

Reimagining the Uttarāṅgam: Rhythmic and Melodic Innovations in the Varṇa-s of Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna

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Abstract

The varṇam occupies a significant position in Carnatic music as both a pedagogical composition and a concert item. A varṇam has two parts- the poorvāṅgam- having pallavi, anupallavi and muktāyi swaram; and the uttarāṅgam- which consists of the charaṇam and the chittaswaras. While the uttarāṅgam section of traditional varṇa-s generally serves to reinforce rāga lakṣaṇa, laya control, and swara proficiency, the varṇa-s of Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna reveal a markedly different compositional approach. Through innovative handling of graha swaras, unconventional rhythmic structures, patterned chittaswara architecture, yati designs, and distinctive approaches to coming back to the graha swara (charaṇam), BMK expanded the expressive and structural possibilities of the uttarāṅgam. This paper examines selected varṇas composed by BMK and analyses the ways in which he transformed the second half of the varṇam from a predominantly pedagogical section into a creative compositional space. The study demonstrates that BMK's varṇa-s function not only as learning material but also as sophisticated musical constructions that embody experimentation within the framework of Carnatic tradition.

Keywords: Varṇam, Uttarāṅgam, Chittaswaram, Balamuralikrishna, Rhythm, Graha Swara, Yati, Carnatic Music

Introduction

The Varṇam:

The varṇam is one of the most comprehensive compositional forms in Carnatic music, integrating melodic, rhythmic, and structural elements within a single framework. Owing to its pedagogical value, it occupies an important place in the training of students and is also commonly presented at the beginning of concerts. Traditionally, the poorvāṅgam and uttarāṅgam of a varṇam serve distinct purposes. While the former establishes the rāga and introduces thematic material, the latter provides scope for swara elaboration through the charaṇam and chittaswarams.

About the composer:

Dr. Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna (1930–2016) was a distinguished Carnatic vocalist, composer, multi-instrumentalist and musicologist. Born in Sankaraguptam in present-day Andhra Pradesh, he received his initial musical training from his father Pattabhiramayya and later became a disciple of Parupalli Ramakrishnayya Pantulu. Recognised as a child prodigy, he began performing at a young age. His debut concert in 1940 impressed everyone so deeply that he was given the title “Bala Muralikrishna.” By the age of fifteen, he had mastered all 72 Melakarta rāgas and composed songs in each of them, earning great respect in the world of classical music and went on to establish himself as one of the most influential musicians of the twentieth century.

Apart from his contributions as a performer, Balamuralikrishna made significant contributions as a composer and innovator. He composed numerous kritis, varṇa-s, tillanas and devotional pieces, created new rāgas, and explored novel rhythmic and melodic possibilities within the Carnatic tradition. His outstanding contributions earned him many prestigious honours, including the Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, Sangeetha Kalanidhi, and the French title “Chevalier of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres” awarded by the Government of France. Dr. Balamuralikrishna will always be remembered as a musical genius who brought innovation, beauty, and global recognition to Indian classical music. His vast body of work reflects both a deep grounding in tradition and a willingness to experiment within it. These qualities are particularly evident in his varṇa-s, which continue to attract the attention of performers, students and researchers.

In many conventional varṇa-s, the uttarāṅgam is designed primarily to strengthen the performer's command over rāga phrases and laya. Although artistic and aesthetically appealing, these sections generally adhere to established structural conventions. The varṇa-s of Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna, however, present a different perspective. His handling of the charaṇam and chittaswarams is beyond the conventional models and introduces innovative rhythmic and melodic ideas.

The present study investigates these innovations and seeks to understand how BMK reimaged the role of the uttarāṅgam within the Carnatic varṇam tradition.

Literature Review and Research Gap

Several studies have examined Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna's contributions as a vocalist, composer, and innovator. Scholarly discussions have addressed his rāga creations, compositional style, and broader impact on Carnatic music. His varṇa-s have occasionally been discussed in the context of his compositional output; however, detailed analytical studies focusing specifically on the uttarāṅgam sections of these compositions remain

limited. Features such as rhythmic organisation, graha swara treatment, pattern-based chittaswara construction, phrase architecture, and concluding muktāyi designs have not received sustained analytical attention. The present study attempts to address this gap through an examination of selected varṇa-s composed by BMK.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the structural design of the charaṇam sections in selected BMK varṇa-s.
2. To analyse rhythmic innovations in the chittaswarams.
3. To study the role of graha swaras, yatis, and phrase architecture in the uttarāṅgam.
4. To evaluate the contribution of these innovations to the evolution of the varṇam form.

