



ISSN: 2582-9513

PRANAV JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

Folk music forms in Haridāsa literature

Ragini A R¹ & Dr.Meera Rajaram Pranesh

Jain University (Deemed to be), Bengaluru, India

Abstract

In the history of Indian classical music, Haridāsās of Karnataka played a very important role in setting up the Karnātak music pedagogy. They were Vaiṣṇava saints of Karnataka who followed Dvaita philosophy of Śri Madhvācārya and ushered in a cultural renaissance during and post the Bhakti movement period. They composed musical compositions to be understood by one and all, by dexterously weaving musical elements and devotional literature together. They were instrumental in reviving and restructuring the ancient and complicated *Prabandhās* into newer, easier musical forms in vernacular languages like *Sulādis*, *Ugābhōgas*, *Dēvaranāma/padās*, *vrutta nāma*, etc during the 15th century and later. Most importantly, they bridged the gap between the common folk and the elite by introducing devotional music forms to the common people by making use of the age old and popular, folk music as their base. Folk music has been the music of the common and undoubtedly, older than the classical or devotional music forms, which have been seen as the music of the elite. Perhaps, for the very first time, these folk compositions were stewarded to be presented as devotional music by the Haridāsās of Karnataka, which heralded a new dimension to the development of classical music, also influencing many later Karnātak music composers such as saint Tyāgaraja, who brought in folk music into his operas, Utsava sampradāya kṛtis , bhajans etc.

¹ Ragini A R, Bengaluru, Email id : ranusanath@gmail.com



ISSN: 2582-9513

PRANAV JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

Aim: This paper will briefly present some of the folk music forms as *Lāli, Suvvali, Kōlāṭa* and *Koravañji* integrated by the Haridāsa saints into devotional classical music, based on select compositions, drawing out their probable influences on the later composers who have integrated these into main stream classical and devotional music spheres.

Keywords: Haridāsās of Karnataka, Folk music, Karnāṭak music, Dāsa Sāhitya, Bhakti, Prabandha, devotional music

Introduction From time immemorial, folk music has remained humankind's most fundamental way to express their feelings. They are simple music compositions, passed down orally from generation to generation in a family or a community, capturing the essence of every occasion or festival and binding together culture, history, language, religion and practices. In contrast to classical or devotional music labelled as the inheritance of the elite, with themes always aiming higher pursuits of life and confined to a certain framework, folk music unconnected to any framework, complete by itself, remained the music of the common-folk and presented themes common to everyday life. In its evolution, classical or art music has been built on top of the folk music structures. During and post the 'Bhakti' movement, classical composers inspired by some of these rich folk themes, integrated them into the devotional sphere of classical music. With the folk form as a base, the composers dexterously weaved literature replete in cultural, philosophical and spiritual values with music set to *rakti rāgās*, embellished them with rhetorics and presented these music forms in vernacular languages in simple rhythmical formats, to be sung by layperson in their day to day lives reaching every nook and corner of the society. Composers as Tallapakka Annamācārya, Haridāsās, many bhakti saints and later Tyā garajacan be seen as pioneers in integrating folk music into classical music.



Haridāsas of Karnataka, the founders of the classical Karnāṭak musical pedagogy, were Vaiṣṇava saints of Karnataka who followed Dvaita philosophy of Śrī Madhvācārya. They ushered in a cultural renaissance by propagating ‘bhakti’ or devotion, weaving literature brimming with cultural and spiritual values with music. Starting from Narahari Tīrtha of the 12th century followed by Srīpādarāya(1404-1502 CE), Vyasarāja Tīrtha(1460-1539 CE), Vadiraja Tīrtha (1480-1600 CE), Rāghavendra Tīrtha (1595-1671 CE) among the saints and pontiffs and their prominent saint disciples as Purandaradāsa, Kanakadāsa, Vijayadāsa, Gopāladāsa, Jagannathadāsa, women disciples as Helavanakatte Giriyamma, Harapanahalli Bheemavva and many more.

