

Cradle to Classroom: Contribution of 19th and 20th Century Composers to Children's Music

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Abstract

Music has played a crucial role in shaping children's cognitive, emotional, and cultural development. In the 19th and 20th centuries, South Indian composers created structured musical pieces for children, blending simple melodies, meaningful lyrics, and educational themes. These compositions introduced young learners to Carnatic music, moral values, and cultural traditions.

This paper explores the contributions of notable composers such as Purandara Dasa, Paidala Gurumurthy Sastry, Prayaga Ranga Dasa, Palagummi Viswanadham, S. Rajeswara Rao, Devulapalli Krishnasastri, and Raallapalli Ananta Krishna Sharma. Their works range from folk rhymes to film songs and educational lyrics, all designed to support early childhood learning. Raallapalli Ananta Krishna Sharma's revival of Annamacharya's kritis provided children with devotional music in a simple, melodic format, making pieces like "Jo Achyutananda Jo Jo Mukunda" widely popular. This study examines the musical, rhythmic, and lyrical features that enhance language acquisition, memory, and emotional connection to music. By comparing traditional and modern adaptations, it underscores the relevance of these compositions in contemporary music education.

Introduction

Music has long been an essential tool for early learning and emotional development. Traditional compositions from the 19th and 20th centuries were crafted to introduce young learners to Carnatic music, cultural values, and religious themes. Purandara Dasa, Paidala Gurumurthy Sastry, and Prayaga Ranga Dasa composed structured works that reinforced devotion and discipline, while light music composers like S. Rajeswara Rao and Devulapalli Krishnasastri contributed through films, folk tunes, and radio programs.

A significant contribution came from Raallapalli Ananta Krishna Sharma, who revived and tuned Annamacharya's compositions. His work made devotional music accessible to children, with simple notations and melodic arrangements fostering early musical training.

Research Objective

This research aims to analyse the musical and lyrical structure of 19th- and 20th-century compositions for children, exploring how they contributed to learning and cultural development. It examines their role in early music education, particularly in fostering devotion, discipline, and linguistic skills. Additionally, the study assesses how these compositions have been adapted in contemporary teaching methods and explores the challenges of preserving them in the digital era.

Research Scope

This study focuses on compositions for children from the 19th and 20th centuries, examining Carnatic music contributions (Pillari Geetegalu, Annamacharya kritis). Folk and devotional compositions (Prayaga Ranga Dasa's children's songs). Light music contributions (Palagummi Viswanadham's songs, S. Rajeswara Rao's film compositions, Devulapalli Krishnasastri's educational songs).

The impact of these compositions on cognitive, linguistic, and emotional development.

Methodology

Textual Analysis: Study of compositions, including lyrics, notation, and themes. Ethnographic Research: Interviews with music educators, scholars, and musicians. Comparative Study: Analysis of traditional vs. modern adaptations to evaluate their educational impact.

Findings

19th- and 20th-century compositions for children introduced them to Carnatic, folk, and light music traditions.

Melodic and rhythmic patterns enhanced memory, language skills, and speech development.

Raallapalli Ananta Krishna Sharma's revival of Annamacharya kritis made devotional music accessible to children.

Film and light music composers helped bring children's songs to a wider audience.

Digital media and changing educational methods have led to a decline in traditional compositions.

Efforts are needed to integrate these compositions into modern education, ensuring they continue to benefit young learners.

Contributions of 19th- and 20th-Century Composers to Children's Music

Purandara Dasa: The Architect of Carnatic Music Education

Purandara Dasa (1484–1564) is regarded as the father of Carnatic music pedagogy. His compositions, particularly the Pillari Geetegalu, were designed to introduce young students to basic swara patterns, rhythm, and lyrical articulation.

His structured learning method, including Swaravali, Janta Varisai, and Alankaras, remains fundamental in music education today.

