

References of Mantra in Karnaṭaka Classical Music

Nagashree Narayan, Guide – Dr.Meera Rajaram Pranesh

Researcher, Jain (Deemed to be) University

Abstract: The Indian classical music has Sāmavēda as its origin. The tonal framework which is the base for classical music can be traced to the Saman chanting. Sāmāgāna is the mantras of the ṛg vēda which is recited musically. With this background the compositional forms kṛti and kīrtane were introduced. Music is said to have been the path for realization. Various Karnāṭaka music composers chose this path. Some of the aspects and principles of Veda-s and Upaniṣad-s have been conveyed in the Compositions. In order to emphasize these principles, aspects of Mantra, Yantra, Tantra, Āgama Śāstra were included in the compositions. This study attempts to explore the references of Mantra-s in Lalita Sahasranāma, in select composition of three different composers.

Keywords: Karnāṭaka classical music, Mantra, Kṛti, Muttusvami Dīkṣitar, Jayacamarāja Wodeyar, Dr. L. Mutthiah Bhāgavathar.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Karnāṭaka music is considered one of the oldest systems of music in the world. It is a system that requires much thought both artistically and technically. Kṛtis form the backbone of a typical Karnāṭaka classical music concert. The Karnāṭaka music composers have incorporated the aspects of Mantra in their compositions. Muttusvami Dīkṣitar, Jaya Chamarāja Wodeyar, Dr. L. Mutthiah Bhāgavathar and others have used the aspects of Mantra in their compositions.

The Mantra, Yantra and Tantra are the three major branches of Āgama Śāstra. The energy source is Mantra. Yantra-s act like the instrument which showcases this energy. Tantra is considered the philosophy and method prevalent to channelize these defined energies to help the Sādḥaka towards the spiritual journey.

The word Mantra means ‘Manas’- mind and ‘tra’ - tool. Mantra is uttering a syllable or a phrase. They are the transformative instrument through which the connection with the inner self can be achieved.

The culmination of music and the inclusion of aspects Mantra-s in the composition, makes the Karnāṭaka musical compositions the modified version of Mantra-s itself.

Muttusvami Dikshitar

He is the youngest among the trinity of Karnāṭaka Music. He was given the Śrī Vidyā initiation by his guru Cidambaranātha Yōgi and he taught him the Tantric mode of worship. He has composed over 400 odd compositions and 100 odd composition are on Devi. He was a great scholar in the aspects of Veda, Vyākaraṇa, Jyōtiṣya, Yantra, Mantra and Tantra Śāstra. He has embedded the aspects of Mantra-s in his compositions which established a meditative mode that transcends the feeling and words. He has composed kṛti-s according to the Rāga rāgāṅga paddati and set to Sulādi tālā-s. His composition Bhajare re citta in the rāga Kalyāṇi is an example where the aspects of Lalita Sahasranāma can be noticed.

In the pallavi,

Bhajare re citta bālāmbikā | Bhakta kalpa latikām

The reference of Bhakta kalpa latikām, meaning Goddess Bālāmbika is like a creeper who fulfils all the desires of her devotees, can be seen in 78th ślōka of Lalita Sahasranāma.

“Bhakti matkalpalatikā paśupāsa vimōcinī | samhr̥tāśēṣa pāṣāṅḍa sadācārapravartikā ||” (Shastry, Lalitā . 2016. Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāma Stōtra sāra Sarvasva.Madhu’s Publishers. P 201), where Kalpa means divine creeper which grants boons. And latika means which is spread over. So, Devi is the one who always grants boons to her devotees.

In the carāṇa of the same composition, sr̥vāgbhava kūṭa jāṭā, reference in the Lalitā Sahasranāma can be seen in the 34th ślōka, meaning vāgbhavakūṭa is a group of syllables in pañcadaśi mantra.

“Śrīmadvāgbhavakūṭaika svarūpa mukha pañkajā” (Shastry, Lalitā. 2016. Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāma Stōtra sāra Sarvasva.Madhu’s Publishers. P 101)

The composition ‘Śrī ramā sarasvatī sevītām’ in the rāga nāsamaṇi has the reference in Lalitā Sahasranāma’s 123rd ślōka for the same phrase in beginning of the pallavi, meaning she is the goddess served by Lakṣmi and Sarasvatī.

‘Kalātmika kalānātha kavyālāpa vinōdinī | Sacāmara ramāvāṇi savyadakṣiṇa sevītā || (Shastry, Lalitā. 2016. Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāma Stōtra sāra Sarvasva.Madhu’s Publishers. P 321) means the aspirants who contemplate Lalitā will be showered with wealth and intelligence without asking for it. The same aspect can be seen in Soundarya Lahari’s 99th verse ‘sarasvatyā lakṣmyā vidhiharisapatnō viharatē’

Dr. L. Mutthiah Bhāgavathar

He has to his credit about 400 compositions. His knowledge in the rules relating to harmony and consonant notes made him a genius in creating melodies.

