

## Concept, relevance and logic behind the title of ragas in Gurbani



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### Abstract

Bani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib is composed in music. Guru sahibans and bhagat jans knew the power of ragas and naad bramha. Guru sahibans composed hymns and placed those hymns in different ragas in which the meaning of hymns are matched to the nature of the ragas. Guru Nanak Dev Ji, first guru of Sikhs is the originator of Sikhism and Gurbani. 11<sup>th</sup> guru Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the spiritual holy book with the layers of music. Today, Gurmat Sangeet has acquired a prominent place in the world of music. It has a unique identity as a source of different ragas entitled on gurbani created by Sikh guru sahibans. In this paper, the authenticities of the ragas that are entitled on Gurbani have explained. Guru Sahibans have not simply composed gurbani in ragas randomly but there involves some science and logics behind the arrangement of Gurbani under ragas. Specific music elements are also considered for the classification of Gurbani shabads in different ragas. Somewhere the classification is done according to the time, nature and rasbhaav of ragas and somewhere it is done according to the theme of Gurbani. This paper shows this deep interrelationship of aesthetical and scientific values of raga with literature in the shape of Gurbani.

**Key Words :** Gurbani, Rag, Mahala, Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji, Sikhism, Samgan

### Research Paper

**Music** creates a great efforts on human beings and also creates a positive effects on human hormonal system that's why people feel relax while listening to the music. It is believed that music is easy way to express the thoughts and it is also the closest stairs towards the god. India is a land of different religious, traditions, cultures etc. Many types of religious traditions are running across in India.

“India's culture is among the world's oldest. Civilization in India began about 4500 years ago. Many sources describe it as ‘Sa Prathama Sanskriti vishwawara’- The first and supreme culture in the world according to All India Gayatri Pariwar organisation {A. W. G. P. }”[1]

“The culture of India refers collectively to thousands of distinct and unique culture of all religions and

communities present in India. India's languages, religions, music, architecture, language and customs differ from place to place within the country. Indian culture is labelled as an amalgamation of several cultures, spans across the Indian subcontinents and has been influenced by a history that is several millions old”[2]

In the same way our music is also very old and rich. It holds the unique and great position, identity, and respect in the whole world.

“Music has always been an important part of Indian life. The range of musical phenomenon in India extends from simple melodies to the well-developed “System” of classical music in the world”.[3]

The history of music of India can be traced back to the Vedic times. The concepts of Naad Bramha were prevalent in the Vedic age. All organised music traces its origins back to the Samveda which contains the latest known of organised music. The latest raga owes its origin to the samveda. In Vedic period, music had been seen in the form of saamgana, which was performed by chanting the verses in music patterns. With the passage of time many singing styles came into existence like jatigaan, prabandhgaan, dhrupad, khayal etc.

The base of classical music is raga. All the aspects of classical music totally depends on ragas whether it is vocal musical or instrumental music. Ragas are structure of swars which are capable of dyeing the soul of a person.

“Literary meaning of raga is colouring, tingeing, dyeing. Each raga is an array of melodic structure with musical motif’s considered in the Indian tradition which has the ability to “colour the mind” and effect the emotions of the audience.”[4]

“स्वरवर्णभेदेन विशेषेण वापुनः

राज्यते येन यः कश्चित् सरागः संमतः सताम्॥”[5]

In medieval period a new tradition came into existence called Sikhism. This was founded in 15th century. The founder of Sikhism was SRI GURU NANAK DEV JI.

Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji gave us the message of right dharma, equality etc in the world. “Guru Nanak Dev Ji is not only the thinker for humanity but also a great and effective leader, greater creator, writer and the musician.”[6]

Every peer, saint, sadhu used the music to spread their great words or thoughts. With the great efforts and forward look of guru ji, the gurmat sangeet parampra tradition started. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji covers the Bani of 6 maestros out of 6 Gurus, 15 Bhagats, 11 Bhattas, 4 Guru Sikh and all Bani (different hymns) of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji entitled with different ragas which shows the prominent place of ragas in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. It can be said that the discipline created by guru can be explained as ragas are entitled on every hymn and making the ‘raha’ line as the prominent line while singing is called Gurumat Sangeet (a discipline which is created by guru sahibans). In this particular research paper our main focus is to clarify that the ragas entitled on hymns by guru sahibans and his order to sing hymns in that

particular ragas is not a simple work. There is a deep thinking and authenticity of guru sahibans behind this. Guru sahibans have not simply created the bani and placed them randomly under different ragas. Actually, they have a deep knowledge of raga and music. They have arranged the bani in particular raga according to subject of bani as well as according to the time of raga.

**Slok Mahlla : 5**

“धन सो राग सुरंगड़े आलापत सब तिख जाए।”[7]

“राग नाद सब सच है कीमत कही न जाए।”[8]

Authenticity Of Ragas On Gurbani

### 1. Raag Bhairav

**THAAT** – Bhairav, **AROHA** - sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni, sa, **AVROHA**- sa, ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, re, sa, **JATI** – sampuran-sampuran, **VADI** – dha, **SAMVADI**- re, **TIME**– 1<sup>st</sup> Pahar of day.

Raga Bhairav is one of the oldest and prominent raga of Indian classical music. This raga is described in many musical granths. Prof. Kartar Singh quoted the statements of different scholars in his book “Gurmat Sangeet Darpan” the according pt. Appa Tulsī in his book “Raag kalapdurmakure” Raga Bhairav have re, dha, ni tevar and ma tivra and vadi is dha and samvadi is re and sometimes komal ni is used in avroha of this raag. Pt. Bhatkhande described raag Bhairav in his book “Abhinav Raag Manjari” as sa, ga, ma, pa, dha pa ma ga, re, ga ma pa, ma ga, ra sa. This is sampuran jati raag of morning. According to the 4 famous mats (beliefs), Shiv Mat, Bharat Mat, Kallinath Mat, Hanuman Mat. Raag Bhairav is the male raga. Muhammad Raza in his book “Nagmate asfee” 1813 AD described the rule of 6 raga and 36 raginies and placed raag Bhairav at first in order. Similarly

“Sri Vimalkant Rai Chaudray in his book “Raga Viyakaran” presented only the famous structure of Raga Bhairav that is aroha-sa re ga ma pa dha ni sa avroha sa ni dha pa ma ga re sa.”[9]

As it is commonly known that the singing time of Raga Bhairav is first pehar of morning, when there is a dawn. The nature of this raga is full of seriousness, spirituality and devotion. It creates very positive effect on the body and the soul of a person in morning. It is usually said that in amritwela every one gets up and chant the name of waheguru because amritwela is referred as the time to

meditate. Now it can be clearly seen that how guru sahibans create the bani in accordance to the nature and time of raag Bhairav.

Some gurbani shabads, hymns are being presented which shows the interrelationship between ragas and bavas with gurbani. Like

### Shabads

भैरो महल्ला: पंजवां ॥

उठत सुखिया बैठत सुखिया

भओ नही लागै जां एैसे बुजिया ॥[ 10]

**Meaning:-**Above line clearly indicates the morning time. How a person peacefully stands-up from sleep in morning without any fear due to the blessing of the god. So the theme of a shabad harmonizes with time of ragas. Similarly this type of authenticity can be seen in other shabads of raag Bhairav of shri guru granth sahib ji.

