), s, r n} \text{d} \text{p - d} \text{s r g m m} \text{l} \]
\[\text{ta ru nōi} - - - - - - - - - l \]

6. The ata tāla varnām Sarasijanābha in the same rāga also hovers in the same range at the beginning

* \text{m, g, s, n} \text{p(), d, l} \]
\[\text{sa ra si -- ja --} \]
The range of this varṇam is the māndra gāndhāraṃ which rarely occurs in any composition. It is included in the varṇam just to increase the range of the voice in the māndra sthāyi. Most often, in an untrained voice, there will be little or no sound at this level. Only puffs of air may emanate. Regular practice of notes in the māndra sthāyi will help in increasing the vocal range.

7. Pallavi Duraiswami Iyer’s Ārabhi varṇam Sarasijamukhiro touches the māndra madhyamam in the first avartana.

8. The third ettukada in the Gaula varṇam celimikōri of Veenā Kuppayyar reaches the māndra madhyamam

9. Veenā Kuppayyar’s ata tāla varṇam Sāmi Vanajākṣi in Rītigaula opens with a lot of māndra sancāras
10. The Śrīrāga varṇaṃ *Sami ninnekōri* of Karur Devudu Ayya touches the mandra madhyama in the second ettukada and the fourth ettukada. This varṇaṃ however does not go beyond the tāra gāndhārum

2\textsuperscript{nd} ettukada

\[ n, \ldots, s \textsuperscript{m} \textsuperscript{p} g r s n, \ldots, s n \textsuperscript{m} p m \textsuperscript{m} g r s n, \textsuperscript{m} s r n s m p \textsuperscript{n} \]

4\textsuperscript{th} ettukada

\[ n, p m r g r s n, p m p m p n s r \]

Practice of the above varṇaṃs regularly will ensure that the voice gains sufficient strength and depth in the lower register.

5.3.2 With Tāra Sthāyi Sancārās:

Most varṇaṃs have a range of two octaves ranging from mandra madhyamam to tāra madhyamam or pancamam depending on the rāga thus reiterating the fact that an ideal range of at least two octaves from mandra madhyamam to tāra madhyamam or pancamam is essential for a vocalist.

While there is a profusion of mandra sancāras in varṇaṃs tāra sancāras are fewer and most phrases go upto the gāndhrāra or madhyamam and rarely upto the pancamam. Thus suggesting that it is not essential to strain oneself and sing in the tāra pancamam. Also the voice has greater depth in the middle and lower registers.

The extent of tāra sthāyi sancāras depend on the rāga in which the varṇaṃ is composed. In a rāga like Ānandabhairavi or Pantuvarāḷi there are fewer tāra sancāras as the rāga is best developed in the madhya sthāyi
whereas in rāgas like Hamsadhvani or Kānada phrases touch the tāra pancamam.

Most varṇams touch the tāra madhyamam in the muktāyi svaram or the last ettukada svaram. Thus beginning on a lower note and gaining in pitch and complexity as one progresses.

It has been observed that the mandra sancāra upto madhyamam or the tāra sancāra upto tāra pancamam usually do not have a kārvai meaning that one does not have to hold a sustained note at that range. It is essential only to reach that point momentarily before traversing elsewhere. Holding a sustained note on the tāra pancamam may not be pleasing to the ear. Most often sustained notes are held on the tāra gāndhāram and tāra madhyāmam and not above that.

1. The Kānada ata tāla varṇam Neranammiti of Poochi Srinivāsa Iyengar has a muktāyi that has the svaras

\[ \text{\textbullet s}\text{n s}\text{r g}, \text{r s p g, m r s n s, r s n p} \]

m ----

The phrase \text{r p g}, is special for Kānada in both the madhya and tāra sthāyi.

2. The Ārabhi varṇam Sarasijamukhiro of Pallavi Duraiswami Iyer has the typical rāga phrase m g r r in the tāra sthāyi. The svaras hover around d s r m g r, which brings out the essence of the rāga. The fourth ettukada has the following sancāras in the tāra sthāyi:

\[ \ldots d d p - m p d s s | d s - s r - m g r l | m g r - r s s - s s r s s n d r s, \ldots \]
5.3.3 Glide from one octave to another

Each system of music has a special method of voice production that is generally. This is dependent on the nature of gamakas used, the pronunciation and phonetic sound of the words as well as musical tradition to which one belongs. It is a fact that the most natural sound of a person is in the madhya sthāyi or middle octave. Stretching it in direction, mandra or tāra will result in a differing voice production. This is because different registers in the body are used to produce differing sounds, the chest, the throat and the head. For mandra sancāras the voice emanates from the chest and the voice will be heavier. In the higher reaches, the voice automatically thins down and the voice emanates from the head register. Practice in the entire vocal range, as shown in varnāms, will help in balancing the three registers and the transition or glide from one to the other should be smooth and the change in voice production subtle.

Varnāms have examples of jumping octaves to give sufficient practice for the voice to handle it with ease.

1. The Kāmbhōji ādi tāla varnām Taruni of Fiddle Ponnumvāmi has such a pattern in the last ettukada svara

\[
\text{p d s r g, - g p d s r, - r g m p d l l sarasakūrā}
\]

2. The Sāma varnām Neraja of Kothavāsal Venkatrāma Iyer has a muktāyi svaram that shifts between madhya and tāra sancāras

\[
\text{s d s r, r - d s r - m g r s r, l m p d p, - m g r - s r m p d, l l}
\]

\[
\text{s d s r g, m g r s, - d s g, d p, l m g r - m g r g r s, d s g d p, - m g r l l}
\]
3. The risabh in Gaula is a very prominent note and the varnam Celinikōri emphasises this by using it in both the madhya and tāra sthāyi

\[ r\ddagger, \ldots, r\ddagger, s\ddagger, n p m r s | r, r, r m l r p n p s \ddagger n s \ddagger \]

4. The Sāveri varnam Sarasūda has an example in the last part of the muktāyi svara

\[ d g r s n d d s n d p m g r s l g r s n d r s l n d p m g r s d\ddagger \]

