

DANCE AND LITERATURE: A STUDY OF AṢṬANĀYAKAS IN THE NAVŌDAYA POETRY OF MAISURU MALLIGE

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Abstract:

Maisūru Mallige stands as a significant work in Kannada literature, and K.S.Narasimhaswamy's (KSN) collection of poems has left a lasting impact on the readers. The emotional depth and reflective quality of Narasimhaswamy's poems make *Maisūru Mallige* a timeless piece of literature. The simplicity of the language, combined with a good lyrical quality and evocative imagery, allows readers and performers to connect with the verses on a personal and emotional level. The exploration of love between a husband and wife in the poems adds a universal appeal to *Maisūru Mallige*. The use of metaphors and vivid descriptions further enhances the readers' experience, creating a rich tapestry of emotions that resonates with them. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* mentions and explains the various *avasthās* of the heroine, terming them as *aṣṭanāyikās*. To the existing heroine of different emotional states, Dr. Shatavadhani R Ganesh has named the *aṣṭanāyakas*. Taking the research forward with the help of the already existing *nāyakas* in the *kāvyaś* and *śāstras*, Dr. DwarithaViswanatha has classified the *nāyakas* as parallels and counterparts of the *aṣṭanāyikās*. The proposed literary work, focusing on the emotional nuances of the *nāyaka* (hero) and their *avasthās* (emotional states), presents an exciting avenue for analysis. By examining the intricacies of these *nāyakas* and their emotional journey, the study can uncover the layers of meaning embedded in Narasimhaswamy's verses.

Keywords:

Aṣṭanāyaka, Navōdaya, Bhāvagīte, Avasthās, Aṣṭanāyikās, Bharatanāṭyam, Mārgam

Introduction:

Bharatanāṭyam, one of the major dance forms of India, holds its roots in the southern part of India yet navigating to different geographies. Wherever might be the place, whatever might be the timeline, the hero and the heroine always play the central theme of the compositions giving it more layers to perform and comprehend. The proposed study offers a comprehensive exploration of the nuanced aspects of conjugal love depicted in K.S. Narasimhaswamy's *Maisūru Mallige* and in particular deals with the hero and his emotional states (*avasthās*). The study takes up the poem collection *Maisūru Mallige* by Kannada poet K S Narasimhaswamy (KSN) to investigate and explore different *nāyakas* to the *aṣṭanāyikās*, increasing the possibility to delve into the emotions of the hero and thereby enhancing their portrayal. The title “*Kannaḍada Prēmakavi*” given to KSN itself shows the importance he has given to the aspects of love and *śṛṅgāra* in his works. The *Navōdaya* phase in Kannada literature refers to the early period of modern poetry in the first few decades of the twentieth century. *Navōdaya* has been regarded as Kannada literature's Romanticism. Here is a breakdown of how the study is being approached:

Intimacy and Togetherness: The poems frequently depict intimate moments shared by a husband and wife, reflecting the warmth and intimacy that come with a strong emotional bond and stressing the delight of being together. **Longing and Separation:** Some poems explore the issue of separation, expressing the poet's emotions when separated from his beloved. This adds a poignant dimension to the collection by emphasizing the longing and emotional intensity of wedded love. **Everyday Life and Family Bliss:** The poet finds beauty in the mundane parts of everyday life, capturing the love that pervades routine activities, shared places, and daily routines while also celebrating the modest pleasures of family life. **Sensuous Imagery:** Narasimhaswamy uses

sensuous and evocative imagery to express the passion and sensibility of conjugal love. By addressing these aspects, the study has the potential to provide a thorough and insightful analysis of the emotional nuances within Narasimhaswamy's work, contributing to the broader understanding of Indian poetry, and different *avasthās* of *nāyakas*, particularly in the context of conjugal love in Kannada literature.

Review of literature:

(Juhi, 2021)'s work on Bharatanāṭyam: A Reflection of the Past and the Evolving Embodiment of the Times even though trying to deal with different changes that the art form is undergoing, there is a lack of discussion on the repertoire side of it.

(Koudur, 2022)'s work on Intermediality of Sensibilities: Reinforcement of *Navōdaya* Poetry/Song in Kannada throws ample light on the *bhāvagītes* and *Navōdaya* literature and its scope. However, its possible application in the performing field is not discussed in the journal.

Thus, the current research stands out for its potential to analyse the possibilities of portrayal and study of the rare *nāyakas* and the emotional journey undergone thereby, providing ample compositions for the artists (especially male) to perform.

