

The Anukramaṇikā Gīta in the SSP

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The word ‘gīta’ has many connotations in the Karnatic music terminology. It may denote – music itself; the melodic component (including the voice and instruments of melody); or a musical/compositional form. The present paper will study this term in the sense of ‘a musical/compositional form’, particularly one gīta titled ‘rāgāṅga rāga lakṣaṇa gīta anukramaṇikā gīta’ in the Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśinī (SSP) of SubbarāmaDīkṣita. This study would be restricted mainly to references from the SSP, the Caturdaṇḍī Prakāśikā of Venkatamakhi and Rāgalakṣaṇam of Muddu Venkatamakhi which are extensively referred to in the SSP.

The anukramaṇikā gīta :

Anukramaṇī or anukramaṇikā means - table of contents, an index showing the successive contents of a work (The Student’s Sanskrit-English Dictionary by V.S. Apte pg.20). The anukramaṇikā gīta in the SSP comprises of the sequence of the names of the 72 rāgāṅga rāga-s. The beginning sāhitya phrase of the respective gīta-s of the 72 rāgāṅga rāga-s is incorporated, following their names. This gīta in the rāga **guṇḍakriya**, an upāṅga janya of the 15th mela Māyāmālavagauḷa, is set to tripuṭa tāla and consists of two sections- dhruva and jāvaḍa, with the second section coming back to the dhruva at the end. The naming of this as anukramaṇikā gīta seems appropriate. It seems to be the only gīta of this type. The mela system with Kanakāṅgī nomenclature has its sequence recorded as a rāgamālikā but not as a gīta. In this respect this is a unique composition.

Title of the gīta as given in the SSP:

Regarding the title given by Subbarāma Dīkṣita in the SSP, ‘rāgāṅga rāga lakṣaṇa gīta anukramaṇikā gītamū’ meaning - the sequential gīta of the rāgāṅga rāga lakṣaṇa gīta-s – a question arises in the ‘rāgāṅga rāga lakṣaṇa gīta’ part. The use of the word ‘lakṣaṇa’ is to be examined. The compound can be split as rāgāṅgarāgalakṣaṇa – gīta(rāgāṅgarāgalakṣaṇārtham gītāni) meaning- gīta-s describing the lakṣaṇa of the rāgāṅga rāga-s; or as rāgāṅgarāga -lakṣaṇa gīta (rāgāṅgaragāṇām - lakṣaṇagītāni) that is - lakṣaṇa gīta-s of the rāgāṅga rāga-s. If the former

is taken there will not be any question regarding the title. But if the latter is considered then the term ‘lakṣaṇa gīta’ has to be taken as referring to the name of a type of gīta.

This point is taken up here for examination for, in no other instance in the SSP does SubbarāmaDīkṣita use the word ‘lakṣaṇa gīta’ as a term to refer to a type of gīta . Rather he explains in his account of Venkatamakhi (Vāggeyakāra Caritramu pg.18; SSP English Translation Vol.1) that he gave the lakṣaṇa for the rāgāṅga, upāṅga and bhāṣāṅga rāga-s in verse format and their lakṣya in gīta format.

The term ‘lakṣaṇa gīta’ is seen in the Saṅgraha cūḍamaṇi of Govinda but it is not defined.

Venkatamakhi, in the gīta prakaraṇam of his work Caturdaṇḍī Prakāśikā –explains that the term gīta there is restricted to the sense of the sālaga sūḍa compositions (Caturdaṇḍī Prakāśikā 8.4) and then goes on to describe the various types of sālaga sūḍa-s, the different types of tāla-s used in them. But we do not find any mention of the term ‘lakṣaṇa gīta’ or reference to a separate type of gīta which comprises of the lakṣaṇa of a rāga.

