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Sanskrit Compositions of Sri Papanasam Sivan - A Musical and Literary Exploration

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Abstract: Sri Papanasam Sivan, a renowned Carnatic Musician and a composer, has made significant contributions to the carnatic music genre through his compositions. This study explores the musical and literary aspects of his Sanskrit musical forms analysing its structure, melody and lyrical content. They are testimony to showcase Sivan's mastery of the language and music, offering insights into his artistic vision. This research provides an in-depth understanding of his Sanskrit compositions, their significance and enduring impact on the genre of Carnatic music.

Key Words: Papanasam Sivan, Sanskrit compositions, Carnatic music, Literature, Ranjaka Prayogas, Raga and Tala.

Introduction:

'Carnatic Music' the music of South India is known for its intricate melodic structures and complex ragas (melody) set in intricate talas (rhythm). One of its significant aspects is its compositions that are composed in various south Indian languages by profuse composers. These composers have thus paved a pivotal role in shaping the Carnatic music tradition. Their contributions have enriched the genre, creating a rich and diverse musical heritage.

In this context Sri Papanasam Sivan is one such notable composer and musician who is cherished as 'Tamil Thyagaraja' since his compositional style resembles that of Saint Thyagaraja. He has composed nearly 2500 compositions that includes the Varnams, Krithis and other musical forms. Even though his Tamil compositions are more in number, he has also composed nearly 50 krithis in Sanskrit. The primary objective of this article is to bring the salient features of the Sanskrit compositions of Sri Papanasam Sivan.

Life History:

Papanasam Ramayya Sivan was born on 26th September 1890 at Polagam in Tanjore District. He spent his early years in Kerala. After the demise of his father in 1897 he moved to Travancore. He took his first music lessons from Noorani Mahadeva Bhagavathar, son of Parameswara Bhagavathar and later he became the disciple of Konerirajapuram Vaidhyanatha Iyer, a renowned musician. He received Sangeet Natak Academy fellowship in 1962 and received Sangita Kalanidhi in 1971.

Compositions of Sri Papanasam Sivan are known for their poetic depth and emotional resonance and are testament to his linguistic and musical prowess. They showcase intricate melodic structure demonstrating his command over the art form. Sivan's musical pieces are highly sought after by several performers and music enthusiasts, with many renowned artists like Bharath



Ratna Smt. M.S.Subbulakshmi, Smt. D.K.Pattammal, Sri D.K.Jayaraman of yester years and Sri K.J.Yesudas, Sri Sanjay Subramaniam and Sri Sikkil Gurucharan etc of today include them frequently in their performance.

Sanskrit Compositions:

Even though Sivan's Tamil compositions outnumber his Sanskrit works, they are equally notable with respect to the lyrical beauty, musical complexity and spiritual themes. The salient features of select Sanskrit compositions of Sri Papanasam Sivan are discussed below:

Structure:

Similar to Sivan's Tamil compositions the Sanskrit pieces are too notably reminiscent of Saint Sri Thyagaraja's style in its structure and fervour. In general Sivan's Sanskrit krithis follow the typical format of pallavi, anupallavi and charanam. Some of the examples are as follows:

- a. 'Radha Mukakamala' – Hindustani Kapi – Adi.
In this krithi the pallavi and anupallavi are of one avartha each and there are three charanas with two avarthas each.
- b. 'Sri Madhava' - Behag – Adi (Desadi)
This krithi has pallavi and anupallavi - two avarthas and charanam - four avarthas. As found in Thyagaraja's krithis the melody of the anupallavi repeats in the third and fourth avartha of the charanam.
- c. 'Srinivasa Tava' – Karaharapriya – Rupakam
This krithis has pallavi and anupallavi of four avartha each and the charanam with eight avarthas, the melody of the last four avarthas of the charanam is same as the anupallavi.
- d. 'Chandra Kalavathamsam' – Sankarabaranam – Adi
This krithi too has all the three sections namely pallavi, anupallavi and charanam. In this krithi, the melody of the anupallavi repeats in the later part of the charanam.
- e. 'Krishna nama' – Behag – Adi (Desadi)
This krithi has all the three sections. In Sri Thyagaraja's compositions we find the krithi with many charanas with repeated melody. In this krithi of Papanasam Sivan there are two charanas with the same melody.
- f. 'Dasarathathmajam' – Poorvikalyani – Rupakam
This krithi has pallavi and anupallavi - four avartha each and charanam with eight avarthas. The melody of the anupallavi repeats in the charanam. This krithi is embellished with a chittaswara of four avarthas.
- g. 'Krishna nama Bajare' – Behag – Adi (Desadi)
This krithi has all the three sections. There are two charanas in this krithi and the melody of both the charanas are same.