Research Method/ Design:

The research uses a mixed method approach. The study employs descriptive and analytical research approach for the already existing poems of *Maisūru Mallige*. This study aims to delve deeper into the facets of the hero engaging himself in different activities. The various aspects of conjugal love dealt in the poem collection will be dealt in the performance perspective. The further scope of the study might also consider a survey-based research from different generations of performing artists, on the interests, inclination, feasibility, and exploration of *Navōdaya* poetry (such as *Maisūru Mallige*) in the field of *Bharatanāṭyam*, which has considerable scope for portraying a wide variety of emotions of the *nāyaka*. This paper follows the guidelines which is outlined in the APA Style Sheet for formatting and citation.

Scope and limitation:

The scope of this research is to study the hero's representation in the *Navōdaya* poems of *Maisūru Mallige* and get a deeper understanding of the *avasthās*. Analysing the fusion between tradition and possibility of application of the *nāyaka* in *bhāvagītes* such as *Maisūru Mallige*, the paper examines how present-day practitioners balance showing fidelity to the past while tapping into the vast range of potentiality. Engagement in this fluidity between past and present ensures relevancy and evolution of the form. However, the study does have a limitation of not being applicable to different geographies due to certain actions and reactions common in the Indian subcontinent. The research does not go into the other classifications given by many other authors and writers from time to time. It is to be observed in the times to come how the artists of other geographies would accept the Kannada poem collection. Through the entire study of the poem collection, it is possible to not find a certain *nāyaka* due to the time and age of its writing.

Analysis:

The research deals with the study of emotional states of the hero in the *Maisūru Mallige* poem collection with respect to the *aṣṭanāyikās*. A parallel *nāyaka* is the one who is put in the same situation of the *nāyikā*, while the counter part is a complementary *nāyaka* who reacts to the current emotional state of the *nāyikā*. The poem collection may not have a specific *nāyaka* due to its age and authoring period. However, all the possibilities pertaining to the different *nāyaka avasthās* is dealt in greater detail along with the *lakṣaṇa ślōkas*- definitions in Sanskrit for the characteristics of these *nāyakas* by Dr. Shatavadhani R Ganesh and categorisation of parallel and counterpart heroes given by Dr. Dwaritha Viswanatha.

There are two ways of analysing the heroes. The parallel hero is the one who is in the same emotional state as that of the corresponding *nāyikā*. The counter-part *nāyaka* is the one who tries to react to the current emotional state of the *nāyikā*. For instance, in the case of *khaṇḍitā nāyikā*, the hero who tries to appease her becomes the counter-part (*narma-prasādakāḥ*) and the hero who is in the anger mood as same as his *nāyikā* becomes the parallel hero (*kupita*). On the similar lines, the research will take up each *nāyaka* and find his presence in KSN's work.

1) *Kāntā Vidhēya*:

kāntā-vidheya-saṅjño'sau nāyakāḥ priyayānvitaḥ |

tat-prema-dhāma-dharmāpi narma-sevāparāyaṇaḥ ||

The verse describes a noble hero (*nāyaka*) who is completely devoted to his beloved. He is always in her company and is the very embodiment of her love. Though he is virtuous and follows righteousness, his highest focus is on lovingly serving and pleasing his beloved through playful and affectionate interactions. *Kānthā vidhēya nāyaka* is the male equivalent and a counterpart to *Svādhīnapatika nāyika*. He appreciates her companionship and is also in love with his beloved. He rejoices in her presence. *Maisūru Mallige*, has poems about *Kānthā vidhēya nāyaka*, who is deeply in love with his lady love and longs to be with her constantly. He is faithful to his beloved and does not cheat on her. He is an *anukūla nāyaka*. He does not do anything that might upset his lover and he is often seen beaming with pleasure and enjoying the company of his friends and well-wishers.

In the poem "*muttaniduvenu, araḷu prēmada gulabiye*" - *Sutta sāvira hoovu kattetti nōdidare atta hōgadidu ninna hiḍidu manasu* line bring out the true essence of the *Kānthā Vidhēya*, where he mentions that amidst many flowers(women) around him, he never would turn towards them because he is captivated by her. Many other poems depicting *kānthā vidhēya nāyaka* are "*nannavaḷu nannedeya honnādanāḷuḷu*", "*navilūrinolaḡella nīne balu cheluve*", "*maduveyāḡi tingaḷilla, noḍiraṇṇa hēḡide! nānu kūḡidāḡalella baruvalenna śarade!*", "*ninna premada pariya*", "*omme nakku nanna naḡisu*", "*manadarasi, nōdalli ratna mandiramāle*", "*obbale maḡaḡendu nīvēke koraguviri?obbale madadi enaḡe!*", where his unending love towards his lady is shown either by describing her beauty in a soliloquy pattern or during a conversation with other people. These poems reflect the marital love of a husband and wife who have been wedded or reside within close proximity. These poems reflect an enduring affection for his woman love.