Hypothesis

The uttarāṅgam sections of Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna's varṇams reflect a conscious reworking of the conventional varṇam structure. His approach goes beyond mere ornamentation; by introducing unconventional graha swara placements and experimental structural patterns, he actively reimagines standard melodic frameworks. Ultimately, his unique rhythmic and phrase organization transforms the second half of the varṇam into a distinct, autonomous compositional space.

Methodology

The study adopts an analytical approach to examine the selected varṇa-s composed by Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna, based on the notations published in his book *Sūryakānti*. The analysis focuses on the compositional treatment of the uttarāṅgam, including the charaṇam and chittaswara passages.

Dr. BMK has composed 5 pada varṇa-s and 5 tana varṇa-s, which are as given in tables 1 and 2. Table 1:

List of Pada Varṇa-s composed by BMK

S. no	Pada Varṇam	Rāgam	Tālam
1	Omkāra Praṇava	Shanmukhapriya	Adi
2	Amma Ānandha Dāyini	Gambhīranāṭa	Adi
3	Chalamu Chesina	Rāmapriya	Adi
4	Ninu Nera Nammiti	Kharaharapriya	Adi

5	Saraguṇa Gāvamu	Tōdi	Adi
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Table 2: List of Tāna Varṇa-s composed by BMK

S. no	Tāna Varṇam	Rāgam	Tālam
1	Ye Nādhamu	Nāta	Adi
2	Ābāla Gopālamu	Amritavarshiṇi	Adi
3	Vesāriti Neve	Khamās	Adi
4	Śākāra Sadguṇa	Svarāshtram	Adi
5	Entha Sudiname	Ṣankarabhāraṇam	Adi

The analysis focuses on:

1. Charaṇam structure
2. Graha and nyāsa swaras
3. Rhythmic organisation
4. Chiṭṭaswara architecture
5. Pattern-based construction
6. Octave-spanning melodic design
7. Yati structures
8. Phrase resolution techniques

Musical examples are examined in relation to conventional varṇam practices in order to identify areas of innovation.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Reconfiguration of the Charaṇam

One of the most distinctive aspects of BMK's varṇa-s is the unconventional treatment of the charaṇam. Rather than functioning merely as an introductory passage for the chittaśwarams, the charaṇam itself becomes an important site of experimentation.

The Tōdi varṇam provides a notable example of BMK's unconventional approach to the charaṇam. The charaṇam begins on the mandra sthāyi niṣādam, which is rather unusual, as the graha swaras of charaṇams in many traditional varṇa-s are generally found in the madhya sthāyi, often around or above pañcamam.

The melodic movement of the charaṇam revolves around niṣādam and beautifully highlights its importance in Tōdi. This treatment blends seamlessly with the sāhityam, "Nī garimagani nī dāriṇi cēritini sadā sāmanigama mōdini," where the repeated use of the syllable "nī" aligns naturally with the swara Ni,

Nī ; g r m g n N d r n Ś | n d n ś D Ś | m n g m G r s ||
Nī ga ri ma ga ni nī da ri ni chē ri ti nī sadā sā ma ni ga ma mō di ni

resulting in effective swarākṣara prayogas.

Similarly, the Nāta varṇam employs a rare anāgata graha, with the charaṇam commencing six akṣarās after samam. Beginning the charaṇam in this manner gives it a distinct rhythmic identity and is yet another example of BMK's innovative approach to varṇam composition.

;;;;;; Ś | , ś n p P , p | m r M m r s || R ; ; p m r s g m P ; |
, Sap ta.. swa ra . . mu. lu.. nā jē va mu

The charaṇam of the Śanmukhapriya varṇam is yet another rare and unconventional creation. It begins with the swarākṣaras pa-da-ne', each of three akṣaras. A clear break can be observed between the two halves of the tāla āvartana, giving the passage a balanced structure and making it suitable to be approached almost like a simple RTP by beginners. The way BMK himself renders this section is also noteworthy, as his characteristic emphasis on certain swaras brings out the beauty and liveliness of the charaṇam.

