

## THE MUSICAL FORM *GĪTA* AND ITS VARIETIES

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Here is a study of the musical form *gīta*, as relevant to the present day musical context, with special reference to the various types of *gīta*-s available from musical treatises and other published music books.

Veṅkaṭamakḥin, the author of the musical treatise *Caturdaṇḍiprakāśikā* (1650 A.D), was instrumental in establishing the concept of *caturdaṇḍi*, meaning four pillars, through which the *svarūpa* of *arāga* can be fully understood. The *caturdaṇḍi* includes *ālāpa*, *thāya*, *gīta* and *prabandha*. *Gīta*, as an integral component of *caturdaṇḍi*, serves as an illustrative form for a structured and refined understanding of a *rāga*. This concept of *caturdaṇḍi* and the contribution of various composers to these four musical genres between 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. is a testimony to the type of music that was practiced and performed during that period. It is during this period that the musical form *gīta*, as relevant to the present day gained popularity.

### ***Gīta*– the musical form**

The term '*gīta*' etimologically means 'that which is sung', but in musical parlance it refers to a musical form or a composition. A musical form or a composition is a piece of music set to time and conforming to the *lakṣaṇa* of the type to which it belongs<sup>1</sup>. In the present day practice, this musical form *gīta* is taught after a set of preliminary *svara* / solfa exercises namely the *svarāvali*, *jaṅṭa*, *dāṭu*, *sthāyi varisa*-s and *alaṅkāra*-s. This is the musical form wherein the learner is introduced to meaningful *mātu* or *sāhityam* (text) to the corresponding *dhātu* or *svara*-s/*solfa* syllables. *Gīta* is generally a syllabic composition in which every *svara* has a corresponding *sāhitya* syllable. So, in a *gīta*, the number of *svara*-s present in an *āvarta* or one *tāla* cycle is equal to the number of *akṣarakāla*-s of that *tāla*. Very rarely we find *svara*-s extending over two or three *akṣarakāla*-s to the corresponding vowel extensions of the *sāhitya* syllables. *Gīta* is generally sung as a single continuous piece without any repetitions in a medium and uniform tempo. In some *gīta*-s, a portion of the first

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<sup>1</sup>Sambamoorthy, P. *A Dictionary of South Indian Music and Musicians* Vol. III (L-N) Madras: Indian Music Pub. House, 1971. p 75.

part is repeated at the end as a refrain. The melody is always simple without any *saṅgati*-s / melodic variations or fast svaracombinations. *Gīta*-s are available in almost all existing *rāga*-s. The *tāla*-s used for composing *gīta*-s are *sūlādi sapta tāla*-s and its varieties.

### **The structure of the musical form *gīta***

Subbarāma Dīkṣita in the *Saṅgītalakṣaṇa Prācīnapaddhati* of *Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśini* (1904 A.D.) says that the *gīta*-s available during his period had two or threesegments, the *udgrāha*, *ābhōga* and *mudrākhaṇḍa*. *Udgrāha* is the introductory segment and generally consists of two sections the *dhruva*, meaning the essential or the indispensable and the *antari/antara* which occurs only in a three segmented *gīta* and never in a two segmented one. *Antari* is composed in the higher octave and is melodically complete connecting the preceeding and the following sections. The second segment, the *ābhōgakhaṇḍa* was also called *jāvaḍa*, a vernacular word which means the latter half of a song. This is the concluding section.

Subbarāma Dīkṣita also says that since the *dhātu* of *udgrāha* and *mudrākhaṇḍa* were similar it got omitted and we are left with *gīta*-s that are devoid of *mudrākhaṇḍa* losing on both the corresponding *mātu* as well as the composer's name. Instead the *antari* is sung in its place. This is one of the main reasons that many *gīta*-s that are available today do not have the composer's name. In some *gīta*-s there might be a very slight difference in the treatment of *dhātu* between the *udgrāha* and *mudrākhaṇḍa*. The *dhātu* and *mātu* of the *antari* is identical in all the three segments.

### **Types of *gīta*-s**

The musical form *gīta* is of two types, says P.Sāmbamūrti in his book *South Indian Music*.<sup>2</sup>

#### **1. *Sāmānya gīta***

#### **2. *Lakṣaṇa gīta***

The above classification which is a recent one, is based on the content or *sāhitya* of a *gīta*.

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<sup>2</sup>Sambamoorthy, P. *South Indian music* Book II. 11th ed. Madras: Indian Music Pub. House, 1992. p 38.

## The *Sāmānya gīta*

*Sāmānya gīta* is that type of *gīta*, wherein the *sāhityais* in praise of a deity or guru or king / patron. The other names for this are *sādhāraṇa gīta*, *lakṣya gīta* and *sañcāri gīta*. *Lakṣya gīta* is the earliest term referring to this type as evident from literary sources. Various composers have composed *lakṣya gīta*-s in praise of different deities. Purandaradāsa's *Piḷḷāri gīta*-s are ideal examples for this type.

