Sarangadeva’s *Sangita-ratnakara* (first half of 13th century) is of particular importance, because it was written just before influence of the Muslim conquest began to assert itself on Indian culture. The Music discussed in *Sangita-ratnakara* is free from Persian influence. *Sangita-ratnakara* therefore marks the stage at which the ‘integrated’ Music of India was before it branched into North-South Music traditions.

It is clear that by the time of Sarangadeva, the Music of India had moved far away from Marga or Gandharva, as also from the system based on Jatis (class of melodies) and two parent scales. By his time, many new conventions had entered into the main stream; and the concept of Ragas that had taken firm roots was yielding considerable authority. Sarangadeva brought together various strands of the past music traditions, defined almost 267 Ragas, established a sound theoretical basis for music and provided a model for the later musicology (*Sangita Shastra*).

Sarangadeva’s emphasis was on the ever changing nature of music, the expanding role of regional (Desi) influences on it, and the increasing complexity of musical material that needed to be systemised time and again. Yet, Sarangadeva was rooted in the prevalent musical practices of his time. His stress was consistently on the Lakshya the music as practiced than on ancient theories which though he respects them highly.

Sarangadeva gives some information about himself in the beginning of the work. Sarangadeva introduces himself as belonging to a family which hailed from Kashmir. His grandfather Bhaskara, an Ayurveda physician, moved Kashmir into the newly found Yadava capital Devagiri (Maharashtra) in the Deccan region at the invitation of King Bhilanna V (1173-1192). After the death of Bhilanna, his son Jaitrapala or Jaitugi ascended the throne and ruled for a short period. He was succeeded in 1200 by Singhana (1200-1247). He was a very powerful king and also a great patron of arts, literature, and science. It is during his reign that Sarangadeva was appointed in his father’s (Sodhala’s) post as the Royal Accountant (*Sri-karana-agrani*). Along with his work at the king’s offices, Sarangadeva continued to practice the family profession of Ayurveda. He is also said to have written an Vedanta work entitled *Adhyatma-viveka*. That work is not available now.

During his spare hours Sarangadeva was busy composing his monumental work on Indian music the *Sangita Ratnakara*, the Ocean of Music. It turned out to be one of the important and comprehensive Sanskrit texts on Music of India.

The *Sangita Ratnakara* of Sarangadeva is a great compilation, not an original work, that ably brings together various strands of the past music tradition found in earlier works like *Nātياyashasra, Dattīlam, Bṛhaddeśī, Sarasvatī-hṛdayānākārā-hāra* and one that is greatly influenced by the commentary of Abhinavagupta the *Abhinavabhārati*. But for *Sangita Ratnakara*, it may have been more difficult to understand Natyasasra and Brhaddesi and other ancient texts. And, *Sangita Ratnakara* also established a sound theoretical basis for...
music related issues and practices. It also provided a model for the subsequent treatises to elaborate on music-theories and practices (Samgita Shastra).

By the time of Samgita-ratnakara, three divisions of Samgita (vocal, instrumental and imitative art) were well developed. Of these, the Vocal music was regarded as the essential, fundamental music through which all other forms of music were to be understood and interpreted.

Samgita Shastra as envisaged by Sarangadeva was a composite art consisting Gita (melodic forms), Vadya (instruments) and Nrtya (dance or limb movements). By the time of Samgita-ratnakara, three Angas (limbs) of Samgita were well developed. Of these, the Vocal music was regarded as the essential, fundamental music through which all other forms of music were to be understood and interpreted. Here again, Sarangadeva focuses on Desa Sangita, though he comments on aspects of Marga Sangita. On Dance (Nritya) he offers clear picture of both Marga and Desi traditions, although in a concise manner.

Samgita Ratnakara is a standard and an authoritative text; and it hugely impacted almost all the writers in the subsequent period. It is also a reliable source book on ancient music traditions and their authors. But for Samgita Ratnakara, it may have been more difficult to understand Natyasstra, Brihaddesi and the other texts.

The text of Samgita Ratnakara has 1676 verses spread over seven chapters (Saptapada-yayi) covering the aspects Gita, Vadya and Nrtya: Svaragat-adhyaya, Raga-vivek-adhyaya, Prakirnaka-adhyaya, Prabandh-adhyaya, Taal-adhyaya; Vadya-adhyaya and Natara-adhyaya. The first six chapters deal with various facets of music and music-instruments; and the last chapter deals with Dance.