They were categorized into:

- . Vyāsakūṭa - saints and pontiffs of the highest philosophical order
- . Dāsakūṭa - saint disciples who propagated good teachings based on a wide spectrum as philosophy, religion, social and ethical conduct, moral values

Coalesce of Folk and devotional music forms in Haridāsa literature

Haridāsas are credited to have revived the ancient *Sāḷaga Sūḍa Prabandhās*² through simple devotional musical compositions based on popular folk musical forms of their times, as *Sampradāya padās* which could be rendered by all, elite or common folk during auspicious occasions. In Karnataka, around the medieval period, folk music forms as *kōlāta*, *Sōbhane* (benedictory songs), *Suvvāli* (sung while pounding corn), *Koravañji* (fortuneteller’s songs), *lāli-jōgula* (cradle songs/lullaby), wedding songs as *Urutāne* (rolling of coconut), *Uyyāle* (swing songs), *ārati* (light wave to ward off evil) etc., have been an integral part of the common man’s

² Music of Madhva monks of Karnataka : Dr.R.Satyanarayana



life, possess the distinctive nature of the places they have originated from. The *sāhithya* of these compositions were in Kannada and described mostly every day lifestyle of common people.

Representation of such folk music forms in the form of *padās* by the Haridāsa's bridged bhakti and the thoughts of plebeians together. These *padās* were composed in vernacular languages mostly in Kannada and sometimes in Tuḷu or Bhāndīra, to reach one and all. The lyrics were attractive with the usage of alliterations and good prosody. They made use of the refrain from the folk and then used literary meters as *tripadi*³, *choupadi*, *shatpadi* and rendered them with simple *dēsi tāḷās*. Stories of Lord Viṣṇu and other celestials from various *Purāṇās*, Dvaita theology constituted the lyrics making them popular with the common folk. This ensured bringing *dēsi* and *mārga* forms closer and also instilled universal appeal for devotional music to be part of every household irrespective of societal strata, age, caste, creed, region, religion or gender, to express devotion and to propel the common folk to higher social, moral or cultural values.

Below are some folk compositions which were merged into devotional music space :

Lālipada/ Jōgula compositions

Lāli or 'loli' songs in the folk literature are lullabies to rock a child to sleep. The lyrics generally are about praising the antics of the child who is being rocked or on the elements of nature guarding one and all. However, the Haridāsa's composed devotional lāli's in praise of a deity. The foremost of them is perhaps '*Lāli Govinda Lāli*' by Sripādarāya. This composition praises the Daśāvatāra of Lord Viṣṇu, through 23 stanzas . The composition consists of a two line Pallavi, a two line anupallavi followed the caraṇas containing by four lines each. It can be noted here, that Sripādarāya was instrumental in bringing out the the finalized structure of Kīrtana⁴ around the 15th century. The composition has been embellished with alliterations as *dwitīyākṣara prāsa*.

³ Compositions with three lines, four lines, six lines

⁴ Annamācārya in his treatise Sankirtalakṣanamulu credits Sripādarāya for this



PRANAV JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

ISSN: 2582-9513

Interesting aspect of this composition is the mention to the Rāgās Kalyaṇi, Anandabhairavi and Dēvagāndhāra in the 18th, 19th and 20th caraṇas of the composition through the phrases “*sallaitagānadinda tūgidaru Kalyaṇi rāgadinda*”, “*ānandabharitarāgi tūgidāru Anandabhairavinda*”, “*devagandharavādi tūgidaru Devagandharainda*”⁵. This brings up the presence of rāgās as Kalyaṇi and Anandabhairavi in practice in the early 15th century, although the documentation to these rāgās are seen in *lakṣaṇagranthās* of late 16th century. This probably infers that these *Rāgās* although in use in popular music from early 15th century might have gained significance in the classical music genre during the late 16th century. *Devagandharai* is an ancient Rāga and continued to be part of the medieval era. Purandaradāsa’s *Jō Jō Sri Kṛṣṇa, Lāli Tribhuvana pāvana Lāli* and Vadiraja Teertha’s *Lāli ādida Ranga Lāli ādida* are some examples of *Lāli* songs thematized on *Daśāvātāra* of Lord Viṣṇu.

