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THE WORKS OF SUBBARAYA SASTRI IN CARNATIC MUSIC

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Abstract:

Subbaraya sastri was a renowed Carnatic music composer, vaggeyakara in Carnatic music. He composed innmumerable compositions. He composed relatively few krities, but they are celebrated for their deep devotion, raga bhava. Most of his compositions praise the mother Goddess. Subbaraya Sastri was a gifted singer and a fine violinist. This paper an overview of the compositions of Subbaraya sastri and also his works and contribution to our Carnatic music.

Keywords: music, Carnatic music. Composers, life sketch, Raga

1. INTRODUCTION

Early life :

Subbaraya Sastri was born in 1803 as the second son of Sri syama sastri. He was born at Thanjavur, grew up to be as talented a singer as his father, Syama Sastri. He had his early training in music under his father and later under the great composers Tyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshitar. He also learnt Hindusthani music feom Meru Goswami, a musician of the Thanjavur palace. He had contacts with eminent Maratha musicians of his time. Subbaraya Sastri was a gifted singer and a fine violinist. From Tyagaraja, he learnt the art of composing music brimming with raga bhava. Introducing graded sangatis in kritis, he is the only composer to have composed kritis in the style of the Musical Trinity. As examples of such kritis may be mentioned – 'Emani ne 'in Mukhari raga, ''Vanajasana Vinuta' in Sri raga and 'Sankarinivani' in Begada raga.

Influence of his father Syama sastri`s style in composing krities :

His kritis 'Janani ninuvina' – Ritigaula and 'Ninu Sevincina'- Yadukula Kambhoji are couched in the style of his father. In the former piece, the five syllable words, patterned after the rhythmic phrase ta thin gina tem are seen. Some examples may be mentioned – Niravadhika, Niratamuga, Meraluvini, Tarunamidi, Kripasalupu. His kriti 'Venkatesailavihara' in Hamir Kalyani reveals the elephantine, leisurely movement associated with Muthuswami Dikshitar's songs. In the art of introducing decorative elements in kritis, he was an ace. Svara sahityas adorning his kritis are brilliant. He derived

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inspiration from Tyagaraja's ghanaraga pancaratnas for his svara sahityas. Another aspect that Subbaraya Sastri has stood apart from that of his father, pertains to tāḷa. With respect to the laya aspect of music, Syama Sastri is hailed as a pioneer in introducing new ideas and concepts in the realm of tāḷa. For instance, he is accredited with introducing the Vilōma Cāpu Krama (Miśra Cāpu tāḷa rendered in the reverse order, that is, 4 + 3 in place of the usual 3 + 4 format). Talli ninnu in rāga Kalyāṇ i, Ninnuvināga in rāga Pūrvikalyāṇ i, Mīnalōcana brōva in rāga Dhanyāsi are a few examples of kṛti-s in the Vilōma Krama of Miśra Cāpu tāḷa. Syama Sastri has also introduced a few intricate laya patterns in his compositions. In contrast, Subbaraya Sastri has stuck to independent lines. He has composed kṛti-s in simple and common tāḷa-s namely Ādi, Rūpakam, and MiśraCāpu, and has made use of relatively straightforward laya exposition.

Subbaraya sastri visited places and he composed compositions on different deities :(kshetra kritis)

When Subbaraya Sastri completed his 'Ninuvina Gatigana Jagana' in Kalyani raga, in the shrine of Dharmasamvardhani in Tiruvaiyaru, in the presence of Tyagaraja, the latter feel into raptures over the musical construction of the piece and complimented him. Subbaraya Sastri, on his visit to Kanchipuram, sang in praise of Devi Kamakshi in Mukhari raga and Sankari neeve in Begada ragam. He is During his stay Chennai, he composed 'Ninusevinchina' in Yadukula Kambhoji in praise of Shri Parthasarathi Swami. His musical craftsmanship is revealed in svara sahitya of his piece. At Tirupati he sang 'Venkatasailavihara' in Hamir Kalyani. This kriti contains as many as five charanas.

2. Subbaraya Sastri's contribution

Subbaraya Sastri does not have many compositions to his credit. About 12 compositions have been listed . All his compositions are in Telugu. The language is simple and lucid. He has signed his compositions with the mudrā (signature), 'Kumāra'. It is sai that he perhaps chose this mudrā owing to his birth star, Krittika, which is associated with Lord Subramaṇya or Kumara Perumal. As far as we know, Subbaraya Sastri does not seem to have attempted various musical forms like Varṇams, Svarajatis, and Tillānās. He has only composed kṛti s that too in the usual format having the sections Pallavi, Anupallavi, and Charaṇam.

Content of his compositions :

Subbaraya Sastri's compositions are mainly in praise of Dēvī (Goddess) or Amba, and portray the sentiment of compassion (karuṇā rasa) – pleading with the Goddess to shower Her compassion on him. In this respect, Subbaraya Sastri has truly followed his father and guru Syama Sastri, whose compositions reflect this sentiment in ample measure. As is well known, Syama Sastri was an ardent devotee of Goddess Kamakshi and, we find this sentiment of bhakti and compassion as the undertone in all his compositions. As an illustration, one of Syama Sastri's kṛtis that expresses the sentiment of karuṇā rasa.

Example ;

Ninnē namminānu – Tōḍi – Miśra Cāpu

In this kṛti (in the pallavi) “Ninnē namminānu sadā nāvinnapamuvini nannubrōvumu”

he expresses, “Dēvi! I always believe in you. Please heed my prayers and protect me.”