The first chapter deals with Nada (the sound); the second with Raga; the third with Prakirna (miscellaneous topics relating to music); the fourth with Prabandha class of Music; the fifth with Marga and Desi Taala systems; the sixth with Vadya (musical instruments); and the seventh chapter on Natara dance.

In general, Sarangadeva follows Abhinavagupta very closely.

Chapter One – Nada: What seems rather unusual for a formal text on music is that Samgita-ratnakara opens with a lengthy chapter (Svara-padhya) divided into eight Prakaranas or Sections running into more than 170 verses purportedly dealing with Svara. It does not talk much about music. But, it goes into elaborate details of human anatomy (according to the Ayurveda), the centers (Sthanas) in the body associated with origin, development and articulation of sound – heart (Hrid), throat (Kantha) and head region (Murtha) – in three varieties of pitches – Mandara, Madhya and Tara.

The third Prakarana of the first chapter is Nada-Sthana-Sruti-Svara-Jati-Kula-Daivata-Risa-Chanda-Rasa-prakarana. It also goes into the philosophical aspects of Nada, sound, which it regards as the manifestation of the undifferentiated, absolute principle Nada Brahman. Then it talks about two forms of Nada the un-struck or un-manifest (anahata) and the struck or the manifest (ahata). The sound in the human initially commences as an impulse or an idea in the mind with an urge to express itself. That idea is individualized and activated by the mind. It takes the aid of breath (Prana), the medium, to act as the vehicle to carry that idea. When the intention (idea or impulse) strikes (ahata) a bond with breath (Prana), the un-manifest turns into manifest Nada.

The, ahata, like its prior form (anahata) is neutral Svara, sound. It is only after passing through series of processes; the Svara is differentiated into Sruti (pitch) modulations.

Srutis are units of tonal interval with which the interval of a Svara is measured. Hence the Svaras are described next. After describing the intervals of the Suddha-Svaras those of the Vikrita-svaras are given. Suddha-svaras are those which conform to the arrangements of the seven Svaras of the Shadja-murcchana of Shadjagrama. Those which differ from this arrangement are the Vikrita-svaras. There are 7 Suddha and 12 Vikrita-svaras.

The Sruti’s (pitch) are said to be of 22 kinds of time-intervals. When certain of these are located along the chosen octave-continuum, modified (sharp or flattened) from their normal and highlighted, a recognizable pattern of Svaras emerge. Here, the Prana and certain body parts play vital roles to transform Sruti into Svaras. Body is considered as an arched harp with 22 strings activated by Prana (vital breath).

Three Gramas are described – Sahaja-grama, Madhyama-grama and Gandharva-grama. The names of the Seven Murcchanas in each Groama are also given.

The sixth Prakarana is on Varna and Alankara. Varnas denote the different kinds of movements that a melodic line can take. Four Varnas are described: Sthayi, Arohi, Avarahi and Sanchari. Alankara-s are ornamental patterns of Svaras that decorate a melodic line. Alankaras are classified under the four Varnas.

The seventh Prakarana is Jati-prakarana in which the lakshana (characteristics) of eighteen Jatis are given. The first seven are classified into Suddha and Vikrita; and the remaining eleven as Samsaragaja. The characteristics of the lakshana-s that are used for a describing a Jati are the same ten as mentioned in Brihaddesi.

The last Prakarana is called the Gili-prakarana. Although it is named thus it takes up the treatment of certain musical forms called Kapâla and Kambala first and then goes on to Gili-s. The Kapâla songs are based on some derivatives of Jâti-s and they are made up of words describing the fierce form of Lord Shiva.
Chapter Two – Raga viveka: is about the descriptions of the Ragas which are treated under two broad heads of Marga and Desi. He mentions six varieties of Marga Ragas: Gramaraga, Uparaga, Raga, Bhasha, Vibhasha and Antarbhasha. He also gives a list of purva-prasiddha (well established) and adhuna-prasiddha (recently established) Ragas. Many Ragas are illustrated in notation. There are also Sanskrit compositions in notation.

But, Sarangadeva’s focus is primarily on the Desi Ragas. He describes and discusses four types of Desi Ragas: Raganga, Bhasanga, Upanga and Kriyanga.

The Gramaragas resemble the Jāti-s closely and they are further classified on the basis of the different melodic styles. These styles are called Gili. In this chapter, the five Gili-s, namely, Suddha, Bhinna, Vesara, Gaudi and Sadharini are described.

