



Understanding 72 Ragas (Melakartha) Theory - Carnatic Music

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Introduction

Generally there are 72 Melakartha (Parent) Ragas in Carnatic style of music. Each raga containing equivalent eight swaras in both ascending and descending order. (Arohana and Avarohana)

- **SaRiGaMaPaDaNiSa (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8)**
- **SaNiDaPaMaGaRiSa (8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1)**

1. Sa – 1st Note – Shadja(Sa) – Lower
2. Ri – 2nd Note – Rishabha(ri)
3. Ga – 3rd Note – Gandhara(g)
4. Ma – 4th Note – Madhyama(m)
5. Pa – 5th Note – Panchama(pa)
6. Da – 6th Note – Dhaivata(da)
7. Ni – 7th Note – Nishada(ni)
8. Sa – 8th Note – Shadja(Sa) – Higher

Raga means one kind of pattern where distribution of intervals or swaras or notes are positioned based on root note (Sa), therefore 72 ragas are represented in 72 different patterns based on intervals.

Ragas can be played on different pitches ranging from 1 to 12(keys) or shrutis from one, one and half, two, two and half, three, four, four and half, five, five and half, six, six and half, seven.

Representation of Intervals

There are 17 intervals in Carnatic music. Interval means position of Note or Swara from Root note (Sa).

Sa ri1 ri2 ri3 g1 g2 g3 m1 m2 Pa da1 da2 da3 ni1 ni2 ni3 Sa

Sa and Pa are Universal intervals where the positions will be same in any of 72 Ragas. The remaining notes like Re Ga Ma Da Ni will change accordingly depending on the Raga.



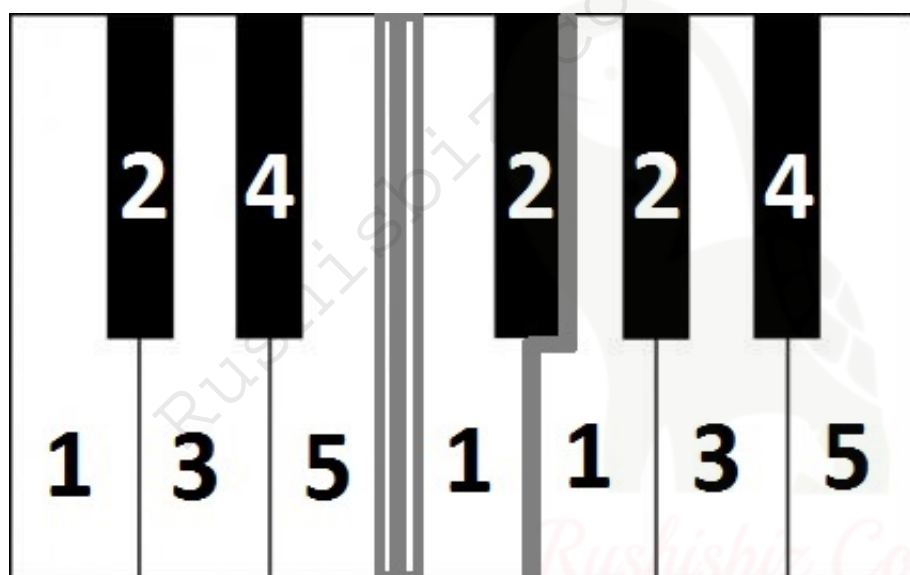
- 72 Ragas are divided into two categories based on “Madhyama” (m1 & m2)
- m1 has 36 Ragas & m2 has remaining 36 Ragas – Total 72 Ragas
- 72 Ragas are also divided into 12 groups called “Chakras”, each group or chakra containing 6 Ragas
- Therefore m1 has 6 groups containing 36 Ragas and m2 has 6 groups containing 36 Ragas.

Keyboard Division

Any keyboard will have set of 12 keys – 5 black keys and 7 white keys – Total 12 keys.

For example a 61 keys keyboard will have 5 sets of keys each set containing 12 keys making 61 keys (5sets x12keys)

