

Role of Musical Compositions in fostering *Manōdharmā Saṅgīta* With Special Reference to Śrī Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar's Compositions

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Abstract

Manōdharmā Saṅgīta or extempore music plays an important role in any genre especially Karnāṭak music. This aspect has paved the way for the improvisation in musical compositions too. This article is about the improvisation on *manōdharmā saṅgīta* through Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar's compositions. He is probably the only authority for the *rāgas* of Veṅkaṭamakhi *mēla paddhati*¹. The compositions and the *rāgas* mentioned in this article are mainly based on *Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśiṇi*, a musical treatise by Subbarāma Dīkṣitar². This is the first authentic source for Dīkṣitar's compositions which consists of musical notations along with *gamaka* symbols. It does not deal with the lyrical and philosophical aspects of the compositions or the changes in the structure of those *rāgas* occurred over a period of time. The present article helps to widen the scope of a musician, especially in knowing the rare *rāgas* and its nuances of Veṅkaṭamakhi's tradition through Dīkṣitar's compositions which in-turn helps to build on the *manōdharmā* aspects.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Karnāṭak Music is being developing since ages and has seen a lot of editions to its indigenous form. Eighteenth-century is considered the 'Golden Era' in the history of Karnāṭak music. It witnessed great saint composers whose contribution has immensely impacted for generations like Śyāma Śāstry, Tyāgarāja and Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar and hence that period was called the Trinity period. It was in the pre-trinity period that the scheme of *mēla paddhati* got propounded. There were two systems, the first one propounded by Veṅkaṭamakhi and the later one by Govindācārya. Among the trinity, Śyāma Śāstry and Tyāgarāja followed the *mēla* scheme propounded by Govindācārya and Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar followed Veṅkaṭamakhi's.

Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar, youngest among the trinity, was born in 1775 in Tiruvārūr, Tamil Nadu. He was well versed in *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, *Purānas*, *Āgama*, *Yantra*, *Mantra*, *Tantra*, *Jyotiṣa Śāstras*, Music and *ŚrīVidyā upāsana*. He started composing at an early age incorporating all the teachings preached in the ancient Indian scriptures. Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar learnt music from his father Rāmaswāmy Dīkṣitar, the inventor of *hamsadhvani rāga*. He stayed in Vāraṇāsi for around ten years with his *Guru* Cidambaranātha Yogi and got initiated into *ŚrīVidyā* tradition. He was blessed with a *vīṇa* from Goddess Saraswati as he was meditating and taking a holy bath in the divine *Gaṅga* river.

While returning from Vāraṇāsi, Dīkṣitar visited Tiruttani and by the grace of Lord Subramānya, he started composing *kṛtis*. He adopted 'Guruguha' (Guha denoting Lord Subramānya) as his *anḱita or mudrā*. His first composition is *Śrī nāthādi guruguho* in the *rāga māyāmālavagowḷa* set to *ādi tāla*. This composition is in *prathamā vibhakti* (first declension in Sanskrit Grammar) and the subsequent compositions are set in the other seven *vibhaktis* which came to be known as *Guruguha vibhakti kṛtis*. He composed many such group *kṛtis* and also compositions, in general, on all deities travelling to temples all over India without any *iṣṭa daiva* concept unlike Tyāgarāja whose *iṣṭa daiva* was Lord *Rāma*.

Dīkṣitar's compositional style is compared to *Nārikelapāka*, the essence of coconut water. His compositions are purely meditative in nature and not emotional set of pieces. He incorporates *rāga mudra* in his compositions perfectly merging with the *sāhitya* without affecting the nuances. His compositions have no *saṅgatis*. He composed *samaṣṭi caraṇas*, for the first time in Karnāṭak Music, that is, a composition which has only one *carāṇa* immediately after *pallavi* without an *anupallavi*. He composed in *suḷādi sapta tālas* and its varieties and did not use *çāpu tālas*.

¹ It is also called as *Asampūrṇa mēla paddhati*.

² Grandson of Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar.

