



Thiruvananthapuram Depicted in Musical Compositions

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Abstract

Thiruvananthapuram is one among the seats of Karnatic music. The city has provided many musicians and composers from decades. Maharaja Swathi Thirunal is considered to be the first among them who popularised the city through his compositions. 'Syanandoorapura', Anantapura, Seshapura etc are the names provided within the compositions which also act as a sthala mudra. This work is a study of compositions composed with the mudra of Thiruvanthapuram, with special focus to Swathi Thirunal krithis. The etymology of the word and the ways in which it has been incorporated within the krithis both structurally and melodically have been dealt in detail. As a recent contribution, a composition of Shri Chitravina N Ravikiran has also been taken for the study in which Thiruvananthapuram is described as one among the 108 divya desham.

Key words: Syanandurapuram, Swathi Thirunal, Mudras, Utsava Prabandham, Lord Padmanabha.

Introduction

Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala contributes a major share in bringing forefront some of South India's best music as well as musicians and composers from decades. Beginning from Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, there are quite a number of composers from Travancore which later came under this name. Some of them include, Irayimman Thampi, Kutti Kunju Thankachi and K.C. Keshava Pillai. Later many institutions of music were established to embellish the musical culture of the city. The music festival at the Navarathri mandapam itself praises the glory of this divine city. Presently, Kuthira malika, a uniquely wonderful example of traditional architecture holds the annual Swathi Thirunal music festival which again acts as an honour.

But, only few krithis mention the name of the city. Not all the composers of the place referred the city in their compositions. Swathi Thirunal comes first to bring more of the city name in his Krithis of Lord Padmanabha. Two varnams of Palakkad Parameshwara Bhagavathar in Natta and Gowla remark about Syanandurapura, in anupallavi and charanam respectively. There are many compositions of various composers which mentions the adjacent places of the city like Palkulangara as "Ksheera taTaka taTe" in Pahi Nikhila Janani of Irayimman Thampi in Natta and Sreekanteshvaram again by Swathi in his Krithi Palayamamayi Bho in Khamas. This work focusses exclusively on the compositions of Swathi Thirunal which give the sthala mudra or sthala nama of Thiruvananthapuram.

A brief introduction about mudra- In musical compositions, the word mudra refers to the impress or mark proclaiming a certain fact. They serve to reveal facts like the authorship, its raga, tala, type, nayaka, etc. The mudra is so cleverly introduced as to maintain a continuity of sense in the sahitya. The beauty underlying the weaving of the mudra into the texture of the sahitya can be felt only when the composition is sung. Valuable internal evidences are furnished by some mudras. Barring some exceptions, it is not obligatory on the part of a composer to introduce any



or all the admissible mudras in a musical composition. The term mudra in common parlance means a seal, stamp, print, mark or badge. Shri P. Sambamoorthy in his book South Indian Music (vol5) classifies mudras in 18 varieties. In this, Stala mudra or Kshetra mudra is a case wherein the name of the shrine in praise of which the song is composed, is introduced in the sahitya.

This work comes under more of Sthala mudra, which discusses different names for the city. It is seen that Swathi Thirunal uses more of synonyms for the name Thiruvananthapuram or Syanandurapuram, which are like Syanandura, Sheshapura, Anantapura, Ananta nagara, Shanta Phanishwara nagara, Bhujagadhipapura, Pannagarajapura and Bhogipura. No composition refers the word as 'Thiruvananthapuram' by itself.

Etymology

The actual time period of the name Thiruvananthapuram came into existence is unknown. There are various thoughts which are still under debate. It is believed that Lord MahaVishnu reclines on the thousand headed serpent Ananthan in the milk ocean. With respects to the Ananthan's Puram (city), 'Tiru' was added, which made it to be as Thiruvananthapuram. This is the belief in general. But there are also people who argues that it was a Jain temple before and the name came to be from the Jaina Mahapurusha 'Aanandan'.