P, D, N, ś n d p m g m | P ; ; p d | n ś r ś n d p m ||
Pa da nē ra ja mu le nam mi ti

The charaṇam of the Gambhīranāṭa varṇam stands out for its unusual rhythmic design. Though it is composed in caturasra gati, the opening pattern gives a strong impression of trisram, creating a striking rhythmic effect. This is not only challenging to sing, but also adds to its uniqueness. The composer extends this pattern into the second half of the āvartana, making it a prominent feature of the charaṇam.

s G – s G – s G , m g m P p | n P - n P - n p | ; ś n p m g s ||
Śivē Śivē Śivē vē vēla varā larā śivē m orā linchu

In many varṇa-s, the charaṇam is designed with a clear visrānti at the first drutam, resulting in two balanced halves within the āvartana, making it suitable to be approached like a simple RTP. Eg: popular adi tala varṇas in mōhana, kalyāṇi, tōḍi, etc. But in the charaṇam of Amritavarshiṇi varṇam, BMK adopts a different treatment. In the phrase "varṣiṇi vāṇi", the syllable "ṇi" occurs slightly after the beat rather than on it.

P, śnś śnp N npm gm | p gmG, śn | pm gs gmpn||
Gā nā mru ta var shi ṇi vā ṇi

Instead of gmp-gmG, for 'shi-ṇi', it could also be gm-G;;- so that 'ni' comes on the beat, and would be easier and more conventional, likely to be attempted as an RTP. But the composer gave it a different thought, which gives the passage a distinct rhythmic feel and makes it less predictable.

2. Rhythmic Innovation and Chīṭṭaswara Structure

A notable feature found in many of BMK's varṇa-s is that the length of the sahitya syllables closely matches the swara akṣarās, particularly in the chīṭṭaswara section. This appears to be one of the composer's stylistic signatures. What is particularly interesting is that the sāhityam for many of these varṇa-s was composed much later, after they had originally been created as tāna varṇa-s. Yet, he was able to maintain this feature successfully, which speaks not only of his musical genius but also of his mastery over language and literature.

Another notable feature observed in many of BMK's compositions is the frequent use of swarākṣaras. They appear so naturally in the compositions that one is reminded of the craftsmanship seen in the works of Muttuswami Dikshitar.

One of the most striking features of BMK's varṇa-s is the rhythmic imagination displayed in the chittaswaras. The swara passages have different internal divisions, unexpected eduppus, and unique structural layouts, revealing a composer who constantly explored new possibilities within the tala framework.

The various chittaswara structures observed in his varṇa-s are as follows:

Tōdi: BMK composed the Tōdi varṇam as a swarākṣara (swarasthāna) varṇam, where the syllables of the sahitya correspond closely with the swaras employed. Earlier examples of such compositions in Tōdi are the varṇa-s ‘Rūpamu Jūchi’ of Muttuswami Dikshitar and ‘Sarigadani’ of Ramaswami Dikshitar.

Since the graha swara of the charaṇam is the mandra sthāyi niṣādam, the composer has chosen sa and ri as the nyāsa swaras for the 4 chittaswaras. Another noteworthy feature is the complete omission of pañcamam throughout all the chittaswaras, similar to the treatment seen in the Tōdi varṇam Ērānapai of Patnam

Subrahmanya Iyer. Despite this omission, the passages retain the rāga bhāva of Tōdi so naturally that one hardly notices the absence of pañcamam unless it is specifically pointed out.

Kharaharapriya: This varṇam is dedicated to Lord Ganesha and is fairly long with six chittaswaras. In these sections, the composer incorporates different episodes related to Ganesha, describing how he destroyed various demons and protected the world.

A closer look at the notation shows that the same graha swara is used in key sections of the varṇam. The note daivata (D) is used as the starting note in the opening part, the charaṇam, and the first three cittaswaras. In Bṛhaddēśī, Matanga links each of the sapta swaras with specific deities, colours, and rasas. In this system, daivata is associated with Ganesha, the colour yellow, and bhayānaka rasa. This suggests that the composer was aware of these traditional ideas, which have been passed down through the guruparamparā, especially within the Tyagarāja lineage across generations.