In the above pattern the svaras g r s, occur four times twice in the tāra sthāyi and twice in the madhya sthāyi. Practising such a pattern will allow the voice to freely traverse the different sthayis. At the end there is a cascading descent of notes \[ r\ddagger s\ddagger n d p m g r s d\ddagger \]

5. The last ettukada of the Śrirāga varnam Sāmi ninne has a pattern that incorporates the tāra and mandra sthayi

\[ r\ddagger n, - s\ddagger p n m p n m, - p r g r s \]
\[ r n\ddagger, - s p n s r l n s r s r m p n \]

5.4 Varnams for Breath Control

Everybody can sing or speak in a natural range (low, comfortable) but to reach higher notes, the vocal cords and breathing system need to be worked on. If the breathing is not in place it will put strain on the vocal cords. The pressure of air to try to reach those notes will be too great which will push the larynx up and make the voice "break" or "squeak". Breathing has to be low, diaphragmatic breathing. Any attempt to breathe lifting the shoulders will not only create tension around the neck area but will also be superficial, shallow
breathing. It is important to keep the head straight and not tilted in any
direction for a length of time. It is natural to move the head while singing but
the body of the singer, shoulder and neck area should never be stiff. This will
be an impediment to proper breathing.

Singing requires good breathing techniques. Though it can be
consciously cultivated initially, later it becomes a natural part of the singing.
Practice in proper exhalation and extended exhalation allows the musician to
sing a musical phrase without breaks in between. The impact is always better.
Sound production occurs during exhalation and the longer the exhalation; the
singer can sing longer phrases. It is not just long exhalation that is important
but controlled exhalation so that the sound produced is of an aesthetic quality.
There are aspects of breath control that must be taken care of:

1. It is not enough to just have air in the body to create sound. There
has to be adequate pressure in the muscles in the voice box to support the
voice so that the vocal chords are not strained.

2. Breathing hard and heavy is inefficient in terms of energy and also
tires the voice, the singer should maintain a steady breath and not wait till the
end of a phrase to take along and hard gasp but take it at suitable pause in a
musical phrase almost imperceptibly.

3. A proper posture is also important for correct breathing as that
allows proper flow of air or ‘prāṇa vāyu’. A Carnātic musician is already
seated in a posture that is meditative in a cross-legged fashion. Patanjali’s
yoga Śastra speaks of ‘āsana’ or seating posture as very important for proper
flow of blood and consequently proper oxygen supply, which in turn helps in
breath control. During practice singing varnams with the correct posture is very important.

For proper breathing techniques varnams are a great help. The presence of a lot of vowel extensions will make it difficult to take a breath in between, as it will spoil the melodic phrase. In the case of a kriti, the lyrics act as a support and the more the words, the easier it is to inhale and exhale in between whereas in varnams there are a lot of kārvais which help in developing breath control.

Taking pauses at the right time is important. This is dependent on the breath control that a singer has.

The NSS has explained when one can take a pause:

*Samāpte arthē padē vāpi*
*Tathā prānā āsvasēna ca*\(^{85}\)

(pauses can be observed at the end of a word when the meaning or breath requires it.)

**Practising varnams for breath control**

1. Āvartana literally means revolution. Training in singing an entire āvarta of a varnam without taking breath in between and slowly extending it can help in increasing the level of exhalation. This will help later in singing long melodic phrases without inappropriate breaks.

2. Apart from this the mandra sancāras in varnams help in developing breathing techniques. Mandra sthāyi singing requires one to take a deep breath and improper breathing will hamper singing in the lower octave.

---

\(^{85}\) NSS chp. 19 verse 67
5.5 Varnams for Flow and Continuity

Music has the quality to be absorbing because it has a flow and continuity. Only then is one able to feel the rāga. What ensures this continuity is a combination of two factors:

1. The ability to have a good grip over the rāga phrases. Any break in a rāga phrase may reduce the impact and the feel for the rāga. Also too many pauses and fragmentation of the phrases may sound more like an amalgam of svaras. To sing with the rāga bhava it is important to be able to sing long phrases sometimes to bring out the rāga bhāva. The way to sing is to take imperceptible pauses at the appropriate moments where a svara or two will not be swallowed while taking a breath

2. Continuity is ensured not only with breath control but also with a thorough knowledge of the perfect svara sthanās of a rāga. Proper practice in varnams will ensure both of the above qualities.

5.5.1 Vowel Extensions: Varnams have a profusion of vowel extensions. The vowels ā and ī are the most natural and occur most frequently.

The sapta svaras or seven notes sa ri ga ma pa dha ni combine only the two vowel sounds ā and ī. It is notable that the vowels of any language begin with the akāra and the oral tradition of music also emphasises the akāra. In fact an analysis of the vowel extensions in varnams reveals that often a single avarta may have just three or four consonant sounds in a range of sixteen akṣaras.
Regular practice of varnams will consciously or subconsciously ensure development musically. The way vowels and consonants are voiced will have a definite impact on the music. Vowels help in the prolongation of the musical sound.

Varnams use a mix of vowel and consonant sounds. Of the vowels used in varnams ‘a’ and ‘i’ are most common. Other vowel sounds such as ‘o’ and ‘u’ are also used but fewer in comparison.

1. An example can be seen in the Tōdi ata tāl varnam Kanakāngi of Pallavi Gōpāla Iyer

Varnams may start with vowel sounds or if the beginning is a consonant sound, it is soon followed by a vowel extension. It is this combination of vowel and consonant sounds that are useful for later ālapana and niraval singing.

This vowel extension need not be a sustained note. It can traverse a multitude of notes and this often helps in later tānam singing.
2. For example in the Rītigaula ata tāla varṇām Vanajāksa

\[n\ddot{s}n\ddot{s}gr\ddot{gm}^* p, m, g, r, s, l\]

sā mi va na jā kṣī

\[n\ddot{s}grsxn\ddot{n}\ddot{n}\ddot{p}\ddot{n}\ddot{n}\ddot{s}n\ddot{s}gr\ddot{gm}^{}\]

ni nnē
gmpdpmgmppmgrpm||grsnsnggm

ko ri na

Also a slightly nasal tone in the higher octave will have a more
pleasing sound than a full-throated open sound. This nasal resonance has to
come naturally and not be contrived. Training is also required in this direction.

