



ELUCIDATION OF HARMONY IN FILM MUSIC FOR DEVI KRITIS

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Abstract

In the Carnatic and film music world, devotional songs form a major part. And songs and Krithis on Devi the Goddess is an important part in this. The compositions of various composers, the great Tyagarajar, Shyama Sastri, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Bharathiyan, Papanasam Sivan are some of the important contributors with their lyrics. And many composers have turned those lyrics into very beautiful compositions in movies as well as in independent albums. The use of various ragas, the instrumentation, the use of harmony in various scales and major rhythm patterns used by them are talked about even today. They have created works that have withstood the test of time. This article talks about those aspects in detail.

Keywords

Devi, Krithis, Movie music, Ragas, Tala, Harmony, Lyrics, Devotion, Bhakti, Tyagaraja, Dikshitar, Sastri, Sivan, Bharathiyan.

Introduction

The five letters constituting the term “MUSIC” themselves indicate a larger purpose to be fulfilled by Music.

- M for Moral strength
- U for Universal recognition
- S for Spiritual stamina
- I for Inspiring experience
- C for Creative skill

India is the land of rich culture and heritage. The whole land itself considered as Divine Goddess. Anything which is complete by nature is generally called as form of Goddess or called Sakthi. Even our country itself considered as Goddess and we call our earth as “Mother Earth”. From Himalaya to Kanyakumari, we have various religions, culture, that are very diverse. However, they all have their own form Devi or Goddess and festivals or rituals associated with them. This article is an attempt to illustrate some salient features of Devi Kritis and the factors which are bringing the harmony in Tamil Film Music. This article about Devi Kritis is a step towards collecting and elucidating the details about the Kritis, their composers, the ragas, the instruments used to capture the mood in the screen and to establish the connection with the audience.

Important Deities or Goddesses

Being very diverse in culture and religions, it venerates many goddesses, each representing various aspects of life, nature, and spirituality. Here are some of the most important goddesses in India and their significance in nut shell.

- **Durga** Attributes: The warrior goddess, embodiment of feminine power (Shakti), often depicted riding a lion or tiger and carrying various weapons. Significance:

Celebrated during Navaratri and Durga Puja, she symbolizes the victory of good over evil.

- **Lakshmi** Attributes: Goddess of wealth, prosperity, and beauty, usually depicted sitting or standing on a lotus flower. Significance: Worshipped especially during Diwali, she is believed to bring good fortune and prosperity.
- **Saraswati** Attributes: Goddess of knowledge, music, art, and wisdom, often shown with a veena (musical instrument) and a book. Significance: Celebrated during Navaratri, she is revered by students and artists.
- **Parvati** Attributes: Consort of Lord Shiva, goddess of fertility, love, and devotion, often depicted with Shiva and their sons, Ganesha and Kartikeya. Significance: Represents the ideal mother and wife, also seen in her fierce forms as Kali and Durga.
- **Kali** Attributes: Fierce form of Parvati, goddess of destruction and transformation, often depicted with a garland of skulls and a skirt of arms. Significance: Worshipped for protection and liberation from evil, symbolizes the destructive and transformative aspects of the divine.
- **Ganga** Attributes: Personification of the sacred Ganges River, depicted riding a crocodile and holding a pot of water. Significance: Represents purity and is believed to cleanse sins, with her waters being sacred for rituals.
- **Radha** Attributes: Consort of Lord Krishna, goddess of love and devotion, often depicted with Krishna in Ras Leela. Significance: Represents the epitome of devotion and unconditional love, central to the Bhakti movement.
- **Sita** Attributes: Consort of Lord Rama, symbol of virtue, purity, and devotion, often depicted in scenes from the Ramayana. Significance: Represents the ideal wife and woman, revered for her unwavering devotion and purity.
- **Annapurna** Attributes: Goddess of nourishment, often depicted with a bowl of food and a ladle, seated on a throne. Significance: Believed to provide food and sustenance, worshipped for prosperity and well-being.

