

Kerala and Carnatic Music

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, keeping in mind the historical perspective of music in Kerala from pre-historic times, the evolution of Carnatic music from secular music in Kerala over a period of time has been enumerated and studied in detail.

Keywords- Kerala, Folk Music, Carnatic Music.

I. INTRODUCTION

The regional diversity in music produces the different music culture and music forms as well. In Kerala, that is in the southern part of India has such an atmosphere that is of both independent and vivid cultural form.

II. THE TRADITION OF KERALA MUSIC

The Art and Culture of a particular area depends upon both geographical and climatic conditions of the same area. Western ghats that lies in eastern part and Arabian sea in western part gives a unique atmosphere to Kerala that which is entirely different from rest of the states. The foreign attacks that happened upon throughout India was not much affected in Kerala. An independent cultural background was formed in Kerala. At the same time, it could create modifications in both literature and arts by accepting foreign relations via sea route. We can see that Keralites tend to mixing up old traditions with its own culture. A.R. Rajaraja Varma clearly states that Kerala has its own style both in the way of hair lock and in the wearing of mundu. Kerala is the land of various art forms. For both higher class and lower-class people have their own different art forms. In the northern as well as in southern part of Kerala, there exists various art forms that is unique in nature. Various

Art forms exist in both parts of the same land. So many Arts can be seen in Kerala, according to the caste, religion, race and sex. And Music remains as a base for all these above-mentioned art forms. Influence of diversions in Kerala Geography like- hilly, coastal, field etc. created diversions in Kerala music too. Kerala traditional music can be seen mainly in three types

- 1) Folk songs
- 2) Songs in temple arts
- 3) Songs in Malayalam literature

III. FOLK SONGS

We can see that the term 'Folk' is being used for indicating a particular society that, no modernity takes place and those who keeps individuality in language, custom, region. 'Folklore have to be defined as a common custom and communication that couldn't be accepted. All these traditions are moulded as the result of the journey through geographical and climatic conditions by the united society. Theyyam is a kali drama that came out from the cultural and traditional features of the landscape of north Kerala. Travelling in boats through the river that, over flows even in summer season resulted in the composition of tunes of rowing boats. It is not easy for northern Keralites and southern Keralites to get the feel of song of rowing boat and Theyyam as a culture respectively. The land that logged up with water even in the summer season, are those local

lands that are different from the post-harvest paddy fields. The life of folk arts is its own localism. The domination of music in those arts, that is full of customs and regional recreation, is not so small in nature.

The ancient feature of Kerala songs can be seen in the folk songs. In literature view, these songs are very beautiful and in poetic view, it is enjoyable. Kerala has a big collection of folk songs and it can be classified on the base of custom, recreation, profession, legends etc. All these came out from various fields like- local, caste and so on. Ulloor classified folk songs on the basis of- God worship, hero worship, recreation, scientific, morale and traditional whereas G. Shankara pillai classified it on the basis of custom, religion and employment. He added all about this in his book called- 'Sahitya charithram prasthanangaliloode' by adding both common songs and story-based songs. Appan thampuran classified songs as- purana, hymn, morality, scientific, heroic legend, regional history, recreation, materialistic, political, castiest etc. M.V. Vishnu Namboodiri classified song as- castiest, custom, recreational, meaningless and so on. All these indicates that, folk songs are subjected to different type of classifications. Here, the classification is based on custom and noncustom.

IV. CUSTOM SONGS

The earlier form of customs got shaped as the result of some disciplines that created by humans, since the prehistoric period. Religious content might have been entered, later. In Kerala, customs played an important role in the growth of arts. Literature that got mixed with songs makes the custom as it is. Kerala people goes through various communal customs. Entire credits for the completion of customs goes to those songs, that comes along with the literature. Here we are analyzing only those art forms, that has much importance to songs.

Thuyilunarthupattu: -

Thuyilunarthupattu is an early morning song that being used to wake up the people in the months of karkkidakam, chingam by using thudi, kinnam, kaimani etc. It is being singing by Pana clan since the Sangam age. Panas were those who used to sing Sangakalapan. It is believed that, Kerala Panas belongs to the Panas of Sriranga. As per the mythology, when a Pana started to sing by praising Sriranga, a priest pelted stone at him, then blood came out not just from his body, but from the idol too. Finally, that Pana got merged into this idol and Kerala Panas are being considered as his descendants. Traditionally, these Panas have skills in music. It is believed that, Ragavisthara, a tune that which Panas used to chant before singing is known as- Aalatthi. Tunes that used to sing in the Sangam age is also known as- Aalatthi. The system of singing Akara can be seen even in ancient songs and its physical form is called Kaattalatthi. Niravalatthi is a form that tied up with

Akaram whereas Ragavardhanavu by Pannalathi. The hymn before the tune is called Kalathra.

