

Rare rāga-s handled by H Yoganarasimham- A lesser-known composer of Mysore

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Abstract

Rāga is the essence of Indian music. Compositions are sources to understand rāga. The musical trinity Tyāgarāja, Muḍḍusvāmi Dikṣita and Syāma sāstri brought to light many new rāga-s and gave them life through their compositions. Like Thanjavur, Mysore also flourished with great composers, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. Sri H.Yoganarasimham was one of the great composers from Mysore who was a scholar in both music and sanskrit. His compositions are testament to his vast knowledge of various aspects of music.

This article will focus on four rare rāga-s handled by H.Yoganarasimham from the published work Gītakusumāñjali.

Key words: Rare rāga, Mysore composer, Vāggēyakāra ,Tyāgaraja

Introduction

South Indian music also known as Karnataka saṅgīta is a part of the culture of Southern India. Indian music is rāga based. The concept of rāga is unique to Indian music. Along with the prācīna rāga-s, new rāga-s evolved and expanded with many musical compositions in the hands of great vāggēyakara-s. Such compositions helped in understanding the unique features of the rāga.

After the fall of Vijayanagara Empire which was flourishing with arts and culture, many musicians and musicologists migrated to the Thanjavur region of the present-day Tamil Nadu. Thanjavur witnessed great vāggēyakara-s , musicians and musicologist emerging during the 17th and 18th century. The trinity of Karnataka music Tyagaraja, Muttuswamy Dīkṣita and Syāma Sāstri brought a renaissance in the classical music. Music and Thanjavur became synonymous.

At the same time, the princely state of Mysore also had many musicians and musicologists thanks to the royal patronage. The Wodeyars of Mysore were not only great patrons but were themselves accomplished artists. Karnataka Music was flourishing in and around Mysore with great vāggēyakara-s and artists.

Trinity of Karnataka saṅgīta introduced many new rāga-s through their magnificent compositions which in turn inspired many new composers to experiment with new rāga-s.

The 19th and 20th century can be termed as a golden period of Karnataka saṅgīta as this period witnessed many new composers and compositions.

This article aims to observe select compositions of H.Yoganarasimham in rare rāga-s from the published work “Gītakusumāñjali”

Methodology

This study will be qualitative and analytical. Notation from the published work Gītakusumāñjali will be taken up to understand the features of the rāga and structure of the composition.



About the composer

Yoganarasimham (1897-1971) was a composer from Mysore. He was a Sanskrit scholar and a musician who learnt the nuances of music from Mysore Vasudecharya.

To his credit there are 36 compositions comprising of svarajati, tāna varṇa-s, kṛti-s, tillāna-s padam and jāvali. He has composed in almost all musical forms. He used the signature **Dēva** in his compositions. He has composed in Telugu Kannda and Sanskrit.

Rāga-s handled in his compositions

Saṅgati-s or melodic variations are observed in both compositions in the Pallavi. Saṅgati-s are developed either by systematically moving to the next higher note or by increasing the speed of the melodic phrase.

Kṛti Śāntirūpāsyatām has pallavi anupallavi and two caraṇa-s having the same melody

This rāga is suitable for exploring in manōdharmā segment

This rāga as per rāgāṅga system is known as Śuddha sāvēri having the same ārōhaṇa avarōhaṇa. It is mentioned in Saṅgīta sampradāya pradarśini as a janya of mēḷa 1 Kanakāmbari. Presently, rāga śuddha sāvēri is rendered with catuśruti ṛṣabha and catuśruti daivata. Hence to give a unique identity to this rāga the composer mentions thus-

“According to the Dikshitar tradition, the order of notes (moorchana) given above belongs to (characterizes) Suddhasaveri, of Kanakambari (Kanakāṅgi) mela. Tulajaji’s ‘Saramruta’ also considers Suddhasāveri as belonging in the Malavagoula mela. But over the years Suddhasaveri has somewhat metamorphosed by dropping its original suddharishabha and suddhadhaivata and replacing them with chatuhsruti rishaba and chatuhsruti dhaivata, respectively. It is a curious fact that despite the change the rāga has retained its original name. It is one of those rāgas that play ‘hide-and-seek’ with us. It became necessary therefore to have a new name for the old Suddhasaveri. The new name given by Tacchur Singaracharya is Latantapriya, which I have used here.”¹

Interestingly in SSP too Subbarama Dikṣita observes the same practice. He mentions that Purandaradasa wrote a anubandha in śuddha sāvēri to pillāri gīta, that is sung with śuddha ṛṣabha and śuddha daivata. He also mentions that singing panca śruti ṛṣabha and daivata is Dēvakriya as per the system of Venkatamakhin. Subbarama Dikṣita concludes that somehow it has become a vogue to sing to śuddha sāvēri with the svara-s of Dēvakriya.²

From the above it is understood that to differentiate between the śuddha sāvēri of the present times and that of the rāgāṅga system, Yoganarasimham used a new name Latāntapriya which he mentions that it is suggested by Taccuru Singaracaryulu.

