

AN ANALYSIS OF THE MUSIC COMPOSED BY TIRUPPĀMBURAM SVĀMINĀTHA PIḷḷAI FOR THE SONGS OF VĒ.RĀMANĀTHAN CHEṬṬIYĀR

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The world of Karnātik Music has produced many doyens who were adept in either vocal music or instrumental music. Some musicians apart from their performing career went a step ahead and have produced a great legacy in composing songs and bringing to light, innumerable songs. One such musician was Tiruppāmburam Svāminātha Piḷḷai. He was not only a musician, but a composer of merit, an academician, dedicated teacher and highly respected performer. His contribution towards Karnātik Music is immense.

Musical Lineage:

Tiruppāmburam Svāminātha Piḷḷai was born on September 12, 1898 to Nāgasvara vidwān Tiruppāmburam Naṭarāja Sundaram Piḷḷai and Sivagāmi Ammāl¹. Naṭarāja Sundaram Piḷḷai, Violin vidwān Tirukkōḍikkāval Krishnayyar and Vīṇa Dhanammāl were the disciples of Sāttanūr Pañcanada Iyer.² Pañcanada Iyer belongs to Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar's lineage.³ Naṭarāja Sundaram Piḷḷai had three sons. The eldest was Svāminātha Piḷḷai. The second son was Sōmasundaram Piḷḷai, who was working in the Nāgasvara School in Pazhaṇi. Sivasubramaṇia Piḷḷai was the youngest son.

He was also serving in Annamalai University. Sivasubramaṇia Piḷḷai contributed a great deal to the Annamalai University Publications along with his elder brother Svāminātha Piḷḷai. Naṭarāja Sundaram Piḷḷai and his brother Subramaṇya Piḷḷai also learnt from Kriṣṇa Bhāgavatar and Sundara Bhāgavatar of Umayālṭpuram, the disciples of Sri Tyāgarāja. Both performed Nāgasvaram together.⁴

Repertoire:

As mentioned earlier, Svāminātha Piḷḷai's family had a wide range of repertoire of the compositions of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar. He also popularized the rāgatāḷamālikā of Rāmasvāmi

¹ B.M.Sundaram, *Mangala Isai Mannargal*, INTACH, 1992, P.12

² T. Śaṅkaran, *Isai Mēdaigal*, V.O.C.Noolagam, Chennai, 2004, p.86

³ ibid

⁴ *Supreme Master of Flute; Hindu speaks on Music*, Kasturi & Sons Ltd., p.166

Dīkṣitar, Compositions of Kumāra Ettēndrā and many rare tillāna-s in complicate tāḷā-s through his disciples.⁵

Interesting Anecdotes:

Svāminātha Piḷḷai never wanted to play Tānam in his flute. Once at a wedding concert in Dhanammāl's house, Svāminātha Piḷḷai was asked to play Kāmbōdi rāga ālāpanā and tānam by Dhanammāl herself. Before she would utter, Svāminātha Piḷḷai concluded the concert with 'Nīnāmarūpamulaku' maṅgaḷam. Svāminātha Piḷḷai never played Tānam in flute and he was also daring to refuse the request.⁶ S.G.Kiṭṭappā was one of the intimate friends of Svāminātha Piḷḷai. He has also recorded the kriti, 'Gītārtamu' in Suruṭṭi which he learnt from Svāminātha Piḷḷai⁷.

Honours and Awards:

Svāminātha Piḷḷai presided over the conferences of Saṅgīta Vidvat Sabha and the Indian Fine Arts Society in the year 1953. He was awarded with the Saṅgīta Kalānidhi. The same year he was also nominated for the President's award for Instrumental Music.

Disciples

Prominent disciples of Svāminātha Piḷḷai include Saṅgīta Kalānidhi T.Viśwanāthan, Isai Pērariṅgar Sīrgāzhi Gōvindarājan, Tiruvārūr Namaśivāyam and Radio Narasimhulu.⁸ Saṅgīta Kalānidhi T.K.Gōvinda Rāo, Sri.S.R.Jānakirāman also learnt from him.

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⁵ ibid

⁶T. Śaṅkaran, *Isai Mēdaigaḷ*, V.O.C.Noolagam, Chennai, 2004, p.87

⁷ ibid, p.89

⁸ ibid, p.88

Annamalai University Tamil Isai Series

Tiruppāmburam Svāminātha Piḷḷai has contributed largely towards the Annamalai University Publications. His publications include:

