

Evolution of the Dēśī Rāga Husēni in the Textual and Oral Traditions – A Study

Suchitra S¹, Guide – Dr. R. Hemalatha²

¹Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Indian Music, University of Madras, Chennai)

²(Assistant Professor, Department of Indian Music, University of Madras, Chennai)

Abstract: Rāga-s are the basis of Indian Classical Music. In South Indian Karnāṭaka Music, the rāga system and classification has gone through a lot of transformation. One such classification is the dēśī rāga classification. The prevalence of the term dēśī is seen from the 17th century as evidenced in the work, “Rāgalakṣaṇamu” (RL-S) of Śāhaji, (1684-1711 AD). Though Śāhaji hasn’t alluded the reason for such a classification, 16 rāga-s have been listed under the classification of dēśī rāga-s. After Śāhaji, it is Muddu Vēṅkatama khī who has given explanation in the text “Rāgalakṣaṇam” (RL-MV) and also classifies about 23 rāga-s under the dēśīya rāga classification. Sangītasampradāyapradarśini of Subbarāma Dīkṣitar (SSP), 1904 AD to a greater extent follows RL-MV.

This article focuses on the evolution of the dēśī rāga Husēni in the textual and oral traditions.

Scope of the study: Though Śāhaji in his text RL-S has given the lakṣaṇa for the rāga Husēni and illustrative prayōga-s, the prayōga-s do not indicate whether there is a usage of anya svāra, as given in the later books. In this paper, the phrases in the rāga Husēni have been compared with the rāga Husēni as documented in the texts “Ādi Tyāgarāja Hṛdayam” (TH) by K V Śrīnivāsa Ayyaṅgār, “Kṛtīmaṇimālai” (KMM) by R Raṅgarāmānuja Ayyaṅgār and Sangītasampradāyapradarśini by Subbarāma Dīkṣitar. Since these authors belong to the lineages of Tyāgarāja and Dīkṣitar, these notations are taken up for study.

Limitations: Even though the lakṣaṇa of the rāga is available from RL-S, the rāga is better understood with the compositions of Trinity which are available from the later part of the 19th century and early part of 20th century. Thus, the lakṣaṇa of the rāga in RL-S is compared with that given in RL-MV and the notations available in SSP, TH and KMM which also give the lakṣaṇa of the rāga. Much precisely, it is seen that the tracing back of the rāga is not continuous.

Methodology: The references to the rāga Husēni in various texts have been studied and the observations are made with regard to the historical evolution of the rāga. The rāga as handled by Tyāgarāja and Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar are studied based on the notations in the books mentioned above.

Keywords: Rāga-s, dēśī, RL-S, RL-MV, SSP, rāga Husēni, lakṣaṇa.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The term dēśī rāga is first seen in Rāgalakṣaṇamu of Śāha Mahārāja, 1684-1711 (RL-S), where he classifies the rāga-s into ghana, naya and dēśī. While RL-S does not mention the reason for this classification, Rāgalakṣaṇa of Muddu Vēṅkaṭamakhī written in the first quarter of 18th Century (RL-MV) and Sangītasampradāyapradarśini of Subbarāma Dīkṣitar (SSP), 1904 AD give explanation for dēśīya rāga-s as those that have come from North. Dēśīya rāga-s are “auttara rāga-s” according to SSP. Here, it is important to note that the term dēśī of RL-S is considered to be the same as the term dēśīya of SSP. RL-S mentions 16 rāga-s as dēśī and SSP mentions 23 rāga-s as dēśīya. SSP to a larger extent follows RL-MV. RL-MV mentions 23 rāga-s as dēśīya rāga-s.

It is interesting to note that many rāga-s which were classified as dēśī in RL-S have been classified as rakti rāga-s in SSP. One such rāga is Husēni which has been in vogue since Śāhaji’s period and changes have crept into the rāga slowly and gradually. The rāga has been mentioned under the rakti category and has been mentioned as a janya of the Śrīrāga mēla. It is also seen that the usage of śuddha dhāivata is seen for the first time only in SSP. The documented notations of the compositions in Husēni reflect the usage of śuddha dhāivata, though this usage is not mentioned in the texts written before SSP.

