

ŚĀSTRA

Journal of Aria University
Vol VIII, 2026

EDITOR
Dr. T K Saroja



Aria
University

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Milpitas, CA 95035

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President's Foreword

Aria University



It's a pleasure to introduce this new edition of Śāstra, the journal of the ARIA University. Indic wisdom has always been guiding light with countless Śāstras that have shaped thought, learning, and culture for centuries. At ARIA, we see it as our responsibility and privilege to bring these works into focus — not just to preserve them, but to invite fresh thinking and new research around them.

This edition continues that effort. Each article in this journal reflects a sincere attempt to engage with traditional knowledge and connect it with today's questions and interests. We hope readers — whether scholars, students, or simply curious minds — will find value, inspiration, and perhaps even new directions for their own work.

I would like to thank Dr. T.K. Saroja for leading this project with great care and commitment, and all the contributors for sharing their knowledge and insights. It's through such collaborative efforts that we keep these traditions alive and relevant.

We look forward to seeing where these ideas will lead next.

Anand Kuchibhotla
President



CEO's Foreword

Aria University



Dear Readers,

Aria University is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 academic organization, first of its kind outside India, offering Masters, Diploma and Certificate courses in Kuchipudi Dance, Bharatanatyam, Carnatic Music, Hindustani Music, Sanskrit and Telugu.

Aria University recently received the approval to start the Ph.D. in Indian Classical Dance program. This program will be operational from the Fall 2026 semester. The university is working on starting the Ph.D. programs in Indian Classical Dance, Telugu and Sanskrit soon.

Aria University is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC).

I am delighted to extend my warmest greetings to you as we present the newest edition of our university journal, Sastra, dedicated to the rich tapestry of Indian classical dances, music, and languages. This journal, usually distributed in print during convocation, will now be available online. This change ensures that our global alumni, students, and well-wishers can access and enjoy it from anywhere in the world.

In this vibrant publication, you will embark on a journey through the cultural heritage of India, exploring the Indian Classical Music, Dance and Languages. Through the lens of scholarship and artistry, we celebrate the timeless traditions that have shaped the cultural landscape of our nation and continue to inspire generations around the world.

This journal serves as a beacon for the preservation and promotion of India's artistic legacy, providing a platform for scholars, practitioners, and enthusiasts to exchange ideas, share insights, and deepen their understanding of these profound art forms. From insightful analyses of classical compositions to reflections on the evolving dynamics of performance practice, each contribution in this publication offers a glimpse into the depth and diversity of India's artistic heritage.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the contributors whose passion and expertise illuminate the pages of this journal, as well as to the editorial team whose dedication ensures the highest standards of excellence. May this journal serve as a source of inspiration, education, and cultural enrichment for all who have the privilege of engaging with it.

Raju Chamarthi
CEO



From the Desk of the Provost
Aria University



It gives me great pleasure to welcome readers to Volume 8 of SASTRA, Aria University's peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the study of Indian arts, languages, and culture. SASTRA has steadily grown into a distinguished forum for rigorous, interdisciplinary scholarship, and this volume exemplifies that tradition with particular distinction. The seven articles gathered here traverse an impressive range of inquiry — from the compositional architectures of the Music Trinity and the cosmological allusions of a rare rāgamālika, to the ritual aesthetics of Bhūtakolā, the devotional depths of the Divyaprabandha commentary tradition, and the living dynamics of Sanskrit-derived vocabulary in contemporary Bengali. Alongside these, the volume offers thought-provoking investigations into contemporary dramaturgy rooted in Natya Śāstra and a penetrating performance-theory analysis of gendered duplicity in digital-public spaces. Together, they affirm that our classical heritage is not a closed archive but an ever-generative source of critical inquiry.

On behalf of Aria University, I extend my sincere congratulations to the authors for their careful scholarship, and my deepest gratitude to Dr. T. K. Saroja, Editor, for her unwavering commitment to intellectual excellence and the integrity of the blind peer-review process. I also thank the reviewers whose critical engagement ensures the highest standards of research quality. It is through the collective dedication of scholars, editors, and reviewers that SASTRA continues to serve as a vital bridge between India's classical knowledge traditions and the global academic conversation. I hope this volume inspires researchers, practitioners, and students alike to explore these rich domains with renewed curiosity and depth.

Dr. Venkat Gudivada
Provost



Editor's Note



Sastra Journal is a peer-reviewed journal of Aria university that carries forward well-researched works in Indian arts, languages and culture while also encouraging an interdisciplinary approach. This edition of the journal features seven articles from diverse domains. We follow a blind peer-review process to ensure the legitimacy and quality of research.

The articles are not only drawn from diverse domains but also focus on compelling and distinctive themes. They highlight the compositional structures of great composers, innovative approaches in dramaturgy, the unique contributions of a composer, a special ritual in which dance forms the central component, the importance of the commentary tradition in unveiling the beauty of the Divyaprabandhas, gender perspectives in performative arts, and contemporary language practices.

The article “Structural Similarities and Variations in the Compositions of the Music Trinity – Śyāma Śāstri, Tyāgarāja and Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita” by Dr. Mala Swamy offers an insightful study of the compositional styles of the celebrated Music Trinity. The paper primarily focuses on the structural analysis of the Kṛti form, which constitutes a defining feature of their musical legacy.

Drawing from the foundations of Natya Shastra, this article examines Sootha Theatre as a contemporary theatrical framework that reinterprets Indian dramaturgy through consciousness, spirituality, and social inclusivity. By proposing Chaitanya Rasa as an additional rasa and analyzing both Indian and Western plays, the paper presents an innovative approach that connects performance, philosophy, and human awakening in the modern context.

Dr. Sobhana Ayyalasomayajula’s article, Purāṇik and Aitihāsik Allusions in Daśavidharāṅganavatikusumamañjarī, explores the rare and distinctive work Daśavidharāṅganavatikusumamañjarī composed by Adibhatla Narayanadasa, a remarkable rāgamālīka featuring 90 rāgas. The study highlights the Purāṇik, Vedāntik, and Aitihāsik references woven into the composition and shows how these elements reflect the composer’s profound devotional outlook and spiritual vision.

Sowmya Krishnan’s article, Cultural Echoes: The Art, History, and Social Impact of Bhūtakolā, focuses on the unique cultural tradition of Bhūtakolā, which blends elements of makeup, storytelling, dance, music, and elaborate costumes. The study

Cont

emphasizes how artistic expression forms the core of this ritual practice and highlights its cultural and social significance.

R. Sudha Laxmi's article, *Bhakti and Bhāva in Periyālvār Tirumōḷi*, emphasizes the significance of the commentary tradition in conveying the deeper meanings of the *Divyaprabandhas*. By analyzing ten hymns from *Periyālvār Tirumōḷi* along with the commentary of Svāmi Maṇavāḷamāmuni, the study demonstrates how commentaries enrich the devotional and emotional understanding of the text.

In the article, *Embodied Duplicity and Split Masculinities in Digital-Public Performance*, Dr. Aswathy Rajan examines how predatory men use carefully constructed behaviors and performances to gain trust and exert control over victims in social and cultural settings. Using performance theory, the article studies how body language, *abhinaya*, and the management of different online and offline identities create what the author describes as “embodied duplicity.”

Sanskrit in Contact: How Bengali Negotiates Tatsama Vocabulary in Media, Law, Education, and Social Media examines how Tatsama vocabulary in Bengali functions not merely as a legacy of Sanskrit influence but as an active tool for shaping register, identity, and communication across different social domains. By analysing language use in media, law, education, and social media, the paper highlights the continuing role of Sanskrit-derived vocabulary in contemporary Bengali and contributes to broader discussions on language contact and linguistic adaptation.

With these seven vibrant articles, this year's *Sastra* emerges as an engaging and productive research edition for inquisitive readers. I sincerely thank the authors for their scholarly contributions. I also extend my gratitude to the reviewers for their critical feedback and valuable insights.

I extend my thanks to Mr. Phani Madhav Kasturi, Director, Technology Operations & Publications for his contribution in bringing out the journal.

Dr.T.K.Saroja
Editor



Our Contributors



Dr. Aswathy Rajan is a multidisciplinary educator, dance and cultural systems scholar, and creative movement therapy practitioner specializing in embodied learning, movement-based wellbeing, and cross-cultural creative practice. She holds a PhD in Dance from the University of Hyderabad and is a UGC-NET JRF / CCRT-JRF qualified researcher, with postdoctoral research (CMNPF) supported by the Kerala State Higher Education Council. With over a decade of experience across academia, research, and community practice, she currently serves as Founder-Director of Padma Foundation & Padma Knowledgeverse, designing and delivering arts-based, wellbeing-centred curricula for diverse learner groups. She has also worked as Assistant Professor and Assistant Director (Indian Knowledge Systems) at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences and as Senior Lecturer and Head in Performing Arts at ISCA, Kochi.

Dr. Rajan's research and teaching span creative pedagogy, performance studies, indigenous movement therapy, cultural studies, and education policy. Her scholarly contributions include 11 peer-reviewed journal articles (including a Scopus Q1 publication), 3 authored books with 2 forthcoming, and 50+ national and international conference presentations, workshops, and keynote lectures.

A trained practitioner in Mohiniyattam and Kuchipudi with rigorous gurukula training from Kerala Kalamandalam, she integrates performance practice with therapeutic and educational frameworks to support emotional regulation, self-awareness, and creative expression. She has contributed to curriculum development at institutional and state levels, including SCERT and Kerala Kalamandalam textbook committees, and serves on multiple academic and expert bodies. Her work aligns with the National Education Policy 2020 (India) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on arts for wellbeing, inclusive education, and community development through embodied, ethical, and learner-centred approaches.

Dr. Deerghasi Vizaiabhaskar looms his craft with meticulous diligence and exhaustive before embarking on a script. Consequently, his plays have not only graced the stage with resounding success but have also garnered widespread acclaim. His theatrical works have transcended linguistic barriers, being translated into English, Hindi, Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, Manipuri, and Kannada. Many of his plays have won prestigious accolades at various literary and cultural forums, earning him the distinguished Nandi Awards on nine occasions. In 2010, he was honored with the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award by the Government of India.

Srushti Garbha, the most recent addition to the corpus of literary art, stands as a profound exegetical work that engages deeply with the sanctified Upanishads; the texts that originate from the eternal philosophical spring of the Vedas. Beyond his contributions to playwriting, Vizaibhaskar has authored notable novels such as Veerakalingam and Dammali, and a short story collection Municipal Kathalu (Municipal Tales). His poetic prowess is evident in anthologies like Vamshadhara, Maunanto Maatalu (Conversations with Silence), and Maha Shoonyam (The Great Void). His literary legacy has inspired scholarly exploration, resulting in one research dissertation in English and three in Telugu, delving into the depth and impact of his dramatic literature.

Dr. Mala Swamy is a Professor at Aria University California and Associate Professor at VELS University, with extensive experience in Carnatic music education, research, and academic administration. She holds a PhD and MPhil in Indian Music from Mother Teresa Women's University, an MA in Indian Music from University of Madras, along with qualifications in English Literature, Journalism, Economics, and Psychology. She has served as Principal of Kalakshetra, Dean and Curriculum Head at Shankar Mahadevan Academy, and faculty member at several prestigious institutions. Her academic contributions include publications on Niraval, Manodharma Sangita, and Chaturdandi Prakashika, along with presentations at national and international seminars and conferences.

Dr. Mala Swamy's research focuses on both theoretical and practical dimensions of Carnatic music, particularly textual studies, performance practices, and analytical approaches to Indian classical music. Her areas of expertise include historical, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research methodologies. She has also conducted workshops internationally in Denmark and London, and across India, including specialized sessions on Papanasam Sivan compositions. With decades of teaching, research, and curriculum development experience, she continues to contribute significantly to higher education and scholarly research in Indian music.

Shri Pratik Dutta is an Assistant Professor at the School of Vedic Sciences, MIT Art, Design and Technology University, Pune, with over eight years of academic and research experience. He holds an M.A. in Sanskrit from JNU, New Delhi, and an M.Phil. from Karnataka Samskrit University, where he is currently pursuing his Ph.D. His areas of specialization include Indian Knowledge Systems, Sanskrit Grammar, Indian Philosophical Systems, and Indian Mind Sciences, with research focusing on the application of Dharmashastra in contemporary legal frameworks. He has presented research papers at several national and international conferences, including the World Sanskrit Conference, and has contributed to publications and academic projects in the field of Indian knowledge traditions .

Shri Dutta has also served as a resource person in various refresher courses and faculty development programmes on Indian Knowledge Systems and interdisciplinary themes, including AI, and actively engages in curriculum development, teaching, and academic coordination.

Dr. Sobhana Ayyalasomayajula is the great-granddaughter of Srimadajjada Adibhatla Narayana Dasu Garu. She is an accomplished musician, proficient as both a vocalist and a veena artiste. In recent years, while reviving her great-grandfather's legacy within the family, she has also become a Harikatha artiste. With her mellifluous voice, she has earned accolades from connoisseurs and vidwan-s alike for her music concerts and Harikatha-s.

She received her vocal training under Sri Neti Srirama Sarma Garu and Prof. Srikantham Nagendra Sastry Garu, and learned veena from Sri Ayyagari Syamasundar Garu. She later trained in Harikatha performance under Smt. Jayanti Savithri Bhagavatarini Garu.

She performed in the gōṣṭhī-gānam presentation of Sri Adibhatla Narayana Das' musical magnum opus "Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī" under the guidance of, and as part of the troupe led by, Prof. Srikantham Nagendra Sastry Garu. The experience inspired her to pursue academic research on the work, ultimately leading to her Ph.D. for her thesis titled "Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī—A Musicological Study." Sobhana has released several albums featuring the kṛti-s of Sri Adibhatla Narayana Das, titled "Sri Hari Ganam" and the devotional century of verses, "Suryanarayana Satakam". She has also rendered Brahmasri Samavedam Shanmukha Sarma's works, such as "Sri Vallabha Ganapati Suprabhatam" and "Vallabha Ganapati Sahasram". With the blessings of Brahmasri Samavedam Shanmukha Sarma Garu, she established the music school "Narayana Nada Vidya" in Delaware, USA, where she resides and also works at her husband Nagendra's accountancy firm.

Sowmya Krishnan holds a Bachelor's degree in Electronics Engineering and a Master's degree in Human Resources. She is an independent freelancer specializing in HR consulting, research writing, career counseling, and student mentorship. A dedicated practitioner of Kuchipudi for over 25 years, she currently teaches the classical dance form in Hyderabad. She holds a diploma and certificate in Kuchipudi dance, along with a certificate in Carnatic violin from Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University. She is also a gold medalist in Vedic Astrology and Vastu Sastra from the Indian Council of Astrological Sciences, in addition to being certified in Reiki. With extensive experience across multinational corporations, her engagements span diverse fields, including art, astrology, Ashtanga Yoga, Advaita Vedanta, personal finance and capital markets. Her interdisciplinary pursuits are driven by a continuing interest in exploring the intersection of mathematical and exoteric frameworks with spiritual inquiry and philosophical thought.

R. Sudhalakxmi is a distinguished Bharatanatyam artist, research scholar, and writer. She is a gold medallist in her post-graduation in Vaishnavism from University of Madras and is currently pursuing her PhD under the guidance of Dr.K.Dayanidhi in the Department of Vaishnavism at the University of Madras. Sudhalakxmi hails from an illustrious lineage. She is the granddaughter of the renowned vaggeyakara Vidwan Madurai N. Krishnan, a recipient of the Padma Bhushan award. She has also been a disciple of the veteran Bharatanatyam exponent Prof. Sudharani Raghupathy, a recipient of the Padma Sri award, for over three decades.

Sudhalakxmi was awarded the Junior Fellowship from the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) for 2018–2019 in the sub-field of Bharatanatyam. Her research focuses on adapting the traditional gestures of a temple ritual Araiyaar Sevai into Bharatanatyam. She is also a recipient of the Teaching Research Fellowship from the University of Madras for the academic year 2025–2026. She has presented several papers at national seminars on the concepts of Araiyaar Sevai and the Natya Sastra. She has also authored book chapters and scholarly articles exploring the nuances of Rasa theory and classical texts such as the Abhinaya Darpana. As a creative choreographer, Sudhalakxmi has explored diverse and profound themes, translating complex theological and philosophical concepts into the visual language of Bharatanatyam.



Cultural Echoes: The Art, History, and Social Impact of Bhūtakōlā

- Sowmya Krishnan

Abstract

A land of diverse ethnicities, cultural practices, and art forms, the Indian subcontinent places great importance on the preservation and promotion of artistic heritage. An ancient art form of the Konkan culture, Bhūtakōlā, is one such cultural ritualistic tradition. Also called Bhūtārādhane, it translates into spirit worship. An annual night long celebration, the ritual is performed to invoke the spirit or bhūta, in an attempt to obtain its protection, guidance and blessings. A person from the community impersonates the bhūta, and in a hypnotized state acts as a medium between the spirit and the community members, offering solutions and clarifications to their concerns.

A unique amalgamation of costumes, make-up, dance, music and story-telling, the Bhūtakōlā custom through its rich artistic expression, historical roots, and practices, functions as a powerful cultural tool. It safeguards ancestral traditions, strengthens community identity, fosters social cohesion, and aids in spiritual and social well-being. Animism, a concept where all entities are believed to have a distinct spirit, draws itself out through parallel rituals in other regions, operating with the unified goal of invoking that spirit. *Theyyam* practiced in Kerala, *Sastha Preethi* in Tamil Nadu, and *Caryā Nṛtya* in Nepal are a few examples. Grounded in local history, art, and culture, these practices reinforce cultural traditions and create social impact, with their influence reverberating across generations.

Keywords: Bhūta, spirit worship, nature worship, ritual, impersonator, animism, culture, art, community identity, social cohesion and well-being.

Introduction

An ancient art form of the Konkan culture, Būtakōlā¹ closely translates into spirit worship – “Būta” meaning spirit and “Kōlā” referring to a performance or a play. In the Indic languages, the term Bhūta often carries a pejorative undertone. However, Būta in Tuḷu language is the Apabhraṃśa form of “Pūtam,” meaning clarified or purified. In simplistic terms, it is a positive natured spirit, present for the protection, welfare and security of the people. An annual celebration, the ritual of Bhūtakōlā is performed to invoke the spirit (bhūta) or deity (daiva), in an attempt to obtain its guidance to help solve the problems and difficulties of the local community or village folk. These spirits are known to offer blessings and protect the village and its dwellers from natural calamities, and bring fortune and prosperity. Otherwise ascribed as Kṣetrapālas, they are the guardian deities local to the land or geographical area.

