

Royal Composer Mysore Sadashiva Rao and his influence on Carnatic Music

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Abstract

The contribution of musicians and composers from the Karnataka region to Carnatic music is indeed immense, and the Vijayanagara empire played a pivotal role in fostering the arts and culture, especially music, during its reign. It served as a central hub, where performing artists from across India were welcomed to showcase their talents and receive royal backing. This patronage was instrumental in documenting and preserving the vibrant music scene of the time. This study delves into some of the works of the royal court composer Mysore Sadashiva Rao. By examining his artistic styles and stylistic developments, this study seeks to understand how his contributions have shaped and influenced modern-day Carnatic music, highlighting the lasting impact of his creative legacy.

Keywords

Mysore Sadashiva Rao, artistic expression, *kritis*, Compositional style, *sangathis*, melodic and rhythmic aspect, influence on Carnatic music.

Introduction

Mysore Sadashiva Rao (1800-1885) was a distinguished composer who served at the royal court of Mysore from 1835 to 1885 during the reign of Mummadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar. Born to Ganesha Rao and Krishnabai in Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, he belonged to the Tyagaraja Parampara. He was a disciple of Walajapete Venkataramana Bhagavat, who was a direct disciple of Tyagaraja Swami. Sadashiva Rao composed various musical forms, including Swarajathis, Tana Varnas, Pada Varnas, Kritis, Kshetra Kritis, Thillanas, Ragamalikas, and Javalis. He composed in both rare ragas, such as Chandrachooda, Jayanthasena, Balahamsa, and Punnagatodi, as well as more commonly known ragas like Kalyani, Pantuvarali, Harikambhoji, and Shankarabharana. His works are composed in a variety of talas, including Khanda Triputa (e.g., *Narasimhudu Udayinchenu*), Matya (e.g., *Paamaruni Brova*), as well as Madhyadi, Roopaka, and Chapu talas. He composed in both Telugu and Sanskrit.

Sadashiva Rao's compositions are notable for their aesthetic richness, woven with prosodic elements such as *yati*, *yamaka*, *prasa*, and *swaraksharas*, blending commendable lyrics and music. The lyrical style and the use of multiple *sangathis* suggest a strong influence from Tyagaraja Swami, although some compositions also bear similarities to the style of Muthuswamy Dikshitar. While he followed the Trinity's approach in the use of *sangathis*, *madhyamakala sahitya*, and multiple *charanas*, his works stand apart by incorporating the *Poshaka Mudra* alongside the *Vaggeyakara Mudra* and *Raga Mudra*. His signature (*ankita*) is "Sadashiva."

Research Objective

The primary objective of this research is to explore and analyse the contributions of the royal court composer, Mysore Sadashiva Rao, and to examine his influence on Carnatic music. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine and analyse the artistic expression, the musical aspect, the *sangatis*, *laya*, and decorative aspects in the compositions of Mysore Sadashiva Rao.
2. To assess the lasting impact and influence of his compositions on Carnatic music.

Scope

This study focuses on the analysis of select compositions of Mysore Sadashiva Rao.

Methodology

A qualitative and analytical research approach has been used as the methodology for this study.

Contributions to Carnatic Music:

The composer's contributions to Carnatic music are diverse, significant, and reflective of both devotional and aesthetic traditions. His works are marked by distinctive melodic patterns, aesthetic richness and rhythmic structures.

The *Inthachowka Varnam* in *Panthuvarali* raga is a remarkable composition that demonstrates both melodic development and aesthetic expression showcasing features such as *Janta prayogas*, *Dhatu prayogas*, *Sthayi bhedas*, and *Makuta swaras* (smart finishes), which together enrich the interpretive depth and performance value of the piece. The swarajathi *Shri Ramabhirama* in *Hamsadhwani* is characterized by its swanamudra "Sadashiva" which has features like *Dhatu prayogas*, *Sthayi bhedas*, and *Makuta swaras*.

His *Kshetra Kritis* highlight his deep spiritual engagement and suggest the influence of the Trinity. The kriti *Sri Parthasarathi* in *Bhairavi* invokes Lord Parthasarathi of Triplicane, while *Samrajyadayakesha* in *Kambhoji* honors Lord Sri Ekamranatha of Kanchi. His compositions on *Sri Kamakshi Devi*, such as *Kamakoti Peeta Sthithe* and *O! Raja Rajeshwari*, invoke the blessings of goddess Kamakshi Devi.

The *Thillana* titled *Dhim Tam Tam Dhiri* in *Purvi Kalyani* showcases rhythmic intricacy and ornamentation, marked with the poshakmudra "Krishnaraja". Furthermore, the *Javali Ekkadunnavura* in *Athana* stands out for its lyrical charm and dual use of compositional signatures: the poshakmudra "Shrikrishna Rajendra" and the swanamudra "Sadashivuni".