As regards recent writings ‘lakṣaṇa and lakṣya gīta-s are clearly stated to be separate types of gīta-s. Prof. Sambamoorthy talks of two types of gīta-s, sāmānya gīta-s also called lakṣya gīta-s, and lakṣaṇa gīta-s (South Indian Music, book II, pg.38-39). He says that while lakṣya gīta-s may be in praise of gods, lakṣaṇa gīta-s describe the characteristics of the rāga. But we see that in the rāgāṅga rāga gīta-s of Muddu Venkatamakhi and lakṣaṇa gīta-s of Govinda the underlying theme is the praise of a deity and in it the rāga name, etc. are interwoven. Another definition of lakṣaṇa and lakṣya gīta-s given by Dr. Seetha (Muthuswami Dīkṣitar & Venkatamakhi tradition, JMA, 1976) is that lakṣaṇa gīta-s are for the rāgāṅga rāga-s while lakṣya gīta-s are found in janya rāga-s. This seems to be the best available description of these two gīta types in this tradition. There are examples where janya rāga-s or rather rāga-s that have become janya-s after the 72 mela classification came in to vogue but were mela- s in the ancient tradition have a lakṣaṇa gīta in them. Eg. Mukhāri- is given as a janya of Kanakāmbāri mela but was the first mela known as śuddha mukhāri in ancient tradition – in the gīta for this rāga given in the SSP it is mentioned as a rāgāṅga rāga and the upāṅga janya is also given, while janya rāga names are not given in Kanakāmbāri rāga gīta. But it is not clear how these gīta-s have been defined, classified and named, and on what basis and source. Nevertheless the gīta-s of the rāgāṅga rāga-s given in the SSP share a certain uniformity in that they have two or three sections – dhruva and jāvaḍa; or dhruva, antarī and jāvaḍa; where the name of the rāga (alongwith the kaṭapayādi prefix as per the context), the svāra-s in it represented by ra, ri ru, ga ma pa dha na, etc, the cakra and the mnemonic – go, pā, śrī, etc; and the upāṅga and bhāṣāṅga janya-s are mentioned. It is possible that the advent of the mela classification required the rāgāṅga rāga-s to be defined based on the

mela system and so the ancient tradition of defining a rāga based on the 10 characteristics like graha, amśa, nyāsa underwent a slight modification. And hence these rāgāṅga rāga gīta-s which described the rāga-s with respect to their place in the mela system came to be called lakṣaṇa gīta-s. This concept is developed further and in the Saṅgraha cūḍāmaṇi the gīta that defined a rāga on the basis of the mela-janya system alongwith the svāra-s in the ascent and descent is referred to as lakṣaṇa gīta. And that is probably why, in the Saṅgraha cūḍāmaṇi lakṣaṇa gīta-s are given for both melādhikāra and melajanita rāga-s.

An interesting observation pertaining to the use of the term ‘lakṣaṇa’ and ‘gīta’ with reference to rāgāṅga rāga-s is as follows. In his work on the musical forms in the Saṅgīta Ratnākara, Dr. N. Ramanathan talks about the structure of jāti gīta-s which are said to be the forms describing the characteristics of a particular jāti. He states that the jāti gīta-s are generally preceded by two parts- verse and prose passage which comprise of a description of the jāti, the tāla employed in the gīta, the mūrchanā, and the prose passage gives the nyāsa, apanyāsa svāra-s, etc; this is followed by a prastāra portion which has song with notation. This structure seems to have some semblance to SubbarāmaDīkṣita’s reference to the concept of giving the lakṣaṇa for the rāgāṅga, upāṅga and bhāṣāṅga rāga-s in verse format and their lakṣya in gīta format.

Authorship of the gīta :

SubbarāmaDīkṣita mentions the author of this gīta as Venkatamakhi. In fact almost all the gīta-s in the SSP are ascribed to Venkatamakhi – excluding a couple of gīta-s that bear the mudra ‘Muddu Venkatamakhi’. But one hint available in the SSP from which we can understand that SubbarāmaDīkṣita had doubts about the authorship of atleast some of the gīta-s is his statement that – in some lyrics we find the mudra-s of ‘Muddu Venkatamakhi’ or Venkata Vaidyanatha’ who may be close relatives of Venkatamakhi. (Vāggeyakāra Caritramu, pg.19; SSP English Translation Vol.1).

That the author of this anukramaṇikā gīta is Venkatamakhi, author of Caturdaṇḍī Prakāśikā is not possible for many reasons –

- Recent studies have shown that though Venkatamakhi computed the 72 mela scheme he did not allot names to each of those.
- It is believed that his direct descendant ‘Muddu’ Venkatamakhin allotted names to the mela-s, wrote the lakṣaṇa for the rāgāṅga rāga-s and their respective janya-s and also composed gīta-s in them.

- It is also seen that the Kanakāmbari nomenclature developed in two stages where the second stage saw adding of prefixes to fit the rāga names in the purview of the kaṭapayādi scheme. The gīta-s in the rāgāṅga rāga-s bear the names with kaṭapayādi prefixes.