In the recent times, this tradition has gained widespread attention through the blockbuster Indian Kannada movie *Kantara*, released in 2022. The gripping narrative of the film, captivating visuals, enchanting ritualistic dance, and the concept of an ancient tradition, has brought to the fore an Indian cultural practice that the current generation was largely oblivious about. One can argue that it is the will of the deity to popularize and promote the form, a resurrection of the tradition that was either forgotten, remained unfamiliar, practiced in pockets, or faced skepticism from non-believers. Regardless of the reason, this article proceeds to demonstrate that Būtakōlā, through its rich artistic expression, historical roots, and ritualistic practices, functions as a powerful cultural tool. The ritual preserves ancestral traditions, upholds community identity, fosters cohesion, and also serves as a medium for spiritual healing and social well-being. Applying Bruno Latour’s theoretical framework of relational ontology (Calazans, 2023) in the cultural context, the deep interconnection between the community, ancestors, spirits, and the environment is explored. In this view, the world is seen as a network of interdependent entities (human and non-human) in constant interaction with each other, where identity and existence are defined by relationships with nature, animals, land, and society.

¹ Būtakōlā is the local pronunciation and Bhūtakōlā is the pronunciation in Kannada.

Bhūtakōlā as an Art Form

The customary practice of Bhūtakōlā, a niche system comprising benevolent spirits, is carried out exclusively in the Tuḷunāḍu region² or South Kanara area (Dakṣiṇa Kannaḍa), positioned between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats. The entire belt encompassing southern Karnataka and northern Kerala³ is referred to as Paraśurāma kṣetra.⁴ This province mainly depends on agriculture and fishing for survival, and is deep rooted in its beliefs around worship of the holy spirits and the ritualistic practices governing it. Passed down over decades and spanning across generations, the inhabitants ensure that they observe and undertake the customary procedures of Bhūtakōlā or Daiva Kōlā once every year, to invoke upon them the grace of the spirits and to avoid their wrath.

The Būtakōlā ritual provides remarkable insights into the mystical world of spirits. The practice, which begins late in the night and continues into the early hours of the morning, is characterized by the invocation of the spirit and the possession of the impersonator or medium by the būta. A person from the community who acts as a medium is self-hypnotized and facilitates a conversation between the worshippers and the deities, providing clarifications and solutions offered by the deity to individuals in need (Hegde, 2021). In this process, the impersonator, in a state of trance, essentially becomes the spirit or daiva.

A systematic and scientific process, the procedure entails an elaborate twenty-two steps performed before the event and on the day of the ritual, signifying adherence to and the essence of the traditional practice. The pre-event preparations include the owner, also known as the Yajamāna, inviting the Bhūta to grace the occasion and provide blessings for a smooth conduct of the event. Folks from the *Koraga* community arrange a *Dholu Leppu* ceremony, playing drums to call attention to the village folk, inviting them to participate (Subramanya, 2023). These solicitations and conversations are a testament to the cultural affinity, social bonding and community participation, an outcome of the attempts to strengthen social ties. On the day of the

² Though the official language of Karnataka is Kannada, the native language of most inhabitants in South Kanara is Tuḷu, thus giving the region its name Tuḷunāḍu.

³ Includes districts of Udupi and Dakshina Kannaḍa in Karnataka and Kasaragod in Kerala. It stretches from the southwestern region of Karnataka that starts from the town of Baindur or Kundapur, extends to Mangalore in the south, goes further into Kerala, all the way until Nileshwar near Kochi.

⁴ The land extending along the west coast of India, reclaimed from the sea by the sixth incarnation of Vishnu - Lord Paraśurāma.

event, the Bhūta embodied in a stone, is carried in a *pallaki* to the gorgeously decorated main arena, ready to celebrate the occasion ostentatiously with great pomp and show. Baindur and Tapaswi (2019) reflect on how the *kōlā* is similar to a dance drama, a unique amalgamation of theatrical elements such as music, dance, makeup, costume, dialogue, story, and a performer, with adequate scope to establish the *caturvidha abhinayas*. From a performance stand point, it can be compared to a *Yakṣagāna* in Kuchipudi.

The event marks its initiation with the performer or impersonator (also called *pambada* or *patri*) applying colour on his face, with constant thoughts of the spirit or *daiva* that he is trying to invoke. This process of *mukhavarnike* signals the beginning of the self-hypnosis, to invoke the spirit. The rich artistic expression in this historic cultural tradition is evident through the elaborate costumes, the detailing of the makeup with specific patterns and colours, and the deployment of other ritualistic accoutrements, very similar to those used in traditional theatre performances. The community cohesion is enhanced with a parallel singing of *paddanna* songs or poetic verses extolling the virtues and deeds of the *bhūta*. These are in general sung by the women folk. The *pambada*, the epicentre of the entire performance, continues the adornment process by wearing the costume, mask, accessories and the most important of the paraphernalia – the “*Gaggara*” or metallic anklets. Shaped like the hood of a snake, they are worn by the performer before commencing the dance. This leads to an actual transformation, with the *patri* being possessed by the spirit and going into a trance state.



Fig. 1. Performer getting ready for the *kōlā* ritual



Fig. 2. Dressed up *bhūta* performer

The Bhūtakōlā ritual is colourful and dramatic, with the entire theatrical environment charged up with loud rhythmic music, beating of drums, and ceremonial dances.⁵ This makes it a source of entertainment as well as a sacred tradition, providing a form of aesthetic and spiritual revelation. The *patri* with a sword (*katsale*) in the right hand and bell in the left, carries on with the dance (*Bhuta Kunita*) for hours, moving in and out of the designated space to interact with the audience. Sacrificial offerings are made to the *bhūta* or *daiva* depending on the nature of the spirit. Animal sacrifice and offering of liquor is not considered taboo if desired as per the ritual. It is common to offer flowers, rice, bananas to the *Puranic* or *Sāttvik* spirits, and alcohol and meat to the fierce spirits (Sharath, 2023). After the process, the impersonator distributes *prasadam* of *gandha* to the devotees, at which stage anyone with a question or problem can approach him. It is here that the ritual departs from a typical theatre performance. Not governed by a script, the medium acts as a conduit for communication between the divine and human realms. Any response by the performer is taken as a judgement, as he is embodying the *Bhūta* (Ishii, 2020). The communication happens through a combination of words, symbols and gestures. It is also common for the response to be a blend of an indicative solution, answer, blessing, reprimand or warning of an impending calamity, thus seen capable of playing a protective and therapeutic role. The practice thereby protects people from diseases, misfortunes and evil spirits. Individuals who question the deity or approach it with disbelief are recipients of its anger and reproach.

Animism in Indigenous Systems

The concept of “animism” holds the view that all natural things – plants, animals, stones, elements of nature, or even places, possess a distinct spirit and can influence human affairs (Eyghen, 2023). *Būtakōlā* or spirit worship considered to have originated from the elements of nature and its worship reflects this idea, where all entities are believed to have a spiritual core, with the world infused with spiritual meaning and interconnectedness. Human beings in the early eons were apprehensive of nature’s fury and were extremely dependent on the weather and harmonious cycles of nature to support their living through agriculture and farming. The evidence of nature worship can be found in ancient Hindu scriptural texts like the *Rig Veda*, with *Agni*, *Vāyu*, *Ṛṥthvī*, *Varuṇa*, *Sūrya* and *Indra* being deified and beseeched upon, for the welfare

⁵ There are eight types of ritualistic dances called *Nalike* in *Tuḷu*.

of the whole locality. Cosmic forces like the pañca bhūtas were revered and worshipped. Apart from these fundamental components of nature, entities or creatures that posed a threat to the horticultural practices, harvests and also to human life – like wild boars, tigers, snakes – began to be venerated. Worship of the spirits thus took shape for the protection and well-being of the crops, cattle and individuals (Killur & Bangera, 2018).

Palthady Ramakrishna Achar, a renowned preacher, opines that the current form of the Bhūtakōlā did not originate in Tuḷunāḍu, but was introduced in the South Kanara region around the fourteenth century. It was borrowed from Sri Lanka, where it continues to exist in the form of Yakṣa Ārādhane (Sonawane, 2019). Yakṣas are nature spirits, governing elements like water, forests, wilderness. They can act in favor of human beings, but are also notorious for causing trouble and haunting them. Like in other parts of the Indian sub-continent, in the Tuḷu culture too, ancestors were being worshipped in the form of spirits and hence according to Achar, this form of spiritual worship was readily embraced. Irrespective of the origin of the practice, the coastal region of Tuḷunāḍu stretching beyond Mangalore, has a lot of cultural, social and historical value affixed to this ritual.

Spirit worship has existed from ancient times in South India. The bhūtas are thought of as the attendants or companions of Lord Shiva, or his gaṇas (Neelakantan, 2023). They act as local deities, the sentinels of the village, guarding and protecting the villagers, their livestock and the agricultural produce. Killur & Bangera (2018) classify the bhūtas or daivas into various categories basis their origin -

Human Based: Spirits of human beings who sacrificed their life fighting for a cause and are regarded as martyrs. Examples include *Koti-Chennaya* who rebelled against the feudal system and *Kalkuda-Kallurti* who fought against injustice and oppression.

Animal Based: Spirits of animals like wild boars (*Panjurli*), bulls (*Nandigona*), tigers (*Pilichandi* or *Pilichamudi*), feared by humans or used for protection of cattle and crops.

Purāṇa Based: Mythological beings finding a mention in the Vedic texts or Purāṇas like *Guliga*, *Veerabhadra*.

Nature Based: These pertain to the pañca bhūtas or five elements of nature.

Bhūtakōlā, in its portrayal of ancestral spirits or deities, examined through the lens of animism, is a way of engaging with the non-human world (spirits and nature) and contributing to ecological and social balance. These rituals, in emphasizing the spiritual aspect of the environment, are tools for maintaining social order and cohesion through the acknowledgment of spirits and the environment's role in sustaining life. The human-environment interaction, with the rituals involving nature worship and agricultural symbolism, is revealed through ecocriticism (Morton, 2016), an interdisciplinary study of literature, culture and nature. The practice of Bhūtakōlā thus acts as a channel for expressing a community's connection with its ecosystem, reinforcing both social and spiritual growth.



Fig. 3. *Guliga* Daivārādhane



Fig. 4. *Panjurli* Bhūtakōlā

Cultural Preservation and Social Impact

A cultural celebration, the Bhūtakōlā ritual brings together all members of the organizing family and the entire village, fostering social bonding and community participation. Reflective of the cultural and local history, the practice strikingly functions as a tool for collective cultural memory (Dutta, 2023). The custom is a performative means of actively preserving ancestral practices and transmitting historical narratives across generations. This ensures that the community remains connected to its history, values, and traditions, which are central to the group's ongoing cultural identity.

The followers of the night long ritual wait in hope and anticipation to be relieved of their troubles, cognizant of the fact that the spirits or deities can also cause harm or misfortune if not appeased appropriately. The mood surrounding the bhūta custom is basically that of fearful reverence, with family members and the village inhabitants holding themselves responsible for misfortune befalling them, as a result of gaps or omissions in due offerings to the deities (Ishii, 2020). Also called Daiva Nēmā or Bhūtārādhane, the bhūta is considered an oracle, who grants corporeal and ethereal desires to the one making an appeal. The spirits possess varied powers to solve any problem being faced by the devotee – to remove obstacles from work, to resolve psychological, physiological, legal, relationship related, property related and financial woes, capable to an extent of locating and guiding people on lost or misplaced precious items.

The inherent relationship between human and non-human beings is evident in the kōlā process, with interdependencies between the bhūtas, elements of nature, and members of the society. Interpreted from the standpoint of relational ontology, the concept of collective affirms that the non-material elements are also active in the network of complex relationships. Being a part of the intricate correlation, entities such as animals, land, nature, and spirits do exhibit agency that shape the reality of societal interactions and define identities of individuals. In essence, the Daiva Kōlā procedure serves both cultural and social purposes, reinforcing cultural traditions and creating societal impact by resolving conflicts and providing solutions at the individual and group levels.

Dimensions of Social Stratification

The Bhūtārādhane event is unifying in nature, with everyone in the village invited to attend, regardless of caste or religion (Subramanya, 2023). While it may be seen as a religious activity, it carries larger social dimensions. It acts as a binding force by encouraging all members of the community to participate in the annual event. A prominent feature is the selection criteria for the impersonator or medium. This individual belongs to the scheduled castes like *Pambada*, *Nalike* or *Parava*. One perspective is that they are ordinary and innocent people, ideally suited to administer impartial justice, as desired by the deity (Killur & Bangera, 2018). From a different vantage point, this can be construed as a reversal of social hierarchy, with the lower marginalized caste given due importance and the reins of power (Shetty, 2013). Acting as a social equalizer,

the roles are reversed, with high caste landlords revering and prostrating before the medium from a lower caste. The bhūtas themselves are known to be associated with various castes. The flip side, however, is that while the event intends social justice, it is short-lived and is status quo for members from these castes upon completion of the ritual (“Bhuta Kola”, 2022).

Drawing attention to the component of gender roles in the ritual, women are known to play a secondary role by singing and participating in the ballads, and providing assistance to ensure that the logistics are in place. The organizer of the ritual and the impersonator are both male, with the female deities also being invoked by professional male members (Shetty, 2013). Bhūta worship offers a complex ideology, with a firm resolve to combat injustice and exploitation within the society. All inhabitants of these regions, including women, feel a sense of safety and security in their home town, guided and protected by the spirits at all times. The dynamics of the socio-political system of Tuḷunāḍu are open to interpretation, and it remains to be seen whether urbanization and modernization in the contemporary society bring about a change in the collective mindset.

Ritualistic Parallels

With animism as the frame of reference, where all entities are believed to have a spiritual core or agency, one can appreciate the myriad rituals, both Indic and cross-border, that operate with the unified goal of stoking or invoking the “spirit.”

“*Theyyam*,” one of the most popular customs in the Kolathunadu region of Kerala, dates back to the period when tribal animism was commonly practiced. The ritual includes a narration of stories called *thottam*, equivalent to the *paddannas* in Bhūtakōlā. Elaborate crown masks characterize this art form, signifying the deity being manifested. The members of the scheduled castes or tribes of *Vannan*, *Mavilan*, *Malayan*, *Anjoottan* communities are some of the many who have the right to perform these rituals. An egalitarian form, it is open to the believers and the atheists alike, providing an opportunity to connect with the deity and request guidance for a better life. The main ceremony of *theyyam* is called *kaliyattam*, with the key performer who embodies the spirit known as *kolakaran*. Similar to Bhūtakōlā, it is essentially performed by

men, except for *devakkooth theyyam* (“Theyyam”, 2022). Of longer duration, the *theyyam* could span between three and six days.

Like in Karnataka and Kerala, the southern state of Tamil Nadu has an equivalent practice called “*Sastha Preethi*,” initiated by the Brahmin community of the Tirunelveli district. The origin of this ritual can be traced back to the *Kambankudi* family belonging to Kallidaikuruchi, with the system spreading further to other districts in Tamil Nadu and Kerala (Subramanyam, 2014). The songs used to invite the deity *Dharma Sastha*, are called *viruttams*. This customary tradition that has been passed down generations, is practiced with the aim of community protection, well-being, social cohesion and invoking the deity for blessing all members of the neighborhood. While the social and spiritual objectives remain the same as *Bhūtakōlā* and *Theyyam*, *Sastha Preethi* restricts itself to a specific community in the societal hierarchy.

Literature points to the fact that spirit worship is prevalent not only in India, but also in other Asian and Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and China (Sonawane, 2019). A corresponding practice closer to the Indian subcontinent is the “*Caryā Nr̥tya*” from Nepal. A traditional Nepalese dance form, it is a sacred tantric ritual dance that is performed by the Newar community during religious ceremonies and festivals. It is closely connected to the Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition and is a spiritual discipline with the objective to attain salvation. *Caryā* is a method of deity yoga and worship, where the performers visualize themselves as the deity, and embody the spirit in the process of performing the ritual (Ghimire, 2023). Classified into two – *Guhya Caryā* is a secret practice performed as a temple ritual, only by those initiated into it, and *Bāhya Caryā* is the outer or external dance performed on the occasion of special pujas, directly observed and learnt by general people. In this practice, the role of dance through gesture, costume, ornamentation and symbolism is pivotal in invoking the deities. The *Caryā* dances are performed in the courtyards of *vihāras*⁶ in the Buddhist monastic complexes. Analogous to the example of *Sastha Preethi*, the purpose of *Caryā Nr̥tya* is spirit embodiment, with the custom performed specifically by the *Vajrācāryas*.

⁶ *Vihāras* are the key buildings in Buddhist monastic complexes, a prayer hall of the Buddhist, that is used to live, study and pray in.



Fig. 5. *Theyyam* performance



Fig. 6. *Carya* performance

Observations and Conclusion

A composite system, the entire approach to spirit or deity worship is an institution in itself. With a clear, focused objective, intricately defined techniques, and extending credence to entrust faith in divinity, it is a unique cultural practice that is not merely theatrical entertainment. While an initial viewing may give an impression of it being an act, the true purport is understood experientially in the long run. Considered a blessing by those who attend the ritual, this psychic practice is a means for humans to connect with nature and the supreme energy of the universe. At the primal level, it helps address material and somatic endeavors, and at the subliminal level, it can lead to transcendental and emancipatory states. The commonality of the practice across cultures and geographies serves as conclusive evidence that art, including music and dance, is integral to the core tradition.

The profound esoteric tendencies of these practices have created an aura of superstition around them. With regard to the Indian subcontinent, a land of varied ethnicity, cultural practices and art forms, the preservation and propagation of traditional folk art has been on the rise in the recent past. The youth and younger generations are eager to connect with their historical roots, explore cultural traditions, and view these practices from a fresh perspective, beyond the fallacy of superstition. The focus during the British era was to operate in silent secrecy, with a resolve to defend Hindu culture and safeguard these art forms from misinterpretation. In the 21st century, the educated populace seeks to garner more information and apply logic before accepting anything as the gospel truth. The current generation finds a sense of identity and social connection through these significant cultural channels. The advent of technology and the internet

has undoubtedly made this journey more convenient. With rapid modernization, upholding and proliferating these traditions can certainly be accomplished with the blessings of the bhūtas and daivas, the cultural echoes creating a lasting impact over time.

