

MELODIC EXPOSITION IN KATHAKALI SANGEETHAM

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Abstract

Kathakali is a very ancient Indian classical dance form which originated in Kerala. Kathakali Padam-s are musical forms used in Kathakali which tells the story of ancient Hindu literature. A Kathakali performance usually consists of two singers: Ponnani and Shingidi. Ponnani is the lead singer and Shingidi repeats what Ponnani sings. Kathakali sangeetham is just an aid to convey the emotion(bhava) of the dancer to the audience. Even though there are many ragas common to both Kathakali sangeetham and Carnatic music, like Kedaragowla, Nattakurinji, Yadukulakamboji. Bhairavi, Todi etc, there are certain privileges that an artist enjoys while singing Kathakali padam-s. Especially in the case of dos and don'ts of raga-s. More than avoiding the grammatical errors of a raga, conveying the emotion is given utmost importance, while singing Kathakali padam. There are also raga-s which are solely used in kathakali sangeetham like Puranir, Samantha malahari, Paadi, Navarasam etc.

Scope of study: The presentation will be a study based on the ragas and talas used in Kathakali padam. It will also cover the difference in singing ragas common to both Kathakali music and Carnatic music.

Research methodology: The research is qualitative in nature and evaluation is done through available audios and videos. Findings and conclusion: The paper will conclude that Kathakali music is rich with bhavam or emotion and also varied ragas and talas.

Key words: Kathakali, Padam, Bhavam, Ragam

Abbreviation:

S – Shadja, r1- Sudha rishabha, r2- Chatursruti rishabha, g1- Sadharana gandhara, g2- Anthara gandhara, m1- Sudha madhyama, p- Panjama, d1- Sudha dhaivata, d2- Chatursruty dhaivata, n1- Kaisiki nishada, n2- Kakali nishada

A dot above a note- an octave higher

A dot below a note- an octave lower

Introduction

This article mainly points out the various raga-s used in kathakali music and its specialities. It also discerns the differences and similarities of singing a raga, which are common to both Kathakali Music and Carnatic Music. Most of the ragas figuring in Kathakali Music are used in Carnatic Music too.

Kathakali can be traced back from the 17th century in its present form. Before Kathakali, it was Ramanattam. But after the evolution of Carnatic Music the Kathakali Sangeetham was very much influenced by it and many a raga were commonly used in both the system of music. Puranir, Samantha Malahari, Paadi, Navarasam etc., are some of the raga-s which are used only in Kathakali Sangeetham. But there are a few raga-s used both in Kathakali Sangeetham and Carnatic Music. They are Todi, Yadukala Kamboji, Kedaragowla, Hindolam are some of them. Even though there are many raga-s used both in Kathakali Music and Carnatic Music,



there are a lot of dissimilarities along with the similarities in the way raga-s are sung in each system of music. In this article, such similarities and dissimilarities are also being highlighted in a nutshell.

RAGAS USED IN KATHAKALI SANGEETHAM

Raga-s used in Kathakali Music can be classified into two:

- (i) The ones used both in Carnatic Music and Kathakali Sangeetham.
- (ii) The raga-s used only in Kathakali Sangeetham.

(i) The raga-s common to both Carnatic Music and Kathakali Music.

Most of the raga-s currently used in Kathakali Padams are used in Carnatic Music too. To name a few: Yadhukulakamboji, Kalyani, Kamboji, Kedargowla, Todi, Dwijawanti are some of them.

i. Kedaragowla

Kedargowla is an unavoidable raga as most of the kathakali performances begin with a sloka in the raga Kedaragowla be it any story. After “Todayam” (a kathakali performance begins with Todayam, behind the curtain) it is followed by a “Vandana Sloka” in the raga Kedaragowla or Kedaragoudam (as is used in Kathakali music). Apart from the “Vandana Sloka” “Ida Sloka-s” are also sung in the same raga. The raga is mainly used to depict the veera, roudra rasas. (veera rasa pada). While coming to the exposition of a raga in kathakali music, be it any raga, a lot of repetition of phrases is sung as the bhava is more important here and the singer has to bring the rasa or emotion of the lyrics or sahitya through his music. Hence one can find a lot of repetition of the major phrases of a ragam. In Kedaragowla (keragoudam), some phrases that are used repeatedly are:

- (a) m1pn1sr2g2,r2,r2,,,
- (b) r2g2m1g2,r2r2,m1g2g2,rš,,,
- (c) m1p,s,š,,,r2sn1d2,pd2,p,,,
- (d) m1pd2,p,m1g2r2,,,

From the phrases listed above it can be generalised that Kedaragowla is same as used in Carnatic Music with just lesser sanjara-s. Though the raga kedargowla is a raga with sanjara-s in the higher octave mostly in both system of music, the sanjara-s are confined to the higher octaves in Kathakali Sangeetham while the padam is sung to convey emotions like Veera and Roudhra. Kedaragowla is an unavoidable raga in Kathakali Sangeetham. This raga is also used in the concluding sloka or the mangala sloka as it is usually called in Kathakali performance.

ii. Kamboji/ Kamodari

Kamboji of Carnatic Music is known as Kamodari in Kathakali Music. “Harinakshi” is the first padam that comes to the mind of a Kathakali lover which is a famous kathakali Padam from “Keechaka Vadham” set to a Cembada talam. Kamboji is another raga in which “Vandana slokam-s” are found. ‘Anandaspadam.’ is one such:- Vandana Sloka on Lord Guruvayurappan. Kamodari is almost the same as Kamboji except for the use of Kampita (First variety, wherein gandhara is the anuswara) use of Rishabha. In Kamboji, the Rishabha is given the third variety of Kampita gamaka, ie, on the note. “Pd2sr2...” is the phrase of Kamodari where Rishabha is sung using the first variety of Kampita gamaka, with Anthara Gandhara as the anuswara. Even though the phrase ‘pd2sr2...’ is used, Rishabha is given on the note, Kampita unlike Kamodari. Just like Kedaragowla, Kamboji shines more in the higher octaves and is used thus in Kathakali music.

iii. Dwijawanti



Dwijavanti is a raga which was adopted to Carnatic music from Hindustani Music by Muthuswami Dikshitar. Similarly, it was used by Kathakali singers while singing Kathakali padam-s too, showing the influence of various music system on each other. 'Marimaan Kanni...' from Nalacaritam(3rd day), is a very beautiful Kathakali padam in the raga Dwijavanti. Another feature of Dwijavanti of Kathakali music is that, the raga is not just sung in Sama sruti but also in Madhyama sruti. 'Chaladali chankaran...' (from Nalacaritam) is an example for a kathakali padam which is sung in madhyama sruti. This raga unlike the above mentioned Kamboji and Kedaragowla, is sung in all the three octaves. It doesn't confine to the tarastayi sanjaras. The padam 'Mariman kanni..' begins with the Madhyastayi shadja and the first sangati of the first line doesn't go beyond madhyastayi Madhyamam. The usage of Sadharana gandhara is comparatively very less compared to the usage of Sadharana gandhara in Carnatic music. The sadharana gandhara figures only in the phrases like, 'sr2g1r2m1..g2r2s....' and 'r2g2m1pm1g2m1r2g1r2s..' and they sound very much folkish. Some of the phrases listed below figure only in Kathakali music:

- g2g2r2r2.....g2g2r2r2.....g2g2r2r2....r2,m1g2s
- d2n1s,r2sn1,s...
- p,m1,n1,...n1d2pm1pd2,p,..
- r2n1n1...n1d2pm1pd2,p,
- g2m1n1n1d2d2ppm1m1g2r...

iv. Todi

Todi is a majestic raga which can be injected in the listener's mind with a single phrase. 'Brigupathe raghava...', 'Vijane bata mahati...' are some of the innumerable padam-s of Kathakali music in the raga, Todi. The raga exposition in Kathakali music is very similar to the exposition in Carnatic music. The only feature of the raga, Todi in Kathakali music, is the usage of Chatursruti Rishabha in certain phrases for the sake of bhava. Such usages can be found in the padam, 'vijane bata mahati...', where mahati is sung as:

G, ggrsrg,,,

Ma.ha...ti... (here all the rishabhas are in chatursruti rishabha)

There are not much other differences seen in the exposition of the raga, Todi in both Kathakali music and Carnatic music.

There are a many more ragas which are commonly used in both the systems of music like Sriraga, Madhyamavati, Nattakurinji, Anandabhairavi, Bhairavi, Yadukulakamboji are some which have equal importance in both systems.