Hence it is not possible that Venkatamakhi authored the rāgāṅga rāga gīta-s and so, the anukramaṇikā gīta too, for, an index presupposes the contents which it sequences.

It is possible that the anukramaṇikā gīta is a creation of Muddu Venkatamakhi. SubbarāmaDīkṣita, while describing the life of Ramasvami Dīkṣita, says that the latter learnt under Venkata Vaidyanatha Dīkṣitulu who was the maternal grandson of Venkatamakhi (Vāggeyakāra Caritramu, pg.25, SSP English Translation Vol.1). In this context it may be observed that the word ‘veṅkaṭa’ has been underlined by SubbarāmaDīkṣita in the sāhitya of deśī simhārava portion in the anukramaṇikā gīta whereas this word has not been highlighted in the rāgāṅga rāga gīta itself. In the SSP the normal practice of SubbarāmaDīkṣita is to underline the mudra of the author if found in the composition. Based on this if it is assumed that ‘veṅkaṭa’ is the mudra of the author, though it may still be said that Muddu Venkatamakhi authored this gīta with a partial mudra, it may also be possible that this was authored by the other descendant of Venkatamakhi, Venkata Vaidyanatha under whom Ramasvami Dīkṣita trained. According to the dating given by Dr. Sathyanarayana (Rāgalakṣaṇam of Śrī Muddu Venkatamakhin; Introduction, pg.9) Muddu Venkatamakhi may have been born around 1650 A.D and Venkata Vaidyanatha was a younger contemporary who taught Ramasvami Dīkṣita at around 1750 A.D. Correspondingly the date of Saṅgraha cūḍāmaṇi is said to be around 1750-1800 A.D (Rāgalakṣaṇasaṅgraha; Preface, xxvi) and this is the time that the Kanakāṅgī nomenclature started gaining popularity and in the Saṅgraha cūḍāmaṇi, we find most of the rāgāṅga rāga-s in the Kanakāmbari nomenclature listed as janya-s under Kanakāṅgī, etc., each of them having lakṣaṇa verses and lakṣaṇa gīta-s. So there would have been two gīta-s describing two rāga-s belonging to each of the two systems, but with the same name. Hence it may be possible to assume that the later descendant Venkata Vaidyanatha, in order to safeguard the tradition of Muddu Venkatamakhi’s Kanakāmbari nomenclature and gīta-s therein from interpolation of mātu, made a sort of a table of contents of the rāgāṅga rāga lakṣaṇa gīta-s with the mudra of ‘veṅkaṭa’. But this is purely an assumption because there does not seem to be any other source to cross-check Venkata Vaidyanatha’s mudra.

Lyric portion of the gīta :

The lyric portion conforms to the beginning phrases of the respective gīta-s with very few instances of elongation or shortening of vowel extensions. There are few places where the rāga

name has undergone minute changes –eg. geya hejjajji has been used as geya hijja ijji – in the anukramaṇika alone.

As the purpose of the anukramaṇikā gīta is mainly indexing, it is not in praise of one God throughout. Generally two cycles of tripuṭa tāla are allocated for each rāga but for some rāga-s whose names are quite long eg. vāṭivasantabhairavi, three cycles have been employed. The sāhitya portion that follows the rāga name has also been restricted according to the length of the rāga name and space left within the two or three cycles of tāla; and so in many cases the whole compound is not given, eg. the māyā māḷava gauḷa gīta begins with the compound –‘ravikoṭiteja’ but only the words ‘ravikoṭi’ are incorporated in the anukramaṇikā gīta. But care has been taken to ensure that the words are not incomplete. It is doubtful if there is a consistency of meaning or sāhityārtha in the anukramaṇikā gīta as a whole, but its objective being different and very specific, probably overshadows this aspect.

Melodic aspects of the anukramaṇikā gīta:

The melody of the composition is in the rāga – guṇḍakriya, a janya of māyā māḷava gauḷa.

