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NANDANAR CHARITHRAM COMPOSITIONS AND THEIR POTENTIAL INFLUENCE ON HUMAN VALUES

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Abstract

A super busy family where a teenage child is seeking refuge on the internet, an elderly couple at an old aged home pining to meet their children for years, and a couple separating after years of marriage, with their children now sure that marriage is an evil !

Such situations are not uncommon nowadays and one of the prime reasons for these is the deterioration of Human Values. This calls for an immediate attention to all humans to tap into effective tools successfully used in the past for the mitigation of this situation. Music is one such tool for reinforcing Human Values. This study analyzes compositions from the Nandanar Charitram to highlight the Human Values they encapsulate .

The analysis of various compositions show that all the parameters like Raga, Laya, Sahitya and Bhava contribute to Human Values that range from surrender, satisfaction, and gratitude to celebration, passion , science and research

Keywords : Human Values, Music, Gopalakrishna Bharathi, Nandanar Charitram



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Introduction

Value can be defined in a layman's language as something which is worthy or important. The worthiness can be because of its utility, beauty or power to help us lead a good life. Human values are defined as those values which help man to live in happiness, peace and harmony with the world. Human Values are universal in nature and grounded in rationalism and acceptance.

“Human Value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence. A value-system is an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-state of existence along a continuum of relative importance” (Rokeach 1973:5).

“The *Sruti* and *Smriti* provide a general understanding of *Dharma* and *Adharma* which most of us have heard from childhood” (Tejomayananda 1994: 93). The essence of Humanism is handed down to us through various epics and in the epic Ramayana, the qualities of Rama stand out as a personification of Humanism (Rajagopalachari 2001).

“The characters from the *Puranas* show us the goal. The way to reach it is through the actual practice of prescribed *Karmas* “(Saraswathi 2014: 247).

We are shaped by life experiences and learnings from the day we are born. The behaviour of our parents, the examples set by our siblings and teachers, the kind of friends we make in school and the values they influence, all the above contribute to shaping our value system and thereby our behaviour. Good and bitter experiences can both shape our value system.



Depending on our life experiences and what we observe, read, and are taught, our value systems can diverge from those needed for peaceful coexistence

For humankind to coexist, sustain and progress, these human values need to be imbibed and practised by everyone. Such values are independent of time and space. When these universal values deteriorate, there is degradation of the quality of life. Hence Human Values need to be reinforced time and again

Music has the necessary attraction and the right vibrations for the mind, heart and soul to receive the human value reinforcement easily. Even without any explicit message, the vibrations of music can put us at peace. Music creates an instant environment of receptivity to Human Value Reinforcement

“Art experience is well adapted to arouse our interest in the ideal state by giving us foretaste of it, and thus to serve as a powerful incentive to the pursuit of that state. By provisionally fulfilling the need felt by man for restful joy, art experience may impel him to do his utmost to secure such joy finally” (Hiriyanna 1997: 32).

This study will help musicologists, practitioners, teachers, students, and rasikas alike in enjoying, communicating, and benefiting from the compositions, with increased awareness of the Human Values they can potentially influence. This will in turn help mitigate the Human Value crisis we face time and again

Nandanar Charithram



Gopalakrishna Bharathi of the nineteenth century was a well known Tamil music composer. He has written a musical drama called “Nandanar Charithram” , to be used in singing the songs and thereby relating the story. This form of art performance is called Harikatha

The following is the story of Nandanar in brief. In the Chozha country, in a small village called Aathanoor, Nandanar was born in a dalit caste called Pulayan. He was living as a slave labourer to a Brahmin land lord. Their caste was engaged in the making of drums using animal skin.

Nandanar also made strings for string instruments like Veena and Yaazh, and skin covering for instruments like Berigai. From a very early age Nandanar was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, though his people worshipped village Gods like Karuppan, and Chamundi. Once, along with some of his people he went to a temple called Thirupungur which was near his village. As Dalits, they were not supposed to enter the temple. Nandanar however wanted to have a glimpse of God.