Lets divide the 12 keys set into three parts as shown in figure



— Part 1 — Part 2 — Part 3 —

- **First part (1,2,3,4,5 keys)**

1. Key 1 – Sa (C)
2. Key 2 – ri1 (C#)
3. Key 3 – ri2/g1 (D)
4. Key 4 – ri3/g2 (D#)
5. Key 5 – g3 (E)

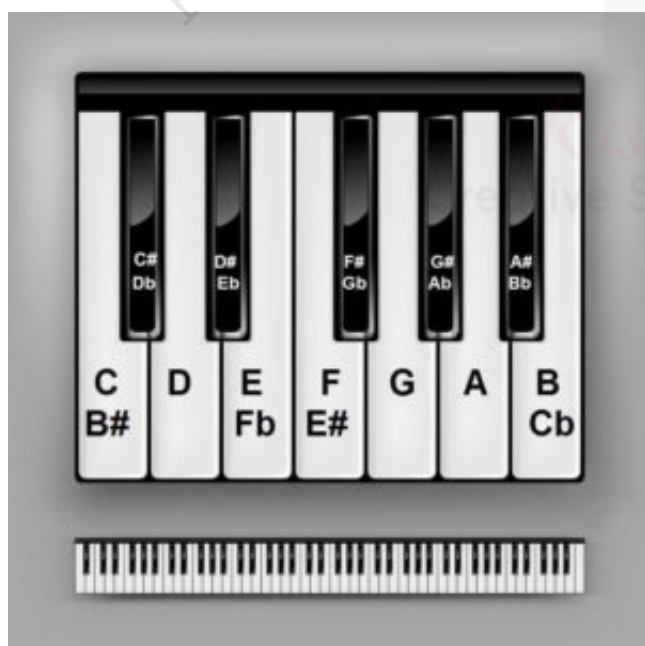
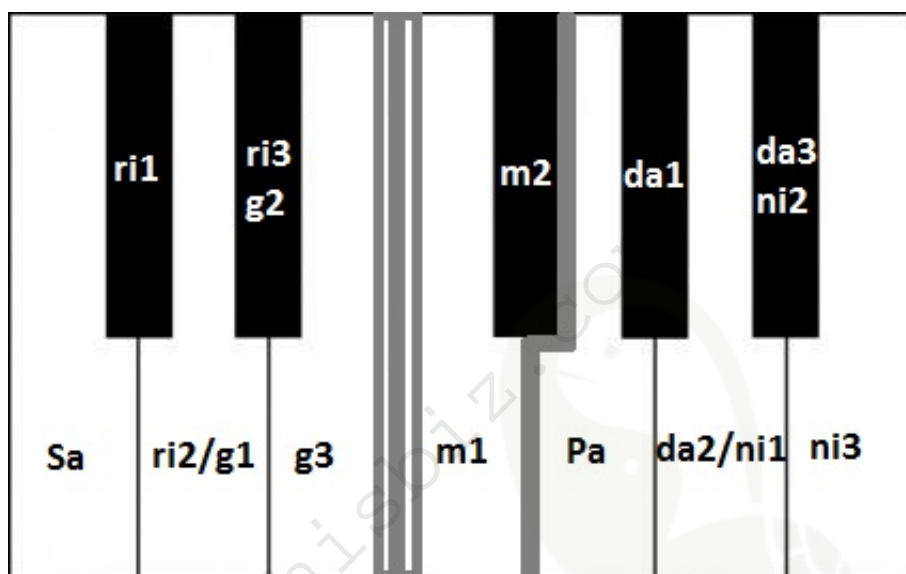
- **Second part(1,2 keys)**



1. Key 1 – m1 (F)
2. Key 2 – m2 (F#)

• **Third part(1,2,3,4,5 keys)**

1. Key 1 – Pa (G)
2. Key 2 – da1 (G#)
3. Key 3 – da2/ni1 (A)
4. Key 4 – da3/ni2 (A#)
5. Key 5 – ni3 (B)





- As we said earlier m1 has 36 ragas and m2 has 36 ragas, lets go for m1 initially.
- Remember any raga(melakartha) will have eight swaras in ascending and descending order.
- Since Sa and Pa are universal in any raga write Sa and Pa as shown below.

Sa Pa..... Sa (1st note..... 5th note..... 8th note)

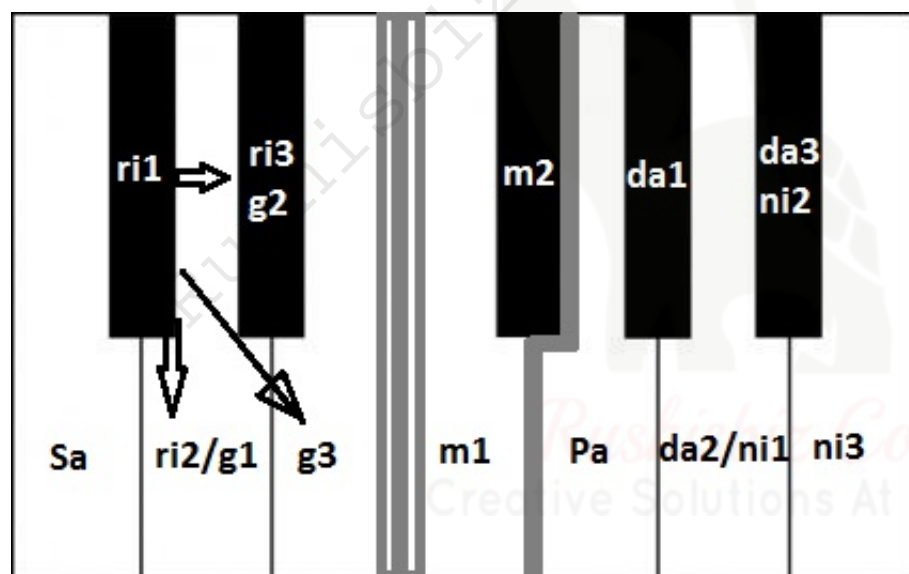
- Since we are doing for m1 which has 36 ragas lets fill the “m1” in fourth note

