



BASIC LESSONS-INTRODUCTION

Let's take a student of Carnatic music. A bare minimum of the following is required.

- 1) Ability to sing in tune with the sruti – A fundamental requirement.
- 2) Ability to sustain a note without wavering as long as possible. Good rounded tonal production throughout the range.
- 3) Ability to render gamakas and nuances with control and mastery at any speed.
- 4) Ability to traverse at least 2 1/2 octaves comfortably.
- 5) Proper articulation of lyrics.

The ten excellences of 'gana' or music are:

- 1) Rakta – melodic harmony
- 2) Purna – fullness in utterance.
- 3) Alankrta – decorated
- 4) Prasanna – shining, radiant
- 5) Vyakta , clearness in pronunciation
- 6) Vikrshta – purity
- 7) Slakshnam – rendering in apt tempo
- 8) Samam – uniform melodious
- 9) Sukumaram – delightfully soft
- 10) Madhuram – sweetness in rendering

The Basic Characteristics of Voice

The voice has four basic characteristics, whether it is a speaking or a singing voice. It is necessary to work on all these aspects of voice separately and simultaneously to make the voice better and better

These terms are:

- a- Swara- The quality of voice according to Pitch.
- b- Laya- The tempo of the flow of voice as well as its in-built Tempo.
- c- Volume- The quality according to Intensity.
- d- Timbre- The tonal Quality of voice.



What You Need

Dedication. It is not enough to just show up for class once a week. Practice everyday, even for as little as half an hour. For those who wish to be performers, weekday practice should be 4-5 hours.

Listening skills. You must be ready to listen carefully to your teacher and to other performers. Listening to great recordings of (especially) past greats will help you learn music faster. Attend concerts as well.

A shruthi box. This will provide the basic notes sa and its fifth pa. Ask your teacher to help you find your ideal pitch so you can sing at least two whole octaves comfortably. Find out exactly how to tune either your shruthi box or tambura. Listen to the notes carefully at least five minutes.

Broadly speaking proper vocal technique involves the following areas.

- Posture
- Proper Breathing Techniques
- Control of the throat area and knowledge of how to maintain an 'open throat'. This is of utmost importance.

Features of Voice-training

1-Hearing:

It is subdivided in:

- a- Hearing - the physical
- b- Listening - the mental filtration
- c- Perceiving - the intellectual process of analysing and storing.

2- Breathing Capacity and Control of Breath:

Good breathing capacity and good control of breath, both are very important for singing. They are not interdependent. So, both need separate training,

3.Practice Our body needs daily exercises to keep it fit and moving. Like any other machine, our body also needs daily maintenance. Same is the case with Vocal Mechanism.

Practice should be divided in basically two types:

- a- Trying that which we cannot sing, but wish to sing.
- b- Repeating that which we already know and bring it closer to perfection.



SHANMUKHAPRIYA

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4. Physical and Mental Fitness:

Singing is an activity of coordination of physical and mental movements. Hence, both physical and mental fitness are necessary for good and effective singing.

Keep in mind the Basic principles of Singing.

1. Sing with an open throat. Never murrer or whisper music.
2. Try to give as much kaarvai or elongation as possible.
3. Keep your mind set on the sruthi/tambura and try to place all the anuswarams also on the sruthi. It is not enough to blend your voice with Shadjham or Panchamam or Anthara Gandharam. Every anuswara should be in tune with the sruthi.
4. Don't strain your voice. If you can't hit a note, sing it softly or shift your shruthi down. With regular practice you will be able to hit the higher notes more comfortably.
5. Slow and steady wins the race. Do not rush. Sing slowly and correctly rather than singing at a fast pace with lots of mistakes.
6. Sit up straight. Do not slouch. Hold your neck back, not sticking out, but relaxed. Rest your hands loosely on your thighs or knees.
7. When you sing, sing long. Sustain each note with elongated karvais holding your breath. The pranayama exercise in yoga helps you a lot to achieve perfect breath control. Try to sing the note without shiver or vibration. Sing the Sapthaswaras in perfect alignment with the sruthi.
8. After a few such sessions, start singing the saptaswaras and small phrases like GMP...RGMP...etc using the vowel "a" . This is called "akaaram" and it is a very integral part of Carnatic music, with particular reference to vocal music.