In the present-day system, rāga Husēni takes the ārōha and avarōha, mentioned by B Subba Rao in his text Rāga Nidhi¹ under rāga Husēni as seen below:

Ārōha: sa ri ga ma pa ni dha ma pa ni dha ni sa

Avarōha: sa ni sa pa dha ma pa ga ri sa

The śuddha dhaivata touch is sometimes given. The prayōga-s in vogue today are:

‘pa ni dha ma’ ‘pa ni dha ni sa’ ‘ni dha ma’ ‘ga ri ni sa’ ‘sa ga ri ga ma ga ri’ ‘pa sa ni sa’ ‘pa dha*² ma pa

In today’s context, much importance is given to ‘ri’ and graha svara is invariably ‘ri’ in most of the compositions. The dīrgha riṣabha, madhyama and pañcama are characteristic of the rāga seen today.

The Rāga Husēni is mentioned in the following texts:

1. Rāgalakṣaṇamu of Śāhaji (RL-S), 1684 – 1711 AD.
2. Saṅgītasārāmṛta of Tulaja (SSA), 1729 – 1735 AD.
3. Rāgalakṣaṇa of Muddu Vēṅkaṭamakhī (RL-MV), first quarter of 18th c. AD.
4. Saṅgrahacūḍāmaṇi of Gōvinda (SCud), 1750 – 1800 AD.
5. Saṅgītasārasaṅgrahamu of Tiruvēṅkaṭakavi (SSS), circa 1800 AD.
6. Mahābharatacūḍāmaṇi (MBC), 18th – 19th c. AD.
7. Rāgalakṣaṇa (RL), 18th – 19th c. AD. – (Author is unknown)
8. Saṅgītasampradāyapradarśini of Subbarāma Dīkṣita (SSP), 1904 AD.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RĀGA HUSĒNI AS IN THE TEXTS

RL-S:

Husēni is mentioned under the mēla Śrīrāga as a sampūrṇa rāga and is classified as a dēśī rāga. The svara contour is given as under;

(Ri ga ma ga ri sa), (ri ga ma pa ma ni dha pa ma ni dha ni, ssa,) (ni dha pa ma pa dha ma, ga ri sa)

SSA:

Mentioned as sampūrṇa rāga, classified under the mēla Śrīrāga. It has ṣaḍja as graha, amśa and nyāsa. It is sung in the evening.

The svara contour is given as under:

(ri ga ma, ga ri sa) (ri ga ma pa ni ma ni dha pa ma) (ni dha ni ssa,) (ni dha pa ma) (pa dha ma, ga ri sa,) (ri ga ri ri ssa,)

RL-MV:

The rāga Husēni is mentioned as a sampūrṇa, bhāṣāṅga, rakti rāga under 22nd mēla and has sa as the graha svara. It can be sung at all times.

SCud:

The rāga Uśēni has been mentioned as a sampūrṇa rāga under the mēla Kharaharapriya and has ri as the nyāsa, amśa and the graha svara.

The ārōha avarōha is given as under:

Ārōha: sa ri ga ma pa dha ni sa

Avarōha: sa ni dha pa ma ga ri sa

SSS:

The rāga Husēni/Vuśāni is mentioned under mēla Kharaharapriya.

Ārōha: sa ri ga ma pa dha ni sa

Avarōha: sa ni dha pa ma ga ri sa

MBC:

The rāga Usāni is mentioned under mēla Kharaharapriya.

The ārōha avarōha is given as under:

Ārōha: sa ri ga ma pa ni dha ni sa

Avarōha: sa ni dha pa ma pa ma ga ri sa

¹ Reference - Rāga Nidhi (RN) by B Subba Rao, Volume I, second edition, 2015.

² Śuddha dhaivata – Note: * has been used to represent śuddha dhaivata wherever it occurs.

RL:³

The *rāga Husēni* is mentioned under the *mēla Kharaharapriyā* and has *sa* as the *nyāsa*, *amśa* and the *graha svara*. The *rāga* is *sampūrṇa* in the ascent and omits *ni* in the descent.

The *ārōha avarōha* is given as under:

Ārōha: *sa ri ga ma pa dha ni sa*

Avarōha: *sa dha pa ma ga ri sa*

The Āndhra version ‘*sa ni dha pa ma ga ri sa*’ follows *Scud* in the descent.