Sam1... Pa..... Sa (1st note.....4th note..... 5th note..... 8th note)

Part 1 has six possibility combinations as shown below

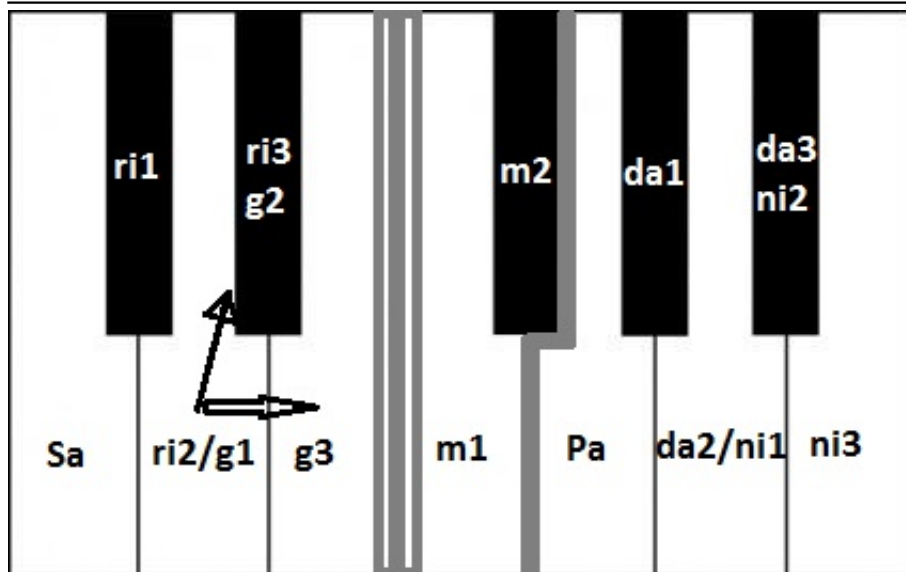
- Now ri1 possibilities in First part

1. ri1g1
2. ri1g2
3. ri1g3



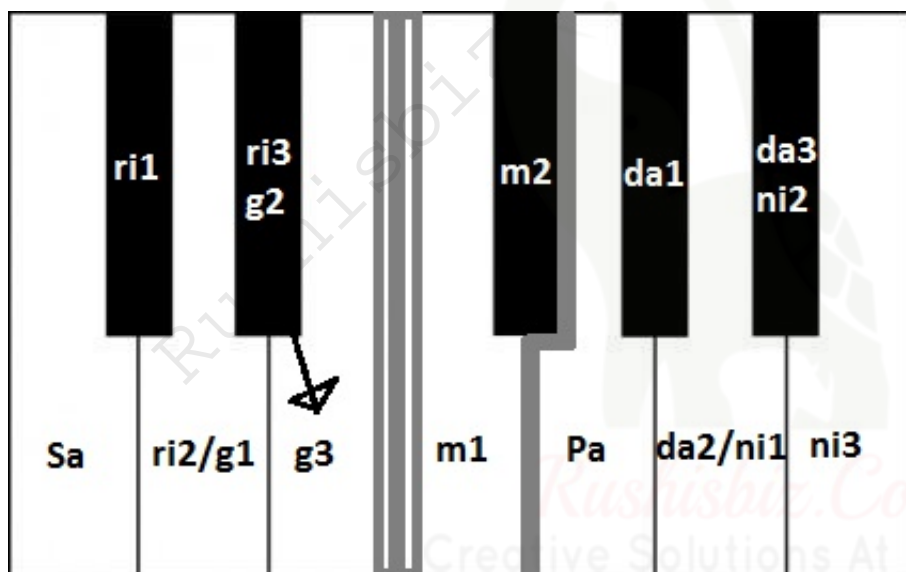
- Now ri2 possibilities in First part

1. ri2g2
2. ri2g3



• Now ri3 possibilities in First part

1. ri3g3



At the end of the day Part 1 Combinations are as follows with “m1” as fourth note