Chapter Three: Prakirnaka: deals with varieties of topics such as: Guna –Dosha (merit and de-merits) of Vakgeya-kara (composers who set their songs to music) ; Guna –Dosha in voice culture of male (Gayaka) and female (Gayani) singers, articulation (Sabda) and resonance in voice ( Sarira); improvisations in song-rendering by application of ornaments (Gamaka) of fifteen kinds; expressions that manifest the feelings or effects associated with Raga phrases (Sthaya) , which are of ninety-six kinds; and, Alapi free and improvised rendering of Raga and the song of two sorts Raga-Alapi that is not bound (Anibaddha) or restricted by Taala ; Rupaka-Alapi , melodic improvisation done while rendering the text of the song.

["He recognized fifteen varieties of Gamakas- Tiripa, Sphurita, Kampita, Leena, Andolita, Vali, Tribhinna, Kurula, Ahata, Ullasita, Humpita, Piavita, Mudita, Namita and Misrita; and, three kinds of Yatis – Sama, Srotopaga or Shrovavaha and Gopuccha."]

Chapter Four –Prabandha: is a detailed discussion on Prabandha class of Music that was dominant during the days of Sarangadeva. He says: the Gayana (singing) is twofold – Nibaddha and Anibaddha. That which is composed of Anga-s (limbs or elements) and Dhathu-s (sections) is Nibaddha Sangita. And Alapita which is free from such structures is known as Anibaddha Samgita. Then he goes on to say that Nibaddha has three names: Prabandha, Vasti and Rupaka.

By the time of Sangita-Ratnakara, Prabandha had grown into thousands. Sarangadeva explained Prabandha as that which is pleasant; and that which is governed by rules regarding Raga, Taala, Chhandas, Vritta (Sanskrit verses) and Anga. Sarangadeva described about 260 types of Prabandha-s with their variations. Sarangadeva generally followed Manasollasa and Sangita-Samayasara.

He describes the four sections ( Dhathu) of a Prabandha song (Udgraha, Melapaka, Dhruva, and Abogha) along with Antara the intermediary; and its six elements (Anga) or limbs (Svara, Birudu, Tenaka, Pata, Pada and Taala) . These comprehensively cover the three aspects of a song: the text, the Raga (melody) and Taala (rhythm).

Then he takes up the discussion on class of Prabandhas: Shuddha Suda, Salaga Suda, Alikrama and Viprakirna. Of these , Sarangadeva selects Salaga Suda for detailed treatment. Sarangadeva was the first to present the class of Suda systematically, lending it a theoretical base. For about 300 years thereafter, the terms and descriptions provided by Sarangadeva were adopted by all the later authors.

He discusses seven types of Salaga Suda songs: Dhruva, Mantha, Prati-mantha, Nihsan, Addatala, Rasaka and Ekatali.

Chapter Five – Taala: deals with time units or rhythmic patterns Taala. Sarangadeva deals with Marga Taala and Desi Taala separately. Under Marga Taala , Sarangadeva mentions five varieties : Caccatpüta ; Cācapuţa ; Ĉášpátā ; Susira (Vamśa, Kāhala, Şańkha); Avadhana ) , and Desi Taala. Under these he discusses the different aspects of the Taala such as the time-units Laghu, Guru and Pluta; the Kriyā-s; the different forms of a Taala like Ēkakala, Dvikala; Şaţpitāputraka ; Sampakvēşţāka ; and Udghaţţa. Under these he discusses the different aspects of the Taala with Antara the intermediary; and its six elements (Anga) or limbs (Svara, Birudu, Tenaka, Pata, Pada and Taala) . These comprehensively cover the three aspects of a song: the text, the Raga (melody) and Taala (rhythm).

After the Marga Taala, 120 varieties of Desi Taala employed in Prabandha songs are discussed.

Chapter Six– Vadya: generally follows the discussions on Music instruments (Vadya) as elaborated in Natyashastra. Sarangadeva also describes various class of instruments in terms of : Tata (stringed) Susira (hollow) . Avadhana (Drum type) and Ghana ( sold like cymbals).

Under these, he names some specific types: Tata (Ekatantři, Cīrā, Viņpiči, Mattakōkālā, Ālāpinī, Kinnari); Susira (Vāmsā, Kāhala, Šārkhā); Avadhana (Huṇukka, Paṭṭha) ; and, Ghana(Kāņeyatālā, Ghayṭā).

