

Melody and Rhythm

Melody and rhythm are fundamental to any music system in the world. Though inseparable, they can be viewed distinctly and studied separately. Different systems in the world give emphasis to one or the other, but Carnatic music believes in the saying: *shrutir maata, laya pita*. Translated, this means, melody is mother, rhythm is father. Thus, there is an equal emphasis on both. Most students would be familiar with the basic concepts of raga and tala as explained in Level 1. Here is a recap with a more in-depth approach.

Melody: Melody, in the context of Carnatic music, may be explained as "any musical tone or succession of tones with an inherent capacity to please, whether rendered independently or in conjunction with rhythm". Carnatic music, like several other major systems in the world, primarily uses 7 notes: Sa (S), Ri (R), Ga (G), Ma (M), Pa (P), Da (D) and Ni (N). The 16-note system, quite unique to Carnatic music, is illustrated in Appendix I.

Creating music: Musical phrases are formed when notes are combined in different ways. These can then be developed to form bigger melodic tunes, or codified to form melodic scales that can be expanded and improvised upon as ragas. One could compare it to the alphabet-word-sentence-paragraph progression. The key to the success of a musician or composer is mastery over the fundamental notes, and an ability to combine them in various ways to evoke a response from the listeners.