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DEVI KRITIS COMPOSED BY SANGITARATNA SRI N.P RAMASWAMI - A STUDY BASED ON PROSODICAL BEAUTIES

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Abstract

Sangitaratna Sri N.P. Ramaswami was a profound Vaggēyakāra lived in Kerala during, 1931-2019. He has composed in different genres, including Tāna Varnā, Kṛitī, Tillāna, and Pallavi. His songs captivate with their melodic and literary elements. Thematically, he has honoured many Deities in his compositions. In pursuit of it, he has composed Devi Kṛiti-s, which praises the Goddesses Akhilāndeswari, Saraswati, Pārvati, Kāmākṣī, and Dharmasamvardhani, among the other aspects of Devi bhava. These compositions shine with a stylometric pattern followed by the creator with his unparalleled creative ideas. Among these five Kṛiti-s, three compositions are written in Sanskrit and remaining two compositions are in Tamil comprising words used as in *Vadamozhi*.

Keywords

Vāggeyakāra, Tāna Varnā, Kṛitī, Tillāna, Pallavi, Vadamozhi, Navavidhabhakthi, Pāda, Prāsa, Yati, Graha, Sangatī, Mudra, Dwi Kalai

Introduction

Sangitaratna Sri N.P. Ramaswami's selected five compositions in adoration of Goddess Devi stand out and are contrasted in a variety of ways. The compositions dazzle with their melodic and lyrical elegance. All of these Kṛiti-s can be classified under Navavidhabhakti, the nine forms of devotion. The main elements to be discussed on the topic are the Musical prosodies, structure of the compositions and the unique features of the selected compositions.

Navavidhabhakthi

The concept of nine forms of devotion is centred to Hinduism, especially in the Bhakti tradition. It refers to the nine different ways, a devotee can express his love and devotion to the God. These forms are often mentioned in the epics such as Bhagavata Purana and Ramayana.

**“Sravanam kīrthanam vishnu smaranam pādasēvanam
archanam vandanam dāsyam sākhyam āthmanivēdanam”**

- Srimad Bhagavatam (7.5.23)

Here, among the selected five compositions 4 kṛiti-s unveil the bhakti ‘Kīrthanam’ (In this approach the devotee constantly chants and narrates the Lord in a poetic or descriptive way) and the remaining one deals with ‘Pādasēvanam’ (It is the approach of serving Lord’s feet constantly)

- | | | |
|------|------------------------|---------------|
| i. | Dēvi akhilāndeswari | – Kīrthanam |
| ii. | Saraswati bhārati | – Kīrthanam |
| iii. | Pāhi jagad janani | – Kīrthanam |
| iv. | Karunā sāgari kāmākṣī | – Kīrthanam |
| v. | Arul purivāye mahāmāye | – Pādasēvanam |



Musical Prosody

• Pāda

The term *Pāda* refers to a verse or a line of the poetry. In compositions it is equal to a full *āvarta* or a full *tālavattam*. The compositions which deal with *Āditāla*, a *Pāda* may be equal to 1 *āvarta* or 2 *āvartas*. Among these Five compositions, 4 *Kṛiti*-s are set to *Āditāla* and remaining one *Kṛiti* to *Rūpaka tāla*. A Composition get its perfect structure according to the ratio of *Pāda* given to the *Pallavi*, *Anupallavi* and *Carana*.

Sl. no	Kṛiti	Tāla	Number of āvarta-s		
			Pallavi	Anupallavi	Caranam
1	Dēvi Akhilāndēswari	Ādi (2 Kalai)	2	2	4
2	Karunāsāgarī Kāmākṣī	Ādi (2 Kalai)	2	3	6
3	Pāhi jagad janani	Ādi	2	2	4
4	Arul Purivāye	Ādi	2	2	4
5	Sarswatī bhārati	Rūpakam	2	4	8