The idol of the big bull Nandi, which normally is in front of Lord Shiva in Shiva temples, was not allowing him to have a glimpse of Lord Shiva. When Nandanar requested Lord Shiva, he made Nandi slightly move away and allow Nandanar to see his Lord. Nandanar was ecstatic. In Thirupungur he heard about the great Nataraja temple at Chidambaram. He wanted to go there and see the Lord. Daily he used to tell his people that he would go to Chidambaram temple the next day (Nalai poven in Tamil) and people around him teasingly called him as Thiru Nalai povaar (The divine one who will go tomorrow). But for that, he had to get permission from his master. His own caste people, including the senior most members of his caste, were against this idea. His master also was not willing to permit him as he thought that it was against the caste norms prevailing at that time. But once, he permitted him to go, provided he cultivated his huge cultivable land in one day. It is believed that as per instructions of Lord Shiva , Lord Ganapathi



did it in a night. The master of Nandanar realized his mistake and he too wanted to know about the Lord from him. The Brahmin priests received him and took him inside the temple in a palanquin. It seems Nandanar became a streak of light and joined the God. The story of Nandanar is mentioned in the Sthala Puranam of Chidambaram. Nandanar has been included as one of the 63 Nayanmars who are worshipped in all Shiva temples as the most blessed devotees of the Lord.

Some of his famous songs are as follows

1. “Sivaloga NATHanai Kandu SEvithidivom VAreer” – where Nandanar gathers his people to worship Lord Shiva.

2. “Vazhi maRaiththirukkudhE malaipOIE oru mADu paDuththirukkudhE” - This bull, the size of a mountain, is lying there and blocking my view of the Lord, sung when Nandanar visits Thirupungur while standing outside the temple premises.

3. Unable to stand this, the Cosmic Lord orders Nandi, the bull to move (“Satre vilagi irum piLLAy—just move a bit, my son!), lest Nandanar, an ardent devotee, should get angry..

4. Nandanar’s incessant pining to visit Chidambaram --“Chidambaram pOgAmal iruppEnO?” – Shall I spend my lifetime here without visiting Chidambaram?) and his daily ranting that he will visit Chidambaram “tomorrow”.

5. “VaruvArO varam tharuvArO endhan manadhu sanchalikkudhaiyyE” where he is patiently waiting everyday for the Lord’s order — (Will He appear and give me the boon?)



6. "Uththaran thaarum aiye – Enakkoruvarumillai Paragadhiadaya" – Where Nandanar seeks permission from his landlord to go to Chidambaram..

7. "VarugalamO Ayya, Nan Undhan Arugil Nindru Kondadavum Padavum – Ange"- At Chidambaram, Nandhanar asks Lord Natraja whether he could enter the temple.

8. "Kanda Mani Aduthu – Adhaik Kandu Pinivaduthu" – when Nandanar arrives at the border of Chidambaram..

9. "Enneneramum Undhan Sannidhiyile Nan Irruka Vendum Ayya , Ponayya" – Upon reaching Chidambaram, Nandanar longs to be with the Lord..

10. "Iyye Metha Kadinam" – where Nandhanar responds to his Landlord's requests him to be his preacher..

Results

Analysis of Compositions and their Potential Influence On Human Values

In this paper , the author analyses the following two compositions from Nandanar Charitram for Human Values

Song : SivalOka nAthanaik kaNDu Raga : Mayamalavagowla Tala : Rupaka

Sahitya

Pallavi:

sivalOka nAthanaik kaNDu sEvittiduvOm vArIr



Anupallavi:

bhava bhayangaLaip pOkki avar parama padattaik koDuppar - anda

CaraNam 1:

aRpa sukhattai ninaindOm aran tiruvaDi maRandOm

kaRpitamAna prapancamidaik kAnal jalampOIE eNNi

CaraNam 2:

Asaik kaDalil vizhundOm adAl aRivukkaRivai izhandOm

pAsam agalum vazhippaDAmal paritavikkum pAviyAnOm

CaraNam 3:

mAniDa janmam koDuttAr tannai vaNangak karangaL aLittAr

tEnum pAlum pOIE senRu tEraDiyil ninRukoNDu

Meaning

Pallavi: Let us go and worship the lord of SivalOkam (at tiruppunkUr)

Anupallavi: He will eliminate the misery of repeated births and grant us entry into his own abode.



CaraNam 1: We were thinking only about our personal petty comforts but we did not remember to worship his holy feet. Let us think of this transitory world as a mirage (and go worship the lord).

CaraNam 2: We were immersed in the ocean of desire and hence lost our clear senses. Without knowing a way out of the bondage we became helpless creatures.

