

Songs in Krishnattam

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Krishnagiti is a musical composition which deserves special attention due to several reasons. There is no information about the existence of musical compositions in Kerala prior to this, in which the writer himself specified the raga (tune) and tala (rhythm) to the text. Krishnagiti was composed in A.D. 1654. This is before the trinity of Karnatic music. This is the time of Venkitamakhi, the creator of Melakartha scheme. Hence Krishnagiti has a prominent place in Indian music itself.

It is certain that the ragas and talas found in Krishnagiti were prevalent in Kerala before 350 years. We do not know exactly how the songs were sung at that time. Even then there may not be any error in saying that the songs were sung in Sopana style. It is our duty to maintain these ragas, talas and style. We know what these are principally from two books and a palm leaf manuscript :

1. Book edited by P.S. Ananthanarayana Sastri and published by Mangalodayam in 1914.
2. Book published by Prof.P.C.Vasudevan Elayath in 1965.
3. Palm leaf manuscript preserved in Krishnattam Kalari, copied in M.E. 1019 (A.D. 1844).

Considering certain facts, we have to assume that the book by Ananthanarayana Sastri is based on the oldest palm leaf manuscript. Except for three or four songs, the ragas and talas are found to be the same in the book and the palm leaf manuscript.

Prof. Elayath has stated in the preface that the ragas given in his book are those used by the Asans (teachers) then (1965), but only four are different from the palm leaf manuscript.

But now (in 1989), about thirty songs are sung in different ragas. Among these, there are seven or eight ragas which are not known now. Without considering these, now (in 1989), more than twenty songs are sung in different ragas.

Considering that this is the first musical composition of Kerala, is it not to be preserved as an archeological item, taking care to see that no changes are made? This is a visual art as well. Should its identity be not preserved?

The ragas of the songs found in the palm leaf manuscript are: Ahari, Indalam, Indisha, Kankkurunji, Kambodhi (Kambodari, Gambodhi etc), Kedaragaudam, Kedarappanthu, Kurunji, Ghandaram, Ghandaramalavam, Dhanasi, Natta, Nadaramagri, Pantayi(ri) (Panthu+Ayiri), Panthuvareali, Paati, Bhuplalam, Bhairavi, Malahari, Madhyamavati, Malavagaudam, Mechilbauli, Mukhari, Ramagri, Varali, Sankarabharanam, Samantamalahari, Saveri and Sourashtram.

Other than these, the ragas sung now are Dvijavanti, Nattakkurunji, Anantabhairavi, Navarasam, Kalyani, Yadukulakamboji, Bilahari, Todi, Devagandhari, Neelambari, Sarangam and Puranir.

The talas specified are only Ekam, Chempa, Panchari, Adantha, Tripata and Chempata. There are no significant changes in this. Only some minor practical conveniences such as ekam is sometimes used as Chempata (etc).

There are some facts to be considered specially for ragas. The nature of some of the ragas have become unknown now (in 1989): Indisha, Kedarappanthu, Pantayi(ri) , Samantamalahari and Ghandaramalavi. Among these, it cannot be said whether Ghandaramalavi is one raga or two ragas such as Ghandaram and Malavi. It is mentioned as Ghandaramalavi in the book and Ghandaramalavabhyam in the palm leaf manuscript. In Karnatic music, there is a raga Malavi.

Then there is a raga Mechilbauli. This is the Mechabauli raga in Karnatic music. Even though this is not sung now (in 1989), we can recover this on the basis of model song.

There is a raga Malahari. We have to doubt whether this is not the raga Malahari which is highly popular in Karnatic music. The reason is that it is not sung by Kathakali singers also. Instead they sing Devagandhari. Similarly in Kathakali, Neelambhari is sung instead of Samantamalahari.

Another raga is Ramagri. This is the old name of Panthuvareali. In Krishnattam it is sung in Panthuvareali now also.