### 2. Raga Basant

**Thaat** – Purvi, **Aroha** – Sa, Ga, Ma, Dha, Re sa· ni, sa· **Avroha**- sa· ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, ma, dha, ma, ga, re, sa, ma, ga, re, sa, **VADI**- sa· **SAMVADI** –pa, **JATI** – audav – sampuran vakar, **TIME**- 4<sup>th</sup> pahar of night

“Raag Basant is developed from Purvi thaata. In this raga both madhyam, rishav and dhawat komal and other shud swars are used. The vadi of this raag is taar saptak sa and samvadi is pa and time period of this ragas is 4<sup>th</sup> pahar of night but we can recite this raga any time in spring season.”[ 11]

“The structure of Basant raag in aroha- sa, ga, ma, ni, dha, pa, ma, pa, ma, ga, ma, dha, sa. avroha – sa· ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, ni, re, sa.”[ 12]

“sri raag ki Basant ragini bhans gur pancham sublayo | sa vadi samvadi pa fir dha anuvadi sampureyo ॥”[ 13]

“do madyam komal rishab charat na pancham kehan | Sa ma vadi samvadite yeh Basant kehe deen ॥”[ 14]

Raag Basant is one of the oldest raga of Indian classical music. Raag Basant has a deep relation with spring season. Different scholars have different opinion on this Raga, some believed that the thaata of this raga is Bilawal and some believed it has Purvi thaata as the spring season is a season of happiness and is very beneficial for nature. In the same way Basant raga is also for happiness and guru sahibans created that type of bani in raga Basant which

have relation with the nature, trees and also give the message to the people about the importance of nature and spirituality.

### Shabads

“KABIR JI – Raag Basant

कबीर जी घर पहला

इक ओंकार सतगुर प्रासाद ॥

मऔली धरती मऔलेया आकाश

घट घट मऔलेया आतम प्रगास ॥[ 15]

Similarly, the Kabir ji also created the bani in raga Basant which have relation with raga Basant and Basant season. These above hymns show that how the earth and sky is blossomed in spring season. And due to this, the mind and soul of person also blossomed. This shows the deep science of placing the bani under different ragas which can be seen in SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI.

### 3. RAAG MALHAR

**THAAT**– kafi, **AROHA**- ni., sa, ma, re, ma, ma, re, pa, ni, dha, ni, sa· **AVROHA**- sa· dha, ni, pa, ma, pa, ga, ga, ma, re, sa, **VADI** – pa, **SAMVADI** - ma, **TIME** - rainy season or 2<sup>nd</sup> pahar of night, **JATI** – shadav – sampooran

This raga is also known as miya ki Malhar. It is one of the oldest, taught and popular raga of Indian classical music.

“The structure of raga Malhar is re ma, re sa, ni Pa., ma., pa., ni. Dha., ni. Dha. Ni. sa, pa ga, sa, re sa.”[ 16]

“Darbari dhang hoot he miya ki Malhar”[ 17]

Prof. Katar singh quoted the statement of different scholars in his book “Gurmat Sangeet Darpan” that Pundrik Vithal believed that Malhar took birth from Kedar male in his book “Raag Chandrodaya”. Pt. Bhavbhat in his book “Anup Vilas” explained 70 ragas and Malhar is one out of 70 ragas. It is believed that this raag was created by Miya Tansain. The nature and melody of this particular raga really shows the picture in which thunder are flashing in sky and rain falling from sky to earth.

### Shabads

“मलहार महल्ला: पंजवां ॥

बरस मेघ जी तिल बिलम न लाओ ॥

बरस प्यारे मनहे सधारे होए अनद सदा मन चाओ ॥ रहाओ ॥[ 18]

As we know that the raga Malhar has a relation with rain.

So guruji created this according to the nature of raga. Guruji wrote, Rain please come down without any delay and please fell down. This shows authenticity of the ragas entitled on gurubani.

#### 4. RAAG KALYAN

**AROHA** – sa ni. re ga, ma pama dha ni sa; **AVORHA** – sa; ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, re, sa, **THAAT** – kalyan; **VADI** – ga; **SAMWADI** – ni.; **JATI** - sampuran – sampuran

**TIME** – 1<sup>st</sup> pahar of night

Raga kalyan is very popular raga and it is also an ancient raga.