'Unni vava kulicheeduka, Uzhari viravil kuriyittunnenam' is a Kalathra. Songs that they use to sing has a connection with the Sopansangeetam.

'Bhagavanmathramurangunoru ponnarasalayil chennu tha Natha natha thuyilunarenam Anandahari thuyilunarenam (*Vishnu namoodiri, m.v, 2008:60*).

To ward off evils and ill effects, such songs were used to sing from house to house. L.S. Rajagopal finds that, Panas uses tunes like Puraneeru, Bhoopalam, Anandabhairavi to sing the songs (*Rajagopalan, L.S, 2008:32*). All these findings convinces that the songs of Panas are the most ancient songs among the traditional folk songs.

Pulluvanpattu: -

Pulluvanpattu is mandatory in Sarppakkalam, a ritual art that conducts for the grace of snake gods. Pulluvas are also musicians, traditionally. Musicians' states that, there are two swaras in Pulluvanpattu. The speciality of Pulluvanpattu is the mystical atmosphere that creates by both Pulluvankudam and Pulluvaveena. Pulluvanpattu exists as Nagampadi and Prethampadi in north and south Kerala respectively (*Vishnu namoodiri, M.V, 2008:43*). In north Kerala, it is the fantasy of shruthi in Pulluvanpattu that makes the humans as snakes as well as erasing the Kalam. To ward off evils in children, Pulluvanpattu also use to sing as Naverupattu. It is not so much that the music therapy is being recognised. But, the mental soothness that being created by Pulluvanpattu must be subjected to study further. The voice of both Pulluvanpattu and Pulluvankudam creates such a fantasy atmosphere which invokes mannerism of snakes in people that makes the human most feared. While friends and relatives shares the mannerism of snakes, it helps to get rid off the fear of snakes.

Kalamezhuthupattu: -

Kalamezhuthupattu is an art form that performs in Kerala temples. Kalams are in many types. It includes Bhagavatikkalam of Bhagavati temple, Ayyappan theyattu of Ayyappa temple, Vettakkoru makan pattu of Vettakkoru makan temple. It includes Kalamvarakkal, Kalampattupadal, Kalam mackal of specific diety too. This art can be mostly seen in central part of Kerala. Kallattuparambil Kuruppus are those who draw and sing Bhagavatikkalam whereas Ayyappakkalam is being drawn by both Thiyyadinambiars and Thiyyattunis. We can see the drawing of Kalam, singing of song, dance step movements, posture acting etc in Kalamezhuthu song. Bhagavatipattu includes uchhappattu, mullakkal pattu, anthippattu etc. Vandanam, Nirampadal, Stuti, Vazhinada, Ammadachhaya etc. are the part of customs in Kalampattu. In this, both Nirampadal and Ammadachhaya is a method of singing of specific tunes. We can see the name 'Niram' for tune in Kalampattu just like in poorakkali. In the book 'Kallattu kuruppanmarude kalamezhuthu pattu, Dr. Babu Mundekkadu opines those various tunes like- Shankarabharanam, Malahari,

Madhyamavati etc can be seen in Bhagavatippattu (*Babu mundekkadu, 2018:101*). Kesavadivarnana named Ghanasangam of Poonthanam comes in Bhagavatippattu.

It believes that the Theeyattu nambiaris who performs Ayyappan theeyattu are those Brahmins who got the ownership. They draw the Ayyappan kalam. After the drawing of Ayyappan kalam, there is a kalampuja and then Nambiaris use to sing Kalampattu along with the support of Para. It includes the description of both head to toe and toe to head. Songs that stand closer to the prose also can be seen. They are using special ragas as well as anchadi like talas for singing all these songs. We can see some similarities between Nambiar songs with Kerala songs. Mulamkunnathkavu Krishnan, a Theeyattu artist says that their songs resemble some ragas like-Anandabhairavi, Dwijavanti (*Direct Conversation, May 7 2019*). We can't say that, they are the pure form of those ragas that mentioned earlier. There is another ritual in Kalampattu that tells the story of birth of Ayyappan via acting with signs. They are using those signs that related to both Chakyarkoothu and Koodiyattom. In Ayyappan theeyattu, after singing, the meaning of that particular song will be performed by acting via signs.