The final chittaswaram is particularly noteworthy, as it beautifully narrates how Ganesha attained the status of being worshipped first and came to be known as the remover of obstacles. The sāhityam of these chittaswaras is further enriched by the use of several literary devices.

Shanmukhapriya: The chittaswaras section of this varṇam, appears to be a rare feature in the varṇam repertoire and stands out as a distinctive feature, based on the literature studied so far. Unlike many conventional varṇa-s, the chittaswaras of this varṇam do not begin on samam, but start with a two-akshara anāgata eduppu. This is yet another example of BMK's tendency to explore new ideas and move beyond established compositional possibilities.

GambheeraNāta and Amritavarshiṇi: Both the varṇa-s contain four chīṭṭaswaras. The first three are of one āvartana each, whereas the concluding chīṭṭaswaram spans four āvartanas. It may also be noted that all the chīṭṭaswaras begin on either sa or pa, with the charaṇams of the two varṇa-s beginning on these samvādi swaras respectively.

Nāta: As noted earlier, the charaṇam of the Nāṭa varṇam begins six akṣarās after samam. The chīṭṭaswaras, in turn begin on the drutams and form an important part of the varṇam's rhythmic design. The varṇam contains seven chīṭṭaswaras, with their graha swaras arranged in ascending order, similar to that of the Bhairavi Swarajati of Syama Sastri. Each chīṭṭaswaram also incorporates a distinct pattern, showcasing the composer's creativity and mastery over the form.

Svarashtram- In the first chīṭṭaswaram, all the swaras are set to two akṣarās each. Unlike the usual varṇam format, where the first swaram has long extensions, the composer here maintains the same duration for every note throughout the passage.

Ṣankarabhāraṇam- The composer employs different ending phrases in the chīṭṭaswaras to return to the charaṇam. Here, phrases such as GR, gmpgmr, mgr, and pmgmr are used to arrive at ga (graha swara of the charaṇam). Such examples are useful to students, as they show different ways of bringing a swara passage back to the graha swara during swarakalpana.

3. Pattern-Based Construction of Chīṭṭaswaras

A recurring feature in BMK's chīṭṭaswaras is the deliberate use of patterns. Some swarams are built around a single pattern that continues throughout, while others exhibit symmetry between the two halves of an āvartana. These patterns not only make the passages aesthetically appealing but also give an insight into the composer's creativity and craftsmanship.

3.1 Symmetrical Division Within a Tala Avartana

Certain chīṭṭaswaras display a balanced internal structure, where the two halves of an avartana mirror or complement one another. This symmetry creates a sense of order and completeness while showcasing the composer's mathematical precision.

Varṇa-swaram	Symmetrical pattern	Notation

Rāmapriya- 1	6+10 (10= 2*5)	Ś ;, Ś NDPD / N;; DPMPD
Śanmukhapriya-2	2+(2121)+1+(2121)	; Ś Ṛ ḡ Ṛ ś - n Ś ṛ Ś n / P D n D p - m P d P m
Gambhēranāṭa-1	1+3*5	s G, M, P, N, Ś , ḡ Ś , N, P, M, G, sG, (charaṇam)

3.2 Continuous Pattern Throughout the Chittaswaram

In several varṇa-s, BMK develops an entire chittaswaram from a single underlying pattern. Despite the repetitive framework, the swaras never sound mechanical, as the composer introduces subtle variations that preserve both musical interest and rāga bhāva as given in the table below. Apart from their aesthetic appeal, these passages are valuable to students, as they demonstrate different ways of exploring a rāga through patterns help develop the swarakalpana-oriented thinking.