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Image References

- Fig.1. Performer getting ready for the kōlā ritual: *Bhoota Kola – Fiery Folk Art Form of Konkan Culture.* <https://www.caleidoscope.in/art-culture/bhoota-kola>
- Fig.2. Dressed up bhūta performer: *Spirit Worship.* https://jmmodule.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/religion_spirit-worship-the-bhuta-kola-2.pdf
- Fig.3. *Guliga Daivārādhane: Bhuta Kola.* <https://mapacademy.io/article/bhuta-kola/>
- Fig.4. *Panjurli Bhūtakōlā: Bhuta Kola.* <https://mapacademy.io/article/bhuta-kola/>
- Fig.5. *Theyyam performance: Theyyam.* <https://mapacademy.io/article/theyyam/>
- Fig. 6. *Caryā performance: Dance Mandal.* <https://www.dancemandal.com/dances-of-dance-mandal-2/>

Bhakti and Bhāva in Periyālvār Tirumōḷi

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Abstract

This article demonstrates the interpretive aspect of the commentary tradition as the authentic explanation. By analyzing ten hymns from *PeriyālvārTirumōḷi* with the commentary of *Svāmi Maṇavāḷamāmuni*, the article provides an in-depth focus on the deeper meanings of hymns that have been brought out through the commentary tradition. It explores the profound *Vātsalya Bhāva* and explains how the parental tenderness towards the divine is developed by *Ālvārs*. The article also provides an over-view of the commentators of *Divya Prabandham* and the origin of written commentary tradition. Furthermore, the article argues how the commentary serves as a tool in systemically transferring the desired *Bhāva* in the readers in line with the philosophy.

Key words

Ālvār, PeriyālvārTirumōḷi, Divya Prabandham, Bhakti, Commentaries, Mysticism

Introduction

The concept of *Bhakti* involves unconditional love and surrendering oneself completely to god. *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra* defines *Bhakti* as, “*sā tv asmin parama prema rūpā*”¹, the importance here must be given to *parama prema rūpā* because the seeker gives nothing but unconditional love to the Supreme with no desires attached. A meaningful offering of love built completely on faith and trust with no expectations thus becomes the sweetest way, “*amṛta swarupaḥ*”². *Ālvār*’s were saints who were deeply involved in the Supreme Lord *Nārāyaṇā*. They dedicated their lives in doing service to the Lord and singing His glories. Their outpourings were spontaneous in *Tamiḷ* as a personal experience relishing the divine infused with the messages of *Vedā*’s and *Vedānta* in a language masses could grasp. These hymns are collectively called the *Divya Prabandham*.

¹ Nārada, Nārada Bhakti Sūtra, 2

² Ibid., 3

The *Ālvār's* through their hymns express deep longing to unite with the Lord. The underlying message is *Bhakti*, and surrender to the Supreme but sung in different ways by *Ālvār's* through different perspectives. *Ālvār's* did not always sing hymns from their roles but adopted a unique relationship with the Supreme infusing different *Bhāvā's* (emotional roles). To name a few, *Tirumaṅgai Ālvār* and *NamĀlvār* take the roles of *Nāyaki* namely *Parakāla Nāyaki* and *Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki* to sing about their beloved Lord *Nārāyaṇa* as a lovelorn girl. They also take the roles of mother and friend of *Nāyaki* in several places to express the pain of *Nāyaki* in separation and re-affirm that Lord is attainable. *Kulasekhara Ālvār* adopts various personas in his hymns. He sings as *Daśaratha* expressing the pain of a father separated from the son, as *Devakī* who could not enjoy the playfulness of her son *Kṛṣṇa*, and as *gopikā* who express the deceitful activities of *Kṛṣṇa*. *Periyālvār* primarily focuses on *Kṛṣṇa bhakti*. Though he praises about other incarnations of the Lord through his hymns, his core focus lies on *Kṛṣṇa*. He takes the role of mother *Yaśodā*, and the Supreme is treated as the loving child *Kṛṣṇa*. This expression of treating the Lord as a child, and *Ālvār* taking the role of a mother is called *Vātsalya bhāva*.

Of many ways to reach God, music, and dance have been indispensable mediums to connect instantaneously. The artist through their performance transport the audience to a different realm to make them experience the divine. This transfer of art by a performer to make the audience understand the deeper meaning. This leads to the attainment of *Rasā*. *Kālidāsa* elevates the greatness of *Nāṭyam* to a visual sacrifice. He adds, “*Nāṭyam bhinna rucher janasya bahudā-apī ekam samārāadhanam*”³, though people are of varied tastes *Nāṭyam* is one that appeals to all. *Nāṭyam*, is a comprehensive term that includes music, dance, and drama.

The greatness of commentary tradition of Śrī Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya

The hymns of *Ālvār's* are verbal expressions of their unconditional love towards the Supreme Lord *Nārāyaṇa*. By reading the plain text, it is difficult to get the essence of text. The commentaries for the hymns elaborate the deeper meaning along with its spiritual significance, and philosophical depth. It is to be noted here that the commentary tradition by *Ācārya* is a boon to *Śrī Vaiṣṇava*

³ Kālidāsa, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, 1.5

Sampradāya. The works of *Ālvār* are like visual abstract and the commentaries help the readers to perceive the meaning.

Origin of written commentary tradition

Initially oral commentary traditions prevailed. The interpretations were passed on from the preceptor to the student orally. *Bhagavad Rāmānuja* initiated *Tirukūrukai Pirān Piḷḷan* to give a written commentary on *Tiruvaimoḷi* which led to the rise of the first written commentary called *Ārāyira Padi*. *Tiruvāimoḷi* blessed by *NamĀlvār* is equated to *Sāma Vedā*. It is blessed with five written commentaries. *Svāmi Maṇavāḷamāmuni*, a preceptor of *Śrī Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya* lists the contributors of commentary on *Tiruvāimoḷi* through a verse,

Piḷḷan Naṇḷiyar periyavācānpīḷḷai
Tellar Vaṭakutiruvīṭṭipīḷḷai
Maṇavāḷayogi Tiruvaimoḷiyai kātha
*Guṇavālar enru neṇḷe kūru*⁴

The five commentators who have given deeper insights and philosophical meanings on *Tiruvaimoḷi* are *Tirukūrukai Pirān Piḷḷan*, *Naṇḷiyar*, *Periyavācānpīḷḷai*, *Vaṭakutiruvīṭṭipīḷḷai*, and *Vādhikēśari Aḷagiya Maṇavāḷa Jīyar*.

Exhaustive commentary of *Periyavācānpīḷḷai*

Periyavācānpīḷḷai is the earliest commentator who has given extensive commentary on all the hymns. *Svāmi Maṇavāḷamāmuni* through a verse highlights this exhaustive authoritative contribution of *Periyavācānpīḷḷai*,

“*Periyavācānpīḷḷai pinpuḷavaikum teriyā viyakkiykal seyval ariya arulicceyal poruḷāy ariyarkku ipoṭu arulicceyalāytu aṛinthu*”⁵

Periyavācānpīḷḷai is adorned with the title of “*Vyākhyāna Cakravarti*” for the monumental contribution of providing the philosophical and theological essence of all the hymns. However, the earliest commentary of *Periyavācānpīḷḷai* for a portion on *Periyālvār Tirumoḷi* was lost to

⁴ Maṇavāḷamāmuni, Upadesaratnamālai, 39

⁵ Ibid., 46

termites. It is said that *Periyavācānpillai*'s commentary survived only for a few hymns on *Periyālvār Tirumōli*. The gap of the lost commentary on *Periyālvār Tirumōli* was bridged by *Svāmi Maṇavālamāmuni* based on the instruction of his preceptor *Tiruvaimōli Piḷḷai*.

Svāmi Maṇavālamāmuni provided commentary on *Periyālvār Tirumōli* for the portions that were tragically destroyed, writing up till the hymn “*thupudaiyārai*”⁶. The greatness of *Svāmi Maṇavālamāmuni* lies in the fact that, rather than writing a comprehensive separate commentary for the whole work, he chose to write only for the lost portions. *Periyavācānpillai*'s commentary is available from the subsequent hymn, “*vāku tūimai*”⁷ which is presented along with the commentarial work of *Svāmi Maṇavālamāmuni* with unbroken continuity.

Periyālvār's divine motherly love

The purest love is the love of a mother towards the child. In *Tirupallāṇṭu*, *Periyālvār* sings for the Lord to live long, fearing that one would cast an eye on him. One would wonder why an individual soul would pray for the well-being of the Supreme! Though Lord is the possessor of all powers, to *Periyālvār*, it was deep-rooted love similar to that of a mother. He fears like a parent and blesses the Lord like his own child. One must also note that *Periyālvār* was a pioneer in “*Piḷḷai Tamil*” genre of poetry. This unconditional affection is converted to verbal expressions as hymns towards the Lord. *Periyālvār* covers a range of episodes from *Kṛṣṇa*'s childhood to *Kṛṣṇa* as a prankster, the great deeds such as lifting the *Govardhan* hill, the complaints mother receives about the little one, and her admiration of her divine son *Kṛṣṇa*.

Periyālvār Tirumōli is the work of *Periyālvār*. This work has four hundred and seventy three verses. This is divided into sections of ten hymns in some decads while eleven in other. There are two distinct sections that have twenty one hymns (*Periyālvār Tirumōli* -1.2), and thirteen hymns (*Periyālvār Tirumōli* -2.3) showing a structural variation in the work. Each decad has a distinct theme. This article will cover the commentary of *Svāmi Maṇavālamāmuni* on ten hymns of the set *Māṇikam katti vayiram idai katti*, where the mother puts the baby to sleep.

⁶ *Periyālvār*, *Periyālvār Tirumōli*-4.10

⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.1

Thālātu are the songs that are sung as lullaby to soothe the baby from crying or to put the child to sleep. *Periyālvār* dedicates ten hymns starting from “*Māṇikam kati*”⁸, as a lullaby to Lord *Kṛṣṇa* from mother *Yaśodā*. The words are beautifully strung, explaining gifts offered to *Kṛṣṇa* by other heavenly deities’. The little One who is sleeping right in front of her is the same Lord who has taken several incarnations to protect his devotees.

Māṇikam katti vayiram idai katti
āṇip ponnāl seydhā vaṇṇach chiru thotil
peṇi unaku piramaṇ vītu thandhān
*māṇikuralanē thālēlō vaiyam aḷandhāne thālēlō*⁹

Through the first hymn *Periyālvār* describes the cradle in which the Lord rests. It was a gift from *Brahma* which is ornamented with precious stones for the baby to sleep. *Periyālvār* asks, Could He be described as a baby? Isn’t He the one who took incarnation as *Vāmanā* and transformed to *Trivikrama*? By doing so, he explained the concept of surrender to the masses through *Mahābali*! The commentary guides the readers to the devotional envisioning of the Lord by the poet. *Brahma* is taken as the secondary creator, who carries out the function of creation under the instruction of Supreme creator *Kṛṣṇa*. The offering by *Brahma* shows his subservience to the Supreme. The commentary points out that the Lord who measured the entire cosmos limits Himself to the smallest cradle now.

“*Udayār kanamaṇiodu oṇmādhaḷam pū idai viraivikotha ...*”¹⁰ is the second hymn. *Rudra* is referred to as *Kabāli īsan*,¹¹ the one who wears the skull as an ornament and rides on a bull. He gifts a waist belt embellished with golden bells and flowers. By listing the gifts through her soft lullaby, the mother continues to sing *thālēlō* ¹². She is attempting to put the child to sleep. In the systematic hierarchy of celestials, *Rudra* follows *Brahma*. *Rudra* is identified as the fierce god and destroyer. The responsibility of destruction is assigned to *Rudra* by *Kṛṣṇa*. *Rudra* bends down to

⁸ *Periyālvār*, *Periyālvār Tirumōḷi*-1.3.1

⁹ *Ibid.*, -1.3.1

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, -1.3.2

¹¹ *Ibid.*, -1.3.2

¹² *Ibid.*, -1.3.2

submit his offering. Rather than expecting *Kṛṣṇa* to come to see *Rudra*, he brings a gift out of intense love. This eagerness expresses his respect and servitude to the Lord.

Next comes *Indra*, the Lord of celestials who offers a beautiful anklet to the tiny lotus feet of the Lord, “*Indiran thānum eḷil udaik kiṇkiṇi thandhu*”¹³. In this hymn, the mother establishes that although He sleeps like a baby in this cradle, He is my Lord “*thambirānār*”¹⁴. Though no comparison can match the beauty of the Lord, the mother brings in reference of lotus to explain the divine form. She compares the divine feet and the eyes to lotus - “*thāmarai thālarku*”¹⁵. “*Thāmarai kaṇṇane*”¹⁶ describes the hue to a freshly blossomed lotus, and the eyes resembling a lotus petal. Through this hymn, the mother admires the divine form lying in front of her continuing the perfect lullaby for peaceful rest. *Periyālvār* follows the celestial hierarchy while singing the lullaby. Indra is placed next after the trinity. The commentary emphasises on the divine beauty of the Lord through this hymn. The Lord is the possessor of all the auspicious qualities. He is the Supreme Reality, yet he rests as a baby in the cradle. This shows the quality of accessibility and simplicity of the Lord.

The celestials rush with their gifts to welcome the Lord, “*sangin valamburiyum sēvadik kiṇkiṇiyum angaich charivaḷaiyum nāṇum*”¹⁷, a conch, ornaments for the forearm, waistline, chest and anklets for the divine feet. *Ālvār* identifies him as *Devaki singame*¹⁸ son of *Devaki* who possesses the power equal to the King of the jungle. She cherishes the beauty of her son as *Karumugile*, the complexion of dark hue similar to that of rain bearing clouds. The commentaries add deeper illustrations to highlight the greatness of the aesthetic beauty of Lord. Following *Indra*, celestials rush to pay their tribute. The commentary is in line with the scriptures that state one should never go empty handed to meet a King or a teacher. The Lord is the Supreme ruler and teacher, can the celestials meet without an offering!

¹³ Ibid.,-1.3.3

¹⁴ Ibid.,-1.3.3

¹⁵ Ibid.,-1.3.3

¹⁶ Ibid.,-1.3.3

¹⁷ Ibid.,-1.3.4

¹⁸ Ibid.,-1.3.4

Following the celestials comes the Lord of wealth *Kubera* to express his adoration .He comes with the folded hands to pay his respects, “*vaḷuvil kodaiyān vaichrāvaṇan thoḷudhu*”¹⁹. He submits “*aḷagiya aimpadaiyum āramum*”²⁰, a jewel resembling the five divine weapons to adorn the chest, where the consort of the Lord resides. He also brings a pearl ornament. The key point does not lie in the offering here, but it’s the cupped hands (*Anjali*) .He submits it as an offering to the Supreme. This shows that Supreme is pleased not by the luxurious offerings. Sincere devotion expressed through folded arms melts the Supreme. Another view point is that, the Lord of wealth who is endowed with the highest of wealth, surrenders not the wealth, but the self. The ultimate offering is thus surrendering oneself to the Lord.

The Lord of ocean and rain *Varuṇa*, brings the purest of pearls formed out of the ocean waves as the ornament for hands and shoulders. *Ālvār* brings reference to *Kṛṣṇa* here as the possessor of the glorious crown, “*sodhi chudar mudiyāy*”²¹ .Though *Ālvār* saw *Kṛṣṇa* as his own child, he did not lose sight of the fact that the little boy was the Supreme too! *Periyālvār* through the reference of crown points out the status of the baby lying in the cradle as the Supreme King. The reference to the Lord’s broad shoulder in the hymn, “*sundarath thoḷānē*”²² further emphasises an important attribute of his royal kingship.

The consort of the Lord is Goddess *Mahālakṣmī* .She sends a garland made of the rarest of flowers, “*thuḷāy kai seydhā kaṇṇiyum vānār seḷum sōlaik karpagathiṇ vāsigaaiyum*”²³. The flowers that are not found in this materialistic world are sent as a gift by the consort. Though mother says do not cry *Kṛṣṇa*, she knows Him to be the Supreme. She mentions His divine abode *Tiru Kuṭandai*, where the Lord controls the entire creations in a reclining position. By bringing in a gift that cannot be accessed by the materialistic world, the commentary highlights the consort’s uniqueness. The rarest gift also reveals that the consort is the ideal match for the Lord. The Lord resting in *Kutandai*, controls both the *līlā vibhuti* (material universe) and *nitya vibhuti*(eternal abode) as the Supreme controller.

¹⁹ Ibid.,-1.3.5

²⁰ Ibid.,-1.3.5

²¹ Ibid.,-1.3.6

²² Ibid., -1.3.7

²³ Ibid., -1.3.7

Bhūmi pirātti, the Earth Goddess sends “*kachodu porchurigai kāmbu kanaga vaḷai uchimaṇichuti oṇthāl niraporpū*”²⁴, a textile that is beautifully crafted with borders exquisitely crafted, a knife, ornament for the shoulder, and a finely detailed jewel for the forehead and a golden flower for the crown. *Ālvār* uses two divine names to establish Lord’s greatness in the hymn namely *Achyutan* and *Nārāyaṇan*. The terms signify that He is the one who never leaves His subservient, and stands as the Supreme Lord who is served by all. The voluntary servitude extending from Brahma to celestials, substantiates that Lord is served by all. He is the Supreme object to be attained.

Durga gives a fragrant powder which is a combination of natural product like sandal, camphor, and turmeric to be applied over the Lord. She presents traditionally made black and red pigments to be applied on the divine eyes and forehead of the Lord. *Ālvār* brings in the abode of *Śrīraṅgam* in this hymn, where the Lord reclines beautifully, and controls the entire cosmos. There is another interpretation that goddess here could also mean *Saraswati*, who has submitted her offerings. This hymn explains *Bhakti* at its highest form. Can one offer protection to the Supreme? The black pigments are said to remove the evil eyes cast on the Lord. Can someone cast an eye on the Lord? The commentary brings the purest form of *bhakti*. It is the distinct love towards the Lord that instils fears, if someone would cast an eye on the Lord.

Throughout the last nine hymns, *Ālvār* sings as *Yaśodā* enjoying Lord’s greatness and simplicity. She constantly brings in *Thālelō*, to express that it is sung gently as a lullaby. In the last hymn, *Ālvār* explains the episode of how the Lord sucked out the life of demons like *Pūthana*, “*vaṇjanaiyāl vanda pēychi mulai unda*”²⁵. He concludes this set of ten hymns by referring to his words as that of *Yaśodā*, “*āychi thālātiya senjol*”²⁶.

Periyālvār throughout this decad infuses the parental love by singing lullaby for the Lord. It is layered with the philosophy of surrender. *Periyālvār* follows the sequential order, beginning with Brahma, who was first to be created from the Lord’s navel lotus. This shows that hymns are not mere spontaneous songs, but are in line with the Vedic hierarchy. The voluntary subservience from

²⁴ Ibid.,-1.3.8

²⁵ Ibid.,-1.3.10

²⁶ Ibid.,-1.3.10

all the celestials conclude that Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, who is the manifestation of *Nārāyaṇā* himself, is the one to be attained, and servitude to his divine feet is the only means to attain him.

