

Raga Nattai - Chromatic beauty

The scale behind Raga Nattai

Raga Nattai is a child raga of the parent raga Chalanattai. While the parent uses all the notes, the child raga Nattai skips some of the notes and has some characteristic melodic patterns. We will focus on the child raga, since some of the famous Carnatic and film songs are based on the child variation.

Starting with the Major scale pattern, if we sharpen the 2nd and 6th notes, we get the scale behind Raga Chalanattai.

C major scale: C D E F G A B

C Chalanattai: C D# E F G A# B

Using the notes of Chalanattai, we will play some Raga Nattai phrases.

Mahaganapathim - a composition in Raga Nattai

Notes

Notes to raga phrase

Collect, connect, optimize

Let us use an embellished phrase from Mahaganapathim to see how we can first *collect* the notes on the fret board, *connect* them using first level slides and then further *optimize* it for playing efficiency and sound embellishment.

The tabs below uses Fret-string positions based on C Nattai: C D# E F G B
Raga Nattai is derived from the parent scale. The 6th position is not used.

This contributes to the kind of melody patterns that originate from the note group.

The first image shows a simplified version of the music, with reduced number of slides. In the second image, I have added more slides and changed some positions to make it easier to connect the phrases when playing, to remove delay and hurry, to get the sound closer to the vocals.

For example in the first picture, the 'raa' part is played on the second string using the frets: 4,1,0.

Instead of Having to move horizontally to play that on the second string I would instead play the 4\1\0/1 on the 3rd string, by finding the same notes on the 3rd string.

The basic deal in relationship tells us that to convert fret numbers from the second string to play the same notes on the 3rd string you just need to add 4 to each of the numbers.

So, 4\1\0/1 movement on the 2nd string becomes 8\5\4/5 on the 3rd string as shown in the second image below. They are the same notes, the same movement. Instead of having to move horizontally and then come back and just transferring the notes played on the 2nd string on to the 3rd string so that I just have to move a small vertical distance (string gap) to play the exact same notes.

The image displays a musical score for a piece in 4/4 time, featuring a melody with slides. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The melody is written on a single staff, with notes connected by lines indicating slides. Below the staff, the lyrics are written: "ma na sa sma ra aa mi ma ha ga na pa thir". At the bottom, a guitar tablature is provided, showing the fret numbers for each note. The tablature is written on a six-line staff, with the first line representing the first string and the sixth line representing the sixth string. The fret numbers are: 4, 4, 1, 8, 6, 4, 1, 0, 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, 7, 8, 11, 8, 7, 8, 6, 4, 1, 4. The tablature is written in a way that shows the movement of the fingers across the fretboard, with lines connecting the notes to indicate slides.

As in the other images the term *gliss.* represents glissando - the term western notation softwares use for the slide movements. For our purposes wherever we have the lines connecting the notes they are all slides. When playing I

often substitute slides with hammer-ons and pull offs because I like the sound and for efficiency.

Pull offs also serve as a booster to the sound stream because plucking the string while during the pull of acts almost like a small strike to the string, without making the full sound of a stroke with the picking hand.

You can start with the variation given in the first image. Then add embellishments like in the image below.

The image displays two musical staves, each with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff contains the lyrics "Ma na sa sma raa mi" and the second staff contains "ma ha aa ga na pa thim". Below the lyrics, the fingerings for each note are indicated with numbers 1-5 and arrows showing the direction of the slide or pull-off. The first staff shows a sequence of notes: Ma (5), na (8), sa (7), sma (8), raa (6), mi (8). The second staff shows: ma (6), ha (8), aa (7), ga (11), na (10), pa (11), thim (8). The fingerings are: Ma (5), na (8), sa (7), sma (8), raa (6), mi (8); ma (6), ha (8), aa (7), ga (11), na (10), pa (11), thim (8). The notes are connected by lines, indicating slides or pull-offs. The first staff has a double bar line after the first measure, and the second staff has a double bar line after the last measure.

Phrasing example: Raga Mohanam

For you to compare and understand the concept of different phrasing and embellishment, here is A line from Varaveena Geetham based on Raga Mohanam (major pentatonic scale)

8

dha ga ri sa sa dha sa dha dha pa

TAB 3/4

10 12 12 10 12 10 8 8 8 5 8 8 5 8 5 5 8 8

8

Vaan chi tha pha la daa aa ya ki

5 8 8 5 8 8 5 8 8 10 8 5 3 5 3 5 3 1