

RāgaMudrās in Śrī MuttuswāmyDīkṣitar's Compositions

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Abstract

Music is the finest of fine arts and is the crest jewel of Indian culture and tradition. Among the different branches of Indian Classical Music, *Karnāṭak* music is one of the genres that cultivates a deep interest in philosophy and spirituality. With this motto, many composers created various musical compositions and caused an awareness of the ancient Indian scriptures in a lay man. They dedicated their master pieces to a particular deity and incorporated varied concepts in describing them. Their compositions are celebrated even at the present due to its excellent incorporation of several aesthetical ornaments like rhetorics and prosodies. Among them, *Mudrā* or signature, is considered to be an inseparable part and ensures an authority over the background of any composition. Śrī MuttuswāmyDīkṣitar, youngest among the *Karnāṭak* music trinity, has incorporated various kinds of *mudrās* in his compositions. This paper gives the description on all kinds of *mudrās* and majorly deals with the *rāgamudrās* figured in his compositions. The author explains the different perspectives in fitting the names of the *rāgas* so as to give a meaningful blending with *sāhitya* or *mātu*. The examples show the lyrical excellence of the composer in enhancing the grandeur of the composition.

Key Words: Indian Classical Music, Karnāṭak Music, MuttuswāmyDīkṣitar, Dīkṣitar, Musical compositions, Musical rhetoric, Mudrā, Rāga mudrā.

Introduction

Mudrā in *Karnāṭak*music is a unique concept of proclaiming certain facts of a composition. The term *mudrā*, in Sanskrit, refers to seal, stamp, mark and impression. *Mudrā* affirms the ownership of the title or theme of any work, its author and its subject or content. In musical terminology, *mudrā* is also known as *aṅkita*, which denotes the signature of the composer, *rāga*, *tāḷa*, type of musical form and so on. It is intertwined with the *sāhitya* or lyrics of the compositions without affecting its meaning and beauty. The term *mudrā* is also found in dance in context with the hand gestures known as *hastā mudrās*. This applies to the *mudrās* in *Śrī Vidyāpūjā* tradition which symbolizes ten *mudrās*, among which nine *mudrās* are dedicated to nine *āvāraṇas* and the last one is dedicated to the entire *cakra*, called, *sarvatrikhaṇḍamudrā*.

There are varied varieties of *mudrās* mentioned by Sambamoorthy in his musical treatise South Indian Music, namely, *vāggēyakāra*, *rāga*, *tāḷa*, *ācārya*, *pōṣaka*, *vamṣa*, *prabandha*, *nāyaka*, *sthaḷa*, *birudu*, *lakṣaṇagrantha*, *bhakti*, *cakra*, *rasa*, *graha*, *liṅga*, *samvatsara* and *ṇandas*¹. Among them, *vāggēyakāra mudrā* is incorporated by almost every *karnāṭak* music composer, in their compositions and *rāga mudrā* is found in the compositions of few composers. Muttuswamy Dīkṣitar, youngest among the *karnāṭak* music trinities, was a prolific composer who composed hundreds of compositions. One can say that, he was one of the composers who incorporated maximum number of *mudrās* in his compositions.

This paper gives a brief description on all the *mudrās* that was incorporated by Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar in his compositions and highlights more on *rāgamudrās*. The study is

¹These categories in *mudrās* are explained in detail with examples, mentioned by Prof. P. Sambamoorthy in his South Indian Music book (Vol 5 183-210). In this paper, the author has dealt with the important ones that is incorporated in Dīkṣitar's compositions.

mainly based on the text , SaṅgītaSampradāyaPradarśiṇi written by Subbarā maDīkṣitar and hence, the nomenclatures are mentioned as per Veṅkaṭamakhi's *mēḷapaddhati*.