Analysis

This article highlights on the aspect of improvising *manōdharmā saṅgīta* or extempore music through Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar's compositions. Among the two *meḷa paddhatis*, Govindācārya's *meḷa paddhati* is being followed by majority of the musicians and composers in the present days. There are both similarities and differences between the two *meḷa* systems both in nomenclature and structure of the *rāga*. Here, a few compositions in *rāgas* from Veṅkaṭamakhi's *meḷa* system are selected for analysis. The analysis has been categorized into two divisions for a better understanding of the concepts. The first are the *rāgas* which have remained with a particular *kṛti* and the second being composed in the *rāgas* which have the same nomenclature as the other system but with a different structure.

1. *Rāgas* that remain with the composition alone:

- *Rāga bhūpāla* and *rāga udayaravicandrikā*³ remains with the *kṛtis Sadācaleśwaram* (one among the *pañca liṅga kṛtis* of Tiruvārūr) and *Śrī guruguha mūrte* (last among *Guruguha vibhakti kṛtis*) respectively. Both the *rāgas* are *janyas* of ninth *meḷakarta dhunibhinnaṣaḍja*. Its scales are as follows –

Bhūpāla – sa ri₁ ga₂ pa da₁ śa – śa da pa ga ri sa.

Udayaravicandrikā – sa ga₂ ma₁ pa ni₃ śa – śa ni pa ma ga sa.

- *Śrī bhārgavi* in the *rāga maṅgaḷa kaiśiki*, *Saraswatya bhagawatyā* in the *rāga cāyāgowḷa*, *Veṅkaṭēśwara* in the *rāga megharañjani*, *Sundaramūrtim āśrayāmi* in the *rāga Ttakka*, *Śrī guruṇā pālītōsmi* (third among *Guruguha vibhakti kṛtis*) in the *rāga pāḍi* are all the *janya rāgas* of fifteenth *meḷa māyāmālavagowḷa* and remain with these compositions. Their scales are as follows where the *meḷa* carries *śuddha riṣabha*, *antara gāndhāra*, *śuddha madhyama*, *śuddha daivata* and *kākali niṣāda* –

Maṅgaḷa kaiśiki – sa ri ga ma pa ma ga pa da ni śa/sa ri ma ga da pa śa – śa ni da pa ma ga ri sa.

Cāyāgowḷa – sa ri ma pa da pa ma pa da śa ni śa – śa ni da da pa ma ga sa ri sa.

Megharañjani – sa ri ga ma ni śa – śa ni ma ga sa ri sa.

Takka – sa ga ma da da ni da Śa/sa ga ma pa ma ga ma da ni śa – śa da ma ga ri ga sa/sa ni da ma pa ma ga ri sa.

Pāḍi – ri ma pa da pa ni śa – śa ni pa Da pa pa ma Ri sa.

- *Śrī nīlōtpala nāyike*⁴ is one such composition in the *rāga nārīrītigowḷa* which is the twentieth *meḷakarta* in Veṅkaṭamakhi's tradition. One of its *janya rāgas*, *Ghaṇṭa*, has been brought to light only through Dīkṣitar's compositions *Śrī kamalāmbike avāva*, eighth composition in the *Kamalāmbā navāvaraṇa* set of *kṛtis* and *Śrī maṅgalāmbikām*. The scales of these *rāgas* are as follows –

Nārīrītigowḷa – Sa ri₂ Ga₂ ma₁ ni₂ da₁ pa ni ni Śa – Śa ni Ni da Ma ga ga ri sa.

Ghaṇṭa – sa ga ri ga ma pa da pa ni da ni Śa – śa ni da pa ma ga ri sa.

- During his stay in Vāraṇāsi, Dīkṣitar got influenced by the Hindustāni system of music and tried to adapt few *rāgas* to Karnāṭak style. *Rāgas* like *brndāvani* or *brndāvana sārāṅga*, *jujāvanti*, *yamunā kalyāṇi* and *hamvīru* gained popularity only after Dīkṣitar's compositions.

Soundararājam is the composition in the *rāga brndāvani* which is a *bhāṣāṅga janya* of twenty-second *meḷa Śrī* – ri₂ ma₁ pa Ni₂ śa – ni pa ma Ri sa.

Cetaḥ Śrī bālakriṣṇam is the composition in *rāga jujāvanti* which is a *bhāṣāṅga janya* of twenty-eighth *meḷa*, *harikedāragowḷa* – Ri₂ ga₃ ma₁ pa da₂ Śa | ni₂ da ni Sa – ni da pa ma ma ga ri sa | ri ma ga ri sa.