Suvvali/Shōbhāne

A very common folk song, widely prevalent in rural Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu is *Suvvi*, *Suvvali*, *Suvvāle*, *Suvvali*, sung by women folk while pounding or grinding corn and in auspicious ceremonies as birth, wedding etc. Women sing these benedictory songs thinking about the menfolk, who are away. The *sāhithya* mostly portrays *Vipralambha Śṛṅgāra*. Haridāsa saints as Vadiraja Tīrtha have composed *Suvvali*’s which praise the exploits of Lord Krishna, conforming to Dvaita philosophy. These compositions are composed in Todi and Anandabhairavi Rāgas, set to traditional *tripadi* meter, while singing, the second line is repeated in the third line carrying the additional short suffix which continues into the fourth line completing the music and the essence of the caraṇa. Jagannatha Dasa’s *Tattva Suvvali* puts deities into forefront and is in *tripadi* meter. It brings out finer details from philosophies in archaic Sanskrit into an easy format in

⁵Varadaraja Rao, G. Sripadaraja Kritigalu



PRANAV JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

ISSN: 2582-9513

vernacular Kannada, thereby reaching it out easily to all. Another benedictory song that falls here is the *Lakṣmi Śobhāne* of Vadiraja Tīrtha. A *Śobhāne* in folklore is sung in wedding by womenfolk as a benediction to the bride and the groom. Vadirāja Tīrtha brings this out as a narration of wedding of goddess Lakṣmi and Lord Nārāyana as a quartette. The composition, *Śobhānavennire* set to *Dhruva tāla*, is a lengthy composition⁶ and has 112 stanzas and the pallavi is repeated as a refrain after every stanza. *Yamakālaṅkāra* is seen as a prosodical excellence here. Also, this *Śobhāne* mentions the instruments as *tāla*, *maddale*, *chande*, *tammate*, *bheri*, *sankha* and *dundubhi*, the celestial musicians Nārada and Tumburu and also Marathi folk musical forms *ovi* and *dhavaḷa*.

Koravañji

In folk literature, *Koravañji* refers to a woman from a wandering gypsy tribe who are known to play an important role as a soothsayer. Their dance is called *Koravañji nāṭya*. In Karnataka, this form of folk dance was called *Koravañji Kattale* by Govindavaidya⁷ in which the theme was mentioned in four languages Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Prakṛta. This in the inception stages was performed simply as a song or a dance set to a literary theme.

However, *Nārada Koravañji* of Vādiraja Tīrtha has a very well defined dramatic element and perhaps is the earliest vernacular folk dance-drama in Kannada setting precedence to many other *Koravañji* compositions as *Kandarpa Koravañji* of Brahmānka, *Brahma Koravañji* of Helavanakatte Giryamma, *Sri Prasanna Krishna Koravañji* of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III, *Mohana Vilasa Koravañji* of Saptarishi, court poet of Sahaji II, Devendra Koravañji of Serfoji II and many *Yakṣagāna* plays⁸. In this *Koravañji* play, the composer brings in the celestial being Nārada as the

⁶ also called deergha hādugaḷu

⁷ Durga S A K, The opera in South India

⁸ R.Satyanarayana, Music of Madhva monks of Karnataka



Koravañji in the marriage of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini. This composition also has the *Koravañji* sing in Telugu, which also brings around the regional aspect. Brahma Koravañji of Helavanakatte Giryamma⁹ mentions *trivude*, *aṣṭa* and *pañcaghata*¹⁰ *tāla* which are from the folklore used mainly in Yakṣagāna. The composition has separate prose passages to narrate the story through different rakhti rāgās as Nāte, Bhairavi, Kambodhi and Kedaragowla. *Koravañji* plays in their due evolution, were composed for performance in royal courts and temples, had the characters of celestial beings take the part of *Koravañji*. The literary style here was more classical, yet retained the folk flavor with the costumes of different characters and the usage of different vernacular dravidian languages for the characters in the play.

