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Developments in the Carnatic Notation System from 1859 - 1904

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Introduction

Music has a language of its own and each region has its classical music. Each system has developed its own way of documenting what is composed or performed, which is popularly known as Music Notation. Musical Notation is the representation of music in writing using various symbols and signs. It is a visual record of the music that is sung which later serves as instructions to perform.

There are different music systems around the world and each music system has its own Music Notation language. The western classical music uses what is known as Staff Notation system. The Indian Classical Music has two divisions; the North Indian Hindustāni Music and the South Indian Carnatic Music. While Hindustāni Music follows Svarlipi Notation system, Karnāṭik Music follows Sargam Notation system.

Notation is of two types; prescriptive notation and descriptive notation. When the notation is prescriptive, it simply mentions 'g'. In a descriptive notation, there are symbols used to show gamaka-s, anusvara-s, speed, etc.

Scope of the study

The Notation system of Karnāṭik Music saw major developments from 1859 – 1904. To understand the evolution, it is necessary to go through the works that were written during that time span. The paper aims to study the developments in the Carnatic Notation system through Kṛti-s notations given in few selected Telugu treatises of that period.

Treatises considered for the paper:

S.no	Treatise/Grantha-s	Author	Year
1.	Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu	Viṇa Rāmānuja	1859
2.	Gāyaka Pārijātam	Taccūr Siṅgārācāryulu and Alaha Siṅgārācāryulu	1877
3.	Saṅgīta Jñāna Kalānubhavam	Saṅgītam Veṅkaṭa Ramaṇayya	1885
4.	Saṅgīta Svayambōdini	T.M. Veṅkaṭēśa Śāstri	1892
5.	Pallavi Svara Kalpavalli	Tiruvorriyūr Tyāgayya (Ed.)	1900
6.	Gāyakalōcanam	Taccūr Siṅgārācāryulu and Alaha Siṅgārācāryulu	1902
7.	Mēla Rāga Mālīka	Mahā Vaidyanātha Ayyar	1903
8.	Saṅgīta Saṁpradāya Pradarśini	Subbarāma Dīkṣitar	1904

1. Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu – Viṇa Rāmānuja (1859)**Preliminary Information**

There are Kṛti/Kīrtana compositions of Kōsalapuri, Vikrala Narasimhācāryulu, Kulaśekhara Mahārāja, Gurumūrti Śāstri, Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, Śyāma Śāstri, Tyāgarāja, Subbarāya Śāstri, Viṇa Kuppayya, Parimaḷaraṅga given in this work. There are notations of only 15 Tyāgarāja Kṛti-s while only the Sāhitya of other compositions is seen. The Rāga and Tāla is mentioned before each composition.

Melody and duration

The Arōhaṇa and Avarōhaṇa of the rāga or the variety of the notes taken by the composition are not given. The author does not use any symbol to indicate the octave. The speed of the composition is not marked and no gamaka symbols have been used.

Hṛsva letters are used to denote one akṣarakāla while Dīrgha letters are used to denote two akṣarakāla-s and No other symbols are used to increase the duration of the notes. The svara and sāhitya do not align with each other. A hyphen is used to mark the end of a phrase and two vertical lines are used to show the end of an āvarta. In the sāhitya, vowels are extended using the alphabets.

2. Gāyaka Pārijātam - Taccūr Siṅgārācāryulu and Alaha Siṅgārācāryulu (1877)

Preliminary Information

Gāyaka Pārijātam has Kṛti-s of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, Śyāma Śāstri, Subbarāya Śāstri, Tyāgarāja, Kulaśēkhara Mahārāja. Notations are given for Gīta-s, Svarajati-s and Varṇā-s while only the Sāhitya of the kṛti-s is found. Rāga and Tāla of each composition is mentioned as the title at the top of the composition.

Melody and duration

Dots are used to indicate the octave of the note. A dot above the svra indicates higher octave and a dot below the svra indicates lower octave. No signs are used for gamaka-s. Dīrgha svaras and commas are used to increase the time unit. The Pallavi, Anupallavi and Caraṇam sections of a composition are not mentioned but each section of the composition is divided using two vertical lines.

3. Saṅgīta Jñāna Kalānubhavam - Saṅgītam Veṅkaṭa Ramaṇayya (1885)

Preliminary Information

Along with the theoretical aspects of Music, this work contains various musical compositions along with Āmba and Śṛīnivāsa Kṛti-s. Notations are given for all the compositions. The Rāga and Tāla (along with its Jāti variety) is given before each composition.