In Krishnattam, from Krishnagiti 62 padams and 10 slokageethams are sung with ragas and talas. Leaving the ten songs in unknown ragas, the balance sixty songs are in ragas known to us. Even then, now (in 1989) about 20 songs are sung in different ragas. Singing in the old ragas specified by the poet is the correct thing to do.

When Prof. Elayath wrote the book, only three or four songs had ragas different from the palm leaf manuscript preserved in Kalari. But now (in 1989), the ragas are changed for more than twenty songs. This is a change happened during the last 25 years.

In 1943, Dr. V. Raghavan wrote an article about the ragas in Krishnagiti in the Journal of Music Academy, Madras. Let me state here that later, he came to Guruvayur to understand about the unknown ragas such as Indisha, Pantayiri etc., listened to the songs and informed me that he could not understand anything, since the quality of singing were very poor.

To improve the songs of Krishnattam, a few years ago, Devaswom had appointed two Kathakali singers. This was supposedly done specially to improve the quality of singing before going on a foreign tour. The aim is good indeed. The standard of singing on stage has improved a little due to this. But I do not think that Devaswom has suggested to change the ragas. The necessity of changing ragas, the basis for doing that, etc., are topics to be considered seriously. Whatever individual opinions we may have about the style of singing the ragas, the old ragas should be maintained in Krishnattam, oldest in Kerala, performed as a ritual in Guruvayur Temple. Hence as far as possible, old ragas should be used. Also it should be decided what ragas should be used instead of those which are not known now.

Apart from padams, many slokas (about 250) from Krishnagiti are also sung with ragas. The poet has not specified the ragas for these slokas. These are not mentioned in the manuscript kept in the Kalari also. Hence we can not find fault when the singers sing them in ragas suitable to the occasion. But it is to be stated that, the singers do not introduce sufficient variety appropriately. About half of the slokas are sung in Kedaragaulam raga. It appears that in olden times, Kedaragaulam was usually used for singing slokas. This might be the reason for singing most of the songs in Kedaragaulam. One fact has to be specially mentioned here. The Paati raga is a mixed raga; it consists of two or three ragas. One of them is kedaragowlam. If kedaragaulam is sung carelessly, it will approach Paati raga. Hence on stage we keep on hearing the phrases of Paati raga.

Let me say that, the sloka preceding the padam is sung in the same raga, in which the padam is also sung. Hence out of 250, leaving 70, the raga is to be specified for the remaining 180. Apart from the ragas specified earlier for the padams, the raga in which slokas are sung also include Devagandhari, Anantabhairavi, Puranir, Surutti, Mohanam, Saramgam, Nattakkurunji, Neelambari, Sahana, Dvijavanti, Dhanasi, Bilahari and Yadukulakamboji.

Let me mention a specialty: In Rasakrida, six ragas are specified for a sloka-song in the palm leaf manuscript: Bhairavi, Bhupali, Indisha, Kanakkurunji, Saurashtram and Indalam. These days, in Kathakali, the tendency to sing several charanas in several ragas is found prevalent. The fact that this tradition is initiated by Manaveda himself may provide solace at least to some.

In Krishnattam, after singing the raga, sloka and padam are sung in that sequence. But at one place, a specialty is seen: In the Play Swayamvaram, a padam of Yavana is sung in three periods (slow, medium and fast) and then the raga is sung.

In Krishnagiti, apart from the padams, having two parts such as pallavi and charanam, some sloka-songs are also sung with raga and tala. In Krishnattam, before the start of the play, Thotayam used to be sung and performed. Nothing is mentioned about this in the manuscript. This is performed in Natta raga. But now (in 1989), the way of singing Natta raga does not appear to be proper.

It was earlier stated that now, many padams are sung in different ragas. Let us examine some of them. Right at the beginning, the padam in which Bhoomidevi complains to Brahma "Thrapayalapitu" was in Paati raga. Now it is in Dvijavanthi.