Brief sketch on thecompositional style of Śrī MuttuswāmyDīkṣitar (1775-1835)

MuttuswāmyDīkṣitarwas a scholar in various domains like *āgamas*, Sanskrit literature, music and *jyōtiṣaśāstras* and was a *ŚrīVidyā upāsaka*. He followed the *mēḷapaddhati* propounded by Veṅkaṭamakhi² and incorporated only *sulādisaptatālas* to his compositions. He adopted *Guruguha* as his *anḱita*, which has a high philosophical essence³. His compositions were in Sanskrit. He was one of the *karnāṭak* music composers who travelled all over India and composed musical compositions during his pilgrimage on a particular *kṣētra* and deity. He imbibed all the philosophical values preached in the ancient Indian scriptures. He composed on various deities regardless of *iṣṭa-daiva* concept⁴. He has also composed many *kṛtis* grouped under various concepts, namely, *vibhakti*, *navāvaraṇa*, *navagraha*, *pañcabhūtakṣētras* and *pañcaliṅgas* of Tiruvarur. *Saṅgatis* are not found in his compositions except in few phrases in few compositions but even those are not with much difference. He was the pioneer in composing *samaṣṭicaraṇas*, that is, a *caraṇa* that comes immediately after *pallavi* without *anupallavi*⁵. His first composition was *Śrī nā thādiguruguhōjayati* set to *māyāmāḷavagowḷarāga*and *āditāḷa*.His

² There are two *mēḷapaddhatīs* being followed at present, namely, Veṅkaṭamakhi's called as *Asampūrṇa* and Govindacarya's called as *Sampūrṇamēḷapaddhati*.

³ *Guruguha* is one of the names of Lord Subramaṇya and TiruttaniSubramaṇya was the reason for Dīkṣitar's journey as a musical composer. In ancient scriptures, Subramaṇya is referred as *sēnādhipati* or commander-in-chief who fights against the enemies in the war-field. In this context, Dīkṣitar attributes that Subramaṇya as the *Guru* who fights against the inner enemies or *ariṣaḍvargas* and removes the darkness (*guha*) in one's mind thereby assisting for acquiring true knowledge in attaining *mōkṣa* or salvation.

⁴ The concept of *iṣṭa-daiva* can be seen in OottukkāḍuVeṅkaṭa Kavi who chose Lord Kṛṣṇa as his favorite deity and Tyāgarāja who chose Lord Rāma as his favorite.

⁵ In the text, SaṅgītaSampradāyaPradarśiṇi, SubbarāmaDīkṣitar mentions them as *anupallavi* and the term *samaṣṭicaraṇa* is seen in the later years.

unique compositional style is compared to *nārikēlapāka*, the essence of coconut water⁶, that is, the essence of coconut water can be tasted only after a lengthy and complicated process of climbing the tree, plucking the coconut, removing the outer covers, which again is very hard, and then finally taste its essence.

Mudrās figured in Dīkṣitar's compositions

Muttuswāmy Dīkṣitar extensively incorporated the *mudrās* in his *sāhitya*. Among the various kinds, one can find the following varieties of *mudrās* in his compositions.

- *Vāggēyakkāra* – Dīkṣitar used *itara mudrā* and not his own name as his *aṅkita*, that is, ***Guruguha***. His was *anēka mudrā* and did not use any *paryāya mudrā*.
- *Sthaḷa* or *kṣētra mudrā* - ***śrīpurasadane*** for Tiruvarur in *uccīṣṭaganapataukṛti*, *kāśirāmakriyārāga* and ***madhurāpurinilayē*** for Madurai in *mīnākṣī mēmudamkṛti*, *gamakriyārāga*.
- *Graha*– this *mudrā* is predominantly found in *navagrahakṛtis*, in which one can notice few names of *rāśis* or zodiacal signs and *nakṣatras* or heavenly stars, for instance, in *aṅgārakamāśrayāmyahamkṛti* of *suraṭirāga*, ***aṅgāraka*** is the *graha*; ***mēṣa*** and ***vṛścika*** are *rāśis* and ***makara*** is the *nakṣatra*.
- *Liṅga*–this *mudrā* is found in *pañcabhūtakṣētra* and *pañcaliṅgakṛtis*, for instance, ***prthivīliṅgam***, ***valmīkaliṅgam*** and others.
- *Rasa*- this *mudrā* is not much prominent in Dīkṣitar's *skṛtis* but there are couple of compositions which incorporate this kind, as seen in, ***śṛṅgāra rasamañjari*** in *rasa mañjarirāga* and ***śṛṅgārādinavarasāṅgi*** in *dhavaḷāṅgirāga*. In *aruṅācalanātham*,