India's length and breadth is so vast that in every village there would be a Goddess and would have some kind of functions associated with that which could be music, dance, or any of the folk music and so on. Due to this constraint this article is restricted with very famous and well known deities specified.

Ragas and their Mood

Sangita Makaranda also classifies the ragas according to their gender i.e. Male Ragas, Female Ragas (i.e., Raginis) and Neuter Ragas. According to Narada, the Male Ragas depict emotions of Raudra (anger), Veera (heroic) and Bhayanaka (fearful); the Female Ragas represent sentiments of Shringara (romantic and erotic), Hasya (humorous) and Karuna (sorrow); while the Neuter Ragas represent emotions of Vibhatsa (disgustful), Adbhuta (amazement) and Shanta (peaceful).

Each raga is principally dominated by one of these nine rasas or sentiments, although the performer can also bring out other emotions in a less prominent way. The more closely the notes of a raga conform to the expression of one single idea or emotion, the more overwhelming the effect of the raga.

Ragas in Devi Krithis

Even though there are thousands of ragas exist in Carnatic music, there are prominently few ragas which are generally used due to various reasons to connect or communicate the lyrical, philosophical beauty of the Devi. These ragas, either because of their structure, melodic qualities,



are perfect for compositions dedicated to the goddesses, enhancing the devotional experience. Carnatic music features numerous kritis which are composed in specific ragas that evoke devotion, reverence, and beauty. Here are some famous ragas commonly used in ragas and some of the very famous or well-known compositions in that raga:

- Ananda Bhairavi, Bhairavi, Natabhairavi
- Kalyani, Hamir Kalyani, Yaman Kalyani,
- Mayamalava gowla, gowla, Reethi gowla, karaharapriya and their janya ragas like Abhogi, Sankarabaranam and their janya.
- Ragamaligai - Sindhu Bhairavi, Kapi, Revathi, Maand

Famous Carnatic Composers of Devi Kritis

- Saint Tyagaraja (1767–1847): One of the most important and revered composers, he has composed numerous kritis (songs) in Telugu but generally in praise of Lord Rama unlike Dikshitar and Shyama Sastri. His compositions are highly regarded for their devotional content and musical excellence. Only very few compositions of Devis by Tyagarajar is available or written by him.
- Muthuswami Dikshitar (1775–1835): Another member of the revered Trinity of Carnatic music, he composed primarily in Sanskrit. His compositions are known for their elaborate structure and incorporation of various ragas (melodic frameworks).
- Shyama Sastri (1762–1827): The third member of the Trinity, he composed mainly in Telugu and Sanskrit. His kritis are known for their depth of bhakti (devotion) and complexity.
- Papanasam Sivan (1890–1973): Often referred to as the Tamil Tyagaraja, he has composed numerous songs in Tamil. His works are noted for their lyrical beauty and devotional fervour.
- Bharathiyar: The great poet of Tamil is Bharathiyar and he is modern in his idea and the same reflects in his lyrics and he is a great supporter for women and their wellness and freedom. Many of his contributions are in praise of Devi only.

Famous Composers of Devi Kritis in Tamil Films

The list of the composers who has created Devi kritis in Tamil film list is very big as it is not just music directors alone contribute because often it is the director who has the idea and it is being translated to words by lyricist and the other orchestral person giving life to the song and above all the singer who give life to the songs. Hence the list of contributors to the Devi Kritis in Tamil music is very vast. Here is a sample lists of Music Directors, Lyricists, Singers and some of the ragas predominantly used.

Music Directors

1. KV Mahadevan
2. MS Viswanathan
3. Ilaiyaraaja
4. G Ramanathan
5. Dhakshinamoorthy

Lyricists

1. Kannadasan
2. Pattukottai Kalayanasundaram
3. Vaali
4. Marudhakasi
5. Pulamaipithan



Singers

1. Yesudas
2. SP Balasubramaniam
3. P Susheela
4. S Janaki
5. P. Leela
6. MS Subbulakshmi
7. ML Vasanthakumari
8. KS Chitra
9. TR Mahalingam
10. Ghantasala