Paidala Gurumurthy Sastry:

The Master of Geetas

Paidala Gurumurthy Sastry, known as "Veyi Geethala Paidala Gurumurthy Sastry," made immense contributions to Carnatic music for children. His Sanchari Geetas, Lakshana Geetas, and Prabandhas helped students understand raga structures. He composed Lakshana Geetas in various Melakarta and Janya ragas, earning the title "Nalubathi Vela Ragala Gurumurthy Sastry."

Sanchari Geetas:

Mandara Dhare – Kamboji – Adi

Kamala Sulochana – Ananda Bhairavi – Adi

Lakshana Geethams:

Jaya Karuna Sindho – Dhanyasi – Dhruva Talam

Kamsasura Kandana – Sahana – Matya

Arabi Ragala Lakshanam – Arabhi – Jhampa

Prayaga Ranga Dasa: The Bhajan Tradition for Children

Prayaga Ranga Dasa was a 19th- and early 20th-century composer from Gudimellanka, East Godavari, Andhra Pradesh. He made a significant contribution to children's devotional music by composing simple yet profound bhajans, lullabies, and folk songs that introduced young minds to spirituality. His compositions blend bhakti (devotion), moral teachings, and playful storytelling, making them easily accessible and enjoyable for children.

Unlike classical compositions that require formal training, Prayaga Ranga Dasa's songs use easy language, rhythmic patterns, and repetitive melodies, ensuring that even young children can sing and understand them. His works continue to be sung in households, temples, and cultural gatherings, preserving traditional folk and devotional music for future generations.

Notable Songs and Their Themes

1. "Eme Oo Chitti" – A Comforting Lullaby

This song portrays a tender interaction, soothing a crying child while subtly instilling discipline and devotion.

Lyrics and Meaning:

Pallavi:

"Eme Oo Chitti Edavake, Eee Rotti Mukkaa Virichi Petti Ne Padudhu Jo Kotti..."

(Oh dear little one, don't cry! Here, take a piece of bread, eat, and sleep peacefully...)

Charanam 1:

"Adigo Buchiwadu Mana Ataka Meedunnadu, Edisthe Vaadu Ninnethuku Pothadu..."

(Look, little Buchi is sitting on the rooftop! If you cry, he might take you away...)

Charanam 2:

"Mitlagudla Vaadu Ponakantha Potta Vaadu, Ete Vachhi Nee Jada Pattuku Laaguthadu..."

(That mischievous one with a round belly will come and pull your hair if you don't stop crying!)

Charanam 3:

"Uyyaluputhane Jola Paatapaduthane, Neyyi Buvva Thinave Thathayya Ethukonune..."

(Let's rock you in a cradle while singing a lullaby! Eat your tasty ghee rice, little one...)

Charanam 4:

"Ushhh ..Kaki Raave Pedda Seshi Nethuku Pove, Rangadasunelina Sree Rangani Maruvaboke..."

(Hush, don't cry, or the big crow will take away your sesame ball! Never forget the blessings of Lord Sriranga...)

This lullaby reflects the traditional way of soothing children, using playful warnings and introducing devotion to Lord Sriranga, subtly instilling faith from a young age.

2. "Krishnamma Gopala Bala Krishnamma" – A Playful Devotional Folk Song

This is one of the most popular children's devotional songs, bringing Lord Krishna's divine childhood closer to young minds through simple words and a folk-style melody. It is still widely sung in Telugu households.

3. "Raala Trinurasundari" – The Divine Mother in Child Form

This bhajan praises the goddess Tripurasundari in her child-like form, symbolizing innocence, protection, and divine grace. The song conveys that divine energy exists in children, making them embodiments of purity and knowledge.

4. "Mangalambhe Shambhurani" – A Traditional Mangala Harati

This is a famous mangala harati (ritual offering song) dedicated to Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati, often sung at the end of devotional gatherings, reinforcing the importance of prayer and gratitude.

Legacy and Impact

Blending Devotion with Folk Traditions: Prayaga Ranga Dasa's compositions seamlessly blend bhakti, folk elements, and moral instruction, making them engaging for children while keeping them rooted in spiritual values.

