

Rāg Pūriyā and related rāgs

In the study of music, there is often a tendency for classification. With the rāgs of Northern India, this tendency engenders itself in the creation of “families” or groups of related rāgs. In order to substantiate defining such a group, though, common characteristics must be shown to exist between the rāgs in question. The focus of this essay will be to attempt to demonstrate the existence of such a group surrounding the rāgs Pūriyā, Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī, Pūriyā-Kalyān, and Yaman, and in doing so show the common characteristics that unite this group. Contrasting examples, in the form of rāgs Mārvā and Sohini – both similar in pitch material to, but, as we shall see, not characteristic of the Pūriyā group – will be given to illustrate the group’s cohesiveness. We will begin with an introduction to each rāg, followed by comparative analysis of the rāgs as a group.

Rāg Pūriyā

Pūriyā is a hexatonic rāg belonging to Bhatkande’s Mārvā ṭhāṭ. Its vādī is Ga, its samvādī Ni: as we will discover later, these two svaras are essential to Pūriyā’s identity. Pa is omitted. In ascent, Sā is avoided; thus the ascent begins with Ni and skips to komal Re, continuing up (omitting Pa) and approaching the upper Sā through komal Re – here we see the komal Re’s role as a passing note to Sa. Kaufmann expands on this, asserting that Ni is only able to move to Sā by vakra through an intermediary such as Dha or Re.¹ In descent, Sā is not avoided and may proceed directly to Ni. A descent starting from Komal Re directly to Ni, thus skipping Sa, is also possible. The rest of the descent proceeds without any vakra movement.

Characteristics of Pūriyā include a slide from tīvra Ma to Ga, pausing for a long time on Ga and strengthening the vādī. The samvādī Ni is similarly strengthened by characteristic slides between it and tīvra Ma, as well as in slow phrases around Ni, like S -. In this example phrase, the Sā is touched upon but goes quickly to Ni; Sā has less importance because of Ni’s prominence.² Pūriyā melodies tend to be characterized by slow, drawn-out phrases winding around in the middle and lower octaves.

Rāg Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī

Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī belongs to the Pūrvī ṭhāṭ because of its komal Dha. Its vādī is Pa and samvādī komal Re. Its ascent is similar to that of Rāg Pūriyā, beginning on Ni, avoiding Sā and Pa in ascent. Though Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī may approach the upper Sā through komal Re, this is not as important as in Pūriyā. In descent, Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī also may descend from komal Re to Ni, skipping Sa, or may start at Sā and continue downwards. Importantly, vādī Pa is not omitted in descent as in Pūriyā; rather, it is quite important and is the focus of many long pauses.

Tīvra Ma also has an important role, and the movements from tīvra Ma to Ga, Pa, and Dha are all very common. The characteristic Pūriyā movement from tīvra Ma to Ga appears in Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī as well, here in the characteristic phrase MG- M\underline{R}G.³ Samvādī komal Re appears usually with the help of Ga, often with phrases such as M\underline{R}G, G \underline{R} or \underline{R} G.

¹ Kaufmann, p. 319.

² Mahajan, p. 113.

³ Bor, p. 132.

Rāg Yaman

Yaman, of the eponymous Kalyān ṭhāṭ, is known as a fundamental rāg in the Hindustani tradition.⁴ Like Pūriyā, its vādī is Ga, with samvādī Ni. Its ascent, like Pūriyā and Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī, also begins on the lower Ni and omits Pa and Sa. However, like Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī, its straightforward descent does not omit Pa or Sa, but rather rests on the two. The tīvra Ma again is important in strengthening Ga, as in the past rāgs described. Ga is quite important. Kaufmann states that Yaman is unique in offering the performer more room for expression, as it lacks any especially characteristic phrases beyond its ascent.⁵ The ascent is notable as it consists of a repeating three-note interval pattern, consisting of a minor third leap followed by a whole step, repeated twice.