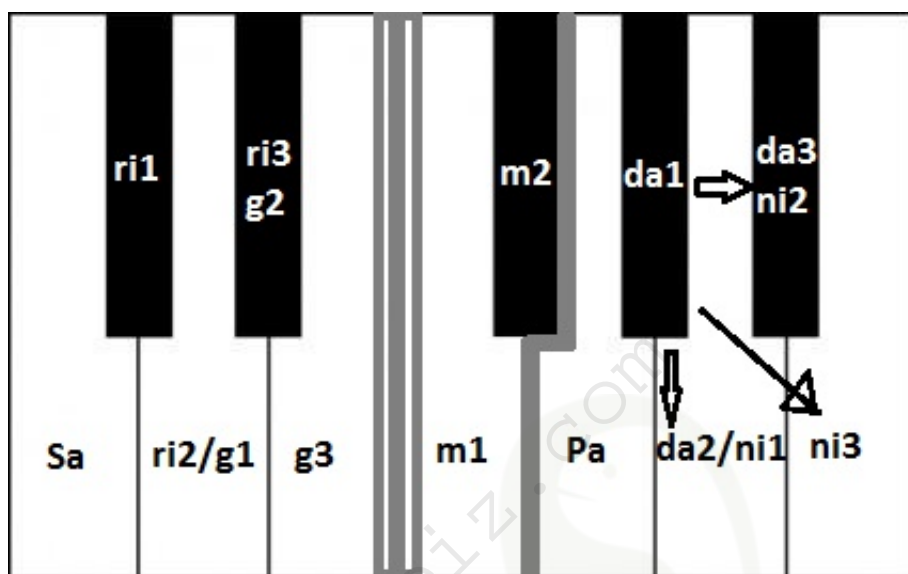
1. Sari1g1
2. Sari1g2
3. Sari1g3
4. Sari2g2
5. Sari2g3
6. Sari3g3



Similarly Part 3 has six possibility combinations as shown below

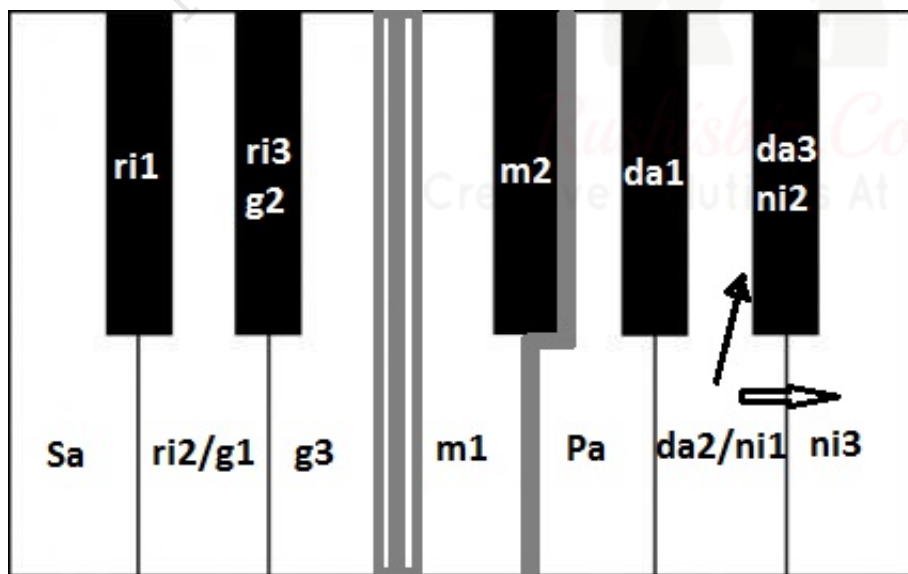
• **Now da1 possibilities in third part**

