

Contribution of Maharaja Swati Tirunal towards Music, Dance and Literature

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Abstract

India is fortunate to have great philosophers like Bhagavan Veda Vyasa, Acharya Sankara, Maharshi Valmiki and poets like Tagore, Kalidasa, Bhasa and saint composer musicians like Andal, Meerabai, Annamacharya, Purandara dasa, Syama Sastri, Tyagaraja, Muttuswami Dikshitar and so on. They propagated the great spiritual values and Upanishad Philosophy through the medium of literature and music. In Kerala, the scholars like Kulasekhara Alwar, Vilwamangalam Swamiyar, Melpattur Narayana Bhatta, Tunchat Ezhuthachan, Narayana Guru, Poomtanam and many others tried to motivate people through their devotional lyrics. The period of Maharaja Swati Tirunal is considered as the 'Golden age' of Music in Kerala. He was a dedicated musician, scholar, poet and art lover with knowledge of 14 languages including Malayalam, English, Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi, Telugu and Tamil. He acquired the knowledge of playing musical instruments like Veena, Violin and Swarabath. Also acquired knowledge in Carnatic music and Hindusthani music. He had composed musical forms in different musical structures like Keertanas, Padam, Bhajan, Varnam, Drupad, Khyal, Tappa, Jati swaram, Tillana, Songs belonging to Kuchelopakhyana, Ajamilopakhyana Upakhyana and Utsava sampradaya. The aim of this paper is to unmask the contribution of Maharaja Swati Tirunal through the analysis of his Musical and literary creations.

Key words:

Maharaja Swati Tirunal, Navaratnamalika, Navaratri kritis, Padam, Ragamalika, Tillana, Bhakti manjari, Muhanaprasaantya prasadi vyavastha, Solkettu, Swaraksharam.

INTRODUCTION:-

Sree Padmanabha Dasa Maharaja Swati Tirunal who ruled Travancore from 1829 to December 1846 was born on 16th April 1813. The people called him 'Garbha Sriman' as there was no prince at the time of his birth. Maharaja Swati Tirunal was the most well-known king among the composers and composer among the kings of Kerala. Rani Parvati Bai, his aunt and his father Rajaraja Varma Koi Tampuran paid attention to his education. He learnt the languages, Sanskrit, English, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Maratti, Hindusthani and Persian. Kshirabdi Sastri taught him Advaita Vedanta. He got an opportunity to learn Karnatic music. Apart from the education, he got a golden opportunity to listen to the different styles of Music such as Kathakali music, Sopana Sangitam, North Indian music, Western music, Dance and instrumental music. Thus the cultural background of Kerala and Tanjore influenced Swati Tirunal to compose compositions and encourage Arts.

Contribution as a music Composer.

Maharaja Swati Tirunal occupies a prominent place as a composer of highest number of different types of musical forms in different languages. He used the Mudra 'Padmanabha, Jalajanabha, Sarasijanaba etc which are synonyms of his favourite deity, Lord Padmanabha.

Classification of the musical forms composed by Maharaja;¹

1. **Navaratnamalika:** A set of group compositions based on Navavidha bhakti.

Sravanam: Bhavatiya katha – Bhairavi- Rupakam





- Kirtanam:** Tavaka namani- Kedaragaula-Adi
Smaranam: Satatam-Neelambari-Misra Chappu
Padasevanam: Pankajaksha-Todi-Rupakam
Archanam: Aradhayami-Bilahari-Ata
Vandanam: Vande deva deva-Begada-Adi
Dasyam: Parama Purusha-Ahiri-Misra Chappu
Sakhyam: Bhavati Viswaso-Mukhari-Misra Chappu

Atmanivedanam:Deva deva kalpayami-Nadhanamakriya-Rupakam

2.**Navaratri Kritis:** A set of nine kritis in praise of Devi.The first six are in praise of Goddess Saraswati and last three are in praise of Goddess Parvati.These compositions are sung during the Navaratri days at Travancore palace. Main composition selected are being sung after delivering ragam and Tanam.

