Kamala Jadala

A Carnatic Geetham by Purandara Dasa

The Divine Trinity of Carnatic Music

Aibhilin inghean Daibhidh

Summary

Kamala Jadala by Purandara Dasa is a piece of Carnatic music from the early 16th century. The piece originated in Southern India in the Vijayanagara Empire. It is a piece of religious/praise music and one of 475,000 compositions by Purandara Dasa. Purandara Dasa began composing in the 1500s after a "religious experience" and is known as the "father" of Carnatic music due to his contributions to the development of Carnatic music education and prolific compositions.

Carnatic music is a classical form of music originating in southern India. All Carnatic music is composed in a specific talam (rhythm pattern) using a ragam (scale) composed of swaras (notes). When performed, both the swara and the sahityam (lyrics) are sung, in addition to an Alapana which introduces the ragam.

Kamala Jadala is a geetham (song) composed in Sanskrit, an ancient Indo-European language still used in India today. Many modern language can trace their roots back to or were heavily influenced by Sanskrit. A geetham is the simplest form of Carnatic music and requires a much smaller variety of vocal techniques and embellishments than more advanced forms of Carnatic music.

The geetham will be performed as a lady studying with Purandara Dasa may perform it for a court or upper class setting. It will be performed in the traditional style, sitting cross legged and beating the talam on the thigh. The geetham is accompanied by a drone, commonly played on the Tambura. The clothing is a sari and jewelry appropriate for a woman from the Vijayanagara Empire.

Table of Contents

Summary 2
Carnatic Music 4
- **Sruti** 4
- **Swara** 4
- **Ragam** 5
- **Talam** 6
  - **7 Basic Talas** 6
  - **5 Jathris** 7
- **Keeping the Talam Beat** 7
- **Notation** 7
- **Elements and Techniques** 8
- **Carnatic music octave division** 9
- **Instruments** 9

Purandara Dasa 10
Kamala Jadala 11
- **Sahityam (lyrics):** 11
- **Kamala Jadala in Carnatic Notation** 12
- **Kamala Jadala in Modern Western Notation** 13

Sanskrit 14
Performance 15
- **Women in Vijayanagara** 15
- **Costuming** 15
- **Learning the Piece** 16
- **Performance Style** 16

Thoughts and Analysis 18
Bibliography 19
Appendix A: Glossary of Terms 21

Carnatic Music

Carnatic music originated as a classical form of music in Southern India using the languages of KannaDa, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, and MalayaaLam (karnATik). It is the southern Indian counterpart of the northern Hindustani music. It can be both vocal and instrumental or purely instrumental. Carnatic music emphasizes the melody and uses a theory system that is significantly different from Western music, though there are basic similarities. The important concepts of Carnatic music are Sruti (relative pitch), (Swara (the note), Ragam (the scale) and Talam (the beat).

Sruti

Sruti is the concept that relates to the arbitrary nature of the swaras (notes) in Carnatic music. Carnatic music has a base frequency represented by the background drone in performance. For example, in Western music, if you were singing a piece of music in the key of C major, your tonal center or base frequency would be represented by the note C. The drone represents the tonal center of a given piece of Carnatic music. Sruti represents the relationship between the base frequency and the other Swara in the piece (Shivkumar).

Swara

A swara is a note used in Carnatic music. Unlike traditional western music, which is written on a staff where a note is in a harmonically fixed position and thus always sounds the same, the swaras in Carnatic music are not fixed and change based on the desired Sruti (pitch) of the performers. This allows Carnatic performers to pick a Sruti that is within a comfortable range of performance and allows for the use of appropriate vocal technique.

The swara system is similar to the Western system of Solflege (do-re-mi) using the moveable Do concept (where Do stands for the starting pitch of the scale, not for a given pitch). The Swaras are:

Shadjamam (Sa)
Rishabam (Ri)
Gaandaaram (Ga)
Madyamam (Ma)
Pancamam (Pa)
Daivatam (Da)
Nishaadam (Ni).

As in Solflege, the swara have vowel variations that allow for representation of a full chromatic scale of 12 notes. The layout of the swara is different from Solflege, however, and a Western “major scale” would need variations in the Carnatic swara. In Carnatic music, Sa (the tonic note) and Pa (the 5^{th} above the tonic) have no variations and will always represent a perfect 5^{th}. The other swara, however, have 2 or 3 variations involving syllables changes that end in 'a', 'i', and 'u'.

These syllable, however, are a later development and usually more of convenience that is not necessarily used when singing the swara (Sriram). Chromatic differences are commonly referenced numerically when written, rather than by syllable variation.