• Prāsa

The repetition of similar letters of a *pāda* in different positions is known as *Prāsa*. *Prāsa* is the *Jīvākṣara*. It means the rhyme inherent in the corresponding syllables of a *Pāda* or a line. His compositions shine with its plenty of alliterations in the form of *Ādyākṣara prāsa*, *Dwityākṣara prāsa*, *Anuprāsa* and *Antyākṣara prāsa*. The Sanskrit compositions *Dēvi akhilāndēswari*, *Pāhi jagad janani* and *Sarswatī bhārati* enhanced with beautiful adorations of *Dēvi bhava*. And the Tamil compositions *Karunāsāgarī kāmākṣī* and *Arul purivāye mahāmāye* are dealt with the *vadamozhi ezhuthukkal* (letters used in Tamil to write the sounds from other language especially in Sanskrit).

- **Ādyākṣara Prāsa** - The similar sound occurs in the 1st line and the remaining lines, which also known as *Muhana prāsa*.

i. Dēvi akhilāndeswari

Pallavi – **Dēvi** akhilāndeswari
Anupallavi – **Dēvarāja** pūjite

ii. Sarswatī bhārati

Pallavi – **Sar**swatī bhārati
Anupallavi – **Sar**asīruha lōcani

This phrase is a rare example for both the *Ādyākṣara* and *Dwityākṣara prāsa*.

- **Dwityākṣara Prāsa** – The second syllable of a *pāda* occur similarly in both the *Pallavi* and *Anupallavi*, also known as *Ādi prāsa*.

i. Pāhi jagad janani

Pallavi – **Pāhi** jagad janani
Anupallavi – **Dēhi** memudam



- **Anuprāsa** – The repetition of similar letters, syllables or words.

The Kriti-s in praise of Goddess Dēvi enrich with its lyrical beauty which contains the three main elements particularly the Synonyms (Address), Nature (Swarūpam) and Characteristics (Gunam) of Goddess. These three elements beautify the compositions in praise of Goddesses Akhilāndeswari, Saraswati, Pārvati, Kāmākśī, and Dharmasamvardhani.

- Synonyms** - The designations of Goddess Dēvi dealt with many names with similar sound adds beauty to these compositions and are examples of Anuprasa.

- Akhilāndēswari, Kripākari, Sankari, Srīkari, Easwari, Sādhōdhari, Mahēswari (words end with syllable **ri**)
- Vilāsini, Hamsini, Sūlini, Brahmāṇi, Nalini, Manōnmaṇi, Nārāyaṇi, Nirananjani, Srīranjani, Nityakalyāṇi (words end with the similar syllable **ni** and **ṇi**)
- Varade, Sārade (words end with the Syllable **de**)
- Kadākśi, Visalākśi (words end with the Syllable **kśi**)

- Characteristics**

- Bhandāsura bhanjani, Chandamunda nashini, Āsritajana pālīni, Sakalavidhyā swarūpīni, Sarasīruhalōchani, Jagad janani, Sritajanapālīni, Mahishāsura sūdani, Pāpavimōchani, Kānjinaril vāzhum nityakalyāṇi, Duritha nivāriṇi (words end with the similar syllable **ni** and **ṇi**)
- Bhaṇḍāsura bhanjani, Chaṇḍamuṇḍa nashini - repetition of the syllable **ṇḍa** adds beauty to the phrase.
- Kripākari, Karunāsāgari, Mūkanai pēsa vaitha paramakripākari (words end with the syllable **ri**)
- Dēsakālapravartite, Abhayaprade, Srī nāradādi sampūjite, Paramamangalaprade (words end with the similar syllable **te** and **de**)

- Nature/Sthūla rupa**

- Mandahāsini, Hēmābharanbhūshaṇi, Sankachakradhāriṇi, Sarasīruhalōchani, Vīnāpusthakadhāriṇi, Shubhravasthradhāriṇi, Mōhanarūpiṇi, Sundaravadani, Kāmākōti pītanivāsini (words end with the similar syllable **ni** and **ṇi**)
- Bhāvaragatālayute, Sahasradalapadmashite (words end with the similar syllable **te**)

Antya Prāsa – It means the rhyme inherent in the ending syllable of a line.