Jambūpate māmpāhi is the composition in *rāga yamunā kalyāṇi* which is a *bhāṣāṅga janya* of sixty-fifth *meḷa*, *śāntakalyāṇi* – sa ri₂ ga₃ ma₂ pa da₂ ni₃ Śa – Śa ni da pa ma Ga Ri Sa.

Parimaḷa raṅganātham is the composition in *rāga hamvīru* which is again a *bhāṣāṅga janya* of sixty-fifth *meḷa*, *śāntakalyāṇi* – sa ri ga ma pa da ni śa – śa ni da pa ma ga ri sa.

³ This nomenclature is the other name for *Śuddha Dhanyāsi rāga* in Govindācārya's *meḷa* scheme and is a *janya* of 22nd *Kharaharapriya meḷa*. This can also come under the second category of analysis.

⁴ At present, this composition is said to be one among the *Nīlōtpalāmbā vibhakti kṛtis* but Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśiṇi does not mention about this group and does not consists of any other compositions in that set except *Nīlōtpala nāyikē*.

2. *Rāgas* that are similar in nomenclatures but different in structure:

- *Kalāvati* is the thirty-first *meḷakarta rāga* in Venkaṭamakhi's *meḷa paddhati*⁵. But there are two more versions of this *rāga* with the same names which differs in its structure. One is the sixteenth *meḷa cakravāka janya* and the other is the Hindustāni version of *rāga valaci*.

Dīkṣitar has composed *kalāvati kamalāsana yuvati* in the thirty-first *meḷa rāga kalāvati*. The scale of this *rāga* is *Sa ri₃ ga₃ ma₁ pa da₁ ni₁ da pa da Śa - Śa Ni da pa ma ri ga ma ri sa*.

The second version of *kalāvati* as a *cakravāka janya* has a composition of Tyāgarāja, *okabāri jūḍagarāda* and the scale is as follows – *sa ri₁ ma₁ pa da₂ śa – śa da pa ma ga₃ ri sa*.

Kalāvati of Hindustāni version carries the same scale as Karnāṭak *rāga Valaci*, that is, *sa ga₃ pa da₂ ni₂ śa – śa ni da pa ga sa* and belongs to *Khamāj thāṭ*.

- Dīkṣitar has composed *Vīnābheri vēṇu vādyādi vinōdini* in the *rāga ābheri* of Venkaṭamakhi's tradition which has the *śuddha daivata prayoga* and is *upāṅga janya* of twentieth *meḷa nārīrītigowḷa*. But in the *meḷa* scheme of Govindācārya, *ābheri* is sung with *catuśruti daivata* being *janya* of twenty-second *meḷa*, *Kharaharapriya* in which there is a famous composition of Tyāgarāja, *Nagumōmuganalēni*. This *rāga* is equivalent to *dēvagāndhāri rāga* of Venkaṭamakhi's tradition and is a *upāṅga janya* of twenty-second *meḷa Śrī*⁶.

Portrayal of *rāga Ābheri* in Dīkṣitar's composition – *sa ma₁ ga₂ ma pa pa śa śa – Śa ni₂ da₁ pa Ma ga ri₂ sa*.

Portrayal of *rāga Ābheri* in Tyāgarāja's composition – *sa ga₂ ma₁ pa ni₂ śa – śa ni da₂ pa ma ga ri₂ sa*.

Portrayal of *rāga devagāndhāri* in Dīkṣitar's composition, (resembling *Ābheri* of Tyāgarāja's) – *sa ri₂ sa ga₂ ga ma₁ pa da₂ pa ni₂ ni śa – Śa ni da Pa ma Ma ga ga ri sa*. This *rāga* is known as *dēśīya dēvagāndhāri*⁷.

- There is also another *janya rāga* of *Śankarābharāṇa* with the same name *devagāndhāri* in both the systems with almost similar characteristics.

Devagāndhāri as a *bhāṣāṅga janya* of *dhīraśankarābharāṇa* in both the systems, differ only in the formation of the scale –

Dīkṣitar's *kṣitijāraṇam* – *sa ri₂ ma₁ pa da₂ Da Śa – śa ni₃ da pa ma ga₃ Ri sa ri ga Ri Sa*.