A full “chromatic” scale with all 12 notes would consist of

C	=	Sa	=	S
C#	=	Ra	=	R1
D	=	Ri/Ga	=	R2/G1
D#	=	Ru/Gi	=	R3/G2
E	=	Gu	=	G3
F	=	Ma	=	M1
F#	=	Mi	=	M2
G	=	Pa	=	P
G#	=	Da	=	D1
A	=	Di/Na	=	D2/N1
A#	=	Du/Ni	=	D3/N2
B	=	Nu	=	N3

It should be noted that in period Carnatic music, R3/Ru, G1/Ga, D3/Du and N1/Na were avoided as they were considered 'tainted' (Sriram). Thus, a chromatic scale would be represented by:

Sa - Ra - Ri - Gi - Gu - Ma - Mi - Pa - Da - Di - Ni - Nu - Sa.

Using “Middle C” as “Sa” the pitches associated with the scale would look like:

C	=	Sa	=	S
D	=	Ri	=	R2
E	=	Gu	=	G3
F	=	Ma	=	M1
G	=	Pa	=	P
A	=	Di	=	D2
B	=	Nu	=	N3

Ragam

A ragam can be compared to a scale in Western music in that it is a “method of organizing tunes based on certain natural principles” (Sriram). However, the formation of a Raga is more complex than a Western scale, in that the Raga consist of a wide variety of intervals and swara in ways not seen in Western music. There are 72 major ragas, but others can exist and are used in compositions as well. Ragas combine swaras in ascending and descending order like a western scale; however, ragams may have a different number of ascending and descending swara, and the swara themselves may or may not be the same.

A basic ragam consists of 7 notes but does not follow a pattern like the western scale. To create a scale in Western music, you follow a formula that requires you to pick a starting note (C), and then take a sequence of notes following the pattern “Whole step, whole step, half step, whole, whole, whole, half.”

To create a ragam, you take a starting note Sa (C), and you pick the 5th note Pa (G). From there, you select the rest of the notes. You pick one of the two Ma notes (in this case, either F or F#). Followed by two notes between Sa and Ma (C#, D, D#, E, or F if you chose F# as Ma) to be “Ri” and “Ga” and two keys between Pa and Sa (G#, A, A#, B) to be “Da” and “Ni”.
Thus, your final ragam may consist of the notes:

Sa = C
Ri = D
Ga = F
Ma = F#
Pa = G
Da = G#
Ni = A#

It is possible to create a Ragam that consists of the same notes as a C major scale in Western music (called Shankarabharanam). However, the tonality would not sound exactly the same, as there are "microtones" used in Carnatic music that give the proper Ragam flavor. These are referred to as Gamakam, which are similar to western ornamentation such as grace notes, slides, and turns (Ramesh).

A ragam need not always contain 7 notes and may change when creating the arohanam (sequence of swara used in ascending passages) and avarohanam (sequence of swara used in descending passages). The arohanam and avarohanam may contain a different number of swara which are selected by leaving out up to two notes from the original ragam. For example, the arohanam may consist of 5 swara while the avarohanam may consist of 7 swara.

Talam

The Talam is the beat or rhythm cycle of the music. It is similar to the time signature in western music, as it signifies how many beats belong to each section of music (each "measure"). Unlike, in western music, the Talam also gives information about the speech or tempo of the pieces and can consist of multiple subdivisions called angams. As tempo is inherent to the talam, a piece will never speed up or slow down, and rarely will the talam change within a composition (karnATik).

There are 6 basic talas. Each Tala can be subdivided into angams (components). The components are Laghu, Dhruta, and Anu Dhruta. 3 additional angams exist, but they are not used in the basic Talas (Subramanian). The Talam may consist of any combination of angams (from a single Laghu to 3 or more components) in any order, and they may be used more than once (for example, 2 Laghu may be used in a row, or may be separated by a Dhruta).

7 Basic Talas

Dhruva Tala	Matya Tala	Jampa Tala	Ata Tala	Triputa Tala	Rupaka Tala	Eka Tala
1 Laghu 1 Dhruta 2 Laghu	1 Laghu 1 Dhruta 1 Laghu	1 Laghu 1 Anu Dhruta 1 Dhruta	2 Laghu 2 Dhruta	1 Laghu 2 Dhruta	1 Dhruta 1 Laghu	1 Laghu

The Dhruta always consists of 2 counts. The Anu Dhruta always consists of a single count. The Laghu angam, however, can be divided into one of 5 Jathris which signify how many beats belong to the Laghu.

5 Jathris

Tisra	3 Counts
Chatusra	4 Counts
Khanda	5 Counts
Misra	7 Counts
Sankeerna	9 Counts

The final component of the Talam is the Gathi or Nadai. Gathi's are underlying rhythms or subdivisions of the piece that helps to convey a fast or slow feeling. There is no set "tempo" of a piece and different performers will take different speeds. The Gathi's have the same names as the Jathirs.

