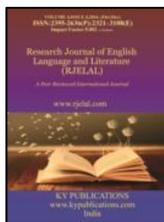




MAKING MELAKARTA RAGAS A UNIVERSAL TREASURE: A MELODIC MAESTRO'S MELLIFLUOUS ENDEAVOUR

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ABSTRACT

English Literature and Film Studies enables one to critically scrutinize English Literature in some of its immensely wide-ranging contexts alongside developing analytical skills attuned to the diverse medium of film. While *English Literature* allows us to develop skills in close and creative reading, theoretical concepts and a critical awareness of the relationship between texts and their contexts, *Film Studies* introduces us to a wide range of film genres and gives the ability to comprehend how we interact, represent our ideas, and tell our stories through a visual medium. Music is an art form and cultural activity whose medium is sound organized in time. It is indisputable too. If someone in one's chosen field attempts to create an innovation that is par excellence, not only is it a valuable treasure trove to the generations to come, it is the true purpose of a committed human being for his fellow beings. The present research article primarily focuses on one of the proud Telugu melodic maestros, Swaraveenapani, who with his mellifluous endeavours and creativity, has been attempting to make the 72 *Melakarta Ragas* a universal treasure to all.

KEYWORDS: Film Studies; Literature and Film Studies; Melakarta Ragas; Sapta Swaravadhanam; Swara Ganitam; Swaraveenapani; Vogeti Naga Venkata Ramana Murthy

INTRODUCTION

Literature and Cinema are two distinct but equally extraordinary works of art. In other words, we can articulate that literature is an art which is developed through writing while cinema brings to life those writings to life through sound, music, visuals, and actors. Literature and film continue to draw on and hold up each other, whether this is the adaptation of classics for the screen or the shared processes and approaches we use to analyze genre, identity, and style in films, television shows, plays, and novels. Through *Film Studies*, one can gain a deep insight of the history of cinema and of literature, and we lay emphasis on how creative

texts in both forms relate to their social and cultural situations, whether this means understanding how writers have responded to contemporary concerns or how films have depicted race, class, and gender.

Music, in its truest sense, attempts to mingle the beauty of melody with the logic of science. It aims at a new-fangled aesthetic where beauty and brain blend to form a unique synchronization. It is a symphony which would soothe the senses even as it appeals to the mind. The science of music and the music of science in setting new benchmarks of appreciation and understanding are sure to delight the connoisseur.

One of the proud Telugu melodic maestros, Swaraveenapani, who with his mellifluous endeavours and creativity, has been attempting to make the 72 *Melakarta Ragas* a universal treasure to the present music admirers and the admirers to be.

ABOUT SWARAVEENAPANI

Swaraveenapani, a.k.a. Vogeti Naga Venkata Ramana Murthy, is a lyricist and Telugu cinema music director par excellence. He hails from a remote village called Ravela near Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. Having been bestowed a meaningful life, Swaraveenapani was born as the younger of the two sons to the highly scholarly Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Sastri and Sreemati Sita Annapurnamma. Swaraveenapani is also gifted with three affectionate sisters.

Genius is one of those words upon which the world has approved to form no clear consensus but we learn that more vital than mere originality or creativity, it is the ability to make us experience the world in new ways that sets *Suswara Brahma*, Swaraveenapani apart among many Telugu music and literary geniuses.

WHAT ARE MELAKARTA RAGAS?

In Indian classical music, each of the seven basic musical modes which express different moods in certain characteristic progressions, with more emphasis placed on some notes than others is known as a Raga. Melakarta is a collection of fundamental musical scales (ragas) in Carnatic music i.e. South Indian classical music. According to Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia,

Mēlakarta ragas are parent ragas (hence known as *janaka* ragas) from which other ragas may be generated. A *melakarta* raga is sometimes referred as *mela*, *karta* or *sampurna* as well, though the latter term is inaccurate, as a *sampurna* raga need not be a *melakarta* (take the raga *Bhairavi*, for example). In Hindustani music the *thaat* is equivalent of *Melakarta*. There are 10 *thaats* in Hindustani music, though the commonly accepted *melakarta* scheme has 72 ragas.¹

CHARACTERISTICS OF MELAKARTA RAGAS

To be considered a *melakarta* raga, it must be a *sampurna* or total raga. Indian classical ragas must contain the following characteristics to be considered *Melakarta*. They contain all seven *swaras* (notes) of the octave in both ascending and descending scale. *Melakarta* ragas are *karma sampurna* ragas – that is, the sequence is strictly ascending and descending in the scales, without any jumps or zig-zag notes. The upper *shadjam* is included in the raga scale (ragas like *Punnagavarali* and *Chenchurutti* are not *mēlakarta* as they end with *nishadam*). The ascending and descending scales must have the same notes.

THE GENIUS OF SWARAVEENAPANI

The primary function of the creative genius in society is to accelerate the development of authentic human values, which often requires these men and women to partially or completely withdraw from mainstream society. The extreme individualism of these people allows them to ascertain human values that are then used to revivify eroding or procrustean social structures. Creative geniuses like Swaraveenapani provide the covert foundation for social change and spiritual transformation, which requires that they remain loners who are totally dedicated to their creative work. No doubt, he has played a pivotal role for everything that has been said here above. According to Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, Swaraveenapani...