Interpretative aspect in Dance

Periyālvār uses *Vātsalya Bhāva* to display his love for Supreme. The commentary tradition illustrates the deeply layered meanings and how a *bhāva* is used to unpack the aim of a soul to attain the Supreme. Though sometimes the lyrics seems to be understood through general reading, after reading the commentaries one can grasp the spiritual insights beyond the literals.

When a dancer attempts to explain a poem or a hymn, the dancer looks into *padārtaḥ*, *vākyārtaḥ* and *kāvyaārtaḥ* namely the meaning of the word, sentence and the work as a whole. While taking hymns from *Divya Prabandham* for performances, the commentaries give the nuanced ideas that direct the choreography in the most authentic way from the poet's perspective in line with the philosophy. By understanding the soul of the text, choice of the right tune becomes simplified. Though the commentary restricts only to *padārtaḥ* and *vākyārtaḥ*, the resources and cross references quoted by the commentators through *Itihāsa*, *Stotra* and *Purāṇa* in the *vākyārtaḥ* gives ample insights. This help the artists highlight the key concept of philosophy elucidated by *Ācārya*'s reflecting true preaching's of *Ālvār*'s without losing focus. Improvisations in *Sanchāri* comes with ease true to the spirit of *Ālvār*'s message.

Conclusion

“*Na hi rasād ṛte kaścīd artha pravartate- No poetic meaning proceeds from speech without any kind of sentiment*”²⁷. That which evokes as an aesthetic experience in the viewers, which is the resultant of any idea, becomes the *Rasa*. The dance and music repertoire has always been inclusive, and presenting *Divya Prabandham* in concerts has persisted for a long time. Presenting the works of *Ālvār*'s by blending the commentaries on *Divya Prabandham* would be the interpretation of highest aesthetic quality. The goal of any performance is to make the audience travel along with the artist. By creating this transformative experience, the seekers envision the invisible and connect to an advanced level of spirituality revealed by the *Ācārya*'s, as a bridge to the *Ālvār*'s intent. This analysis is restricted to commentary of one decade from one *Ālvār*'s work, however, the

²⁷Bharata & Ghosh, 1951, Chapter 6, verse 31

commentary is available for all the hymns. In summary, the commentaries act as the authoritative foundation for understanding the meaning of hymns.

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“Embodied Duplicity and Split Masculinities in Digital-Public Performance”

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Abstract:

This paper examines the performative strategies through which predatory men operate within social and cultural spaces to access and control their victims. Drawing on the performance paradigm, it analyses how bodily performance and the deliberate use of *abhinaya* involving the maintenance of multiple identities across digital and physical terrains produce what this paper terms *embodied duplicity*. These split masculinities function through calculated affect, role-shifting, and strategic self-presentation. Gravitating through the field of visual culture, with especial emphasis being given to artistic spaces, it underlines how women artistes are constantly confronted with and subject to such embodied duplicity. Moreover, it has applied the analytical case study approach with its base grounded in literature, observations, and survey studies. Lastly, it advocates that a framework to prevent such problems could be best devised by incorporating such dimensions of awareness regarding the various performative strategies within art education itself.

Keywords: *Embodied Duplicity, Performative Legitimacy, Affective Gatekeeping, Coercive Relational Control, Embodied Empowered Empathy Pedagogy (3E P)*

Introduction

Performance studies have long recognized the body as a site of rehearsal, repetition, and signification through which social identities are learned, consolidated, and contested. In the everyday, subjects perform roles through embodied signs of gesture, tone, rhythm, spatial proximity, and affective variation. While a great deal of scholarship has explored the ways in which marginalized bodies are disciplined and regulated through performance, relatively little attention has been given to the ways in which respectable masculinity itself is choreographed as a protective disguise, facilitating ethical dissociation over extended periods of time. This paper examines how certain forms of respectable masculinity cultivate public legitimacy through

sustained performances of care, morality, cultural refinement, and emotional attentiveness while simultaneously maintaining hidden practices of manipulation, coercive control, and sexual exploitation, anchoring on Goffman's frontstage–backstage framework¹. This research defines such a structure as *embodied duplicity*: the sustained inhabitation of multiple moral performances by the same body across public, intimate, and digital spheres. Rather than viewing these contradictions as individual moral failures, the paper argues that they operate as rehearsed regimes of trust-production in which virtue itself functions as a technology of access.

The work majorly concentrates on artistic and visual-cultural environments, especially dance and visual culture, where pedagogies of openness, receptivity, emotional attunement, and mentorship intensify relational vulnerability. In such contexts, manipulative figures often operate through affective mirroring, moral performance, and guardian-like authority, making harm difficult to recognize in its early stages.

This duplicity often could call upon the characteristics of what might be called a sacred path: ethical discourse, service rhetoric, aesthetic awareness, moderation, and public moral stances. Artistic discourse whether through dance, photography, philosophy, or cultural connoisseurship operates here not as a disciplinary focus, but as a symbolic currency through which intimacy, mentorship, and authority can be negotiated. Creative worlds become entry points through which women's professional, relational, and affective lives are gradually restructured. Special emphasis is placed on why dancers and somatic practitioners may become structurally vulnerable to such manipulations. The type of training that focuses on openness, receptivity, empathy, and attunement develops a subtle aesthetic intelligence that can be used for **nefarious** purposes by manipulators who are adept at affective mirroring and moral performance. The study argues that delayed recognition of harm is not a failure of judgment, but a consequence of performative coherence, wherein virtue is sustained with sufficient consistency to override bodily warning signals.

Methodologically, the work pursues a comparative and typological approach instead of focusing on limited case studies. Based on ethnographic reflexivity, examples from feminist art history, and

¹ This study is consonant with Erving Goffman's dramaturgical model of social interaction, particularly his distinction between frontstage and backstage performances. However, it extends this framework into contemporary digital and gendered contexts, where a single body may sustain **parallel moral performances across multiple stages**-public, intimate, and virtual allowing ethical dissociation and impression management to coexist without visible rupture.

digital cultures, to examine how such structures become socially sustainable, the study identifies recurring performative typologies; the sacred moral performer, the family-sanctioned custodian, and the digital shadow performer, through which duplicity becomes socially sustainable. Reframing exploitation as an embodied, rehearsed practice rather than an individual moral failure, this study contributes to performance scholarship by theorizing split masculinities as a structural phenomenon. It concludes by calling for critical literacy within performance and arts pedagogy around performative virtue, moral authority, performative legitimacy, and the politics of trust, particularly within professions already marked by patriarchal surveillance and precarity.²

Body, Space, and Communication in Platformed Realities

Communication here is understood not primarily as verbal exchange, but as an embodied and spatial practice enacted through posture, timing, silence, proximity, touch, withdrawal, and repetition. Through such patterned cues, individuals learn to occupy roles, perform virtue, and sustain social legitimacy, making masculinities socially intelligible and morally credible. Contemporary platformed life enables individuals to sustain compartmentalized identities across multiple relational spaces simultaneously. Such fragmentation complicates verification and permits ethical dissociation, wherein contradictory performances remain separated across audiences, contexts, and embodied stages.

Truth is no longer singular; it fragments across platforms, performances, and audiences³ addition to that the world is heading toward what has been described as *bio-digital convergence*, where

² Although practices of manipulation, coercion, and ethical duplicity are not exclusive to any one gender, this study deliberately centers **male performances of authority over women** in relation to classical dance. This choice is grounded in the gendered history of dance as a field that is simultaneously feminized and controlled through predominantly male-authored aesthetic, philosophical, and institutional logics. Within such a framework, women dancers occupy a paradoxical position: they are rendered culturally vulnerable while remaining subject to masculine moral surveillance, mentorship, and regulation. Focusing on masculinity thus allows the study to examine how embodied authority, respectability, and moral performance operate within a historically asymmetrical power structure, rather than making claims about gender behavior in general.

³ The nook and corner of the contemporary world is now shaken by disclosures such as the Epstein files and by proliferating conspiracy cultures. What a common person is left to digest is a general sense that we live in a world of lies. Conspiracy theorists circulate upside-down arguments ranging from claims about political leaders being replaced by robots to grotesque gender fabrications where serious ethical concerns coexist with unwanted, distracting narratives. Rather than treating these phenomena as irrational excess, this paper reads them as symptoms of a broader epistemic condition often described as the *post-truth era* (Keyes).

organic human life circulates through digital infrastructures that enable simultaneity, anonymity, and ethical dissociation (Zuboff). Hence, when buffered by power, secrecy, or social legitimacy, exploitative practices become easier to conceal and normalize.

-Real criminals are not produced suddenly; they are made through knowledge, practice, brevity, and endurance. Over time, they develop recognizable patterns for attaining satisfaction. Criminological and sociological research has shown that such patterned predation depends on feedback loops, institutional silence, and moral cover (Connell; Katz). These patterns cut across class and status: both ordinary and elite social locations provide tactics of power, although the forms of protection differ.

This work speaks particularly to women engaging in visual communication and allied fields. The invocation of “Na sthree Swathanram Arhathi” gestures toward a patriarchal logic that naturalizes women’s dispossession by framing exploitation as inevitability. What makes this form of violence difficult to recognize is not always overt force but the *garb of protection*. When harm is performed through the body of a mentor, caregiver, patron, or socially committed figure, the victim cannot easily recognize exploitation as exploitation.

In such conditions, a woman may gradually submit not only her body but her consciousness, cognition, and trust to a man of duplicity. The ruin is slow and often interpreted as devotion. Pain is misread as love. Feminist scholarship on coercive intimacy has repeatedly shown how consent is eroded through relational dependency rather than immediate violence (Dworkin; Ahmed). Testimonies emerging from the Epstein files, including accounts of women bleeding during sexual acts, reveal how cruelty can be normalized when power suspends accountability. This reality stands in sharp contrast to romantic imaginaries such as Neruda’s metaphors of spring and cherry trees that aestheticize intimacy while concealing domination.

What is at stake here is not a claim that all men behave in this manner, but that *certain masculinities eroticize control and pain* while sustaining a public performance of gentleness and moral speech. To reach such goals, men deploy tactics of power; social capital, mentorship, aesthetic sensitivity, institutional respectability that operate across strata of humanity. Both ordinary and elite contexts provide stages on which these tactics are rehearsed and protected.

Hypothesis: From Rasika to Impresario; Cultural Power as Embodied Management

This study advances a focused hypothesis: **in visual and performative cultures, certain men attain positions of cultural power not through artistic practice but through sustained performance of legitimacy.** The movement from rasika (connoisseur) to organizer to impresario is less a career path than a **strategy of visibility management**, where proximity to art substitutes for artistic labor and gradually converts into gatekeeping authority.

This authority is produced through repetition rather than expertise. The same body appears consistently as host, curator, patron, spokesperson, and moral commentator. Over time, this produces an impression of inevitability: festivals, exhibitions, and platforms seem unable to function without this figure. Goffman's dramaturgical model clarifies this process frontstage devotion to art is carefully stabilized, while backstage power consolidates through informal control over access, selection, and circulation. Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital explains how taste, vocabulary, and symbolic alignment with "good art" are converted into organizational dominance.

Selection as a Technology of Control

Across visual culture; dance festivals, photography circuits, film platforms, theatre spaces, digital content hubs, the selection process functions as a *technology of power* rather than a neutral aesthetic exercise. Criteria remain opaque, decisions are personalized, and accountability is dispersed. Selection often hinges on availability, gratitude, silence, and affective compliance rather than merit alone. This opacity allows duplicity to persist without direct coercion.

Importantly, exploitation here is not always immediate or sexual. It frequently begins as *career modulation*: delaying opportunities, offering partial access, staging scarcity, or framing advancement as personal favor. Over time, dependence is normalized, and refusal acquires professional cost. Such patterns are widely documented in studies of cultural labor and precarity across media industries.

Visual Culture and the Risk of Exposure

The vulnerability identified in this paper is not limited to dance. It extends across *visual culture wherever women are required to offer their face or body for circulation*; performance, cinema,

photography, advertising, social media, and digital content economies. Visibility becomes both currency and risk. Feminist media scholarship has shown that when visibility is controlled by intermediaries, women's bodies become sites of negotiation rather than expression.

In these fields, moral discourse often coexists with bodily access. Men who publicly speak about justice, ethics, or culture are less likely to be questioned when they privately manage women's visibility, mobility, or intimacy. This alignment of moral speech with gatekeeping power creates what can be termed *ethical camouflage*.

Three Recurrent Threat Configurations

Within visual and performative ecosystems, women encounter three recurrent and concrete threat configurations.

Familial Surveillance. Families may fear public exposure of the female body even when framed as art. While such vigilance can be protective, it can also limit autonomy and professional networking, indirectly increasing dependence on external authorities who promise safety and legitimacy.

Inflated Cultural Intermediaries. A second configuration involves self-styled experts or individuals with symbolic proximity to institutions but limited accountability. They operate through urgency, exclusivity, and indebtedness, binding women through schedules, documentation, and reputation management.

External Guardianship as a Regime of Capture

External guardianship is not a role; it is a status gradually achieved. It does not announce itself through authority but accumulates legitimacy through proximity, repetition, and affective labor. Entry points vary: the figure may arrive as a mentor, a collaborator, a friend, a co-worker, a fellow *rasika*, a cultural intermediary, or a socially committed "good Samaritan." The role at the gate is contingent; the destination is singular.

This configuration advances through acts that appear supportive rather than directive. Emotional availability is framed as care, attentiveness as solidarity, and sustained presence as rare motivation. What is offered is not control but reassurance often at moments of professional uncertainty, bodily

exposure, or familial hesitation. Support is made to feel exceptional, irreplaceable, and therefore difficult to refuse.

Over time, relational boundaries are subtly re-scripted. Advice becomes guidance, guidance becomes mediation, and mediation becomes dependency. The figure begins to speak *for* the subject interpreting risks, filtering opportunities, and redefining what safety, seriousness, or success should look like. Alternative networks are not attacked directly; they are quietly displaced. Family is described as misaligned, peers as unreliable, institutions as indifferent or incapable of recognizing “true potential.”

The culmination of this process is the emergence of what this paper terms the *Affective Gatekeeper*; the “one and only protector.” Guardianship is no longer shared or negotiable but personalized and exclusive. Trust is not withdrawn from others through overt coercion but redirected through affective persuasion. The subject experiences this condition as security; structurally, it functions as enclosure.

A historical condensation of this dynamic can be observed in the relationship between Pablo Picasso and Dora Maar during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Maar entered the relationship as an accomplished photographer associated with the Surrealist movement. Over time, Picasso positioned himself as the central interpretive authority over her artistic life; encouraging, redirecting, and ultimately displacing her photographic practice in favor of painting, a medium in which she expressed ambivalence and self-doubt (Fattal, 2017). While this shift was framed as artistic guidance and intimate collaboration, the effect was a gradual erosion of her professional autonomy and confidence. Maar’s increasing psychological distress and withdrawal from photography illustrate how external guardianship, when personalized and totalized, can reorganize a woman’s creative trajectory while maintaining the appearance of artistic care.

External guardianship thus functions as a slow technology of capture across visual and performance cultures. It reorganizes the subject’s social world, professional choices, and bodily autonomy while preserving a moralized surface of protection. Harm becomes legible only after isolation has been normalized and exit routes familial, institutional, and internal have been systematically eroded.

Argument Forward

These configurations do not rely on spectacle or overt violence. They operate through *everyday embodied performances* tone, timing, proximity, withdrawal that are difficult to contest without appearing ungrateful or paranoid. The argument advanced here is not accusatory but structural: *when visual culture centralizes visibility without transparent accountability, split masculinities thrive*. The sections that follow examine the specific bodily tactics through which this power is enacted and identify early, concrete warning signs accessible to women working across visual communication fields.

Rather than moral accusation, the paper advances *critical literacy of embodied power*, calling for performance pedagogy that can read virtue as choreography and trust as a political relation.

Predatory Performance and the Architecture of Capture

This paper advances the hypothesis that certain men operating within art and visual-culture ecosystems cultivate power not merely through institutional authority but through *long-term performative labour* oriented toward what may be termed *mrygaya* (the hunt) as entertainment and domination. This behaviour is neither impulsive nor accidental. It unfolds through patterned observation, strategic self-staging⁴, and sustained dramaturgical discipline.⁵

The process begins at a distance. The subject studies the prospective victim through publicly available materials; social media, professional networks, family affiliations, artistic interests, institutional vulnerabilities. This phase resembles what Erving Goffman would identify as *backstage preparation*, where the performer learns the audience before entering the scene. The victim's emotional deficits, career anxieties, family pressures, and aspirations are gradually mapped. Importantly, this reconnaissance is non-intrusive and therefore unreadable as threat.

⁴ In this paper, strategic self-staging refers to the deliberate and sustained orchestration of one's outward persona, gesture, language, affect, moral positioning, and social role in response to a specific relational context. It denotes a situational performance calibrated to the expectations, vulnerabilities, and cultural environment of the victim. It is neither spontaneous nor expressive but rehearsed, repetitive, and adaptive, functioning as a dramaturgical technique through which credibility, trust, and access are accumulated over time.

⁵ Pornographic and anonymous digital platforms are analyzed as alternate stages that enable ethical dissociation while maintaining continuity with respectable public personas.

Once a potential “prey” is identified, the plan shifts from observation to *role assumption*. The man does not approach as an aggressor but as the *nearest available solution* to a contextual problem in the woman’s life. For dancers and women in visual culture, this role is often aligned with the ecosystem itself: photographer, videographer, musician, writer, scholar, rasika, arts administrator, HR liaison, or cultural organizer. These identities provide legitimate access to the body, rehearsal spaces, private conversations, and professional dependencies without triggering alarm.

Simultaneously, the subject constructs a *clean public front*. Memberships in respected civic bodies, foundations, and social-service organizations; Rotary clubs, cultural forums, NGOs function as moral insulation. From the outside, he appears as a gentle, socially committed, culturally refined man. This respectability is not incidental; it is meticulously rehearsed. Minor inconsistencies may occur, but they are often overlooked because the overall performance sustains coherence. As Judith Butler notes, repetition produces the effect of authenticity; here, virtue itself is performatively stabilized.

At the embodied level, this performance manifests as what dance studies would recognize as *minute, intricate abhinaya*. Excessive listening, over-care, hyper-attunement to detail, persistent checking-in, and constant advice create an illusion of deep relational investment. Over time, this attentiveness shifts into subtle behavioral governance: suggesting changes to daily routines, reframing family concerns as obstacles, redefining artistic instincts as “immature,” and offering himself as the sole reliable interpreter of reality.

