

MĀRGADARŚI ŚĒṢAYYAṄĀR'S COMPOSITIONS – A STUDY

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Śēṣayyaṅār was a pre-trinity composer, whose usage of Śabdālaṅkāra-s in Sanskrit compositions, earned him the title 'Mārgadarśi'. Śēṣayyaṅār or Śēṣarāmānuja Kavi is known to have come down south from Ayōdhya and settled down in Śrīraṅgam, and composed on his Iṣṭa Dēvata, Lord Raṅganātha, with the mudra, 'Kōsala'.

1. Review of History:

The title 'Mārgadarśi' for Śēṣayyaṅār was probably first recorded on paper by Subbarāma Dikṣitar, in SSP. However, in the 'Vāggēyakāra Caritramu' section, he says, "The paṇḍit-s of those days praised him and called him 'Mārgadarśi'." In Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu, Vīṇa Rāmānuja, has labeled the vāggēyakāra's kṛtī-s as 'Kōsalapurivāru kīrtanalu'. Other published books with his compositions call him Śēṣayyaṅār, chronologically listed below:

S.No	Title	Author	Year	No of songs
1	Gāyaka Lōcanam	Taccūru Singaracāryulu	1884	9 (S)
2	Oriental Music In European Notation	A.M Cinnasvāmi Mudaliar	1893	2 (N)
3	Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradaṣini	Subbarāma Dikṣitar	1904	1 (N)
4	Pratamābhyāsa Pustakamu	Subbarāma Dikṣitar	1905	1 (N)
5	Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu	Vīṇa Rāmānuja	1917	18 (S)
6	Saṅgīta Rasārnavam	K.V. Śrīnivāsa Aiyāṅār	1924	1 (N)
7	Gāna Bhāskaramu	K.V. Śrīnivāsa Aiyāṅār	1934	1 (N)
8	Kṛtīmaṇimālai, Vol 5 & 6	Raṅgarāmānuja Aiyāṅār	1953	3 (N)
9	Śēṣayyaṅār kīrtanaigaḷ	T.R.Dāmōdaran and T.Viṣvanāthan	1978	31 (S)

S-Sāhitya alone; N-Notation

Of the many compositions of the vāggēyakāra, which have been wrongly attributed to other composers, one kṛtī, 'Kōsalēndra Māmava' deserves special attention. This composition in Madyamāvati, is listed in the Sarasvati Mahāl Library publication and has also been cited in Muhanaprāsāntyaprāsavyavastha, by Mahārāja Svāti Tirunāl. The same kṛtī appears in

Cidambara vādyār's book on Svāti Tirunālī Kṛti-s, and in its translation by Śāmbhaśiva Śāstri. A notation of this composition is found in a collection of Svāti Tirunālī's compositions by Śrī T.K. Gōvinda Rao.

There are slight variations in the two versions though. In the Sarasvati Mahal publication, which was edited based on the Manuscript from Madurai, there is no anupallavi segment. Instead, the editor has split the composition into a six-line pallavi and three caraṇā-s. The notation obtained has a two-line pallavi and two-line anupallavi, omitting the last two lines present in the former version. These lines are indicative of a svara sāhitya segment, intervoven with beautiful svarākṣara-s.

नी सरिसरिमारिमपानिपमा	पाससनिमपनिप्पाम्मारिमरिस	॥
नीरजसरमासमपावनमा	परिलसितकृपानिप्पाम्मधुरस	॥

The usage of 'ppā' and 'mma' is quite unusual. It may have been given thus, to go in accordance with the sāhitya. Looking at it from a metrical point of view, using the procedure for vṛtta calculation, It may suggest a dīrgha for Niśāda (because of the following conjunct syllable, 'प्'). Similarly, Pañcama will also get a dīrgha, owing to the presence of 'म्'. In the second instance however, it does not make a difference, as the preceding solfa, is already dīrgha. With this assumption, the svara sāhitya can be reconstructed as follows:

