

AKASHAKSHETRA IN THIRUPUGAZH HYMNS-A NRITHYA PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

In Bharatanatyam margam, Tiruppugazh is one of the composition used by many dance teachers and performers, who gives importance for Tamil literature and also with regards to its lyrical beauty, rich in meaning and santhams used. Tiruppugazh verses from Chidambaram temple has several aspects and facets has been analysed based on nritya perspective , which gives ideas on choreographic aspects.

KEY WORDS

AkashaKshetram, Nritya , Arunagirinathar, Tiruppugazh , Chidambaram, Music , Dance , Instruments, Simile, Manodharmam

Methodology

Qualitative approach has been adapted during this research. The research makes use of secondary sources of data, where the hymns are taken from Tiruppugazh (Chidambaram). The words which are rich in meaning have been identified so that they may provide ideas for choreography for artists.

AIM

The aim of the study is to analyse the lyrical beauty of Tiruppugazh hymns based on Chidambaram temple, which is specifically associated with Aakasha (ether , space or sky) and also to highlight the words which are highly rich in meaning from a nritya perspective.

Introduction

Tiruppugazh

Tiruppugazh is an anthology of Tamil poetic works containing religious hymns which are devoted to Lord Muruga and other Gods. During the medieval era of Tamil literature, Tiruppugazh which was considered a prominent and major religious work, literally meant divine glory or glory to the Lord given by Saint Arunagirinathar . These do not take the form of a normal kriti or keerthanam, where there is a Pallavi, Anupallvi and Charanam. Tiruppugazh are written in padas or stanzas consisting of 4 lines or more, set to particular rhythmic pattern called 'Santhams'. Lyrical beauty, grandeur and words rich in meaning are some aspects of Tiruppugazh.

The hymns of Tiruppugazh have remained as traditional practice in various temples and also, they are performed in art forms (music, dance concerts). Therefore, this study is to understand the meaning of words given in Tiruppugazh, limited to the verses specifically from Chidambaram temple from a choreography perspective.

Saint Arunagirinathar

Saint Arunagirinathar was born around the 15th century in the town of Tiruvanmalai, Tamil Nadu. At an early age, he lost his father and was brought up by his mother and sister. He was not so religious and did not follow the traditional values. In one of the Tiruppugazh – 'Anaivarum Marundu', where he explains about the people who avoid him because of the disease (leprosy). Hence, due to distress, he decided to end his life.



It is believed that he was saved by Lord Muruga himself and who blessed him with poetic knowledge. There he composed his first Tiruppugazh 'Muthaithiru paththithiru nagai'. He travelled around a number of temples all over South India, including Arupadai Veedu, and composed about 16000 hymns or songs but only 2000 of them remain. Arunagirinathar has been hailed as 'Muttamizharasu', 'Nar kavi Raja', 'Sandha Pavala peruman', 'Thaala Chelvar' and many more.

Tiruppugazh Hymns and Nrithya Perspectives

Phrases from Tiruppugazhs of Sri Arunagirinadhar, which can be implemented in Nrithya compositions in Bharatanatyam are analyzed and discussed below. Some phrases from each of the below compositions have been identified which can help in expanding the manodharma. The phrases which have been chosen contain unique references to the particular instance and these can aid in representing the particular entity either in the depiction of this composition or in any other composition which involve the same entity.

1. Tiruppugazh – avaguNaviraganai (Chidhambaram)

**“kaLiyanaI aRivurai pENAdha mAnuda
kasaniyai asaniyai mA pAthan Agiya
gathiyili thanai adinAyEnai ALuvadhu- endha nALO”**

While depicting the self as unworthy in any composition, the following phrases can help elaborate the idea -

- **aRivurai pENAdha mAnuda kasaniyai** – I am a human scum never heeding good advice
- **asaniyai** – I roar vainly like a thunder
- **mA pAthan Agiya gathiyili thanai** – and I am the worst sinner with no hope for salvation
- **adinAyEnai ALuvadhu- endha nALO** – Despite all my shortcomings, will I be protected by you one of these days?
- **"AnjubUtham"** used in this Tiruppugazh explains the human body is made of five elements.

Mythological characters may also be depicted by these unique descriptions

- **“ Adishesan - “mavuliyil azhagiya pAthALa lOkanu”** - AdhisEshan, the cobra King of pAthala, with his lovely crowns,
- **Patanjali - “ marakatha muzhugiya kAkOdha rAjanu”** – Pathanjali , the king of Snakes, of an emerald green body
- **AnabAyan - “manuneRi udan vaLar sONAdar kOnudan”** – AnabhAyan , the ChOzha Emperor, renowned for his rule
- **NadarAjar - “puliyUr vAzhu nAyakar”** – PuliyUr (Chidambaram) whose presiding deity is NadarAjar
- **Parvati - “ madamayil magizhvura”** – Along with NadarAjar, Parvati who stands by his side like a young peahen
- **Shiva - “mandruLAdum siva siva hara hara dhEva namO nama”** – You are ShivA, the ShivA who dances at the golden shrine at Chidambaram, I bow to you, I bow to you!
- **Shiva - “ dhisaiyinum isaiyinum vAzhvE namOnama”** – You dwell in all



directions and in all forms of music, I bow to You, I bow to You!

According to AruNagirinAthar, in this Tiruppugazh, Lord Natarajar and Lord Muruga are identical.

2. Tiruppugazh - ezhukadal maNalai (Chidhambaram)

“kadan unadh abayam adimai un adimai
kadugi un adigaL tharuvAyE”

The above phrase helps to depict the surrendering to the Lord’s feet in different ways

kadan unadh abayam: My duty is to surrender to You totally

- **adimai un adimai:** To this servant, Your service is the only service
- **kadugi un adigaL tharuvAyE:** You must grant me Your Holy feet immediately

The below phrases helps to understand how seven seas has been depicted in two different dimensions such as self-sin and how demons demolished.