Similarly, we find the use of the phrase “Kannatalligādā biḍḍ ayani kanikaraminthainalēdā,

Ambā” that occurs in the anupallavi of the kṛti.

Influence of the Music Trinity:

Subbaraya Sastri had the good fortune to come under the influence of all the members of

the illustrious Music Trinity. This influence is well reflected in his compositions. The development of various musical forms in general, and kritis in particular, attained its peak during the period of the Musical Trinity, and the subsequent periods – the 18th and 19th centuries. This development brought in newer ideas by way of enriching a composition either from the musical angle or the lyrical side, or both. These are the additional sections added to a kṛti termed decorative angas like, Saṅgatis, Svara Sāhityam, and Madhyama Kālam, to name a few. We will now observe how Subbaraya Sastri has dexterously introduced some of these aṅgas in his kritis, following the model of his great mentors namely, the Trinity – the Trendsetters of Modern Classical Carnatic Music.

Illustrated below are examples of a few decorative aṅgas occurring in Subbaraya Sastri’s kṛtis, drawing a parallel to each one of them, from the kṛtis of the Trinity:

1.SANGATEES :

Saṅgatis are important musical features found in Carnatic music. The credit for introducing this feature goes to the great master, Tyagaraja. Saṅgatis may be described as variations pertaining to a musical theme. In other words, these are variations in svara phrases, constituting the arrangement or succession of svara groupings, in a graded manner. They are generally introduced in a stepwise progression, one leading to the next in a logical manner. Saṅgatis are mainly used to highlight the rāga bhāva or the saṅcara-s of a rāga, in an interesting and appealing manner. All the same, they are used at times to focSubbaraya Sastri has introduced this feature, Saṅgati, in his kṛti-s. The kṛtis Śaṅkarinīvē in Bēgaḍa and Mīnanayana in Darbār are good examples that demonstrate his skill in handling this technical beauty.

2.Svara Sāhityam :

This is one of the decorative aṅga-s which has been widely handled by Subbaraya Sastri. He has composed Svara Sāhityam for almost all his compositions.

Swara Sāhityam – examples are

Ō! Jagadamba in Ānanda Bhairavi and Durusuga in Sāvērī.

3.Madhyama Kālam :

This decorative aṅga essentially pertains to the sāhitya part of a kṛti. When the sāhitya syllables or words are tightly packed in a given line or Āvartanam, it gives the impression of the line being executed in a faster tempo or Madhyama Kālam.

Three kṛtis of Subbaraya Sastri that have the Madhyama Kālam :

a. Śaṅkari nīvē – Bēgaḍā – Rūpakam

b. Vanajāsana – Śrī – Rūpakam

c. Śrī Kamalāmbikē – Tōḍ i – Rūpakam

SISHYA PARAMPARA :

Subbaraya Sastri was blessed with a well-known śiṣya paramparā that proved to be worthy torchbearers of his inimitable styleof music. He had the advantage of dual śiṣya paramparās which happened to include some of the well-known musicians of yesteryears – the one was through the Vina Dhanammal line and the other through his own son-in-law and his disciples. It is said that Vina Dhanammal's great-great-grandmother, was a direct disciple of Subbaraya Sastri himself. To the other śiṣya paramparā belonged, Mettu Kamakshi and Visalakshi – great-grandmother, and grandmother respectively of Kanchipuram Nayana Pillai5 – who were trained under Kacci Sastri, who was none other than the son-in-law of Subbaraya Sastri.

3. Some of his Notable Works

- *Janani Ninnuvina* (Reetigowla): A kriti in praise of the Mother Goddess, showcasing his mastery over the Reetigowla raga.

- *Ninnu Sevinchina* (Yadukulakambhoji): A kriti in praise of Lord Parthasarathi, demonstrating his skill in the Yadukulakambhoji raga.

- *Venkatasailavihara* (Hamirkalyani): A kriti in praise of Lord Venkateswara, featuring intricate swara patterns and poetic lyrics.

- *Sankari Neve* / *Sankari Neevani* (Begada): A kriti in praise of the Mother Goddess, showcasing his ability to evoke emotions through music.

- *Vanajasana Vinuta* (Shri): A kriti that highlights his understanding of the Shri raga and its nuances.

- *Meena Nayana* (Darbar): A kriti in praise of Goddess Meenakshi, demonstrating his skill in the Darbar raga.

- *Emani Ne* (Mukhari): A kriti that showcases his mastery over the Mukhari raga.

- *Ninnuvina Gatigana* (Kalyani): A kriti in praise of Goddess Dharmasamvardhani, composed in the presence of Tyagaraja.

- *Talachina Varu* (Dhanyasi): A kriti that features intricate swara patterns and poetic lyrics.

- *Enta Nuvu Vinnavintune* (Shankarabharanam): A kriti that showcases his understanding of the Shankarabharanam raga.

- *Shri Kamalambike* (Desya Todi): A kriti in praise of the Mother Goddess, demonstrating his skill in the Desya Todi raga

4. CONCLUSION

Subbaraya Sastri's contributions to Carnatic music are invaluable. His compositions continue to inspire and enrich the lives of music lovers. With his mastery over melody and rhythm, he left an indelible mark on the world of Carnatic music. Subbaraya Sastri's legacy continues to inspire generations of musicians and music enthusiasts. His compositions remain an integral part of Carnatic music concerts and music education.

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