Musical Simplicity: His songs are designed with easy-to-sing melodies and rhythmic structures, allowing them to be sung in schools, homes, and temples.

Cultural Preservation: His works continue to be passed down orally, ensuring that devotional music remains an integral part of childhood learning.

Through his bhajans, lullabies, and folk compositions, Prayaga Ranga Dasa created a unique musical tradition that bridges devotion and childhood innocence, making him one of the most influential figures in Telugu children's devotional music.

Raallapalli Ananta Krishna Sharma: Reviving Annamacharya for Children

Annamacharya, the 14th-century saint-poet, composed thousands of kritis dedicated to Lord Venkateswara. However, many of his works lacked musical notation. Raallapalli Ananta Krishna Sharma revived these kritis by setting them to music, making them accessible for both classical musicians and children.

Key Contributions:

"Jo Achyutananda Jo Jo Mukunda" – A popular lullaby introducing children to devotional music.

His meticulous structuring of Annamacharya kritis helped integrate them into early music education

Light Music Composers and Their Contributions to Children's Music

Devulapalli Krishnasastri:

Devulapalli Krishnasastri's compositions blended music with cultural and patriotic themes. Songs like "Bale Elaka Savari Elagekkuthavo" and "Neeru Challina Mungitlo Panneeru Challina Vaakitlo" integrate music with festival traditions, while "Jaya Jaya Jaya Priya Bharatha" instills national pride in children.

Lyrics and Meaning of "Bhale Eluka Savari Elagekkuthavo"

Lyrics:

Bhale eluka savari elagekkuthavo...

Chalo antu prathi inta ela thiruguthavo.... Bhalevadaveevu..

Ch: edi maaku chupinchu enugumukamu

Edi chandravanka vanti ekadanthamu...

Ide vachhe nee gurramu ela gekkuthavo .

Kadalaleni bojja neevu kadam throkkuthavo.....

Ch: sare gaani vinayaka...chaduvu sandhyaluntai

Mari mari panuluntai aata paataluntai

Maro saari manavulive maaku addu raaku

Bharayinchukolemu pasivaallamu babu ...

Cha: phalam ichukuntamu pathri ichukuntamu

Thalo puvvu Kaalla kada dakalu chesthamu

Alakadu themmante Amma nadigi testhamu

Polo mantu parugathy boledu uundrallu...

Meaning:

This song playfully describes a rat's journey, humorously depicting its movements while linking it to Lord Vinayaka's vehicle. The lyrics cleverly introduce children to Lord Ganesha's features, such as his elephant head (enugu mukamu), crescent-shaped tusk (chandravanka vanti ekadantham), and pot belly (bojja). The song encourages children to recognize and celebrate Vinayaka Chavithi traditions while highlighting their everyday playful nature.

Palagummi Viswanadham: A Versatile Lyricist

Palagummi Viswanadham was a talented lyricist. He composed songs for children, festivals, devotion, and patriotism. His song "Amma Donga Ninnu Chudakunte" is very popular.

Collaboration with Devulapalli Venkata Krishnasastri

He worked closely with poet Devulapalli Venkata Krishnasastri. Together, they created songs for many occasions. Some famous songs include:

"Neeru Chalina Mongitulo" – A Sankranti festival song.

"Theravandi Thalupulu" – A Ugadi celebration song.

"Navvante Jabilli" – A lullaby for children.

"Rama Charanam" – A devotional song.

"Narayana Narayana Allah Allah" – A patriotic song.

Sankranti Song: "Gobillo Gobillo"

This song, written by Krishnasastri and composed by Viswanadham, celebrates Sankranti.

Lyrics and Meaning:

Pallavi:

"Gobillo gobillo, Neeru chalina mungitlo, Neeru chalina vakitlo..."

(Oh little gobillu dolls, in the front and backyards where water is sprinkled...)

Charanam:

"Dari poduguna muggulu, Muthyala posina muggulu..."

(Rangoli patterns shine, decorated with pearls...)