Talas are named based on knowing the 3 compoents: the basic Tala, the Jathri, and the Nadai. The names are listed in order Tala – Jathri – Nadai (For example Matya Tala Misra Jathi Tisra Nadai) Knowing this information, the number of beats in the song can be determined. For example, Triputa Talam Tisra Jathri signifys there is 1 Laghu and 2 Dhruta. The Lathru is Tisa, so it consists of 3 counts. Thus, the rhythm would be 3 beats, followed by 2 sets of two beats. When written, the angams are separated by lines with a double line signifying the end of one Tala beat. Triputa Talam Tisra Jathri would look like: XXX | XX | XX ||

Keeping the Talam Beat

The talam beat is kept by a specific combination of hand and finger movements (called kriyaa) against the upper thigh while seated in a cross legged (Indian) style. The type of movement used is based on the angams. Beats of the Laghu are kept using the palm and the fingers. Beats of the Dhruta are kept using the palm of the hand and then the back of the hand. Beats of the Anu Dhruta are kept using just the palm of the hand.

To beat the Dhruta, beat the palm of the hand on the thigh with the odd beats and the back of the hand against the thigh with the even beats.

To beat the Anu Dhruta, beat the palm of the hand on the thigh for every beat.

To beat the Laghu, beat the palm of the hand against the thigh for the first beat. Then, tap one finger against the thigh, starting with the 5th (pinky) finger for each subsequent beat. For example, for Chatusra Jathi (4 counts) you would do the following movements (karnATik):

Beat 1 – Tap palm of hand on thigh
Beat 2 – Tap 5th (pinky) finger against thigh
Beat 3 – Tap 4th (ring) finger against thigh
Beat 4 – take 3rd (middle) finger against thigh

Notation

Carnatic music in period, like many historical music traditions, was not written down. The notation provided here follows conventions developed outside of period but which are used to record period words and melodies that were previously only oral collections. Modern Carnatic music notation relies on the swara system. Most music available online is presented in a similar fashion, however there are some variations between sites. Each piece lists a ragam and a Talam. The swara that make up the ragam are also listed in the arohanam (ascending) and avarohanam (descending) order. Swara are listed using the full designation (such as R2 or M1) in the ragam listing; however, in the notation the numerals are dropped listed by either the swara syllable name or the first letter of the swara syllable.

In the music, swaras are arranged into Talas to form the kalpita sangita (the composed music). Talas are separated into angams using vertical slashes (|) and the Talas are separated from each other by double vertical slashses (||). The length of the note is indicated by hash marks or other fillers such as periods and commas, depending on the source.

The sahityam (words or lyrics) with each swara are listed below the swara and also separated into Talas by the vertical slash marks. Music from other sources, or using alphabets other than English, will follow the same general rules with Talams separated by slashes, a line showing the Swara, and a line showing the sahityam. Some notations may differ from the numeric system such as using the adjusted syllable names (Ru, Ra, Ri). However, the numeric system is by far the most common system used, especially with internet sources (Subramanian).

Example Talam from Analekara, another geetham by Purandara Dasa written in Triputa Talam Thisra Jathi):

	Lagha				Dhruta			Dhruta		
R	M	R	|	R	S	|	D	S	|| ← Talam with Swara
A	-	na	|	le	-	|	ka	ra	|| ← Talam with sahityam

Elements and Techniques

There are many elements which define Carnatic music and techniques for singing that are important in the performance of Carnatic music. A few techniques are defined here that are often used when researching and discussing Carnatic Music (Ayyar).

Manodharma sangita

Effectively “imaginative music”. These are the improvised aspects of Carnatic music not part of the kalpita sangita (the composed music) (Ayyar).

Raga Alapana

The alapana introduces the raga of a given piece of music. It is divided into three sections: akshipthika, ragavardhini, and makarini. The Akshipthika is the introduction to the framework of the raga. Ragavardhini is the major section of the alapana which elaborates the raga and focuses on each note of the raga one at a time. The final section, makarini is the conclusion often signified by fast passages (brigas) within the raga. Alapanas are often sung on syllables such as tadarina or tadana but are also sung using ‘ah’ to allow for resonance and akAram (Ayyar).

akAram

akAram is, effectively, open throated singing that shapes the phrase structure of a piece. The goal is to have clear, resonating notes. Sections of the alapana and or sangita that are sung on the same vowel are often referred to as “the akAram” and are sung with one breath in an open manner (Kalyanaraman).