...completed his research on 72 Melakarta Ragas and he brought the entire theme as a song in a span of 6 and 1/2 minutes and the other version is of 3 and 1/2 minutes. He has been working for the last 16 years on the *Swaranidhi* project which has been registered as *Swaranidhi*. He is working vigorously to spread the same to the World which can be most useful to the Music Students, Musicians and Music Lovers to know the capsule format of 72 Melakarta ragas in an easy way. *Swaranidhi* project got a huge applause from the stalwarts of Indian Music.²

In an interview given on 22nd January, 2018 to this researcher (i.e. Dr.V.Sreenatha Chary)³, the oceanic melodic maestro, Swaraveenapani made it clear that his rendition of 72 *Melakarta Ragas* in its shortest capsule form is an incredible feat and is very useful to the students and lovers of music. His extraordinary composition of these *ragas*, which is truly adulation to his august audience, be it veterans of music, musicologists, performing artists or discerning and knowledgeable *Rasikaas*. His legendary feat, with its theme as a song in a span of 6 and 1/2 minutes and the other version of 3 and 1/2 minutes, is not only mellifluous but also unique! During his interview given to this researcher, Swaraveenapani shared some of the most interesting aspects about the course of his musical journey and melodic innovations. Some of them are mentioned hereunder:

- Two most ground-breaking creations of his are *Sapta Swaravadhanam* and *Swara Ganitam*.
- The true purpose of any *Avadhanam* event is the showcasing, through entertainment or skill, of superior mastery of cognitive capabilities - of observation, memory, multitasking, task switching, retrieval, reasoning and creativity in multiple modes of intelligence - literature, poetry, music, mathematical calculations, puzzle solving etc.
- These two melodic feats require memory power and test a person's capability of performing multiple tasks simultaneously.
- The two tasks demand an in-depth knowledge of *sapta swaras*, literature, and prosody.
- He is capable of relating and reciting an apt raga according to the emotion, feeling or any *bhavam* expressed by *Prcchaka* or the Questioner. This is the outcome of Swaraveenapani's research all through his career till date.
- He underscores the point that when he is able to perform an extempore rendition through his *Sapta Swaravadhanam*, students of music, through committed *sadhana* or exercise, can easily emerge as the stalwarts of *ragas* and music undoubtedly.
- Each of the seven ragas evokes a feel which is different from the other.
- In order to evoke the feeling of sadness, for example, *Sivaranjani* raga can be recited; for joy or happiness, *Kalyani* or *Malkhos* raga can be chosen; or to induce anger, *Sriragam* can be recited.
- In order to inspire and motivate the music-lovers and learners, he makes it a point to showcase his *Sapta Swaravadhanam* at the end of his workshops.
- He has developed another unique aspect called *Swara Ganitam* which is the rarest feat of musical orchestration.
- *Swara Ganitam* refers to the mathematical equations of *swaras* which enables both a musician or a non-musician to get grip over all the ragas. By using this precise melodic mode, one can create the table of 72 *Melakarta Ragas* and explain the meanings of *sapta swaras*.

On invitation from the Madras Music Academy, Swaraveenapani demonstrated on the 24th of December 2014, his astonishing composition amidst applause and adulation of the august audience. The legendary Hyderabad Brothers endorsed Swaraveenapani's composition of 72 *Melakarta Ragas* not only by rendering it melodiously but also elaborating on the amazing aspects of this unique creation of Swaraveenapani. The Chairperson of the Conference, Dr.Pappu and the Sangeetha Kalanidhi designate *Padmabhushan* (Shri) T.V.Gopalakrishnan endorsed

Swaraveenapani's rendition of 72 *Melakarta Ragas* as a universal treasure, an incredible fete and a very useful tool for the students of music.

In fact, literary or melodic genius is a multi-layered aptitude that consists of many unique cognitive, affective, perceptual, motivational, interpersonal, and state-dependent attributes, including the challenging of orthodox thinking, fertility of ideas, compulsive discipline and hard work, tolerance of ambiguity, innocence of perception, immersion in the present moment, intellectual diversity, an internal locus of evaluation, and sensitivity to nuances. If these qualities find the mind of a single individual, that is the Son of India, Pride of Andhra Pradesh, and Diamond of Music... (Dr.) Swaraveenapani.

CONCLUSION

Swaraveenapani, in his humble way, reminds the people around him that this by no means is his accomplishment, and that he remains but a medium that passes on the vitality of Indian music to the generations next. He never prefers to be in the limelight but chooses to be a simple human being, by merely possessing the recognition of his distinguished contribution in the sphere of music. He is an illustrious individual with all versatility of being a musician, literary magician, writer, poet and guru. He is a multidimensional personality whose interests include poetry, lyrical writing, spiritual and Bhakthi pieces of literature. He is a beacon light in his chosen art and the sea of honeyed music. He does deserve the prestigious and celebrated Guinness World Record which he is planning to attempt in few months. One can simply say that it becomes just another frill in his cap. Honouring him is honouring the Musical Muse, period!

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