- ***Lambōdara* in *malahari* is in praise of lord *Gaṇeśa***
- ***Kundagoura* in *malahari* is in praise of lord *Śiva***

Subbarāma Dīkṣita gives two *gīta*-s in his Prathamābhyāsa Pustakamu (1905 A.D) that are in praise of Veṅkaṭamakhin. The composer of these two *gīta*-s is not known, but must be a descendant of Veṅkaṭamakhin revealing his veneration to his guru.

- ***Āre* | *ddanuja varaniragghata* | .....*guru* | *ggōvinda dikṣita* | *putra veṅkaṭamakhi* | *svāmi jaya jīvu* | *re re*..... is in the *rāga kām̄bhōji* (p.41 English ed.)**
- ***Apratimamallu* | .....*Śrī gōvindā* | *dhvari nandanure* | *Śrī veṅkaṭamakhi* | *svāmi jīvu* | *dhī* ... is in the *rāga pantuvarāḷi*. (p. 51 English ed.)**

There is a *gīta* in Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśiṇi attributed to Mudduveṅkaṭamakhin in the *rāga nāṭakurañji* wherein the composer praises his king and the patron Saha Mahārāja.

- ***Re re bbhū* | *bharaṇa* | .....*ekōji* | *nṛpāla tana* | *yu re* | *saha maharāja* | *rājakavi* | *bhōja* | *ravitējā*. (pp.777 and 778 Tamil ed.)**

The *lakṣya gīta*-s can have one or more *khaṇḍa*-s or sections.<sup>3</sup>

- One *khaṇḍa* as in the *gīta Śrīrāmacandra* in the *rāga bhairavi* set to *dhruva tāḷa* (this is a Sanskrit *slōka* adapted into a *lakṣya gīta* form); *Varavīṇā mṛdupāṇī* a Sanskrit *gīta* in praise of Goddess *Lakṣmi* in the *rāga mōhanam* set to *rūpaka tāḷa*
- Two *khaṇḍa*-s as in *Mīnākṣi jaya kāmākṣi* in the *rāga Śrī* set to *dhruva tāḷa*; *Padumanābhā* in the *rāga malahari* set to *tripuṭa tāḷa* and
- Three *khaṇḍa*-sas in *lambōdara* in the *rāga malahari* set to *rūpaka tāḷa*; *Atulita vibhava* in the *rāga varāḷi* set to *jhampa tāḷa*.

*Lakṣya gīta*-s are available in various languages like Kannāḍa, Sanskr̄t, Prākṛt, *Bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa* and other vernacular languages. *Bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa* is an *apabhramśa*, i.e.

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<sup>3</sup>Sambamoorthy, P. *South Indian music* Book II. 11th ed. Madras: Indian Music Pub. House, 1992. p.37

colloquial form of Prākṛta. According to Viṣveśvara who has written a treatise on the grammar for this language says that this *bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa* is a creation from Kāmbhōji, Magadhi, Gauḍi, Mahārāstri, Kāliṅgi and Gairvāṇi when Śrī Kṛṣṇa danced with gōpi-s of different places and dialects.<sup>4</sup> The special feature of *gīta*-s composed in *bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa* is the inclusion of syllable clusters such as *iya*, *tiya*, *aiya*, *amvo*, *ārē*, *voyi*, etc. in the *mātu*. They are known as *mātrka padā*-s or *gūtālankāra pada*-s. These syllables generally occur in the *ābhōga khaṇḍika*. The *pada*-s not only add poetical beauty to the *gīta*-s but heightens the *rāga bhāva*.

There is a lot of variety in this type of *gīta* available to us from various literary sources.

(i) **Piḷḷāri gīta-s of Śrī Purandaradāsa**- Purandaradāsa's introductory set of five *gīta*-s, in praise of Vignēśvara, Mahēśvara and Viṣṇu are referred to collectively as *Piḷḷāri gīta*-s.<sup>5</sup>

1. *lambōdara - malahari-rūpaka tāḷa*
2. *kundagoura- malahari-rūpaka tāḷa*
3. *keraya nīranu- malahari-tripuṭa tāḷa*
4. *padumanābha- malahari-tripuṭa tāḷa*
5. *ānalēkara-suddha sāvēri- tripuṭa tāḷa*

The *gīta*'*padumanābha*', has the *mudra* or signature, Abhinava Purandaraviṭhala, but has been wrongly attributed to Purandaradāsa. Purandaradāsa's *gīta*-s are available in languages like Kannaḍa, Sanskṛt and Bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa.