2) *Virahi*:

virahī vanitām prītām smāram smāram pade pade |

viṣḍati viyogāḡnau bharjitaḥ praṇayotkataḥ ||

The verse beautifully expresses the sorrow of a lover tormented by separation. The afflicted lover constantly remembers his beloved at every moment, his heart overwhelmed with longing. Burned by the fiery pain of separation, he sinks into deep distress, consumed by the intensity of his love. *Virahī nāyaka* is both male counterpart and parallel to *virahōtkāṇṭhitā nāyika*. He is equally devastated by their separation and misses his lady love. He remembers his love interest again and again. He expresses disinterest in the other things around him and longs for their union. *Virahi* exhibits weakness and a lack of enthusiasm. He dislikes his loneliness and ponders over the reasons for separation. He is an excellent example for *vipralambha śṛṅgāra* (love due to separation).

The poem "*nāle baruvaḷu gauri*" depicts the pangs of separation in the eyes of the hero. "*taurigōḡdida gauri mōru tingaḷa mēle vāravondādarū bandillavū*" - depicts the heroine who promised to return the next day after her three months stay at her parents' home. But it has been a week and the hero does not see her. The poet uses the nature to depict the *viraha* of the *nāyaka* - a star comes and asks the hero about the heroine's return; the brightness of the lamp seems to have faded; the peacock seems to be in

a dull mood. Hero is worried and thinks of her wellbeing and even writes a letter to his in-laws' place. "*ōle talupirabahudu; nillalāraḷu innu, nāḷe baruvaḷu nanna prēmalahari*"- the letter might have reached and once she reads that she will return immediately- shows his anticipation for her arrival and how badly he misses her company.

3) *Nirīkṣaka*:

gatvābhisāra-saṅketam kāntā" gamana-kātarah |

śaṅkātaṅka-yuto bhāti nāyakatsu nirīkṣakah ||

The verse describes a passionate lover (*nāyaka*) who arrives at the secret meeting place (*abhisāra-saṅketa*) with eager anticipation to meet his beloved. However, he is also overwhelmed by feelings of doubt and fear, possibly due to the uncertainty of the rendezvous or the risk of being discovered. Despite his love-driven urgency, he remains watchful and cautious.

The hero, *nirīkṣaka*, eagerly waits for his lady love in a tryst. He is the masculine counterpart and parallel to *vipralabdā nāyikā*. He feels dejected and cheated, and he wonders if she encountered any problems meeting him. He portrays a man who is distraught when his beloved does not arrive at the scheduled time and date. He is always associated with tryst. The feeling of frustration and anger is very common in *nirīkṣaka*. He can exhibit anger for being foolish to have believed his lady love.

In the poem "*Rāyaru bandaru māvana manege*" a progressive change of the *avasthas* of the *nāyaka* is seen, where his moods change from "*abhisāraka*" to "*nirīkṣaka*" to "*kupita*". The other two *nāyakas* will be studied in the further research. Here, after the scheduled arrival of the hero to his in-laws house, the heroine does not turn up to meet him till the next day morning. Due to which he spends a sleepless night and the feeling of dejection seeps in. He is the *nirīkṣaka*. The line "*kaṇṇanu kaḍidaru niddeyu bāradu; padumaḷu oḷagilla- padumaḷa baḷegaḷa daniyilla*"- even if his eyes are closed he is not able to sleep; he is not able to hear the bangle sounds of *Paduma* (his wife) - shows his state without the *nāyikā*. Even though he clearly knows that his wife has not cheated him in a regular sense, her absence even after being aware of his presence makes the dejected feeling seep into the mind of the *nirīkṣaka*.

4) *Kupita*:

Kupita nāyaka is categorised as a male parallel of the *khaṇḍitā nāyikā* by Dr.Dwaritha Viswanatha. Many *kāvya*s bring out the characteristics of *Kupita nāyaka*. He is seen being angry with his lady and does not provide room for an explanation from her. It is important to notice that this fury falls under the *sthāyi* of *rati* rather than *krodha*. Here, the fury stems from love rather than jealousy. The hero not being able to meet his heroine can bring out fury within him. *Kupita nāyaka* offers ample opportunities for representation. The hero's ego is hurt and is seen accusing the heroine. His patience is tried and tested and he might lose confidence over his lover. This category of *nāyaka* falls under *vipralambha śṛṅgāra* where, the separation is due to anger.

