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CONCEPT OF GROUP KRITIS – AN INSIGHT

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Abstract

Kriti is a format of musical composition typical to Carnatic music. Kritis form the mental backbone of any typical Carnatic music concert and is longer format of Carnatic song. The term kriti is widely regarded as being synonymous with *kirtana*, although some scholars make a distinction and reserve kriti for the more differentiated form of art music. Any simple devotional song is referred to as *kirtana*, *pada* or *devarnama*.

In this article we shall see how the Group kritis have been handled by few of the composers and in what aspects they vary.

Keywords : Kriti, Group kritis, Trinity compositions, Kriti Analysis, Kshetra kritis.

Introduction

Group kritis or samudayakritis are set of songs composed on a particular theme, or particular deity. Also known as “Vargaracanas” the compositions in the group kritis may be usually five or nine. The kritis have been compiled as group kritis based on Raga, place where it has been composed, on a single deity and “Vibhakti”(The various cases that occur in the declination of a noun). These kritis could have been grouped by the composer or could have been grouped later based on a common basis by the successors or scholars.



Let us dwell into of these creative works of few of the composers.

Concept of Pancharatnam :

Pancharatnamkritis are a set of five kritis grouped based on the Gana raga classification or according to the Kshetras where it is composed. Tyagaraja's *Gana raga pancharatnam* are referred to as Pancharatnam in general. Though it is difficult to say that these kritis were grouped by Tyagaraja it could have been later grouped based on the concept of Ghana ragas. These are the ragas whose individuality is brought out by playing "Madhyama kala" or tanam. Given the importance of tanam playing especially among vainikas .it is interesting to see that the concept of ghana ragas is more evolved among the practitioner of the instrument. But apart from that Tyagaraja himself has composed kritis in various kshetras that are grouped as pancharatnam. Those are:

1. Kovurpancharatnam or kshetrakritis
2. Sriranga pancharatnam or kshetrakritis
3. Tiruvottiyurpancharatnam or kshetrakritis
4. Lalgudipancharatnam or kshetrakritis

Though the Ghana raga pancharatnams resemble the varna composition there are many differences to show that they are two different types of compositions with certain similarities. The ghana raga pancharatnams as a whole stand separately with their special characteristics. The genius of the composer is represented in a unique manner in these five gems.

Vina kuppier disciple of Tyagaraja is also said to have composed a ragamalika where the Pallavi anupallavi and mukhtayiswaram are in the first set of Ghana ragas and the charanam and chittaiswaras are sequentially in second set of ghana ragas like the Narayanagowla ,Ritigowla, Bowli and Kedaram.

Gopalakrishna bharathi'sghana raga kritis:



Apart from Tyagaraja, composers like Gopalakrishna Bharathi who was a contemporary of tyagaraja and inspired by Tyagarajas Gana raga pancharatnam is said to have composed pancharatnam on lord shiva . he is a well known composer of the Vidutikirtanas in tamil and the opera Nandanarcharitam.

When he visited tyagaraja in the year 1841 he listened to the latter's disciples rendering some of the kritis which included the Pancharatnam. Once he went back to mayavaram he composed five kritis in the ghana ragas in praise of lord shiva.

The following are the set of five kritis composed by Gopalakrishna Bharathi:

1. Arakara Siva sankara in the ragamNata set to Rupaka thalam
2. Saranagathiendrunambi in the ragam Goula set to Adi thalam
3. Piravadhavaramthaarum in the ragam Arabhi set to Adi thalam
4. Adiya Padhame in the ragam Varali set to Adi thalam
5. Maravamaleppadiyum in the ragam Sri set to Adi thalam

Though they are in the gana ragas they differ from the structure of the pancharatnams. They are like in a normal kriti format having pallavi, anupallavi and a charanam. The Varali kritis has three charanams each with eight lines. Unlike the ghana raga pancharatnam they are not in swara sahitya pattern.

Pancharatnamsof modern age composers:

1. PuthucodeKrishnamoorthy's Devi Pancharatnam

Devi pancharatnam composed by Puthucode Krishnamoorthy was sequenced like that of Tyagaraja pancharatnam starting from nattai to Sri raga. He stuck to the format of swara patterns subsequently but unlike Tyagaraja pancharatnam the kritis are set in different talas. All these kritis are in Malayalam.