3. The Tōdi varṇām erānāpai composed by Patnam Subramanya Iyer has almost all the vowel sounds.

\[s\ddot{r}, s\ddot{p}ndpndngmprmn\]

é, rā, nā, - paī, i, nta

n d p - m g r s r | g m p - g m p d n ||
cau, ka, sé, - ya, ||

s\ddot{r}g - nds\ddot{r}dnd - g\ddot{r}s\ddot{n}dpm|
mē, ra, gā, dū, rā, |
d, , , , s`n d pm gm pdn ||
nā, , , , sā, , , mi, , , ||

Careful observation would show that almost all vowel sounds appear
in the very first line itself. a ā i é ū ai ou all appear in the first two āvartas.
This must clearly be by design and not accident as the composer must have
been aware that vowels allow for free flow of air and consequently sound. The
Tōdi varṇaṁ has a lot of vowel extensions. The first half of the tāla or the laghu has patterns of three and the drutams have two threes and two fives.

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4. Pallavi Gōpāla Iyer’s ataṁ a talāṁ a varṇaṁ Intacalamu in Kāmbhōji has a lot of vowel extensions in the pallavi.

```
, , , , * g, m g - r, g r - s, , | s s r r g s r s n d - p , d d s, - s p d d
   d d |
In- - - - ta - - - - - - - - - - - cha - - - la - - -
   s - p d d , d d s, r g - s r p m g - s r || g r s n p d d s r
   - - - - - - - - - mu -- se - - - ya - - -
```

The sāhitya line of ‘Inta calamu seya’ is stretched over an entire āvartanam of the ata tālam. The akāram is stretched over aksharas using janta and other svara patterns ranging mainly in the lower madhya and mandra sthāyi.

5. The Mohana rāga varṇaṁ am of Pallavi Duraiswami Iyer is a good example for the vowel extensions. The consonant positions in an āvarta can be shown

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The vowel extensions can be seen here. In fact earlier texts used to have notations with ‘a a a a’ or ‘e e e e’ for each akshara or syllable of vowel extension.

There are varnṃam books where the akāra and ikāra are spelt out as above in some books. Kothavaśal Venkatarama Iyer’s Śāverī Varnṃam is given in a similar manner shown in the book Prathama Śikṣā Prakaranam published in 1913. This is shown in appendix v. These vowel extensions should be sung with continuity and not in fits and starts.

6. The caranam line of the Kāmbhōji ādi tāla varṇṃam Taruṇi has just the text of ‘sarasaku rārā’ which is just eight akṣaras of the thirty two in the avartana

s\(\ddot{s}\), s\(\ddot{s}\), n n d, m p d d n n d p l
sa ra sa |
m p n d p d - m, l p - g, m, p, d l |
ku rā rā l l

If the text is spread out in the above manner there will be a lot of scope for the voice to sing in akāra.

7. The caranṃam sāhitya line of the Kalyāṇi ata tāla varṇṃam Vanajākṣi has a long vowel extension for the vowel ō
The extension of the vowel sound ō is not a sustained note but a combination extending close to half a āvartana.

5.5.2 Steadiness in Holding Sustained Notes

For holding sustained notes, often there are occasions where the tāra sadjam and madhya sthāyi sadjam alternate in the svaras. This will be particularly obvious when one sings in a slow speed or four kālai.

1. In the Vasanta varnām Ninnukori of Tacchur Singārachārī, in the last ettukada svaram

2. Sometimes the tāra sadjam and madhya pancamam may alternate as sustained notes. In the Hamsadhvani varnām Jalajākṣa of Mānambucavadi Venkatasubayyar, in the last ettukada svaram

In such pauses the kārvai can be used for practice of jumping octaves as well as holding sustained notes.
3. The well known Kalyāṇāṅgāvasī varnām Vanajākṣi of Poochi Srinivāsa Iyengar has a resting note on the tāra risabham and tāra sadjam

\[
\text{r} \quad \text{, , , , , - d g r s} \quad \text{n p d n s} \quad \text{r} \\
\text{s} \quad \text{, , , , - s} \quad \text{n l d p m} \quad \text{g m p d n} \\
\]

4. The Kedāragaula varnām Sāmi dayājūda of Tiruvottriyur Tyāgayyar has the fourth ettukada svara with similar sustained notes on tāra risabham and sadjam

\[
\text{r} \quad \text{, , , , - n r s} \quad \text{n d p m p n s} \quad \text{l} \\
\text{s} \quad \text{, , , , - r s} \quad \text{l , n d p m p n s} \\
\]

5. The Gaula varnām Celimikori of Veena Kuppayyar has an example.

\[
\text{r} \quad \text{, , , , , r} \quad \text{s r m r s} \quad \text{r , , r m l r p m n p s} \quad \text{n s} \\
\]

The risabham is a sustained note but it has to be held with oscillation. It is interesting to note the differing kārvais for the same note

6. The Sāmā rāga varnām Neraja has the sustained note on the tāra and madhya sadjam.

\[
\text{s} \quad \text{, , , , d s} \quad \text{d p} \quad \text{m g r s d l s , , , - d} \quad \text{s r m g} \quad \text{s r m p d} \\
\]

5.6 Varnāms for Training the Voice in:

5.6.1 Janta Svarās

Varnāms use a lot of janta prayogas. Janta actually means pairs or multiples of the same note such as ss rr gg mm or sss rrr gg. This practice is very effective for later niraval or tānam singing as all the notes are not sung with uniform intensity. Usually the second note is stressed to create an impact.
Singing janta svaras also requires voice modulation and this also helps in later manōdharma singing. A student of music is introduced to the practical use of janta svaras in compositions particularly in varṇams. There are plenty of janta patterns in varṇams of all composers.