In Avataram, the padam used when Putana breast-feeds Krishna was in Nathanamakriya. It is changed to Navarasam. Other two padams in Nathanamakriya are changed to Kalyani + Yadukulakambhoji and Madhyamavati etc.,. A padam in Rasakrida in Kanakkurunji is changed to Ananthabhairavi and one in Swargarohanam is sung in Nattakkurunji.

The padam in which Kaliya's wives request Srikrishna was in Saurashtra raga. Let me say here that Saurashtra is a raga commonly used by Pulluvas. Now it is sung in Ananthabhairavi.

All ragas in Ahiri are sung in Bhairavi, Bhoopalam and Thodi. Let me indicate here that there is some difference between the Ahiri of Karnatic music and the Ahiri prevalent in Kerala.

Instead of Kambhoji, Mukhari, Anandabhairavi etc., are used.

The suitability of the ragas replacing Samantamalahari, Indisa, Kedarapanthu, Malahari etc., should also be examined specially. What Kalidasa said earlier

Eko hi dosho gunasannipate

Nimajjatheendo kiraneshvivanka

has to be stated in the reverse way in the case of Krishnattam. Due to the deficiency in standard of singing, the remaining good aspects of Krishnattam also appear lustreless. It is necessary to change this at the earliest.

There may be many short comings in the style of singing. These can be known when they are sung by Bhagavathars here. I request the respected audience to give suggestions to improve the standard of singing.

The summary is this: Now (in 1989), changes are noticed in the ragas of about 30 padams from those specified by the author in Krishnagiti. Among these, about twenty ragas should be sung in the old way, as specified by the poet. Are the current ragas sufficient for those 10 ragas not prevalent today ? It should be examined whether any changes are required to be made for these.

The ragas to be used for slokas should also be prescribed, suitable to the situation, in the beginning of the padam.

(Essay presented in the seminar organized at Guruvayur during the celebration of Krishnagiti day on 13th November 1989 and published in Keli, Sangeet Natak Academy, Aug-September 2004).

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THRISSUR - 682 002

Kerala, India

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2. Elayath: Book published by Prof. P.C. Vasudevan Elayath (1965) republished by Guruvayur Devaswom (1986).
3. Grantham (Manuscript): Palm Leaf Manuscript preserved in Krishnattam Kalari, copied in M.E.1019 (A.D.1844).
4. Attaprakaram: handwritten manuscript prepared by Asans (kept in Devaswom).

List of Ragas in Krishnattam:

Avataram

Padam	Beginning	Shastri	Grantham	Elayath	Attaprakaram	1989
1.	<i>trapayalapitu</i>	Paati	Paati	Paati	Paati	Dvijavanti
2.	<i>anrshamsa nanu</i>	Samantamalahari	Samantamalahari	Samantamalahari	Samantamalahari	Sankarabharanam
3.	<i>paripandu payodhara</i>	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi
4.	<i>bodha mayavyaya</i>	Mechabauli	Mechilbauli	Saurastram	Saurastram	Bhupalam (Bauli)
5.	<i>mahita shirodhrta</i>	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji	Kamodari	Kamodari	Ragamalika
6.	<i>jagadanandana nandana</i>	Ramagri	Ramagri	Pantuvarali	Pantuvarali	Pantuvarali
7.	<i>atilobhanamayi</i>	Gambodhi	Natharamagri	Nathanamakriya	Nathanamakriya	Navarasam
8.	<i>hanta suta kim</i>	Indisha	Indisha	Indisha	Indisha	Bilahari
9.	<i>balasomabhasamana</i>	Pantayiri	Pantayiri	Ahiri	Ahiri	Ahiri
10.	<i>padambujena</i>	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam
11.	<i>ehi kumara muda</i>	Paati	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam
12.	<i>nandanandaneha</i>	Sankarabharanam	Saveri	Saveri	Saveri	Saveri
13.	<i>tvatsute namuna</i>	Malahari	Malahari	Malahari	Malahari	Todi
14.	<i>mahitavamshe vihita</i>	-	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari

List of Ragas in Krishnattam:

Kaliyamardanam

Padam	Beginning	Shastri	Grantham	Elayath	Attaprakaram	1989
1.	<i>ahini ca kuhacana</i>	Ahiri	Ahiri	Ahiri	Ahiri	Bhairavi
2.	<i>bakanamaka danujo</i>	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam
3.	<i>ghanakamanarocise</i>	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari
4.	<i>avalokayato</i>	–	–	Varali	–	Varali
5.	<i>ambaracumbaka</i>	Paati	Varali	Varali	Varali	Varali
6.	<i>bhoganamni</i>	Kambodari	Kamodari	Kambodari	Kambodari	Kamboji
7.	<i>viracitashamale</i>	Sauastram	Saurastram	Saurastram	Saurastram	Anandabhairavi
8.	<i>celajalamakhila</i>	Nadaramagri	Nadaramagri	Nadaramagri	Nathanamakriya	Kalyani + Yadukulakamboji
9.	<i>Agamanam punarudita</i>	Samantamalahari	Samantamalahari	Samantamalahari	Samantamalahari	–
10.	<i>tata he shrnu</i>	Bhupalam	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi
11.	<i>avani suravali</i>	Ghantara Malavam	Kanthara Malavi ragabhyam	Ghantara Malavam	Ghantara Malavam	Ghantaram
12.	<i>pashupaloka</i>	Malavagaudam	Malavagaulam	Malavagaulam	Mayamalavagaulam	Madhyamavati

List of Ragas in Krishnattam:

Rasakrida

Padam	Beginning	Shastri	Grantham	Elayath	Attaprakaram	1989
1.	<i>madhuratara muralika</i>	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam
2.	<i>svagatamudayatu</i>	Kedarapantu	Kedarappant	Kedarapant	Kedarapant	Nilambari
3.	<i>bhuvanakamanakrte</i>	Indisha	Indisha	Indisha	Indisha	Dvijavanti
4.	<i>tvamashoka nishamaya</i>	Nadaramagri	Nadaramagri	Nathanamagri	Nathanamagri	Mayamalavagaulam
5.	<i>kvanu bhavanima</i>	–	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji	Anandabhairavi
6.	<i>abhirika niyata</i>	Saurastram	Saurastram	Saurastram	Saurastram	Saurastram
7.	<i>panikamalatala</i>	Ghantaram	Ghantaram	Ghantaram	Ghantaram	Navarasam
8.	<i>shrutiyugasukha</i>	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam
9.	<i>vamalocana</i>	Bhairavi, Bhupala Indisha Kanakkurunji	Bhairavi, Bhupali Indisha Kanakkurunji ragena	Bhairavi, Bhupali Indisha, Indalam Kanakkurunji Saurastram	Saurastram Indalam	Bhairavi Kalyani
10.	<i>tada kacid</i>	Kamodari	Kamodari Mukhari	Kamodari	Kamodari	Mukhari
11.	<i>visrjannatanu</i>	Gambodhi	Kambodhari	Kambidhi	Gambodhi	Kamboji
12.	<i>natavallavanapada</i>	Dhanashi	Dhanashi	Dhanashi	–	Puranir

Kamsavadham

Padam	Beginning	Shastri	grantham	Elayath	Attaprakaram	1989
1.	<i>naradeva vrtha</i>	–	Pantuvarali	Pantuvarali	Pantuvarali	Pantuvarali
2.	<i>sucaritam vicaritam</i>	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaulam
3.	<i>nanuvidhe daya</i>	Kamboji	Kambodari	Kambodhi	Kamboji	Anandabhairavi
4.	<i>muranarakamathana</i>	Paati	Paati	Paati	–	–
5.	<i>saravisaravarakrti</i>	Malahari	Malahari	Malahari	–	Devagandhari Maddhyamavati
6.	<i>agadhara haladhara</i>	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	–	Sankarabharanam
7.	<i>sakhiyo vilokayati</i>	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari	–	Mukhari
8.	<i>apagamita bhurimada</i>	Natta	Natta	Natta	–	Natta
9.	<i>janani vibho janaka</i>	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Nattakkurunji