These compositions, deeply rooted in tradition yet marked by creative expression, have greatly enriched the Carnatic music repertoire and they continue to influence both practitioners and scholars alike.

Analysis

Kriti 1: Saketa Nagaranatha

Raga: Harikambhoji

Tala: Roopaka

Pallavi

|| Saketha || nagara natha || shrikantha || jagannatha ||

Anupallavi

|| Lokesha || chidvilasa || lokavana || chatura mam pahi ||

Madhyama Kala Sahitya

|| Devadeva munijana hita || surapatinuta shubhada charita ||

|| dasarata sukha janakajara || mana devaripuna shachana ||

Charanam

|| rajitha || Amara pala || ramacandra bhupala ||

Madhyama Kala Sahitya

|| rajaraja vandita chara || na yugala dina pala dina ||

|| rajavamsha ratna sada || shiva kavinuta charitha padma ||

Sangathis

The kriti introduces excellent sangathis, with 8 in the pallavi. The progression from a simple sangathi to the complex one, beautifully establishes the *ragaswaroop* and also suggest ideas for improvisation in the *manodharma Sangeetha*.

Prasa (Dwitiyakshara prasa)

Adyakshara and Antya prasa are found in the Pallavi, Anupallavi as well as Charana.

Janta Swara Prayogas

Examples include triplet patterns such as:

|| m, p d n d d p p m g r ||

|| sa - - - - ke - - tha - || – Pallavi

|| n s r g m g m g g r s ||

|| shri - - - - kan - - tha - || – Pallavi

Swaras in Triplets

|| g, m p , d s , n d n n || n s s s ||

|| ra- ja ra -ja van- di tha cha ra || – Madhyama Kala Sahitya

Chittaswara & SwaraSahitya

Chittaswaras are introduced after the Anupallavi as well as the Charana in madhyamakala adding brilliant finish to the respective sections.

MakutaSwara (Crown-like ending)

The chittaswara ends with a *makuta swara* also called a mukthaya or a crown-like finish which gives a charming effect to the *kriti*.

Example: m, g r s - n, d p m - g, m p d

Kriti 2: Padasannidhi Naku

Raga: Jayanthasena

Tala: Adi

Pallavi

|| padasannidhi naku | yenadu galguno || budhajanavana | sitaramana || ni

Anupallavi

|| karunakara ni | karuname ledaite || maranamenaku | sharanamanti nayyo ||

Charanam

|| mataladuma inka kopama || tatakari nannu | brova bharama ||

|| rama vinuma idi niku tarama bhamamani sita | premambudhi soma ||

Madhyamakala

|| mampapapa vidaraka sargasuga mAruti dhyAninche (raghu) ||

|| nayaka ripumaraka sadashivakavi bhava haraka natajanapalaka || ni

This kriti commences with *Swarakshara* which immediately establishes the *raga swaroopa*. *Swaraksharas* appear in the madhyamakala swara sahitya as well. Dwitiyakshara prasa and antya prasa can be found throughout the kriti. Usage of *yati* is evident in the words like “karuna”, “marana”, “sarana”. *Vishesha prayogas* like “smg,” “sgs,ndpds”, “sgsgm,-gmgmp,n,dp” blend seamlessly with the emotion that is conveyed. The makuta swara sahitya at the end, provides a brilliant finish to the kriti.

Findings

The study reveals the significant impact of prominent *Vāggeyakaras* such as Tyagarajaswamy and Muttuswamy Dikshitar on the compositional style of Mysore Sadashiva Rao. The systematic development of raga, lyrical style, and the use of multiple *sangathis* suggest a strong influence of Tyagaraja.

Furthermore, the aspect of rhythm (*laya*), especially the usage of *chittaswaras* and *madhayamakala sahitya* reflects the influence of Dikshitar & Shyama Shastri. These elements also highlight his engagement with rhythmic complexity.

Despite these influences his compositions exhibit distinctive features most notably the frequent usage of *Poshaka Mudra* (Eg. *Shri krishnarajendra*) alongside *Swanama Mudra* (*Sadaashiva*) which sets his style apart from that of the trinity.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant influence of the royal court composer Mysore Sadashiva Rao and his compositions. Through an analysis of his selected works, the study emphasizes his invaluable contributions to the field of Carnatic music. The artistic expression, melodic richness, and intricate rhythmic (*Laya*) structures in his compositions continue to inspire and influence generations of musicians. Furthermore, the royal patronage of Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, the Maharaja of Mysore, played a pivotal role in fostering an environment that encouraged the court composers to refine their artform.

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