

# Begada

Janya from 29, Dheerashankarabharanam

Arohana Avarohana: @TS5,33<sup>-</sup>

S G3 R2 G3 M1 P D2 P S S N\* D2 P M1 G3 R2 S  
(see later discussions) Vakra (arohana alone) shadava-sampoorna

This article has two parts:

1) Salient parts of discussion on the raga:

As the saying "bEgaDA mlgada" (Begada (is the) cream) goes, it is an exquisite raga, and one that provides great relish.

It is also quite a sphinx of a raga i.e. defies any easy or simplistic attempts at being bracketed into categories - particularly due to the varied intonations of the svara N. The M1 is quite idiosyncratic (as Lalita Ramakrishna says in her book "The Varnam: a special form in Karnatak music").

Nominally, the scale is given as S G3 R2 G3 M1 P D2 P S S N\* D2 P M1 G3 R2 S But there is a glaring D N S in the "inta calamu" varnam itself.

Am sure that there are padams, jAvalis, etc... in Begada RTPs in Begada are also quite common.

Prof.S.R.Janakiraman demonstrated this in a lucid manner while he visited Detroit in 93. He sang various phrases involving the N; the "S N D P S" phrase was one of those in which N3 was distinctly used. The N in the "D N S R S" phrase of the "inta calamu" varnam (corresponding to "pan... ta" of the lyric) is also raised enough that I suppose it can be called N3.

The caveat of course is that with ragas like this (unlike, say, Hamsadhvani) you need a "dense" description to convey any real flavor. This would include many prayogas which have gotten dropped due to over-standardization, changing views on raga lakshana, or increasingly rigid raga lakshana, etc. or else which lurk around under the name of "ArSha" prayogam, prAclna/ pazhaya piDi,...

SRJ also sang the phrase "R N D P S" twice; in his own words, the first used "a touch of kAkali ni i.e. N3", and the second used the very low N3 (which may be called N2 by some) which is NOW the patent N in Begada as in phrases like P D P N D D P. On another occasion, he sang a phrase with the kAkali N, adding that it was rare, and that "it may even be avoided", thus indicating a certain ambivalence for such archaic or rare usages.

I am still doubtful if kakali nishada is used as an independent note with a distinct frequency.

If you are thinking of a stature for N3 similar to that in, say, kalyANI, yes, your doubt is very valid. But then, isn't it the case that even in Shankarabharanam, such an independent stature for N3 is not quite possible, or, at the least, would be jarring.

The usage is very subtle and those of you who play instruments will probably agree with me that, although ostensibly the note being played is nishada, in reality it is merely a jantaiswara of the shadja masquerading as nishada.

Enharmonic equivalence (I like the ring of this phrase - heard it first from Art Levine on this very newsgroup) in action !!!

I wonder if it has something to do with the 22 sruthi concept.

Yes. In a manner of speaking, that is.

It does have to do with shrutis (tones) and svaras (notes), even if we don't care about the 22 stuff. Throw in svarasthAnas (note positions) too for verbosity sake :-)

Since the post-Sangita ratnakara period (> 1250 AD or so), the positions of S/P became immutable so that, even in theory, the earlier variations in S intonation with accompanying nomenclature like cyuta-Shadja (i.e. a lowered S) were dumped on the lower svara N, giving rise to names like cyuta-shadja-nishada.

Thus, in theoretical and practical discourse, anything intoned lower than the S in a subtle or overt manner has come to be regarded and verbalized as a N. Same is true in the case of P and M.

ps: A general comment here: I have observed various vidvans talk about or demonstrate subtle differences between ragas, or shrutis employed in certain phrases, or about janaka/janya relationships - each employing their own rhetorical devices. Everyone of them will split hairs over minute differences on certain occasions, while they will tend to gloss over variations on other occasions. While this can be maddening at times, it certainly adds to the richness of the whole experience...

pps: Last summer, an "uncle" of mine who is 80+ played Begada on the flute and said with full attendant rhetoric "this is not the garden variety Begada you hear these days... this is strongly Shankarabharanam based, an older style". I think his whole bombast was based on the M/N usages.