A few of the Sri Thyagaraja krithi for example 'Sri Ganapathini' in raga Sowrashtam and in tala Adi in praise of Lord Ganapathy have pallavi, anupallavi and charanam. The charanam of



this krithi is set in madhyama kala (slightly higher in tempo) as there are more words without long notes.

‘Panasanarikeladi jambu phalamolanarakinchi gnana tarambuganu mahipai padamulu ghallu gallana nunchi.....’

Similarly in one of Sivan's Sanskrit compositions ‘Sharade Veena Vadana’ in the raga Devagandari and in tala Adi composed in praise of Goddess Sri Saraswathi, a similar framework is seen.

‘Indradi sakala brindaraka gana vandita padara vinde indu vitambana manda smitayuta sundara mukara vinde’

Widely acclaimed divyanama and utsava sampradaya krithis of Saint Thyagaraja are master pieces composed in several Ranjaka ragas that are characterized by simplicity in structure and melody yet evolve evoking the raga’s emotional essence to its fullest potential. Some of them have repeated melodic patterns across multiple lines. For example

Nagumomu – raga madhyamavathi – tala Adi - Saint Thyagaraja

‘Nagumomu galavani namanoharuni jagamelu shuruni janaki varuni’

This keerthana has a pallavi with two avartas and there are multiple charanas with the same melody of the pallavi repeating in the charanas. Some of Sivan’s Sanskrit compositions in similar format are as follows:

1. The krithi 'Pathitha Pavana' in raga thodi and set to tala adi.

‘Pathitha pavana rama pasupathinutha nama paripoorna sathkama paranjothi parandhama’

The melody of the next two couplets are similar to that of the first two lines.

2. The krithi ‘Jaya Vijayebava Ramachandra’ in raga Mand and tala Adi has three couplets sharing the same melody.

Some of the Sri Thyagaraja’s divyanama keerthanas have pallavi and multiple charanas with same melody and without anupallavi example ‘Sri Rama Sri Rama’ in raga sahana and tala adi.

The krithi ‘pathitha paavana Rama’ in the raga thodi and tala adi composed by papanasam sivan has three couplets with the same melody.

Poetic splendour :

Along with musical elegance, Papanasam Sivan’s compositions are a testament to poetic splendour. His Sanskrit compositions are a harmonious fusion of musical subtlety and eloquent expression. Some of the examples to prove the above statement are as follows:

Prathama and Dvitiya Akshara prasam :

Prathama and Dvitiya akshara prasam are important type of alliteration in Sanskrit poetry where prathama akshara prasam refers to the repetition of the first consonant or letter in successive



words and dvitiya akshara prasam refers to the repetition of second consonant or letter in successive words.

In the krithi 'Pathithapavana rama' in raga Thodi and tala Adi, the first two letters in all the couplets are prosodics. eg. 1. **Pathithapavana** and **paripoorna** 2. **Pankajapama** and **sankata** 3. **Samaja** and **Rama saketha**

In the krithi 'Ramam Bajatha' in the ragam Sriragam and adi tala the prathama and dvitiya akshara prasam is present throughout the composition. The Pallavi starts with the word 'ramam' in the anupallavi each lines are prosodical viz., Kamam, Namam, Bhimam and Shyamam and in the charanam Dheeram, Karam, Karam and Daram.

In the krithi 'Chandra Kalavathamsam' in raga Sankarabaranam and tala Adi the beginning of pallavi and anupallavi are prosodical with the words 'Chandra' in the pallavi and 'Indra' in the anupallavi.

At some instances the word is split to maintain the prathama akshara prasam (alliteration of the first consonant) eg.,

In the krithi 'Ramam Bajatha' in the Sri ragam and tala adi, in the anupallavi to maintain the alliteration the words are split to Srin-karam, Manuja-karam and Man-daram.

Dheeram-janakaja hrudaya Srun-
Karam-parikruhitha Manuja-
Karam-Ashrutha Sajjanaman-
Dharam-Anu varam varam

In the same krithi we can also see the prosodic beauty called 'Anuprasam' where there is a repetition of consonant sound that creates musicality and rhythm. In the pallavi and anupallavi the sound 'mam' repeats in the words 'Ramam' in the pallavi and 'Kamam', 'Namam', 'Bhimam' and 'Shyamam' in the anupallavi. In the charanam the sound 'ram' repeats in 'Dheram', 'Karam', 'Karam' and 'Daram'.

Anthyaprasam :

In Anthyaprasam the last letter or a syllable of a word is repeated in the next word or line, creating a sense of continuity and musicality. This adds aesthetic appeal and harmony to poetry or a composition.

In the krithi 'Radha mukha Kamala' set in raga Hindustani Kapi and tala Adi the Anthyaprasam is found throughout the composition ie., in the pallavi, anupallavi and charanam. They end with the word 'Rasikam and Tilakam' in the pallavi and anupallavi. 'Roopam and Thapam' in the first charanam, 'Tharam and Shreeram' in the second charanam and 'Ganitham and Tham' in the third charanam.