- Pāhi jagad janani**

Pallavi - pāhi jagad janani niranjani
dēhi me mudam srīranjani

Here, both the lines end with the word ‘ranjani’ adds beauty.

Anupallavi - mōhanarūpini sundaravadani
mahishāsura sūdani sūlini

Here, both the lines end with the syllable ‘ni’ adds beauty.

- Karunāsāgari kāmākśi**

Pallavi - karunāsāgari kāmākśi katākśi
sadā kasi visālākśi



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This is a beautiful phrase ornamented with plenty of Anuprasa-s and also with similar sound syllables and Antyākshara prāsa.

karunāsāgari	-	ka and ga , ru and ri
katākṣī sadā kāsī visālākṣī	-	ta and da , sa and si

• Repeated Expressions

- i. **Synonyms** - Sankari, Sārade, Mahāmāye
- ii. **Characteristics** - Paramapāvani, Kripākari, Āshritajanapālīni, Pāpavimōchani
- iii. **Nature** – Poet describes each Goddesses in their specific nature with suitable ornamentations. ‘Hēmābharanabhūshani’ is the only repeated word expressed to praise Goddess Akhilāndēswari and Goddess Saraswati.

- i. **Akhilāndēswari** - Mandahāsini, Bhāvarāgatālayute
Hēmābharanabhūshani,
Shankachakradhārini
- ii. **Saraswati** - Sarasīruha lōcani, Vīnāpustakadhārini,
Subhravasthradhārini, Hēmābharanabhūshani,
Sahasradala padmasthite
- iii. **Pārvati** - Mōhanarūpini, Sundaravadani
- iv. **Kāmākṣī** - Sadā Kasi visālākṣī, Kāmākōti pīta nivāsini
- v. **Dharma samvardhani** - This composition is based on the bhakthi
deals with ‘Pādasēvanam’, therefore the
lyrics deals with the serving of Goddess
by the total surrender on her feet.

• Yati

The Syllable occur after a pause in a Pāda is known as Yati. These compositions are also beautifully ornamented by immense Yati-s.

- i. **Devi akhilāndēswari**
Anupallavi - Dēvarāja pūjite.... **Dēsakāla** pravarthite
- ii. **Pāhi jagad janani**
Caranam - Parama pāvani.... **Pāpavimocani**
- iii. **Saraswati bhārati**
Pallavi – Saraswati bhārati.... **Rakshamām** sarade
- iv. **Karunāsāgari**
Pallavi – Karunāsāgari **Kāmākṣī**

Structure of the Compositions

Angās

All these five compositions having the angās called Pallavi, Anupallavi and Caranam. Exceptionally the kriti ‘Saraswati bhārati’ in rāga Pūrvikalyani set to rūpaka tāla has one more anga called Madhyamakāla sahityam (A musical piece which mostly appears at the end of



anupallavi or caraṇam, it is the transition of compositions from slower paced tempo to medium tempo) which make the composition more elegant.

Graha (Eduppu)

Sl. no	Kriti	Tāla	Graha (Eduppu)		
			Pallavi	Anupallavi	Caraṇam
1	Dēvi akhilāndēswari	Ādi (2 Kalai)	Anāgata	Anāgata	Anāgata
2	Karunāsāgari kāmākṣi	Ādi (2 Kalai)	Anāgata	Anāgata	Anāgata
3	Pāhi jagad janani	Ādi	Sama	Sama	Sama
4	Arul purivāye	Ādi	Anāgata	Anāgata	Anāgata
5	Saraswati bhārati	Rūpakam	Sama	Anāgata	Anāgata

Among these five compositions the Kriti ‘Arul purivāyē mahāmāye’ belongs to *Madhyādi tālam* (An application of Āditālam were, the song begins after the 2 matrās or 1/2 akṣarakāla in a tāla cycle). Mostly he has used *Anāgatha eduppu* (tāla starts first and the song follows it later) in these following Kriti-s.