SSP:

SSP mentions the *rāga Husēni* as a *bhāṣāṅga*, *sampūrṇa*, *ṣaḍja graha*, *rakti rāga* and it can be sung at all times. It is also cited that the *dīrgha madhyama svara-s* and *niṣāda* in the *avarōhaṇa* impart *rañjana* to the *rāga*. The *ārōha avarōha* is given as under:

Ārōha: *sa ri ga ma pa dha ni sa*

Avarōha: *ni dha pa ma ga ri sa*

After giving the *lakṣaṇa* of the *rāga*, *Subbarāma Dīkṣitar* lists out the following *rāga rañjaka prayōga-s* and also lists the *prayōga-s* that occur with *śuddha dhaivata*.

The important *prayōga-s* are:

(*Sa ri ga ma pa \ ma*) (*ma pa / ni dha pa pa ma*) (*pa / sa ni dha ni sa \ ni dha pa \ ma / ni dha pa \ ma*) (*pa ni dha ni sa sa ni dha pa ma*) (*ni dha ni sa ni dha pa ma*) (*pa ma ga ri sa*) (*ni ri ri ri ri ga ma pa ma pa ma ga ri sa*)

The *prayōga-s* with *śuddha dhaivata* are:

(*ma dha* pa ma ga ri sa*) (*pa \ ma pa dha* pa ma ga ri sa*) (*pa dha* ma*) (*pa ma dha* pa ma ga ri sa*). It is also mentioned in the text that all other *dhaivata prayōga-s* are *pañcaśruti dhaivata-s*. *Subbarāma Dīkṣitar* also quotes that the modernists render the *śuddha dhaivata* in the following *prayōga-s* as well.

(*sa ni dha* pa*) (*pa dha* ni pa dha* pa*) (*ma ni dha* pa*) (*pa dha* ni dha* pa*).

Observation:

It is clearly observed that all the texts mention the *rāga* under the 22nd *mēla* of the 72 *mēla* scheme. The texts *RL-S*, *RL-MV*, *SSA* and *SSP* mention the *rāga Husēni* under *Śrirāga* corresponding to 22nd *mēla*. Moreover, these texts give a *krama sampūrṇa ārōha-avarōha* for the *rāga Husēni*. The texts *Scud*, *SSS*, *MBC* and *RL* mention it under the 22nd *melakarta Kharaharapriya* and incidentally all these texts also give a *krama sampūrṇa ārōha-avarōha* for this *rāga*. While it can be pronounced that the characteristics of the *rāga* has not changed in the two schools of thought, it is also interesting to see that the latter texts giving a *krama sampūrṇa ārōha-avarōha* for this *rāga* under *Kharaharapriya*, which also has the same *ārōha-avarōha*. Moreover, these texts do not mention the presence of *anya svara* (*śuddha dhaivata* as mentioned in *SSP*) and there are no illustrative *prayoga-s* given for this *rāga*. Hence, it is difficult to understand the *svarūpa* of the *rāga Husēni* as distinct from its *mēla Kharaharapriya* from these texts.

The structure of the *rāga* is almost unchanged upto *RL-MV* and the inclusion of the *śuddha dhaivata* is seen only in *SSP*. It is also interesting to note that the *prayōga-s* of the *rāga* as described in *RL-S* is closer to the present version of the *rāga* when sung with the *śuddha dhaivata*. Since, it is mentioned as a *dēśī rāga*, it is imperative to look into the *rāga Husēni* in other regions.

Rāga Husēni in North Indian Classical Music Texts:

While discussing the *rāga lakṣaṇa* of *Rāga Husēni* in the South Indian context, it becomes important to understand its North Indian counterpart.

Rāgamañjari (RM) of *Paṇḍarīkaviṭṭhala*, 1572 – 1578 AD gives the list of *Pāraśīka rāga-s* and their equivalent Indian *rāga-s*. RM refers *Hausēni* as a *pāraśīka rāga* and its Indian equivalent being *Jijāvanti*. *Subba Rao* in his text *Rāga Nidhi* (RN) says that it is associated with *Mohammedan music*. He also adds saying that this *rāga* is not sung in *Hindustāni Saṅgīt* in the present day.