The following are the kritis in Devi Pancharatnam:



Kriti	Ragam	Thalam
1.Janani ninthiruvadi	Nattai	Adi
2. Kanivodu	Gaula	Roopakam
3.Sree vidya swaroopini	Arabhi	Misra chapu
4.Thamasam thellumini	Varali	Khanda chapu
5.Sarva Mangalam tharum	Sri	Misra jampa

2. Cuddalore .M. Subramaniam

Another modern age composer who has composed around 600 compositions including kritis in 72 melakarthis. Cuddalore Subramaniam has composed pancharatnam exclusively on Goddess Rajarajeshwari. These compositions are not in Ghana ragas but in rakthi ragas like Ananda bhairavi ,Sahana.

These compositions are said to be composed during the Navarthri and many references to Lalitha sahasranamam is made in the sahitya of the kritis. Though not composed in Ghana ragas the format of the kritis are similar to Tyagaraja pancharatnam where the Pallavi and Anupallavi are followed by multiple charanams. The charanams are also sung in the swara sahitya format. The last charanam is set to khanda nadai in all the five compositions.

The following are the compositions in Rajarajeshwari pancharatnam:

Kriti	Ragam	Thalam
1.Shri rajarajeshwarishankari	Hamsadhvani	Adi
2. Shri rajarajeshwarichithrupini	Anandha bhairavi	Adi
3.Shri rajarajeshwarikadhambavanavasini	Mohanam	Adi
4.Shri rajarajeshwarishivashankari	Sahana	Adi
5.Shrirajarajeshwari chandrakaladharu	Madhyamavathi	Adhi



Concept of grouping as Nine :

Navavarnakritis:

The Navavarna pooja forms the mantric and tantric ritualistic part of devi worship associated with srichakra pooja. An avarna may be understood as a covering , a veil that must be removed in order to reach the supreme shakthi residing at the center point.

The Navavarna pieces of Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Venkata kavi are one of the best works in Carnatic music. These compositions bring out the composer's expertise melodic, rhythmic and literary skills. Though both the composers have composed the Navavarna they differ in few aspects like the deity, thalam, and the ragas handled.

Though the main pieces are 9 in number, both Venkata Kavi and Dikshitar have composed a preliminary worship piece (dhyana kriti) and a concluding auspicious piece (mangalakrti/phalastuti). Venkata Kavi has also composed a piece on Lord Vinayaka, Sri Ganeshwara (Shankmukhapriya) where he specifically refers to this Lord as 'srividyanabodhakara' while Dikshitar's Sri Mahaganapatiravatamam (Gowla) is taken to be the Vinayaka stuti for his Navavarana set presumably because it mentions Tiruvarur through the phrase, 'kamalalayatataviharo'.

Dikshitar chose heavy ragas like Todi, Shankarabharanam, Kambhodhi, Kalyani, Bhairavi and also added some rakti ragas like Sahana, Ghanta, Anandabhairavi, Ahiri and Punnagavarali. While Venkata Kavi chose rakti ragas like Anandabhairavi, Punnagavarali, Nadanamakriya, and a couple of rare ones like Deshakshi and Balahamsa and used a ghana raga like Kalyani only one piece (Dhyana stuti).

Dikshitar opts for talas in the Sapta tala system like Mishra Jhampa, Khanda Ata, Tishra Triputa etc. It should be noted that many of Dikshitar's tala choices were based on the kind of chakra that he was focusing on. For example, the 4th song in Kambodhi is based on Sarvasowbhagyadayaka chakra symbolized by 14 triangles and he used the 14-unit Khanda Ata for this.

Venkata Kavi opted to compose in rare talas from the 35 tala system such as Khanda Triputa (9 units), Khanda Dhruvam (17-units) and Sankeerna Matyam (20 units). He has also indulged in



gatibhedam (shift of gait) in his Madhyamavati piece, Shankari where he flits back and forth from Chaturashra (4 units) and Tishra (3 units). In his piece in Hindolam, Sadanandamayi, he has employed another remarkable innovation - change of kalai in the charanam.