Brahmanippattu: -

It is a ritualistic art that exists in temples of central Kerala. It is Nambiar women who sing Brahmanippattu. Brahmanippattu is being performed in front of the temple sanctum for the blessing of goddess. It was an old custom to conduct marriage for Brahmin girls before attaining the puberty. Once a Brahmin girl attained puberty before the marriage and so her family was boycotted by their community and lost their rights for vedic chant. Later, they were called as Nambiar. Then they were appointed as kazhakam in a temple and as an earning, they got right to sing praising songs in temple. This is the mythological reason behind the origin of Brahmanippattu. It is said that the Brahmanippattu was a Tamil mixture and later on, it was Mahishamangalam who converted it into the present form (*A.N. Nambiar, Brahmanippattukal:18*) and can't say how much accurate it is. It is believed that, Brahmanippattu came into existence since 8th century. It says that Thekkeppattath Sankaran Nambiar brought a system to decide which songs need to sing (*A.N. Nambiar:18*). The style of singing may vary from village to village. The locals of Kodungallur worship Kodungalluramma as their deity whereas locals of Thrissur worship Paramekkavilamma as their deity. But, there are some songs that use to sing commonly in all temples. Singing Swayamvaram in all temples considers as an auspicious one. In Devi temples, the main song is Darika Vadha. Brahmanippattu are in different types. Nadakkalattu is one among them. Swayamvaram sings like this and the another one use to sing on mandapam. For this, mandapam decorates with bunch of flowers, coconut, bushel. Among this, Madapadal is another ritual that which priest too

involves. Singing of Darikavadham is being considered as a special one in Devi temples. After presenting Devi from Kattakampala temple, it is mandatory to sing Darikavadham. (From the conversation of Nallankara rama brahmaniyamma, 2019 may) While singing Darikavadham, Ganapatistuti, Padadikesam etc, thalam is being created by beating on bronze bowl by using a knife at the end of this program. Thalam is being tuned according to the story of both Darikavadham and the holy dance of Bhagawathi. In a ritual called- Pongaladi, songs were used to sing while hitting in wooden grinder after filling it with some materials like Kuruthi. There are some dance steps too in it. Uthrapattu, thiruvonampattu were used to sing in each different days. Singing of Brahmanippattu can be seen in temple as well as in houses too. To get married and for getting children, both Brahmanippattu and Santhanagopalam were used to chant respectively.

“ramabrahmaniyamma padi thanna pattukal, akkath himavanaka pinne oushadhiprasthathinkallem oredamozhiyathe thoranangal natti thonukal pothinnu thudangiyallo kodimarangal natti kodikkurakal thookithudangiyallo”. These are Swayamvaram lines.

“chovvazhchanal suddhamayi neeradi Velliyazhchanal udayam neeradi venpattu charthiyi venkunnimala charthi udanjaan kaimurukki poonkachaketti poonchurika charthi nalente bhagavathiyalo”. All these lines are the part of Neerattupattu.

It is said that, there is no specific system for singing Brahmanippattu (talk with nallankara Ramabharhmaniyamma). What we can see is the way of chanting. Its presentation is like telling the story in a specific tune. It has a structure of Dandaka, that converts the prose in poetic form. Still, it has a relation to Yajurvedic singing in Kerala style. We can see much importance to the Devistuti in Brahmanippattu. The importance of Darikavadham is an example to this. The arrival of Dravidian atmosphere in Brahmanippattu is coming like this.

Importance of thalam in Brahmanippattu is also considerable. Both bronze bowl as well as knife of Brahmin women is being used for making thalam. Wooden grinder that being used for pongaladi was also an instrument that used in the kitchen. We can see simplistic as well as beautifully expressed literature in Brahmanippattu. The dance of Devi is an example for this. It is all about the description of body movements of Devi while dancing.

“Jaya jaya bhagavati, chenthasaranripa manigrihamennum nadiyil vilangina pulinamithennum thonnicheedum kadithadadese chartheadunna karinthukiladayulanju vilanga, thirunrithamudayove devi, ninthiruvadiye njan stutikkunnen” (*A.N. Nambiar, brahmanippattukal, puram 107*).

Here, the physical description of goddess is beautiful. Like any other art forms in Kerala, both

Kesadipadam and Padadikesavam holds an important role in Brahmanippattu.