Kalpana swara

Kalpana swara is the presentation of a raga using only the swara. This can be done around a single line or the entire piece can be presented using the swara before adding the sahityam. Only the swara syllables that are part of the ragam can be sung as part of the kalpana swara (Ayyar).

Carnatic music octave division

It is important to note that Carnatic music is based on rational division, not on logarithmic division. This means that for a note to be "in tune" in the Carnatic system, it will have a slightly different frequency compared to its Western world counterpart. Western music was originally based on rational division as well, but gave way to logarithmic division. Logarithmic division, also referred to as Equal Temperament, is modernly used as the proper turning for keyboard instruments, music programs, etc, and allows for the notes to be evenly spaced, but requires slightly more complex math. Rational division, also referred to as Just Intonation, is based on ratios that divide an octave. The two tuning scales are very close together, and an untrained ear would not necessarily be able to tell the difference. However, when learning Carnatic music it is important to learn the notes using the rational division tuning system, as trained Carnatic musicians will be able to tell the difference. For this reason, using a western keyboard or music program to generate the notes, while close to the proper pitches and enough to give a "general idea" of the ragam, it will result in the ragam lacking the true characteristics of Carnatic music (Sriram).

Instruments

There are a few instruments traditionally used in the performance of Carnatic music. The first is the tambura. The tambura is a long necked string instrument similar to a lute with no frets which plays an important role in the performance of Carnatic music. Carnatic music is performed to a drone, which is a continuous sound based on the Sa and Pa swara of the raga. The tambura is generally tuned to Pa, Sa, Sa, Sa with the middle two Sa's an octave higher than the final. The strings are plucked and resonate for up to 10 seconds, depending on the tuning. While distinct notes sound as they are plucked, the overall feeling is of a continuous Sa/Pa sound. The tambura is the instrument which traditionally plays the drone. Other instruments include the percussion instrument known as the Mridhangam, which is often used to beat the Talam. String instruments such as the violin and the veena, the instrument favored by Saraswathi, the Goddess of learning and the Arts, are also common for use as melodic instruments. Below are the Tambura, Mridhangam, and Veena respectively (Instruments of South India).

Purandara Dasa

Purandara Dasa was born in 1484 in Southern India. The exact location of his birth is a subject of disagreement: some say it was the small village of Pandarpur, other say the town of Kshemapura in the Karnataka state. He was well education and, in 1500, at the age of 16, he married Lakshmibai. He worked in his family's business as a moneylender and it is said that he lived only to earn money karnATik).

(photo from Karnataka.com)

The accepted story of how he became a Carnatic musician involves a religious incident. A Brahmin visited his shop asking for charity, and when Purandara Dasa would not have any charity, the Brahmin went to his wife. His wife wanted to help the Brahmin, and the Brahmin suggested that she give him something she received from her parents, as it would be hers to give without the permission of her husband. The wife gave the Brahmin a piece of jewelry giver to her by her parents. The Brahmin then returned to Purandara Dasa's shop to pledge something for a loan. The Brahmin showed Purandara Dasa the jewelry received from his wife and Purandara Dasa took it and locked it away. He went to his wife and demanded to see the jewelry. His wife knew she would be punished for giving away the jewelry and decided to drink poison. As she was about to drink the poison, the jewelry appeared in the cup. She showed the ornament to Purandara Dasa and, when he saw the box where he had locked the ornament was empty, asked his wife to tell him the truth of what had happened. This led Purandara Dasa to believe that the Brahmin was God. He was disgusted with himself and gave away his wealth and began to travel the Vijayanagara Empire composing verses and songs (karnATik).

Purandara Dasa composed in both KannaDa and Sanskrit. He became a disciple of Vyaasa Raaya in 1525 and was titled Purandara VitThala. He wrote 475,000 songs before he died in 1564 (one year before the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire) and is considered the father of Carnatic music. He developed and standardized a structure of lessons and exercises for Carnatic musicians. Most of his songs praise Krishna, but other gods and goddesses such as Ganesha and Saraswathi were occasionally praised as well (karnATik). He died in 1564.

Kamala Jadala

Kamala Jadala is a geetham, which is the simplest type of Carnatic piece. Geethams are characterized by limited ornamentation or repetition.

Ragam: Kalyani
Talam: Triputa Talam Tisra Jathi

Arohanam : S R2 G3 M2 P D2 N3 S
Avarohanam: S N3 D2 P M2 G3 R2 S

This Ragam contains the same notes both ascending and descending.

Using middle C as Sa, the notes of this Raga are as follows (with how they are pronounced when singing the swara). Keep in mind Raga involves more than just the pure pitches and includes gamaka (ornamentation) and the pitches use rational division of the octave.