ण , s r nī . ra ja m r s . ra sa	s r m , sa ra mā . 	r m p , sa ma pā . 	n p m , va na mā . 	p , ś ś pa . ri la 	n ś n m si ta kṛ . 	p n , p , m , r pā nī . ppa . ma .dhu 	(Kōsalēndra)
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The same composition, in Śāmbhaśiva Śāstri's book, does not have this svara sāhitya in the body of the composition. Instead, these lines are given as a footnote. Why it has not been given with the rest of the sāhitya, is not clear. The reasons why this might have been given thus, can be:

1. The svara sāhitya segment could have been an addition by a later composer, which is very uncommon in the case of this aṅga (predominantly seen only in ciṭṭa svara passages)
2. This segment might not have been published in the original, by Cidambara vādyar and Śāmbhaśiva Śāstri might have appended it, to the translation, with the intention of preserving the then-prevalent oral tradition.

The usage of ‘ppā or ‘mma’ is not found in this version. There is a change, in number of mātra-s.

नी स रि स रि मा रि म पा नि प मा प स स नि प रि प नी पा म रि म रि स ॥
नीरज शरमा समपावनमा परिलसितकृपा कामभृत रस ॥

n̄ , s r s r m , r m p , n p m , | p ś ś n p ṛ p n | , p , m r m r s ||
nī . ra ja sa ra mā . sa ma pā . va na mā . | pa ri la si ta kṛ pa . . kā . ma bhr tarasa ||

It is observed that there is a change in the sāhitya and in the number of akṣara-s. While the former was of thirty-five akṣara-s, culminating three akṣara-s after the samam, the latter is of thirty-two akṣara-s, falling on samam, or the idam. The thirty-five akṣara setting is seen to conveniently fit-in with the already available notation obtained from the book by Śrī T.K. Gōvinda Rao.

There is abundant svarākṣara-s in both the versions. Though the musical setting of the first version has a better solfa-sāhitya relationship, as found in ‘nip̄pa’ and that the eduppu is more apt for the notation available today, the word ‘parilasita’ is more conveniently placed in the second version. The dṛgha for ‘pa’ in the first instance is a little non-aesthetic as compared to the second version.

3. Rāgā-s figuring in Śēṣayyaṅgār’s Compositions

The composer has composed mainly in time-tested Rakti rāgā-s like Sāveri, Kēdāragauḷa, Aṭhāna, Bhairavi and Dhanyāsi. Dēśi Rāgā-s like Dvijāvanti and Bṛndāvana Sāraṅga also figure in his compositions. He has also rare rāga-s like Karnāṭa Sāraṅga, Maṅgaḷa Kaiśiki and Maṅgaḷa are used.

3.a Karnāṭa Sāraṅga – A rare rāga

The vāggēyakāra, has used a rāga, named Karnāṭaka Sāraṅga/ Karnāṭa Sāraṅga, which is not present in any of the treatises dealing with Rāgalakṣaṇa. Three of his compositions are found in this rāga,

- Pālayamām dēvakāñcana, in Aṭa cāpu, from Saṅgīta-Sarvārtha-Sāra-Saṅgrahamu
- Vāsavādigēya kaumīpura, in Aṭa cāpu, from Saṅgīta-Sarvārtha-Sāra-Saṅgrahamu
- Pālaya raghunāyaka, in Aṭa cāpu, from Saṅgīta-Sarvārtha-Sāra-Saṅgrahamu

The notation for the last kṛti was available in ‘Compositions of Svāti Tirunāl’, by T.K.Gōvinda Rao. However, the notation is in Sāraṅga (not in Karnāṭaka Sāraṅga) and tāḷa

given as Miśra cāpu. The composition doesn't have the mudra 'Kōsala' and has 'Padmanābha' instead. It is not listed anywhere else, as Śēṣayyaṅgār's kṛti. Vīṇa Rāmānuja might have wrongly printed it as Śēṣayyaṅgār's composition.