This marks the transition from support to *exclusive custodianship*. Thought processes begin to externalize. Decision-making is outsourced. The victim gradually “thinks through” the predator. What appears as guidance becomes cognitive occupation. Psychological literature on coercive control and relational domination identifies this not as a single act of abuse but as an accumulative erosion of autonomy (Stark, 2007).

Crucially, this configuration is not limited to mentorship. It can emerge through friendship, collaboration, shared ideology, or humanitarian positioning. These diverse entry roles converge toward a single outcome: the formation of an **affective gatekeeper** a figure who regulates access to safety, opportunity, truth, and self-trust. Family and professional networks are reframed as dangerous, jealous, or regressive. Isolation is narrated as focus. Dependence is narrated as love.

While individual psychology may involve narcissistic, antisocial, or sadistic traits, this paper resists reducing the phenomenon to pathology alone. These behaviours are **structurally enabled** by visual-culture economies where women's bodies are simultaneously aestheticized, exposed, and morally policed.

Case Anchors Across Scales

1) Global Networked Elite Custodianship: The Epstein Files

The Epstein case illustrates a *systemic, networked pattern of predation that operates at the scale of elite institutional power and sexual exploitation networks*.

Prey Identification: Jeffrey Epstein's operation targeted vulnerable populations systematically young girls, often from precarious economic backgrounds but did so using elite social structures as cover. Documents show massive collections of victim names, images, and correspondence, indicating long-term mapping and recruitment of specific populations at scale, with underage girls represented among those trafficked.

Access and Approach: Rather than direct personal introduction alone, access was mediated through complex networks modeling agencies, philanthropic fronts, private jets, and island retreats that appeared legitimate. These institutional vectors normalized predatory access as *opportunity* or *benefit*, not threat, and insulated the predator through elite association.

Consolidation of Trust: Trust here was institutionalized. Affiliation with famous names and public respectability served as moral camouflage. Elite philanthropy and political engagement functioned as moral capital, dissuading scrutiny and creating an aura of legitimacy that victims and bystanders interpreted as safety.

Maintenance of Dependency: Victims were frequently isolated physically and socially flown across jurisdictions, separated from family, and made dependent on carefully choreographed "support networks" controlled by Epstein and his associates.

Terminal Enclosure: The secure enclosure here was not only physical but legal and institutional: partial non-prosecution deals, political connections, and a culture of silence around elite misdeeds

allowed predation to persist for decades. The very respectability that funded access also protected predators from accountability.

Pattern: In this regime, predation leverages institutional legitimacy and elite insulation to hide abuse. There is less emphasis on *emotional grooming* of individuals and more on *systemic normalization of access* exploitative networks become invisible within elite structures.

2) Narrative / Representational Capture Kalamkaval (Film)

The South Indian film *Kalamkaval*, based on the real-life case of a serial predator, may be read as a narrative condensation of relational predation operating within ordinary social life. Unlike the Epstein model, which relies on elite institutional insulation, predation here functions through role multiplication, fabricated identities, and everyday credibility. The predator repeatedly enters women's lives under different names, occupations, and regional affiliations, tailoring his performance to the relational context of each target. Trust emerges not through spectacular power but through familiarity, routine interaction, and narrative coherence. Harm remains difficult to identify because the predator operates through socially legible roles collaborator, investigator, companion, helper rather than overt domination. Exposure occurs only retrospectively, when fragmented experiences are collectively assembled. The case demonstrates how performative masculinity can weaponize ordinary social trust through adaptive identity performance rather than elite authority.

3) Regional Cultural Custodianship: A Composite Kerala Vignette

Recent media-discussed cases emerging from regional cultural and social spaces in Kerala reveal another variation of embodied duplicity grounded less in elite wealth than in symbolic legitimacy, social credibility, and positional authority. In such contexts, access is frequently mediated through public respectability, institutional affiliation, artistic proximity, or socially trusted roles. Relational trust develops gradually through emotional attentiveness, promises of support, mentorship, or future commitment, often reinforced through sustained digital communication. Unlike highly mobile identity-based predation, this structure depends on stability of public persona: the same socially legitimate identity that grants access also discourages scrutiny. Dependency emerges through affective investment, reputational asymmetry, and fear of social consequences, making

withdrawal, disclosure, or resistance difficult. The significance of such regional cases lies not in individual deviance alone, but in how cultural authority and performative respectability themselves become protective structures within localized social ecosystems.

Comparative Synthesis: Three Paths to the Same Ruin

Dimension	Epstein	<i>Kalamaval</i> (film made on true event)	Kerala Context
Prey Logic	Structural vulnerability	Situational openness	Aspirational visibility
Identity Strategy	Fixed elite persona	Total identity fluidity	Stable role, adaptive function
Temporal Scale	Long-term institutional	Short-term serial	Slow relational
Control Mode	Structural enclosure	Disposable capture	Affective custodianship
Exit Possibility	Blocked by power	Blocked by anonymity	Eroded through dependency

Corrective Clarification

It is important to state that such behaviours are **not exclusive to men**, nor are all men in positions of access predatory. However, this study focuses on male-to-female configurations because classical dance and visual performance in South Asia remain gendered as bodily exposure under patriarchal scrutiny, while authority and gatekeeping continue to be disproportionately male. The asymmetry is structural, not moral.

Toward Early Recognition

The danger for dancers and visual-culture practitioners lies not in naivety but in *performative coherence*. When care, virtue, expertise, and protection align seamlessly over time, the body trusts before the intellect can intervene. Recognizing this requires new pedagogies ones that teach not only technique and expression but also *literacy in performative power, digital duplicity, and affective control*.

Repetition, Linguistic Conditioning, and the Manufacture of Trust

A crucial but under-theorized tactic within predatory performative behaviour is the use of *everyday conversation as rehearsal*. What appears as casual, caring daily communication functions as a disciplined performance practice. Drawing from Butler's assertion that *repetition produces the effect of authenticity*, this study argues that language itself becomes a technology of capture.

Daily chats "normal" messages, routine check-ins, affectionate remarks are not neutral exchanges. They operate as *micro-performances*, repeated with precision until they sediment into the victim's subconscious. Certain phrases are deployed obsessively, almost liturgically, producing what psychologists describe as *cognitive imprinting*. Over time, the repetition bypasses rational evaluation and installs itself as emotional truth.

Across survivor testimonies, clinical interviews, and feminist psychological literature, a recurring set of phrases emerges with remarkable consistency across cultures:

- "The world is against you."
- "Your family doesn't understand you."
- "I am the only one who truly sees you."
- "We are unconditional; others are jealous."

These statements are not shouted or imposed abruptly. They are introduced in *slowly increasing doses*, calibrated to the woman's emotional state. Early on, they appear as empathy. Later, they function as epistemic closures statements that define reality itself.

Tone is central here. The language is often soft, protective, and intimate rather than authoritarian. Linguistically, it combines *care rhetoric* with *exclusivity claims*, creating what trauma theorists identify as *benevolent coercion*. The predator does not initially demand obedience; instead, he narrates himself as indispensable.

Psychological experts have repeatedly noted that one of the most effective mechanisms of deep relational control is *reproductive or future-binding discourse* statements about bearing a child, forming an irreversible bond, or creating a life that cannot be undone. Such propositions do not merely signal intimacy; they *reconfigure power* by anchoring the woman's future to the man's presence. Whether or not pregnancy occurs, the idea itself functions as symbolic ownership.

Importantly, this linguistic strategy is synchronized with *social engineering*. The woman is gradually placed in situations where family relationships strain, professional networks thin, or misunderstandings escalate. Sometimes this abandonment is actively engineered; sometimes it results from the woman's own withdrawal, guided by the belief that separation is necessary for love, focus, or survival. Either way, isolation becomes the condition under which control is finalized.

At this stage, the man materializes the position he has long rehearsed: *sole authority, sole interpreter, sole protector*. What began as support crystallizes into ownership over time, attention, decision-making, and bodily autonomy. Feminist scholars describe this not as loss of agency but as *relational capture*, where the self is reorganized around another's will.

It is crucial to clarify that this paper does not pathologize love, intimacy, or care. Rather, it identifies how *language, tone, and repetition* when deployed strategically within asymmetrical power relations become instruments of domination. The danger lies not in intensity but in *pattern*.⁶

The survey taken for the study across women working in various domains and of different ages, and survivor-informed narratives and consultations with psychologists, revealed strong thematic convergence around the gradual construction of trust, emotional dependency, and delayed recognition of harm. Participants consistently associated trust not with immediate intuition, but

⁶ This analysis draws on auto-ethnographic reflexivity, feminist psychology, performance theory, and documented survivor narratives. References to public cases are treated as discursive sites that reveal patterns, not as evidentiary claims about individuals.

with repeated patterns of care, attentiveness, moral consistency, and emotional availability. Across multiple responses, relational manipulation was described as cumulative rather than abrupt, emerging through phases of validation, affective alignment, increasing dependency, and subtle isolation from alternative support systems. Psychologist consultations further emphasized that such dynamics frequently operate through performative coherence, wherein public gentleness, empathy, and moral credibility override early warning signals and complicate recognition of exploitation. Survivors repeatedly described experiences of confusion, self-doubt, and retrospective clarity, particularly in situations where the same individual maintained contrasting identities across public, intimate, and digital spaces. Collectively, these findings reinforce the study's central argument that embodied duplicity functions not through overt force alone, but through sustained performances of legitimacy, care, and relational indispensability.

Embodied Literacy as Preventive Pedagogy in Visual-Performance Cultures

The preceding analyses indicate that predatory capture within visual and performance cultures does not operate through ignorance alone, nor through the absence of moral instruction. Rather, it exploits gaps in **embodied literacy** the lack of structured knowledge about one's own body as a site of desire, vulnerability, power, boundary, and relational meaning. As performance studies has long argued, the body is not merely expressive but *trained into legibility through repetition, discipline, and social expectation* (Schechner, 2002; Foster, 1995). For artistes whose labour requires bodily visibility, affective openness, and public exposure, such gaps are not incidental but structurally consequential.

Prevailing preventive frameworks frequently rely on simplified binaries of “good touch” and “bad touch.” While necessary at a basic level, such binaries are insufficient for artists operating within visual cultures, where touch, proximity, gaze, and affect are often *professionally normalized and aesthetically sanctioned* (Foster, 1998). Feminist scholars have shown that consent and coercion often operate not as opposites but as overlapping registers within asymmetrical power relations (MacKinnon, 1989; Ahmed, 2017). What is therefore required is a comprehensive embodied pedagogy that enables practitioners to recognize how bodily autonomy, emotional attunement, and relational ethics intersect.

This includes literacy around hormonal and psychosomatic processes, affective attachment, desire, boundary formation, trauma bonding, and vulnerability. Trauma studies have demonstrated that the body often registers harm *before cognitive recognition is possible*, particularly in prolonged relational contexts where care and threat coexist (van der Kolk, 2014). Thus, delayed recognition of exploitation should not be framed as individual failure but as an effect of sustained performative coherence and affective persuasion.

Gurukula Discipline and the Pedagogic Silence Around Desire

My own training within the *gurukula system at Kerala Kalamandalam*, a rigorous residential pedagogy, provides a situated illustration of this paradox. While the system cultivates discipline, endurance, and aesthetic rigor, it often withholds explicit engagement with desire particularly erotic affect. In the context of Mohiniyattam, where *śṛṅgāra* (erotic love) is central, eros was deferred or symbolically substituted with *bhakti* (devotion). Desire was not denied but *rendered unspeakable* during my learning years at Kerala Kalamandalam.

Performance pedagogy scholars have noted that when affective registers are aestheticized without being conceptually addressed, performers may reproduce emotion without understanding its relational force (Foster, 2003). Feminist cultural theory further cautions that the sanitization of female desire often functions as a form of protection that paradoxically produces vulnerability, leaving women ill-equipped to recognize coercive intimacy when it appears in socially legitimate forms (Butler, 2004; Bordo, 1993).

The result is not absence of desire but absence of *language and agency* around it. Dancers emerge with highly trained bodies but limited frameworks to understand attraction, attachment, and emotional intensity as embodied phenomena rather than moral states.

From Moral Regulation to Embodied Empowerment

An empowered embodied pedagogy does not suppress desire nor moralize intimacy. Instead, it names desire as a *human, relational, and somatic reality*, while simultaneously teaching boundary articulation, self-respect, and ethical relationality. Ahmed's work on affect and orientation is particularly instructive here: bodies are shaped by what they are allowed to approach, avoid, or

name (Ahmed, 2006). When performers are denied pedagogic engagement with desire, admiration, or dependency, these forces do not disappear; they operate without scrutiny.

Such pedagogic silence creates fertile ground for what this paper has described as *external guardianship regimes*, where care, mentorship, or solidarity become vehicles for capture. As Goffman's dramaturgical framework suggests, repeated performance produces the effect of authenticity (Goffman, 1959). Without embodied literacy, performers may misread repetition as sincerity, intensity as commitment, and enclosure as protection.

Pedagogy as Structural Prevention

The intervention proposed here is not individual vigilance but *systemic pedagogic reform*. Visual and performance education must move beyond producing disciplined bodies toward cultivating *self-knowing bodies*; bodies capable of reading affect, recognizing manipulation, articulating boundaries, and sustaining autonomy within relational complexity. This aligns with feminist calls for pedagogy that treats embodiment not as raw material to be shaped, but as an epistemic site of knowledge (Braidotti, 2011).

To train bodies without training consciousness is to produce technically accomplished yet structurally vulnerable practitioners. Embodied literacy, therefore, must be understood not as supplementary ethics but as *core infrastructure* for artistic survival in contemporary visual cultures.

Desensitization as a Secondary Technology of Power

Alongside embodied duplicity and relational capture, this paper identifies desensitization as a secondary but decisive technology through which predatory systems sustain themselves. In the Epstein case, public attention has been diluted through an overwhelming circulation of manipulated images, speculative narratives, and AI-generated content that bears little relation to the original documentary corpus. This saturation does not produce clarity; rather, it exhausts affect. The continuous flood of distorted representations renders the violence familiar, repetitive, and ultimately ignorable, transforming outrage into fatigue. Desensitization here functions not as denial but as overexposure.

A parallel mechanism operates within local contexts through juridical processes. Prolonged legal procedures, repeated hearings, delayed verdicts, and procedural opacity often shift the burden of endurance onto the survivor. Over time, public attention dissipates, solidarity erodes, and the case becomes another unresolved narrative within the social archive. In this way, legal process itself can unintentionally operate as an instrument of attrition, where time replaces force and exhaustion replaces silence. As public memory fades, the perpetrator's social life resumes, while the whistleblower or survivor is pushed into invisibility.

Desensitization thus emerges as a post-exposure phase of predation, ensuring that even when truth surfaces, it does not prevail. What is eroded is not evidence but collective attentiveness. This makes clear the urgency of pedagogical interventions that do not merely expose harm but train sustained ethical attention what this paper advances as empowered empathy pedagogy capable of resisting fatigue, delay, and narrative dilution.

Conclusion: From Exposure to Embodied Agency

This paper has argued that predatory power within visual and performance cultures operates not primarily through overt violence, but through sustained dramaturgical labour: patterned self-staging, affective repetition, and the slow consolidation of exclusive guardianship. Across global, cultural, and local scales, the cases examined demonstrate that what appears as contradiction moral speech coexisting with exploitation is better understood as *performative coherence maintained across split stages*.⁷ Respectability, care, and cultural capital function here not as ethical guarantees, but as protective costumes. As Goffman reminds us, audiences are trained to trust the frontstage precisely because the backstage is structurally concealed (Goffman, 1959). In contemporary digital–public life, this concealment is no longer spatial but *platformed*, allowing parallel realities to coexist without immediate contradiction.

For dancers and visual performers, whose training emphasizes openness, sensitivity, and relational attunement, such regimes of duplicity pose heightened risks. The very skills cultivated for artistic excellence listening, mirroring, affective responsiveness can be appropriated as technologies of

⁷ Performance studies has long recognized that “repetition produces the effect of naturalness” (Butler, 1990). This insight becomes critical when applied not only to gender norms, but to ethical perception itself. When virtue is convincingly rehearsed, harm becomes difficult to name.

capture. As Susan Leigh Foster notes, bodies do not merely express meaning; they “learn how to mean” through disciplinary systems (Foster, 1995). When pedagogy trains bodies without equipping them to read power, affect, and manipulation, vulnerability is not accidental but produced.

This paper therefore insists that prevention cannot be limited to moral injunctions or simplified safety frameworks. As trauma research shows, harm is often registered somatically long before it becomes cognitively legible (van der Kolk, 2014). To dismiss delayed recognition as weakness is to misunderstand how affective enclosure operates. What is needed instead is *embodied literacy* the capacity to understand one’s own body as a site of desire, boundary, emotion, hormonal response, and relational meaning.

It is at this juncture that the paper proposes the expansion of what may be termed *Embodied Empowered Empathy Pedagogy (3E P)* within physical and performance training. Empathy, when untrained, can render performers porous to exploitation; when critically cultivated, it becomes a tool of discernment rather than surrender. Such pedagogy does not suppress desire or discipline emotion into silence. Rather, it names them, contextualizes them, and situates them within ethical and relational frameworks. As Sara Ahmed reminds us, empowerment lies not in avoidance, but in learning how bodies are oriented toward whom, toward what, and at what cost (Ahmed, 2006).

The work initiated here does not claim closure. Instead, it opens a pedagogic and methodological trajectory: one that integrates performance studies, feminist theory, and somatic awareness to rethink how bodies are trained for visibility in contemporary culture. The annex that follows offers an auto-ethnographic encounter not as confession, but as embodied corroboration demonstrating how these structures are lived before they are named. To train the body is always to train a way of being in the world. The question this paper leaves us with is not whether performance can be dangerous, but whether pedagogy will continue to produce disciplined vulnerability or begin to cultivate embodied agency.

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Sanskrit in Contact

How Bengali Negotiates Tatsama Vocabulary in Media, Law, Education, and Social Media

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Abstract

Bengali has absorbed vocabulary from multiple linguistic streams over centuries, yet Sanskrit-derived Tatsama words continue to occupy a distinctive position in contemporary usage. While often linked with formality, education, and cultural authority, Tatsama vocabulary does not appear uniformly across modern domains. This paper examines how present-day Bengali negotiates Tatsama choices in four influential spaces—education, law, mainstream media, and social media—where competing lexical alternatives are readily available. Rather than treating Tatsama as a static historical residue, the study focuses on current language practices and the patterned decisions writers and speakers make between Sanskritic forms and *tadbhava*, Perso-Arabic, or English equivalents. Using domain-wise textual sampling and comparative lexical mapping, the analysis highlights contrasting tendencies: educational and legal-administrative registers strongly favour Tatsama for standardization, abstraction, and terminological precision, whereas media language shows balanced usage that mediates authority with readability. Digital writing, by contrast, reveals rapid shifts and creative adaptations: Tatsama forms may be simplified, truncated, humorously stylized, or strategically deployed to signal seriousness, irony, or intellectual stance. The paper argues that Tatsama vocabulary functions not only as lexical inheritance but also as a dynamic resource for register management and identity performance. By situating Sanskrit influence within Bengali’s wider contact ecology, the study contributes to contemporary language-contact research and offers a practical framework for tracking how classical lexical layers remain active within everyday communicative behavior.