The reason why the rāga ‘guṇḍakriya’ has been used for the melodic expression of this gīta is not known nor is it mentioned. This rāga is mentioned in many treatises like the Svaramelakalānidhi, Rāgatālacintāmaṇi, Saṅgītasudhā, Caturdaṇḍī Prakāśikā, Rāgalakṣaṇam. In most of these texts it is classified under (Māyā)māḷavagauḷa, the 15th mela in the Kanakāmbari scheme and sometimes under gurjari mela which comprises of the same svara-s as the 15th mela. While texts like Svaramelakalānidhi and Rāgatālacintāmaṇi define guṇḍakriya as primarily śāḍava with only occasional use of dha, it is said to be sampūrṇa in Saṅgītasudhā, Caturdaṇḍī Prakāśikā and Rāgalakṣaṇam. There are slight variations in the name of the rāga as guṇḍakrī, gauṇḍakriya, goṇḍakriya and guṇḍakriyā. In the Saṅgītasudhā, Caturdaṇḍī Prakāśikā and few other texts the name guṇḍakriyā is seen as a feminine gender word while Rāgalakṣaṇam of Muḍdu Venkatamakhi gives it as a masculine gender word - guṇḍakriyaḥ. (Rāgalakṣaṇasaṅgraha, pg.493-499). In the lakṣaṇa śloka in the SSP the name guṇḍakriyā (as a feminine gender word) is used but the rest of the verse follows the grammar as for a masculine gender word!

The mūrchanā of guṇḍakriya in the SSP is – S r g m p d n ś, Ś n p m g m d p m g r s.

It is taken that each vertical bar indicates the completion of a tāla cycle comprising of seven akṣara-s. The dhruva portion of the gīta begins on the 6th akṣara. It comprises of the 36 śuddha madhyama rāgāṅga rāga-s. The other 36 are found in the jāvaḍa portion and then it comes back to the first part of the dhruva portion upto phenadyuti rāga and ends with it. The eḍuppu of the

jāvaḍa is also on the 6th akṣara. But there is no uniformity in the placement of the rāga names in the tāla cycle.

It may be noteworthy to mention here that in the description of guṇḍakriyā in the Saṅgītasudhā where the method of delineating the rāga in stages starting from ākṣiptikā to the final nyāsa is given, the ākṣiptikā is to be begun in the tāra sthāyi ṣaḍja, then descend to madhya ṣaḍja, ascend upto tāra ṛṣabha, sing a few varied tāna-s and then rest in the tāra ṣaḍja - ...prārabhya tārasthita ṣaḍjamāḍau | āmadhya ṣaḍjam tvavaruhya paścādāruhya tāropahitarṣabhāntam || tānān vicitrān katicit pragāyan nyasyet punastāraṣaḍja eva | (Rāgalakṣaṇasaṅgraha, pg.495). A similar melodic arrangement is seen in the first portion of this guṇḍakriya gīta – (illustration) [ś n | M p p m g m | P m g s r s | G m p d d | n ś r ś n Ś | ġ r ġ **Ā** r ś | ś n p n ś r ś | ś n p d d p | d ś ś r r ś | r r ś Ś ś ś | g m p d ś **Ś** |

The melodic phrases that digress from the given mūrchanā are many – eg. g m p d ś -here the mūrchanā in ascent does not omit any svāra whereas in this phrase ‘n’ is omitted; r m m p ; ś n p m m p m / d d ś n p M | m g s s ...are some other instances of deviation from the mūrchanā. But the point is that these phrases and this rāga itself is not bound by the krama of the mūrchanā as strictly as it is applied like a rule in the case of ārohaṇa - avarohaṇa based rāga-s of today. In fact this is true of many other rāga-s described in the SSP. Moreover, gīta-s being compositions of an earlier period, SubbarāmaDīkṣita himself notes changes in the rāga phrases in the later compositions when compared to the gīta-s. Hence deviations from the mūrchanā given in SSP are only to be expected that too in the case of a rāga like guṇḍakriya which has been in vogue for atleast three centuries before being recorded in the SSP. The observation that may be made here is of phrases that seem to be special –though, as it is not sung widely today it is difficult to exactly point out the mukhya and viśeṣa prayoga-s – but based on the melodic flow some phrases may be pointed out here like - ś n M p which is found at the beginning of the gīta; variations of this phrase are found in another place - Ś n m m p p ; this seems to be a special phrase that enhances the melodic appeal. m p g r p m g s – is a phrase that sounds very different . The usages – p ś, p d ś are extensively used apart from p d n ś.

Conclusion:

It may be true that we have come a long way from performing these type of compositions and have a contemporary set of compositional forms which we are comfortable with. But nevertheless, knowing about these compositions definitely helps us understand and appreciate the tradition handed down to us.

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