Kavi Maṭṛbhūṭayya, another pre-trinity composer, who flourished in the court of Amarasimha (1787–1798), is seen to have used the same rāga, in his Yakṣagāna 'Pārijātapaharaṇa Nāṭakamu'. This yakṣagāna again, is not available with notation. Therefore, the rāgasvarūpa of Karnāṭa Sāraṅga, is not known.

3.b Rāga Variants obtained for Some Compositions

Certain compositions of the vāggēyakāra have been obtained in multiple rāgā-s, from different sources. Compositions with rāgā variants:

3.b.i.	Raṅgathē pāhimām	-	Kāpi/ Kāṇaḍa
3.b.ii.	Vandēham kari śaila	-	Jujāvanti/Bhairavi/ Dvijāvanti
3.b.iii.	Sītē vasumati saṅjāthē	-	Asāvēri/Sāvēri
3.b.iv.	Nāthavānasmi	-	Dhanyāśi/Tōḍi/ Bhairvi
3.b.v.	Jānaki manōharāya	-	Dhanyāśi/Maṅgaḷa
3.b.vi.	Kamalanayana	-	Kannaḍa/Bēgaḍa/ Pūrvikalyāṇi
3.b.vii.	Śrīraghuvara suguṇālaya	-	Ghaṅṭhā/ Punnāgavarāḷi
3.b.viii.	Gōpāla pāhi divya	-	Dhanyāśi/Dannāsi
3.b.ix.	Śrīraṅgaśāyinaṃ	-	Dhanyāśi/Dhannāsi/Kēdāragauḷa

Raṅgathē pāhimām in Kāpi and Kāṇaḍa

Of the above, only Raṅgathē Pāhimām, is available with tune. Different versions of this kṛti are available now – one in Kāṇaḍa and another in Kāpi (Karnāṭaka). The Kāpi version was available in print, from Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśiṇi (SSP), Gāna Bhāskaramu, Saṅgīta Rasārṇavam and Kṛtimaṇimālai (KMM) and the Kāṇaḍa version from oral tradition. The first three versions of Kāpi (hereon, referred to as SSP version) are similar, while Raṅgarāmānuja Iyaṅgār's version (hereon, KMM version) is a more developed 'distinct' Kāpi, now called 'Karnāṭaka Kāpi'. Many of the compositions originally sung in Kāpi are now sung in Kāṇaḍa too. The Kāṇaḍa version of 'Raṅgathē' is yet another example.

Graham: The graha of the variants, differ from one another. While Kāṇaḍa and SSP versions are of sama graha, the KMM version starts two akṣara-s after sama, ie. *ara-iḍam*.

Kāpi: (KMM)

, , s ṅ	r , s ,	r , , ,	r m <u>p , , n</u>	p , m g	p m g r
.. rañ .	ga . pa .	thē ...	pā ...	hi . mām .	.. srī .

Kāpi: (SSP)

s , ṅ ,	r , s ,	r , , ,	p m r ,	g m r ,	, , r s
Rañ ...	ga . pa .	thē ...	pā ...	hi . mām .	.. srī .

Kānaḍa:

g , m ,	r , r ,	s , , ,	s , , ṅ	r s ṅ ,	, d n ,
rañ ...	ga . pa .	thē ...	pā ...	hi . mām .	. srī ..

Anupallavi:

In both the versions Kāpi, the whole Anupallavi section and later half of Caraṇa are set in Madhyamakāla, comprising five āvarta-s. In Kānaḍa, the first four āvarta-s of the Anupallavi start in viḷamba kāla and the last three āvartā-s alone are set in Madhyamakāla, totaling to seven āvarta-s.

Anupallavi for Kāpi:

p , n p	<u>m,mg mdpm</u>	g r s r	s <u>r,pm</u> grsr	<u>s n p , s , r s</u>	r m p p
mañ . ga ḷa	ka ra sañ .	ka ra hi ta	añ . ga ja	ni bha mō .	ha nā . ṅga
n m <u>p , , n</u>	ś ṛ ḡ ṛ	ś ṛ n ś	n d <u>n , ṛ ś</u>	n p <u>m , d p</u>	<u>mg g , r m p</u>
gañ . gā .	. ja na ka	ga ru ḍa thu	rañ . ga .	bha va bañ .	ga . ka ru
<u>d , , n p ,</u>	<u>m,pm</u> g p m	g r g r	s r		
ṅā . pāñ .	ga . dru ta	ra thāñ ..	ga .		