Ragas

1. Kalyani
2. Keeravani
3. Karaharapriya
4. Mayamalavagowla
5. Reethi Gowla
6. Maduvanthy
7. Panthuvarali
8. Bhairavi
9. Sindu Bhairavi
10. Abhogi

Over view of Harmony

Often when we think of a song, our initial thoughts gravitate towards the melody. The melody or “top-line” is the part of the music that we hum or sing, and the aspect that often lingers in our memories. But a melody seldom stands on its own. The richness and captivating dynamics of a melody largely stem from its surrounding harmonies and chords. Harmony in music refers to the sounding of two or more notes simultaneously. Because these notes are being played at the same time and are “stacked” on top of each other, people sometimes refer to harmony as being a “vertical” aspect of music. Harmony provides richness and texture to music, and it plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional and expressive qualities of a composition.

Consonant Vs dissonant chords

Consonant chords are combinations of notes that create a stable and pleasing sound. They provide a sense of resolution and rest. Consonant chords can be major, On the other hand, dissonant chords can create a tense, unstable, and even harsh sound.

There are many types of harmony in music. In Western music theory, three popular types of harmony are:

- Diatonic harmony – which uses notes from the key signature to create melodies and chords.
- Non-diatonic harmony – which utilizes notes from the key signature as well as notes from outside of the key signature.
- Atonal harmony – which doesn’t use traditional tonal centres at all.

Harmony – Tamil - Film songs

The harmony in Tamil film music is little different the way to convey the same. Here the importance is not given not only for the type of instrument used or the chords played or pitch and tone, timber but also to the lyrical beauty. So the harmony is achieved from very simple elegant to



grant orchestration of hundreds of instruments played together to achieve the effect or convey the message to the audience.

There are various aspects or parameter involved in the harmony of song or specifically to Devi kritis. Throughout this article wherever a song is discussed we can assume these parameters or aspects are mixed in different proportion to pull or get the net output of the song.

Simple – Harmony

Here the simple meaning either no of instruments or orchestration involvement for the making of the song. Way back to the old day the very simple harmony sometime would have just a voice or a tambura to support that voice and the idea behind this is to enrich the user experience or to connect to the sole of the singer / instrumentalist who plays that.

Complex - Harmony

Here the complex means either the number of instruments or the oneness of the different instrument from string, percussion, wind and voice of the singers are goes to a state, where the listener can hear the song or can't even imagine the song without the background scores. There are various songs which look so simple but they have consumed very heavy efforts for the final output.

Factors / Parameters contribute to the Harmony

The film music is collective effect and the harmony is achieved with the careful selection or by giving due importance to the following factors or parameters.

- Language of the song
- Lyrics or lyrical beauty
- Thalam or Meter or Rhythm
- Ragas and their Rasa.
- Selection of voice - Singers
- Instruments – string, wind, percussion and so on.

Language

The film music often reaches every individual irrespective of their depth of knowledge because of the reason that it reached their heart rather the mind. The very easy way to reach any audience in film music is the selection of target audience, once the target audience is identified the first and foremost importance is given to their Mother Tongue. Because it is believed and even proved that we translate every information to our known language and process. So, selection of language is also playing a major role. But in contrast also seen Tamil people singing or humming Hindi, Malayalam, Telugu or other language when they are so attached with other aspects of the song other than the language.

Lyrical Beauty

Once the language is selected the harmony is achieved through the selection of apt and appropriate words for the scene running the screen. The lyrics plays major role in Devi kriti as it has to invoke the effect from and within the listeners. The lyrics determine in many times the gender of the song. It also seen many lyrics apart from the lyrical beauty the male portion would have long letter and female portion has short version or elongation of a note.

Thalam / Rhythm / Meter

The mood of the song is majorly depending on the Thalam or Rhythm of the song. This can be explained easily that the song which is very fast in tempo would have beats which are also fast or else the song would fail to convey the mood. The Rhythm 7/8 or Mira Nadai (Thakita Thaka Thimi), 5/ 8Thaka Thakita Kanta Nadai are used for enhancing the fastness of the song.