Varṇam- swaram	Pattern	Notation
Tōdi-3	3+ (2+3+4)	G, gm ggm ggrs - R, rg rrg rrsn - S,
Rāmapriya- 2	(1+2) + 5	sS rgmpd nŚ ś ndpd nŚ (charaṇam)
Svarāṣṭram-2	1+2+1	ś Ś n- dPm- pDp- mGm- pMg- rSd- ṇsrgmpdn
Śanmukhapriya-1	6+2+2	; Ś ;, N D / N;; D P / D;; P M
Nāṭa- 1	6+2+2	S;;RG /M;; PM /P;;DN
Nāṭa- 2	3+3+6	Rr pmr S;; / Pp snp M;; / Rr nsr
Nāṭa- 3	2+2+4	G mp mmrs-R gm rrsṇ-
Nāṭa- 4	3+3+4	Mm Pp mmp / Pp Dd nnś ś / Ś n Pm gmpn
Nāṭa- 5	2+3	P pmr / N npm / Ś ś np / Ṛ ṛś n / Ṣ ṁ ṛś / N mpn
Nāṭa- 6	6+4	Dnś np pnpm / Mpnpm mpmr / Rgmrs gmpn
Kharaharapriya-2	3+5	dN-ś sndp / dN-dpmgr / pD-ndpmg / rS-srgmp

Gambhēranāṭa-3	5+4	pmGs-pMg / npMg-nPm / mgSn-mGs / pmGs sGs(ch)
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4. Vishesha Prayogas and Melodic Design

BMK enriches the uttarāṅgam through the use of several distinctive melodic devices. These include rare rāga-specific prayogas, octave-spanning phrases, dātu movements, vadi-samvadi-oriented designs, and yati structures. Such prayogas contribute significantly to the individuality of each varṇam and reflect the composer's creative engagement with rāga grammar.

4.1 Apuroopa Prayogas

Several varṇa-s contain unusual yet aesthetically convincing phrase structures that are not frequently encountered in conventional compositions. These prayogas reveal BMK's ability to explore fresh melodic possibilities while remaining within the framework of the rāga.

- In the last chittaswaram of Śankarabhāraṇam varṇam, he uses the ‘rnd’ repeatedly - rndP, grndp, mgmp dnrndp and also used the prayoga: mdpgs
- The charaṇam of the Svarashtram varṇam starts with a phrase which gives the flavour of sourashtra. ‘Svarashtram’ rāgam is a creation of BMK. When he was accused of singing wrong phrases in Sourashtra rāgam, BMK retorted to saying that it was Svarashtram, and he named it so as it was the 25th year of independence of India(Prince Rama Varma, n.d.) The rāga Svarashtram - uses the phrases from sourashtram, chakravakam and suryakantham, and this varṇam mainly centres on sa and pa.

4.2 Octave-Based & Vadi-samvadi based phrases

The use of octave-based phrases and samvādi-sensed swara combinations is another feature frequently encountered in BMK's varṇa-s. Many chittaswaras contain movements that connect distant octaves or bring together related swaras in interesting ways. These passages stand out as important melodic highlights and reflect the composer's ability to explore the possibilities offered by a rāga through different swara relationships. They are also challenging to sing, especially in higher speeds.

Varṇam- swaram	Octave -sensed / Vādi- samvādi Prayoga
Kharaharapriya-3	dN ś rg Ṁ - g rś ndp M - grs ndp g rś ndp mgmp
Gambhēranāṭa-2	SmgS, PmgN mpn Ś m g Ś , Ṁ g ś N pmg
Svarāṣṭram-3	dn Ś -gmP-dṇS-gmP dn Ś , (of the charaṇam)

Amruthavarṣini-2	ś Ś npmgm pP mgsṇs S mP nŚ mp ṇS mpn
Amruthavarṣini-3	pś nś pmp-sgmp sṇs nm p-ḡ nś -pś n- m p-gm-sgmpn
Rāmapriya- 4	ś rḡ r ḡ m ḡ r Ś pd nd rś nd P srgṛ gmpd
Śhanmukhapriya-3	prś R ḡ rś nd ps ṇ Ś rś ndp mndN ś ndpm
Śankarābharaṇam-2	M- pdnś rḡ - Ṁ - ḡ rś ndp- M

4.3 Yati Structures

Yati patterns such as gopuccha and srotovaha are employed effectively in several varṇa-s. These structures contribute both rhythmic beauty and architectural clarity, reflecting BMK's fascination with organised musical design.

Examples of gopuccha yati.

The muktāyi swaram of GambheeraNāta varṇam:

sss np / nnn pm / ppp mg / mmm gs / ss
np / nn pm / pp mg / mm gs / s np / n pm /
p mg / m gs /

The 3rd chittaswaram of Svarashtram Varṇam showcases gopucchayati in different ways- rrsnd-rsnd/ rsndp-sndp/ dpmgr-pmgr.