1. Introduction:

Languages grow by contact. Slowly. Sometimes unevenly. Bengali is no exception. It is often described as a New Indo-Aryan language, but this label alone does not capture the complexity of its vocabulary. Bengali has developed through centuries of interaction with Sanskrit, Middle Indo-Aryan forms, regional languages, and later with Persian, Arabic, and English. The result is not a single homogeneous lexicon, but a layered system in which different types of words coexist and perform different social functions.

A detailed account of this lexical composition is provided by Niladri Sekhar Dash in his comprehensive study of Bengali vocabulary. According to Dash (2015), Bengali contains roughly **100,000 distinct words**, distributed across several etymological categories. Approximately **16 % of the vocabulary consists of তদ্ভব (*tôdbhôbô*) words**, which are inherited Indo-Aryan forms that evolved naturally through Prakrit and Apabhramśa. Another **16 % are দেশী (*deśi*) words**, which originate outside the Sanskritic lineage and reflect local or regional linguistic influences. A substantial portion, nearly **28 %**, comes from foreign sources (বিদেশী / *bideśi*), including Persian, Arabic, Turkish, and English. Most strikingly, around **40 % of the Bengali lexicon consists of তৎসম (*tôtsômô*) words**, borrowed directly from Sanskrit with minimal phonological modification (Dash, 2015).

This distribution immediately highlights the continuing importance of Sanskrit in Bengali. Tatsama words form the single largest lexical category. Words such as সংস্কৃতি (*samskṛti*), দর্শন (*darśana*), or সৌন্দর্য (*saundarya*) retain a close relationship with their Sanskrit originals and are still widely used in formal contexts. At the same time, everyday communication relies heavily on tadbhava words like মানুষ (*manuṣ*) or খেলা (*khēlā*), as well as foreign borrowings such as টেবিল (*tēbil*) or চালান (*cālān*). Bengali speakers move between these layers with ease, often without conscious awareness.

Much of the existing scholarship on Bengali vocabulary, including Dash's work, has focused on classification, etymology, and historical development. These studies are invaluable, but they tend to treat tatsama vocabulary as a static inheritance. What remains less explored is how these Sanskrit-derived words function in contemporary usage. Do they appear equally across all forms

of writing? Are they preferred in certain domains and avoided in others? What kinds of meanings do they carry today?

This paper addresses these questions by shifting attention from origin to use. Instead of asking where tatsama words come from, it asks how they operate in present-day Bengali. By examining language use across education, law and administration, mainstream media, and social media, the study treats tatsama vocabulary as a living resource. A resource that Bengali speakers actively negotiate to express authority, abstraction, seriousness, or identity. In doing so, the paper seeks to connect the descriptive insights of lexical studies such as Dash (2015) with the realities of contemporary language practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sanskrit Influence on Bengali

Any discussion of Sanskrit influence on Bengali has to begin with its sheer scale. As Dash (2015) shows, nearly forty percent of the Bengali lexicon consists of Sanskrit-derived *tatsama* words. This alone makes it difficult to treat Sanskrit as a marginal or purely historical influence. It is not on the edges of the language. It sits at the center of Bengali vocabulary and shapes how the language sounds and functions even today.

Bengali, of course, did not develop in isolation. Like other Indo-Aryan languages, it emerged through long processes of movement and contact. Linguists generally agree that it evolved from Old Indo-Aryan through Middle Indo-Aryan stages such as Prakrit and Apabhramśa, which shaped its grammar and much of its everyday speech (Chatterji 1926). Sanskrit followed a different path. It was never the language of daily conversation, yet it never vanished. Instead, it continued alongside the vernacular, supplying learned, religious, and formal vocabulary.

Chatterji's distinction between *tadbhava* and *tatsama* words remains crucial here. *Tadbhava* forms changed naturally over time and became part of ordinary speech. *Tatsama* words, by contrast, were borrowed directly from Sanskrit with little change and entered Bengali mainly

through education and literature. This distinction still underlies most descriptions of Bengali vocabulary, including Dash's (2015) work.

Later scholars such as Masica (1991) described Indo-Aryan languages as layered systems, where inherited and learned forms coexist. Bengali fits this pattern well. It keeps multiple lexical options open, allowing speakers to shift tone and register through word choice alone. Sanskritization and prestige borrowing further explain why tatsama vocabulary became firmly established in formal Bengali (Pollock 2006). Yet most studies stop at history. How these words function in contemporary usage remains underexplored. That gap is precisely where this study begins.

2.2 Language Contact and Register Theory

To understand how tatsama vocabulary functions in present-day Bengali, it is necessary to move beyond historical accounts and engage with language contact and register theory. Language contact does not always lead to replacement or loss. More often, it produces specialization, where different forms survive because they serve different communicative purposes (Fishman 1972). Bengali illustrates this clearly. Sanskrit-derived words did not replace tadbhava forms. Instead, they settled into distinct domains.

Register theory helps explain this distribution. Registers are not separate languages but context-sensitive ways of using the same language, shaped by audience, purpose, and situation (Biber et al. 1995). Educational writing, legal discourse, journalism, and everyday interaction demand different styles, and vocabulary choice shifts accordingly.

Language is also closely tied to power. Institutional settings tend to favour stable and prestigious forms (Fairclough 1995), which explains the continued reliance on tatsama vocabulary in academic and legal Bengali. These words convey authority and legitimacy, while everyday speech values speed and familiarity.

Domain-based choice further sharpens this picture. As Ferguson (1994) observed, speakers adjust language according to social domain without switching languages. In Bengali, this often means choosing Sanskrit-derived words in formal contexts and avoiding them in casual or digital spaces.

Most importantly, these frameworks highlight agency. Speakers actively select vocabulary based on context and social meaning. Yet tatsama usage in contemporary Bengali remains underexplored in empirical, domain-based studies.

2.3 Digital Media and Contemporary Language Change

Digital media adds a new layer to how language works. Online writing is fast, informal, and flexible. Scholars note frequent spelling variation, relaxed grammar, and playful styles in digital communication, where expression often matters more than correctness (Crystal 2006).

In India, these spaces also intensify language mixing. English regularly appears alongside regional languages, producing hybrid forms and code-mixing, especially in multilingual settings (Androutsopoulos 2015). Bengali follows this pattern closely. These shifts affect tatsama vocabulary in interesting ways.

Sanskrit-derived words, usually formal and orthographically complex, are often simplified online or used selectively for emphasis, irony, or intellectual effect. Conjuncts are dropped, diacritics ignored, and meanings stretched. Yet most studies of digital language overlook how such older lexical layers operate in these new spaces.

3. Methodology

The present study adopts a qualitative, corpus-based research design, supported by selective computational processing. The aim is to examine how Sanskrit-derived tatsama vocabulary functions in contemporary Bengali across different domains, rather than to construct a fully annotated linguistic database.

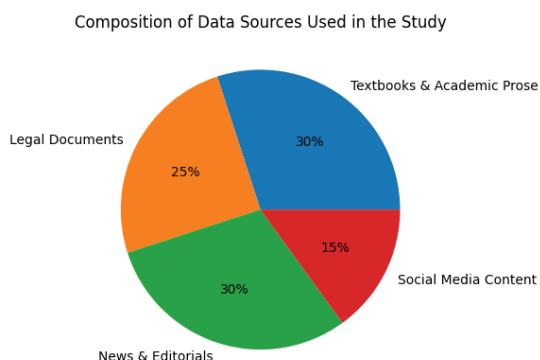
Given the absence of any publicly available, pre-tagged corpus of Bengali textbooks or institutional texts with explicit tatsama labeling, the study relies on the construction of a customized corpus drawn from Indian Bengali online sources. This approach allows both methodological transparency and close alignment with the research objectives.

3.1 Corpus Design and Data Sources

The corpus was compiled from publicly accessible Indian Bengali websites representing a range of formal and semi-formal registers. These sources were selected because they reflect real, current language use in institutional, educational, journalistic, and public communicative contexts. No single source was treated as a complete corpus in itself. Instead, the study builds a composite dataset by drawing from multiple platforms.

A substantial portion of the data was collected from major Indian Bengali newspaper websites such as *Anandabazar Patrika*, *Bartaman Patrika*, *Ei Samay*, and *Aajkaal*. These platforms publish large volumes of written Bengali in standard orthography on a daily basis. News reports and editorials from these sites were used to represent mainstream media language and public institutional discourse. Texts were collected either through manual selection or basic web-scraping techniques using Python-based tools.

To balance journalistic language with longer, reflective prose, the study also included material from Bengali literary and magazine portals such as *Krittibas* and *Kabita*. These



platforms host essays, opinion pieces, and literary writing that approximate academic or semi-formal registers. Although such sites do not provide structured corpora, they offer linguistically rich and stylistically controlled text suitable for close lexical analysis.

Educational and institutional language was represented through Bengali PDFs published by Indian state education bodies, particularly the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education and the West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education. These included textbooks, curriculum documents, and instructional materials available on official websites. As most of these texts are published in PDF format, Optical Character Recognition (OCR) tools were used to convert them into machine-readable text. Post-OCR cleaning was necessary to remove formatting noise and non-linguistic content.

Additional data was drawn from Indian government portals that provide Bengali versions of public information, such as legal notices and administrative announcements. These texts are particularly relevant for examining formal register and standardized language use. Open platforms such as Bengali Wikipedia and Wikisource were also consulted to supplement factual and explanatory prose, given their open access and textual consistency.

Together, these sources allowed the construction of a domain-balanced corpus comprising approximately 1000 to 2000 words per major domain, including education, media, and institutional writing. The corpus reflects contemporary usage and is synchronic in scope.

3.2 Data Collection and Pre-Processing

All texts were collected from publicly available webpages or downloadable documents between January and December 2024. HTML content was cleaned to remove navigation menus, advertisements, and non-Bengali text. PDF files were processed using OCR software, after which the extracted text was manually checked for accuracy. Particular attention was paid to correcting OCR errors in conjunct consonants and vowel signs, which are crucial for accurate identification of Sanskrit-derived forms.

The cleaned texts were normalized to ensure consistent encoding and orthography. No attempt was made to modernize or simplify spelling, as preserving original orthographic choices was essential for observing tatsama usage in context.

3.3 Identification and Analysis of Tatsama Vocabulary

The identification of tatsama vocabulary was carried out through a combination of manual reading and lexicon-based support. Automated tagging was deliberately avoided, as many Bengali words occupy ambiguous positions between tatsama and nativized usage. Instead, candidate words were identified through repeated contextual reading, frequency observation, and comparison with standard lexical resources.

For etymological verification, established reference works such as the Bangla Academy's Sanskrit loanword lists and the Monier-Williams Sanskrit lexicon were consulted. Concordance tools such as AntConc were used to track repetition and distribution of selected lexemes across

domains. The analysis focused not on exhaustive enumeration, but on recurring and socially salient tatsama forms that play a clear role in register formation.

3.4 Analytical Framework and Limitations

The analytical framework is usage-based and interpretive. Tatsama words were examined within their immediate textual contexts to understand their pragmatic function, stylistic value, and domain-specific meaning. Cross-domain comparison was then used to identify patterns of retention, avoidance, or recontextualization.

The study does not claim to represent spoken Bengali or rural varieties, nor does it aim to provide a statistically complete account of tatsama usage. Its strength lies in close textual analysis grounded in real, contemporary data. By building a corpus from Indian Bengali online sources, the methodology reflects both practical constraints and the linguistic realities of modern Bengali usage.

4. Analysis and Findings

The analysis demonstrates that tatsama vocabulary in contemporary Bengali is not distributed randomly, nor does it function uniformly across communicative domains. Instead, its usage reflects domain-specific norms and social expectations.

The examples discussed below are drawn from educational materials prescribed by state education boards, major Indian Bengali newspapers, official government notifications, and publicly accessible social media content. All examples are representative constructions based on recurring patterns observed in the data.

4.1 Tatsama in Education

Educational Bengali displays the most consistent and dense use of tatsama vocabulary. Textbooks prescribed by the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education and the West Bengal Council of Higher Secondary Education rely heavily on Sanskrit-derived abstract nouns for

conceptual explanation (WBBSE, 2023; WBCHSE, 2022). Tatsama forms are preferred because they allow ideas to be presented with precision, seriousness, and institutional authority.

Typical instructional sentences include constructions such as:

এই অধ্যায়ে আমরা ভারতের সামাজিক কাঠামো বিশ্লেষণ করব। (*ēi adhyāyē āmarā bhārater sāmājika kāthāmō viśleṣaṇa karba*) [“In this chapter, we will analyze the social structure of India.”] Lexical items such as **অধ্যায়** (*adhyāya*, ‘chapter’) and **বিশ্লেষণ** (*viśleṣaṇa*, ‘analysis’) are characteristic of textbook discourse and are rarely replaced by colloquial alternatives. Their repeated use creates a recognizable academic register that distinguishes educational writing from everyday communication.

Similarly, conceptual explanations frequently employ tatsama forms such as **ধারণা** (*dhāraṇā*, ‘concept’) and **বিকাশ** (*vikāśa*, ‘development’), as in:

এই ধারণাটি আধুনিক রাষ্ট্রচিন্তার বিকাশের সঙ্গে যুক্ত। (*ēi dhāraṇāṭi ādhunika rāṣṭracintāra vikāśēra saṅgē yukta*) [“This concept is connected with the development of modern political thought.”] Such patterns reinforce the association between tatsama vocabulary and academic authority. The use of Sanskrit-derived abstraction allows complex ideas to be framed in a formal and standardized manner. As Masica (1991) observes, learned borrowings in Indo-Aryan languages often function as tools of abstraction, and Bengali educational prose clearly exemplifies this tendency.

4.2 Tatsama in Legal and Administrative Bengali

Legal and administrative Bengali exhibits a more rigid and formulaic use of tatsama vocabulary. Official notifications issued by state and central government bodies consistently employ standardized Sanskrit-derived expressions (Government of West Bengal, 2023). A representative formulation is:

উপরোক্ত বিষয়ে প্রয়োজ্য বিধান অনুসারে প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে। (*uparōkta biṣayē prayōjya vidhāna anusārē prayōjanīya byabasthā grahaṇa karā habē*) [“Necessary measures

will be taken in accordance with the applicable provisions regarding the above-mentioned matter.”] Here, words such as **বিধান** (*vidhāna*, ‘legal provision’) and **ব্যবস্থা** (*byabasthā*, ‘measure/arrangement’) contribute to a register that prioritizes institutional continuity over accessibility. Even brief administrative orders retain a formal tone, as seen in constructions like: **এই নির্দেশ অবিলম্বে কার্যকর হবে।** (*ēi nirdēśa abilambē kāryakara habē*) [“This directive will come into effect immediately.”] This pattern reflects what Fairclough (1995) identifies as the conservative nature of institutional discourse, where older and prestigious linguistic forms are preserved to maintain authority and legitimacy.

4.3 Tatsama in Media

Media Bengali adopts a more flexible strategy. News reports published in widely circulated newspapers such as *Anandabazar Patrika* and *Ei Samay* typically employ moderately Sanskritized vocabulary that remains accessible to a broad readership (Anandabazar Patrika, 2024). For example: **ঘটনাস্থলে পৌঁছে পুলিশ তদন্ত শুরু করেছে।** (*ghaṭanāsthalē paũchē pulis tadanta śuru karēchē*) [“After reaching the scene, the police have begun the investigation.”] Here, **ঘটনা** (*ghaṭanā*, ‘incident’) and **তদন্ত** (*tadanta*, ‘investigation’) are tatsama but highly naturalized. Editorial writing, however, shows increased Sanskritization, especially when expressing evaluation or ideological stance. Opinion pieces frequently use constructions such as: **এই সিদ্ধান্ত গণতান্ত্রিক মূল্যবোধের পরিপন্থী।** (*ēi siddhānta gaṇatāntrika mūlyabōdhēra paripanthi*) [“This decision runs contrary to democratic values.”] Words like **সিদ্ধান্ত** (*siddhānta*, ‘decision’) and **মূল্যবোধ** (*mūlyabōdha*, ‘values’) frame arguments within a moral and political register. This internal variation supports Ferguson’s (1994) concept of domain-based register differentiation.

4.4 Tatsama in Social Media

Social media presents the most dynamic and context-sensitive use of tatsama vocabulary. While informal posts tend to avoid heavy Sanskritization, tatsama words appear strategically in political and ethical discussions. Public posts on platforms such as Facebook and X frequently include statements like:

সংবিধান রক্ষার দায়িত্ব আমাদের সকলের। (*saṁvidhāna rakṣāra dāyitva āmadēra sakalēra*)

[“The responsibility to protect the Constitution belongs to all of us.”] Here, **সংবিধান** (*saṁvidhāna*, ‘constitution’) and **দায়িত্ব** (*dāyitva*, ‘responsibility’) signal seriousness and civic responsibility. At the same time, code-mixing is common:

এই সিদ্ধান্তটা completely অযৌক্তিক। (*ēi siddhāntaṭā completely ayauktika*) [“This decision is completely illogical.”] Such hybrid constructions reflect the fluid linguistic practices of digital spaces (Crystal, 2006; Androutsopoulos, 2015). Irony and parody are also widespread, with exaggerated formal language used humorously, as in: **অত্যন্ত দুঃখের সহিত জানানো যাচ্ছে যে আজ ছুটি নেই।** (*atyanta duḥkhēra sahita jānānō yācchē yē āja chuṭi nēi*) [“It is being announced with great regret that there is no holiday today.”] These examples show that tatsama vocabulary is not rejected in digital contexts but creatively recontextualized.

5. Discussion

Taken together, these findings confirm that tatsama vocabulary functions as a register marker rather than a static lexical inheritance. In education and law, Sanskrit-derived words operate as symbols of abstraction, authority, and institutional legitimacy. In media discourse, they are selectively deployed to balance seriousness with accessibility. In social media, they serve as tools for identity performance, irony, and ideological positioning.