“The structure of this raga is very attractive and beautiful.”[19]

“Guru Ram Das Ji and Guru Arjan Dev Ji created his bani in this raag.”[20]

Raga kalyan is full of joy and happiness. Guru sahibans composed bani according to the mood and time of raga. This raga is recited in evening. The bani created in this raga has a theme like a welfare state, hailer which shows the kalyankari effect which gives happiness to the people. It is quoted by Prof. kartar singh in his book “Gurmat Sangeet Darpan “that according to the book “raga kalapdrumapure” by Pt. Apa Tulsi that the raag yaman kalyan become beautiful with the use of tivra swaras. Pt. ji also wrote about raga kalyan in his other book “raag chandrikasaar”, ”sabhi tivra swar jaha vadi ghandhar suhye ar samvadi nikhadite enam raag kahaye”. Eman is Arabic name kalyan raga which means welfare (kalyan)

#### Shabads

“कल्याण महल्ला: पंजवां ॥

हर चरण सरण कल्याण करन ॥

प्रभ नाम पतत पावनो ॥ रहाओ ॥[21]

Above shabad shows welfare state for person who lives in the feet of lord. And the name of god transformed a culprit into a good person. It is cleared that guru ji wrote the kalyan kari bani in the raga kalyan which shows the authenticity of the raga entitled in gurbani.

#### 5. RAAG SARANG

**AROHA** – sa, re, ma, pa, ni, sa; **AVROHA** – sa, ni, pa, ma, re, ni, sa; **THAAT** – kafi; **VADI** – re **SAMVADI** – pa **JATI** – audav – audav; **TIME** – after noon

This raga is one of the old ragas of Indian classical music. Sarang is a raga of afternoon when the sun shines on the head. So this raga produces the cold effect on the body and soul. It creates the soothing effect and has the ability to change the selfish and negative thoughts. It also quenches the burning thoughts of mind. “Many folk lore are based on raga sarang. It has a cold effect so it’s singing time in afternoon.”[22]

#### Shabads

“सारंग महल्ला: पंजवां ॥

आयो सुनन पढ़न कओ बाणी ॥

नाम विसार लगेहे अन लालच बिरथ जनम पराणी ॥ रहाओ ॥[23]

Above lines of gurbani indicate that a person come to listen and chant the bani on earth But he forgets his path and participates in worldly things, due to this his life is worthless. From above it is clear that the guru ji gave the warning to the person to take the name of the lord and do not forget his vision and path This line is able to change the negative thoughts with positive one and the burning desire of the man will be calm. So we can say that guru ji created bani in raga according to the nature and time of raga sarang.

#### 6. RAAG TODI

**THAAT** – Todi; **AROHA** – sa, re, ga, ma, pa, ma, dha, ni, sa; **AVROHA** – sa, ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, re, sa; **VADI** – dha; **SAMVADI** – ga; **JATI** – sampooran – sampooran; **Time** – second pahar of day

Raga Todi is very popular, simple and serious nature raga. This raga produces the feeling of humbleness. This raga attention the listeners for chanting the god name and do things which are ordered by lord, in which a person usually fails due to his madness. “This raga becomes the important part of a folk music and we hear lot of folk songs in which the swars combination of Todi is used.”[24]

“Todi raga is popular in which ma and ni tevar and dha, ga, re komal swars are used and its 6<sup>th</sup> swar dha is vadi and gais samvadi.”[25]

“Dha. ni. sa, rega, re sa ma pa, dhaga, ma ga, re sa is the raag thodi.”[26]

Prof. Kartar Singh quoted in his book “Gurmat Sangeet Darpan” that Lochan Pandit described 12 thaats from which 75 ragas are classified. And Todi is produced from Todi thaats which is janiye raag in his book “Raag Tarangani”.

## SHABAD

“टोडी महल्ला पंजवां घर चौथा दुपदे

इक ओंकार सतगुर प्रासाद ॥

रूडो मन हर रंगो लोडै ॥

गाली हर नीहो न होए ॥ रहाओ ॥[27]

**MEANING** – The nature of this raga is humble and serious. So guruji created gurbani in accordance with this raga in which a person say that man needs the colour of name of true lord. With only words we cannot reach to the god. So guruji shows the humbleness and gives attentive message throughgurbani in raga Todi as a warning to a person. This shows the deep thinking of gurusahibans regarding the literature and music.