1. da1ni1
2. da1ni2
3. da1ni3



• **Now da2 possibilities in third part**

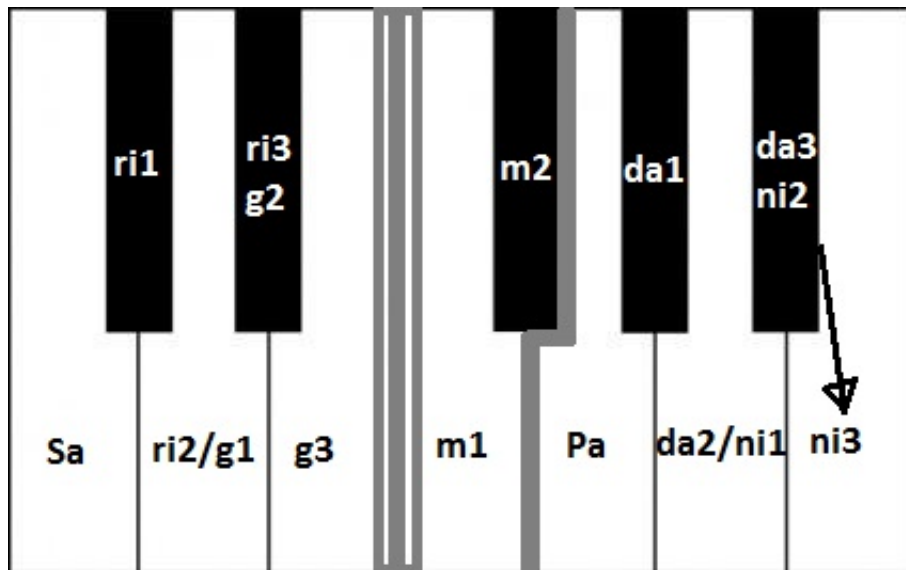
1. da2ni2
2. da2ni3



• **Now da3 possibilities in third part**



1. da3ni3



At the end of the day Part 3 Combinations are as follows with “m1” as fourth note

1. Pada1ni1
2. Pada1ni2
3. Pada1ni3
4. Pada2ni2
5. Pada2ni3
6. Pada3ni3

Now Add Part 1(Sariga combinations) + Part 2(m1 or m2) + Part 3(Padani combinations) + “Sa” as eighth swara or note in this way

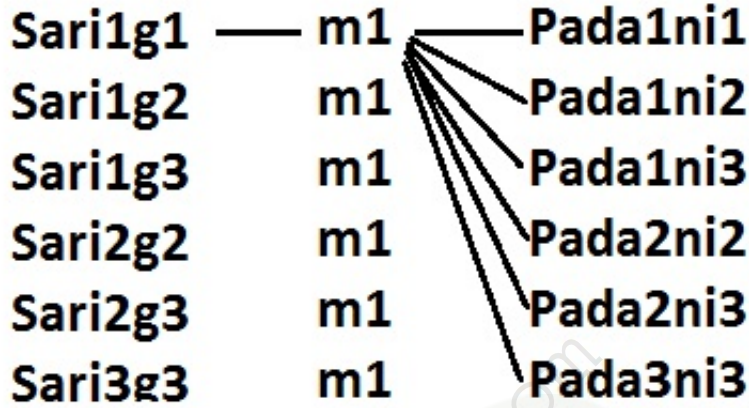
Sari1g1	m1 or m2	Pada1ni1
Sari1g2	m1 or m2	Pada1ni2
Sari1g3	m1 or m2	Pada1ni3
Sari2g2	m1 or m2	Pada2ni2
Sari2g3	m1 or m2	Pada2ni3
Sari3g3	m1 or m2	Pada3ni3

For m1 – 36 ragas (Shuddha Madhyama)



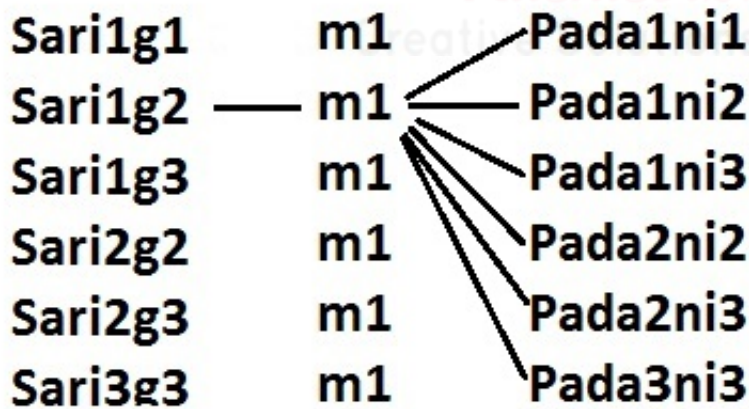
- m1 contains 6 groups or chakras
- Each chakra or group having 6 ragas
- Total 6 groups makes 36 ragas which is shown below

Group 1 or Chakra 1 (Indu)



1. Sari1g1m1Pada1ni1- kanakAngi
2. Sari1g1m1Pada1ni2 – rathnAngi
3. Sari1g1m1Pada1ni3 – gAnamUrthi
4. Sari1g1m1Pada2ni2 – vanaspathi
5. Sari1g1m1Pada2ni3 – mAnavathi
6. Sari1g1m1Pada3ni3 – thAnarUpi

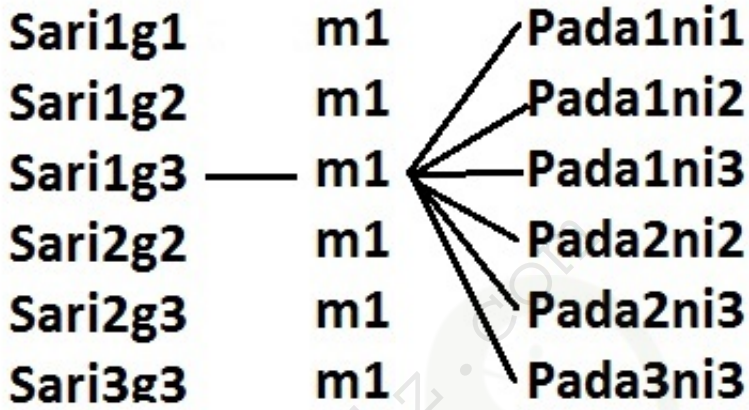
Group 2 or Chakra 2 (Netra)





