



IDENTIFYING THE IDENTITY OF MEDIEVAL ṬHĀYAS

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2

Introduction

Gīta, Ālāpa, Prabandha and *Ṭhāya* are four types of musical forms that existed during the medieval period. Veṅkaṭamakhi's Chaturdandiprakashika describes *Ṭhāya* as one of the four Dandis. Executed on the "nature of the rāga, i.e., vakratva and varjyatva" (Chaturdandiprakashika: 376) with respect to the appropriate note of that rāga, its essence can be traced to contemporary nuances of Carnatic music. This paper attempts to trace the evolution of *Ṭhāyas* through the medieval period using available textual references and other sources. It also tries to analyze the apparent similarity observed between the experience of *Ṭhāyas* and *ChittaTānas* on Veena.

Scope of the Study

Using available records and references, analyze the history and evolution of this long-defunct music form and its role in Carnatic music.

Research Methodology

The paper makes use of qualitative and evaluative methods based on available textual evidence, as well as audio files for the comparative examination prescribed in the study.

ṬHĀYAS

Ṭhāya is one of the medieval musical forms popular in the 16th – 17th centuries, in Tanjore region. It is performed along with *Ālāpa*, *Gīta* and *Prabandha*. It consists of svara phrases, set to a particular rāga, but do not correspond to any tala. Some of the *Ṭhāyas* will have syllables like **ta, na, a and m** as sahitya mentioned under the respective svara phrases. Each svara phrase is differentiated with a vertical bar and there are many such svara phrases can be seen. *Ṭhāya* also called as *Ṭhāyam* follows *Ālāpa* set in the same rāga. For some rāgas *Ṭhāyas* occur more than once, but no two of them alike which means, each *Ṭhāya* composition is unique and distinct.

The term *Ṭhāya* has been come in the ancient Sanskrit texts from almost 12th Century A.D. In *Caturdaṇḍīprakāśikā*, Veṅkaṭamakhi describes *Ṭhāyas* – one of the *caturdaṇḍīs* which is sung as "select any note appropriate to the given rāga as *sthayī*. i.e., a base for melodic operation through *tānas*. Then consider four notes lying above it with due attention to the nature of the rāga i.e., *vakratva* (scalar curvature) and *varjyatva* (scalar gap i.e., omissible notes). Execute one *tāna* on each of these four notes in the ascent in the same order in which these notes occur in the rāga (*yathākramam*). Then execute one *tāna* on each of these selfsame four notes in descent in the reverse order. Then, reaching the above mentioned *sthayī* note, perform a little melodic elaboration, (*atāna? kañcidakalpya*) to rest on *mandraśadja* which is a *vinyāsa* for this performance. Finally, perform a concluding passage, *muktāyī*." ¹ Before the onset of *Caturdaṇḍī* tradition, *Ṭhāya* is seen as one of the aspects of rāga with the term *Sthāya* being used as its synonym. Saṅgītasamayāsāra of Pārśvadēva is the lakṣaṇagrantha which has met with the term *Ṭhāya* for the first time. He says "thesvaras constituting a phrase in rāga endowed with gamaka is *Ṭhāya*" ². Śāraṅgadēva in his work *Saṅgītaratnākara*, uses the word '*sthāya*' but not '*Ṭhāya*' and classifies *sthāyas* into 96 varieties. ³ Thus both the terms seem to have been elaborately delineated in the same period; 12th

¹Satyanarayana R, *Caturdandiprakashika of Veṅkaṭamakhi*- Vol 2, India Gandhi National Centre for Arts, NewDelhi, 2006, Page No. 374

²E B Saraswathy, 'A Study of *Ṭhāyas* and *Chittatānas*', Phd Thesis Submitted to University of Madras under the guidance of Dr. Seetha S, 1992, Page no.1

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and 13th Century and either Ṭhāya was a colloquial form of the term sthāya or the sthāya was a sanskritised form of Ṭhāya. Apart from the lakṣaṇagranthas there are lots of telugu palm leaf manuscripts are available, which is preserved in the Saraswati Mahal Library. As the mudras are not found in these pieces the authorship of these valuable pieces are unknown.