1. In the Ārabhi rāga varṇam Sarasijamukhirō the muktāyi svaram has a lot of janta prayogas:

   m g r r p p m g r r – d d p p p
   m g r r , s n d m , s s r s r m , ll

2. In the same varṇam has janta svaras in the last ettukada.

   d d p p m g r r m g r r s n d

3. The muktāyi svaram of the Bhairavi rāga ata tāla varṇam Viribōni of Pachimirium Ādiyapayya has a profusion of janta patterns

   * g g r s r s n n d n s r
   m m p p d d n n p p p p - d d d d - n n n n -
   s s r

4. Kāmbhōji rāga ata tala varṇam86 Sarasijanābha has janta patterns in the pallavi second āvartana.

   * m m g g r r s s n d m d s m g m p s r s
cā - - - - - - la - - - kru - - - pa --

   In the same varṇam, in the anupallavi there are a lot of janta svaras in the tāra sthayi.

   * n d s s r r g g m m g g r r s s s n d p
   m
   ni - - - - - - ja - ma - - - - ni - -

---

86 GVM Pg. 181
5. The Ārabhi varnŚam Sarasijamukhirō has many examples of janta phrases. Some rāgās like Ārabhi have a lot of usage of janta prayōgas.

The muktāyi svaram begins:

\[
\begin{align*}
mgrppmgr & - ddppl \\
mgr & - rsnsdl, ssrsrml \, || \\
grmpmpr, mmpsnsdl rsrl \\
gr - dp - rpmr gr - mmpl, ll
\end{align*}
\]

The last ettukada begins:

\[
\begin{align*}
ddpptomrsgrrssn dl \\
rrs - mgrppmgrmgrsrll \\
mpdpmpmgrmmpmpdl \ldots .
\end{align*}
\]

A study of the above reveals that the notes that most often used as janta svaras are the dhaivatam, pancamam and risŚabham. Practice in akaram of the janta varas will help in training the voice in both stress syllables as well as typical rāga phrases. The double madhyamam is always in the ārōhanŚa krama or in ascent and in the phrase r m – m p – pd where the stress is different. In the avarōhanŚa or descent, it is always the phrase m g r r

8. Mysore Vāsudēvāchār’s varnŚam Nīvē rakśa in Kadanakutūḥalamanhas a lot of interesting janta prayōgas in the third ettukada svara.

\[
\begin{align*}
prrsrsnsnnddldpppmddn
\end{align*}
\]

8. Kothavāsal Venkatarāma Iyer’s Sāma varnŚam Neraja has a lot of janta patterns in the last ettukada.
9. T. R. Subramanyam’s Sāma varnām Innamum has a ettukada starting with and having a pattern using janta svaras in between

\[ ddss dp m gr sdr - srm m | gr - sr pp mg - sr dd p m - \ldots \]

10. Pachimirium Adiyappaya’s Bhairavi varnām in ata tālam has janta patterns in the last ettukada

\[ n r s s n d p d m p d n n s s , n n \]

\[ s s s r s g g - m s g g g r m g r s s n g r s n r l \]

11. Veenā Kuppayyar’s ata tāla varnām Srinātha in Nattai has many janta prayogas in the fourth ettukada and nine svara phrases with patterns of five has been repeated throughout the particular ettukada

\[ ss n p - s s r s s r s m m r s p p l \]

\[ m r s n n p mg - s s s n p r s r s s n - m s m l \]

\[ r s r s s s - s r s r s s n l p n p m - m p m l l \]

\[ m r s n s r g m (it u) \]

11. Kothavāsal Venkatarama Iyer’s varnām Neraja in Sama has many janta patterns. Such patterns are particularly suited for this rāga and enhance the aesthetic appeal of the rāga.

\[ d p m p d m dp pp mm gg r r l ss d s r m - d s l r m p - s r m p d l l \]

5.6.2 Dātu Patterns
Dātu patterns are when svaras are arranged in a zigzag manner. This is to ensure proper svara sthānas or note positions in the voice particularly if a sequential order of notes is not used. A typical example of a dātu pattern is as follows:

```
s m g m r g s r
c p m p g m r
g d p d m g m
g p m p g m p
```

and the same pattern is repeated for each of the svaras in the octave. Such zigzag patterns are found in many varnāms and are useful for practice and vocalisation.

1. The Kannada varnām Sāmiti vēla of Patnam Subramanya Iyer has many such examples.

The last ettukada svara has the pattern:

```
s n s d- p m g m - d m p - g m r s n
c g m p m d n s d- d n s r s - m g m
```

2. In the Hamsadhvani varnām Jalajāśa of Mānambucāvadi Venkata Subbayyar, the third ettukada svara has jumping notes

```
n p g r - n g r n - p n n p - s - n r s g
r p g n - p s n r n - g r r n r n - r p g
```

3. The Vasanta varnām Ninnukori of Taccur Singarachāri has dātu prayogas in the 4th ettukada svaram.

```
s r s m g m d m g n d g m d d n
```

4. The Gaula varnām Celimikōri has an example in the muktāyi with the following pattern:

```
rrm tpp mmm pps
```
The last ettukada has the pattern \( rmrpmpnpsns \)

5. The Mōhana varn\( \text{\textsc{am}} \) Ninnukori has the dātu pattern in the ettukada

\[
gp, gp, \quad rp, \quad sp, \quad dp, \quad gp, \quad sp, \quad ...,\]

6. Begada is a rāga that gives scope for plenty of dātu prayogas. The third ettukada in the varn\( \text{\textsc{am}} \) Inta calamu is entirely sarvalaghu and at the same time with a lot of dātu svaras.

\[
mgmpdmrpmgmp - sp \\
mg - rpmgrsln\text{\textsc{\textcircled{r}}} dp - rsn\text{\textsc{\textcircled{r}}} grll \\
smgrpmgdp - sn drs s - m\text{\textsc{\textcircled{r}}} g\text{\textsc{\textcircled{r}}} l \\
r\text{\textsc{\textcircled{r}}} - s\text{\textsc{\textcircled{r}}} nr s - pdmdp - gmr gml \]

7. T. R. Subramanyam’s Hamir Kalyān\( \text{\textsc{i}} \) varn\( \text{\textsc{am}} \) Sendil Vāzh has dātu prayōgas in the third ettukada.