The final verses of "*rāyaru bandaru māvana manege*" portray the hero preparing to leave his in-laws' residence after having not seen the woman he married. The word "*munisu*" in the line "*sari horaḍave'nendaru rāyaru munisinali*" expresses his minor fury as a result of his affection for his beloved and not being able to see or meet her. This situation is a result of him not being able to meet his wife even after coming to his in-laws' place and spending the entire night all alone.

5) *Pāntha nāyaka and Proṣitapati*:

Proṣitabhartṛkā, is a *nāyikā* who longs for her beloved who has travelled to a distant land. *Pāntha nāyaka*, the male counterpart of the *proṣitabhartṛkā nāyika*, is traveling and missing the love of his life. Dr.Dwaritha Viswanatha categories *proṣitapati* as the male equivalent or parallel of *proṣitabhartṛkā nāyikā*, whose lady love has left on a journey and he misses her immensely. While *pāntha nāyaka* is more seen in the *kāvyas* and history, *proṣitapati* is seen when the *nāyikā* goes to her parents' home or

to attend a function at a relative's place. *Proṣitapati* is very well aware of the return time of his wife/lover yet he is unable to bear the separation. He misses her and yearns for her support. Dr Shatavadhani R. Ganesh describes *pāntha nāyaka* as,

kāntā-viyojitaḥ pānthaḥ pravāsī prañayāturaḥ |

prati-kūlasthitau tāntaḥ smarati priya-kāminīm ||

The verse paints the sorrowful image of a traveller in exile, tormented by separation from his beloved. Afflicted by deep love, he finds himself in an adverse and difficult situation. Weary and emotionally drained, his heart clings to the memories of his beloved, longing to be reunited with her.

"*Thingalayithe?*" - The poem begins with the line "*payāṇisuva vēḷeyali bandu adigeragi*" pictures the *nāyika* and *pāntha nāyaka*, who is preparing to leave currently. Here, the hero's anguish is seen when he walks towards the railway station and looks behind constantly to see his wife. The usage of the words "*theraḷidenū virahadali niḷḍāṇadeḍe*" shows his pain while walking towards the station.

Many *kāvyaś* and *śāstras* explain the features of *proṣitapati*. *Proṣitapati* may be seen in poems such as "*akkareya daniyāke*" where the hero expresses that his wife is not around to open doors for him ("*hosala baḷi bandoḍane bāgilanu terevāke*"). The one who fills his house with laughter, the one who plays veena, the one who adorns herself with flowers, and the one who calls him "*rāyare*" is not in the hero's proximity. The line "*endu baruvaḷo, kāṇe, nannedeyanāḷuvāke*"-depicts the hero wondering when his beloved will return.

In the poem "*hūvāḍagitti*", the flower vendor inquires as to whether the hero wants to purchase flowers for his wife ("*hoovu beke' endu munbāgilige bandu kēḷidaḷu nagunaguta hōvinavaḷu*"). But the hero sighs in vain, recalling that his wife is not there at home. This is shown through the line- "*maneyoḷage hōmuḍiyuva maḍadiyilla*". His wife is in her parents' place taking care of her child who was just delivered and was in the cradle, shown through the phrase- "*toṭṭilali maguvittu*".

The next poem, "*hendatiya kāgada*", begins with the line "*taura sukhadoḷagenna maretihaḷu ennadiri*", in which the woman sends a letter to her husband, stating that she has not forgotten him because she is now in the luxury of her parents' home but would come home as soon as possible. Here, the heroine is addressing her *proṣitapati*. She mentions that as soon as her sister's wedding is done, she'll take the train to be there with her husband. She requests him to not feel bad and treat her parents respectfully when they come to leave her to the *nāyaka*'s house.

6) *Abhisāraka*:

abhisāraka-saṅgāṇo'sau nāyakaḥ prañayon-mukaḥ |

svakāntā-saṅgamotsāhe yāti saṅketakam mudā ||

This *lakṣaṇa ślōka* describes an *abhisāraka nāyaka*, a lover who eagerly sets out for a secret rendezvous with his beloved. Filled with enthusiasm and joy, he makes his way to the appointed meeting place, longing for union with her.