Notes of the Arohanam and Avarohanam

S	=	C	=	Sa
R2	=	D	=	Ri
G3	=	E	=	Ga
M2	=	F#	=	Ma
P	=	G	=	Pa
D2	=	A	=	Da
N3	=	B	=	Ni

The geetham is in Triputa Talam. Triputa Tala consists of 1 Laghu and 2 Dhruta. The Dhruta always consists of 2 counts and the Laghu is in Tisra Jathi, which means it has 3 counts.

Format of each Talam:

X X X | X X | X X ||

Sahityam (lyrics):
Kamalajadala Vimala Su-nayana Kari Varada Karunaambudhe
Karuna Sharadhe Kamalaa Kaanthaa
Keshi Narakaasura Vibhedana Varadha Velasura Purottama

Translation of the Sahityam:
Oh! Merciful one, with lotus-like Eyes!You are an ocean of mercy and showed kindness to the elephant king), Gajendra. You, the lord of Lakshmi slew the demons Keshi and Narakaasura. Your exalted presence resides in the city of Velapura. You are the greatest amongst Gods. (Shivkumar)

Kamala Jadala in Carnatic Notation

S S S | N D | N S || N D P | D P | M P ||
Ka ma la jaa - da la Vi ma la Su na ya na

G M P | P D | D N || D P M | P G | R S ||
Ka ri Va ra da Ka ru naa - mbu dhe - - -

D D D | G G | G , || M P , | M G | R S ||
Ka ru na Sha ra dhe - Ka ma - laa - - -

R , , | S , | , , ||
Kaan - - thaa - - -

G M P | M P | D P || N D P | D P | M P ||
Ke - shi Na ra kaa - su ra Vi bhe - da na

G M P | P D | D N || D P M | P G | R S ||
Va ra dha Ve - la a su ra Pu ro - tta ma

D D D | G G | G , || M P , | M G | R S ||
Ka ru na Sha ra dhe - Ka ma - laa - - -

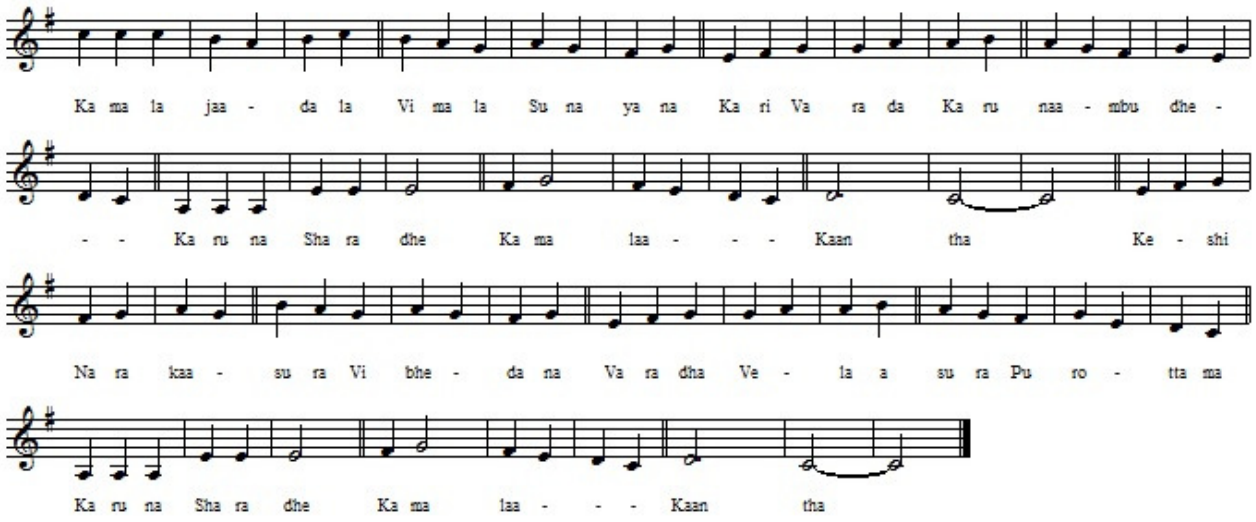
R , , | S , | , , ||
Kaan - - thaa - - -

Kamala Jadala in Modern Western Notation

This is included as a reference for modern musicians and uses middle C as Sa.

Kamala Jadala

Purandara Dasa



Sanskrit

Sanskrit is an ancient Indian language belonging to the Indo-European language family which many modern language can trace their roots to. Texts written in Sanskrit date to 1500 BC. Stories say that the Hindu god of creation, Brahma, created the Sanskrit, and thus the language is also called Dev Vani (language of gods). Below is a basic phonetic inventory of Sanskrit.