Ṭhāyas also seem to have been musical composition used in dance. Ṭhāyas along with *kauttuvamand prabandham* were dance items in temples. Vyjayanthimala Bali demonstrated these items during the Music festival in Music Academy, Madras on 31-12-87⁴. But it is very strange that a musical composition without a tala framework is being taken for dance. The Ṭhāyas she danced to are available in the book *Adi Bharata Kala Manjari* by Tanjavur Quartette⁵ (19th Century and published in 1964).

Apart from these, different meanings for the word Ṭhāya can be found in the book named ‘Ganabhaskaram’ by K V Sreenivasalyyengar. He states that Ṭhāya denotes grahabhedam. Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna has composed a tillāna which he has called “Rāga – Ṭhāya – Mālikātillāna” and he has himself rendered this tillāna during the Music Festival at the Madras Music Academy in December 1977⁶. Here, in this tillāna, there are five sections and each section is set in different rāgas and each rāga is based on the scale arrived through model shift of tonic. But the interpretations of the concept of grahabhedam of these scholars are deviating from the definitions given by Veṅkaṭamakhi.

STRUCTURE OF ṬHĀYA

As per the explanation given by Dr. V.Premalatha in her lecture-demonstration at Madras Music Academy conference held on 17th December 2022, states that⁷, “Ṭhāyas have particular structure. Ṭhāya consists of set of svarapassages that ends with a Muktāyī. Muktāyī is a very short section, consisting of 5 to 8 svara phrases, which ultimately ends on ṣaḍja. There is no title or sectional heading like Yaḍuppu or Makaraṇi (commencement) is found in any of the manuscripts”. But in *Caturdaṇḍīprakāśikā*, Veṅkaṭamakhi mentions about the structure of Ṭhāya as;⁸ “Ṭhāya has only one yaḍuppu; this is called Makaraṇi. Ṭhāya has only one sthayī note; any note occurring in the rāga may be made sthayī. Each sthayī note of the rāga has 2n tānas, where n is the number of notes (7 for sampūrṇa, 6 for ṣāḍava, and 5 for auḍava). But a Ṭhāya has a fixed number of tānas, viz. eight. Vartanisection of Ālāpa is called Makaraṇi whereas the yaḍuppusection of Ṭhāya is called Makaraṇi. Ṭhāya does not have a Vartani; it has only one Vidārī which is its concluding passage. The final part of sthayīvidhi has, like the Ṭhāya, a corpus of four tānas each on ascent and descent, but rests on the sthayī note itself, whereas the concluding passage in Ṭhāya rests on mandraṣaḍja”. In Manuscripts, Ālāpa have these sectional headings. Based on the notations in the Manuscripts, beginning of Ṭhāyam is marked with a distinctive phrase, which by and large ends with ṣaḍja. This distinctive phrase occurs frequently in the whole of the Ṭhāya.

E.g. A Ṭhāya in Bhūpālam

ggrrrgs | ssrrgrrs | srp | ggrrrgs | srp | ddppd | ggrrrgs |
srpdpdp | ggrrrgs | ssddp | ggrrrgs | ppg | ggrrrgs | d,ddd |
ggrrrgs | ssrrsdppd | sssds | rrgg | rgp,p | ddpp | ggrrrgs |
ssrrsd | pddp | ggrrrgs | sss |
Muktāyī
Sssrrrgrrr | ssrrsd | pdds | rrgrgs | grrgs | srss |

⁴E B Saraswathi, ‘A Study on ṭhāyasand ciṭṭatānas’, Phd Thesis Submitted to University of Madras under the guidance of Dr. Seetha S, 1992, Page no.10

⁵E B Saraswathi, ‘A Study on ṭhāyas and ciṭṭatānas’, Phd Thesis Submitted to University of Madras under the guidance of Dr. Seetha S, 1992, Page no.11