- I day:** Devi Jagajjanani-Sankarabharanam-Adi **II day:** Pahimam-Kalyani-Adi
III day: Devi Pavane-Saveri-Adi **IV day:** Bharati Mamava-Todi-Adi
V day: Janani Mamava-Bhairavi-Chappu **VI day:** Saroruhasana jaye-Pantuvarali-Adi
VII day: Janani Pahi-Sudhasaveri-Chappu **VIII day:** Pahi Janani-Nattakurunji-Rupakam
IX day: Pahi Parvatanandini-Arabhi-Adi

3.**Ghanaraga Kritis:** A set of compositions in Natta,Gaula,Varali,Arabhi ,Sri, Kedaram,Ritigaula and Saranga Natta which are in praise of Lord Vishnu.

4. Compositions in praise of **Lord Padmanabha-47**

5.Compositions in praise of **Lord Vishnu-43**

6. Compositions in praise of **Lord Krishna-40**

7. Compositions in praise **Lord Narasimha-3**

8.Compositions in praise of **Lord Rama-20**

(including the **Ragamalika 'Bhavayami'** set to tune by Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer.)

9. Compositions in praise of **Lord Siva-15**

10.**Jnana Vairagya Kritis-9**

11.**Subrahmanya kriti-1, Ganapati kriti-1, Anjaneya kriti-1,Devi kritis-10**

Contribution in the field of Dance.The Pada varnams of Maharaja are widely used in the field of dance ,especially in Mohiniyattom.'Alarsara paritapam' in Surutti, 'Aliveni' in Kurunji, and 'Panimati mukhi' in Ahiri

1.**Sthava Varnams** in Sanskrit :Eight Sthava varnams are composed by Maharaja.They are same as Pada varnams and have sahitya for all the swarams.

2.**Tana Varnams:12** Two tana varnams without swara sahityam,One Daru Varnam; 'Sumasayaka' which was popularised by Sri.KV Narayana swami in his vocal concerts set to Ragamalika,

3.**Padas in Sanskrit:9**

4.**Padas in Manipravalam:50**

5.**Padas in Telugu and Kannada:5**

7.**Compositions /Bhajans in Hindi:38**

8.**Swarajati:7 including one Ragamalika jati swaram**

9.**Tillanas:6** in the ragas Anandabhairavi, 2 in Bhupalam,Purvi, Dhanasri and Ragamalika.

10.**Javali:** Three Javalis are composed in the ragas Bihag,Saindhavi and Kamboji.

11..**Ragamalikas:**Four Ragamalikas were composed by Maharaja.

One of the Ramayana kirtanam set to Saveri was tuned in the form of Ragamalika by Sri.Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and popularised by Smt.MS Subbulakshmi.

Popular Ragamalika 'Pannagendrasayana' is composed in eight ragas Sankarabharanam Kambhoji, Neelambari, Bhairavi, Todi, Surutti, Nadhanamakriya & Bhupalam with chittaswarams.Another Ragamalikas are Chatur Ragamalikas 'Kamalamanohara'in





Kamalamanohari,Hamsadhwani,Revagupti and Tarangini respectively and ‘Kalyanikhalu’ in Kalyani,Mohanam,Saranga and Sankarabharanam.Another Ragamalika ‘Sarasabhavadruta is in five ragas,Kalyani,Begada,Atana,Surutti and Todi.

12 **Mangalam:** Bhujaga sayino inYadukula Kamboji,Jaya Devaki kishora in Natta and Parama purusha in Vasanta are mentioned in the category of Mangalam by TK.Govinda Rao.⁴

Rare ragas handled by Swati Tirunal:The contribution of Swati Tirunal in the preservation of ragas used in Sopana sangitam and Kathakali is commendable.Some of the rare ragas handled are Dhanasri, Khanta, Jhinjotti, Kamodari, Bhushavali, Saranganatta, Navarasam, Gopikavasantam,Purvi,Sudhalalitha,Paras,Lalitapanchamam,Jimgala,Saindhavi,Pushpalatika,Kuntala varali,Malavasri,Saraswatimanohari, Gaulipantu, Gauri, Devamanohari, Manji and Sudhabhairavi.

Literary beauties and decorative angas in Swati Tirunal kritis.