The word '*Abhi*' means forward and '*Sarati*' means to go. Hence *abhisāraka* is the one who goes towards the heroine. The counter-part and the parallel hero of the *abhisārikā nāyikā* is the *abhisāraka nāyaka*. He is the one who goes to meet his beloved for tryst. "*Rāyaru bandaru māvana manege*" opens with the arrival of the *abhisāraka nāyaka* to his in-laws' place. His arrival is known to all the people in the house, which can be seen in their preparedness to welcome the hero. He awaits and anticipates to meet his wife in the house. The line "*huṇṇime harasida bānina naḍuve candira bandittu*" indicates the hero's arrival on the full moon night. Hence, he can be termed as *jyotsnābhisāraka*.

In the poem “*eraḍu mettīlu*” shows the distraught hero- the *abhisārikā nāyikā* who has come to the place of tryst after travelling from village to village shown through the line- “*ōrūranaledaledu hagāliṟuḷu hambalisi ninna kaṇḍare sāku endu bandu*”. He reminisces the moments of union with his beloved, which is shown in the lines “*ninninda nānendu kāmadali kanavarisi, kaṇṇa cumbisi kenne kenneyotti*”. He states that he has travelled long way to meet her and a lot of time has gone by and how can this moment be fruitful if not for their union.

Conclusion:

This research paper discusses the emotional states of *nāyaka* in relation to KSN's literary work from *Maisūru Mallige*. Conjugal love has never lost its ability to bring human emotions to the forefront. This study seeks to provide critical context for the portrayal of the hero and heroine. Out of the counter-part (eight) and parallel (eight) *astanāyakas* to the *astanāyikās*, the book provides ample number of examples of hero for further study, understanding and portrayal. An elaborate description of the particular *nāyaka* can be understood in the poems making it easy for the understanding of the audience.

However, poems like “*Rāyaru bandaru māvana manege*” has quick changes in the *avasthās* of the hero making it not a great choice for performing. These kind of poems makes it hard to establish a character in the minds of the *rasikas*. It is to be noted that the *sthai bhāva* of all the poems of conjugal love is *rati*. All the changes in the *śṛṅgāranāyakas* are due to transition in the emotional states of the hero. Hence, it is possible and justified to have many *avasthās* of the hero in one particular song/poem but it is not advisable to perform them which creates ambiguity in the audience's mind thus, making it difficult to establish the emotional state of the *nāyaka*. The *sthai bhāva* being the base emotion holds other *vybhicāri bhāvas* (transitory emotions) giving rise to *rasa* (aesthetic sense). Also, the hero of *uttama* and *madhyama prakṛti* can be seen and not of *adhama prakṛti*. In addition, all the *avasthās* of the hero (ex.: *bhāmini bhīta*, *kalahāntarita*) are not to be found in the poem collection reflecting the time in which it was written. The study provides an entire set of compositions (poems) that can be used in the performances or *mārgam* repertoire. The poem collection provides good number of poems that has the potential to replace *jāvaḷis* and *padams* in the repertoire of *Bharatanāṭyam*.

Further a comparative study of traditional *Bharatanāṭyam* compositions with the poems can be done. The further study can include research on the supporting characters that can be found in many poems of *Maisūru Mallige* which help in the navigation of the theme and the story line. An interview based study of the artists, who have explored the *bhāvagītes* in their performances can be done to understand the preview of these contemporary compositions by recent poets. Since, most of the researches are exploring the *nāyikās* and related ideas, this work adds more possibilities for the portrayal of the *nāyaka* which can be highly useful for the male performers.

The *Bharatanāṭyam* repertoire has evolved through time to reflect many geographies, tastes, and thought processes among performers. The Tanjore quartet's *mārgam* structure has evolved over time to include *jāvaḷis*, *kīrtanai*, and other compositions. In the recent days, the dance presentations have started to incorporate *Bhāvagītes*, *Ghazals*, *Thumris*, and lyrics from many literature to complement the topic and theme of the performance. As a result, the inclusion and deletion of literary works has occurred on multiple occasions. This has always allowed a broad scope for adapting new ideas, allowing performers to express their originality and connoisseurs to appreciate the art-form. As long as *Bharatanāṭyam*'s unique and unwavering transformative essence remains intact, it is sure to offer much promise to future practitioners as they navigate the stories of tomorrow. However, it is to be observed in the times to come how the artists of other geographies would accept the Kannada poem collection. The wide variety spectrum of *nāyaka avasthās* provide an interesting scope to portray for the male dancers specially, when the dance literature has numerous female centric compositions. Also, the possibility of the *nāyikā* having a male parallel and counterpart gives many situations and scenario to develop the plot and story line for a performance.

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