There are other examples of both the yatis in the varṇa-s, which will be discussed under the next section.

5. Phrase Resolution and Muktāyi Endings employed in the concluding Chittaswaras

The final chittaswaras of many BMK varṇa-s conclude with phrases that resemble muktāyis. Much like the muktāyi sung at the end of swarakalpana in a concert, these passages create a sense of completion and lead effectively back to the charaṇam. Such endings often give the varṇam a grand conclusion and are among the most striking features of the composer's style.

The special conclusions for the final chittaswaras in his varṇa-s are as below:

1. Tōdi: Here, as we observe, the muktāyi follows a decreasing pattern- 9,8,7.

Also, internally, grsrđn S, / rsrđn S, / sđm grs- make a gopuccha yati. (6+3 + 5+3 + 4+3)

Śrḡ ṛśnd ḡṛśndnŚ |, ṛśndnŚ |, śndmḡrs ||
9 8 7

2. Shanmukhapriya: Pattern: 6+3+ 6+4 + 6+5 + 6

This is a type of muktāyi which seamlessly blends into the charaṇam as the pattern of the muktāyi is similar to the opening phrase of the charaṇam. Also, the muktāyi employs a Srotovahayati- i.e gradually increasing no. of akṣarās, which is clear from the picture provided alongside.

Ś,R,G, ḡṛś / N,Ś,R, ḡṛśn / D,N,Ś, ḡṛśnd || P,D,N,
3 4 5

3. Khamās: The concluding muktāyi is: ḡ Ṛ ś nś ṛŚ ndp ḡMpdn|| - a simple muktāyi with 3 sixes in succession.

4. Amritavarshiṇi: sgmpnŚ sgmpN sgm|| P, (of charaṇam)- which is a gopucchayati.

5. Nāta: The seventh chīṭṭaswaram concludes with an interesting muktāyi. A phrase is repeated three times and is followed by a concluding passage containing all the sapta swaras in order, before returning to the charaṇam. This beautifully complements the sāhityam "sapta swaramulu nā jīvam", as the swara passage itself culminates in all seven swaras. Another interesting detail is that each of these sapta swaras occupies three akṣarās, matching the three-akshara duration of the opening sa of the charaṇam.

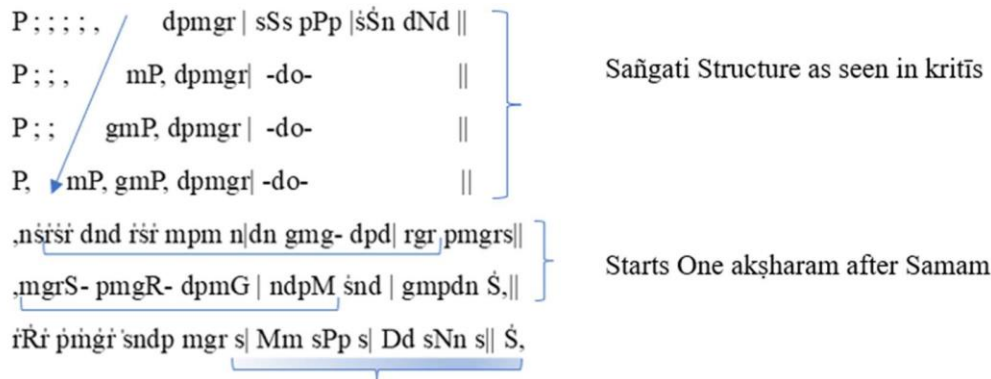
N, Śnpmr S- ṛḡmpd- N, Śnpmr S- ṛḡmpd- N, Śnpmr S,R,G,M,P,D,N,|| Ś, (charanam)

6. Svarashtram:

The final chīṭṭaswaram of the Svarāṣṭram varṇam is particularly noteworthy. Unlike the conventional chīṭṭaswaras found in most varṇa-s, this passage extends over seven āvartanas, and is developed through multiple-sangati like variations. The opening pañcama of each line appears with progressively decreasing durations of 11, 7, 4 and 3 akṣarās respectively. At the same time, the phrases that follow undergo gradual

expansion: dpmgr, mP dpmgr, gmP dpmgr and mP gmP dpmgr. Thus, while the initial phrase becomes shorter, the succeeding material becomes progressively elaborate, creating a srotovāha-like effect.