\[
s\text{\textsc{\textcircled{r}}} g \quad pm dp sn r\text{\textsc{\textcircled{r}}} s \quad g\text{\textsc{\textcircled{r}}} \]

8. Pachimirium Adiyappaya’s Bhairavi varn\( \text{\textsc{am}} \) Viriboni in ata tālam has dātu patterns in the last ettukada. The zigzag notes can be visually seen on the graph.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccccc}
\text{n} & \text{s} & \text{n} & \text{g} & \text{r} & \text{m} & \text{g} & \text{p} \\
213 & 240 & 213 & 280 & 267 & 320 & 320 & 320 & 384 \\
\text{p} & \text{n} & \text{d} & \text{n} & \text{p} & \text{d} & \text{m} & \text{p} & \text{g} & \text{r} \\
360 & 427 & 384 & 427 & 360 & 384 & 320 & 316 & 280 & 267
\end{array}
\]
Practice in akara of these dātu prayogas will train the voice for rendering the datu patterns or zigzag svaras. The vocal muscles need to be stretched differently for singing varying note combinations as well as the same in differing speeds.

10. The Sāranga varṇa Intamodi of Tiruvottriyur Tyāgayyar has dātu patterns typical of the rāga in the last ettukada.

\[
\begin{align*}
d & p & d & m & p & - & r & g & m & p & - & r & g & m & r & s & | \\
\textit{r} & \textit{s} & \textit{p} & - & s & p & m & d & p & | & n & d & p & m & r & - & g & m & p & | & 1 \\
\end{align*}
\]

11. T. R. Subramanyam’s varṇam Innamum in Sāma has dātu prayōgas in the third ettukada.

\[
\text{..... m d r s } \downarrow \text{ d s } \downarrow \text{ - m d s } \downarrow \text{ p d } - \text{ m p d m p } \| \\
\]

5.6.3 Jāru or Glides

A jāru is a glide of a note from a lower note to a higher note. This glide is usually a smooth one and often slides across multiple notes. A jāru from a lower to a higher note is referred to as ettra jāru and is shown with the
symbol of / while a downward slide is referred to as irakka jāru and shown with the sign of \ between the notes.

1. In the Begada varṇaṃ Inta calamu of Veena Kuppayyar the phrase \( \text{d\ m, g r} \) occurs a number of times as a jāru. In many varṇams, particularly in the fourth ettukada there is a jāru from the madhya s\adjam to the tāra s\adjam.

2. The Abhogi varṇaṃ evvari bodhana has a similar glide from the madhya to the tāra s\adjam s, / s\, s\, r\, g\, s\, r\.

5.6.4 Āhata and Pratyāhata Gamakas

This is one of the commonest type of gamaka but enhances the beauty of the rāga because of the stress syllables. Examples of such gamakas are seen in many varṇams and the difference between janta svaras and pratyāhata gamaka can be clearly seen. The āhata gamaka is usually sounded in the ascending pattern where the lower note will be sounded in between whereas a pratyāhata gamaka is in the avarōhan\a krama. The syllable to be stressed is in bold letters. This is particularly useful for training the voice for later tānam singing.

1. In the Kānadā ata tala varṇaṃ neranammiti muktayi svaram there is an example of āhata gamaka where the progression is from the lower to higher note.

\( \text{g m m d d n n s\ s\ s\ r\} } \)

2. The Sahāna varṇaṃ Karunimpa also has pratyāhata gamakas or a stress while the notes are in descent.

\( \text{d n d d p - p d p p m - d p m - g m r l} \)

\( \text{pa - ru - la - - - v e - - da - - l} \)
While singing, the stress has to be on the second dhaivatam in the first phrase and the second pancamam in the second phrase. Singing the same in akara will help the voice train in using stressed syllables without a consonant sound.

3. The Gaula varm Challam Celimikori has an anupallavi sāhityam, which has such gamakas. The notation for the sāhityam is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
    r & m & m & p & n & p & s & n - & r & s & m & n & m & p & n & p & s \\
    m & - & p & m & r & g & m & r & s & n & u & g & o & p & a & l
\end{align*}
\]

sa ra sa Sri Vé nu go pā la
5.6.5 Different Svara Patterns

Varnams have countless svara patterns and every composer has used his creativity and ingenuity in devising different patterns in the ettukada svaras. Singing these patterns trains the voice to be accurate with svara sthānas as also be familiar with many patterns that may be used in kalpana svara. This is given in great detail in chapter 6.

5.6.6 Vādi samvādi Prayōga

Rāgas have vādi notes that are structurally important as well as important in terms of expressing the rāga bhāva. The samvādi note is next in importance and is usually the fourth or fifth note.

While the concept of vādi samvādi is not the edifice of the Carnātic system of music as it is in Hindustāni music, there are vadi samvādi usages that are very beautiful in some compositions. This can be seen in varnams in rāgas like Bilahari and Hamsadhvani.

The third ettukada in Kothavāsal Venkatarāma Iyer’s Hamsadhvani varnam Pagavāri has many examples of vādi samvādi pairs. The rāga lends itself to such prayōgas and this zigzag pattern with all single notes and no kārvais gives tremendous practice to the voice to traverse these patterns.

Veenā Kuppayyar’s varnam in Bilahari is a simple one often taught to beginners. He has introduced not only a lot of vādi samvādi prayogas in this varnam but also the use of many flat notes which is not so common in Carnātic music. The influence of Western music is seen in this
svaram as Bilahari is a janya of Śankarābharanam which is equivalent to the major scale in Western classical music. Veena Kuppayyar was influenced by the western bands, which played music in Fort St. George, Madras. This varnām has a fifth ettukada with four āvartanas. The vādi and samvādi pairs are shown as darkened fonts.