This pattern supports the argument that Sanskrit in Bengali functions as symbolic capital, available to both institutions and individuals. Crucially, Bengali speakers are not passive recipients of Sanskrit influence. They actively negotiate it across domains. The same lexical item may appear as a neutral administrative term, a moral judgment in journalism, or a sarcastic remark online. Meaning emerges through context and use.

By grounding tatsama analysis in contemporary data and clearly sourced domains, this study extends the descriptive insights of Dash (2015) into the realm of actual language practice.

Sanskrit influence in Bengali, therefore, should be understood not only historically, but as an ongoing and dynamic process shaped by social context and communicative intent.

6. Conclusion

This study examined Sanskrit-derived tatsama vocabulary in Bengali not as a static historical inheritance, but as an active element of contemporary language use. Building on Dash's (2015) description of Bengali's lexical composition, the paper moved beyond etymology to explore how tatsama words function across education, law and administration, media, and social media. The findings show that Sanskrit influence in Bengali is neither uniform nor declining. It is shaped by domain, register, and communicative purpose.

In institutional contexts such as education and legal discourse, tatsama vocabulary continues to signal abstraction, authority, and standardization. Its persistence reflects both historical prestige and the institutional need for linguistic stability. Media language demonstrates a more negotiated use, balancing accessibility with seriousness through selective Sanskritization. Social media presents the most dynamic picture, where tatsama words are recontextualized for emphasis, critique, irony, or identity performance, often alongside colloquial Bengali and English.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that Bengali does not borrow Sanskrit passively. Speakers and writers actively manage Sanskrit-derived vocabulary as a linguistic resource. Tatsama words function as tools for intellectual framing, institutional legitimacy, and social positioning rather than as mere remnants of the past.

By integrating lexical description with register theory and contemporary data, this study highlights the importance of examining Sanskrit influence in actual usage contexts. Sanskrit remains deeply embedded in Bengali, not as a frozen classical layer, but as a flexible and meaningful component of a living language.

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Purāṇik and Aitihāsik allusions in Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī

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ABSTRACT:

Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās' *Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī* constitutes an unprecedented and monumental contribution to the field of classical music. The work is a rāgamālika incorporating ninety Carnatic rāga-s, the first half composed in Saṃskṛtaṃ and the second in Telugu. Structurally and thematically, the composition assumes the form of a devotional hymn addressed to the goddess Kanyākumārī, with each individual line set in a distinct rāga. From a musical perspective, the work engages extensively with intricate rāga-s and tāla-s, and may therefore be understood not merely as an exemplar of remarkable compositional ingenuity, but also as a valuable guide to musical praxis.

From a literary perspective, the composition reveals the extraordinary erudition and poetic versatility of the composer in both Saṃskṛtaṃ and Telugu. The first half, being directly addressed to the Goddess, appropriately employs Saṃskṛtaṃ—the language traditionally associated with mantra, liturgy, and concise yet potent modes of divine invocation. Through this medium, the composer fashions expressions of devotional grandeur and sacred supplication with remarkable economy and intensity. The second half, by contrast, turns inward toward the condition of the human self and accordingly adopts Telugu, whose idiomatic richness and emotional immediacy render it especially suited to intimate reflection and contemplative expression.

This paper examines the Vedāntik and Aitihāsik allusions embedded in the Mañjarī and explores how they reflect the composer's deeply devotional vision. In this vision, the rāga-s themselves are conceived as manifestations of the Goddess, with each melodic form perceived as embodying a distinct divine presence. The composer imaginatively visualises the Goddess through the aesthetic and emotive qualities inherent in the rāga-s themselves. Consequently, the musical structure of the composition acquires a profound theological and symbolic dimension.

Key words: Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās, Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī, Dēvīstuti, Rāgamālika, Pañcamukhi – Ṣaṇmukhi

INTRODUCTION

Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās (1864–1945) has rightly been described as a versatile genius. He was a prolific writer, musician, composer, aṣṭāvadhāni, dancer, and actor. He is credited with creating the composite art form of *Harikathā*, which integrates Purāṇic storytelling, extempore poetry, the rendering of classical music, dance, and dramatic performance. He composed and performed his first *Harikathā* at the age of nineteen and continued to present *Harikathā-s* over the course of the next six decades. A distinctive feature of his *Harikathā* performances lay in his enactment of all the principal characters within the narrative. He authored more than fifty works in Saṃskṛtaṃ, Telugu, and Acca-Telugu, the latter being a form of Telugu deliberately devoid of Saṃskṛtaṃ expressions.

Apart from the literary features commonly associated with aṣṭāvadhāna performances, his aṣṭāvadhāna-s were distinguished by several unique musical dimensions, including the spontaneous composition and rendering of kṛti-s in specified rāga-s and tāḷa-s. He further cultivated the remarkable ability to render kṛti-s simultaneously in two distinct tāḷa-s, and subsequently in four tāḷa-s executed concurrently through different movements of the body. In the later stages of this practice, he attained the extraordinary feat of performing five and even six tāḷa-s simultaneously—maintained through coordinated movements of both hands, both feet, and the head, while the sixth was indicated by the palm of the right hand in a technique known as *laghuśekharaṃ*. He designated the simultaneous performance of five tāḷa-s as *pañcamukhi*—an appellation alluding to the five facets of Śiva, namely Sadyōjāta, Vāmadēva, Aghōra, Tatpuruṣa, and Īśāna—and the simultaneous rendering of six tāḷa-s as *ṣaṇmukhi*.

The literary and cultural elite of his time conferred upon Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās such honorific titles as *Puṃbhāva Sarasvati* and *Saṅgīta Sāhitya Sārvabhauma* in recognition of his exalted and prolific literary output. His extraordinary mastery in the simultaneous performance of the

pañcamukhi and *ṣaṇmukhi* systems further earned him the appellations *Layabrahma* and *Pañcamukhī Paramēśvara*.

The composition of *Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī* was intended for the practical application of the *pañcamukhi* and *ṣaṇmukhi* systems. Following a pilgrimage to Kanyākumārī, Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās composed the *mañjarī* as a devotional ode to the Goddess. *Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī* constitutes an unprecedented and monumental contribution to the field of classical music. Though comparatively brief in extent—comprising merely 180 lines—it may nevertheless be regarded as a veritable magnum opus. The work is a rāgamālīka incorporating ninety Carnatic rāga-s, the first half composed in Saṃskṛtaṃ and the second in Telugu. Structurally and thematically, the composition assumes the form of a devotional hymn addressed to the goddess Kanyākumārī, with each individual line set in a distinct rāga.

A particularly noteworthy feature of the composition lies in its employment of rāgamudrā-s: the name of each rāga is ingeniously invoked as an epithet of the Goddess. The semantic flexibility of these rāgamudrā-s is especially striking, as the terms function variously as nouns, adjectives, and verbs within the poetic framework. In the latter half of the *mañjarī*, the same sequence of rāga-s reappears in reverse order, thereby imparting an additional structural symmetry to the composition. From a musical perspective, moreover, the work engages extensively with intricate rāga-s and tāla-s, and may therefore be understood not merely as an exemplar of remarkable compositional ingenuity, but also as a valuable guide to musical praxis.

At this juncture, the observations of Śrīkāntaṃ Nāgēndra Śāstri, a renowned musician and professor of music who supervised the author's doctoral thesis, in the preface to “*Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī—A Musicological Study*” merit quotation in some detail.

[...] It is not merely a composition; it is a world unto itself. It invites the listener, the reader, and the student into a realm where melody, language, rhythm, philosophy, and devotion interweave with remarkable precision and creative force. No single label—rāgamālīka, stotram, kāvya, musical exposition, or devotional hymn—can fully contain the scope of this work. It is a grand, holistic vision.

[...] The Sanskrit portion is steeped in scriptural luminosity. Each verse resonates with the cadence of mantra-like poetry. The Goddess is invoked through names, metaphors, and visions drawn from Śākta traditions, Tantric imagery, Vedānta, and Purāṇik lore. The poet seamlessly blends technical musical terms with the luminous vocabulary of spiritual texts.

[...] The Telugu half turns inward. If the Sanskrit section ascends toward the divine, the Telugu portion gently descends into the human heart. In a language rooted in softness and emotional immediacy, Nārāyaṇa Dās reflects on impermanence, weakness, moral struggle, and the inevitable need for surrender. His compositions echo the sentiments of Tyāgarāja, Bhadrācala Rāmadās, and the great bhakti poets. Yet, this is not simple lament; it is a thoughtful dialogue between the self and the supreme. (Śrīkāntam, 2025)

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MAÑJARI

In Carṇatic music, many theoretical rāgas are not in popular use. The mañjari demonstrated their practical applicability through compositions in these rāgas. This exemplifies lakṣaṇa–lakṣya samanvaya, the integration of theory and practice. The ninety rāga-s constituting the *Mañjarī* are classified into ten *navati*-s, each comprising nine rāga-s. These are as follows:

1. *Sarva Saṃpūrṇa Rāga-s* – 9
[Śaṅkarābharaṇam, Nāgabhairavi, Syāmalāṅgi, Sarasāṅgi, Kīravāṇi, Pāvani, Rūpavati, Gāyakapriyē, Jyōtisvarūpiṇi]
2. *Saṃpūrṇa Śāḍava Rāga-s* – 9
[Jīvaraṅjani, Tilakaprakāśini, Saṅgītapriyē, Bhairav, Padmarāgaṃ, Kusumapriyē, Gītamurti, Duṃdubhipriyē, Saraṅganayanē]
3. *Śāḍava Saṃpūrṇa Rāga-s* – 9
[Bhūṣaṇi, Sammōhana, Siṃhavāhini, Kāmbhōji, Jayanārāyaṇi, Vīṇādhari, Kaumāri, Niraṅjani, Manōraṅjani]
4. *Saṃpūrṇa Auḍava Rāga-s* – 9

[Lalitagauri, Pañcamam, Garuḍadhvani, Gandharvaṃ, Nāṭa, Hēmaṃbari, Sīmantini, Mañjari, Sāramati]

5. *Auḍava Saṃpūrṇa Rāga-s* – 9

[Sunādapriya, Alaṃkāriṇi, Bilahari, Ārabhi, Kēdāragauḷa, Gauri, Dhanyāsi, Śṛṅgāriṇi, Syāmala]

6. *Śuddha Śāḍava Rāga-s* – 9

[Suddha Tōḍi, Vāgīsvari, Gurupriya, Kalakanṭhi, Lalita, Malayamārutam, Śrīrañjani, Haṃsadhvani, Svarūpiṇi]

7. *Śāḍava Auḍava Rāga-s* – 9

[Lōkōttari, Ratnākari, Susmita, Svarābharaṇam, Kōkila Svarāvaḷi, Nagabhūṣaṇi, Nāṭakurañji, Candrikāgauḷa, Rasāli]

8. *Auḍava Śāḍava Rāga-s* – 9

[Sugātri, Jaganmōhini, Malahari, Vasanta, Rudrapriya, Nārāyaṇi, Vēdapriya, Tapasvini, Sarasvati]

9. *Śuddha Auḍava Rāga-s* – 9

[Sunādavīnōdini, Haṃsadhvani, Nāgasvarāḷi, Mēgharaṇani, Mōhana, Kaumōda, Bhūpala, Suravarāḷi, Madhyamāvati]

10. *Vakra Rāga-s* – 9

[Punnāgaravaḷi, Ānandabhairavi, Mukhāri, Nīlāmbari, Bhavāni, Janaraṇani, Cāmunḍi, Phaladāyini, Mañjari]

PAÑCAMUKHI – ŚAṆMUKHI

In the caraṇam of the kṛti “Nāda tanumanīṣam Śaṅkaram, namāmi mē manasā śirasā”, Tyāgarāja wrote: “Sadyōjātādi pañca vaktraja sarigamapadhanī vara saptasvara”. Sadyōjāta, Aghōra, Tatpuruṣa, Īśāna, and Vāmadēva are the five faces of Paramēśvara. The seven notes of the Carnāṭaka musical scale emanate from these five faces as follows: gāndhāraṃ from Sadyōjāta; ṣaḍjamaṃ and ṛṣabhaṃ from Aghōra; pañcamam from Tatpuruṣa; madhyamaṃ and niṣādhaṃ from Īśāna; and dhaivatam from Vāmadēva.

In addition to the svara-s, five tāḷa-s also emanated from the five faces:

“Sadyojāte mukhe Śambhōḥ, Vāmadēvē’py Aghōrakē |
Tatpuruṣe ca Īśānyē jātās ca ccha-tsuṭādayaḥ ||”

These are considered the first five among the one hundred and eight recognised tāḷa-s. There are seven tāḷa-s that possess laghu, dhruta, and anudhruta verbal components as tāḷāṅga-s. When these are conjugated with the five laghu-jāti-s, they yield pañcatrimśati, or thirty-five tāḷa-s, that are generally in vogue. The five jāti-s include Triśra-jāti (three akṣara-s), Caturaśra-jāti (four akṣara-s), Khaṇḍa-jāti (five akṣara-s), Miśra-jāti (seven akṣara-s), and Saṅkīrṇa-jāti (nine akṣara-s). These five jāti-s relate to the laghu among the six tāḷāṅga-s. It is because of their relation to the laghu-s that they are known as pañcajāti ēkatāḷa-s.

Adibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās conceptualised the *mañjari* as a form to be performed by a single musician simultaneously rendering five tāḷa-s through different parts of the body—the hands, legs, and head in the case of *pañcamukhi*, with the addition of the right palm in *ṣaṇmukhi*. The rendering of the *mañjari* can conclude only when all the tāḷa-s reach completion simultaneously, and never in between. Mastery of this art demands rigorous and sustained practice, along with extraordinary concentration during performance.

Recognising the immense difficulty of such execution, Mahāmahōpādhyāya Dr. Nūkala Chinasatyanarayana, the eminent musician and music professor, suggested an alternative approach: five different musicians could jointly render the *mañjari*, each performing in a distinct tāḷa. (Nūkala, 1977b) He further observed that if the *mañjari* is taught systematically and learnt with dedication, a student who begins with the first āvartam would, by the completion of the 180th āvartam, evolve into a true *vidwan*. (Nūkala, 1977a)

As part of her thesis work, the author conducted interviews with eminent musicians and litterateurs, among whom the most prominent was the renowned Purāṇic exponent Brahmaśrī Sāmavēdaṃ Ṣaṇmukha Śarma. The interview was conducted in Telugu, and its gist is presented below in English translation.

ERUDITION, POETICS, AND BHAKTI

The composition reveals the extraordinary erudition and poetic versatility of the composer in both Saṃskṛtaṃ and Telugu. The first half, being directly addressed to the Goddess, appropriately employs Saṃskṛtaṃ—the language traditionally associated with mantra, liturgy, and concise yet potent modes of divine invocation. Through this medium, the composer fashions expressions of devotional grandeur and sacred supplication with remarkable economy and intensity. The second half, by contrast, turns inward toward the condition of the human self and accordingly adopts Telugu, whose idiomatic richness and emotional immediacy render it especially suited to intimate reflection and contemplative expression.

Thematically, the first portion of the work is devoted primarily to the expression of bhakti, whereas the latter centres upon human frailty, moral introspection, and surrender at the feet of the Goddess. Themes such as offering the mind in devotion, recognising the impermanence of worldly riches, relinquishing conceit, and seeking refuge in the divine are articulated with profound emotional resonance. In this respect, the work stands within the broader bhakti tradition exemplified by Tyāgarāja’s celebrated *Pañcaratna Kīrtana*, “Duḍukugala nannēdorakoḍuku brōcurā...,” wherein the devotee laments human follies and moral lapses while seeking divine grace and redemption. Similarly, the second half of *Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī* foregrounds humility, self-examination, and supplication as essential dimensions of spiritual discipline. The acknowledgement of one’s own limitations and the conscious renunciation of demonic qualities in favour of divine virtues emerge as integral aspects of the devotional path.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Particularly striking are the composer’s evocative similes and moral reflections, which lend the composition both poetic beauty and philosophical depth. Expressions such as “Does ghee put out fires?” and “Worlds appear and disappear like bubbles upon the sea” convey, with remarkable lucidity, the transience of worldly existence and the inadequacy of material pursuits in alleviating existential suffering. Such imagery simultaneously inculcates ethical reflection and intensifies the

devotional appeal to the Goddess, before whom the soul is repeatedly offered in humility and surrender.

Although the latter half of the composition is predominantly in Telugu, the composer—following established literary conventions—draws freely upon both Saṃskṛtaṃ and Telugu idioms wherever contextually appropriate. The resulting linguistic texture is at once refined and accessible, combining lucid Saṃskṛtaṃ expressions with pure, and at times pastoral, Telugu diction. This seamless interplay of languages not only demonstrates the composer’s literary mastery, but also enriches the devotional and aesthetic dimensions of the work.

RĀGAMUDRĀ-S: GRAMMAR AND DIVINE MANIFESTATION

The poetic and musical achievement of the composition becomes even more remarkable when one considers the complexity of its governing constraints. To incorporate the names of the rāga-s as rāgamudrā-s identified with the Goddess, while simultaneously expressing bhakti, portraying the nature of worldly existence, illuminating the path toward spiritual realisation, and articulating the soul’s yearning for refuge, is by no means an easy undertaking. Yet such a synthesis lies entirely within the creative and poetic mastery of Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās. Although the work is fundamentally musical in conception, the composer demonstrates extraordinary skill in composing within the structural demands of musical form without in any way diminishing the literary excellence of the text.

The employment of rāgamudrā-s as epithets or synonymous expressions of the Goddess ought not to be understood merely as an exercise in brevity or technical ingenuity. Rather, it reflects the composer’s deeply devotional vision, wherein the rāga-s themselves are conceived as manifestations of the Goddess. A fervent devotee, Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsu appears to perceive the divine presence within each melodic form, imaginatively visualising the Goddess through the aesthetic and emotive qualities embodied in the rāga-s themselves. The musical structure of the composition thus acquires a profound theological and symbolic dimension.