He also talks about the construction of these instruments and ways of playing them.

Chapter Seven– Nartana: The seventh and the last chapter is in two parts. The first one deals with Nartana. The term Nartana is a common term representing the arts of Nrţţa, Nrtya and Natya. In describing the Marga tradition of Dance, Sarangadeva follows Natyashastra. As regards the class of Desi Dance he improves upon the explanations offered in Manasollasa of King Someshwara and Sangita Samayasara of Parsvadeva.

Although he follows Bharatha in describing the movements of the body, he differs from Bharatha in dividing the limbs into three categories, Anga, Upanga and Pratyanga. he follows the Manasollasa in using the term Nartana.
for dance; dividing Nartana into three categories: Natya, Nrttya and Nrtta (SR. 7. 3).

He also differs from Natyashastra which identifies Tandava as Shiva’s dance and Lasya as Parvati’s. According to Sarngadeva, Nrtta and Nrttya can both be of two kinds, Tandava and Lasya (SR. 7. 28). Tandava requires *uddhata* (forceful) and Lasya requires *lalita* (delicate) movements (SR. 7. 29-30).

Sarangadeva’s description of Cari, Sthana, Karana and Angaharas of the Marga type are as in the Natyasastras. But the Desi Caris, Sthanas and Utplutikaranas are the same as those in the Manasollasa of Someshwara.

Next described are Gaudali and Perani, the two dances commonly performed in the Desi tradition. Here he follows Sangita-Samayasastra.

Sarngadeva explains the importance of aesthetic beauty, lays down the rules of exercise, and describes the qualities and faults of a performer (including a description of her make-up and costume), and those of the teacher and the group of supporting performers. Then he describes the sequential process of a performance, including the musical accompaniment, in the pure mode or *suddha-paddhati*.

After describing these two dance pieces, Sarngadeva deals with the qualifications of the Acharya (the teacher), the Nata (the actor), the Nartaka (the dancer), the Vaitalika (a general entertainer), the Charana (an expert in understanding gharhara) and the Kohlatika (a performer who specializes in Bhramari, rope-walking and dancing with a dagger). Next, he describes the audience and the sitting arrangements.

In the second part of this chapter, the author describes Rasas (nine in number), Sthayibhavas (thirty-three in number) and the definition of Satvra (the essence) and Sattvikabhavas (eight in number). Sarangadeva largely follows the explanations offered by Abhinavagupta on the theories of Rasa. The chapter concludes with final prayers.

The significant commentaries on the text include the Sangitasudhakara of Simhabhupala (c.1330) and the Kalandhi of Kallinatha (c.1430).

[Ref : 1. Sangitaratnakara of Sarngadeva by Dr.N. Ramanathan; 2. Sangitaratnakara of Saringadeva translated into English with detailed notes by Dr. C. Kunhan Raja, the Adyar Library, 1945. 3. Sangitaratnakara of Saringadeva by Natalie Savelyeva. 4. The Evolution of Classical Indian Dance Literature: A Study of the Sanskritic Tradition by Mandakranta Bose]

9. Swaramekalanidhi of Ramamatiya (1550AD)

Ramamatiya who described himself as the maternal grandson of the learned scholar Kallappa Desika (Vidyamanditha Kallappa Desikaste matamah) was a noted scholar and musician in the court of the Vijayanagar King Sadashiva Raya (1542-1570). It is said; that Ramamatiya was requested by Venkadri, the brother of Rama Raja the Minister of King Sadashiva Raya, to write a book on Music, particularly to reconcile the tradition and the current practices. The result of his efforts was Swaramekalanidhi having four Chapters: Swaraprakarana, Veenaprakarana, Melaprakarana and Ragaprakarana with a total of about 328 couplets in Sanskrit. The text systematically deals with Svara, Veena, Mela system and Ragas.

Swaramekalanidhi is a fitting introduction to the post-Sangita Ratnakara period in the history of South Indian Music. Ramamatiya’s work makes it evident that the Sangita of his time (1550) was yet to be influenced by the Muslim music. The Raga-vibodha of Somanatha (1609) supports this view, although Somanatha himself seemed to be getting familiar with Muslim music.