To understand the growth of the *rāga*, the important phrases in the compositions are to be analysed.

III. COMPOSITIONS IN SAṄGĪTASAMPRADĀYAPRADARŚINI (SSP)

Analysis:

The compositions taken for analysis under this *rāga* are a *lakṣya gīta*, *umātilaka prabandha*, a *kṛti* of *Muttuswāmi Dīkṣitar* (*Śrī kālāhastīśa*), a *sañcāri* by *Subbarāma Dīkṣitar*.

³ The reference for the text *Rāgalakṣaṇa* (RL) has been taken from the book *Rāgalakṣaṇasaṅgraha* by *Hema Ramanathan*, Pub. N.Ramanathan, Chennai, 1st Edition, 2004

Table no 1: Shows the prayōga-s in the pūrvāṅga of the ārōha ‘sa ri ga ma’.

Gīta	Prabandha	Kṛti	Sañcāri
sa ga ri ga ma (thrice) ga ma ma pa (once) sa ri ga ma (once)	ga ma ga ma sa ri ga ma	ri ga ma pa ga ri ga ri ga ma sa ga ri ga ma ri ri ga ma pa ni sa ri ga ma ni sa ri ri ga ri sa	ni sa ri ga ma (twice) sa ri ga ma pa ga ma ma pa ri sa ni sa ri ri ga ri

Table no 2: Shows the prayōga-s in the uttarāṅga of the ārōha ‘pa dha ni sa’.

Gīta	Prabandha	Kṛti	Sañcāri
Pa ma ni dha ni sa (twice)	Pa ma ni dha ni sa Ni dha ni sa (four times) Pa dha ni sa	Pa dha ni sa (fast phrase) Pa ma ni dha ni sa Pa sa	Pa dha ni sa (thrice) Pa ma pa ni dha ni

Table no 3: Shows the prayōga-s in the pūrvāṅga of avarōha ‘sa ni dha pa’.

Gīta	Prabandha	Kṛti	Sañcāri
Sa ni dha ni (twice) Sa ni dha pa (thrice) Pa ni dha dha pa (thrice) Sa ni dha dha pa	Sa sa ni ni dha dha pa pa Ri ni sa ni dha pa Pa ni dha ma Sa ni ni dha	Sa sa ni ni dha dha pa Pa dha ni ni dha dha pa Ni dha pa ma ma Pa dha* pa dha* ma ma Sa ni dha pa ma Pa dha* pa ma (thrice) Ri ni sa ni dha pa ma pa	pa ni dha pa ri ni sa pa ma ni sa ni dha pa (Twice) pa dha ni pa sa ni dha pa ma (7 times)

Table no 4: Shows the prayōga-s in the uttarāṅga of avarōha ‘ma ga ri sa’.

Gīta	Prabandha	Kṛti	Sañcāri
Pa ma ma ga ri ga Ma ga ri ga ri sa (Twice) Ma ga ri sa (thrice)	Pa ma ma ga ri sa Ma ga ri sa ri ni (twice) Ma ga ri ga ri sa	ma ga ri sa (4 times) ga ga ri (twice) ma dha* pa ma ga ri pa ga ma ga ri sa	Pa ma ga ri sa Ga ri ma ga ri Ga ma ga ri Pa ga ri ga ma

Observation:

After giving a krama sampūrṇa ārōha and an avarōha, the illustrative prayōga-s given, portray the lakṣaṇa of the rāga. The ‘pa dha ni sa’ prayōga occurs as a fast phrase in the kṛti. Much importance is given to ‘ri’ throughout the kṛti and ‘ri’ is seen to be the graha svara. In the gīta, it is seen that ‘pa dha ni sa’ doesn’t occur. Whereas, ‘sa’ is seen as the graha svara in the gīta. Dīrgha pañcama and dīrgha madhyama are all characteristic of Husēni seen in all compositions. All the prayōga-s seen are sung today.