List of Ragas in Krishnattam:

Svayamvaram

Padam	Beginning	shastri	grantham	Elayath	Attaprakaram	1989
1.	<i>dhrtaduritanuta</i>	Malahari	Malahari	Malahari	Malahari	Devagandhari Kalyanii
2.	<i>prahitavanaye</i>	Kamodari	Kamodari	Kamodari	Kamodari	Kamboji
3.	<i>sharanagatasharana</i>	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari
4.	<i>ahamayi dayita</i>	Indisha	Indisha	Indisha	Indisha	AnandaBhairavi
5.	<i>tamatha sa carutara</i>	-	-	Todi	Todi	Todi
6.	<i>atha kopavata</i>	-	-	Kedaragaudam	Kedaragaulam	Madhyamavati
7.	<i>tvamakalaye</i>	Kedaragaula	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaudam	-	Bhupalam
8.	<i>dayite janamimamayi</i>	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	

Banayuddham

Padam	Beginning	Shastri	grantham	Elayath	Attaprakaram	1989
1.	<i>mukharam svadaram</i>	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	Bhairavi
2.	<i>purusavara ko bhavan</i>	Ghantaram	Ghantaram	Ghantaram	Ghantaram	Ghantaram Saveri
3.	<i>he deva deva jaya</i>	-	-	Ghantaram	not sung	not used
4.	<i>kalitanadiivarakapisha</i>	Paati	Paati	Paati	Paati	Paati
5.	<i>sakalashamalaharana</i>	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji
6.	<i>jagadudayabhrtivilaya</i>	Kurunji	Kanakkurunji	Kurunji	Kurunji	Mohanam
7.	<i>tavahare maya</i>	Malavagauda	Malavagaudam	Malavagaudam	Malavagaulam	Madhyamavati Mukhari Nilambari
8.	<i>shrnutadarato</i>	Ahiri	Ayiri	Ahiri	Ahiri	Bhupalam

List of Ragas in Krishnattam:

Vividavadham

Padam	Beginning	Shastri	grantham	Elayath	Attaprakaram	1989
1.	<i>dharaniramaniyamani</i>	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari	Mukhari Saveri
2.	<i>sahitam sahasa</i>	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam	Sankarabharanam
3.	<i>nadeyamapi ca</i>	Natta	Natta	Malahari	Malahari	Saramgam
4.	<i>tyaja sumukhakulabhavam</i>	Gambodhi	Kamboji	Kamboji	Kamboji	Kamboji Devagandhari
5.	<i>gurugrhanijagrhan</i>	Bhairavi	Bhairavi	–	–	Pantuvarali

Svargarohanam

Padam	Beginning	Shastri	grantham	Elayath	Attaprakaram	1989
1.	<i>jayajaya ramaramana</i>	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji	Kanakkurunji	Nattakkurunji
2.	<i>svakulam murahara</i>	Samantamalahari	Samantamalahari	Samantamalahari	Samantamalahari	Saveri Kalyani
3.	<i>nanu sakhe manuja</i>	Ahiri	Ayiri	Ahiri	Ahiri	Todi
4.	<i>vidhanayeha</i>	Kedara	Kedaragaudam	Kedaragaulam	Kedaragaula	Kedaragaula
5.	<i>priyasakha mukha</i>	Ghantaram	Ghantaragam	Ghantaram	Ghantaram	Bhairavi
6.	<i>iha viveka virahitasya</i>	Gambodhi	Kambodari	Gambodhi	Gambodhi	Kamboji Shri
7.	<i>samavadharitam</i>	Indalam	Indalam	Indalam	Indalam	Bilahari Devagandhari
8.	<i>keliola</i>					Madhyamavati