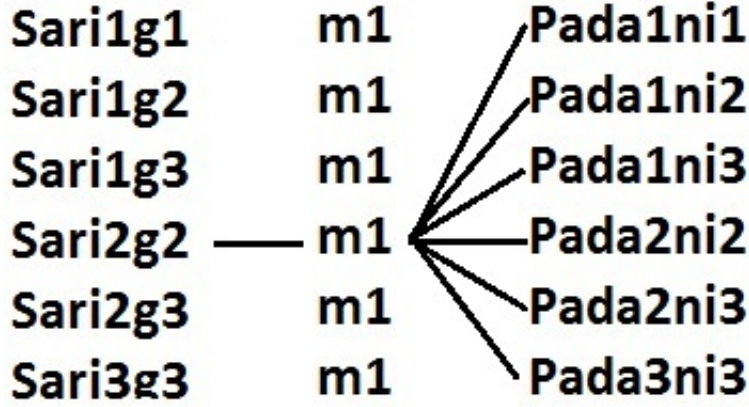
1. Sari1g2m1Pada1ni1 – sEnAvathi
2. Sari1g2m1Pada1ni2 – HanumathOdi
3. Sari1g2m1Pada1ni3 – DhEnukA
4. Sari1g2m1Pada2ni2 – nAtakapriya
5. Sari1g2m1Pada2ni3 – kOkilapriya
6. Sari1g2m1Pada3ni3 – rUpavathi

Group 3 or Chakra 3 (Agni)



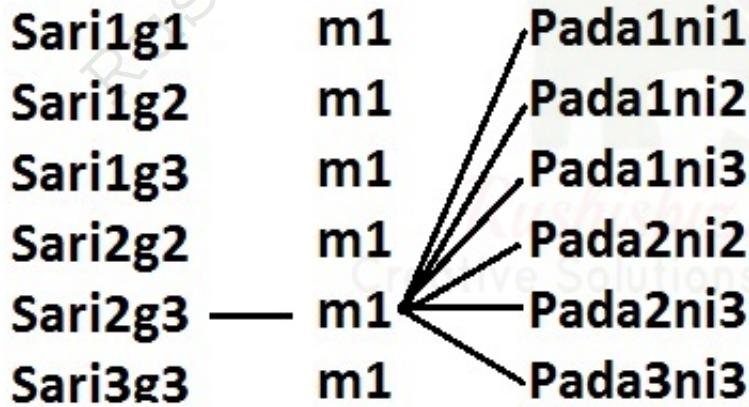
1. Sari1g3m1Pada1ni1 – gAyakapriya
2. Sari1g3m1Pada1ni2 – vakulAbharaNam
3. Sari1g3m1Pada1ni3 – mAyAmALava gowLA
4. Sari1g3m1Pada2ni2 – chakravAkam
5. Sari1g3m1Pada2ni3 – sUryakAntam
6. Sari1g3m1Pada3ni3 – HAtakAmbari

Group 4 or Chakra 4 (Veda)



1. Sari2g2m1Pada1ni1 – JankAradhvani
2. Sari2g2m1Pada1ni2 – naTabhairavi
3. Sari2g2m1Pada1ni3 – klavANi
4. Sari2g2m1Pada2ni2 – KaraHarapriya
5. Sari2g2m1Pada2ni3 – gowrimanOHari
6. Sari2g2m1Pada3ni3 – varuNapriya

Group 5 or Chakra 5 (Bana)



1. Sari2g3m1Pada1ni1 – mAraranjani
2. Sari2g3m1Pada1ni2 – chArukeshi
3. Sari2g3m1Pada1ni3 – sarasAngi
4. Sari2g3m1Pada2ni2 – HarikAmbhOji
5. Sari2g3m1Pada2ni3 – DhIrashankarAbharaNam
6. Sari2g3m1Pada3ni3 – nAgAnandhini



Group 6 or Chakra 6 (Rutu)

Sari1g1	m1	Pada1ni1
Sari1g2	m1	Pada1ni2
Sari1g3	m1	Pada1ni3
Sari2g2	m1	Pada2ni2
Sari2g3	m1	Pada2ni3
Sari3g3	m1	Pada3ni3