⁶ There are three different compositional styles ascribed to *karnāṭak* music trinities, that is, *kadalīpāka* (the essence of banana) for Śyāmāśāstri, *drākṣāpāka* (the essence of grapes) for Tyāgarāja and *nārikēlapāka* for Dīkṣitar.

sāraṅgarāga, which is one among the *peñcabhūtakṣētrakṛtis*, the term *vīraguruguha* is seen depicting the *vīra rasa*.

- *Bhakti*–Dīkṣitar mentions *dāsyabhakti* in *Śrīguruguhasyadāsōham*, *pūrvirāga*, which is one among the *Guruguhavibhaktikṛtis*.
- *Cakra* - this can be found in Dīkṣitar's *Kamalāmbānavāvaraṇakṛtis*, for instance, the first as *kṣitipuratrailōkyamōhana cakra*, the second as *sarvāśāparipūraka cakra* and so on.
- *Pōṣaka* – this *mudrā* can be found in two of Dīkṣitar's compositions, namely, *veṅkaṭeśwaraṣṭṭappabhūpatimāśrayēham* (as Viṣṇu's incarnation) in *mēgharañjanirāga* and *caturdaśarāgamālikā*. Sambamoorthy mentions that, this *rāgamālikā* composition has *vāggēyakāra (guruguha)*, *rāga* (for all the fourteen *rāgas*), *prabandha (caturdaśabhuvanarāgamālika)* and *pōṣaka mudrā (vaidyaliṅgabhūpālapālanam)* and hence ranks the composition as *caturmudrāprabandha*⁷ (Sambamoorthy 2006: 210). Along with them, one can also find the *graha mudrā* in this composition, mentioned as *kujabudhādigraha* (ssp_append.pdf (ibiblio.org) 2008: 1251).

Rāga Mudrās figured in Dīkṣitar's compositions

Rāga mudrā is a concept where the name of the *rāga* appears in the composition. There are two types of *rāgamudrās*, namely, *śuddha* and *sūcita*. Dīkṣitar incorporates both these types in his compositions which can be noticed as follows –

- *Śuddharāga mudrā* - the *rāga* name occurs in its distinct form. In this paper, the author has tried to categorize it further, on the basis of its appearance, that is, one is that

⁷ This category comes under *bahu mudrā*, that is, two or more *mudrās* found in a composition.

where the *rāga* name is just added with a suffix, namely, ***dhautapañcamapriyē***, in *mātaṅgimarakatāṅgi* and ***niṣādādidēśādipatinuta*** in *niṣādarāga*. The other is that the *rāga* name which addresses as any deity's name (primarily Goddess), like, *kanakāmbari*, *bhairavi* and *kalyāṇi*.