Usually, Brahmanippattu is being sung when the sanctum is opened whereas Sopanam is being sung when the sanctum is closed. While singing, it is the responsibility of Brahmaniyamma to get rid of struggles of all people. In this artform, that which is full of women, Brahmaniyamma is provided with the position of a friend of goddess.

V. THOTTAM PATTU

Theyyam is an artform of Northern Kerala. It creates a scenario that which local people becomes God. Only specific community has the right to perform Theyyam. Apart from mythology, Theyyam is being considered as a reflection of great legends, who lived earlier.

Theyyam is being presented via Thottam pattu. The rhythmic presentation of Thottam pattu resembles the champu gadyam. Champu gadyam might have penned in the form of thottam pattu. Theyyam becomes representative of God by invoking thotti. Theyyam starts its performance by singing thotti, that contains the story of origin. Thottam pattu is of different types and Varavili is one of them that chants very fastly. Theyyam starts after the praising of Vighneswara. Story of thottam is being presented via Theyyam. It is the magical effect that makes the performer- Theyyam. As per Pooja, a teacher who enquired on Theyyam music, Theyyam songs is connected with the music of Koodiyattom (*Direct Talk, April 2019*).

She opines that- only three or four swaras has been found in Theyyathottam and that too connected with swarikkal in koodiyattom. But ragas that mentioned in koodiyattom can't be found in this. Theyyam is an emotion to north Kerala and so that, it has much importance to feelings. It is the swarasthanas of theyyamthottam that comes as tune for ragas. Some extensions of thottam resembles the style of the chanting of both Yajurveda and Srirudram. Singing style that is similar to ragas also can be found in thottampattu. Malayars have special skills in the singing of thottampattu has the style of chanting. Prose is much closer to the poetry in thottampattu.

VI. POORAKKALIPPATTU

It is an artform which belongs to Kannur and Kasargod district. Pooravela starts in the day of Kartika in meenam month. Poorakkali is a part of this that which performed by some communities like- Thiyyas, Maniyani, Chaliyar, Mukayar, Thattan, Moosari etc. Pooravela is a women's festival and Poorakkali is performed by men. Poorakkali is an artform that relates to both kalari and kolkkali. Poorakkali songs also known as Pooramala is an attractive factor that which is closer to the classical songs. There are eighteen niram in

pooramala. Here, the term niram means style, ragam etc. Each niram has its own different feel and rhythm. Poovali, Poornahari, Kshetrahari, Vanahari, Kanakahari, Madhyamahari, Aahari, Sankaravarni, Saindhavi, Bhootanandini, Bhootaharshi, Bhootalila, Manchari, Malahari, Margi, Salini, Sariravi, Malavi etc were the ragas of Pooramala. It can be classified into Sampoomnam, Apudam, Shadavam etc. It shows a connection to Oudavam, Shadavam of Carnatic music. Classically, ragas that has 5 swaras is called Oudavam and ragas that has 6 swaras is called Shadavam. Apudam and shadavam of poorakkali must be oudavam and shadavam of Carnatic music. As per this, the order of number of swaras is five (oudavam), six (shadavam) and seven (sampoornam). (*Dr. K. Karunakaran, 1999:36*)

It is believed that, in Poorakkalipoovali, madhyamahari, salini is close to the bhoopala ragam, madhyamavati, dwijavanti respectively. Poovaliragam (letters eight).

“Narayana narayana narakamennath kalanjaruluka viravino daravanamel thuyirkondene vasudeva vasudeva varikarangathil pooramalamelam thudaruvan sarasijanayana mukil varna poornahari ragam (letters ten) narayana hari narayana vasudeva ennu kaithozhuthen anandanadyanthaheenanakum nanamughan paramanandatma”. (*K. Karunakaran, 1999 :122*)

Number of letters on poorakkali is related to rhythm of tunes. We can see the system that creates the variations of rhythm in poorakkali, by the letters. The division of Ragas on the basis of niram also can be found in poorakkali. The system of connecting Aksharam, Eenam, Ragam and Niram can be seen in poorakkali. Niram, that has aksharam is classified into seven types that has letters between eight and eighteen in numbers. K. Karunakaran observes that, ragas of niram that comes between one to seven is Harikamboji, swaras that comes between eight and fifteen is in local tune, sixteenth niram has a closer connection towards dwijavanti and the niram, that is seventeen and eighteenth is for the late timing (*K. Karunakaran, 1999:137*).

The name of Ragas in poorakkali seems similar to the present ragas but, the way of singing is entirely different. The similarity of names indicates the earlier presence of ragas here.

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