A similar principle may be observed in several kṛitis of Tyagaraja. For instance, in Brōcēvārevare – Sriranjani rāgam- adi talam, one half of the āvartana undergoes gradual sangati development while the other half remains largely unchanged, with only minor variations. BMK appears to adopt a comparable approach here. In the first four lines of the chīṭṭaswaram, the latter half of the āvartana remains almost the same, whereas the former half is systematically developed through successive sangatis.



Though the sangati- orientation is common to kṛitis, this can be considered to be one of a kind in varṇam repertoire, explored by BMK.

The concluding portion of the chīṭṭaswaram is worth highlighting. As the composer centres around sa and pa throughout the varṇam, he employs phrases beginning with sa in the ending section as well. The phrase sMm–sPp–sDd–sNn s || S blends effectively into the charaṇam, which also commences on sa in the higher octave, resulting in a well-crafted conclusion.

7. GambheeraNāta:

In the concluding chīṭṭaswaram of the Gambhīranāṭa varṇam, the first three lines begin with the same phrase, which is subsequently developed in different ways through the addition of new swara patterns. This approach creates variety while maintaining a sense of unity throughout the passage.

S G S ; ṇ s g m p n ṣ ḡ | ṣ N p m n P | m g p M g s g ||
 S G S ; n s g m p n Ṣ | , ṇ s g m p n ṣ | , ṇ s g m p n ||
Ṣ Ḡ Ṣ ; n ṣ ḡ ṁ ḡ ṁ ḡ ṁ | ḡ ṁ ḡ ṁ ḡ ṁ ḡ ṁ | p m g – ṁ ḡ ṣ n p ||
 m g – ḡ ṣ n p m g – ṣ n p m g s G | ṣ n p m g s G | s G ṣ n p m g || s G s G s G (charaṇam)

In the concluding chittaswaram of the Gambhīranāṭa varṇam, the first three lines begin with the same phrase, which is subsequently developed in different ways through the addition of new swara patterns. This approach creates variety while maintaining a sense of unity throughout the passage.

The muktāyi is preceded by a gopucchayati: ṁ ṁ ḡ ṣ n p m g – ṁ ḡ ṣ n p m g – ḡ ṣ n p m g – ṣ n p m g. Interestingly, the phrase ‘ṣ n p m g’, last part of this yati also forms the opening of the concluding muktāyi: ṣ n p m g s G – ṣ n p m g s G Sg – ṣ n p m g s G s G s G. This design enables the muktāyi to merge seamlessly with the opening phrase of the charaṇam, resulting in a striking and effective conclusion. The lively nature of the varṇam is reflected throughout this passage, making it one of the most memorable sections of the uttarāṅgam.

Conclusion

The present analysis shows that Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna considerably expanded the scope of the uttarāṅgam within the varṇam tradition. Through innovative rhythmic structures, unusual graha swaras, patterned chittaswaras, yati-based constructions, distinctive phrase endings, and imaginative melodic designs, he transformed the second half of the varṇam into a rich space for creative exploration.

Taken together, these observations suggest that BMK viewed the varṇam not merely as a pedagogical form, but as a creative compositional medium capable of accommodating innovation while remaining firmly rooted in Carnatic tradition. His varṇa-s therefore occupy a distinctive place in the modern varṇam repertoire and continue to offer valuable insights to performers, students and researchers.

Another interesting observation is that the features discussed in this study do not appear separately in the varṇa-s. In most of the compositions, several of these aspects are found together, whether in the charaṇam structure, chittaswaras, rhythmic design, special prayogas, or concluding passages. The combination of these features within a single composition adds variety and depth to the music, making the varṇa-s engaging for both performers and listeners.

Further Scope of study:

The study also reveals several noteworthy literary features in these compositions. The use of swarākṣaras, yamakas and other prosodical devices, together with the close alignment between swara and sahitya, reflects the composer's command over both music and language. In many places, the swara phrases appear to reinforce the meaning and mood of the text, adding another dimension to the musical experience. Since these literary and sahitya-related aspects constitute a substantial area of study in themselves, they have not been dealt with in detail here and may be taken up as a separate investigation.

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