Kōlāṭa

A folk dance congregational format using sticks to dance involving groups of people who dance to rhythmic clashing of sticks in various patterns and rhythms is *kōlāṭa*. The lyrics commonly have themes pertaining to romance and valor, references to contemporary, political and social issues that people dance to an energizing music. Haridāsās, named the compositions sung for *kōlāṭa* as *kōlu padās*, introduced the concepts of Daśavatāra and antics of Lord Kṛṣṇa as their themes for these compositions. Mahipatidāsā's *Kōlu Kōlenna Kōle* and Mohanadasa's *Akāśakabhimāni* are some examples of *kōlu padās*. The latter is a *choupadi*¹¹, consists of 217 stanzas and is set to folk tune in Nādanāmakriya. *Kōlu padās*, in due evolution, became an integral part of *Gēya Rūpakās* and *nātakās* (vernacular theatre dramas) as in saint Tyagarāja's *Noukacharithram nātaka*. Below table has some examples of folk forms adapted in Haridāsa literature through compositions.

⁹ T K Indubai, Helavanakatte Giryammannahādugalu

¹⁰ Tālās that are used in Yakṣagāna

¹¹ quartette



PRANAV JOURNAL OF FINE ARTS

ISSN: 2582-9513

We come across folk music forms as above in the Utsava Sampradaya Kritis of Saint Tyā garaja.

These were compositions written in association with traditional rituals (*sōdāsa pūja*) involving worshipping of the deity and made use of folk forms as *Śōbhāne*, *Lāli*, *heccharika*, *Jō jō* and others.

Folk Form	Pada (Composition)	Composer
Uppavāda	Yēḷu Nārāyana	Kanakadāsa
Naivedya/anna prashana	Annavanuṇisida	Vādirāja Tīrtha
Ārati	Ārati Belagōṇa	Vādirāja Tīrtha
Uyyale	Toogire Rangana	Purandaradāsa
Eccharike	Eccharikeccharike	Vādirāja Tīrtha
Uruṭāne	Lakśmi Ramaṇage	Vādirāja Tīrtha
Lāli	Lāli Govinda	Sreepadarāya
Joguḷa	Jō Jō Sri Kṛṣṇa	Purandaradāsa
Pavada	Pavadisu Paramātmāne	Purandaradāsa
Suvvi	Suvvi suvvi namma	Vādirāja Tīrtha
Śōbhāne	Lakśmi Śōbhāne	Vādirāja Tīrtha
Kōlāta	Kōlu Kōlenna Kōle	Mahipathi dāsa
Mangaḷa Pada	Mangaḷa mahimage mangaḷa	Prasanna Venkata Dāsa
Marriage song	Alankarisidaru Padmavatiya	Harapanahalli Bheemavva

Folk forms and compositions in Haridāsa literature



Conclusion

The Haridāsa heritage through the folk music adaptation ushered in an expansion to the devotional genre of Karnātak music repertoire through simple devotional music compositions called ‘*Sampradāya padās*’. This expansion was very effective in bridging the divide that existed between the music of the elite versus the music of the common folk. Today, folk music has become an everlasting part of mainstream classical music and dance through musical forms as Namasankeertanam’s, Sampradāya padās, Yakśagāna, Koravañji, Harikatha, Bhāgavatha mēla nātaka and others.

References

Durga SA K(1979), “The opera in South India “, Delhi : B R Rhythms

Indubai T K (1987), “Helavanakatte Giryammanna hādugalu” , Mysore: Kannada Adhyayana Samsthe

Nagaratna. T N (1980), “Sri Vadiraja kritigalu”, Mysore: Kannada Adhyayana Samsthe

Rao, Varadaraja G (1987),” SripadarajaKrtigalu (Popular Edition)”. Mysuru: Kannada AdhyayanaSamsthe: University of Mysuru

Ramachandrarao, SK (2003), “Dāsa sāhithya mattu samskruti”, Bangalore : Kannada Pustaka Pradhikāra

Sambamoorthy.P (2008), “South Indian music Book III” , Chennai:The Indian Music Publishing House.

Satyanarayana.R (1988), “Music of Madhva monks of Karnataka”, Bangalore : Gnana Jyothi Kala Mandir

Varadaraja Rao, G(1987), “SripadarajaKrtigalu(Popular Edition)”. Mysuru: Kannada AdhyayanaSamsthe: University of Mysuru

Narendra Babu (Mar 2020), “Haridaasa Saahitya Mathu Janapada Saahitya Ondhu Tholulanika Adhyayana”, Unpublished thesis

<https://sreenivasaraos.com/tag/haridasas/>