Melody and duration

The svarasthānā-s taken up by the rāga is not mentioned. No symbol or sign is used to indicate the octave or gamaka-s. The speed of the composition is not mentioned. A small vertical line (I) is used to divide the tāla and completion of an āvarta is marked with two vertical lines (II).

Dīrgha svaras are used to increase the time duration by two units. There is no symbol used for increasing the duration by more than two units. Vowels are extended to increase the duration in sāhitya.

4. Saṅgīta Svayambōdhini - T.M. Veṅkaṭēśa Śāstri (1892)

Preliminary Information

Saṅgīta Svayambōdhini has the Notations of the Kṛti-s of Tyāgarāja, Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, Paṭṇam Subrahmaṇya Ayyar, Veṅkaṭēśa Śāstri, Sarasvati Śēṣa Śāstri, Nanjana Koudu Vidvān Subba Śāstrulu, Karur Dēvuḍayya and Śēṣagiri Śāstrulu. The Rāga, Tāḷa and the name of the composer is mentioned at the top of each composition. The book certainly comes under the category of descriptive notation, as it includes numerous signs and symbols.

Melody and duration

The Arōhaṇa and Avarōhaṇa of the rāga-s mentioned in the book are given at the end. The notes in the lower octave are shown with a dot below the note and the higher octave notes have a dot above them.

A small vertical line is used to divide the aṅga-s of a tāḷa and parallel vertical lines are used to mark the end of a tāḷa āvarta. All the Ādi tāḷa Kṛti-s are notated in Ēka tāḷa.

The signs used in the book to indicate various details are as follows;

sharp (#)	Anusvara one semitone high
flat (b)	Anusvara one semitone low
_____	First speed
=====	Second speed
స,	స స (duration of 2 notes)
స·	స స స (duration of 1.5 notes)
—	To connect the notes while singing
~	Slur mark for playing the note on Viṇa
⌒	Resting note/ Pause

5. Pallavi Svvara Kalpavalli - Tiruvorriyūr Tyāgayya – Ed. (1900)

Preliminary Information

Pallavi Svvara Kalpavalli edited by Tiruvorriyūr Tyāgayya includes Tānavarṇa-s of Vīṇā Kuppayya and Tiruvorriyūr Tyāgayya along with Kṛti-s of Vīṇā Kuppayya. Notations are given for all compositions. The Rāga and Tāḷa are mentioned as the title of the composition and the composer is mentioned in the name of the chapter.

- **Melody and duration**

The svarasthana-s of the rāga is not mentioned in the book. The higher octave is indicated by placing a dot over the note and the lower octave is indicated with a dot below the note. The speed is shown by drawing a horizontal line above the notes.

The phrases are divided using a hyphen and parallel vertical lines are drawn to mark the end of the composition. There are no symbols used for gamaka-s. Dīrga svvara indicates two akṣarakāla-s and comma and semicolons are used to increase the duration of the notes further. Vowel extensions are used to increase the time unit in the sāhitya of a composition.

6. Gāyakalōcanam - Taccūr Siṅgārācāryulu and Alaha Siṅgārācāryulu (1902)

Preliminary Information

This is another work by the Taccūr brothers in this period. In this work, they have included Tāna Varṇa-s, Kṛti-s of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, Tyāgarāja, Śēṣayaṅgār, Māṭṛbhūṭayya, Pallavi Gōpālayya, Kuppusvāmayya, Annāsāmi Śāstri, Vaikuṇṭha Śāstri, Kṛṣṇa Śāstri, Talaṅgambāḍi Pañcanadayya, Kulaśēkhara Mahārāja, Vīṇa Kuppayya, Kañci Śēṣayya, Sadāśiva Rāo, Vasudēvācāri, Subramaṇya, Taccūr Brothers, Purandara dāsa and others. The notes taken up by the Mēḷa-s and the Ārōhaṇa and Avarōhaṇa of the Janya Rāga-s are listed in the beginning of the work. The complete book has only the Sāhitya of the compositions along with the name of the Rāga and Tāḷa.

Melody and duration

Though the sections of the compositions are not divided as Pallavi, Anupallavi and Caraṇam; two vertical lines are drawn to mark the end of each section. The Ciṭṭai Svvara is

given along with the svara sāhitya placed exactly below it. The phrases in the Ciṭṭai svaras-s are separated with a hyphen.