Vowels (From Omniglot)

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अँ	अः
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ	e	ai	o	au	aṅ	aṃ	aḥ
[ʌ]	[aː]	[i]	[iː]	[u]	[uː]	[r]	[rː]	[l]	[lː]	[eː]	[aːi]	[o]	[aːu]	[aŋ]	[ə̃]	[əh]

प	पा	पि	पी	पु	पू	पृ	पॄ	पॢ	पॣ	पे	पै	पो	पौ	पं	पाँ	पः
pa	pā	pi	pī	pu	pū	pṛ	pṝ	pḷ	pḹ	pe	pai	po	pau	paṅ	paṃ	paḥ

Consonants (From Omniglot)

क	ka	[kʌ]	ख	kha	[kʰʌ]	ग	ga	[gʌ]	घ	gha	[gʱʌ]	ङ	ṅa	[ŋʌ]
च	ca	[cʌ]	छ	cha	[cʰʌ]	ज	ja	[ɟʌ]	झ	jha	[ɟʱʌ]	ञ	ña	[ɲʌ]
ट	ṭa	[ʈʌ]	ठ	ṭha	[ʈʰʌ]	ड	ḍa	[ɖʌ]	ढ	ḍha	[ɖʱʌ]	ण	ṇa	[ɳʌ]
त	ta	[tʌ]	थ	tha	[tʰʌ]	द	da	[dʌ]	ध	dha	[dʱʌ]	न	na	[nʌ]
प	pa	[pʌ]	फ	pha	[pʰʌ]	ब	ba	[ʋʌ]	भ	bha	[bʱʌ]	म	ma	[mʌ]
य	ya	[jʌ]	र	ra	[rʌ]	ल	la	[lʌ]	व	va	[ʋʌ]			
श	śa	[ɕʌ]	ष	ṣa	[ʂʌ]	स	sa	[sʌ]						
ह	ha	[ɦʌ]	ळ	ḷa	[ɭʌ]									

Examples of Conjunct Consonants (From Omniglot)
(About 1000 conjunct consonants exist, formed from combinations of between 2 and 5 consonants)

ग्य	ग्र	ग्र्य	घ्न	घ्न्य	घ्म	घ्य	घ्र	ङ्क	ङ्क्त	ङ्क्त्य	ङ्क्य
gya	gra	grya	ghna	ghnya	ghma	ghya	ghra	ṅka	ṅkta	ṅktya	ṅkya

क्ष्ण	क्ष्व	ख्व	ङ्ख्य	ङ्ग	ङ्ग्य	ङ्घ	ङ्घ्य	ङ्घ्र	ङ्ङ	ङ्न	ङ्म
ṅkṣa	ṅkṣva	ṅkha	ṅkhya	ṅga	ṅgya	ṅgha	ṅghya	ṅghra	ṅṅa	ṅna	ṅma

Performance

Women in Vijayanagara

While there is no express evidence (that I have found) that states "women performed Carnatic music," based on the information available the conclusion can be drawn that, even if it is not expressly documented, it is not outside the realm of activities in which women in the Vijayanagara Empire participated. There are multiple sources available that state women were adept at music and participatd in many activities other "considered the monopoly of men, such as administration, business and trade, and involvement in the fine arts" (New World). Kamat of the Mysore Department of Archeology states that South India had excellent education for girls, starting in ancient times, which included "reading, writing, arithmetic, recitation from classics, dance, drama; music" and that "women musicians were expert in playing on flute, vina (=lute), and drum (=maddale), beating on bronze tala (kamsala) and blowing horn (kahale)." Women composers of religious music in India have existed since at least the 7th Century when a woman named Andal composed hymns celebrating Krishna. In the 13th century, Akka Mahadevi sang religious songs called Vachanas and wrote free verse lyrics and poems. While out of period, Princess Rukmini Bai Tamburatti composed religious songs in the 18th Century, as well. Finally, biographies of Purandara Dasa's life suggest that his wife and children also composed versus and songs with him and, while not expressly stated, it would be reasonable to assume that where they were composing, they were also performing the music they composed (karnATik). With a history showing that women have continued to compose and perform religious music over a period of over 1000 years, coupled with the knowledge that women were expert musicians in the Vijayanagara Empire and enjoyed many traditionally male activities, it is valid to consider that women would have been involved in the performance and proliferation of Carnatic music in the early 16th Century.

Costuming

Women during this time period either went topless or wore a blouse, either plain, embroidered, or otherwise decorated and a sari (Kamat). While there is limited pictoral evidence to support wearing a Choli, the option of topless is generally considered less than socially acceptable to our modern society (both medieval and mundane) and thus with Choli type tops being a dominant upper garment throughout various regions of India, it is reasonable to assume that this would be an appropriate substitute for topless as an upper garment. A sari wrap similar to the fishtail wrap was worn (see picture, right, from Sivaramamurti). As with all Indian cultures, jewelry was important with bangles worn at the wrists, pearl necklaces hanging from closer to the neck all the way to the belly button, large earrings, anklets, armbands, and pearled headdress at the part of the hair ending at the forehead called a tilaka (or tika), which was a mark of religious worship or devotion, was worn. Additional jewelry was also worn, though images indicated that it was not necessary to wear all these elements all the time.