Bilahari rāga varnām – last ettukada: (example for vādi samvādi notes)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{p, d r} & \text{s, , , , p} \text{d p m g, , , r, g s r, , , l s n} & \text{d} & \text{p} \text{s, , , , l} \\
\text{r} & \text{s n} & \text{d} & \text{g, , , p} \text{m g r d, , , l s n p} & \text{r} & \text{g s r, , , l n s} & \text{d n p, , , l} \\
\text{s} & \text{s} & \text{s} & \text{p p p, d n p, m g r, l r g d, m g r s l n} & \text{p} & \text{d} & \text{r} & \text{s, , , l} \\
\text{p, , , s} & \text{s} & \text{r} & \text{g s, , , l m} & \text{g} & \text{r} & \text{s} & \text{n d p, l m g r s r g p d} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Muthiah Bhagavatār composed a varnām Sri Rājamātangi in praise of Chāmundeśvari in the rāga Śuddha Dhanyāsi. The third charanām ettukada has some interesting prayogas with the gāndhāram and nisādam as vādi samvādi svaras. The gāndhāram is in both the tāra sthāyi and the madhya sthāyi. This jump between the two notes will help train the voice in perfect sruti alignment as well as svara sthāna or position of the note.

\[
\begin{align*}
g & \text{m n, n - m g s n} & \text{c, n} & \text{c - g m p n s} & \text{c} & l
g & \text{c, c - n, n - g, l g - m g s n} & \text{c, s g} & \text{m} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

5.6.7 Agility to Flex the Voice for various gamakas

The beauty and aesthetics of Carnātic music lies in the gamakas or ornamentations to the svaras. It may range from a big oscillation to a mild tremor. How the gamaka is used depends on the rāga and the positioning of
the svara within a rāga phrase. Gamakas such as sphuritam, kampitam, jāru etc. can be practised through varnAMS. This is dealt with in greater detail in the chapter 6.

5.7 VarnAMS for Developing Speed

As a composition varnAMS most often do not have a combination of speeds like kritis which have a mixed kālapramānAMS and hence it is possible to sing them in multiple speeds. It can be sung in four kālai first for slow speed, then in the medium tempo after which the same varnAMS can be rendered in high speed. For practice in speed, it is always not essential to take the proportionately higher speed. One can sing it as fast as possible without compromising the svara positions.

One important fact has to be kept in mind while singing in different speeds. The gamaka oscillation cannot be maintained the same way in all the speeds. In a cauka kālapramānAMS or slow speed, the gamakas can be delineated well and it is difficult to hold the notes as well as ones breath for a long time. Most varnAMS are designed for the middle speed or madhyama kāla and it is comparatively easy to render them in this manner. Singing in the higher speed requires training. If one were to include all the embellishments the ‘voice will not move’ in other words the voice will not be able to sustain the steady pace. This is possible only if the notes are held flat without too many oscillations. Singing gamakas will cause the speed of the voice to slacken.

Singing in different speeds requires the singer to keep the kārvais or spaces for each svara and that becomes useful for later pallavi singing. Kārvais or spaces are introduced for vowel extension as well as for a grip on the laya aspect as the kārvais are often spaces of three, five or seven. This
causes the tāla to fall somewhere in between and good control over the tāla will develop through varṇams. An example is rendered in audio cd 2

In the first speed in the Saveri varṇam Sarasuda rendered in two-kalai ādi tālam has 32 aksharams

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. l .. né .. kō .. ri ..
```

In the second speed two avartanas can be included which means 64 aksharams can be sung.

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. né .. kō .. ri ..
s r p m g r s - d d m g r s d s r m p d r s, m p d n m g r s d
cā .. la .. mā .. ru .. lu .. né .. kō .. ri ..
```

This doubles to four āvartanas or 128 aksharams in the third speed.

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. né .. kō .. ri ..
s r p m g r s - d d m g r s d s r m p d r s, m p d n m g r s d
cā .. la .. mā .. ru .. lu .. né .. kō .. ri ..
d d p m p d r m p d m, g r s r s, m p d n d p d p d s
```

```
gi .. ri .. ni .. v e la .. yu .. śrī .. Ven .. ka te .. sā
p d s r g g r g r g r s n d r s n d p d m, g r s s, n d p d m
```

```
ka .. ru .. n i .. in ca .. ee .. dé .. sa .. ma .. ya .. mu
```

causes the tāla to fall somewhere in between and good control over the tāla will develop through varṇams. An example is rendered in audio cd 2

In the first speed in the Saveri varṇam Sarasuda rendered in two-kalai ādi tālam has 32 aksharams

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. l .. né .. kō .. ri ..
```

In the second speed two avartanas can be included which means 64 aksharams can be sung.

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. né .. kō .. ri ..
s r p m g r s - d d m g r s d s r m p d r s, m p d n m g r s d
cā .. la .. mā .. ru .. lu .. né .. kō .. ri ..
```

This doubles to four āvartanas or 128 aksharams in the third speed.

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. né .. kō .. ri ..
s r p m g r s - d d m g r s d s r m p d r s, m p d n m g r s d
cā .. la .. mā .. ru .. lu .. né .. kō .. ri ..
d d p m p d r m p d m, g r s r s, m p d n d p d p d s
```

```
gi .. ri .. ni .. v e la .. yu .. śrī .. Ven .. ka te .. sā
p d s r g g r g r g r s n d r s n d p d m, g r s s, n d p d m
```

```
ka .. ru .. n i .. in ca .. ee .. dé .. sa .. ma .. ya .. mu
```

causes the tāla to fall somewhere in between and good control over the tāla will develop through varṇams. An example is rendered in audio cd 2

In the first speed in the Saveri varṇam Sarasuda rendered in two-kalai ādi tālam has 32 aksharams

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. l .. né .. kō .. ri ..
```

In the second speed two avartanas can be included which means 64 aksharams can be sung.

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. né .. kō .. ri ..
s r p m g r s - d d m g r s d s r m p d r s, m p d n m g r s d
cā .. la .. mā .. ru .. lu .. né .. kō .. ri ..
```

This doubles to four āvartanas or 128 aksharams in the third speed.