IV. COMPOSITIONS OF ĀDI TYĀGARĀJA HRDAYAM (TH) AND KṚTIMAṆIMĀLAI (KMM)

Now the kṛti-s of Tyāgarāja in the rāga Husēni are taken up for study. K V Śrīnivāsa Ayyangār in his text TH has given lakṣaṇa to the rāga Husēni before giving the notations to five compositions in the rāga Husēni (the list of compositions is mentioned below). Śrīnivāsa Ayyangār mentions Husēni as a vakra sampūrṇa rāga under the 22nd mēla. It can be sung at all times. The ārōha avarōha given is as under:

Ārōha: sa ri ga ma pa dha ni sa

Avarōha: sa ni dha pa ma ga ri sa

He gives the following prayōga-s:

‘ri ri sa’ ‘ma ma pa ma’ ‘ri ri ga ma’ ‘pa ni dha ma’ ‘pa ni dha ni sa ni dha ma’ ‘ma ga ma pa’ ‘pa ma ga ri’ ‘sa ga ri ga ma ga ri’ ‘ga ri ni sa’

Table no 5: Shows the list of compositions in TH under rāga Husēni.

S.No.	Composition	Tāla
1.	Rāma Ninne	Ādi
2.	Raghuvīra Raṇadhīra	Rūpakam

3.	Rāma Rāma Rāma Sīta	Rūpakam
4.	Sarvalōka Dayānidhī	Tiśra laghu
5.	Bhaja Rāmam	Ādi

R Raṅgarāmānuja Ayya ṅgār in his text KMM has mentioned the rāga Husēni under the mēla Naṭhabhairavi (20th mēla) as a sampūrṇa – sampūrṇa vakra bhāṣāṅga rāga. The author mentions that it has instant appeal when dwelling longer on madhyama and niṣāda as nyāsa svāra-s in the ārōha. He also mentions the usage of catuśruti dhaivata in the ārōha and śuddha dhaivata in the avarōha.

The ārōha avarōha is given as under:

Ārōha: sa ga ri ga ma pa ni dha² ni sa

Avarōha: sa ni sa pa dha¹ ma pa ma ga ri sa

Table no 6: Shows the list of compositions in KMM under rāga Husēni.

S.No.	Composition	Tāla
1.	Bhaja Rāmam	Catuśra tripuṭa
2.	Ēmani Vēgintunē	Catuśra tripuṭa
3.	Raghuvīra Raṇadhīra	Catuśra Rūpaka
4.	Rāma Rāma Rāma Sīta	Rūpakam
5.	Rāma Ninnē	Catuśra tripuṭa
6.	Sarvalōka Dayānidhī	Ādi – tiśra nadai
7.	Vinatā Suta	Catuśra tripuṭa

Observation:

All the texts mention Rāga Husēni under 22nd mēla except KMM in which Raṅgarāmānuja Ayyangār cites Rāga Husēni under Naṭhabhairavi (20th mēla). The svāra contour in the ārōha says “sa ga ri ga” which has not been mentioned in any of the other texts.

Analysis:

Both the texts give notations to five compositions in common. Two compositions Raghuvīra and Rāmā ninnē, are sung popularly today. Hence, the compositions taken up for analysis under TH and KMM are Raghuvīra and Rāmā Ninnē.

Table no 7: Shows the prayōga-s in the pūrvāṅga of the ārōha ‘sa ri ga ma’

Raghuvīra in TH	Raghuvīra in KMM	Rāmā Ninnē in TH	Rāmā Ninnē in KMM
ga ma pa pa ga ri pa ma ma pa ni sa ri ga ri ga ri ri ga sa ga ri ma	Sa ri ri ga ri Ri ga ma pa ma Ga ma pa Sa ga ri ga ma pa Ri ga ma ga ri Ri sa ri ga ga ma Ga sa ri ga ga ma	Ri ri ga ma pa Ma ga pa ma (twice) Ga ri ma ga Ri ma ga ma ri	Ri ri ga ri ga ma pa Ri sa ni sa ri ga ma pa Ri ga ma pa Ri ga ri ga ma Ri ga ma pa ma Sa ri ga ri

Table no 8: Shows the prayōga-s in the uttarāṅga of the ārōha ‘pa dha ni sa’