(ii) **Ghana rāga gīta-s** - These are *gīta*-s composed in *ghana rāga*-s like *nāṭṭa*, *gouḷa*, *ārabhi*, *varāḷi* and *śrī*.<sup>6</sup> Different composers have composed *gīta*-s in these five *ghana rāga*-s. But the composers name is not available. The following *ghana rāga gīta*-s in Bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa are found in Saṅgīta Svara Prastāra Sāgaramu of Nādamuni Paṇḍita<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Sambamoorthy, P. *South Indian music* Book II. 11th ed. Madras: Indian Music Pub. House, 1992. pp 37 and 38.

<sup>5</sup>Sambamoorthy, P. *South Indian music* Book II. 11th ed. Madras: Indian Music Pub. House, 1992. Pp.39.

<sup>6</sup>Sambamoorthy, P. *South Indian music* Book II. 11th ed. Madras: Indian Music Pub. House, 1992. Pp.39.

<sup>7</sup>Nadamuni Paṇḍita, M. *Saṅgīta Svara Prastāra Sāgaramu* (Telugu). Cannapuri: Dowder Press, 1914.

1. *ā re yūnaka – dhruva rūpaka - nāṭṭai*
2. *śrī rāmacandra –rūpaka - gouḷa*
3. *sārasa sambhava vinuta – rūpaka - varāḷi*
4. *rē rē śrīrāmacandra – jhampa – ārabhi*
5. *mīnākṣi jaya kāmākṣi –dhruva - śrī*

(iii) **Sapta tāḷa gīta of Paiḍāla Gurumūrti Śāstri-** Paiḍāla Gurumūrti Śāstri, a prolific composer of this musical form *gīta*, has composed a *sapta tāḷa gīta* ‘*Gāna vidyā durandara*’ in *Nāṭṭa rāga*, which is in praise of his *guru* or *ācārya* Soṇṭi Veṅkaṭasubbayya. This is a unique composition that can be reckoned in all the seven *sūlādi sapta tāḷa*-s without hampering the melody. This *gīta* extends to 30 *āvarta*-s or *tāḷa* cycle when reckoned in *dhruva tāḷa*, 42 *āvarta*-s in *maṭhya tāḷa*, 70 *āvarta* –s in *rūpaka tāḷa*, 42 *āvarta*-s in *jhampa tāḷa*, 60 *āvarta*-s in *tripuṭa tāḷa*, 30 *āvarta*-s in *aṭa tāḷa* and 105 *āvarta*-s in *ēka tāḷa*.

(iv) **Rāgamāla gīta-s-** Vīṇa Rāmānuja in *Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu* (1873 A.D) gives two *rāgamāla gīta*-s of Vīṇa Vijaya Varadayya.

1. *karnāṭa koṅkaṇa – rāgamāla gīta with 36 rāga-s*
2. *śrī ramaṇi – rāgamāla gīta with 32 rāga-s*

The *rāgamāla gīta*, *karnāṭa koṅkaṇa*, does not have the *tāḷa* name mentioned. Since each *āvarta* has ten *akṣarakāla*-s, this *gīta* can either be reckoned as *catuśramaṭhya* or *miśra jhampa tāḷa*. The whole *gīta* is of 37 *āvarta*-s. Each *rāga* takes one *āvarta* along with the *rāga mudra*. The last *āvarta* has the *vāggēyakāra mudra*, ‘Vijaya Varada’. The first and the last *āvarta*-s are in the *rāga nāṭṭa*. This *gīta* has two *khaṇḍika*-s. The five *ghana rāga*-s have been used in the beginning followed by others which also include *māruvadhanyāsi*, *ghaṇṭāravam*, *navrōj*, etc.

The *rāgamāla gīta*, *śrī ramaṇi*, is set to *dhruva tāḷa*. The entire *gīta* extends to 32 *āvarta*s and each *āvarta* is set in one *rāga*. This is in *bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa*. There is neither *rāga mudra* nor *vāggēyakāra mudra*. There are no *tālāṅga*-s, only a comma after each *āvarta* and two strokes at the end of both the *gīta*-s.

(v) **Śrī Raṅganāyaki pañcaratna gīta-s, Pārthasārathi pañcaratna gīta-s and Yatirāja gītāṣṭakam of Vīṇa Vijaya Varadayya-** Vīṇa Vijaya Varadayya has composed three group *gīta*-s on his favourite deities Śrīraṅganāyaki, Pārthasārathi and Śrīraṅganātha available in *Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu*.