Rāg Pūriyā-Kalyān

Pūriyā-Kalyān is of the Mārvā ṭhāṭ and is always described as a combination of two rāgs, its bottom tetrachord taken from Pūriyā and its top tetrachord taken from Kalyān (Yaman). Its vādī is also Ga, samvādī Ni. Like Pūriyā, it begins on Ni and avoids Pa in ascent. Sā may also be avoided in vakra ascent NṚṢ (as in Pūriyā) or approached directly (as in Yaman). In descent, Pūriyā-Kalyān does not omit Pa, but instead sustains on it.

Kaufmann attributes the composition of Pūriyā-Kalyān (or, as he and Bhatkande called it, Purvakalyān) to Mārvā and Kalyān, rather than Pūriyā and Kalyān.⁶ However, the emphasis on Ga and slide M\G in the lower tetrachord are much more characteristic of Pūriyā than of Mārvā. Yaman-like phrases seen in Pūriyā-Kalyān involve climbing passages from the vādī to the samvādī such as GM^(N)DN-; Pūriyā does not usually begin such phrases on Ga (it would start from the tīvra Ma).

Pūriyā group – comparative analysis

An important characteristic of the Pūriyā group of rāgs concerns the svaras Sā and Pa. This is best shown in the ascending and descending lines of the rāgs. In ascent, all four rāgs unilaterally skip Sa, starting on Ni and advancing to Re. In approaching the upper Sa, Pūriyā follows a vakra movement through the komal Re (NṚṢ), but Yaman does not (it lacks a komal Re, which will be discussed later) and approaches it directly. Pūriyā-Kalyān, as its name implies, finds itself between the two, combining both the direct and vakra approach to upper Sa. Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī also approaches the upper Sā both ways. In descent, Sā is avoided (as in Ṛ N D P) in Pūriyā, but is not avoided in Yaman; Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī and Pūriyā-Kalyān again find themselves in the middle, accommodating both descents.

We find Pa in a similar situation. In ascent, while the hexatonic Pūriyā omits Pa completely, the other three rāgs often omit Pa, but also allow it as a final note of rest in rising phrases such as RGMP. In descent, Pa is not omitted in Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī, Pūriyā-Kalyān, or Yaman, but again does not exist in Pūriyā.

What has not been shown so far is the emphasis placed on the svaras Sā and Pa, despite their avoidance in ascent. In Yaman, Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī, and Pūriyā-Kalyān, Pa is typically found sustained, ending phrases – Pa is even assigned as vādī to Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī and is “treated strongly.”⁷ Sā is also very strong and final in Yaman and Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī. Pūriyā, however, obviously does not stress Pa, and neither shares Yaman’s heavy Sa.

Two more important svaras are Ga and Ni, which are treated strongly across the group, especially Ga. In Pūriyā, Yaman, and Pūriyā-Kalyān, Ga is vādī and Ni samvādī, while Pūriyā-

⁴ Bor, p. 164.

⁵ Kaufmann, p. 62.

⁶ Kaufmann, p. 342.

⁷ Kaufmann, p. 283.

Dhanāśrī does not have the same vādīs, but also has a very strong Ga. Ga is essential to the group and reigns supreme here, quite often sustained: most of the group’s characteristic phrases, slides, etc., end on Ga. The characteristic slide from tīvra Ma to Ga also serves to strengthen Ga.

This brings us to tīvra Ma, the only non-shuddh svāra shared by all four of the ṭhāṭṣ represented in this group. Tīvra Ma is often seen as having a “vital role”⁸ in conjunction with Ga, often leading to it with a characteristic glide.⁹ It also leads upwards, performing the skip MDN seen across the group, as well as leading to vādī Pa in Pūriyā-Kalyān.

One accidental that is not shared by all the rāgs in this group is komal Re. Komal Re exists in Pūriyā, Pūriyā-Kalyān, and Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī, but not in Yaman. Those rāgs that do have a komal Re often use it as a sort of leading tone to Sa, especially in the vakra movement NṚṢ. Mahajan claims that in Pūriyā, this has the effect of making komal Re lower than usual.¹⁰ However, in Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī, komal Re is the samvādī and is not altered. Jairazbhoy attributes the leading-tone role of komal Re found in ṭhāṭṣ Mārvā and Pūrvī to several reasons, among them komal Re being “more dissonant” (especially, probably, with the Ni/Sā tuned drone used for Pūriyā) and thus such a resolution more pleasing, and a general penchant for descending cadences in most rāgs which make komal Re a better leading note.¹¹

Another point of difference, though minor, is the shuddh Dha found in Pūriyā, Pūriyā-Kalyān, and Yaman, compared with the komal Dha found in Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī. This, however, has little impact on the group as a whole.