### 7. Raag Shree

**THAAT-** Purvi; **AROHA-** sa, re, ma, pa, ni, sa ; **AVROHA** – sa, ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, re, sa; **VADI-** re

**SAMVADI-** dha; **TIME** – 4<sup>th</sup> pahar of the day

Raga shri is one of the most prominent ragas of SHRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI and Indian classical music. Shri raga is so important in SHRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI that it is the first raag of SHRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI and GURU AMAR DAS JI illustrated in SHRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI.]”

“रागा विच्च श्रीराग है जे सच धरे पेयार ।[28]

“Shri raga is very old, melodious and difficult raga. Singing of this raga requires hard work. The nature of this raga is serious.”[29]

“The structure of shri is given as:- AROHA- sa, re, ga, pa, ma, pa, dha, pa, ni, sa. AVROHA-re, ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, re, sa.”[30]

“Bhat Khande mentioned aroha avroha of shri as sa re ma pa ni sa, sa ni pa dha ni pa, ma re ga re sa.”[31]

According to the Prof. Kartar Singh in the book “Gurmat Sangeet Darpan” Bhatkhande took ten thaats out of 72 thaats from the book “Chaturdandtrakasika” by “Viankat mukhi” and out of 10 one thaats is Shri. Shri is equal to kafi thaats of south India classical music. It is serious raag and it creates the provoking nature in which listener should accept the advice of true lord.

## Shabads

“सलोक महल्ला: तीजा ॥

सतगुर जिन्नी न सेवेयो सबद न कीत्तो वीचार ॥

अंतर ज्ञान न आयो मिरतक है संसार ॥[32]

Similarly guru ji again placed such type of bani in raga shri which gives the serious warning cum message to humans. “To chant the name of lord if you do not take the name of true lord and do not analyses and understands the bani then you are like dead bodies in the world without any divine knowledge.” This is cleared that bani theme and ragas nature are mixed and matched with each other.

### 8. RAAGASA

**AROHA** -sa, re, ma, pa, dha, sa; **AVROHA**—sa, ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, sa, re, ga, sa; **JATI**— audav-sampuran **VADI**— ma; **SAMVADI** – sa; **TIME** – last pahar of night and first pahar of night.

This raga does not come under the list of famous ragas of Indian classical music. This is generated from the folklores. It comes at no. 4<sup>th</sup> in the ragas list of SHRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI that provides the environment of inspiration and courage to achieve the aim and also inspires the people to chant the name of true lord in dawn.

“According to “Gurmat Sangeet Paditi Granth” Asa is very important raga. We hear the melodies tone of Asa in each and every particle of the land of Punjab.”[33]

“According to different scholars similar raga of Asa is Maand which is described by scholars like “Vishno Narayan Bhatkhande, Acharya Ratanjankar and many more in their books. “According to Pt. Vinayak Rao Patwardan layover on the different swaras of Maand, Asa is produced.”[34]

Structure of raag Asa in raag viakaran.

#### FIRST TYPE OF ASA :-

**AROHA** – sa, re, ma, pa, dha, sa

**AVROHA** – sa, ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, re, sa.

#### SECOND TYPE OF ASA :-

**AROHA** – sa, re, ma, pa, dha, sa

**AVROHA** – ni, dha, pa, ma, ga, sa.”[35]

## SHABAD

“आसा महल्ला: पंजवां ॥

वंज मेरे आलसा हर पास बेनती ॥

रावआ सहो आपनढ़ा प्रभ संग सोहंती ॥[ 36]

Above lines inspire a person to fight with the laziness and chant the name of lord. So it is cleared that inspirational and courageous nature of raga is fully harmonized with the bani lines.

