



PRACTICAL EXERCISES

WHY SHOULD YOU SING VARISHAIS ?

The great composer **Purandara Dasa**, hailed as the **Father of Carnatic music**, created a set of fundamental exercises nearly 500 years ago, which are followed even today. **There are 4 main types of varishais. They are Sarali Varishais, Jantai Varishais, Melsthai Varishais and Dhattu Varishais.**

Sarali Varishais

Singing Sarali varisai improves tonal quality, makes you understand the concept of sruthi and enables to sing the notes firstly plain and then with gamakas. Each swara should be sung perfectly with alignment to the pitch or sruthi.

The purpose of sarali varisai is to facilitate singing in different speeds. It helps to provide with necessary rhythmic and melodic foundation.

Janta Varishais:

These are forceful sequences, which **facilitate the students to add weight and majesty to their voice**. They make use of a form of ornamentation called "spuritham" which is rendering a note twice: plain the first time, and with force from the previous note (i.e. the note just below this note in frequency) in the raga the second time. Practice akaram with care to avoid slurs or slips and to maintain the same clarity as in the case of swara/ solfa exercise. Practice swaras and akarams in 3 speeds.

Melsthai Varishais:

These are higher octave sequences, **which increase the students' vocal or instrumental range**. Again, the logic is easy to understand. The first is the simplest and every subsequent exercise adds a new phrase to the previous one. This progressively cover notes upto Pa in the higher octave.

Thara Staayi Varishai also called as Melsthaayi, Uccha sthaayi varishai improves your tonal quality and range in the upper octaves. Sing this in Akaram and in 3 speeds.

Dhattu Varishais:

These are zigzag sequences that **increase the students' overall command of notes**. Dhattu means jumping from one note another, skipping one or more immediate notes. This **helps to train the voice to produce intermittent notes with fluency**. Basically these exercises are set in zig-zag pattern. Hence it is important to understand logic behind the



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patterns. This exercise is practiced even by performing artists. Practice dhattu varisai in various speeds.

Mandhrasthayi varisai

Aims to **improve your tone and range in lower octave**. Practice in 3 speeds and Akarams.

Madhya Sthayi Varishai

SRGMP..GMP..P

While the first 8 exercises introduces you to the concept of sruthi, swarasthaanas and tempo, the Madhya sthayi varishai centering around P tests your progress till this stage. Maximum practice of this exercise ensures your fluency and control in the Madhya sthayi or middle register. Sing this in various speeds and in Akaram.

Talam

Physical representation of rhythmic cycles in Carnatic Music is called Talam. Initial exercises are in 8 beat cycles called Adi Talam. The most commonly used talam in Carnatic Music.

Alankaras

Last of technical exercises, alankara lays the foundation for the acquisition of skill in rhythm and melody. The musical phrases that occur in these exercises when practiced properly in swara and akaram help in the later stages of rendering manodharma or creative music. **These exercises increase your grasp in tala** when they are rendered in doubling the speed in different tempos. Till this point all the varisais are practiced in Adi Tala.

Alankaras are set in seven different talas namely dhruva, matya, rupaka, jhampa, triputa, ata and eka . Each has 5 varieties based on 5 jaathies namely tisra-3, chatusra-4, misra-7, khanda-5 and sankeerna-9. Thus 7 talas with 5 jaathies make up the entire set of 35 talas. These 5 jaathies are also used to indicate the 5 varieties of laghu as demonstrated. Thus 7 talas with 5 jaathies make up the entire set of 35 talas. Traditionally one tala in each alankara is taught.

Tisra laghu	X 1 2	3 notes
Chatusra Laghu	X 1 2 3	4 notes
Misra Laghu	X 1 2 3 4 5 6	7 notes
Khanda Laghu	X 1 2 3 4	5 notes
Sankeerna Laghu	X 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	9 notes



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Practice all Saptha Thala Alankaras in various speeds and akarams. Traditionally one tala in each alankara is taught.

Sahitya for varisha

Earlier sarali varisai were accompanied by sahityam. This is said to have been a contribution from Vina Ramanujayya in the 19th century. He has written Sahitya in Sanskrit and Telugu. These are devotional in nature. The special feature of this is, the swaravalis have different lyrics for variation of speeds.

S R G M P D N S / S N D P M G R S

Sri Ra me sa ra ma pa hi / Sri Vat san ga krish na pa hi

Once you are thorough with all these exercises in Mayamalavagowla, we can try other major ragas like Kalyani, Sankarabharanam, Thodi etc to acquire proficiency in different swarasthanas as well as a better understanding of subtle nuances and ornamentations in each of the ragas.

Alankarams should also be practiced in 6 note rags like Sriranjani and 5 note ragas like Mohanam, Suddha Dhanyasi, Hamsadwani etc.

Varisais should be practiced using the vowels

Akaram – Aa, Ekaaram-Ee, Uukaram-Uu, Okaram-Oo , Mkaram-Mm

Guidelines to Teachers

1. Teachers must select right pitch for the student.
2. Ensure the correctness of the every note rendered.
3. Improvised exercise to be taught.

Guidelines to Students

Students should pay heed to the following advices while learning and practising.

Basic principles of Singing.

1. Sing with an open throat. Never mermer 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.



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Illustrate with Akaram singing of small phrases. Give importance to Anthara Gandharam. Anthara Gandharam is a Swayambhu note. It is a self evolved note. In a fine tuned tambura, the final note you hear is Anthara Gandharam. If Anthara Gandharam is perfectly tuned, the rest of the notes will fall in place. There will no room for sruthi mis-alignment.

The voice is always stiff in the morning. Only if you keep practising, it will gain flexibility. A practice should be atleast for 20 minutes. Practice is better in the morning time than in the evening or night. By evening or night our muscles get tired. In the early morning or morning up till 9 O Clock, we are fresh and the muscles are fresh.

We should aim to achieve a wobble free standing on a particular note say Panchamam..try to sustain this particular note first upto 8 seconds, then improve to 12 seconds...upto 16 seconds etc. If you can hold on a note without wobbling or shivering for 16 seconds, why don't you try to achieve it for 18 seconds. **We have to keep on improving the control of the exhaled breath.**

Have a recorder and hear your own voice. Never imagine you have a bad voice. Say goodbye to negative imagination or thoughts. Nobody has got a bad voice. Each voice is good and unique in some aspects. Voice Culture and Care is a part and parcel of any vocal student or performer. The voice should be trained in such a way that it reaches both the MandraSthayi Panchamam and Tharasthayi Panchamam.

Problems and Care.

We have to make the vocal chords which are the muscles so much flexible, so that it will listen to you. You can produce anything of which you want to produce. The ornamentations pertaining to one style of singing is different from other. The voice has to be trained to produce the ornaments of that particular style. Breathing is very very important for any singer. Whole technique of singing is mainly based on breath control. Voice is the medium to communicate your jnana to the audience. So there should not be any kind of strain for the voice when you are singing. It is not difficult to achieve this. You have to understand the secret of breathing. When you are singing open the lips and sing with an open throat. So many vocal impurities are there. Lower jaw is the portion which always moves when you talk or sing. When the tongue, neck or the jaws get tensed, the vocal chords are not able to vibrate properly. Physical exercise prescribed is to turn the neck sideways, up and down and rotate to relax and also do the relaxation of the jaw by opening and closing your mouth. Relax the tongue by closing the mouth and by making the tongue roll.