### **Śrī Raṅganāyakī pañcaratna gīta-s-**

1. *Śrīraṅganāyakurē – Kēdāragauḷa - Khaṇḍa jhampa*
2. *Śṛṅgāraśēkhara – Nāṭakurañji – Dhruva*
3. *Daśamukhāri – Mukhāri - Aṭa*
4. *Padmasambava – Śāṅkarābharaṇam - Tripuṭa*
5. *Śrīsamatparimaḷa – Bhairavi – Rūpaka*

The author has composed all the five *gīta*-s in *Bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa*. The first *gīta* is in praise of *Śrīraṅganāyakī* and has three *khaṇḍika*-s. The second *gīta* is in praise of *Mannāruraṅgā samēta Śrī Śēṅkamalavallī* and has two *khaṇḍika*-s. The third *gīta* is in praise of *Śrī Śārṅgapāṇī sameta Kōmalavallī* of Kumbakōṇam and has two *khaṇḍika*-s. The fourth *gīta* is in praise of *Śrī Vijayalakṣmī sameta Śrī Cakrapāṇi* in two *khaṇḍika*-s. The fifth *gīta* is in praise of *Cēṅgamalavallī*. All the *gīta*-s have the *mudra* Vijaya Varada.

### **Pārtasārathi pañcaratna gīta-s-**

1. *Śrīdharasuravarāśura - Kalyāṇi - Tripuṭa*
2. *Śrīlakṣmippatiputramu – Kāmbhōji – Dhruva*
3. *Ārēdaśaratha - Bhūpāḷa – Rūpaka*
4. *Kamalasambhava - Rītīgouḷa – Jhampa*
5. *Aretumebhūtaḷiti – Śuddhasāvēri - Maṭhya*

All the above five *gīta*-s are in praise of Pārtasārathi in *bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa*. The *gīta* in *bhūpāḷa rāga* is a three segmented *gīta* with a *mudrākhaṇḍa*. All the *gīta*-s have the *mudra* Vijaya Varada.

### **Yatirāja gūṣṭakam**

1. *Arēbhūtapuravāsa - nāṭa – jhampa*
2. *Aredhari tritu jhaktīriti - gouḷa – jhampa*
3. *atulitavibhavālaṅkāra - varāḷi – jhampa*
4. *mantaraguru – ārabhi – jhampa*
5. *śrī rāga – jhampa*
6. *śrīmadbhuta -bouḷi –jhampa*
7. *viśiṣṭādyā -sāraṅganāṭa-jhampa*
8. *jayabhāsyakarayatu - narāyaṇagouḷa –jhampa*

The above eight *gīta*-s are in praise of different *yati*-s in *bhāṇḍīrabhāṣa*. All the *gīta*-s have the *mudra* , 'Vijaya Varada'. The starting words of the *śrī rāga gīta* is missing.

(vi) **Sarvalaghu gīta-** Vīṇa Vijaya Varadayya has composed a *sarvalaghu gīta* in the *rāga nāṭṭa* set to *tripuṭa tāḷa*. This is available in Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu of Vīṇa

Rāmānuja. This is a two segmented *gīta* in praise of Lord Bālagōpāla. The first segment has eight and the second, nine *āvarta*-s. The entire *gīta* has been composed using *janṭa svāra*-s. No *dīrgha svāra*-s are found and so called *sarvalaghu gīta*. This *gīta* is an ideal example for a syllabic composition.

(vii) *Vāra gīta*-s of Tañjore K. Ponnayya Piḷḷai<sup>8</sup>

1. *Sūriya bagavanai- Sourāśtram- Dhruvam*
2. *Vaḷariḷamadiyavanē – Asāvēri - Catuśra Maṭhyam*
3. *Pūvulagadipatiyē - Suratṭi – Rūpakam*
4. *Maditarumaganē - Nāṭṭakuriṇji – Jhampa*
5. *Gurumagān - Atāṇa - Aṭa*
6. *Bārgavanē – Parasu - Tripuṭa*
7. *Sanibagavān – Yadukulakāmbōdi - Khaṇḍa Maṭhyam*

K.Ponnayya Piḷḷai has composed a set of seven *gīta*-s in Tamizh named *vāra gīta*-s based on the concept of the *vāra kṛti*-s of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita. He has also used the same *rāga*-s and *tāḷa*-s for these *gīta*-s like the *vāra kṛti*-s. Apart from this, he has composed 15 *sañcāri gīta*-sin Tamil in praise of different deities.

(viii) *Daśāvātāra gīta*-s of Viṇa V.S.GōmatiŚankar<sup>9</sup>- The author has composed a set of ten *sañcāri gīta*-s in Tamil in praise of the ten *avatāra*-s of Viṣṇu. The lyrics for these ten *gīta*-s has been written by M.Aruṇācalam Piḷḷai. All these *gīta*-s have only one segment.