- Gītā Varnangal – This volume is a compilation of the Svāra varisai-s, Iraṭṭai varisai-s (Jaṅṭa varisai-s), Mēl sthāyi varisai-s, Dāṭu varisai-s, Alaṅkāra-s, Tamil Sañcāri gīta-s, Lakṣaṇa gīta-s, Jatisvaram, Svarajati, Prabandha-s, Varṇam-s.
- The second publication of Svāminātha Piḷḷai is a compilation of the songs of Mārimuttā Piḷḷai, Sevaṅkuḷam Kandasāmi Pulavar and Nagaram Muttuvīra Kavirāyar (disciple of Sevaṅkuḷam Kandasāmi Pulavar). With regard to the compositions of Mārimuttā Piḷḷai, it is mentioned in the preface that except for the three kīrtana-s, “Ennēramum” in Tōḍi, “Kālai tūkki” in Yadukulakāmbhōji and “Oru kāl siva cidambaram” in ārabhi, the rest of the kīrtana-s, were composed by Svāminātha Piḷḷai. The compositions of Sevaṅkuḷam Kandasāmi Pulavar and Nagaram Muttuvīra Kavirāyar were notated according to the tunes sung by Nagaram Muttuvīra Kavirāyar himself. This was published in the year 1945.
- The third volume is devoted to the songs of Nagaram Muttuvīra Kavirāyar. It is said that Muttuvīra Kavirāyar himself sang the songs and Svāminātha Piḷḷai had the job of notating it and fine tuning the notation. This was published in the year 1946.
- The next volume contains the songs composed by Darumai ādīna Vidvān Dēvakōṭṭai “Bālakavi” Vayināgaram Thiru.Vē.Rāmanāthan Cheṭṭiyār which was published in the year 1946.
- The fifth volume contains the compositions of Muttutāṇḍavar. Totally sixty compositions are found in this volume. This was published in the year 1955

Songs of Vē.Rāmanāthan Cheṭṭiyār:

The thirteenth volume of the Annamalai University Publication’s Isai Tamil Series consists of the songs of Vayināgaram Vē.Rāmanāthan Cheṭṭiyār. This was published in the year 1946. Darmapuram ādīna Vidvān, Dēvakōṭṭai Bālakavi Vayināgaram Vē.Rāmanāthan Cheṭṭiyār belongs to the family of merchants from Nāṭṭukōṭṭai. He was the son of Mahādēva

⁹ ibid,p.88

Murugappa Cheṭṭiyār, a great Śiva Bhaktā of Kōnārpaṭṭu which was ruled by the Kings of Pudukōṭṭai. As he was proficient in composing songs from a very young age he was acclaimed as Bālakavi.

This specific volume contains seventy five songs. The songs are in praise of God, devotees, deeds of virtue, characteristics of human life as love themes (agappāḍalgaḷ), significance and classicism of Tamil language and so on. Vē.Rāmanāthan Cheṭṭiyār has named the sections of songs as mudal nilai, idai nilai and iṟudi nilai viz pallavi, anupallavi and caraṇa.(Preferred Tamil terms).All the songs have only one caraṇam.

Rare janya ragas used by Svāminātha Piḷḷai for the songs of Vē.Rāmanāthan Cheṭṭiyār

S.no	Name of the rāgā	Janya of
1	Citramani	11,Kōkilapriyā
2	Nāgacūdamani	17,Sūryakāntam
3	Agnikōpam	20, Naṭabhairavi
4	Chandrikā	21,Kīravāni
5	Divyābharanam	21,Kīravāni
6	Sāmantasālavi	21,Kīravāni
7	Ōmkāri	22,Kharaharapriyā
8	Vajrakānti	22, Kharaharapriyā
9	Surabhūshani/Svarabhūshani	22, Kharaharapriyā
10	Ambhōjini	28,Harikāmbhōji
11	Dharārdhari	28,Harikāmbhōji
12	Rāgam	28,Harikāmbhōji
13	Tōmaradhāri	29,Dhīraśaṅkharābharaṇam
14	Dhavaḷakamsi	57,Simhēndramadhyamam
15	Kārmukavati	59,Dharmavati

16	Dēśōvati	62,Rishabapriyā
17	Gōtrāri	63, Latāngi
18	Navaratnabhūshani	63, Latāngi
19	Ravisvarūpini	63,Latāngi
20	Pramōdini	65 ,Mēchakalyāni

References to the rāgā-s

We find references to these rāgā-s in the works like Sangīta Candrikai and Sangīta Svava Prastāra Sāgaramu.

- ▶ Sangīta Candrikai of Māṇikka Mudaliar
 - Agnikōpam, Gōtrāri, Sāmantasālavi, Dhavaḷakamsi,
 - Navaratnabhūshani , Pramōdini, Nāgacūdamani, Divyābharanam, Ravisvarūpini
 - Dharārdhari is given under the name Janasammōdini.
- ▶ Sangīta svava prastāra sāgaramu of Nādamuni Paṇḍita
 - Ambhōjini, Citramani, Chandrikā, Tōmaradhārini, Kārmukavati, Ōmkāri, Surabhūshani

With regard to the rāgā Surabhūshani, we find a slight contradiction. Surabhūshani in Sangīta Candrikai is given as the janya of the 4th mela Vanaspati whereas the same work also mentions another rāgā Svarabhūshani as the janya of Kharaharapriya. Tyāgarājar has composed a krti Varadarāja ninnukōri in the raga Svarabhūshani as the janya of Kharaharapriya. Svāminātha Piḷḷai follows the version of Svarabhūshani but named the rāgā as Surabhūshani. Probably he wanted to use the tamilized term for the rāgā.