Tyāgarāja's *kṣīra sāgara vihāra* – *sa ri ma pa da śa – śa ni da pa ma ga ri sa*.

- *Śuddha Sāveri* is one among such *rāgas* which is sung with *śuddha riṣabha* and *daivata*—in Venkaṭamakhi's tradition and with *catuśruti riṣabha* and *daivata* in Govindācārya's tradition. The latter version of is termed as *Devakriya* in Venkaṭamakhi's *meḷa* scheme. The respective compositions and scales are as follows –

Sa ri₁ ma₁ pa da₁ Śa – Śa Da da pa pa ma ri Sa – upāṅga janya of first *meḷa* in Venkaṭamakhi's tradition, *Kanakāmbari*⁸.

sa ri₂ ma₁ pa da₂ śa – śa da pa ma ri sa – upāṅga janya of twenty-eighth *meḷa* in both the systems (*Harikēdāragowḷa* and *Harikāmbhojī*). Dīkṣitar has composed *Śrī guruguha tārayāsumām* and *Śrī vaṭukanātha* and Tyāgarāja has composed *Kālaharāṇa melara hare* and *Dāri nī telusukoṅṭi* in this *rāga*.

- *Pūrvi* is a *bhāṣāṅga janya rāga* of fifteenth *meḷa māyāmāḷavagowḷa* and *Śrī guruguhasya dāsoham* (sixth among *Guruguha vibhakti kṛtis*) is probably the only composition in this *rāga* – *sa ri₁ ga₃ ma₁ pa da₁ ni₃ śa – śa ni da pa ma ga ri sa*. There is a Hindustāni version of *Pūrvi rāga* belonging to *Pūrvi thāṭ* – *sa ri₁ ga₃ ma₂ pa da₁ ni₃ śa – śa ni da pa ma Ga ma₁ ga ri sa*. This is equivalent to the fifty-first *meḷa* of Karnāṭak music, *Kāmavardhini*, except for the *śuddha madhyama prayōga* in the *avarōhaṇa* of Hindustāni version.

II. CONCLUSION

In Indian classical music, mere scales do not become a well-tuned *rāga*. It is the composition that helps a musician in building a scale to a *rāga*. It is necessary that a performer understands a *rāga* before it is presented or taught. With reference to Dīkṣitar's compositions, one has to look into the original source to understand a

⁵ Equivalent *meḷa* in Govindācārya's *paddhati* is *Yāgapriya*.

⁶ In *Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśiṇi*, there is no mention of any composition in this *rāga* by Dīkṣitar. But at present, there are other sources which mention *Pañcāsatpīṭha rūpiṇi* as his composition in *Devagāndhāri*.

⁷ As mentioned in *Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśiṇi*.

⁸ *Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśiṇi* does not give any compositions of Dīkṣitar in this *rāga*. But at present, there are other sources which mention *Ēkāmrēśa nāyikē* as his composition in *Śuddha sāveri*.

composition and the *rāga*. Since, Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar's father Ramaswamy Dīkṣitar learnt music lessons from Vainika Veṅkaṭa Vaidyanātha Dīkṣitar⁹, Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśini, written by Subbarāma Dīkṣitar, who comes under the same lineage, can be considered as the first authentic reference to the *rāgas* of Veṅkaṭamakhi tradition. At present, even though there are different styles being established by the musicians due to the different approaches in each of their *manōdharmā*, with the help of these compositions, one can know the factual *lakṣaṇas* or characteristics of a *rāga*. Only then, a *rāga* can be improvised in a grammatically perfect manner. All the scales mentioned in this article represents just an outline of the *rāga*. There are special *sañcāras* with *gamakas* mentioned in the book that need to be followed in order to understand the complete structure of a *rāga*. This is possible only by practicing the nuances of the *rāga* in the compositions. Hence, the role of musical compositions, in particular, Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar's compositions, helps a musician to understand and develop his *Manōdharmā* or extempore skills in *rāgas* of Veṅkaṭamakhi's *meḷa* tradition.

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⁹ Grandson of Veṅkaṭamakhi. Also called Muddu Veṅkaṭamakhi.