1. *Aruḷvāyē - Nāṭṭai – Dhruvam- Matsyāvatāram*
2. *Unadupadamalar- Sāvēri – Cāpu – Kūrmāvatāram*
3. *Tirumagaḷurai - Pantuvarāḷi – Rūpakam – Varāgavatāram*
4. *Varamaruḷum kōvē – Bhairavi - Maṭhyam – Narasimmāvatāram*
5. *Kāsipamuni - Tōḍi – Rūpakam – Vāmanāvatāram*
6. *Māmazhuvēndum - Nārāyaṇagouḷa – ādi - Paraśurāmāvatāram*
7. *Vāzhga daśaratarāma – Kāmbōdi – ādi – Rāmāvatāram*
8. *Tāyu rōgiṇi - Nāṭṭakuriṇji – M. cāpu – balarāmāvatāram*
9. *Gōpālā - Rūtigouḷa – Dhruvam - Kṛṣṇāvatāram*
10. *Vāzhvuru – Bilahari - Maṭhyam – Karkiatāram*

The *tripuṭa tāḷa gīta*-s have been given as *saippu* or *cāpu tāḷa* for the benefit of the *vaiṇika*-s to practice these *gīta*-s in the second speed.

<sup>8</sup>Ponnaiy Pillai, K. *Raja Annamalai Tamizhisai Karuvoolam*. Chidambaram: Annamalai University, 1949. Pp.32-51.

<sup>9</sup>Gomathy Shankar Iyer, V.S.. *Tamizh Gita Varnangal-Tiger Varadacariyar Padalgal*. Chidambaram: Annamalai University, 1989.Pp.113-153.

(ix) *Tamiz Gīta-s* on themes like nature, agriculture, education, co-operation and discipline<sup>10</sup> – K.Ponnayya Piḷḷai has composed *gīta-s* that speak about the importance of good qualities and the value of education, agriculture and nature.

(x) *Simhanandana tāḷa gīta* -Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu also gives a *gīta*, *ā re daśarata rāja* in the *rāga Śaṅkarābharaṇam* set to *simhānandana tāḷa* composed by Vīṇa Vijaya Vradayya. This is the *tāḷa* with the longest *akṣarakāla* of 128. This *gīta* is of single *āvarta*. The language used is *bhāṇḍīrabhāśa*. This is the only *gīta* available in a *tāḷa* other the *sapta tāḷa* and its varieties.

The following is a *lakṣya gīta* of Paiḍāla Gurumūrti Śāstri. The notation has been taken from Svaramaṅjari of Tacchūr brothers. This *gīta* is in the *rāga ānandabhairavi* and set to *dhruva tāḷa*.

I <sub>4</sub>				O		I <sub>4</sub>				I <sub>4</sub>			
S	,	S	, l	G	R l	S	G	G	M l	G	R	S	Ṇ ll
<i>pā</i>		<i>hi</i>		<i>śri</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>rā</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>ca</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>dra</i>
S	M	G	, l	R	S l	S	R	S	Ṇ l	Ṇ	,	S	, ll
<i>ka</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>sā</i>		<i>lya</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>bha</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>gya</i>	<i>rū</i>		<i>pā</i>	
M	G	G	, l	M	, l	S	N	Ṇ	, l	S	,	S	, ll
<i>kṛ</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>a</i>		<i>lō</i>		<i>dī</i>	<i>śa</i>	<i>mē</i>		<i>bha</i>		<i>ktim</i>	
S	,	S	P l	M	G l	G	,	M	G l	R	G	R	S ll
<i>dē</i>		<i>va</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>va</i>	<i>kā</i>		<i>mi</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ya</i>	<i>ka</i>
Ṇ	S	,	G l	G	M l	G	M	D	P l	M	G	R	P ll
<i>ra</i>	<i>mā</i>		<i>ka</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>vya</i>
P	,	M	, l	P	, l	M	G	P	M l	G	R	S	R ll
<i>gī</i>		<i>tā</i>		<i>ā</i>		<i>mṛ</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>pa</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>na</i>
S	Ṇ	S	G l	G	M l	P	D	P	M l	G	R	S	, ll
<i>a</i>	<i>khi</i>	<i>la</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>ka</i>	<i>va</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>dī</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>ca</i>	<i>ra</i>	<i>ṅā</i>	
S	,	S	D l	P	M l	M	P	M	G l	G	,	M	M ll
<i>ā</i>		<i>śri</i>	<i>ta</i>	<i>ja</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>ma</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>dā</i>		<i>a</i>	<i>ra</i>

<sup>10</sup>Ponnai Pillai, K. *Raja Annamalai Tamizhisai Karuvoolam*. Chidambaram: Annamalai University, 1949. Pp.53-67.