Anupallavi in Kānaḍa:

p , , ,	p , g ,	, m d ,	m d , n	ś n ṛ ś	p , p ,
mañ ...	ga . ḷa .	. ka ra .	sañ . . ka	ra . vi .	ja . ya .
p , g ,	, m d ,	d , d ,	m d <u>mdn,</u>	, n ś ,	, , ś ,
añ ga ja .	ni . bha .	mō ha . nā	.. ṅga .
ḡ m , ṛ	ṛ ś - n ṛ	ś n p p	p , p ,	g m d ,	d , n ṛ
gañ gā . ja	na ka ga ru	ḍa . . thu	rañ . ga .	bha va bañ .	ga . ka ru

ś n p p	, p g g	m r , s		
ṇā . . pāñ	. ga dru ta	ra thāñ . ga		

Rāga Sañcārā-s:

The word ‘Pāhimām’ notated as

‘p m r , g m r ; , s’ in the earlier SSP version of Kāpi,
has been replaced by

‘r m p n p , m g p m g r s r’ in KMM version of Kāpi,
and is present in the Kānaḍa version (2nd saṅgati) –

‘n n p m g , g m r ,’.

The usage of ‘g m r ,’ has been avoided by Raaṅgarāmānuja Iyeṅgār for some reason. It is found in Kānaḍa, not surprisingly though, as it is one of the characteristic Kānaḍa phrases of today.

SSP :		p m r ,	g m r ,	, , r s	
		pā . . .	hi . mām	
KMM :		r m <u>p , , n</u>	p , m g	p m g r	s r
		pā . . .	hi . mām .	. . srī .	. .
Kānaḍa :		n n p m	g , g m	r , , ,	
		pā . . .	hi . mām	

Similarly, SSP version has phrases like – ‘g m r ,’ ; ‘m p d p m r’ ; ‘m r g ; , g ,’ ; ‘m n d n p , m ,’ ; ‘d , d , n ś ṛ ,’ and ‘g m p m’ which are common to both Kāpi and Kānaḍa, or to say, more characteristic of the latter.

The phases of present day Karnāṭaka Kāpi like ‘m g p m g r s r’ and ‘p n ś ṛ ḡ ṛ’ are present only in the KMM version and not in SSP version. However, SSP version has also some elements of the present day Kāpi, like -‘s , ṇ r s r ,’ ; ‘m p d n p ,’ and ‘m p d p m ,’ . Kānaḍa is a recently developed rāga. It has been first described only in Rāgalakṣaṇamu of Śāhaji¹. Since Śēṣayyaṅgār is also from that period, his compositions have the impact of the changes in the rāga-s associated with it.

¹ ‘Rāgalakṣaṇasaṅgraha’ , Hēma Rāmanathan.

Since SSP version has elements of both Kāpi and Kānaḍa of today, it can be deduced that Kānaḍa and KMM version are two versions of the same original, which has been kept alive in two different schools.

Conclusion

Śeṣayyaṅgār, who was once celebrated as a ‘Mārgadarśi’, has composed quite a number of compositions, which have undergone many changes, with time.

The composition, Kōsalēndra, has been obtained from multiple sources, and they have been put together, with a new segment of Svarasāhitya, which was not present in the notation obtained. The two versions reconstructed were both aesthetically appealing, one for the eduppu and another for the conveniently placed sāhitya.

Different notations of ‘Raṅgapathe’, in Kāpi and Kānaḍa, were studied. The oldest version is Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśini, which bears similarity to both the Kānaḍa version from Oral tradition and Kāpi version from Kṛtimaṇimālai, indicating a deviation in the pāṭāntara, with time.

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