(ii) Raga-s used only in Kathakali music

Next comes the ragas which are exotic to Kathakali music and a brief description about the raga-s. The raga-s of Kathakali music doesn't have an arohana - avarohana krama. As a result, the raga-s are not bound to a strict pattern unlike Carnatic music. Hence these raga-s can be learnt only from *gurumukha* or through repeated listening. Even though the raga-s don't have an arohana - avarohana krama, they don't lack a structure. Each raga has its own unique svaroopam. Paadi, Khandaram, Puranees, Navarasam are some examples for such raga, which are melodious in their own way.

a. Khandaram and Dukha Khandaram

Dukha Khandaram is a raga usually used to depict sorrow in a Kathakali. 'Badhitasya...' is a padam from 'Balivadham', 'Haha karomi...' from Santhanagopalam are some examples for Dukha khandaram.



Normal Khandaram is used to showcase valour or courage. And is also sung in a higher tempo compared to Dukha Khandaram. ‘Nilleda nilleda..’ from Duryodhanavadham is a good example of Khandaram. Another difference between both the raga-s is the usage of Anthara gandhara in Khandaram. Given below are some phrases used in Dukha Khandaram:

- ś,ś,n1,p,m1,p,s,,,
- n1śf1ġ1,,,ġ1r2śf2,ś,,(it’s not clear whether it is Kaisiki nishada or Chatursruti dhaivata while they sing as the artists sing by keeping in mind of the ragabhava rather than the notes figuring in the raga)
- d2,n1,n1,d1,pa,,,

Apart from these phrases Khandaram uses Anthara gandharam occasionally in a phrase ‘n1śf2ġ2....’.

b. Paadi

Most of the raga-s originated from Kerala uses the Harikamboji notes. Hence most of the Kathakali raga-s also use the Harikamboji notes and so is Paadi. Some of the phrases of the raga Paadi are listed below:

- dśf,ġ,,,ġġfś,f,ś,,,
- mr,m,p,,,
- nnpmp,s,,,
- śn2,dn2,p,,, (Special prayoga wherein Kakali nishada is used)

These are some commonly used phrases of Paadi. ‘Chendar bana’ (Baka vahda) and ‘Malini...’ (from Keechaka vadha) are some examples for Kathakali padas in the raga.

Even though, there is a raga in the same name, the Paadi of Kathakali music is entirely different from the Paadi of Carnatic music. Paadi of Carnatic music uses Sudha rishabha, Sudha madhyama, Sudha dhaivata and KAKali nishada apart from Shadja- panjama while Paadi of Kathakali music uses the notes of Harikamboji (apart from Kakali nishada). The similarity exists only in the name and not in the structure of the raga.

Though majority of the ragas are the ones used in Carnatic music, the above-mentioned ragas are some examples for the raga-s solely used in Kathakali music out of many others.

Conclusion

Kathakali sangeetham is yet another stream of music which cannot be covered in an article. This article covers just small portion of the raga-s used in Kathakali music. In Kathakali music bhava or emotion is most important as it is “*Abhinaya Sangeetha*” or music for acting. Hence the swara sthanas or notes are given least importance in it. Another fact about Kathakali music is that most of the sancharas are done in tara sthayi. The Kathakali singer also uses some beautiful dynamics or modulation which adds beauty to their rendition and touch the souls of the listener. While a Kathakali padam is being sung, what the singer keeps in mind is the lyrical bhava more than the raga framework. As a result, when they sing a raga, for say a raga like Todi, there can be phrases from Dhanyasi, Sindubhairavi etc too. Now a days some artists with Carnatic knowledge have started to sing the Kathakali padam-s with the raga restrictions as in Carnatic music. And it can also be noted the that the singer keeps on repeating the major phrases of the raga while singing the padams as he/she might have to repeat the lines many times for the artists to enact the story. It is also true that the Kathakali singer mostly confine to the higher octaves be it any raga. This can be because in a thought that it is only when sung in the higher octaves it is easier to convey the emotion easier and also because the singer’s voice has to be heard to the audience in between the sound of the Asura vadya-s like Cenda, Maddalam etc, which are too loud. To conclude one could say that the Kathakali music is a stream of music which gives very much importance to the

lyrical bhava or rasa. Hence some deviations from the arohana - avarohana krama (from the perspective of a Carnatic artist) are allowed in Kathakali music.

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