Bhāgavathar was given the task by Nālwadi Krishṇarājēndra Woḍeyār of composing 108 kṛtis on Goddess Cāmuṇḍāmbā based on the aṣṭōttara shatanāmāvaḷi. These sets of kṛtis were completed in the year 1932 (Pranesh 2014:15)

The basis for the 108 songs is the Cāmuṇḍāmbā Aṣṭōttara, which, as the name suggests, is a list of 108 names of the Goddess, recited every day at the temple. Bhāgavathar followed the order of the Aṣṭōttara Śhatanāmāvaḷi. The first song is Sampatprade Śrī Cāmuṇḍēśwari in Kalyani and the last Śrīmat Tripurasundari in Madhyamāvati which correspond to the nāmāvaḷis Śrī Cāmuṇḍāyai Namaḥ and Śrīmat Tripura Sundaryai Namaḥ respectively.

In the anupallavi, she is referred as Indīvarākṣī, which means that she is the one having eyes like lotus petal, and also means Goddess Lakṣmi, another form of chāmuṇḍāmba. The same reference can be seen in the aṣṭōttara. 28th nāma ‘Om Indirākṣyāyai Namaḥ’ which means that she is the one with eyes like the lotus petal and 11th nāma ‘Om Mahālakṣmyai Namaḥ’, meaning she is the form of Lakṣmi.

In the caraṇa he says she is Maṅgalāṅgi, that she is the one who bestows auspiciousness, the reference in the nāmāvaḷi is 52nd nāma ‘Om Śubhāyai Namaḥ’. It also conveys that she is the giver of auspiciousness and also the auspiciousness herself.

In the caraṇa of the composition Śaraṇam vijaya sarasvatī māye, Bhagavatar mentions Carācarādī sarvya bhūta vyāpi | sarva yantra mantra tantra svarūpi, meaning she is the form of all the Mantra Yantra and Tantra. This reference can be seen in 158th ślōka and 204th nāma of Lalitā Sahasranāma.

‘Mantra sāra talōdari’ (Shastry, Lalitā . 2016. Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāma Stōtra sāra Sarvasva.Madhu’s Publishers. P 201) ‘Sarva mantra svarūpini’. Mantra is the combination of different alphabets and syllables. Devi is the śabdha brahmna and all the alphabets originate from her, hence she is the essence of all the Mantra-s.

Maharāja Jaya Chamaraja Wodeyar

He was a Śrī Vidya Upasaka. He followed the great composer Sri Muttusvami Dīkṣitar and has composed 94 kṛtis in Sanskrit language. Some of the phrases in his compositions depict the tantric details as well. He has composed in rare ragas like Bhūpālāpañcama, Bhōgavasanta, Bhānuchandrike, Hamsavinōdini and such others. He uses the mudras Śrī Vidya and also Nāgaliṅga in his compositions. The kṛti Jaganmōhinīm haramōhinīm is one of the example where the aspects of Lalitā Sahasranāma can be seen.

In the pallavi, the name Rājarājēśvari is used which is mentioned in Lalitasahasranāma. She is the goddess to the kings of Dēvās, Indira, Yakṣa raja, and the trimūrti- Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

In the Anupallavi ‘mahāmāyā’ is used which is mentioned in Lalitasahasranāma, which means that she is the form of māye. And the phrase ‘catuśśaṣṭi kōṭi yogini gaṇa sēvitām’ (Shastry, Lalitā . 2016. Śrī Lalitā Sahasranāma Stōtra sāra Sarvasva.Madhu’s Publishers. P 143) is used mentioned in Lalitasahasranāma as ‘mahā chatuśśṭi kōṭi yōginī gaṇa sēvitā – one who is served by 64 crores of yōginis. The phrase ‘cidagñi kuṇḍa sambhūtām’ can be seen in Lalitasahasranāma, as well, meaning she is the one who rises from the fire of knowledge.

In the composition Amba śrī rājarājēvari, in the raga bhōgavasanta, Maharaja mentions devi as, ‘Vimalēśvarī Vinuta śrividya śōḍaśākṣarī’. Here the reference of Śōḍaśākṣakri can be seen in the 118th ślōka of Lalitā Sahasranāma.

‘Śrī śōḍaśākṣarī vidyā trikūṭa kākōṭikā’. Śōḍaśākṣari is the most powerful mantra, used in Śrī vidyā upāsana. This consists of 16 bījās which can be chanted after initiation from a guru for self-realization and liberation. Devi is the essence of the same.

The aspects of mantras have been embedded in Karnāṭaka music compositions by composers in concordance with the music or the sañcaras used adhering to the rules and lakṣana of the rāga being used. The references of the Mantra-s satisfy to the grammatical and aesthetical aspects. Just like a sādḥaka is benefitted by continuous chanting of Mantra-s, in the same way Karnāṭaka music compositions are the encapsulated form of the Mantra-s which helps to discipline the mind. The principles or the tatva-s of the deities are conveyed through the compositions which can be showcased through Nādōpāsana.

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