P	N	N	, l	Ś	, l	P	Ś	N	N l	Ś	,	Ś	, ll
ja	la	jā		tā		pra	bha	a	a	ā		vā	
P	,	P	Ś l	,	Ś l	Ś	N	N	D l	D	P	P	M ll
ā		di	pū		u	ji	ta	ka	ma	la	a	a	kṣa
G	M	P	D l	P	M l	M	D	P	M l	G	R	S	N ll
ni	ga	ma	ve	e	dya	ni	i	i	la	va	a	a	rṇa
S	G	G	M l	P	M l	G	R	G	M l	P	D	P	, ll
a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	ā	
Ś	,	N	D l	P	M l	P	,	M	P l	M	G	R	S ll
śrī		i	i	gu	ru	mū		u	u	u	u	u	rte

A structural, textual and melodic analysis of the same has been made and the observations are as follows-

- This is a single segmented *lakṣya gīta* without any section names.
- This *gīta* is a small composition as compared to the other *lakṣya* and *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s of the same author. This *gīta* extends to thirteen *āvarta*-s in *dhruva tālam* of fourteen *akṣarakāla*-s or *catuśra jāti dhruva tālam*(1<sub>4</sub>1<sub>4</sub>0<sub>2</sub>1<sub>4</sub>).
- The *tāla* of this *gīta* has been given as *khaṇḍa aṭa* in *Saṅgīta Svara Prastāra Sāgaramu* of Nādamuni Paṇḍita and another recent music book *Saṅgīta Sudha* of Nūkala Cinna Satyanarāyaṇa. The placement of syllables and the extension of vowels to the corresponding *tālāṅga*-s is best suited only to *dhruva tāla*.
- The *gīta* starts on the first beat of the *tāla* or in other words, has *asama eḍuppu*.
- The text which is in praise of god Rāma is in sanskr̥t.
- The *mudra* of the composer ‘Śrī Gurumūrtē’ is found in the last *āvarta* of the *gīta*.
- The *dhātu* is a combination of *hṛsva* and *dhīrga svāra*-s, where the extension of *dhīrga svāra*-s is not more than two *akṣarakāla*-s.
- The *mātu* has vowel extensions from two to four *akṣarakāla*-s.
- The concept of *gamakālāpti* or extension of vowel ‘a’ for a whole *āvarta* that sounds like *rāga ālāpa* is adopted in this *gīta* in the last but one *āvarta*.

S	G	G	M l	P	M l	G	R	G	M l	P	D	P	, ll
a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	ā	

- The author has used the *prayōga sggm* in four places but the *prayōga sgrgm* as per the *ārōhaṇa* of *rāga ānandabhairavi* is absent. The usage *mrgm* is seen once.
- Lot of *janṭa prayōga*-s are seen in this *gīta* that brings out the *rāga bhāva* fully  
-*sggm –sṇṇs – mggm- dpmm – pmggmmpnn –pnn śś– pp śśindpp-*
- The *prayōga*-s extend from *mandra niśādha* to *tāra sadja* and not beyond that.
- The *pdpś* usage occurs only once but no *pdnś* usage as seen in the *gīta* ‘*kamalasulōcana*’.

### **Lakṣaṇa gīta-s**

A *lakṣaṇa gīta* is a type of *gīta* in which the text enumerates the *lakṣaṇa*-s of the *rāga* in which it is composed. It gives details like the *varjya* and *vakrasvara*-s, the *graha*, *amsa* and *nyāsa svāra*-s, the *auḍava*, *śāḍava* or *sampūrṇa* character and the name of the *rāga* and *cakra*, and the *anya svāra*-s, if any, if it is a *bhāśāṅga rāga lakṣaṇa gīta*.<sup>11</sup> There are *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s for most of the current *rāga*-s and also some extinct *rāga*-s. The *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s of *mēḷakartarāga*-s are called *rāgāṅga rāga lakṣaṇa gīta*-s and that of the *janya rāga*-s the *janya rāga lakṣaṇa gīta*-s.

Saṅgraha Cūḍāmaṇi of Gōvinda (18<sup>th</sup> century A.D) is the earliest treatise wherein we get reference to the term *lakṣaṇa gīta*. In the *uttarabhāga* of the treatise Gōvinda gives *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s for *mēḷa* and *janya rāga*-s under the heading ‘*dvāsaptati mēḷa tajjanya rāgāṅgām lakṣaṇagītāni*’. Gōvindacārya, the author of the treatise Saṅgraha Cūḍāmaṇi has composed all the 366 *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s in *tripuṭa tāḷa* alone. He has not only given the *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s for the 72 *mēḷādhikara rāga*-s of the *kanakāṅgi-ratnāṅgi* scheme of *rāga* classification formulated by him and their *janya rāga*-s but also for the 72 *mēḷa rāga*-s of the *kanakāmbari-pheṇadyuti* scheme of *rāga* classification by *Veṅkaṭamakṣin*.