The following are the Navavarnams of Dikshitar and Oothukadu Venkata kavi:

KamalambaNavavaranams Of Muthuswami Dikshitar

Song	Raga	Tala	Remarks
Sri Mahaganapatiravatumam	Gowla	Mishra Chapu	Vinayaka stuti
Kamalambike	Todi	Tishra Ekam	Dhyana stuti
Kamalamba	Anandabhairavi	Mishra Chapu	1st avaranam
Kamalambambhajare	Kalyani	Adi	2nd avaranam
Sri Kamalambikaya	Shankarabharanam	Tishra Ekam	3rd avaranam
Kamalambikayai	Kambhodhi	Khanda Atam	4th avaranam
Sri Kamalambayah	Bhairavi	Mishra Jhampa	5th avaranam
Kamalambikayah	Punnagavarali	Tishra Ekam	6th avaranam
Sri Kamalambikayam	Sahana	Tishra Triputa	7th avaranam
Sri Kamalambike	Ghanta	Adi	8th avaranam
Sri Kamalamba	Ahiri	Tishra Ekam	9th avaranam
Sri Kamalambike	Sri	Khanda Ekam	

Kamakshi Navavaranam Of Oothukkadu Venkata Kavi

Song	Raga	Tala	Remarks
Sri Ganeshwara	Shanmukhapriya	Adi	Vinayaka stuti
Vanchayasiedikushalam	Kalyani	Adi	Dhyana stuti
Santatamahamseve	Deshakshi	Adi	1st avaranam
Bhajaswasritripurasundari	Nadanamakriya	Adi	2nd avaranam
Sarva jeevadayapari	Shuddhasaveri	M Chapu	3rd avaranam
Yogayogeshwari	Anandabhairavi	Khanda Triputa	4th avaranam
Neela lohitaramani	Balahamsa	Khanda Dhruvam	5th avaranam
Sadanandamayi	Hindolam	Sankeerna Mathyam	6th avaranam
Sakala lokanayike	Arabhi	Adi	7th avaranam
Shankari sri Rajarajeshwari	Madhyamavati	Adi	8th avaranam



Natajanakalpavalli	Punnagavarali	Adi	9th avaranam
Haladharanujam	Manirangu	Adi	Phala stuti

Navaratnamalika :

Shyama Shastry, unlike MutthuswamiDikshitar, did not travel much; nor did he visit many temples. He was a rather reclusive person by nature and was greatly devoted to his own Mother Goddess – Bangaru Kamakshi, whom he worshiped, without fail, each morning, noon and evening (Tri-kaala-puja).

Although this set of Kritis is titled as Nava-ratna-malika; meaning that it comprises nine splendid Kritis, there is much debate about composition of the group. Nevertheless, it has, customarily come to be celebrated as Nava-ratna-malika, the garland of nine gems.

In the early references, only the first seven Kritis were included under the series. And, the remaining two slots were left undecided. But, it was surmised that the other two Kritis might be in the Ragas Nattakuranji and Sri without however specifying the lyrics of the Kritis.

Since, the only two Kritis composed by Sri Shyama Shastry in those two Ragas were ‘Mayammanannubrova’ and ‘Karuna-judavamma’, they have been provisionally included in the list, despite the fact their lyrics do not mention either the name of the deity as Meenakshi or its Sthala-mudra as Madhura. In some of the versions, the Kriti ‘Rave Parvatha-raja-kumari’ in the raga Kalyani is reckoned as the eighth Kriti in the series.

Kriti	Ragam	Thalam
1.Minalocanabrova	Dhanyasi	Misra chapu
2. Sarojadhalanethri	Shankarabharanam	Adi
3.Devi meenanethri	Shankarabharanam	Adi
4.Marivere	Ananda bhairavi	Misra chapu
5.Devi nidupadasarasamule	Kamboji	Adi
6.Mayamma	Ahiri	Adi
7.Nanubrova lalita	Lalita	Misra chapu
8.Rave parvatarajakumari	Kalyani	Adi



Navarathrikritis:

Swati Tirunal chose to use only the *Sambodhanavibhakti* (vocative case) and *prathamavibhakti* (nominative case) in the Navaratri kritis unlike the Navavarnakritis of Muthuswamy Dikshitar. All the nine kritis are in the format of the kriti "*Pahi mam*", calling out to the Goddess to protect him, and the bulk of the words employed in each kriti are just the description of the Goddess and her virtues at great length, using poetic language.

These compositions belong to the Kriti pattern, with a short pallavi and anupallavi followed by one or more Charanams. The first song has four Charanams, and the remaining six only three. While the first six songs indulge in very long Charanams using very lengthy phrases, the last three, devoted to Parvati, are shorter and simpler. It is worth observing that the first three songs do not feature his mudra (signature) "Padmanabha" or any of the synonyms. The third Charanam of the Saveri composition features a phrase "Padmanabha Vilasini". But, according to some experts, this is an incorrect version, since it means "the consort of Padmanabha", which is certainly not a correct description for Saraswati. Perhaps the correct phrase should be "Padmabhavavilasini", since "Padmabhava" is certainly Lord Brahma!