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. né .. kō .. ri ..
s r p m g r s - d d m g r s d s r m p d r s, m p d n m g r s d
cā .. la .. mā .. ru .. lu .. né .. kō .. ri ..
d d p m p d r m p d m, g r s r s, m p d n d p d p d s
```

```
gi .. ri .. ni .. v e la .. yu .. śrī .. Ven .. ka te .. sā
p d s r g g r g r g r s n d r s n d p d m, g r s s, n d p d m
```

```
ka .. ru .. n i .. in ca .. ee .. dé .. sa .. ma .. ya .. mu
```

causes the tāla to fall somewhere in between and good control over the tāla will develop through varṇams. An example is rendered in audio cd 2

In the first speed in the Saveri varṇam Sarasuda rendered in two-kalai ādi tālam has 32 aksharams

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. l .. né .. kō .. ri ..
```

In the second speed two avartanas can be included which means 64 aksharams can be sung.

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. né .. kō .. ri ..
s r p m g r s - d d m g r s d s r m p d r s, m p d n m g r s d
cā .. la .. mā .. ru .. lu .. né .. kō .. ri ..
```

This doubles to four āvartanas or 128 aksharams in the third speed.

```
s, r, g, r g r r s, r s s n d, g r r g r s n d
sara su .. da .. ni .. né .. kō .. ri ..
s r p m g r s - d d m g r s d s r m p d r s, m p d n m g r s d
cā .. la .. mā .. ru .. lu .. né .. kō .. ri ..
d d p m p d r m p d m, g r s r s, m p d n d p d p d s
```

```
gi .. ri .. ni .. v e la .. yu .. śrī .. Ven .. ka te .. sā
p d s r g g r g r g r s n d r s n d p d m, g r s s, n d p d m
```

```
ka .. ru .. n i .. in ca .. ee .. dé .. sa .. ma .. ya .. mu
```
5.8 Varnams for Voice Modulation

Voice modulation is natural for expressing emotions. In music it is possible to evoke emotions whether it be sāhitya or svara that is being rendered through voice modulation. Mentioned as ‘kāku’ in the Nātya Śastra in the context of drama, it is absolutely essential to give stress where necessary and increase or decrease volume as and when required. Sometimes patterns in solfa notes are brought out with voice modulation. This is referred to as ‘vallinam and mellinam’ in Tamil. Singing without any kind of modulation will sound dull and mechanical. This can be practised particularly while rendering the purvāngam as well as some some svara patterns in the uttarangam where differing volume increases the aesthetic quality of the piece.

1. The Nāyaki varnam Sarasijākṣi has a second – ettukada where voice modulation can be practised. The svaras with darkened fonts should be sung with greater force.

```
s\| n s\| p, d – p d n n d p – d p, r m p d n l n d p d p m r g l g r s r m p d p \|
```

( marubārī)

2. In the Surutti varnam Entō prēmato the third ettukada can be rendered with modulation.