- *Sūcitarāga mudrā* - when the *rāga* name occurs in a suggestive manner to the proper form. Here again, the author has tried to categorize according to its usage, that is, using the *rāga* as its direct meaning, for instance, ***ghaṇṭūmaṇi*** in *śrī kamalāmbikē avāva* symbolizing bell, ***śarāvati*** *taṭavāsini* symbolizing river and ***kalāvati*** *kamalāsanayuvati* symbolizing the art-form of Goddess Saraswati. The other is that which has to be split in order to deliver any particular meaning, that is, ***samsārabhītyāpahē***, one who removes the fear of *samsāra*, in *śrī saraswatinamōstute*. There are few partial *rāga mudrās* found in Dīkṣitar's compositions like *ānanda* for *ānandabhairavi* (*kamalajānandabōdhasukhi* in *kamalāmbā samrakṣatumām*), *bagaḷē* for *bēgaḍe* (*yugaḷē* ***bagaḷē*** in *śrīmātaḥśivavāmāṅkē*), *śāna* for *sahana* (***hariīśāna*** in *śrī kamalāmbikāyām*) and *śaṅkara* for *śaṅkarābharaṇa* (***śaṅkaranāyikayā*** in *śrī kamalāmbikayā*). There are also few *rāga mudrās* which undergo an interchange in the syllables, that are grammatically accepted, as seen in *śrī gurūṅāpālītōsmi* for *pāḍi* and ***ṣāyāgauratarayā*** (*saraswatyaḥbhagavatya*) for ***ṣāyāgaḷa***.

The following gives a detailed description on the *rāga mudrās* found in Dīkṣitar's compositions –

- *Śrī dakṣiṇāmūrtīśam* – *phēnadyuti* – ***amṛtaphēnadyuti*** *mandasmitamukhāmbujam* – one whose lotus-like face bears a smile that shines like the spray of nectar.

- *Guruguhaswāmini – bhānumati–nijarūpajitapāvakaindubhānumati* – the real form that surpassed fire, moon and sun.
- *Cidambaranaṭarājamūrtim– tanukīrti – cintayāmiatanukūrtim*– the one who is famed for being formless.
- *Jñānāmbikēpālayamām – sēnāgraṇi – sēnā agrāṇī pramukhaupāsītē* – the one who is worshipped by many, led by army commanders.
- *Sadācalēśwaram – bhūpāla – camatkārabhupalādiprasādakarāṇanipuṇamahāliṅgam*– the one in the form of great *liṅga*, adept at bestowing grace to King *Camatkāra*.
- *Viśwanāthambhajēham – naṭābharaṇa – ucčvāsājapānaṭaābharaṇam*– the one glorified with the *ajapā* dance which is related to the rhythm of breathing.
- *Śrī mahā gaṇapatiravatumām – goṽḷa – gauravarṇavasanaadharō* – the one wearing white garments.
- *Cintayēmahāliṅgamūrtim – pharaju – antaraṅga bhakta*
janānāmatīsamīparjūmārgadarśitam – to those devotees who are very close to him, he shows the direct or straight-forward path (to salvation).
- *Rāmacandrambhāvayāmi – vasanta– sākētanagarēnivasantam* – the one who resides in *Ayōdhyā*.
- *Kālabhairavambhajēhamaniśamkāsīpuravāsam– bhairavam– kālabhairava* is the fierce form of Lord Śiva, celebrated in *Kāśīkṣētra*.
- *Himācalakumārīm – jhaṅkārabhramari – hrīmkārasarasīruhajhaṅkārabhramarīm*– murmuring honey-bee to the lotus of *hrīmsyllable (mantra)*.
- *Maṅgaladēvatā – dhanyāsi – dāridraduḥkhādīmūrdhanyaasīvanigrahāya*–the destroyer of the inauspiciousness that leads to poverty and sorrow.