As desired by his patron, Ramamatiya brings the theory up to his times, rationalizes music principles and practices). He speaks of two kinds of Music: the ancient Marga or Gandharva which was *Lakshya* oriented (pradhanam) and the Desi Sangita which is in practice (*Lakshya pradhanam*). He seemed to favor the practice of Music over the theory (*Lakshya pradhanam khalu Gita-shastram*).
Ramamatya describes various types of Veenas used in his day as well as their tuning. He distinguishes two main types: Veena with fixed frets which that allows all the Ragas to be played (Sarva-raga-mela-veena); and, Veena on which only one Raga could be played at a time (Eka-raga-mela-veena) and for playing another Raga the frets had to be moved and re-arranged.

Besides these he mentions three other types of Veena differing in in the tuning of their main strings: Shuddha-mela-veena (Sa, Pa, sa, ma); Madhya-mela-veena (Pa, sa, pa, sa); and, Achutharaya-mela-veena (Sa, Pa, sa, pa).

An interesting aspect of Ramamatya’s description is the method of placing the frets. Ramamatya bases his technique in the principle of Samvadi Svaras as described in in ancient texts. Applying this principle, he introduced the concepts of Svayambhu-Svara (self-generating note, which some say is the equivalent of the ancient Samvadi- perfect consonant) to all other notes. Based on this he determines the positions of all the frets on the Veena. He explains that the different Shuddha and Vikṛta-svaras can be derived as the Samvadi-s of one another, starting with the basic Svaras viz. Sa, Pa and Ma to which the strings of the Veena are tuned, are termed Svayambhu-Svara. And in turn, he says, the other Svaras derived through Samvadi relationship are also called Svayambhu-Svaras.

He also brought certain improvements into the technical aspects of Music. For instance; the ancient music-theories mentioned 22 Srutis, although only 14 were used as Svaras (notes). Ramamatya reduced the number of Srutis to 12, because, he said, the difference in pitch between Antara Ga and Cyuta Ma (prefix cyuta means lowered) and the notes were negligible. He specified the implementation of this tuning by describing the location of six frets on his Veena. He clarified the distinction between abstract Mela ragas and Janya ragas. He then combined these three concepts to identify 20 Melas under which he classified about 64 Janya Ragas.

Ramamatya’s Swarametakalanidhi marked the revival or a new beginning of an era of classifying Ragas on purely music principles; and, methodically grouping them under what came to be known as Mela system. After Swarametakalanidhi, numerous other works were written following Ramamatya’s theories of classifying Ragas into Mela system. Thereafter, the 16th and 17e centuries grew into periods of great importance for production of Lakshna-granthas. Bringing to fore the method of classifying Ragas into Melas could be said to be the major contribution of Ramamatya.

It appears that by the time of Ramamatya, the method of deriving tunes from the complicated arrangement of Grama-Murchhana-Jaati was no longer in use. Similarly, the ancient model essentials (lakshanas) for identifying a Raga based on ten criteria was no longer in practice. The ten ancient criteria (lakshanas) had then been reduced to five. Ramamatya, in his Svara-mela-kalanidhi classified the then known Ragas into 20 Melas. His classification of Melas was based on five criteria (Lakshana). That is, Amsa (predominant note); Graha (initial note); Nyasa (final note); Shadava (sixth note); and, Audava (pentatonic structure) were no longer considered necessary. This meant that the ancient modal system was replaced by a scalar system. Nevertheless, individual Raga continued to preserve some of their ancient modal essentials (Lakshna), in certain case even until today.

Even prior to Ramamatya the method grouping the Ragas into Mela was in vogue. Mela is a Kannada word meaning gathering or grouping. The practice of grouping (MeTa) the Ragas according to their parent scale, it said, was initiated by Sage Sri Vidyaranya in his Sangita-sara (14th century). Govinda Dikshita (who reverently addresses Sri Vidyarana as: Sri Charana) confirms this in his Sangita-sudha (1614). Sri Vidyaranya classified about 50 Ragas into 15 groups (Mela). The intention of the Mela system was to organize then known Ragas that were in practice. Sri Vidyaranya’s work on Melakarta system was followed up and improved upon in later times by other scholars.

Following Sri Vidyaranya, Ramamatya in the fourth Chapter – Mela-Prakarana– of his Svara-mela-kalanidhi introduced the theoretical framework for classifying then known Ragas under 20 Melas (parent scale), the notes and names of which were taken from the prominent Ragas of that time. This was an improvement over the system initiated by Sri Vidyaranya.