Learning the Piece

Before learning any music, I spent time learning the theory behind Carnatic music. I could not understand the notation and the concept of swara, ragam, and talam without studying it first. With a background in the theory of the music, the first step to learning to piece is to learn the Ragam. After practice on the Ragam, I was able to learn the swara and sahityam.

In period, there would have been no written notation of the piece. A student would learn from his guru (teacher) by first learning the ragam, and then being taught the piece orally. However, they would have also done extensive practice and exercises prior to learning an actual piece of music. Thus, I learned the piece primarily from listening to recordings of the piece, both instructional recordings provided by Kalyanaraman and performance recordings found on other Carnatic websites, to emulate the oral learning experience. I use the swara notation primarily for learning and memorizing an unfamiliar language and do not use Western notation (which I provide as a reference point for modern musicians) in the actual learning of a piece.

I did my best to emulate the recordings. Geethams are considered by Carnatic musicians to be simple songs, and thus easier to learn (they are often learned first by students studying Carnatic music), however, many of the basic elements and techniques are difficult for a Western musician. The gamakam in Kalyani Ragam, which is the ragam of Kamala Jadala, were particularly difficult in this case and involved more vocal techniques than other ragams . As Carnatic music does not specify a starting pitch for the music, performers are expected to choose the sruti (pitch) that is most comfortable for their voice. I chose to designate my “Sa” as the note “G”.

The geetham is performed at a variety of tempos, though most are relatively moderate with each swara somewhere between 100 and 120 beats per minute. Many performances of this geetham are on the fast side, so I chose a tempo on the upper end of the range in order to be more similar to what I have heard.

Finally, this geetham is more difficult than others I have encountered due to the gamakam of the piece. It is difficult to isolate some of the pitches due to the vocal slides and ornamentations inherent to the ragam. The vocal trills are particularly hard to emulate. The akAram section is also difficult, as it is in a very low range and has little movement of notes, making it much more difficult to convey forward movement of the performance.

Performance Style

For the performance I decided to perform as a female and will be wearing Sari and jewelry as appropriate for an urban woman of the Vijayanagara empire. The performance will be for an upper class or courtly audience, but it would be performed to all levels of general audience in a similar way. Many performance, such as Purandara Dasa, sang as minstrels or on street corners to praise Krishna and the other gods and goddesses, thus, the music itself is appropriate for both public places and more private settings such as court or temple, or as a song of individual worship rather than one of group worship.

I will be seated in the traditional cross legged (Indian) style so that I can properly beat the Talam against the thigh. The tambura drone will begin. Due to the expensive of buying an instrument, the tambura drone used will be a recording of a tambura (Peikoff). First, the Alapana is sung. This will be a simple iteration of the ragam both arohanam and avarohanam, mostly to establish the swara which compose the ragam. It will be sung at a slow tempo followed by a faster tempo, then sung using

akAram on the ‘ah’ syllable. Following the Alapana, the geetham is sung using the swara. In this situation, the swara is significantly short than the sahityam of the piece, and there is no necessity to repeat the swara to match length. Thus, the swara section will be comparatively shorter than the sahityam section. The sahityam section will be sung through including a short repeated section, which I wrote out in the notation. In some pieces, the first line of the geetham is often sung again at the end to finish the geetham. In this particular geetham, the short repeated section at the end serves the same purpose as the first line repetition seen in other geethams, and thus no other repetition is necessary.

Thoughts and Analysis

In this performance, I focused on being true to the performance standards of a trained Carnatic musician. However, there are distinct limitations on my performance. Primarily, a Carnatic musician will receive hours of training to accomplish the techniques associated with the gamaka of the piece: the 'bounces' on a note, slides, trills, and wavering on a note. As I have never received any type of classical vocal training, it is very difficult to duplicate these techniques. Even in a geetham, which is limited in its use of excessive ornamentation, there are techniques that I may try to achieve but fall short on accomplishing due to limitations in my vocal training. Kamala Jadala, in particular, has far more vocal technique required through ornamentation that any I have previously attempted.