- *Śrīkālahastīśa* – *huśāni* –
*pākārividhihariprāṇamayakōśaani*laākāśabhūmisalilāgniprakāśa– the one shining as air, ether, earth, water and fire of which *prāṇamaya* forms the vital air sheath for Indra, Brahmā and Viṣṇu.
- *Pañcabhūtakiraṇaāvaḷīm*candramaulīm bhāvayāmi– *kiraṇāvaḷi*–forever, I mediate upon Śiva who is radiated out as the five elements.
- *Māyētvamyāhimām*– *taraṅgiṇi* – *sudhātaraṅgiṇi* – wave of nectar.
- *Māmavaraghuvīra* – *māhuri* – *tvāmāhuḥ* *īśādayaḥtatvamiti*– Lord Śiva and others have spoken of you as the supreme truth.
- *Śrīguruguhatārayāśumām* – *dēvakriya* – *bhūdēvakriyāmōda* – one who delights in the rites performed by *Brāhmaṇas*.
- In the compositions of *kambhōjirāga*, the *mudrā* is used to indicate lotus – *sakalasaubhāgyadāyakaambhōjacaraṇāyai* in *kamalāmbikāyai*, *sōmakulāmbikaambhōjamadhukaramin* *śrīvalmīkaliṅgam* and *bhadradāyakaambhōjakaravibhō* in *kāśiviśwēśwaraēhimāmpāhi*.
- *Śrī vañṇanāthambhajēham* – *suraṭi* – *bhūsuraṭīkātīḍitabhāvam* – the one whose power is praised by the commentaries written by learned *Vēdic* scholars.
- *Sadāśivamupāsmahē* – *śaṅkarābharaṇa* – *śaṅkarābharaṇabhāsamānadēham*–the one whose body shines with auspicious ornaments.
- *Guruguhāyabhaktānugrahāya* – *sāma* – *sāmarasyasampradāyakāya*– adherent of the *sāmarasya* tradition.
- *Ānandanaṭanaprakāśam* – *kēdāra* – *śrīkēdārādikṣētraādhāram* – the one who is the origin for *kēdāra* and other Śivaḥṣētras.

- *Hastivadanāyanamastubhyam* – *navarōj* –
umāramaṇakumāraguruguhasamānavarāḍjasēmahasē—the one who is equal to *guruguha* who is the son of Śiva, beloved to Umā, in excellent vigor.
- *Śwētagaṇapatim – rāgacūḍāmaṇi – virāgacūḍāmaṇi*—the Lord who is like a crest-jewel with the absence of desire.
- *Māmavamīnākṣi – varāḷi – varāḷivēṇi* – the one whose braided hair is as dark as the superior black bumble-bee.
- *Stavarājādīnutabrhadīśa– stavarāja*– the Lord who is worshipped by the celebrated Kings.
- *Mīnākṣi mē mudamdēhi – gamakakriya – vīṇāgānadaśagamakakriyē* – the one who herself is an embodiment of the ten kinds of *gamakas* applied in *vīṇa* and vocal.
- In the compositions of *kalyāṇi*, where all portray the Goddess form⁸, *rāga mudrā* depicts the meaning of auspiciousness.
- *Jambūpatēmāmpāhi – yamunākalyāṇi (yamunā) – ambudhigaṅgākāvērīyamunā*—the one who take forms of ocean and rivers like *gaṅgā*, *kāvērī* and *yamunā*.
- *Parimaḷaraṅganāthambhajēhamvīranutam– hamvīru* – I worship *parimaḷaraṅganātha*, the one extolled by the brave.
- *Śṛṅgārarasa mañjarīm– rasamañjari*— the one like a cluster of blossoms of love.

Conclusion

Rāgamudrā is an interesting concept in musical compositions. It not only authenticates the *rāga* of the composition but also gives scope to exhibit a composer's scholarliness. These usage of

⁸ In SaṅgītaSampradāyaPradarśiṇi, there are totally three compositions given for *kalyāṇirāga*, namely *bhajarē rēcittabālāmbikāi*, *kamālāmbāmbhajarē rēmānasa* and *śrīmaṅgaḷāmbikē*. The later texts give few more in this *rāga*.

rāgamudrās, as seen above, shows the literary and musical excellence of MuttuswāmyDīkṣitar in exhibiting his technique of adjoining the compounds, adjectives with verbs without affecting their meaningful connection. It can be said that they were a beautiful garland of Sanskrit terms that depicted the names of the *rāgas*. This concept also assists in finding the difference between the *rāganomenclatures* of Venkaṭamakhi and Govindā cāryamēlapaddhati. Hence, *mudrās*, in particular, *rāga mudrā*, is a beautiful concept in *karnāṭak* music, which adds to the grandeur of the composition.

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