VidyaSankar Sunderesan writes:

Regarding the kakali nishada in Begada. The varnam Inta chalamu is notated with a dns ris in the anupallavi. Veena Dhanammal plays it with a kaisiki nishada, not kakali. But I've heard another paThAnthara with pdp sns, which also utilizes kaisiki nishada. At least to my ears, the second one sounds closer to how Begada "should" sound. Furthermore, the dhaivata in Begada is rarely handled as a straight note; even in phrases like ni da pa (e.g. Nee pada pankaja), the da is higher in its value than the straight note. Thus, even in the first paThAnthara, nns ris is how it really sounds. I would venture to say that "dns" as written down is more a limitation of the notation scheme used, than a real problem in the raga itself. Note that this is not an appeal for standardization, even in the written notation! :-). Rather, musicians should follow their musical sensibilities about what sounds good here, rather than be worried too much about the dns notation. Whether something sounds good or not, is of course a subjective opinion.

There are many phrases in Begada where the arohana krama of pdps is violated. Like - gmpd nsdp mpgr sa, pdpd rsni da pa, dnrs ni dp, etc. In all these cases, the ni is kaisiki. The kakali nishada, when it is used, is very close to the

shadja. I guess you could call it the chyuta shadja nishada i.e. the nishada "touching" the shadja. In many places, it sounds almost like two sa's in succession rather than like sa and ni. But I would still call it a nishada if for nothing else but the sake of consistency. A similar usage (janta sa, the second sa sounding almost like a ni) in Mohanam is frowned down upon, and is usually called an admixture of Kalyani! Though of course Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer got away with it.  
:-).

S. Vidyasankar

Shivkumar writes:

Following up on the discussion of nishada in begada, I had a relook at some of the prayogas in the begada varnam and at my paataantara of "Tyagaraajaaya Namaste" by Dikshitar (semmgudi paddathi). Here's a set of opinions :

Notation : -----

Kaisiki Ni is written as : N and kalali as N... I use hyphens to split a sangati... Capital letters are dheergam and small are hruswam...

Kaakali N : ----- In general I have found N (kakali) as more of a connecting note esp in sangatis like sndp - sndrs. It takes a more resonant tonality in the sangati sngr G;. I noticed that there was hardly any janta swara at shadjam in the whole varnam. The kriti too has a couple of spots where SS occurs ( like the second madhayama kaala sanchara : "sakalaagama mantra tantra..." which is tuned ssMmg Pm Dp...), but it is not a janta prayogam, in the sense the lower note is not even posed momentarily. The kriti in fact stresses more on the kaisiki version and just flashes N at a couple of places. Perhaps this is because the krithi gave a lot more weightage to the flat D ( which in turn admits only of kaisiki N gamaka in combination with it ).

As a connecting note, N takes on a role of terminating the rest at AdhAra shadja. Eg : rSndp, SnDp, S - rndp, S - sngr G etc. Shankari Neevee has an interesting prayogam where DP (shan -- kari) is followed by sndp (in the refrain). It seems to be a very serene territory to venture into after a resting note esp. adhaara shadja.

Being a connecting note, it finds its place more in the change of nadais encountered in the chitta swaras of the varnam. The tempo for e ample in the 3rd chitta swaram picks up with : ndp - rsn - grs - mgr ... upto sndrs (note that n doesnt appear here at all. N however, finds its utmost beauty when it is used in contrast with N - either in a sequence of sangatis, or more so - in the same sangati ! By far, my favorite prayoga in the varnam is in the 2nd chitta swaram where we have : npd N dp - which sums up all the attributes of N. Further, it is one of the sangatis where N stands independently (before falling unto the enchanting gamaka of kaisiki n) without the help of s or r (eg : sndp or rndp or rndppS ). Other contrasts with N (kaisiki) are : .. .. sndrS - pdp NDp (also a contrast between a S based sangati and a P based one). ... S n R s - rndp

S n D p - S n R s....

pmdp mgr snrs - rnd ( 2nd chitta swaram : also illustrates n in sarva laghu prayogam)

The introduction of N in the last chitta swaram which dwells on N is also interesting : rSndp - sngrG ( characterises the use of the two Ns again)... .

Moreover, we dont encounter janta NN.

The two other extremely rare commodities with respect to N are dheergam and use in aarohana krama. However, the varna does provide e amples : dnsRs (panthamElarA : subject of some discussion earlier) [ the same line also ends with dnsr - rSndp which is ( ---- gO-pA-- ) also an ascent prayoga. ] The ascent N would also imply a shankarabharanam style gamakam for D, rather than its usual flat (pdN) or pDp style gamakam.