- **ezhu kadal maNalai aLavidin:** If one counts the sands on the shores of the seven seas,
 - **adhikam enadh idar piRavi avathAram:** even that number is exceeded by the number of my miserable births!
 - **ezhu kadal kumuRa:** While the seven seas burst out,
 - **avuNargaL uyirai irai koLum:** the demons' (asuras) lives were devoured
 - **ayilai udaiyOnE:** by Your mighty Spear!
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- In this tiruppugazh, it gives as an example that Devas and sages like VyakrapAdha, Pathanjali, Upamanyu and Vasishta worshipped the cosmic dancer, Lord Siva
 - **imaiyavar munivar paraviya puliyur:** At Puliyur (Chidhambaram), DEvAs and Sages worshipped You
 - **nata maruvu perumALE.:** when You danced the Cosmic Dance, Oh Great One!

3. Tiruppugazh - katti muNdaga (Chidhambaram)

“dhukkam vendhu vizha nyAnam uNdu kudil
vajjirangaLena mEni thangam uRa
suhdhagam pugudha vEdha vindhaiyodu pugazhvEnO”

The above phrase helps to depict many ways to praise Lord greatness and how he rescues the devotees

- **dhukkam vendhu vizha nyAnam uNdu:** burning away the misery of birth, imbibing the nectar of true knowledge,

kudil vajjirangaLena mEni thangam uRa: turning my body into a solid diamond rock,



changing my complexion into a golden hue,

- **sudhdhagam pugudha vEdha vindhaiyodu pugazhvEnO:** and attaining pure liberation, will I be able to sing Your glory in an amazing VEdic meter?
- Also, few other phrases gives different ideas which could be used in different other compositions as 'sancharis'
- **suttu vempura niRAga vinjai kodu-** burning into ashes the three slags (thiripuram -represented by arrogance , karma and delusion) acquiring the 8 siddhis
- **ThaththuvangaL vizha chAdi** – knocking down the mischief created by the ninety -six tenets,
- **eNguNavar sorggam vandhu kaiyuLAgA** – attaining the heavenly pinnacle of Siva , the lord of eight characteristics
- **“ettiraNdum idhuvAm ilingamena ettiraNdum veLiyA mozhindha guru murugOnE”** : You preached that those numbers are the symbols of SivA and further elucidated that they represent the PraNava Manthra OM, Oh MurugA, my master
- **“ettiraNdum uruvAgi vanchakar mel ettiraNdu dhisaiyOrgaL pondra ayil viduvOnE”** : You assumed 16 postures and wielded the spear upon the treacherous demons on the battlefield and also those demons in many worlds situated in the ten directions, Oh Lord!

4. Tiruppugazh - gugaNE gurubaranE

The following phrases gives references to the musical instruments used during Arunagirinadhar's century

- **“thapalai thimilaikaL pUrikai pampai karadi”**
the two small drums (tabEIA), the large drums (thimilai), flutes, and other percussion instruments of the variety, pampai and karadi (making animal sounds)
- **“thamarukam veeNaikaL ponga”**
hand-drums (udukkai) and veeNAs - all these created a loud noise;

5. Tiruppugazh - thAdhu mAmalar

This tiruppugazh phrases gives an idea to depict samanya nayika during 15th century

- **“thAthu mA malar mudiyAIE pathaRatha nUpura adiyAIE kara thALamAkiya nodiyAIE madi pidiyAIE”**



By their hair adorned with flowers filled with pollen grains, by the unflustered way of walking with their anklet-wearing feet, by the loud musical beats produced by their hands, by their grabbing of the suitors' waist-line and enticing them,

“sAdai pEsiya vakaiyAIE miku vAdai pUsiya nakaiyAIE pala thARumARu sol mikaiyAIE a(n)na nadaiyAIE”

By their speeches interspersed with gestures, by their giggles while exuding fragrant scents, by their arrogance displayed through incoherent and impertinent words spoken by them, by their gait like that of a swan,

The below phrase depicts the relationship between Lord Vishnu and Lord Muruga

- “kAthAlAy aruL purivAy nAn maRai mUlame ena udanE mA kari kANa nEr varu thirumAl nAraNan marukOnE”

When the huge elephant (GajEndran) screamed for help, praying "Oh Primordial and Causal Principle of the four VedAs, kindly bestow Your compassion upon me", He came right in front of that elephant so that it could see Him; You are the nephew of that helpful Lord VishNu! Also, in this tiruppugazh, AruNagirinAthar had the vision of Lord NadarAjan in the form of Lord Murugan and vice versa, without any distinction.

Conclusion:

This study gives wide scope to develop the manodharmam (elaboration) aspects.

For example a single word can be presented as a detailed story and vice-versa.

In this study, 17 tiruppugazhs were analyzed and five were given in detail which comes under the chidambaram kshetram, also known as Aakasha Kshetra (one among the five elements-space)

- Ten different descriptions of Gods
- Four references of Sages
- Seventeen varieties of Aaksha kshetram description
- Eight dance references of cosmic dancer Lord Siva
- References of seven music, eight percussion instruments, and four mythological stories
- Thirteen Simile references are found and can be used as sancharis in other compositions

We all know that the tiruppugazh is written on Lord Muruga but Arunagirinadar praises lord Shiva in all hymns as well. Both the saivites and vaishnavites are equally highlighted. This shows that all the Gods belonged to one family.

Using dance as a tool young choreographers, teachers, performers and research scholars can bring this treasure of literature to the people in the form of Keerthanams.

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