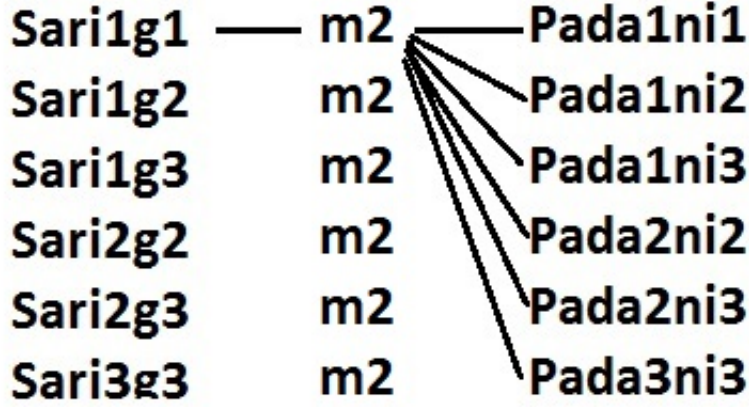
1. Sari3g3m1Pada1ni1 – yAgapriya
2. Sari3g3m1Pada1ni2 – rAgavarDhani
3. Sari3g3m1Pada1ni3 – gAngeyabhushani
4. Sari3g3m1Pada2ni2 – vAgaDhIsvari
5. Sari3g3m1Pada2ni3 – shUlini
6. Sari3g3m1Pada3ni3 – chalanAta

Similarly

For m2 – 36 ragas (Prati Madhyama)

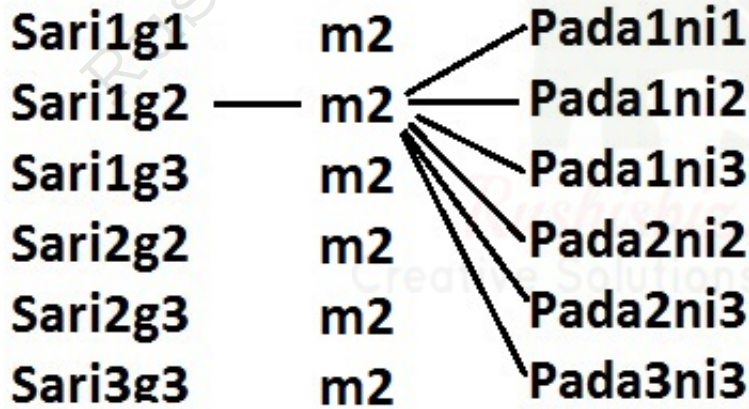
- m2 contains 6 groups or chakras
- Each chakra or group having 6 ragas
- Total 6 groups makes 36 ragas which is shown below
- **Just you need to replace “m1” with “m2” in all above done 36 ragas**

Group 7 or Chakra 7 (Rishi)



1. Sari1g1m2Pada1ni1 – sAlagam
2. Sari1g1m2Pada1ni2 – jaArnavam
3. Sari1g1m2Pada1ni3 – JAlavarALi
4. Sari1g1m2Pada2ni2 – navaNItham
5. Sari1g1m2Pada2ni3 – pAvani
6. Sari1g1m2Pada3ni3 – raGupriya

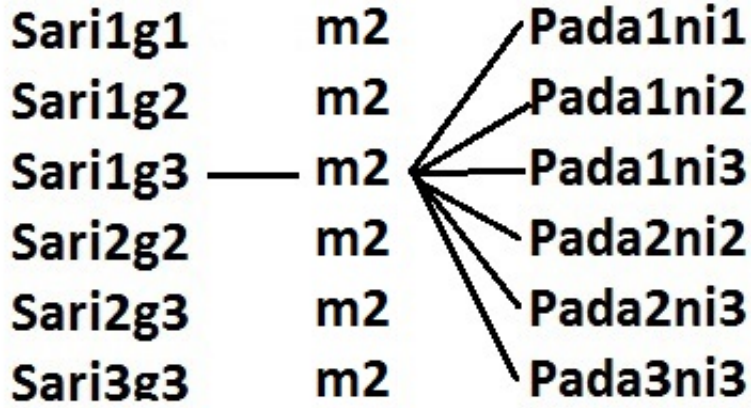
Group 8 or Chakra 8 (Vasu)



1. Sari1g2m2Pada1ni1 – gavAmbodhi
2. Sari1g2m2Pada1ni2 – bhavapriya
3. Sari1g2m2Pada1ni3 – shubhapanthuvArALi
4. Sari1g2m2Pada2ni2 – shadhvidha mArgiNi
5. Sari1g2m2Pada2ni3 – suvarNAngi
6. Sari1g2m2Pada3ni3 – dhivyAmaNi