All the songs use majestic ragas. The first six are chowka-kala (slow tempo) kritis, whereas the last three use madhyamakala (medium tempo). But madhyamakala passages are found at the very end of the Charanams from the second song onwards. To add to the complexity, the middle three songs have "solkattu" (rhythmic syllables) in the anupallavi.



The following are the Navaratri kritis of Swathi tirunal:

Day	Kriti	Raga	Tala
1	Devi jagatjanani	Sankarabharanam	Adi
2	Pahimam Sri Vageeswari	Kalyani	Adi
3	Devi pavane	Saveri	Adi
4	Bharati mamava	Todi	Adi
5	Janani mamavameye	Bhairavi	Misra Chapu
6	Saroruhasanajaye	Pantuvarali	Adi
7	Janani pahi	Shuddhasaveri	Misra Chapu
8	Pahijanisanantam	Nattakkurinji	Misra Chapu
9	Pahi Parvatanandini	Arabhi	Adi

Navagraha kritis :

Muthuswamy Dikshitar composed the seven Vaara kritis celebrating the days of the week, as per the Indian culture. The seven songs are composed in seven different ragas, each set to one of the seven Sooladi talas. Sangita Sampradayaprasini' of 1904 mentions only the Vaara kritis of Dikshitar. The song dedicated to Rahu in ramamanohari is part of Lalithopakyanam and the one on Kethu in Chamaram is believed to have been composed by one of his disciples with the same mudhra of his Guru.



Talking of the Vaara the first two composed by Dikshitar were those on Brihaspati or Guru (Jupiter) and Sanaischara (Saturn) to cure his disciple TambiappaMuttukkara (a Suddhamaddala player) of his stomach ailment. After that he composed, the other five songs. The seven compositions are: 'Suryamurte' on Sun in Saurashtram and Druva Tala, 'Chandram Bhaja' on moon in Asaveri and Matya Tala, 'AngarakamAshrayami' on Mars in Surutti and Rupaka tala, 'BudhamAshrayami' on Mercury in Nattakurinji and Jhampa tala, 'Brihaspate' in Atana set to Triputa tala, 'Sri SukraBhagavantam' on Venus in Paras and Ata tala and 'Divakaradanujam' in Yadukulakhambodi and Chatusra Eka tala. Hence Dikshitar has used the Sapta talas for the Vara kritis.

Dikshitar composed all the Vaara kritis in Tiruvarur only except for the kritiAngarakam which has the kshetra (place) vaidheeshwaran temple mentioned in the line

“Dheena rakshakampoojithaVaidhyanathaKshetram”

There are other kritis by him, which refer to Navagrahas; many other composers have also written on the Navagrahas one such noteworthy compositions are Harikesanallurmuthiahbhagavathar'svarakritis.

Muthiah bhagavathar has composed varakritis in different set of ragas and talas from the kritis composed by Dikshitar. One ragam commonly used by both is suruti. Muthiah bhagavathar has used this ragam for the Bhudhakritis whereas Dikshitar has used it for the Mangala kriti. Unlike Dikshitar Muthiahbhagavathar has used talas like Misra chapu ,khanda chapu looking at the kritis in a different perspective. He has also used rakti ragas like sahana for the kritiVachaspatimbhaje whereas Dikshitar has used Atana a majestic raga that suits the majestic Brihaspate.



The following are the varakritis of Muthiah Bhagavathar:

Kriti	Ragam	Thalam
1.Adityam deva Adidevam	Mayamalavagowlai	Adi
2.Chandrambhaje kantisandram	Poornachandrika	Roopakam
3.Anagaraka managalamoorthey	Reetigowlai	Misra chapu
4.Rouhineyam bhudham	Suruti	Khanda chapu
5.Vachaspatim bhaje	Sahana	Roopakam
6.Shri bhargavam	Shri	Adi

Conclusion:

Apart from the above discussed kritis there are many thematic group kritis based on 72 melakartha, Saptharatna of oothukadu Venkata kavi on Krishna and Anajaneya , many other Vibhakthikritis of Dikshitar ,108 chamundaashtotharashathanamakritis of Muthiah bhagavathar and so on which are vast and provide a wide scope for further study of how it is composed, their structure and grouping format. Thus it varies from composer to composer on what basis they have structured these kritis and the idea behind it.

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