CaraNam 3: The lord gave us our human births. He gave us our hands to worship him (with folded hands). Let us all go like honey and milk together near the entrance (where the temple chariot is parked) to the temple and worship the lord

Human Values

sivalOka nAthanaik kaNDu sEvittiduvOm vArIr -> Service and Influence

The line here reflects two important values of Service and Influence

Though Nandanar refers to service to Lord Siva on seeing him, this is just a means to enunciate the need for service to mankind. Nandanar himself exemplified such service

Nanadanar was longing to go to Chidambaram but he did not want to benefit alone from the joy of getting to see the Lord. He extols all his co-villagers to join him, and using various analogies manages to influence them to join him

bhava bhayangaLaip pOkki avar parama padattaik koDuppAr -> Fearlessness and Peace

Parama Padam refers to the highest position in life. When we surrender to a larger force that has created us, the worldly fears disappear and we get peace



aRpa sukhattai ninaindOm aran tiruvaDi maRandOm -> Gratitude and Discernment

We get attracted to transitory happiness through enjoyment of the senses, and in the process lose the ability to judge or discern as to what is right and permanent. We also forget to be grateful for simple things like our breath and heartbeat which are still keeping us alive . We belittle the pains taken by our parents to bring us up and fail to live in gratitude. The feet of the Lord is a way to take us back to gratitude and discernment

kaRpitamAna prapancamidaik kAnal jalampOIE eNNi -> Acceptance and Influence

Nandanar exhorts us to treat this worldly existence as a mirage . In essence, he requests us to accept whatever life has to offer because acceptance will let us focus and live a better life

Asaik kaDalil vizhundOm adAl aRivukkaRivai izhandOm -> Detachment and Wisdom

Nandanar tells us that we are caught in the web of expectations and desires, instead we should be detached from the happenings around us, and thus we will obtain the wisdom to handle the toughest of situations

pAsam agalum vazhippaDAmal paritavikkum pAviyAnOm -> Clarity and Control

Clarity is attained when we leave the attachments and desires . We can then see the way forward in life. Instead of struggling, we will achieve control over our life.

mAniDa janmam koDuttAr tannai vaNangak karangaL aLittAr -> Humanity and Gratitude



Nandanar says that service to humanity is service to self . Folded hands refers to the value of being grateful at all times to what has been given to us and to those who help us in everyday life

tEnum pAlum pOIE senRu tEraDiyil ninRukoNDu -> Collaboration ,Hope, Faith

Honey and milk together gives added taste. Similarly if everyone comes together for a good cause, there will be added good done to society and life. When we wait for a glimpse of the Lord, that signifies hope and faith

Musical Analysis

The Raga *Mayamalavagowla* beautifully embodies the essence of the values.

The start *PP-MPDP-MGM* briga phrase adds instant emphasis on Service and Influence.

GMG,MPM,PDP,DND,SNS prayoga in sEvithiduvOm is a really inviting tune for influence

DPM,M,M, MGPMM,,, in Arpa Sukhathai Ninaindhom is a very peaceful use of madhyama laden phrases to signify how pointless material pursuit is.

D,D NDD, DNSRS in Thenum Paalum POle senRu is an amalgamating tune to rightly signify the collaboration that the lyrics suggests



Song : ennEramum undan sannidiyilE Raga : Devagandhari Tala : Adi 2 Kalai

Sahitya

Pallavi

ennEramum undan sannidiyilE nAn

irukka vENdum aiyA! ponnaiyA

Anupallavi

tennancOlai tazhaikkum ten puliyUr

ponnamba lattarasE en arasE (ennEramum)

CaraNam 1

disai eNgaNum pugazhum sivagangaiyum

dEva sabhaiyum sivakAmi darisanamum

pasi koDAdu pArtta pErkku kalakkangaL

paRandiDa magizhndu unnai pADikkoNDu (ennEramum)

CaraNam 2

pancAkshara paDiyum koDikkambamum

kOvil azhagum aridAna ragasiyamum

anjala kURum vIra maNigal Osaiyum



andakkaraNa mayakkam tIrndu pAdikkoNDu (ennEramum)

CaraNam 3

sheela maruvum teruvum tirukkUTTamum

devarulagil kiDaiyAda adisayamum

bAlakrishnan paNiyum pAdam bhavamenum

bhayangaL tIrndu malargal tUvit tozhudu koNDu (ennEramum)

Meaning:

Pallavi: I want to be in front of your sanctum always, my Lord, the golden one!

Anupallavi: My lord, who dances in the golden hall of tenpuliyUr (Chidambaram) which is surrounded by fertile coconut groves, you are my lord.