Theme of the Sanskrit Compositions :

As most of the Tamil compositions the Sanskrit compositions are devotional in content. Many of them are in praise of the incarnations of Maha Vishnu like Rama eg., 'Pathithapavana rama' in Thodi raga and Adi tala, 'Nama bajave rama' in Mand and Adi tala, 'Ramam bajata' in raga Sriragam and Adi tala, ' Dasarathathmajam' in raga Poorvikalyani and Rupaka Tala etc., Some of the krithis in praise of Lord Krishna e.g., 'Radha mukha kamala' in raga Hindustani Kapi and tala desadi, 'Krishna nama' in Behag - Adi tala etc., Krithi 'Srinivasa tava charanam' in praise of Lord Srinivasa in raga Karaharapriya and Tala Rupakam. A few krithis are composed in praise of Lord Muruga namely 'Sri Valli Devasenapathe' in Natabairavi –Tala Adi, 'Balasubramanya' in raga Kedaragoula – Rupaka Tala etc., Krithis composed in praise of Lord Shiva are 'Chandra Kalavathamsam' in raga Shankarabaranam – Adi Tala, 'Sri Vishwanatham' in raga Bairavi – Adi Tala. Some krithis are in praise of Goddess Parvathy namely 'Sivaganga Nagara' in Punnavagavali – Adi Tala, 'Chamundeswari Sankari' in Saveri set to Adi Tala. A very popular composition in Sanskrit by Papanasam Sivan 'Sarade Veena Vadana' in raga Devagandari set to Adi Tala is composed in praise of Goddess Saraswathy. One of the Sanskrit compositions 'Sa Sabha' in the raga Hamsadwani and in Rupaka Talam is composed in praise of the Moon.

When we look upon the meaning conveyed by Sri Papanasam Sivan through his compositions, there are krithis that talk about the beauty, characteristics and the greatness of the deity on which they are composed. Many of the Tamil compositions of Sivan talk about his hardship, poverty and misfortune that he has faced in his life. For example 'Unnai allal' in raga Kalyani set in Adi Tala, 'Kadaikkan nokki' in raga Thodi – Adi Tala, 'mariyadai thano' in dhanyasi – Adi Tala etc., But in case of his Sanskrit compositions all the songs focuses only in speaking the greatness of the Gods and Goddesses on which they are composed and does not mention the discontent of the composer.

Musicality in Sivan's Sanskrit Composition :

Sivan's Sanskrit Compositions are exquisite in their musicality with a perfect blend of melody and rhythm. These are compared in a diverse range of ragas that include melakartha ragas such as Thodi, Sankarabaranam, Karaharapriya, Kalyani etc., Janya ragas such as Hamsadwani, Bairavi, Poorvikalyani, Madhyamavathi etc. Krithis are also set in some of the popular Hindustani ragas such as Hindustani Kapi, Behag, Sindubairavi etc.,

Melakartha ragas form the foundation of Carnatic music genre. Papanasam Sivan has handled several suddha madhyama and prathimadyama mela ragas in his krithis. Krithis composed in mela ragas are



1. 'Pathithapavana rama' set in raga Todi and in tala Adi. The grahaswara of this krithi is madhya sthayi daivatham which is also seen in Sri Thyagaraja's composition 'Emijesithe'. Several raga Ranjaka Prayogas such as 'r s n d d n s', 'n s n d p m', 's, r g r', 'd r s n d p', 'm, p d p, d' are present.
2. 'Chandra Kalava thamsam' in raga Sankarabharanam is set to tala Adi. The grahaswara of this krithi is Mathyasthyayi gandharam which is also the grahaswara of this raga. Several raga Ranjaka Prayogas such as 'p m m g m', 'g, m g r', 's n p', 's d n, s,', 'g m g r s', 'g, m g g r' etc are present throughout the krithi. The range of this krithi traverses between mandra sthayi daivatam to tara sthayi madhyamam.
3. 'Srinivassa Tava Charanou' in raga kharaharapriya and in Tala rupakam. The grahaswara of this krithi is Madhya sthayi rishaba which is also an appropriate grahaswara of this raga. There are four sangathis in the pallavi of this krithi. There are several raga ranjaka prayogas namely 'p, p m m,', 'p m g, g r s', 'd n d p m,', 'p m m g g r r s' 's r, s n d p,' etc., are present. The range of this krithi traverses from Madhya sthayi Sadja to tara sthayi Madhyama.
4. 'Saradhe Veena' in raga Devagandhari and Tala Adi. The grahaswara of this krithi is tara sthayi Sadja. There are four sangathis in the pallavi of this krithi. Several raga ranjaka prayogas namely 'r, g g m, g r,', 'd p m g r', 'm p d,', 's n r s r,', 'r g g m, g r,', 's r, s n d' etc., add bhavam to the composition. There is a rare prayoga of spuritham in the pallavi namely 's, r s n, s n d, n d p, d p' which adds beauty to the krithi. The range of this krithi is from mandra sthayi daivata to tara sthayi madhyama.