The dheergam N is provided in the last chitta swara ending : rNddp. But the effect is short lived as it is immediately contrasted and embellished by the lavish gamaka in the kaisiki nishadham : ... s n R - sndp

Kaisiki N: -----

So much for kakali N. Kaisiki N however is the more unobtrusive of the two and is hence more common in raga alapana renderings which I have heard. It is also the case that it admits of a lot more gamaka. Further, there is a similarity in the gamakam employed for N and M (the characteristic begada M) and composers no doubt exploit this gamaka symmetry a lot. It also sets up a flat D usage which contrasts with the normal definition of D as pDp (in the aarohana of the raaga). The pallavi of the krithi has the following sangatis to substantiate this : pd N D P... ( the `d' though short is stressed with a sahitya syllable) thya - ga rA ... ( and this fits the flatness on the spot ).. . r s n s D P... (more variety on n - this prayoga does not appear in thya-- ga rA varnam) The pallavi also has a vigorous eddupu of the N gamakam from G : S G , r G - N dpm gR S ( this before refraining serenely : ) na ma s the nama- sthe - ( kathyayani pathe-... ! ) The sarva laghu of n is exploited in :

... .. rsn dp snrs - nn dp pm - gmpd || sim ha sa na pa the || thyAga...

more Sarva laghu e amples for kaisiki n are found in the chitta swaras of the varnam, eg: beginning of 2nd chitta (already quoted),..... mgr sr - nrs pd - mdp gm - rgm ( 3rd chitta ending)

A rare gamakam for N is found in the anupallavi refrain : ; pd N; dP, || P M dp gR, S || va ghee sha thya ki la the va ||

Perhaps it has a lot to do with the sahitya chosen. This variety introduces possibility of ravva : Dnd P (the underlined portions sung at double tempo.) --- ..... Dikshitar also uses rare dhatu prayogas like : ns mg rs - rs ns dp yu -- kta va da na which require Seshagopalan style note-to-note gamakam pulling capabilities :)

In the first madhyama kaala sahityam there is emphasis on the fact that there ought to be sanchaaras where n is omitted

altogether in the aarohana (according to the raga definition of sgrgm pdps) : ...R s - gm P d p d d p S s ||.. vA ma bhA gas thitha shai la jA ya ...

nnD in contrast with ddP or mpM is also found in both varnam and krithi. In fact dikshitar calls it a "prati bimiba" in the saahityam. ; n N D - P muku ra bim... ba - pra ti bim bita mukha - sphur tha yE. The varnam also exploits the symmetry with sangatis like : mpdndp M (n gamakam is similar to M, albeit shorter and more challenging). The characteristic resting gamaka at N is seen in : pdp N, D, p (pallavi ending region : varnam) N, dpmgr (anupallavi ending region)

nN, dpmgr (muktayi ending region)

N;; ( 4th chitta swaram beginning)

and of course the classic contrast : npd N dp

The wait is perceptible only if it is 3 aksharas or more - else it seems to be rushing.

The krithi's termination also brings home a combination : . . . . r n N dp m G r G || m P M dd p- sn r S || rsnS D vikalpa bEdha yu ktaye vitanga roopa sha ktha yE || thyA ga. (in simple form : rNdpm - dMgmr used frequently in chitta swaras to many krithis) the saahitya of which has the emphasis on 'bEdha', and I could not help wondering if the master composer was referring to begada - the raga of contrasts...

Comments and further analysis welcome...

It is surprising the Madurai Mani Iyer never ventured into this raaga too much, which was a favorite of Semmangudi, KVN, MDR and GNB, Voleti, Tanjore S. Kalyanaraman :)

-Shivkumar

Some further comments by Srini:

IMHO, this paThAntharam is more due to somewhat needless standardization that has taken place in Carnatic music in this century than anything else. The standard varNam book available - of A.S.Pancapakesa Iyer - gAnAmrta varNamAliKA - lists it as pdp...

However consider this:

1. In the Pallavi Svaram Kalpavalli of Tiruvottriyur Tyagayyar (the son of the composer of this varnam, Veena Kuppier), this Avartanam of the varnam contains not one, but 2 'D N S R's almost to reinforce the point. Now, Veena Dhanammal learnt and interacted quite a bit with Tiruvottriyur Tyagayyar and hence seems to play only this version.