Vaishnavakavi Nammalvar, who was supposed to live in A.D.9, is the first to mention about the temple. So, the initial information about the Padmanabha Swamy temple and Thiruvananthapuram have been from literatures. Shukasandesham, Syanandurapurana samuchayam, Anantapura varnanam, Unnineeli sandesham are some important ones among these. But still, in these the name Thiruvananthapuram is not mentioned. There are justifications saying, by the meaning as the city always fulfilled with happiness, it is named as Anandapuram. Infront of that when 'Shree' was added it came to be as Shree Anandapuram and with time it got condensed as Syananduram. From 1375 onwards, all the documents regarding the temple mentions the name as Thiruvananthapuram, but it is also said that the name got started to be used only after the coming of Europeans. Prof Dr V.S. Sharma in his book 'Shri Swathi Thirunal Jeevithavum Krithikalum' says that the name syanaduram for Thiruvananthapuram was held from the time of puranas. 150th ghanam of Varaha purana is Syanandura mahatmyam, in which its 3rd and 28th slokam refers this name. Swathi Tirunal himself has a prabhandha named "Syanandurapura varnana prabandham" which describe details regarding The Padmanabha swamy temple.

Utsava prabhandham of Swati Thirunal gives an idea of the formation of stala namams. Slokam 5 goes like this

syAnandUramitennahO krtayugE nAmnA prasiddham punaS-

CAAnandAhvayamAtrilOka viditam trEtAyugattingalum

jnAnaprApakamAmanatapuramen- nEtadvidur dvAparE

sAnandam nanu padmanAbhamiti Ca prAhuhu kalua mAnavAha

Which means, during the kritayuga, this city was known as syAnandUra: in trEtAyuga it was popular in all the three worlds as Anandapura. In DvApara yuga it was known as Anantapura. In this Kaliyuga it is known as PadmanAbhapura.

The slokam 4 of Utsava prabhandham is also valid in this context which gives information about the formation of anantapura.

munnam divAkara yatIshwara pUrnabhaktyA- nandiccu nIlamukil varnanamEya kAntyA

minnunna pAvana vimAnavarE viLaNNI dhanyam CakAra puramEtadanantasamjnam



which means, long long ago, you were made happy by the implicit devotion of the sage Divakara. Therefore, with your form resembling the dark clouds and on your shining sacred heavenly vehicle- VimAna, you created this Anantapura.

As mentioned in an earlier paragraph, the name Aanandapuram is believed to be derived as the city which always bestows happiness, the same idea is again brought out by Swati Thirunal in his krithi PankajanAbhAghOsham in mohanam. The third and fourth charanam lines are:

3. vipaNikaLilum gEhangaLilum vIdhi ChatvArAdikaLilum
aparimitAnandattOdu lOKar sarasAlApakautuka sannimagnarAyum

4. nAnAvitAnajAlattAl lOKa nAthAn tannAlayamellAm

UnamenniyE yalankarichum punaRAnandapuramennorabhidha satyamAyatum.

Which means, people happily enjoy themselves by meeting in places like shopping arcades and houses. The temple of the lord is decorated grandly. Thus, the name Aanandapura is most befitting to the city.

From all the literature sources above, it is understood that Syanandurapuram was the name popularly called for the present-day Thiruvananthapuram.

Study in Detail

The krithis on Lord Padmanabha are the ones with the sthala mudra of Thiruvananthapuram. 24 among them have the mudra in various names. They are listed below:

No	Krithi	Raga	Stala mudra	Anga located
1	BhaktapArayana	Shankarabharanam	SyAnandurapura	3 rd charanam
2	Bhogindra shAyinam	Kuntala varali	Anantapura	2 nd charanam
3	MamavAshrita	Bhavapriya	ShAnta Phanishvara nagara	3 rd charanam
4	NityamAshraye	Reetigowla	BhujagAdhipa pura	Anupallavi
5	PadmAnabha pAhi	Hindolam	SyAnandurapura	2 nd charanam
6	PAhimAm sree padmanabha	Saveri	SyAnandurapura	3 rd charanam
7	PAhi pankajanAbha	asaveri	SyAnandura vimalapura	3 rd charanam
8	PAhi srIpate	hamsadwani	SyAnandurapura	3 rd charanam
9	PAlaya pankajanAbha	Ghanta	SyAnandurapura	15 th charanam
10	RInamadanuta	behag	PannagarAjapura	1 st charanam
11	Sri padmanAbha	madyamavathi	SyAnandura	3 rd charanam
12	SrIsha padmanAbha	kamas	SyAnandurapura	4 th charanam
13	Santatam bhajAmiha	bilahari	SyAnandura	pallavi
14	SarOjanAbha	chakravakam	ShEshapura	pallavi
15	SAhasarata	devamanohari	BhOgipura	charanam
16	SAmOdham chintayAmi	udayaravichandrika	SyAnandura nagari	3 rd charanam
17	SARasa lochana	kalyani	ShEshapuri	3 rd charanam
18	VanajAksham	madyamavathi	SyAnandurapura	3 rd charanam
19	SEvE shrikAntham	Mohana kalyani	SyAnandurapura	3 rd charanam