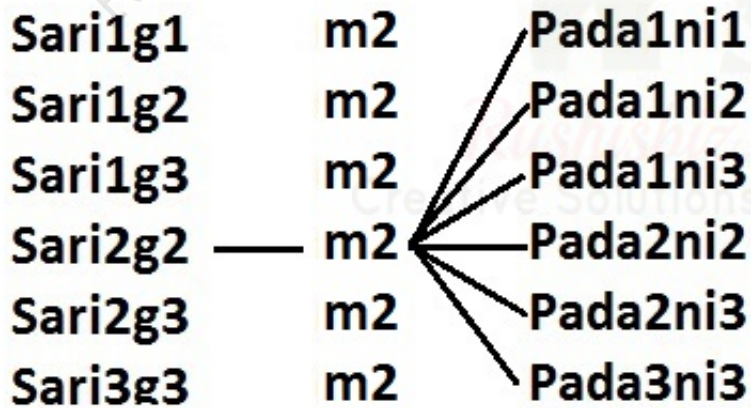


Group 9 or Chakra 9 (Brahma)



1. Sari1g3m2Pada1ni1 – dhavalAmbari
2. Sari1g3m2Pada1ni2 – nAmanArAyaNi
3. Sari1g3m2Pada1ni3 – kAmavardhini
4. Sari1g3m2Pada2ni2 – rAmapriya
5. Sari1g3m2Pada2ni3 – gamanashrama
6. Sari1g3m2Pada3ni3 – vishvAmbhari

Group 10 or Chakra 10 (Disi)

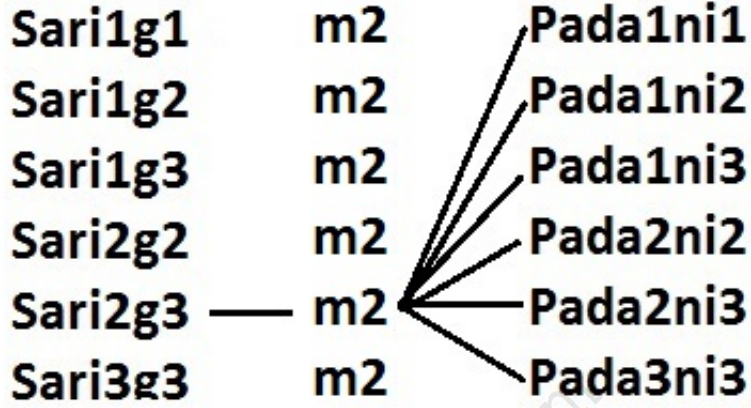


1. Sari2g2m2Pada1ni1 – shyAmaLAngi
2. Sari2g2m2Pada1ni2 – shanmuKapriya
3. Sari2g2m2Pada1ni3 – simHendra madhyamam
4. Sari2g2m2Pada2ni2 – HemAvathi



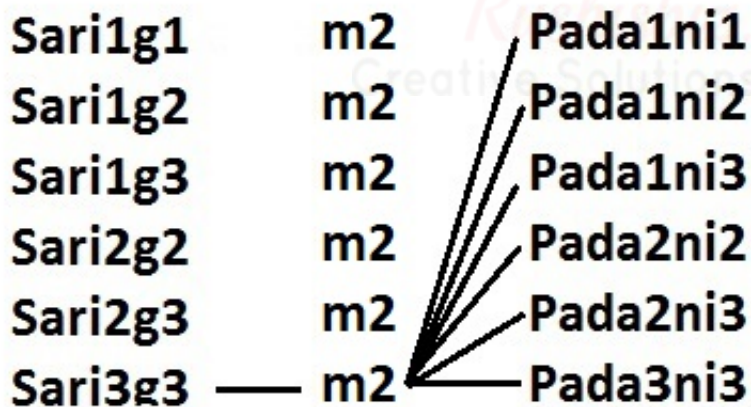
5. Sari2g2m2Pada2ni3 – DharmAvathi
6. Sari2g2m2Pada3ni3 – nIthimathi

Group 11 or Chakra 11 (Rudra)



1. Sari2g3m2Pada1ni1 – kAnthAmaNi
2. Sari2g3m2Pada1ni2 – rishabhapriya
3. Sari2g3m2Pada1ni3 – lathAngi
4. Sari2g3m2Pada2ni2 – vAchaspathi
5. Sari2g3m2Pada2ni3 – mEchakalyANi
6. Sari2g3m2Pada3ni3 – chithrAmbari

Group 12 or Chakra 12 (Aditya)



1. Sari3g3m2Pada1ni1 – sucharithra



2. Sari3g3m2Pada1ni2 – jyothisvarUpiNi
3. Sari3g3m2Pada1ni3 – dhAtuvardhani
4. Sari3g3m2Pada2ni2 – nAsika bhUshaNi
5. Sari3g3m2Pada2ni3 – kosalam
6. Sari3g3m2Pada3ni3 – rasikapriya

Total 72 Ragas are simplified in this way

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