2. Similarly, the Sampradaya Pradarshini of Subbarama Dikshitar notates it only as D N S R.

3. Lalita Ramakrishna in her book "The Varnam" makes this point about the 2 DNSR's in the same Avartanam of the anupallavi but says that it is mostly out of vogue now. She also draws attention to the usage of the higher sruti N in certain phrases and the lower shruti N in P D P N D D P etc...

As for what Veena Dhanammal intones when she does D N S R. S, I am not convinced that it can be called kaisiki nishada - it seems somewhat higher than that; for example, if you slacken the tempo of what she plays to a point where you could enounce the individual svaras with a decent kArvai or elongation, then, intoning the N as a "canonical" N2 would be jarring.

In any case, these ve ed issues are what seems to prompt Subbarama Dikshitar to write at least 1.5 pages of detailed intro to this rAga, and the highly complex quality of madhyama-nishAdas... He says that sometimes the N svara will speak (sic) with the quality of kAkali, sometimes with that of kaisiki, and sometimes an in-between.

And it also why we keep hearing stories about how a Tiger or a Dhanammal could produce real mlgaDa (cream) out of this rAgam without paying too much attention to the ArohaNa-avarohana krama, as you have pointed out, or the "standard" intonation of the svaras.

-Srini.

But I've heard another paThAnthara with pdp sns, which also utilizes kaisiki nishada. At least to my ears, the second one sounds closer to how Begada "should" sound.

This is certainly a widely held preference and is indicative of a changing (or already changed) scenario vis-a-vis Begada.

In any case, I heard the tape of my "rhetorical uncle" once again last evening. He says that there is one school of thought which considers Shankarabharanam as the karta ragam and gives little or scant attention to the bhashanga svara (foreign note) kaisiki N. And the other school of course considers N2 to be the right svara and N3 as the bhashanga svara. He states that in the kriti "nAdopAsana" - which he claims is the only maDi or kosher kriti left of Tyagaraja's Begada creations - little or no N2 should be employed.

Then he plays various phrases of Begada, one of which has quite a "hook" - a phrase that goes like G G G G M P D SN3 SN3 G -, and mentions that these sort of prayogams don't form a part of Begada alapanas these days. He also points out certain overworked phrases of Begada from contemporary practice.

2) Compositions in Begada: -----

Srini contributes:

Here are the pieces I have heard in this raga:

1. inta calamu jEsitE - varNam - vIna kuppier 2. dayAnidhe - varNam - shyAmA shAstrI 3. maracitluNDE - varNam - paTNam subrahmanya iyer

4. nAdOpAsana - kriti - tyAgarAjA 5. gaTTi gAnu - kriti - ... 6. nIvErA kula dhanamu - kriti - ... 7. nI pada pankajamula - kriti - ... 8. tanavAri tanamu - kriti - ... 9. sAmikki sari - kriti - ... 10. lokAvana catura - kriti - ... 11. sundari nannindariIO - kriti - ...

12. vallabhA nAyakasya - kriti - muttusvAmi dikShitar 13. tyAgarAjAya namaste - kriti - ... 14. shrl mAta: shiva vAmAnke - kriti - ...

15. shankarl nIvEyani - kriti - subbarAya shAstrI

16. kalayAmi raghurAmam - kriti - svAti tirunAL

17. abhimAnammenneDu - kriti - paTNam subrahmanya iyer

18. anudinamunu kAvumayya - kriti - paTNam subrahmanya iyer (?)

19. cidambaram araharAvenRu - kriti - gopAlakrShNa bhArati (?)

20. innum pArAmugam EnO - kriti - pApanAsam shivan

21. maduram pazhagiya azhagiya - kriti? - ???

nat@amber.ithaca.com contributes:

22. vA murugA

Muthu contributes: 23. GAna Rasamudan (beautiful lyrics) and 24. VisAlakshi NAYakan 25. I have also heard Shri S Rajam sing a Kotiswara Iyer Kriti, Isan Kanaka Sabesan. This is set in what percussionists call an "Edanjai" Kalapramanam.

From Prof Sambamurthy's "South Indian Music":  
Intapriyamuga (varnam)- ata- thaala Aiyaswami nattuvanAr  
Bhaktuni Charitramu - adi -thyagaraja ganarasamudan -  
Papanasan Sivan