Treating Ragas in terms of a Mela was possibly the most significant approach and development in musical history. Mela refers to a collection of seven Svarasthanas (Svara positions). All Ragas are Janya Ragas, and janya Ragas that have a common set of Svarasthanas are placed in the same Mela. The name of the Mela was given to the Raga among the group that was most significant or popular. At this stage, the Raga that held the title for the Mela did not need to possess all the seven Svaras; and though the Mela was referred by its name, it was still a janya Raga.


[Later, Venkatamakhi pointed out that two of Ramamatya’s Melas – Saranganata and Kedaragaula – do not differ in their structure.]

Ramamatya gives details of Shuddha-svara-s and Vikṛta-svara-s occurring in each of the Mela, a list of sixty-four Janya Raga-s classified under each Mela, and the Sruti positions of Svaras in the Melas. Mukhari is established
The voluminous Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini by Sri Subbarama Dikshitar (1839-1906), the grandson of N. Ramanathan, according to Tulaja the Karnataka Raga Mukhari (Raga as well as Mela) is the same as the ancient Suddha-sadharita.

In this scheme, ten ancient model essentials (lakshanas) which had been reduced to 5 (the predominant note (Amsa); the initial note (Graha); the final note (Nyasa), the hexatonic structure (Shadava) and the pentatonic structure (Audava) were no longer considered to be the criteria for classifying the Ragas. That meant that the ancient modal system was replaced by a scalar system. Nevertheless, individual Raga continued to preserve some of their ancient modal essentials (Lakshna), in certain cases even until today.

Such continuity in the Ragas is illustrated by the following Ragas: 1. The Karnataka Raga Mukhari (a Raga as well as a Mela), which according to Tulaja is the same Raga as the ancient Suddha-sadharita; 2. Karnataka Raga Varali or Varar that is both Samavarnali and Jhalavarali; 3. Hindustani Varari or Barai – Varali; 4. Hindustani Bhairava; 5. Karnataka Lajjali; 6. Karnataka and Hindustani Dhanasri; and, 7. Hindustani Sindhubhairavi.

Ramamatya’s exposition of Mela, Raga and his technique of ‘Madya Mela Veena’ was a pioneering work in the systematic classification of Ragas. After his work, numerous others on Raga, Mela, Janya, etc were published. Ramamatya was followed by: Pandurangi Vittala (16th century); Venkatamakhin (17th century); and his grandson Muddu Venkatamakhin (18th century).

Ramamatya’s work also enormously influenced Somanatha’s Raga Vibodha and Govinda Dikshitar’s Sangita Chudamani, two important works which deal with Ragas current at their time. Some regard Ramamatya, Somanatha and Govinda Dikshitar as the Trinity of Karnataka Sangita theory (Sangita Shastra).

Later scholars, that is after Ramamatya, started computing the maximum number of seven Svara combinations they could derive (melapratvatha) based on the number of Svara positions. Here, each author computed a different number of Melas based on the number of Svarasthansas he had theorised. For example, the Sad-Raga-chandrodlaya Pandurangi Vittala mentions a possible 90 Melas, while in Somanatha’s Raga Vibodha there are 960 possible Melas. Even though they came up with this computation they found that only a limited number of these were actually used in the form of a Raga. Therefore, Somanatha felt that 23 Melas would suffice to classify the 67 Ragas then in practice.

During the second half of the 16th century Pundarika Vittala (in his Raga-manjari) introduced Ramamatya’s Mela system in North India. But, he changed the names and scales of several Melas. Another South Indian musicologist who migrated North was Srikantha who wrote his Chatur-dandi-prakashika in North India. But, he changed the names and scales of several Melas. Another South Indian musicologist who migrated North was Srikantha who wrote his Chatur-dandi-prakashika (12th century). Shri TM Krishna observes: ‘The Madya Mela Veena’ was a pioneering work in the systematic classification of Ragas. After his work, numerous others on Raga, Mela, Janya, etc were published. Ramamatya was followed by: Pandurangi Vittala (16th century); Venkatamakhin (17th century); and his grandson Muddu Venkatamakhin (18th century).

The one of the most important texts in music of South India was Chatur-dandi-prakashika of Venkatamakhin (1660), which brought the Mela- Janya system on a rational basis. It classified the Ragas according to the system of 72 basic scales (Mela). This system still prevails in South Indian music, though with modifications.