```
n n d d p m - d p m g – p m r m r s l
nɒ s r s m r p m l d p m p d n n d l
p n d - s\| n d - p s\| n d – p r \| s\| n d - s\| m\| r\| s\| n d p – s\| n d p – m
g r s r m lll
```

Modulating the voice by softening the notes before the notes printed bold will enhance the effect of the varnam. This modulation has to sound natural and not be in surges.
3. The anupallavi of the Kānada ata tāla varṇām Neranammiti lends itself to a lot of voice modulation.

*s, d p d, , , d , , , | p d n sṁ n n d p m p d n d d p m d p d – m| ma ru nī kan na Sri
 d p – m g m – d, d l m d n sṁ - d p m || g m d n sṁ, ,
ni vā sa dé vā

Rendering the above sāhityam with voice modulation, especially with pratyāhata gamakas is typical of the rāga Kānada. The halt at the dhaivatam should be with a kampita gamaka. While some examples are given there is scope for voice modulation in all varṇāms. A mature and seasoned singer is effective because of the ability to bring out emotions with voice modulation

5.9 Varnāms for Sruti Alignment

Sruti or being in tune with the tonic note is absolutely essential. Our classical music both instrumental and vocal is accompanied with the drone instrument, the tanpura. This is common to both the Hindustāni and Carnātic systems of music. Ours is melodic music and all notes are expressed in relation to the tonic note on the drone instrument. There is a common saying among musicians stressing the importance of sruti, ‘Sruti māta laya pita’ (sruti is the mother and laya or an inherent rhythm is the father) This sruti alignment is important for the position of each and every note in the rāga, not just the pancamam and sādja.

Even a small digression will cause a jarring note both audibly and in the minds of the listener. Many varṇāms have examples of ettukada svaras which have both the tāra and madhya śadja juxtaposed. Often the varṇāms themselves start on the tāra śadja and the singer has to reach it directly with no
hesitation whatsoever. There are innumerable varṇams opening starting on the tāra śadjam. To name a few commonly sung ādi tāla varṇams:

1. Vanajāksi - Kalyāṇi
2. Sāmidajayuda - Kedaragula
3. Sāmi nine - Śankarābharamṇam
4. Inta mōdi - Sāranga
5. Erānēpai - Todi
6. Erānēpai - Mukhāri
7. Inta Cauka - Bilahari
8. Sāmi ninne - Pantuvarāli
9. Entō Prėmatō - Surutti
10. Sāmitivēla - Kannada

The last ettukada in most varṇams starts on the tāra sādjam or pāncaṃam. After the first āvarta the ending note is such that one can revert to the first āvarta before moving on to the next.

1. For example in the Sāvēri varṇam Sarasūda the first avarta of the last ettukada is as follows:

s, , , , , r, s, n, d, p, m, g, r, s, d, l, s, , , , , p, m, l, d, p, n, d, p, m, p, d, l,

2. Pallavi Duraiswami Iyer’s Mōhana varṇam Ninne kōri has a last ettukada where one can revert to the beginning of the ettukada at the end of the first āvarta.

p, , , , , d, s, d, d, p, g, d, p, g, r, l, g, , , , , p, d, l, s, ’d, p, g, r, s, r, g, l,

3. A similar example can be seen in Poochi Srinivāsa Iyengār’s Ānandabhairavi varṇam Rārā sāmī.

s, , , , , p, s, n, d, p, m, g, r, s, n, l, s, , , , , n, s, l, g, r, g, m, p, d, p, n, l,
One can notice the striking similarity between the above three examples. The laghu of the tāla opens with a prolonged note at the tāra sadjam or pancamam and the first drutam too has a prolonged note. This prolonged note helps in sruti alignment.

5.10 Varnams for Volume

On the whole, practising a varnam will ensure totality of experience. As a composition, singing a varnam with full throated ease requires physical stamina. Producing the required volume and resonance comes with practice and the ensuing maturity. Singing a varnam perfectly requires memory and concentration. Most often, the varnam is rendered as the introductory piece in a concert so there is no time to settle down. Enough practice will ensure that the varnam sets the pace and mood of the concert.

Volume does not mean that one has to be very loud. It means that the music should be full throated and should have clarity. In earlier day when microphones were not in use, it was essential that the singer be heard in a large hall. Most halls particularly in temples were acoustically designed for this. Today in the era of technology with excellent sound systems, the individual voice is not strained so much but at the same time for the music to be effective, the voice should have a reasonable volume so that the music is powerful. Otherwise it will sound weak inspite of a microphone.

Singing an entire varnam in four kalai or two kalai in trikālam sustaining the same volume comes with practice and will build stamina over a period of time. Singing in the natural voice automatically brings a reasonable volume along with it.
A basic prerequisite to all this mentioned in the NaŚ is a healthy body free from problems of phlegm or indigestion and āyurvedic remedies are mentioned for the same.

The NaŚ speaks of the kind of volume that is to be produced.

\[ Na \text{ tam samirayēd vācam yā prānāḥ amuparodhayēt|} \]
\[ prānāḥ amuparodhēna vaisvaryam cōpajāyatē| \]
\[ svaravyan janā mādhuryam lupyatē na atra samśayah |87 \]

‘One should sing with force which should not agitate the prānāḥ as otherwise it will go out of tune and the sweetness of the varṇā would be lost.’

5.11 Practice Methods

Tāna varṇāms may be practised in the following ways:

i. Choosing a particular varṇā and rendering it as slow as possible. Singing the right gamakam to bring out the rāga bhavam is essential in slow speed. The varṇā may also be rendered in four kalāi.

ii. Rendering the same varṇā as fast as possible. This is just for training in speed. One has to make sure that all svaras are audible and clearly inunciated. Also all the svara sthānas have to be correct even while singing in high speed.

87 NaŚ Dvitiya Prapātakē Astami Kandikā pp. 187
iii. Singing the varṇaṃ in trīkālam or three relative degrees of speed (successively increasing from the first to the second and then to the third speed each one double the previous one)

iv. Singing the varṇaṃ in four kalai

v. Singing the whole varṇaṃ in akaram or ikaram without the sāhityam

vi. Rendering the purvāṅgam of the varṇaṃ with the labial sound of ‘mmm’ This consonant possesses the properties of ‘nādānupradan, ghōṣa, kant hasamvrutatva and ānunāsikya’

Though a consonant it is the anusvara or Bindu in the Sanskrit alphabet and the humming sound with closed lips uses the sound from the nābhi. This kind of practice is also recommended in other systems of music.

vii. Singing the varṇaṃ as a tāna exercise

viii. For a greater grip on the laya aspect, the same varṇaṃ can be rendered in tisram, khandam or mīśram. Also the varṇaṃ may be rendered ¼, ½ or ¾ idam or space away from the starting point or eduppu.

For example in the Hamsadhvani varṇaṃ Pagavāribōdhana the first avartana shown is in sama eduppu or the song starts at the starting point of the tala, the second one starter a quarter distance away shown by a comma, the next half away shown by two commas and the last ¾ away shown by three commas.

88 Sanskrit Phonetics by Dr. Vidyātā Misra
This is an exercise not just for a grip over the laya but also for the voice not to fix on any beat positions for a particular svara. The entire purvāṅgam may be sung in this manner.

The notation given in the following page shows the shift of the sāhitya each time with the shift of the starting point. This helps not only in having a grip over the tāla but also remembering the right kārvais or spaces between notes.

Rāga: Hamsadvani  
Tāla : Ādi

Original position:
\[
\begin{align*}
p, g, r, s n \rightarrow g g r s & \mid s r s s n \rightarrow p n \rightarrow s r r n \rightarrow s p n \rightarrow s r g \\
p, g a vā ri \rightarrow bō dha & \rightarrow n a v i n i \\
p, p g g r s n n p g r g s r g & \rightarrow n s r \rightarrow s s p, n p s n \rightarrow n p, g r s r g \\
pan & \rightarrow tha mé la jē sé vu ra
\end{align*}
\]

Quarter position away from starting point indicated by a single comma :
\[
\begin{align*}
, p, g, r, s n \rightarrow g g r s & \mid s r s s n \rightarrow p n \rightarrow s r r n \rightarrow s p n \rightarrow s r g \\
p, g a vā ri \rightarrow bō dha & \rightarrow n a v i n i \\
, p, p, g g r s n n p g r g s r g & \rightarrow p n s s s, n p s n \rightarrow n p, g r s r g \\
pan & \rightarrow tha mé la jē sé vu ra
\end{align*}
\]

Half position away from starting point indicated by a double comma :
\[
\begin{align*}
, , p, g, r, s n \rightarrow g g r s & \mid s r s s n \rightarrow p n \rightarrow s r r n \rightarrow s p n \rightarrow s r g \\
p, g a vā ri \rightarrow bō dha & \rightarrow n a v i n i \\
, , p, g g r s n n p g r g s r g & \rightarrow p n s s s, n p s n \rightarrow n p, g r s r g \\
pan & \rightarrow tha mé la jē sé vu ra
\end{align*}
\]

Three fourth position away from starting point indicated three commas :
\[
\begin{align*}
, , , p, g, r, s n \rightarrow g g r s & \mid s r s s n \rightarrow p n \rightarrow s r r n \rightarrow s p n \rightarrow s r g \\
p, g a vā ri \rightarrow bō dha & \rightarrow n a v i n i \\
, , , p, g g r s n n p g r g s r g & \rightarrow p n s s s, n p s n \rightarrow n p, g r s r g \\
pan & \rightarrow tha mé la jē sé vu ra
\end{align*}
\]
For varnams analysed in this chapter kindly refer to appendix viii