Rhythmic aspects :

Most of the Sanskrit krithis by Sri Papanasam Sivan are composed in Adi Tala and Rupaka Tala. Some of the krithis set in adi tala are in desadi tala where the pallavi, anupallavi and charana starts after six aksharas. Some of the examples are 'Sri Madhava Madhusoodana' in the raga Behag, 'Padmanabha mam Pahi' in raga Kalyani etc., Most of the songs in Adi tala are in either Vilamba (slow) tempo or in medium tempo. For example 'Sharade' in raga Devagandhari is a krithi in two kala ie., in slow tempo. The krithi 'Ramam bajatha' in Sriragam, 'Radha Mukha Kamala' in Hindustani Kapi etc., are in medium tempo.

The krithis in rupaka tala are also in vilamba or slow tempo, for example 'Srinivasa thava' in raga Kharaharapriya. The eduppu of the pallavi and anupallavi are in samam and the charanam is after two aksharas.

Apart from krithis, Sri Papanasam Sivan has composed ragamalika Krithi and Tillana in Sanskrit.

Ragamalika :

The krithi 'Marajanaka' is a ragamalika set in Adi Tala. The pallavi of this krithi is in Yadukula Kamboji and raga mudra is present in the pallavi. 'Marajanaka Madhusudana **Yadukula Kambhodi** chandra mamava'. The grahaswara of the pallavi is madhya sthayi Madyama which is also in the Yadukula Kambhoji raga preceded with a chittaswaram in four avarthas.



There are four charanas in this krithi. The first charana is in Saveri, Second in Begada, Third in Saraswathy and Fourth charana in Gowrimanohari. All the charanas have chittaswaram of four avartha each.

Tillana :

There are two tillanas composed by Sri Papanasam Sivan in Sanskrit 'Dhim tana Udara' in raga behag in tala Adi and 'Dhim tarana dhim' in raga Shanmukhapriya. In both the tillanas the jathi section after the charanam has swaras interspersed between the jathi syllables.

Raga Behag :

Tam tam **s g m p m** taka dhimita dhim dhim **n r s n d** tha din gina tom

Janutha **m g m** dhimita tatinginathom

Raga Shanmukhapriya :

Tadhim tarana udara dhim **n d n s n r s , n** gana udari dha **n g r s ,**

dhim tadhim takajanutha **r s , n d n** udara tara **p m p d n**

These swara syllables within the jathi section adds beauty to the tillana.

Vaggeyakara Mudhra :

It's familiar that the vaggeyakara mudhra (composer's signature) of Sri Papanasam Sivan is 'Ramadasa'. Most of his compositions bear his mudra. As far as the Sanskrit compositions of Sri Papanasam Sivan are concerned some of the krithis bear his mudhra and some don't. Some of the Sanskrit krithis that bear the Vaggeyakara mudra are 'Pathitha pavana rama' in thodi, Adi Tala, 'Nama bajare' in Mand, Adi Tala, 'Srinivasa tava' in raga Kharaharapriya, Rupaka Tala, 'Marajanaka' – in Adi Tala and 'Jaya Vijayee' in raga mand, Adi Tala. Apart from these krithis others do not bear the vaggeyakara mudhra.

Salient features of Sivan's Sanskrit compositions :

Sri Papanasam Sivan's Sanskrit compositions are characterized by the following :

1. The musical forms in Sanskrit compositions encompass krithis, tillanas and krithis in divyanama Keerthana format.
2. Most of the Sanskrit compositions have all the three sections namely Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam.
3. In many of his Sanskrit compositions, especially in krithi format the melody of the anupallavi repeats in the later part of the charana. Few krithis are in divyanama Keerthana format, where in few krithis the same melody repeats in various couplets and in some there are two sections namely Pallavi and Charanas where the melody of all the charanas are similar.
4. Sivan's Sanskrit compositions showcase his mastery of language and poetry encompassing various prosodic beauties such as prasas and yathi.
5. Sivan's compositions excel in his melodic beauty with the usage of several raga ranjaka prayogas in various janaka janya ragas without any compromise in the rhythmic aspect.
6. His Sanskrit compositions convey a strong sense of devotion and reverence.

Conclusion :

Among the copious compositions of Sri Papanasam Sivan nearly 2500 compositions, his Sanskrit compositions nearly 50 are a testament to his mastery over the language, rich in literary



and musical nuances. These compositions will continue to inspire and uplift the performers as well as the listeners offering a glimpse into the composer's profound devotion and artistic vision.

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