Maharaja Swati Tirunal was well versed in the use of Madhyamakala sahityam(eg.Navaratri kritis.),Solketu swaram(eg.Gopalaka Pahimam in Bhupalam),Chittaswaram(eg.Pannagendra sayana Ragamalika),Swaraksharam(eg.Padavarnam **Danisamajendra** in Todi) and Ragamudra (eg. Charanam of Sarasa sara sundara as **Nilambareeharsha** nitya karana.).A beautiful srotovaha Yati pattern can be seen in the Sankarabharanam Atatala varnam ‘chalemelara’as

n-dn-padn-mpdn-gmpdn-rgmpdn-srgmpdn.

Analysis of one kriti in Rare Raga Sudhabhairavi shows the poetic as well as philosophic perspective of Maharaja.

Pallavi : **Viharamanasa** sada deve nityam (Prasam in viha & Vaha)

Anupallavi: **Vahasi** kimuda mamatam vata ha! Samsare

Charanam.3: **Karunam** kuru satat**am** lok**am** sarv**am** (Rhyming of M)

Kalayatmas**am**amaye sant**y**ajasok**am** (message)

Sarasa jalada sadrisa**abham** nity**am**

Sarvaatmana**abhaja** sripadman**abham**

The key message of this composition is; Be kind always (karunam kuru satatam)consider everyone as same as your soul(kalayaatma samamaye), throw away grief (santyaaja sokam)Always situate Deva /Padmanabha in your mind(vihara manasa sada deve nityam)

Literary works by Swati Tirunal

1.**Bhaktimanjari** : Is one of the best literary works of Maharaja.It contains highly Philosophical as well as Puranic references. It is basically a work with 10 satakas each containing 100 slokas which explains the simple ways to achieve Bhakti, the story of devotees like Gajendra and Prahlada, the kesadipada varnana of Lord Padmanabha, creation of human beings, Varnaasramadharma,24 Gurus and Nine kinds of Bhakti. This work is on the model of Narayaniya of Melpattur Narayanabhata which is based on Bhagavatam.Each sataka is set in separate metre.

2.**Sripadmanabha satakam:**This work is also based on Bhakti which contains one hundred verses, divided into ten dasakas of 10 verses in praise of Lord Padmanabha.

3.**Syaanandurapura-varnana- prabandha:**This ‘champu kavya’ shows the literary skill of Maharaja.There are ten Stabakas in this work which deal the legendary history of Padmanabhaswamy temple.All the slokas end with “”tasmai deva namosthu viswa gurave sripadmanabhaya te”

4.**Utsava-prabandha** ²: The ten days festival of Sri Padmanabha temple is detailed in this work.There are 12 sections each containing a song and a few verses. Thus there are 13 songs and 43 verses in different metres.

5.**Anyapadesa-sataka-slokavataranika** ³: This small Sanskrit work contains short prose introduction to the Anyapadesa satakam written by Nilakantha Dikshita.This work reveals the analytical and critical expertise of Maharaja.

6.**Two Upakhyanas: Ajamilopakhyanam & Kuchelopakhyanam:**Two narratives based on the





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story of Bhagavata composed in Harikatha kalakshepam style in Sanskrit. Kuchelopakhyanam consists of 12 songs and 28 slokas. Ajamilopakhyanam contains 9 songs and 23 slokas.

7. **Muhanaprasa-antya prasaadi vyavastha**: This small Sanskrit work which deals with the rules related to the sabdalankaras/prosodical beauties like muhana, prasa, antya prasa, antarukti is a representation of musical, poetic and literary adroitness of Maharaja.

Conclusion

In the short life span of 34, Maharaja took advantage of all his favourable circumstances with regard to arts and literature apart from administration. Maharaja Swati Tirunal encouraged all the artists in dance, music and literature which helped a lot in the propagation of Music and arts in Kerala. Swati Sangeeta Puraskaram is the highest honour for musicians instituted by Kerala Government in 1997. Sri. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer got the first award. The encouragement given by Maharaja in the promotion of Mohiniyattam through his Padams is unique. The services made by Mullamoodu Bhagavata, who sing the composition in Padmanabha temple, All India Radio Swati Tirunal Sangita sabha, Prince RamaVarma who took a revolutionary decision of permitting female musicians to sing in Navaratri Mandapam,

Dr. K. Omanakutty who is instrumental in conducting concerts in the platform Gana Kairali and collecting the rare notations through Sangita Bharati research centre are significant.

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