Some examples have been given of characteristic phrases common between the rāgs. The tone material in the bottom half of Pūriyā (komal Re, tīvra Ma) is shared across Pūriyā, Pūriyā-Kalyān, and Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī – common movements can also be shown among these three here. Pūriyā-Kalyān obviously gives the best example of shared phrases with others in the group, exhibiting movements similar to Kalyān in the upper tetrachord and movements similar to Pūriyā in the bottom. Pūriyā-Dhanāśrī is also said to contain some similarities with Pūriyā in the lower tetrachord.¹² Yaman, however, lacks the komal Re to share its bottom tetrachord with Pūriyā.

Putting together the broadest of the similarities, we can forge a basis for this grouping of rāgs. Reviewing this list, first we find the Pūriyā ascent, beginning on Ni and continuing upwards, omitting Pa and Sa. Corollary to this is an emphasis on Pa and Sā among the rāgs not omitting Pa in descent (i.e. all but Pūriyā). Next is the svāra tīvra Ma, shared by all the rāgs, and the important movement from tīvra Ma to Ga. Lastly, there is the very strong emphasis put on Ga (and secondarily on Ni); in all the rāgs, Ga returns again and again, sustained as the final note at the end of phrases.

Now that there has been some exploration of the group’s characteristics, it is useful to put them in the context of other rāgs that seem similar in scale but otherwise are completely different. Rāg Mārvā and Sohinī – both hexatonic rāgs belonging to Mārvā ṭhāṭ, like Pūriyā – are now introduced as a way of further strengthening the group’s character through contrast.

⁸ Mahajan, p. 124.

⁹ Kaufmann, p. 318. also Bor, p. 134.

¹⁰ Mahajan, p. 112.

¹¹ Jairazbhoy, p. 114.

¹² Bor, p. 132.

Rāg Mārvā

Rāg Mārvā is a hexatonic rāg belonging to Mārvā ṭhāṭ. Its vādī is komal Re, and its samvādī is Dha. Like Pūriyā, it omits Pa completely, and also avoids Sā in ascent, approaching the upper Sā by vakra movement through komal Re. In descent it avoids Sā again, stepping over it from komal Re down to Ni. Suspension of Sā is the key to Mārvā;¹³ the strong emphasis on vādī komal Re and samvādī Dha is important for creating this tension. The final resolution step of this tension (R S) is played “slowly and heavily”¹⁴ with a long pause on komal Re.

Rāg Sohini

Rāg Sohini is also a hexatonic rāg belonging to Mārvā ṭhāṭ. It similarly omits Pa. Its vādī is Dha and its samvādī is Ga. In ascent it starts from Ga, continuing directly upwards (without a vakra to avoid Sa, as in Pūriyā or Mārvā). Descent is similarly straightforward. Sohini especially lives in the higher octave; Ga and tīvra Ma are often at the bottom range of melodies, which usually start in the higher register, descend, and rise back up again.

Comparison – Rāg Mārvā, Sohini, Pūriyā group

First in contrasts between these two rāgs and the Pūriyā group is the ascent and descent. Mārvā’s ascent is much like Pūriyā’s, avoiding Pa and Sa, using a vakra to approach Sa. In descent it also resembles Pūriyā, stepping over Sa. Sohini’s, however, is completely different, starting on Ga, ascending directly to Sa, descending directly downwards.

We must also consider the vādī and the samvādī. Mārvā’s vādī is Re and samvādī Dha; Sohini’s, Dha and Ga. Most of the Pūriyā rāgs have vādī Ga and samvādī Ni. The differences in these emphases require greater detail, so we must look at the individual svaras themselves.

We start with Ga, very important to and receiving strong emphasis in the Pūriyā group. In Mārvā, however, Ga has no such importance – it is not avoided, but is not a point of rest. In Sohini Ga is of some importance as the samvādī, but not as much as in Pūriyā.