CaraNam1: There is the famous pond Sivagangai, the hall of the celestials, the sanctum of goddess SivakAmi, the sight of these will quench the hunger of the devotees and drive away their worries. With pleasure I have to sing your praise in front of your sanctum.

CaraNam2: The steps representing the panchAksharam (na-ma-si-vA-ya), the flagpole, the beauty of the temple environs, the cryptic secret (known as chidambara rahasiyam), and the chimes of the bells are enchanting and dispel the fear of darkness and ignorance. I want to sing your praise, my lord!



CaraNam3: Dignified streets and learned people, the wonders which may not be even in the heavens are here. Balakrishnan worships your feet which will eliminate the cycle of birth and death. I want to offer you flowers and worship singing your praise.

Human Values

ennEramum undan sannidiyilE nAn irukka vENdum -> Desire, Surrender

The values that are seen here are desire and surrender. Desire is not necessarily a bad thing. Desire for good things that bring happiness to all is good and here the desire of Nandanar is to be in front of God's sanctum at all times. The inner meaning is to live a daily life based on values that can lead to a happy life for all. Surrendering to a good cause brings peace in life

tennancOlai tazhaikkum ten puliyUr ponnamba lattarasE -> Nature, Celebration

The coconut groves immediately take the listener to the visual beauty of nature . The assembly of Lord Nataraja is also synonymous to dance and hence celebration is a value that is expressed here

disai eNgaNum pugazhum sivagangaiyum -> Omnipresence and Fame

Here sivaganga refers to the holy tank of sivaganga, Omnipresence is an important value. Like the pure waters of sivaganga, our love and devotion and all other positive qualities should spread far and wide. These should be expressed independent of time and place. Our fame should also be pure and this fame should arise out of good qualities.

pasi koDAdu pArta pErkku kalakkangaL paRandiDa - Satisfaction and Music



Nandanar says that by being near the Lord (i.e. by being near goodness), even hunger will disappear because being as virtuous as the Lord is the way to happiness. Music is also expressed as a value here because the vibrations of music can ensure well being

pancAkshara paDiyum koDikkambamum -> Focus and Awareness

The flag post signifies milestones, the steps signify the path, and panchakshara can also be likened to pancha bhutas (earth, sky, water, fire, air) . Together they represent a focussed march towards the goals of life with awareness

aridAna ragasiyamum -> Wisdom, Truth, Energy

The Chidambaram Rahasya or secret of Chidambaram is a Hindu belief that there is a secret message conveyed through the embossed figure near the shrine of Shiva in the Chidambaram Temple. The form and formless combination of the blissful dance of Siva, and the energy of Shakti, represent the change from ignorance to wisdom and truth

sheela maruvum teruvum tirukkUTTamum devarulagil kiDaiyAda adisayamum -> Trust and Attraction

The values of unquestioned trust on the Lord and the power of attraction in a place full of humility and devotion is clearly mentioned

Musical Analysis

The Raga Devagandhari gives the much needed devotional base to express the total surrender expressed in the lyrics.



The *SN2DNI*, *DP* phrase and *MPDPD* capture this beautifully in the first line itself.

In the Charanams, the *RPMP* and *RMGR* help express the path and then in the next line *MPDPD* and *DSRSR* help express the path leading to the goal .

The *SND*, *NDP*, *MGR*, *MPDPD*, avarohanam descent in the last part of the charanas help convey the flying away of hunger due to the bhakti

Conclusion

From the above compositions we see that through various symbolisms, the Nandanar Charitram compositions by Gopalakrishna Bharati try to bring out the essence and importance of the core Human Values. Nandanar himself exemplified *Determination , Hope, Simplicity and Humility* and this is reflected in his compositions.

The first composition **SivalOka nAthanaik kaNDu** highlights the values of *Service, Influence, Fearlessness, Peace, Gratitude, Discernment, Acceptance, Detachment, Wisdom, Clarity, Control, Humanity, Gratitude, Collaboration, Hope and Faith*

The second composition suggests *Desire, Surrender, Nature, Celebration, Omnipresence, Fame, Satisfaction, Music , Focus, Awareness, Wisdom, Truth and Energy* as Human Values.

Thus we see that Values go much beyond those that are used in common parlance. Melody, rhythm and meaningful words can help take these Human Values beyond the senses, into the core of the human being, thereby potentially reinforcing them to help all lead a good life.



Understanding these values messaged through the music and lyrics of the compositions can enhance the performance and also bring about transformational change in the singers, listeners , teachers ,students, and any human being.

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