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### Like a game of chess

Renuka Suryanarayan



G. Ravikiran.

The Hindu

A Chitravina artist on the national, local and International circuit, scholar, composer, speaker, author and teacher . . . all these descriptions fit Ravikiran. His depth of knowledge and yearning that youngsters should imbibe classic Carnatic music practices came to the fore as **Chitravina N. Ravikiran** held recently, on the first day, a **lec-dem** on 'Approach to Model Alapanas' under Acharyanet and Madhuradhwani, and, on the next day, a lec-dem organised by Karnatic Music Forum on 'Sangeeta Lakshana Lakshaya' about differences between closely allied ragas in Carnatic music. Both were held at **Arkay Convention Center**.

Listeners can look forward to a recording of the first 'Approach to Model Alapanas' to be available soon on the Internet at Hailing the Carnatic system as unique with subtle notes and note oscillations, Ravikiran regaled learners eager to absorb correct aspects of raga alapanas. What drives good alapana? Ravikiran posed to knowledgeable learners. Stressing learning from a guru to avoid pitfalls in raga enunciation, Ravikiran emphasised acquiring gitams, varnams and a good repertoire besides excellent listening as critical. Some ragas can be sung for a few minutes, whereas ragas such as Sankarabaranam require hours of introspection for a singer to flourish the right touches on stage. One false swara enunciation could point to a different raga, he stressed earnestly.

Raga elaboration is like a chess game — see what openings are possible; however, "A raga alapana should not be like a suspense novel," Ravikiran said on how crucial it is to begin directly by using a raga's key phrases. He then discussed elaborate model alapanas of the ragas - Sankarabharanam, Yadukulakhambodi, Lalitha and Sahana.

*(The author, a professor of journalism at California State University in Los Angeles, now a Chennai resident, is a vocalist trained.)*

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