Next we consider komal Re. In Mārvā, komal Re is the vādī, and is emphasized very strongly with a sliding phrase G̣R, just as Ga is emphasized by ṂG in the Pūriyā rāgs. In Sohini, however, it does not receive any strong emphasis, and also mostly only appears in the upper octave, given Sohini’s registral placement. In contrast, most of our Pūriyā group rāgs use komal Re as a passing note to Sa, and do not give it the strong emphasis it receives in Mārvā.

Tīvra Ma now receives our attention. These two rāgs both contain a tīvra Ma, as do all the rāgs in the Pūriyā group. In Pūriyā, the tīvra Ma is used to emphasize Ga, already shown as quite important. In Mārvā, tīvra Ma does not play a big role, serving instead as simply a passing note between Dha and Ga. In Sohini, tīvra Ma sits at the bottom of many melodies and thus may be paused on.

Dha is of little importance in the Pūriyā rāgs; however, its importance in Mārvā and Sohini underlines their distinction from the group. In Mārvā, Dha is samvādī and is very strong, with a pause always made on it.¹⁵ In Sohini, Dha is vādī and also very strong.

Finally, we consider the registral placement of each rāg. Most significant is Sohini, which lives in the high octave and rarely ventures even to the lower tetrachord of the middle octave. Mārvā and Pūriyā, however, are situated lower, in the middle and lower octaves.

Thus Rāg Mārvā does not fit our conception of the Pūriyā group. For all the Pūriyā-like characteristics it qualifies – ṭhāṭ, register (lower and middle octaves), ascending line (avoiding Pa, Sa, with vakra), and descending line – its essential difference lies in its emphasis on vādī Re and samvādī Dha, and its lack of emphasis on Ga. Indeed, Bor and Kaufmann both warn against

¹³ Bor, p. 114.

¹⁴ Kaufmann, p. 317.

¹⁵ Mahajan, p. 112.

evoking Mārvā while performing Pūriyā by pausing too long on Ga, or vice versa.¹⁶ Despite the many strong similarities, without a strong Ga, Mārvā cannot be classified as a member of the Pūriyā group.

Rāg Sohini also does not belong with the Pūriyā group. It fails the test brilliantly: Sohini's ascent from Ga doesn't resemble the group's; its register is too high, in the middle and upper octaves, dipping down only to travel back up again; it does not put enough emphasis on Ga, rather emphasizing its vādī Dha. It is similar only in pitch material, and even then only with Rāg Pūriyā and not the other rāgs in the group.

Conclusion

Thus, by exploring and comparing each of the rāgs in this group as well as rāgs outside the group, it is possible to show that common characteristics exist between the rāgs Pūriyā, Pūriyā-Dhanāsrī, Pūriyā-Kalyān, and Yaman. They form a loose family of rāgs that share many similarities and differences, which have been discussed in detail. But despite their differences, they can be shown to be a unified group identifiable from other rāgs.

¹⁶ Bor, p. 114; Kaufmann, p. 322.

Appendix: Reference chart

	Pūriyā	Pūriyā- Dhanāśrī	Pūriyā- Kalyān	Yaman	Mārvā	Sohinī
Pa omitted, asc.	Y	Y, (a)	Y, (a)	Y, (a)	Y	Y
Pa omitted, desc.	Y				Y	Y
Pa emphasized		Y	Y	Y		
Sā omitted, asc.	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Sā omitted, desc.	Y	Y, (b)	Y, (b)		Y	
Sā emphasized		Y		Y		
NR'S' vakra	Y	Y	Y		Y	
Tīvra Ma	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Komal Re	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
Komal Dha		Y				
Ga, Ni emphasized	Y	Ga	Y	Y		
Re emphasized		Y			Y	
Vādī, samvādī	Ga, Ni	Pa, <u>Re</u>	Ga, Ni	Ga, Ni	<u>Re</u> , Dha	Dha, Ga
Ṭhāṭ	Mārvā	Pūrvī	Mārvā	Kalyān	Mārvā	Mārvā

(a) Pa appears in ascent as resting point

(b) Sā may be omitted, as in Pūriyā (R' N etc), but is not necessarily omitted (S N etc)

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