The following are the general features observed in his *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s-

- The *tāḷa* used for all the 366 *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s is *tripuṭa tāḷa* of the *tiśra jāti*.
- All the *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s have *atīta eḍuppu* wherein the *gīta* begins in the last *dhrutam* of the previous *āvarta*.

<sup>11</sup>Sambamoorthy, P. *South Indian music* Book II. 11th ed. Madras: Indian Music Pub. House, 1992. Pp.38.

- The *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s have been composed in *bhāṇḍīra bhāśa*.
- There are no *tālāṅga*-s seen but only a comma after each *āvarta* and two *daṇḍi*-s or stokes at the end of the *gīta*.
- There are no segments or sections found. All the *gīta*-s have only one *khaṇḍa* extending between 21 and 24 *āvarta*-s.
- The *lakṣaṇa* details found are the *śuddha and vikṛta svāra*-s of the *rāga*, the nature of the *ārōha* and *avarōha* in terms of *sampūrṇa* or *vakra orvarjya* , the *graha*, *amsa* and *nyāsa svāra*-s, the *tāla* used and the name of the *rāga* in terms of *mēḷādhikāra* or *mēḷajanita rāga*.
- All the *lakṣaṇa gīta*-s has the ending ‘*śrī rāma namō namō*’ showing the author’s veneration to his favourite deity.
- There are no *sthāyi* indications or indications of vowel extensions.
- The last two *āvarta*-s of the *dhātu* generally gives the *ārōhaṇa* and *avarōhaṇa* of the *rāga* in which the *gīta* is composed.

The following is the notation of a *lakṣaṇa gīta* of Gōvinda from Saṅgraha Cūḍāmaṇi. This *gīta* is in the *rāga Śrī* and set to *tripuṭa tāla*.

s , - s n p d n p m - r g r m m p n - s r g r s n p -  
āre reva limadavibha n ja na vaṭapa tra

m p n s , s , - r r , r g r s - n n , p d n p - m , m p n n s -  
śaya nure re ca tuṣṭi ri sha bhasā dhā raṇa gān dhā ra

n n p n n s s - r r g r s r g - r s n s r g r - s s n p n n s -  
ca tu śrutidhai vatasvarakai śi ki niśā da i ta raśu ddha

n , s n s r m - p p m r g r r - m p m r g r n - s r m p m p n -  
ā rōha gadhava rji ta a va rō hasa m pūrṇavakra

s , n s , s n - p d n p m r m - p p n p m p n - s s n p n s n -  
sagraha n yāsām ṣa tripuṭa yu kta kharahapri ya

p d n p p m r - r g r s s n n - s r m p n s s - n p d n p m r -  
mēḷajani ta śrī rāga mavadhā ra ya śrīrā ma

g g r s n ||  
namō namō

The structural, textual and melodic analysis of the same is attempted here and the observations are as follows

- This is a single segmented *lakṣaṇa gīta* in the *rāga śrī* without any sections.

- The *gīta* is set to *tripuṭa tāḷa* with *atīta eḍuppu*, the melody starting in the last *dhrutam* of the previous *āvarta*. The *gīta* ends on the last wave of the *tripuṭa tāḷa*. The entire *gīta* extends to 24 *āvarta*-s. ,
- The *dhātu* consists of *hṛsva svāra*-s with occasional *dhīrga svāra*-s extending to not more than two *akṣarakāla*-s.
- *Jaṅṭa prayōga*-s have been used throughout the *gīta*.
- The *ārōhaṇa* and *avarōhaṇa* of the *rāga* is given in the last two *āvarta*-s of the *dhātu*- *s r m p n s – s n p d n p m r g g r s*
- No *tālāṅga*-s or *sthāyi* indications are found. Groups of seven *svāra*-s equivalent to the seven *akṣarakāla*-s of a single *tiśra jāti tripuṭa tāḷa āvarta* are seen separated by a comma. There are no indications of the vowel extensions of the syllables in the *mātu*.
- The text which is in praise of lord Rāma gives the *rāga lakṣaṇa* of *śrīrāga* from the fifth *āvarta*.
- The *svāra*-s taken by the *rāga śrī* has been given as *catuśruti riṣabha*, *sādhāraṇa gāndhāra*, *catuśruti dhaivata* and *kaiśiki niṣādha* and the rest *asūddha svāra*-s. It is also given that *gāndhāra* and *dhaivata* are absent in the *ārōha* but the *avarōha* is *vakra sampūrṇa*. These details along with the scale given in the last two *āvarta*-s of the *dhātu* gives a clear picture of the *ārōhaṇa* and *avarōhaṇa* of this *rāga*.
- *Śadjam* is given as the *graha* and *nyāsa svāra*. Gōvinda has given enough phrases in the *dhātu* of this *gīta* to explain this- *s n p d n p m- s r g r s – m p n s – r r g r s*
- Gōvinda has used the *p d n p m* phrase four times in this relatively small composition in contrast to the Dikṣitar school of thought which says that *p d n p m* phrase has to be used only once or sparingly in any composition.
- The phrase *r g r s* and *r g g r s* which is a *rañjaka prayōga* for this *rāga* has been used effectively by Gōvinda in this *gīta*.
- *Śrīrāga* which is the 22<sup>nd</sup> *rāgāṅga rāga* in the Veṅkaṭamakhin scheme of *rāga* classification is given by Gōvinda as the first *janya rāga* of the 22<sup>nd</sup> *meḷa Karaharapriya*. The *lakṣaṇa ślōka* of this *śrīrāga* is given by Gōvinda in the third *adhyāya* of Saṅgraha Cūḍāmaṇi under ‘*mēḷajānām rāgāṅgām lakṣaṇāni*’ as follows-