Raga and their Rasa



Most of the songs for the Devi Kritis are selected as Rakthi ragas to convey the powerful emotion in the movies. And also many times the ragas which are selected for the songs are pradimathyamam and also bhashanga raga or the raga with one or two foreign notes to their parent ragas. The Ragas which are very frequently used in movie are like Anandha Bhairavi, Bhairavi, Kalyani, Kurunji, Sahana, Kedaragowla, Sivarajanji, Hamir Kalyani, Yamuna Kalyani and some rare ragas like Pavani, Gowda, Malhar, Surya, Chala natai, Gangeyabhushani and so on.

Voice

The voice plays a major role in bringing the mood of the song. The success of a film song depends on the voice of the singer also in many times. For an instance below we will see the song Kai veenai yenthum was song by Carnatic musician named “Bombay Jayashree” which was very apt for conveying the mood as it is very subtle and a gentle karunai rasam also being conveyed in that song. The song like Maniye Maniyein oliye was sung by TM Soundararajan by his powerful strong push in the voice. The voice of the artist who sung the song plays a major role in contributing to the harmony of the song.

Instruments

There are more than 100 instruments and they were used for various purpose of the song depending on the complexity of the song. The instruments viola, violin, veena, shenai, Sitar, trumpet, Saxophone, Bass Guitar, Xylophone, flute, Celesta, Horn, Harp, Flute, keyboard, drums, piano, Nadaswaram, urumi, pambai, udukkai, mandolin, harmonium and so on. Depends on the need of the film or shots the instruments are selected.

In general, for most of the Devi Kritis Nadaswaram, Veena, Udukkai, Pambai, Urumi are used and however Veena is mainly used when the type of the song is not very peppy or subtle or soft. While to arose the audience mood or to kindle the emotion or outburst Bambari, Parai, Urumi is used.

Critical Analysis of Devi Kritis

Table 1

Movie	Thooku Thooki
Music Director	G. Ramanathan
Lyricist	A. Maruthakasi
Singers	P. Leela, A. P. Komala & T. M. Soundararajan
Ragam	Kurunji
Song	Sundari Sowndari

Lyrical Beauty

This song was written in Tamil language. The lyrical beauty is lying in the selection of the words or letters. In the song the words start with rhyming or end with rhyming, these words are called as Edukai, Monai, Eyyaibu, Thodai. The entire song is filled with this lyrical beauty by creating words of similar sound. This similar sound contributes to the harmony of sound while it is rendered and which also shows the proficiency of the lyricist over the language by the lyricist A. Maruthakasi. The famous kamatchi virutham lines are incorporated in to this song to give the essence of the virutam and it was rendered by three legendary singers.

The song is set to Kurunji ragam to capture the soft mood and the very famous sita kalyana is set in this raga and the swathi tirunal padam Alleveni Enthu is also the same raga. This song



starts with the scintillating veena playing followed by the voice of the two female singers. Not much of the instruments are used in this song as the song was like a bhajanai samprathayam where the two female singers render a line and the male singer follows them. The harmony of the song is so strong that even today we can hear this song to have a piece filled mood and the rasa which it conveys is karuna and bakthi. In the below line every first character of the line is matching called Edugai same way the ending also matches to give the rhythmic sound to the song and enhances its beauty.

Instruments

The song starts with the very melodic veena instrument and followed by harmonium, jalra. The jalra is used to maintain the tempo of the song.

Raga

The raga Kurunji is a vakra (zigzag) raga and a non-linear progression in its scale. It is the Janya Raga of the very famous Sankarabaranam – 29th Mela kartha Ragam. The raga kurunji as various aspects associated with the mood that it creates. The raga evokes devotion, tranquillity, and serenity. In this movie this song was sung before the Goddess and it creates the divine mood in the screen by the meditative and reflective in nature.

Talam / Singers

This song was rendered by P. Leela, AP. Komala and TM. Soundarajan like bhajanai sampradayam. Where a line would be rendered by the main singer and others would follow them in bhajanai, the same way throughout the song the two female singers would sing the son and the male would follow them. This is set to 5/8 meter of talam. It is called the Kandasapu talam in Carnatic music. All these characters made this song as a great success and enable us to hear even today.