20	SEvE shri padmanAbha	mohanam	SyAnandura	4 th charanam
21	SEvE syAnandUrEshvara	kalyani	SyAnandura	pallavi
22	Paramapurusha	vasanta	SyAnandurapura	3 rd charanam
23	RInamadAdrita	Sri	ShEshapuri	pallavi
24	Satatam samsmarAniha	nilambari	SyAnandura	pallavi

Among these Paramapurusha is a Mangalam, RInamadArita is a ghana raga krithi and Satatam samsmarAniha is a navavidha bhakti krithi in the type smaranam. All these are Sanskrit compositions. But there are also 2 manipravala krithis in the Utsava Prabandham which gives the sthala mudra. They are, SyAnandUrEshan in kurinji, which is in the fifth day and SarasijanAbha nin in sourashtram for the 10th day. In this krithi alone the name is mentioned as Ananta nagare.

From the above table, it can be noted that the greatest number of krithis name it as Syanandurapuram. It aligns to form different meanings like the lord of the city, the lord who dwells in the city, abide in the city, eternal light shining in the city, solace to the people in the city and so on. The selection of names can be according to the metre available in each talam. Krithis are set in all common talams.

Something special noted is that, as mentioned in the history of formation of names, the name Anantapura was used in Dvapara yugam for the city. So, in some of the krithis which has mentioning of the incidents of that particular era, the city is not named as Syanandurapura, apart names with other synonyms of Anantapura are used. RInamadanuta in behag is an example. From that itself it is clear how much importance the composer has given for each detailing. 2 krithis and mangalam end with the word having the city name.

Since most of the names occur in the charanam of the krithis, the melodic phrases given for it are generally focussed on the amsha swarams of that particular ragams like gandharam in shankarabharanam or madhyamam in hindolam. The swaraksharam given for the mudra shanta phanishvara (SNDPN) in the Kriti Mamavashrita and the arohanam shown as a phrase for the mudra sheshapuralaya (SRGMP, DN) in Sarojanabha adds beauty to the melody.

A Recent Contribution

Thiruvananthapuram is one among the 108 Divya desham in Vaishnava tradition. Shri Chitravina N Ravikiran, recently composed 108 Divya Desha Gaanaamrtam, a set of 108 krithis on each of the divya desham. The krithi on Thiruvananthapuram is in ragam Gangeyabhooshani set to Adi talam.

P

tiru mihu anantapuram alankarikkum
karu mEgha vaNNanai nADuvOm

A

tiruvALan tAmarai nAbhan divA-
kara muni kaLikka darishanam aLitta

C

nammAzhwArum swAti tirunAL mudal
emmAnavarum pOTRi pADiya
pemmAnivanE maRavAdE (i) enRum (ii) nara-
simmAdi vEShan ravi shashiyOr nEshan

Meaning:

Let us seek the dark hued Vishnu, who is the great ornament to the city of Anantapuram.



One who is the husband of Lakshmi, he is Padmanabha who gives his vision to the sage Divakara.

He is the Lord who has been praised by devotees including Nammalvar and Swati Tirunal. Do not forget him any day, the one who also took the incarnation of Narasimha and he is the friend of Sun and the moon. The concluding phrase Ravi Sasi also indicates the VaGGEyaKArAmudra.

The krithi is in tamil and it entirely has the second rhyme syllable. It mentions the sthala mudra as 'Tiru mihu anantapuram', which is much closer to the present name.

Conclusion

As mentioned, this work only focuses on the sthala mudra of the city in particular. There are also terms in many compositions of different composers which shows the identity of earlier Thiruvananthapuram, like to say 'Vanci', the dynasty which ruled and the name of the king. But that would be denoting more of the kingdom of Travancore than the city Thiruvananthapuram.

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