Expansion of Sangatī

Sl. No	Kriti	Rāgam	No. of Sangatī-s		
			Pallavi	Anupallavi	Caraṇam
1	Dēvi akhilāndēswari	Behāg	2	2	1
2	Karunāsāgari kāmākṣi	Kharaharapriya	3	2	2
3	Pāhi jagad janani	Srīranjani	4	4	1
4	Arul purivāye	Sarasāṅgi	3	3	2
5	Saraswati bhārati	Pūrvikalyāni	4	2	1

Among these five compositions the Kriti ‘Pāhi jagad janani’ in raga Srīranjani has maximum number of Sangatī-s (It is the development of a Pāda starting with simple music plans and gradually improving on the previous one and finally conclude with a complex plan) comparing to other kriti-s. The kriti ‘Saraswati bhārati’ in raga Pūrvikalyani set to rūpaka tāla has one more anga called Madhyamakāla sahityam which adds more beauty to the composition.

Unique features occurring in the Devi Kriti-s of Sri N.P. Ramaswami

Palindromes – It is the notes or words arranged in same order while it produced forward or backward.

i. Dēvi akhilāndēswari

g m p d n d p m g r s
de vi (Pallavi)

ii. Saraswati bhārati

ś, , , ś ṛ ḡ m ḡ ṛ ś, , ,
lō ca. ni (Anupallavi)

iii. Pāhi jagad janani

, , n ṛ ś n d m g m d n



. . sū.li. . . . ni . . . (Pallavi, Anupallavi, Caraṇam)

iv. **Karunāsāgari kāmākṣī**

p d n ś ṛ ḡ ṛ ś n , , ,
. . tha ye . .

(Anupallavi)

v. **Arul purivāye mahāmāye**

ś n d p d n ś ,
irul . . ni . kki .

(Caraṇam)

Placement of Vāggēyakāra Mudra unites the Devi bhāva

The term *Mudra* meant to be a signature or a seal. It is an identification mark for the Vāggēyakāra who has composed the particular composition. Mudra-s are also classified in different aspects such as Rāgamudra, Tālamudra, Sthalamudra etc. In these five compositions, the composer has placed the Vāggēyakāra mudra '*Parama* '- dedication to his grandfather Srī Paramēswara Bāgavathar (A profound court musician of Maharaja Sri Swati Tirunal)' in such a brilliant way connecting with Dēvi bhava, which adds beauty to these compositions.

- i. **Dēvi akhilāndēswari** - The Vāggēyakāra mudra has placed in the 2nd line of the caraṇam, starting with '*paramapāvani nirmala hridayavāsini*'
- ii. **Saraswati bhārati** - The Vāggēyakāra mudra has placed in the 2nd line of caraṇam, '*Sahasradala padmasthite parama mangalaprade*'
- iii. **Pāhi jagad janani** - The caraṇa starts with the Vāggēyakāra mudra '*paramapāvani pāpavimōchini*'
- iv. **Karunāsāgari kāmākṣi** - The Vāggēyakāra mudra has placed in the last line of caraṇam, starts with '*paramakripākari easwari sankari shādhōdari*'
- v. **Arul purivāye mahāmāye** - Here also the caraṇa starts with the Vāggēyakāra mudra '*paramapāvani pāpavimōchini*'

It is noteworthy that the poet addresses Goddess Akhilāndēswari, Goddess Pārvati, and Goddess Dharmasamvardhani using the phrase '*Paramapāvani*', which signifies the Ultimate purity. 'Saraswati', the Goddess of auspiciousness, is called '*Parama mangalaprade*', while Kāmākṣī, the Goddess of supreme grace, is called '*Paramakripākari*'. The "Ultimate" is referred to as *Parama*.