Table 2

Movie	Adhi parasakthi
Music Director	K.V. Mahadevan
Lyricist	Kannadasan
Singers	T. M. Soundararajan
Ragam	Ragamaligai – Mayamalavagowla, gowla, kamboji.
Song	Maniye Maniyin Oliye

Lyrical Beauty

This song was written in Tamil language by the lyricist Kannadasan. The lyrical beauty is in the selection of words. In the song every words last characters sounds similar giving beauty to the song. Also it has different moods based on the mood the words are used. For an instance in the first line it is like ordering Goddess saying why can't you tell but as it progresses the order becoming little submissive and then later he pleases the Goddess. To carry this different mood, the music director cleverly selected Ragamaliga meaning different ragas to convey the different rasa. In this song the devotee says that the full moon would appear on a day when it was no moon day.

The song was depicting the power of the Devi that she can do anything which is from impossible to possible. it was rendered by T.M. Soundararajan voice which is considered a very power full and majestic by nature. The singer does full justice to the song by open throated singing method contributed to the fullness or success of the song. Another import thing in this song is



starting with the Abirami Andhadi and it is rendered with the virutham. This song was directed musically by K. V. Mahadevan.

Factors to consider

This song was used to carry different mood hence the director used cleverly raga maligai to capture the different rasas. The very first paragraph was very powerful and in this the devotee orders the Goddess saying I told what you said why are you delaying like this. To get this feel Mayamalavagowla raga was used for this purpose.

Raga Mayamalavagowla is one of the fundamental ragas in Carnatic music. It is the 15th Melakarta raga in the 72 Melakarta raga system and using that how the poet with boldness speaks to the Goddess. Mayamalavagowla evokes feelings of devotion, calmness, and solemnity. Its serene and meditative nature makes it suitable for devotional compositions and spiritual themes. Mayamalavagowla offers ample scope for elaborate improvisation in both raga alapana (melodic improvisation) and talam (rhythmic improvisation). It is a versatile raga that can be explored in various tempos and styles.

In the second paragraph he starts requesting the Goddess and for which the composer used Gowla raga. Interestingly it is the derivative of the Mayamalavagowla. The Rishabam makes it distinct from all other ragas. It possesses a unique aesthetic and emotional essence. This raga is known for its tranquil and serene nature. It creates a calming and soothing atmosphere, ideal for meditative and reflective moods. Gowla has a majestic and grand feel, which adds a sense of dignity to the compositions. This makes it suitable for singing in a formal and respectful setting.

In the final paragraph, after ordering, requesting he started to please the Goddess to show the full moon as she told through him hence he used the ragam Kamboji. Raga Kamboji is a popular and majestic raga in Carnatic music, known for its grandeur and versatility. It is a bhashanga raga, meaning it includes notes that are not part of its parent Melakarta raga. This is the raga which can render different flavours like **Veera (Heroic)**, **Shringara (Romantic)**, **Bhakti (Devotion)** too. Kamboji is known for evoking feelings of heroism and grandeur. It is often associated with majesty and valour. It can also convey romantic and affectionate moods, adding to its versatility. The raga is used in many devotional compositions, showcasing its ability to express deep devotion and reverence. Hence Raga Kamboji is celebrated for its aesthetic appeal and the emotional depth it can convey. It is a favourite among both musicians and listeners for its ability to evoke a wide range of emotions, from the heroic and majestic to the devotional and romantic.

The song slowly starts with just tampura and then veena, mirudangam are accompanied for the voice later udukai was used to convey the powerful mood towards the end. All these contributes to the harmonic beauty of the song.

Yet another song in Kalyani to notice is “Thai Moogambigai” movie’s Devi kriti Janani Janani sung by Ilaiyaraaja the composer of the movie. There are many songs in film in Kalyani raga which used to capture all the different emotions. The Kalyani raga has variety of janya ragas like Yamuna Kalyani, Amir Kalyani, Saranga and so on which are very popular like their parent raga.