"Naru posina mungeetulo, Ganneru puuchina vakitalo..."

(In the yard with harvested grains, in the courtyard with flowers...)

This song is sung during Sankranti when children worship Gobillu (sacred idols). It describes festive joy, harvest, and traditions.

Legacy of Palagummi Viswanadham

Viswanadham's songs are simple, melodious, and meaningful. His works continue to inspire and educate children.

Manchala Jagannatha Rao:

He composed the motivational song "Bangaru Papai Bahumathulu Thevaali," which encourages children to embrace values such as hard work, dedication, and self-confidence. The song inspires young learners to strive for excellence in life.

Kopalle Shivaram:

Kopalle Shivaram's lullaby "Oogave Naa Papa Uyyala" remains a classic cradle song in Telugu tradition.

P.V. Saibaba:

P.V. Saibaba's "Pappa Paata Paadana" encourages children to sing, nurturing musical interest from an early age.

Veturi Prabhakara Sastri: Preserving Traditional Rhymes

Veturī Prabhākara Śāstri collected and preserved traditional rhymes that teach children about nature, science, and cultural values. His work in *Bālabhāṣa* highlights how these songs help in early education.

One of his significant contributions is the rhyme "Endalu Kaśēdendukurā", which explains the water cycle, farming, and human survival in a simple question-answer format.

Lyrics and Meaning:

"Endalu Kaśēdendukurā, Mabbulu Paṭṭe Tāndukurā..."

(Why does the heat disappear? Because clouds have gathered.)

"Mabbulu Paṭṭe Dendukurā, Vaanalu Kurise Tāndukurā..."

(Why do clouds gather? Because it is about to rain.)

"Vaanalu Kurise Dendukurā, Cheruvulu Ninde Tāndukurā..."

(Why does it rain? To fill reservoirs.)

"Cheruvulu Ninde Dendukurā, Pantalu Pande Tāndukurā..."

(Why do reservoirs fill? So crops can grow.)

"Pantalu Pande Dendukurā, Prajalu Brathike Tāndukurā..."

(Why do crops grow? So people can survive.)

"Prajalu Brathike Dendukurā, Swāmi Ni Koli Ce Tāndukurā..."

(Why do people survive? To worship God.)

"Swāmi Ni Koli Chedendukurā, Mukthini Pōde Tāndukurā..."

(Why do we worship God? To attain salvation.)

This rhyme teaches natural cycles, human dependence on nature, and spiritual values in a simple and engaging way. Śāstri ensured such rhymes were preserved, as they help children develop logic, memory, and cultural awareness through music.

Traditional Folk Songs in Children's Education

Traditional folk songs play a vital role in India's oral tradition, offering children valuable lessons in health, logical thinking, and measurements.

Examples:

"Kalla Gajja Kanakamma" – Provides health-related advice.

"Okati Rendu - Oppula Kuppa

Moodu Nalugu - Muddula Gumma

Adidu Aaru -Andala bharina

Edu enimidi -vayyari bhama

Thommidi padi-bangaru bomma”

Introduces numbers to young children.

"Oogu Oogu Gangedda – Uggū Pale Gangedda

Soli Oogu Gangedda –soledu paale Gangedda

Thaali Ooge Gangedda -thavvedu paale Gangedda

maari Ooge Gangedda -maanedu paale Gangedda

Aagi Ooge Gangedda -addedu paale Gangedda”

Teaches traditional measurement systems while aiding digestion in infants.

Findings

Children's songs play a crucial role in language development, emotional bonding, and cognitive stimulation.

Melody and repetition enhance memory retention.

Rhythmic patterns aid in speech development.

These songs serve as cultural markers, preserving dialects, religious themes, and historical narratives.

Keywords

19th- and 20th-century compositions for children, Carnatic Music for Children, Traditional Indian Children's Songs, Lullabies and Cradle Songs, Educational Songs, Folk Music for Children, Annamacharya Kritis for Children, Music Pedagogy.

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