In 1620, Venkatamakhin, son of Govinda Dikshitar, corrected Ramamatya’s Mela system by reducing the number of Melas from 20 to 19, because he said the notes of the two Melas Kedaragaula and Saranganata were the same. More importantly, in the Appendix (Anubandha) to his Chatur-dandi-prakashika, Venkatamakhin mentions the possibility of classifying Ragas (Kanakangi to Rasikapriya) built on 12 Svara-Sthanas under a 72 Mela-karta scheme made into two groups of 36 each (Shuddha Madhyama and Prathy Madhyama) . (It was at this time a theoretical possibility, since all those Melas were yet unknown.) The 72 Melas bear the names of prominent contemporary Ragas; and each of which is considered the basic scale of one or more Ragas.

It is believed that it was Venkatamakhin’s grandson Muddu Venkatamakhin, who gave the nomenclature for the Mela Ragas, (Kanakambari, and Phenadhyuti etc) in his Gitam called Raganga Raga Anukramanika Gitam (found in Sri Subbarama Dikshitar’s Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini (1904). Shri TM Krishna observes: ‘The Muddu Venkatamakhin tradition, which uses the terms Raganga Raga (equivalent term to Mela-kartha) and Janya Raga, adopts the opinion that the Raganga Raga needs to be Sampurna in either Arohana or Avarohana but non-linear. Sri Muthusvami Dikshitar gave form to most of these Ragas through his compositions.’

Again, during late 17th – early 18th century, Govindacharya the author of Sangraha-chudamani changed the names of some Melas of Venkatamakhin. He expanded on Venkatamakhin’s Chatur-Dandi-Prakashika by introducing the Samporna Melakarta scheme which has a complete (samporna) arohana – avaroha structure, as well as delineating Lakshanas for 294 Janya Ragas, many of which were till then unknown, with their Arohana and Avarohana. In this scheme, the Melakartas arise out of systematic permutation of the seven Svaras into the twelve svara sthanas. . Govindacharya also gave lakshana gitas and lakshana slokas for 294 Janya Ragas. And, he also refined the Katyapadi prefixes by linking the Mela Ragas to their first two syllables of their names. This system of 72 Mela is the Karanataka Mela system of the present day.

As per Shri TM Krishna: ‘Mela started out as a way to organize existing Ragas but moved to creating scales as Ragas using the Mela structure. Probably for the first time in musical history theory influenced practice. This is probably why many Ragas in performance even today are only svara structures sans features that give a Raga an organic form’.
Sri Mutthuswami Dikshitar, running into about 1700 pages is a source-book on Music of India, tracing the history of Music from Sarangadeva to the 20th century through a series of biographies of noteworthy musicians and music-scholars. It also provides exhaustive details on 72 Melas as also tables of Ragas, Ragangas, Upanga-s, Bhashangas with their Murchchanas, Gamakas, in addition to details of the Taalas.

Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (1860-1936), a scholar and a musicologist, in his colossal work ‘Hindustan Sangeet Paddhati’ reorganized the Uttaradi or North Indian Music, mainly, by adopting the concept of Mela system as expanded by Venkatamakhin (1660) in the Appendix to his Chatur-dandi-prakashika.

Bhatkhande also adopted the idea of Lakshana-geetas that Venkatamakhin employed to describe the characteristics of a Raga. Bhatkhande arranged all the Ragas of the Uttaradi Sangita into ten basic groups called ‘Thaat’, based on their musical scales. The Thaat arrangement, which is an important contribution to Indian musical theory, broadly corresponds with the Mela-karta system of Karnataka Sangita.

When you look back the long and interesting history of Raga in Karnataka Sangita stretching from Matanga to the present-day, you find that the system has evolved through several stages. If Matanga defined the Raga and lent it a sense of identity, it was Ramamatya that activated the process of binding the Ragas into structured groups. This has provided Karnataka Sangita a unique and a thorough theoretical foundation.

Thus, Swaramelakalanidhi of Ramamatya occupies a significant position in the history of the development of Karnataka Sangita. And, as Dr. N. Ramanathan remarks: Swaramelakalanidhi is an important work as the information contained in it is more relevant and related to the modern practice than the books written prior to it.

[At the end of his work, Ramamatya says he does not treat the subjects of Taala and Prabandha because these had already been treated exhaustively by Sarangadeva.]


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