⁶E B Saraswathi, ‘A Study on ṭhāyas and ciṭṭatānas’, Phd Thesis Submitted to University of Madras under the guidance of Dr. Seetha S, 1992, Page no.11

⁷Premalatha V, “Understanding the form Ṭhāyam from Unpublished Manuscripts”, LecDem conducted by Music Academy, Madras on 17th December 2022

⁸Satyanarayana R, *Caturdaṇḍīprakāśikā* of Veṅkaṭamakhi- Vol 2, India Gandhi National Centre for Arts, NewDelhi, 2006, Page No. 374



Here, **gggrgrs** is the distinctive phrase or otherwise a common phrase. This distinctive phrase will be the main phrase of the Ṭhāya and the rest of the phrases will be added to it. In these Ṭhāyas there is no sthayī is mentioned i.e. a dot above or under the note can't be seen. Ṭhāyas are found with and without the 'tānam' syllables.

Some Ṭhāyas can be differentiate as SāraṇīṬhāyas and PakkasāraṇīṬhāyas. The common difference between these two Ṭhāyas is that the distinctive phrase (the repeating phrase) of SāraṇīṬhāyas ends on ṣaḍja or probably in the madhysthayī. But the distinctive phrase of PakkasāraṇīṬhāyas travels one or two svaras below ṣaḍja, probably in the mandrasthayī. An example given by Dr.V.Premalatha in her Lec Dem is:

Bhūpālam:SāraṇīṬhāya – **gggrgrs**

PakkasāraṇīṬhāya – **rsrsdp –dpdpdgr**

(Here, the mandra or tārasvara might be identified in a precise manner by observing the previous note)

In a Ṭhāya there will be atleast 7 to 12 lines. The svaraarrangements are always shortened ones which have a minimum of 2 to maximum of 8 to 12. The common phrase is kept as the base and the svaras or phrases are added to this for the melodic development. There is a gradual increase in the range of the svaras added in each line and the svaras are without long extensions. Towards the end it is covered with morephrases mostly with jaṅṭasvaras and is followed by Mukṭāyī. In the manuscripts,PakkasāraṇīṬhāyas doesn't consists of tāna syllables. But SāraṇīṬhāya may or may not consist of tāna syllables as sāhitya.

ṬHĀYAS and CIṬṬATĀNAS

From the description of Ṭhāyas, it is understood that Ṭhāyas are pre –set musical forms like KalpitaSaṅgīta in Carnatic Music. By observing the structure of different Ṭhāyas, it was found that Ṭhāyas have similarity withCiṭṭatānas which are small svara compositions with tāna syllabled playedon the Veenainstrument. Or in other hand, the structure of Ciṭṭatānas is influenced by Ṭhāyas. The outline structure of tānas available in manuscripts and books which are later called as Ciṭṭatānas in books of early 20th Century. In some books of early 20th Century like Saṅgīta Sat Sampradāya Dīpikā by Vinai S V ArangasamiAyyar in 1912, SaṅgītaSudhāmbudhi by K V SreenivasaAyyer in 1932, these typical tānas are titled as Chittatānas⁹. Chittatānas are also Pre- set ones.

INFERENCES

The study brought into some findings that,the descriptions for Ṭhāyas in Caturdaṇḍīprakshika are different from the data obtained from the manuscripts.Also,Ṭhāyas have different interpretations in different sources.Chittatānas are the developed form of Ṭhāyas which have same melodic values. Ṭhāyas are the combination of short duration of notes mostly with jaṅṭasvaras while chittatānas are concentrating on the wide range of svara patterns. But both are pre-composed ones.

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<https://youtu.be/Ksr0SpvuTHM>

⁹E B Saraswathi, 'A Study of Ṭhāyas and Ciṭṭatānas', Phd Thesis Submitted to University of Madras under the guidance of Dr. Seetha S, 1992. Page No. 25