Similarly, the rāgā Omkāri is mentioned in the Sangīta Svava Prastāra Sāgaramu of Nādamuni Paṇḍita as the janya of 22nd mela Kharaharapriyā. Svāminātha Piḷḷai follows the same version. This work also mentions a rāgā Omkāri as a janya of 48th mela Divyamani. Dr.Balamuralikrishna handles a rāgā Omkāri employing only three notes. s m₁ p s – s p m₁ s There is also another rāgā Omkāra as the janya of 65th mēḷā Mēchakalyāni. C.Honnappa Bhagavatar of Mysore has composed a tāna varṇa in the rāgā Omkāra.

Analysis of the Structure of the Songs

With regard to the songs we find varied structures. Some of the songs have certain peculiar structures which have been intellectually set to tune by Svāminātha Piḷḷai with the usage of madhyamakāla.

Songs with different Structure

In the song, 'Neñjame' in the rāgā Vajrakānti the pallavi has two lines, the anupallavi has three lines and the caraṇa has four lines. The third line of the anupallavi is set in madhyamakalam. All the four lines of the caraṇa is set in madhyamakalam which comes to two āvartā-s. The second āvartā of the caraṇa and the madhyamakāla of the anupallavi have the same dhātu.

The song, 'Maṛai gñāna sambanda perumānē' in the rāgā Pramōdini set in ādi tāḷā has the following structure.

Pallavi and anupallavi - two āvartā-s each

Caraṇa - eight āvartā

Since the caraṇa is long, it is set in madhyamakāla. Employing madhyamakāla sahitya in the songs certainly must have been influenced from the Dikṣitar compositions.

Saṅgati-s

Saṅgati-s are not profusely used in these songs. Very few songs have saṅgati-s and they are simple. Saṅgati-s are gradually developed with minimal variations.

Svarākṣarā

In the iṛudi nilai (caraṇa) of the song, 'Vānōrgaḷ poṛṛum' in the rāgā Madhyamāvati we find a svarākṣarā phrase.

; m r , M p , p , p
; ma rā ma lar van du

Graha Svara

- ▶ In the song 'Sanḍēsar padam' in the rāgā Ānandabhairavi all the three sections mudal nilai, idai nilai and iṛudi nilai start with the same graha svarā 'pañcama'.
- ▶ Similarly the other song, 'Tūdu senṟu vārāi' in the rāgā Ravisvarūpiṇi has the sections mudal nilai, idai nilai and iṛudi nilai starting with the graha svara dhaivata.

Observations in some Rāgā-s

i. Rītigaṭṭa

d n ś is employed. no usage of n n ś prayogam

ii. Ānandabhairavi

More usage of p n p prayogams. Dhaivatam sparsely used. Occurs only in the avarōhana krama.

iii. Pūrvikalyāṇi

p d p ś prayogam not seen.

These rāgā prayōgā-s can be seen in the kṛti-s of Muttusvāmi Dikṣitar.

Tāḷa-s used

- ▶ Ādi-58 compositions
- ▶ Rūpakam – 9 Compositions
- ▶ Mīśra Cāpu – 4 compositions
- ▶ Mīśra Jhampa – 4 compositions

Eḍuppu of compositions

The compositions are set in sama eḍuppu, ½ eḍuppu, ¼ eḍuppu and ¾ eḍuppu. Hardly two kaḷai composition is seen

Rhythmical aspects

- ▶ Development of melody extending over a whole section
 - In the composition ‘Ēnō kavalai’ in Sāveri, Mīśra Cāpu, the pallavi extends to 8 āvarta-s. The melody and the text is in such a way that it cannot be repeated and the pallavi has to be repeated as a whole.
 - Similarly, the song Kumara nāyakā in Pūrvikalyāṇi the pallavi has two āvarta-s which cannot be repeated after the first āvartā.

These are some of the aspects seen in the musical setting done by Svāminātha Piḷḷai for the songs of Vē.Rāmanāthan Cheṭṭiyār. It is observed that Svāminātha Piḷḷai has brought out many rare rāgā-s in this publication. His idea was to popularise the rare rāgā-s through

Tamizh songs. Many of the songs in this volume stand as sole compositions for the study of the rāgā prayōgā-s and other lakṣana-s of these less popular rāgā-s. He has tuned the songs in such a way that the content or the sāhitya is not disturbed. The rāga phrases are clearly brought out through the compositions. The efforts taken by Svāminātha Piḷḷai in popularising many of the rare rāgā-s is note worthy.

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