¹ Excerpts from the work Gītakusumanjali English version

² Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśini śuddha sāvēri lakṣaṇa vivaraṇa

Bhānudanyāsi

Kīrtana-Nijada nija

Janya of mēḷa 45 Śubhapantuvarāḷi.

Ārōhana- Avarōhaṇa- S R1 G2 M1 N3 D1 N- D P M G R S N S.

Niṣādāntya rāga.

Pancama varjya in the ārōhaṇa and devious ascend .

Set to Khanda cāpu tāḷa

The reference about this rāga is seen in the work Rāgapravāham which has compiled the scale of various rāga-s mentioned in various works.

This is a ēka dhātu composition. Melody is the same for both pallavi and the following caraṇa-s.

Since the highest note is niṣāda and the lowest note is maṇḍra madhyama this rāga is rendered in madhyama śruti.

Some of Tyagaraja's utsava sampradāya kīrtana-s and divyanāma kīrtana-s have ēka dhātu. Here, importance is given to the lyrics or the contents of the compositions hence melody is a medium to convey the message.

Yoganasimham too has continued the same idea in this composition keeping the melody repeatative for all the sections of the song.

This rāga is melodious and lilting as a pratimadhyama janya rāga sung in madhyama śruti.

Gaganamōhini

Kṛti – Kāpāḍadē- ādi

Janya of the 64th mēḷakarta Vacaspati.

Ārōhaṇa-Avarōhaṇa S G3 P D2 N2 S – S N2 P M2 G3 S

Auḍava rāga with asymmetrical svara -s. In the ascend riṣabha and madhyama are varjya and in the descend daivata and riṣabha are varjya .

Set to ādi tāla with one and half akṣara eduppu

Reference about the rāga is found in the work Pālayāzi which is a compilation of the scales of various rāga-s described in various works.

Rāga is introduced in the first āvarta with melody revealing the scale

|| ; , s g p , d | N , d n | p P , m g || P ,
|| kā pā ḍa | dē nē | pa hū ḍu || vi

The highest note is tāra gāndhāra and the lowest note is maṅdra pancama.

Saṅgati-s are observed in pallavi and anupallavi.

Set in madhyamakāla with a brisk pace, this kṛti is provides scope for exploring manōdharma. Asymmetry of the svāra-s in the ārōhaṇa avarōhaṇa is interesting as well as challenging while rendering rāga alāpana or kalpana svāra.

Kuntalakuṣumāvaḷi

Kṛti- Saphalam dēhi

Janya of 65th mēḷa Mēcakalyāṇi

Ārōhaṇa-Avarōhaṇa S R2 G3 M2 P M2 P S- S N D2 N P M G S

Ubhaya vakra rāga. Daivata niṣāda varjya in the ascend and riṣabha varjya in the descend.

The tempo of the tāla is in between madhya and viḷamba, this kṛti is set to ādi tāla two kaḷai with a six akṣara eduppu.

Reference for this rāga is seen in Rāgapravāham.

.The scale of the rāga is introduced at the beginning of the kṛti.

|| ; ; ; s r G m g m p m p | Ś ; ; Ś | Ś n d n d n p || m p , m g s
|| saphalam jī vi | tam ku | ru mē || nara sim ha

The rāga is restrictive as it is both a varjya and a vakra rāga.

The highest note is tāra madhyama and the lowest note is maṅdra pancama.

There is ciṭṭēsvara for this kṛti. The composition is used as a medium to explain the svarūpa of the rāga.

Saṅgati-s revolve around the scale.

Exploring manodharma is futile as phrases will be repeatative and around the scale.

Conclusion

Sri Yoganarasimham is a uttama vāggēyakara. One can observe embellishments like svarākṣara-s, ciṭṭēsvara and all the necessary alankara-s needed for compositions of good standard in his work.

His mastery over the languages is observed through all his compositions.

The rāga-s taken for this study are mentioned in Saṅgīta swara prastāra sāgaram of Nadamuni Pandithar - 1906 and Rāga kōsam of R R Kesavamurthy.

As a disciple of Mysore Vasudevacharya, some influence of Tyagaraja can be observed in his compositions, be it

- Experimentation with new rāga-s.
- Adoption of six-akṣara eduppu.
- Adherence to the Tyagaraja-style kṛti format (pallavi–anupallavi–caraṇa).
- Use of ēka-dhātu settings as in divyanāma-s.
- Creative handling of rāga-s like Nāḍavarāṅgini and Kōlāhala, hitherto associated with Tyagaraja alone

Ultimately, while theoretical scales remain abstract, Yoganarasimham transformed them into living rāga-s through composition. Whether these rāga-s endure in mainstream practice or not, his work stands as a testament to a composer's joy in creativity and novelty.

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