Secondly, a performance of this piece in period would have been accompanied by live instrumentation. Some performances would have been accompanied by multiple instruments, while other accompanied only by the drone. Specialized instruments such as the tambura are expensive to purchase and the sound cannot be emulated on Western style period instruments. Additionally, to have a live musician accompany me, someone would have to not only own the instrument but learn how to play it. As the singer would generally be keeping the talam beat rather than accompanying themselves on the instrument, the instrument itself is not necessary for a period performance of the vocal portion.

As the drone is an important part of the performance, modern day singers often use a recording or electronic "sruti box" that provides an authentic sounding tambura drone. I felt that it was necessary for the depth of performance and immersive aspect to have my "off stage accompanist" (my iPod speaker) perform the tambura drone for the performance. The recording is an authentic tambura done recording. I feel that, as it is impossible to tell the difference between the recording a live "off stage accompanist", the drone recording allows for the right ambiance, as well as depth and authenticity of performance.

A major issue in preparing Carnatic music is the issue of primary documentation. During this time period, all music was transmitted orally from teacher to student with no need to write down the music. Thus, in choosing a piece to perform, I started with a composer. Purandara Dasa was a prolific composer of music in period and is highly regarded as the "father" of Carnatic music. With this in mind, I chose a piece attributed to him from multiple sources. While there is a chance the music has been altered over the years, pieces that pass through oral tradition, especially in situation that require long apprenticeships and tight student-teacher relationship where lineage is important, are often carefully kept to ensure the integrity of the original composition. It is reasonable to assume that pieces written by Purandara Dasa, as a highly respected composer, and pieces of a religious nature, which is what Carnatic music is, would be kept as true to form as possible.

A final issue occurs in finding good sources for Carnatic music. Because Carnatic musicians still follow a guru-student education structure, it is difficult to find solid information online or in English language books about the complex musical structure of Carnatic music. Many online sources are written with the idea that you already have fundamental knowledge of Carnatic music theory, and thus use terms that are meaningless without attempting to find the terminology elsewhere. Due to the complicated process of acquiring information about Carnatic theory, it is possible that some information is not completely accurate.. However, I did the best I could to compile information from multiple sources in order to ensure the information was as accurate as possible. The theory was written through studying the concepts and then translating them as closely as possible into terminology that a musician with western theory and notation knowledge would understand. Learning this style of music without a guru is challenging, and finding an easy way to present the basics even more so. It is my hope that the information presented provides a starting point for others to further research and learn.

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Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

akAram: Open throated, clear, resonating singing sung on a sustained vowel that shapes the phrase structure of the piece.

Akshipthika: The first pat of the alapana which introduces to the framework of the raga sung prior to beginning the sangita. The notes of the ragam are sung simply in arohanam and avarohanam

Angams: components that make up the Talam consisting of Laghu, Dhruta, and Anu Dhruta

Arohanam: the sequences of swara used in ascending passages of a ragam

Avarohanam: the sequences of swara used in descending passages of a ragam

Brigas: Fast singing passages

Carnatic: (Karnatic, Karnatik) Classical music from Southern India. It is the counterpart of northern Hindustani music.

Dhruta: consists of 2 beats counts

Gamakam: Ornamentation such as grace notes and slides used in Carnatic music that develop the tonality of the piece. Some Ragam consist of the same swara, but are differentiated from each other based on the Gamakam.

Gathi: (gati) Also called Nadai. Subdivisions or underlying rhythm of the beat. Contributes to how fast or slow (tempo) the piece sounds

Geetham: The most simple song form in Carnatic music. It contains limited ornamentation or repetition.

Jathri: The amount of beats or counts in the Laghu (Tisra = 3, Chatusra = 4, Khanda = 5, Misra = 7, Sankeerna = 9)

Kalpana swara: The presentation of a raga using only the swara

Kalpita sangita: composed music

Kriyaa: Movements of the hand that keep the beat of the different Anga divisions of the Talam

Laghu: consists of 3, 4, 5, 7 or 9 beats or counts determined by the Jathri

Makarini: The final section of the Alapana which involves brigas (fast passages) within the raga, often sung with akAram on the syllable ‘ah’

Manodharma sangita: improvised music within a ragam

Raga Alapana: the introduction to the ragam. Prior to singing the Kalpita sangita, the ragam is sung. There are three sections: akshipthika, ragavardhini, and makarini

Ragam: The melodic organization of swara to create a given tonality. Comparative to scales in Western music.

Ragavardhini: The major section of the alapana which elaborates on the raga. Each note is focused and will include elements of the Gamakam.

Sahityam: The words or lyrics

Sruti: The tonality of the Carnatic piece – relationship between base frequency and swara in a ragam

Swara: A note or pitch. Swara specifically refers to notes that are sung vocally.

Talam: the beat of rhythm cycle of the music. Similar to the time signature in western music, but consisting of 1 or more sections called angams which may have a different number of beats.