Raghuvīra in TH	Raghuvīra in KMM	Rāmā Ninnē in TH	Rāmā Ninnē in KMM
Dha ni sa ri sa Ma pa ni dha pa Sa ni dha pa Dha pa pa ma Ni dha ma pa	Pa pa sa Pa pa ni dha ni sa Pa pa ri sa Pa pa ri ri sa Pa sa sa ni dha ni	Pa dha dha pa Pa ma pa dha pa Pa ni dha Pa ni dha ni sa Pa dha ni sa Pa ma pa ni dha ni sa ri sa	Pa sa sa ni Pa ni dha* pa Ma pa dha* pa Pa dha ni Pa ma pa dha* Pa dha ni sa Pa ma pa dha* pa Ni dha ni sa

Table no 9: Shows the prayōga-s in the pūrvāṅga of the avarōha ‘sa ni dha pa’

Raghuvīra in TH	Raghuvīra in KMM	Rāmā Ninnē in TH	Rāmā Ninnē in KMM
Sa ni dha pa ma Pa ni dha pa Pa sa sa ni dha	Dha* pa ma pa ma Pa pa sa ni dha* pa ma ga Pa sa ni ni dha ni dha ma Sa ni dha dha* ni Ni dha pa ma Ni dha* dha* ni pa Pa ni dha dha ma Pa dha* pa ma	Ni dha pa dha pa ma Ri sa ni dha pa ma Ri sa sa ni dha pa ma Pa sa ni dha pa	Ni dha* pa ma dha* pa ma Dha ri sa ni dha Sa ri sa ni dha Ma dha* pa ma Sa ni dha ni pa Ri sa sa ni sa ni dha Sa ni dha pa ga ma

Table no 10: Shows the prayōga-s in the uttarāṅga of the avarōha ‘ma ga ri sa’

Raghuvīra in TH	Raghuvīra in KMM	Rāmā Ninnē in TH	Rāmā Ninnē in KMM
Ma ga ri sa Dha pa pa ma ma ga ri sa Sa ri ga sa Ga ri sa ni sa Sa ri ga ri sa	Ga ri sa ri ni ni sa Ri ga ga sa ni sa Pa ma ga ri Ri ri ga sa ni sa Pa pa ga ri sa ri s ani ri sa ni dha pa ma	Ga ri ga sa (thrice) Ga ma ri ri ma ga ma ri Ga ri ga ri Pa ga ma pa ma Ga ri sa sa	Ma pa ma ga ri Ma ga ma ga ga sa ri Ma ga ri sa Sa ri sa ni dha Ma ga ri ga sa Ma ga ga ri sa

Observation:

Raṅgarāmānuja Ayyaṅgār is the only author to mention the rāga Husēni under 20th mēla and he gives the āroha ‘sa ga ri ga ma’ which is not seen in any other work. The prayōga ‘ṣa ri ga ma’ is also frequently seen. Though the author has mentioned the rāga Husēni under mēla Naṭ habhairavi, the āroha and avarōha itself illustrates the vakra prayōga-s seen in the rāga today. However, krama phrases are also seen in the kṛti.

Though, the phrases in the compositions seen in both the texts are similar, the character of the rāga seem to differ in both the texts since Raṅgarāmānuja Ayyaṅgār and K V Śrīnīvāsa Ayyaṅgār mention the rāga Husēni under 20th mēla and 22nd mēla respectively. It is also observed that Raṅgarāmānuja Ayyaṅgār, while citing the lakṣaṇa of the rāga Husēni, mentions the usage of anyā svāra, whereas K V Śrīnīvāsa Ayyaṅgār does not mention the usage of any anyā svāra.

V. CONCLUSION

As mentioned above, it is seen that the rāga Husēni has been cited as rakti in the present-day system (as mentioned in SSP) while it has been mentioned as a dēśī rāga in RL-S. Moreover, from the illustrative prayōga-s seen in the text RL-S and the āroha avarōha mentioned in the other texts, it is seen that the contour of the rāga has not changed much except for the usage of śuddha dhaivata in SSP.

Even though, it has been adapted from the North Indian system as mentioned in RL-S, it can be said that, probably the handling of the rāga by many composers would have paved the way in giving a distinct character to the rāga Husēni which in turn would have been the reason for classifying this rāga under rakti in the present day system.

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