*Adhikārāt kharaharapriyāccrīrāga ishyatē |*  
*Sanyāsam sāmśakam caiva saśadjagrahamucyatē |*  
*Ārōhē gadhavarjyam ca pūrṇavakrāvarōhakam |*  
*Sarimāpanisānipā dhanīpamarigārisāll*

The *rāga lakṣaṇa* of *śrī* given in the above *lakṣaṇa ślōka* is exactly reproduced in the *lakṣaṇa gīta* with some more added details.

- The name of the *tāla tripuṭa* is also given in the text.
- The language used is *bhāṇḍīra*.

This *lakṣaṇa gīta* of Gōvinda not only gives the *rāga lakṣaṇa* of the *rāga śrī* in detail in the text but also the *sañcāra-s* and *rañjakaprayōga-s* of this *rāga* in the *dhātu*. Learning such *gīta-s* has dual advantage in not only understanding the *rāga svarūpa* of the *rāga-s* in which they are composed in a structured and refined way but getting a clear knowledge of the *lakṣaṇa* aspect of the *rāga-s* as conceived during that period as well.

Veṅkaṭamakhin and Muḍdu Veṅkaṭamakhi have composed *lakṣaṇa gīta-s* for the 72 *rāgāṅga rāga-s* and some of their *janya rāga-s* of *kanakāmbari-phēṇadyuti* scheme of *rāga* classification which has been given by Subbarāma Dīkṣita in Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśini under the heading *lakṣya gīta-s*. The *rāgāṅga rāga lakṣaṇa gīta-s* found in this source generally consists of three sections or *khaṇḍa-s*. The first is the *sūtra khaṇḍa* or the *dhruva* wherein the initial syllables of the text (mnemonics) gives the clue to the *svara-s* taken by the *rāga*. The next two sections the *upāṅga* and *bhāsāṅga khaṇḍa-s* give the list of *upāṅga* and *bhāsāṅga rāga-s* of the *rāgāṅga rāga*. The last two sections are absent for those *rāgāṅga rāga-s* for which there are few or no *janya rāga-s*. The *janya rāga lakṣaṇa gīta-s* do not have these sections though.

Paidāla Gurumūrti Śāstri, an 18<sup>th</sup> century composer, has also composed *lakṣaṇa gīta-s* of which three are available in the music book *Gāyaka Pārijātam* of Tacchūr brothers.

- ***Ārabhi rāga lakṣaṇam in the rāga ārabhi***
- ***Jayakarunāsindhū in the rāga dhanyāsi***
- ***Kamsāsura khaṇḍana in the rāga sahāna***

All the three *gīta-s* have only one segment. They include *rāga lakṣaṇa* details like the *svarasthāna-s* of the *rāga*, *sampūrṇa*, *auḍava*, *śāḍava* details of the *ārohaṇa* and *avarōhaṇa* and details of the *mēḷa* and *janya* names.

The *gīta-s* of Vīṇa Vijaya Varadayya in Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu given under the heading *lakṣaṇa gīta-s* do not give the *lakṣaṇa-s* of the *rāga* in which they are composed but merely gives some musical terms like *sruti*, *svara*, *mūrcchana*, *jāti*, *gīta*, *ālāpa*, *ṭhāya*, etc. in the *sāhitya*.

## Conclusion

Considering the *lakṣya* and *lakṣaṇa* value of the musical form *gīta*, along with the volume and variety that are available, the utility of this form can no doubt be extended beyond the sphere of *abhyāsa gāna* to which it has been restricted to. Attempt has to be made to popularize this musical form, by bringing out more and more number of *gita*-s to the attention of music fraternity through publications. Music institutions should compulsarily include this musical form in their curriculum both from academic and practical view points. Attempt also should be made to make these pieces concert worthy.

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