## 9. RAAG KANADA

**AROHA** – sa, re, ga, ma, pa, ni, sa; **AVROHA** – sa ni pa, ma pa ga, ma re sa; **THAAT** – kafi.

**VADI** – pa; **SAMVADI** – sa; **JATI** – shadav-shadav; **TIME** – 2<sup>nd</sup> pahar of night

Raga Kanada comes under the list of famous ragas of Indian classical music. It is believed that this raga is created by Miya Tansen. The other name of this raga is Darbari or Darbari Kanada because in old days this raga always recited in the darbars of the kings. Its nature is very quiet, slow in tempo and full of majesty.

“It is believed when the utensils dropped on the floor after that the sound is produced which is very deep and vibrate for long period is called kanada.”[ 37]

“According to Bhatkhande ga re, sa, ni sa, re, ma pa, dha, ni sa ni pa, ma pa, ga, re sa. The darbari raga in which re is vadi.”[ 38]

It is quoted by Prof. Kartar Singh in his book “Gurmat Sangeet Darpan” that Damodhar Pandit in his book “Sangeet Darpan” said that raga kanada is the ragini of Deepak raga. Raga kanada is as much as important that we see the last chonki of SHRI DARBAR SAHIB. Name—kanada or kirtan sohila chonki.

## Shabads

“कानड़ा महल्ला: पंजवां ॥

ठाकुर जिओ तुहारो परना ॥

मान महत तुमहरै पर तुमहरी ओट तुमहरी सरना ॥[ 39]

The above lines are full of majesty and devotion. Its nature is to provide a base to praise the god and to see the properties of god. Meaning of these lines is, god you are the only support of mine and you are my honour and i seek your support, so it justifies the theme and wording of the bani and it is blended with the majestic nature of

raga.

## 10. RAAG BIHAGRA

**AVROHA** – ni sa ga ma pa ni sa ; **AVROHA** – sa ni dha pa, ni dha pa, dha ga ma ga re sa **THAAT** – bilawal; **VADI**—ga; **SAMVADI** – ni; **JATI** – audav- sampuran; **TIME** – 2<sup>nd</sup> pahar of night

This raga acquires very beautiful melodious structure that is very impressive. This raga is one of the sweet ragas of night which produces the effect of sadness, pain and sorrow in separation from the lord.

“This raga is made after making some adjustments in raga Bihag.”[ 40]

“Vimalkant Rai Chaudhary second types of raga Bihagra:-

### FIRST TYPE OF BIHAGRA:-

**AROHA** – sa ga ma pa ni sa

**AVROHA** – sa ni pa ma ga sa ga sa

### SECOND TYPE OF BIHAGRA:-

**AROHA** – sa ga ma pa dha ni dha pa ma pa ni sa

**AVROHA** – sa ni dha pa ma ga ma ga re sa”.[ 41]

## Shabads

“राग बिहागड़ा महल्ला: पंजवां ॥

गोपाल दयाल गोबिन्द लालन मिलहो कंत निमाणीआ ॥

नैन तरसन दरस परसन नह नीद रैण विहाणीआ ॥[ 42]

Upper lines describe that the god is great and majestic so please give me your sight, my eyes are long to see your sight and night roll on and have no sleep. So guru ji perfectly matches firstly the time of the raga with the theme of bani in which we see the description of night and also matches the ras bhav of raga with the theme of the gurbani.

## Conclusion

“raag naad sabh sach he kimat khai na jaye”

The meaning of above tuk (phrase) in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is “The melodies in which the guru’s word is sung are true, their worth can be told not”. All the guru sahibans and bhagat jans who have composed gurbani in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji very well knew about the power of raga and naad and their impact on mind and soul. So they have entitled the ragas on gurbani. The study proves that guru sahibans composed the bani and placed on

different ragas according to the theme of the bani, time of the raga, nature and ras bhav of ragas. This shows the deep thinking and knowledge of guru sahibans about music, ragas and literature. So it is cleared that the entitlement of ragas on gurbani is completely logical and has deep meaning behind it.

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