Table 3

Movie	Thai Moogambigai
Music Director	Ilaiyaraaja
Lyricist	Vaali

Singers	P. Susheela, S. Janaki, S. Rajeshwari
Ragam	Surya
Song	Isai Arasi ennalum

The song was a dialogue type song where two female singers have a conversation as song. The heated dialogue would reveal the power of Devi and towards the end it shows everything is controlled by Sakthi and she is capable of even making the dumb person to sing. The movie was captured in a temple where the concert has been organized between a leading artist and a simple woman who does odd jobs in a temple who happens to be the Goddess.

Ragam Surya or Sallapam is a janya of mela ragam (14) Vakulabharanam; by losing the Rishabham and Panchamam. Hindolam is changed to Anthara Gandharam (G3), it results in Surya; this raga is called "Sallapam" in Carnatic Music. The composer Sri. K. Ramaraj differs in the above, says "Scale wise, despite Ragam Sallabham and Surya may appear to be one and the same, Sallabham has a different identity with a subtle variation in so far as the prayogam of Anthara Gandharam with a tinge of oscillation, since it is a janya of Vakulabharanam (14th meLam), whereas Surya (as adopted by me) is a Janya of Charukesi (26th MeLam), where the same Anthara gandharam is performed as a plain note". But most of the musicians favour both Surya and Sallapam to be same

The raga Surya was not popular even in concert stage but the very clever way that Ilaiyaraaja sir has used this song for the dialogue between two performing artists. one of the artist is being a performer of Carnatic while another artist is the Goddess – Moogambigai herself in the movie. And the harmony of the song is it used all the instruments required for the concerts stage like mirudangam, violin, tampura, etc. while the Goddess stop singing and enable the dump girl by touching her throat and gives goosebumps to every audience. The three female artists selected are Susheela and Rajeshwari then Janaki joins and the beauty of the song is their signing all swarams but none of them are actually Carnatic artists. The song touches the heart and by the selection of this raga for exchange of their excellence in singing or it is set to be a dialogue based song.

Table 4

Movie	Guna
Music Director	Ilaiyaraaja
Lyricist	Vaali
Singers	K.J. Yesudas
Ragam	Pavani
Song	Nayagi Naanmugi

This song is from the movie Guna which starts with the Abirami Andhadi “Endai Kondu Vimmi, Inaikkondu”.

Pavani (pronounced pāvani, meaning the purifier) is a rāgam in Carnatic music (musical scale of South Indian classical music). It is the 41st melakarta rāgam in the 72 melakarta rāgam system of Carnatic music. It is called Kumbhini in Dikshidar. It has *Chandrajyoti* as a *janya* rāgam (derived scale) . There are very few compositions in this derived raga available. raga was also very



powerful as far as to convey the emotion of the hero. However, it was not usual raga in concerts platform. The song starts with the divinity of the Abirami anthathi followed by the voice of Yesudas. Many instruments were used in this song to give the effect of the temple like drums, violin, keyboard, triangle mirudangam, bass guitar.

Conclusion

The article is an attempt to appreciate and admire the various harmonic feature of film music restricted to the Devi Kriti. Some of the kriti has the poetic lyrics from Abirami Andhadi, Lalitha sahasranam and so on, however the lyrics were written in such a way to capture the essence and mood of the scene it follows. Various aspects or parameters that gives the harmonization of the film music is being discussed above. The typical factors like language, their lyrical embellishment (Edugai, Monai, Thodai) and the various Ragas which are used to carry the emotion has been discussed in detail with the example however it is a drop of an ocean in the film music. The success of many devotional movies has majorly contributed by the songs in the movies which depends on the lyricist, music director, raga of the song, instruments used, tempo and voice of the singers and so on.

The orchestration of the film music is the breath of the entire movie and various factors which are import for that has been illustrated and elucidated with few examples. The above discussed features of the film music are very essential to kindle the mood of the audience and to convey the divinity to them or to invoke it whenever they listen or visually see the song.

Music is the life line for a movie and hence the Harmonies play a pivotal role in bringing out the essence of the emotion through the lyrical beauties.

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