Scope of Manōdharma Sangīta in the selected Compositions

In addition to being a Vāggēyakāra, he was an excellent Mridangam artist. That inspired him to create gorgeous compositions to the greatest extent. The selected five pieces showcase a variety of melodic and lyrical elements, including rāgabhāva, rhythmical patterns, yati patterns, musical prosodies, palindromes etc. In various ways, his compositions stand apart from those of other composers. There is a tremendous scope for expressing the breadth of Manōdharma Sangita in his compositions, including those of rāgālāpāna, niraval, and kalpanaswara.

i. **Dēvi akhilāndēswari**

The niraval and kalpana swara can be applied to the first phrase of anupallavi 'Dēvarāja pūjite dēsakāla pravarthite', commencing with the Graha swara (initial note of a musical phrase) madhyastāyi 'P'. The composer produced this phrase in a niraval pattern that deals with surrounding notes with shorter intervals, allowing for more complex singing by niraval.

ii. **Saraswati bhārati**



- Caranam – ‘*Gītavādhyā nātakādi sakala vidhyā swarūpini*’
- iii. **Pāhi jagad janani**
Caranam – ‘*Paramapāvani pāpavimocini āsritajanapālīni manōnmani*’
- iv. **Karunāsāgari kāmākṣī**
Caranam – ‘*Kāmakōti pītanivāsini kāñjinagaril vāzhum nithyakalyāni*’
- v. **Arul purivāye mahāmāye**
Caranam – ‘*Paramapāvani pāpavimocini dharmasamvardhani duritanivārini*’

Application of raga Hindustani Behag in tāla Dwi Kalai Ādi

The rāga Hindustāni Behag is a dēśya raga (rāga originated from Hindustani music and got popular in Carnatic music). Dēśya ragas are light and highly melodic. “Simple compositions like bhajan-s, pada-s, tillana-s etc are set in dēśya rāgas”. (Ragas in Carnatic music, page no.54, Dr. S Bagyalakshmi). Rāga Behag has various compositions set to Ādi tāla. “Swati Tirunal, Gopalakrishna Bharati were the earliest composers to compose in this raga” (page.no 174). Composing complicated musical forms in relaxing ragas such as Behag, Yamunakalyani, and Desh requires sophistication. The composition Ādi tāla Varṇa in raga Behag, by the renowned Carnatic composer Veena Kuppayyar, is quite extraordinary. Raga Behag has numerous compositions set to various tālas, including Ādi, Rūpaka, Caturasra Eka, Tisra Eka, Misra chapu, Triputa etc. It is uncommon to find Kriti-s set to 'Dwi Kalai Ādi' (Kalai is the minor unit or fractional unit of a tālā akṣara, with each akṣara having 8 notes). Out of the chosen pieces, Sri N.P. Ramaswami's Kriti "Devi akhilāndēswari" in Raga Behag is set to Dwi Kalai Ādi, which is an amazing composition. The well-known composer Gopalakrishna Bharati's "Ithu thāno tillaisthalam" is another piece in raga Behag set to Dwi Kalai Ādi which is incredibly calming to hear.

Conclusion

Sangītaratna Sri N.P. Ramaswami's five compositions dedicated to Goddess are a beautiful bouquet of musical brilliance. All of these Kritis are identical and unparalleled in their melodic and poetic brilliance. His compositions honouring Goddesses Akhilāndēswari, Saraswati, Pārvati, Kāmākṣī, and Dharmasamvardhani are a musical feast for our ears. Each of these songs stands exceptional in terms of prosodic norms, musical structure, rhythmic patterns, breadth of manodharma sangīta, sangati-s, ragabhava, etc. The three compositions penned in Sanskrit is a sea of alliterations, addressing Dēvi bhava with different synonyms in appropriate tāla patterns. The Tamil compositions in praise of Goddess Kāmākṣī and Dharmasamvardhani drove with *Vadamozhi* letters such as Kāmākṣī, Visālākṣī, Mahāmāye and so on.

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