7. Mēḷa Rāga Mālika - Mahā Vaidyanātha Ayyar (1903)

Preliminary Information

This practical work has the Notation of the 72 Mēḷa Rāga Mālika composed by the author of the book, Māhā Vaidyanātha Ayyar along with the Kṛti-s of Anaiyya and Rāmasvāmi Ayya. The Rāga and Tāḷa of the composition is mentioned at the top of the composition. The Sāhitya of the composition is given separately before the Notation. The Notes taken up by the 72 Mēḷa-s is given in the following format;

Kanakāṅgi:

స	రి	గా	.	.	మ	.	ప	ధ	ని	.	.	స
Sa	Ri ₁	Ga ₁	.	.	Ma	.	Pa	Dha ₁	Ni ₁	.	.	Sa

Melody and duration

Dīrgha svara-s are used to indicate the increase of time duration by two units. Commas are also used to indicate the increase the duration in the notation as well as sāhitya section. The sāhitya is clearly divided into Pallavi, Anupallavi and Caranam. Two vertical lines are drawn to indicate the end of each section and the phrases are divided using a hyphen. There are no signs used to denote the octave of the notes or gamaka-s. The last 15 pages of the work consist of the sāhiya of Tāmiz compositions by various composers.

8. Saṅgīta Saṁpradāya Pradarśini - Subbarāma Dīkṣita (1904)

Preliminary Information

Saṅgīta Saṁpradāya Pradarśini by Subbarāma Dīkṣita has been written in a systematic manner. The Rāgāṅga Rāga-s are first listed out followed by its Janya rāga-s. Each rāga begins with a Gīta-s and ends with a Sañcāri in that rāga. This work includes Notations of the compositions of various composers including Dīkṣita, Bālasvāmi Dīkṣita, Rāmasvāmi Dīkṣita, Cinnasvāmi Dīkṣita, Kumāra – Eṭṭēndra, Ponnayya, Purandara Viṭṭhala,

Kulaśēkhara Mahārāja, Vīṇa Kuppayya, Soṇṭi Vēṅkaṭasubayya, Tāḷapāka Cinnaya Girirājakavi, Tyāgayya and Pallavi Gopālayya.

Melody and duration

The Rāga, Tāḷa and the name of the composer is mentioned at the top of each composition. A dot placed above the note denotes higher octave and a dot below the note denotes lower octave. The end of each āvarta is shown with a small vertical line while two small vertical lines are used mark the end of the composition. The speed of the phrase is increased by drawing horizontal lines on the top of the phrase. Dīrga svara indicates two time units or akṣarakāla-s and comma increases the duration by one unit.

This work extensively used gamaka signs in the notation. The Gamaka signs used in this work are;

Gamaka	Gamaka Symbol
Kaṁpitamu	~
Sphuritam	∴
Pratyāhatamu	∴
Tirupamu/Nokku	W
Rava	Λ
Khaṇḍimpu	✓
Vali	⤿
Ekku Jāru	/
Digu Jāru	\
Odigimpu (Odukkal)	X
Orayika	γ

Subbarāma Dīkṣita has also combined certain aspects of the western staff notation such as ♭, ♭♭, ♮ and # to indicate the variety of the note or svarasthāna-s. As the Notation given in Saṅgīta Saṁpradāya Pradarśini is very detail, it is descriptive in nature.

Overview

1. In the initial texts like Saṅgīta Sarvārtha Sāra Saṅgrahamu, Saṅgīta Jñāna Kalānubhavam and few others, only the rāga and tāla of the composition had been mentioned. Later on, the svarasthana-s are mentioned either with the initial of the prefix such as in Gāyakalōcanam or in the form of a tabulation as seen in Mēla Rāga Mālīka.
2. The presentation of the Sāhitya differed in each work. Few have given the Pallavi, Anupallavi and Caraṇam division, while in other books the sections are divided without naming them. In Mēla Rāga Mālīka by Māhā Vaidyanātha Ayyar, the complete sāhityam is given before the notation.
3. At first, there was no indication of octaves. Eventually, octaves were indicated with dots above the note for higher octave and below the note for lower octave.
4. In Saṅgīta Svayambōdhini and Saṅgīta Saṁpradāya Pradarśini, the authors have adopted certain aspects from the western staff notation.
5. Commas and Semicolons for increasing the duration of notes were employed later on.
6. Using two vertical lines to mark the end of a section, āvarta or a composition had been prevalent from the beginning.
7. The Vowel extensions in the sāhitya were done using alphabets. Later on, comma was used for the same.

Conclusion

The Indian Music has seen continuity and growth throughout the history and has never been static. This continuous development is perceptible in the area of writing notation too. Notation helps to preserve the age old melodies and pass it on to the future generations. With the advancement in technology, many computer programs have been developed for creating and digitalizing musical notations. The development in this field stands as a boon to the future of Indian Music.

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