Equally noteworthy is the composer's linguistic virtuosity in both Saṃskṛtaṃ and Telugu. The skilful transformation of rāga-names into varied grammatical functions—whether as nouns, adjectives, or verbal forms—demonstrates not only philological command and poetic inventiveness, but also the capacity to elevate musical terminology into richly layered devotional expression. Such usage transcends mere economy of words. By integrating the rāgamudrā-s organically into the grammatical and semantic fabric of the composition, the composer establishes manifold associations between the rāga and the Goddess, sustaining the divine presence continuously throughout the work. Consequently, the rāgamudrā functions not as an externally imposed or ornamental insertion, but as an intrinsic devotional and poetic device through which musical, linguistic, and spiritual meanings are harmoniously unified. Śrīkāntaṃ concurs:

The rāgamudra, whether woven into the grammar or nestled within compound words, does not disturb the sanctity of the verse. Instead, it becomes a flower in the garland—the kusumamañjarī—offered at the feet of the Divine Mother. In this portion, music and theology merge, with the rāga-s transforming into vehicles of devotion rather than remaining merely melodic frameworks. (Śrīkāntaṃ, 2025)

Writing metrical compositions is, in itself, a demanding and restrictive framework. To that, one must add the formidable task of composing a rāgamālīka in ninety rāga-s, conforming rigorously to rhythmic syllables and tāḷa-s, all the while preserving the flow of thought and sustaining an unwavering devotional flavour. This is no ordinary achievement. There may have been poets or composers who employed some of these devices—musical or literary—but it can be said without fear of contradiction that none has done so with such comprehensive mastery. The very conception of the *Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī* is unprecedented; bringing it to full bloom as a work of literature is yet another wonder.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dās was, above all, an intense devotee. Dharma is the very essence of Harikatha. In Kaliyuga, chanting the name of God is the path to Mokṣa. He employed Harikatha as a vehicle to propagate the path of devotion. That is its lofty aim.

UPANIṢDIK AND AITIHĀSIK ALLUSIONS

Purāṇa-s teach us that the study of Śāstra-s should not be pursued for vanity, nor for the acquisition of wealth and pleasures, but for seeking refuge in the Paramātmā. This lofty ideal finds clear and prominent expression in this work.

Truth, kindness, fellow-feeling, patience, control of anger and of the senses, contentment, and freedom from weariness are all divine qualities. These are the very virtues taught in the *Bhagavadgīta*, and they are clearly reflected in this work.

Bhavānī is the creator and the cause of the three worlds; she is the source of birth, growth, and dissolution. This is the doctrine propounded in Purāṇa-s such as the *Devībhāgavatam*.

Worshipping Jaganmātā “as the light of the three worlds, as the embodiment of both enchanting gentleness (*mohana* and *saumya*) and fierce power—the very force heralded by the drumbeat that brings about cosmic dissolution—and as the One who wears the nine planets as ornaments”, this is how Śākta literature envisions Her. All these diverse forms of the Supreme Deity, along with their associated practices, find expression in this work.

Vedānta Śāstraṃ teaches both *bhakti* and *jñānam*. The paths that cultivate pure devotion (*śuddha-bhakti*) and *Brahma-jñānam* are described as intense meditation and an unwavering quest for the Divine—what the tradition refers to as *mīmāṃsā*, the disciplined inquiry into ultimate truth.

Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dāsu Garu adopted the worship of the Deity as the ladder leading toward *mokṣa*. He addressed Her with exalted epithets such as “*Kaivalyacaṇḍrikā*”, “*Nirañjanī*”, “*Nityānanda-Śrīrañjanī*”, “*Sarvalokottarī*”, “*Paramahaṃsānandinī*”, and “*Parabrahmasvarūpiṇī*”, each name reflecting a distinct facet of Her transcendental nature.

Envisioning the formless Deity—beyond the grasp of human thought—he further worshipped Her as “*Patitapāvanī*”, “*Vīṇādhārī*”, “*Sīmāntinī*”, “*Nikhilapramāṇa-Vāgeśvarī*” (the very embodiment of the Vedas, Śrīmāta), and “*Trilokajanānī*”. The Upaniṣads describe Brahman as *nirguṇa*,

transcending all attributes and human comprehension, and as *saguṇa*, endowed with auspicious qualities. The mode of worship recommended by the Upaniṣats—recognising the Divine in both these aspects—is vividly enacted in this work.

The Upaniṣadic line “*param pumāṃsaṃ nihitaṃ guhāyāṃ*”¹ speaks of the Supreme Reality abiding in the firmament of the heart. Śrī Nārāyaṇa Dās expressed this idea through the evocative phrase “*bhaktamānobilaharicarite*”.

In a similar manner, he rendered the Upaniṣadic teaching — “*nakarmaṇā naprajayā dhanena tyāgēnaikē amṛtatvamānaśuḥ*”², which declares that immortality is attained not through action, progeny, or wealth, but through renunciation—into a vivid poetic expression: “Give birth to valiant sons; let them rule the whole world—yet, are riches or learning permanent, or are they really but air bubbles?”

He interpreted the Upaniṣadic teachings — “*śraddhā-bhakti-dhyāna-yogādavaihi*” and “*śraddhāvān labhate jñānaṃ*”³, which emphasise that knowledge is attained through steadfast faith, devotion, and meditative discipline—through the succinct expression: “If you practise zeal, you will prevail.” Reflecting the aphoristic thought “*the world is void, false, unreal*” echoes the Upaniṣadic truth “*jagan mithyā; brahma satyaṃ*”⁴—the world is illusory, and Brahman alone is real. Therefore, Brahman must be meditated upon, for Brahman is *Parātparī*, the supreme beyond the supreme. In this spirit, the poet uses the Telugu phrase “*ninu viḍuvaka*,” literally “without leaving you,” which spiritually conveys the deeper resolve: “I must remain with You alone.”

¹ परं पुमांसं निहितं गुहायाम् । (श्वेताश्वतरोपनिषत् — 3.11)

² न कर्मणा न प्रजया धनेन

त्यागेनैके अमृतत्वमानशुः ।

परेण नाकं निहितं गुहायां

विभ्राजते तद्यतयो विशन्ति ॥ (मुण्डकोपनिषत्, 3.2.3)

³ श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।

ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥ भगवद्गीता (4.39)

⁴ “ब्रह्मसत्यम् जगन्मिथ्य; जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः ।” आदि शङ्कराचार्यः

When he prays, “*What deliverance is there apart from the Lord’s mercy?*”, “*What refuge exists but Your sacred lotus feet?*”, and “*Abandon not this wretched and afflicted being,*” he embodies the Upaniṣadic declaration “mumukṣurvaiśaraṇmaprapadyē”⁵—the earnest aspirant taking complete refuge in the Supreme.

"The world and Parabrahmaṇ are not separate; the world is not different from the Absolute." This Vedantic truth is reflected in the lines: *"Tree and seed; cloth and yarn; hole and sky; gold and ornaments"* — all are akin to *"pot and clay."* All material objects, like nature and its apparent opposite (decay or corruption), are essentially the same; they only appear different because of their varying names. These lines embody the Upanishadic teaching: “vācārambhaṇamvikārōnāmadheyam”⁶ — the manifestation of the world arises through names and forms, while the underlying reality remains one.

CONCLUSION

Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī stands as one of the most extraordinary syntheses of music, literature, devotion, and philosophical reflection in the history of Carnatic tradition. Although relatively concise in outward extent, the composition reveals immense depth in conception, structure, and execution. Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās demonstrates not merely technical virtuosity, but an integrated artistic vision in which rāga, language, rhythm, theology, and poetic imagination coalesce into a unified spiritual offering. The work transcends conventional categorisation as a rāgamālika or devotional hymn; rather, it emerges as a multidimensional cultural text that simultaneously functions as musical exposition, literary composition, philosophical meditation, and devotional sādhana.

The study of the Purāṇik, Aitiḥāsik, and Upaniṣadic allusions embedded within the composition reveals the profound scriptural grounding of the composer. The work is deeply informed by Vedāntic insight, Śākta theology, and the bhakti tradition. Concepts central to the Upaniṣads and Bhagavadgītā—such as renunciation, surrender, the transience of worldly existence, the unity

⁵ “मुमुक्षुर्वै शरणं प्रपद्ये”

⁶ “वाक्प्रामाण्यविकारो नामादयैव”

underlying multiplicity, and the dual conception of the Divine as both nirguṇa and saṁguṇa—are not merely quoted or imitated, but poetically internalised and transformed into living devotional experience. Through concise yet evocative expression, Nārāyaṇa Dās succeeds in translating abstract metaphysical doctrines into emotionally resonant poetic imagery accessible to both the devotee and the rasika.

Equally remarkable is the composer’s masterly use of rāgamudrā-s. The rāga names are not inserted mechanically as ornamental devices, but are organically woven into the grammatical and semantic structure of the text. By transforming rāga names into epithets, adjectives, and verbal expressions associated with the Goddess, the composer elevates musical terminology into vehicles of theology and devotion. This reflects a deeply spiritual vision wherein the rāga-s themselves are perceived as manifestations of the Divine Mother. Consequently, the musical architecture of the work acquires symbolic and metaphysical significance, and the distinction between melody and worship effectively dissolves.

The bilingual structure of the composition further enhances its literary and devotional richness. The Saṁskṛtaṁ section embodies liturgical grandeur, scriptural luminosity, and concentrated devotional invocation, while the Telugu portion turns inward toward introspection, humility, and existential reflection. Together, they create a movement from divine contemplation to human self-examination, thereby mirroring the spiritual journey from outward worship to inward surrender.

Moreover, the work exemplifies the ideal of lakṣaṇa–lakṣya samanvaya by demonstrating the practical viability of numerous theoretical rāga-s through aesthetically compelling compositions. In doing so, it contributes not only to literature and devotion, but also significantly to the pedagogy and praxis of Carnatic music.

Ultimately, Daśavidharāganavatikusumamañjarī may be regarded as the flowering of Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās’s many-sided genius. It reflects the rare convergence of scholarship, musical mastery, poetic creativity, and spiritual intensity. The work remains an enduring testimony to the capacity of Indian artistic traditions to harmonise aesthetics with metaphysics, and technical brilliance with devotional fervour. As such, it deserves continued scholarly attention not merely as

a musical curiosity or literary achievement, but as a profound expression of the integrated cultural and spiritual vision that characterises the classical Indian tradition.

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“Sootha” Theatre its Historical and present relevance

- Dr. D. Vizai Bhaskar

Abstract

Natya Shastra by Bharata Muni stands as the foundational treatise on Indian theatre, revered as the Panchama Veda, encompassing 36 chapters and over 6,000 slokas composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE. This article explores Sootha Theatre (Sootha Rangasthala Shastram), a contemporary extension rooted in the Puranic narrator Sootha, who transformed historical chronicles into performative art at Naimisharanya, bridging reality and idealism. It proposes innovations like recognizing DheeraDalitudu and DheeraShudrudu as heroic prototypes (Kavya Nayakas) alongside Bharata's four—Dheerodhatta, Dheerlalita, Dheerodhaata, and Dheeraprasaanta—challenging varna restrictions and aligning with Arthur Miller's common man tragedy. Central is the theorization of Chaitanya Rasa (Consciousness Rasa) as the eleventh rasa, with Vibhrama (departure from delusion, Bhrama) as its sthayi bhava. Evoked via Vibhaava, Anubhaava, and Vyabhichari bhaava, drawing from Upanishads like Taittiriya ("Raso vai sah") and Mundaka's two birds metaphor. Analyzing plays—Yayati (Girish Karnad), Oedipus Rex (Sophocles), Macbeth (Shakespeare), Death and the King's Horseman (Wole Soyinka), Death of a Salesman (Arthur Miller)—demonstrates characters' arcs from delusion to awakening, transcending traditional nine rasas toward spiritual ecstasy (Ananda). Sootha Theatre revitalizes Natya Shastra for modern challenges, integrating life, art, spirituality, and social equity, contrasting Aristotle's catharsis and Western linear drama with India's holistic, rasa-driven non-linear storytelling. This framework fosters global theatre consciousness, promoting dharma, cultural preservation, and liberation from worldly bondages through consciousness.

Keywords: Natya Shastra, Sootha Theatre, Chaitanya Rasa, DheeraDalitudu, Theatre Consciousness

Introduction

Natya Shastra authored by Bharata Muni is the most ancient treatise on theatre in the world, being studied and practiced by generation after generation from several centuries till date. It is the authoritative text for performers, practitioners and also a text of principles for Teachers and Masters of theatre, as well as of poetry and all other fine arts. Therefore it is reverentially called as the '*Panchama Veda*'. '*Natya Sastra*' is not just a science of stage craft (Theatre) but a holistic representation of Indian way of life.

Art is an organized expression of human experience and Theatre is the most comprehensive manifestation of life that the human civilization could create. It is the philosophical enactment of human experience. It looks at the harmony of life and conceptualizes the equality of human beings and precepts the eternity of human soul. It delineates the grief at roots and emboldens people to conquer upon the evil designs of the bad and re-assert themselves at the shoots of glory. **Hence drama may be defined as a re-creation of human world aiming to complement the Almighty's unwritten legislation to the society.** Man, in search of his real self, enacts many characters right from an emperor to the Soldier on this world – stage. This goes eternal as deep as the ocean and as vast as the sky. As a mother preserves the micro form of the child in her womb, Theatre possesses all the eternity and entirety in it.

Methodology

This research employs textual analysis and comparative poetics, drawing from Natya Shastra's 11 angas (rasa to ranga) and rasa siddhanta sutra: "Vibhaavanubhaava-vyabhichari-samyogath rasanishpattih" (6.31). Primary source: Dr. D. Vizai Bhaskar's draft on Sootha Theatre, extracting concepts like Chaitanya Rasa (sthaiyi: vibhrama; from Taittiriya/Mundaka Upanishads) and hero expansions.

Qualitative approach dissects five plays for delusion-to-consciousness arcs: Indian (Yayati), Greek (Oedipus Rex), Shakespearean (Macbeth), African (Death and the King's Horseman), modern American (Death of a Salesman). Criteria: identify bhrama (delusion), vibhrama (illusion departure), chaitanyam (awakening), rasa transcendence. Cross-cultural comparisons highlight Natya Shastra's superiority in spiritual quests versus Western

catharsis/mimesis. Theoretical framework integrates Puranic meta-history (sarga to vamsa), Sootha as prophet, and modern equity (Dalit/Shudra nayakas aligning Miller's dignity thesis).

Proposal of Ekadasa Rasa Sidhantam, DheeraDalithudu and DheeraShudrudu

The composition of Natya Shastra dates back between 200 BCE to 200 CE which spreads into 36 chapters containing 6000 slokas . Bharata Muni proposes 11 constituting elements for the Natyam in the following verse

“ Rasabhaavabhinaya dharmivruttipravruttiyah
Siddhiswaratodyayam ganamrangascha sangrah “[Natya Shastra 6.10]

The eleven elements or Angas of Natya Veda are 1. Rasa 2. Bhava 3. Abhinaya 4. Dharmi 5. Vrtti 6. Pravrtti 7.Siddhi 8.Swara 9.Atodya 10. Gana 11. Ranga .

But Aristotle in his Poetics limited to 6 components namely plot,character, thought , diction ,song and spectacle for an effective Tragedy.He defines “Tragedy as an imitation of action , serious , complete and of certain magnitude , in a language beautified in all different parts with different kinds of embellishments through action and not narration , and through scene of pity and fear bringing about the catharsis of emotions “.

Aristotle theory of tragedy immensely influenced the dramatic craft in the world . It shaped the Greek , Roman . and also western theatre and the impact could be seen very vividly on Shakespearean tragedies.The key concepts of Aristotle theory : memesis , catharsis,unities of time , place , action , plot structure and the qualities of a tragic hero were adhered by the dramatists of all times .

Much different to the Greek impact the Indian Theatre entirely shaped , guided and monitored by Natya Shastra focused on inter connecting Life ,Art and Spirituality. .Natyam means Drama is a combination of Rasa (Emotional essence) , Bhava(ideas) and Abhinaya(expressions) . Natya shastra’s rich concepts and principles have shaped Indian theare ‘s unique identity , exploring the complexities of human experiences , spirituality , and the mysteries of Life and Death .

The study of Indian Theatre would be more interesting and engrossing by drawing comparisons and contrasts with other theatre strategies and philosophies in the world .For Indians Theatre is a place of spiritual journey and a philosophical quest, a literary feast ,an inquiry into deeper truths of life ,an exploration of inner self and finally attaining liberation from the clutches of worldly bondages . For Aristotle it is only purgation of fear and pity . But for Bharata Muni it is a passage through multiple experiences finally to reach the state of ecstasy ; the state of Anandam and becoming one with the God .Indian Theatre is a blend of dance, music , elaborate costumes ,make up to convey the status of the character and appropriate language in the form of dialogues .It is a non -linear story telling often employing techniques like flash backs , dreams , symbols , metaphors , allegories and mythological references . It is not simply story telling ,it is preaching of Dharma , which man ought to follow for the secured existence of Life on the Earth .

Greek tragedy often focuses on the individual's struggle with a tragic flaw against the fate . But the horizon of Indian Theatre is more wider and it explores broader themes and cosmic connections .While Greek tragedy tends to be more somber , Indian Theatre is often characterized by humor , irony , and satire all culminating into an un- forgettable message to the humanity .while the Shakespearean drama focuses more on the development of character and dramatic conflict , Indian Theatre explores on emotional landscapes offering a distinct and captivating experience. Japanese and Chinese share some similarities in combining dance and music in Noh theatre and use of symbolism , acrobatics and music in Opera .It can be said that rich story telling tradition , vibrant performance styles , emotional resonance (Rasa stimulation), use of symbolism and metaphor , integration of music and dance , community engagement , spiritual exploration , diverse regional flavors are the significant hall marks of Indian drama.

Each Nation has its own way of narrating its history. A Nation is characterized by a given culture of historical process. Ancient Indian culture found its fullest expression in the forms of 'Purana', a fine blend of history and myth which carries its stamp on the present and posterity. With five-fold character - *Sarga, Prati Sarga, Manvantara, Charita and Vamsa*. The Puranas related humanity with divinity, present with past, roots with shoots, kings with subjects, politics with philosophy and culture with history.

History for India is not a mere account of dead facts, but a narration of the phenomenon of life. Purana, the ancient historical narrative is a complex form of narration bridging the subaltern with the main stream of society, presenting the tales of culture-heroes to common man in order to inspire him and preserve the cultural dynamics of the race. Each purana is a meta – historical creation (In spite of some incoherent and inconsistent issues). Puranas are narrations of ancient Indian history. They are not synonyms to western mythology or their epics.

This chronicle of events called *purana* introduced ‘*Sootha* character’ to the world of thought. If puranas are literary documentation of Indian history, *Sootha* is its first performer. ‘He’ made purana a solo-performance, transforming history into a performing art form.

‘*Sootha*’, the first narrator, has presented the stories of the world, the tales of culture-heroes and the accounts of changing social patterns and customs to the secluded sages in ‘*Naimisha Aranyam*’. ‘*Sootha*’ accounts the visible and the invisible, both complementing each other in the path of Truth. Thus, *Sootha* becomes a representing voice of Reality, the spirit of which again lies in idealism, pursued by the Seers. Theatre is the mediating centre of reality and idealism and *Sootha* was its first prophet.

If the suppression of a King draws out the sword, the suppression of a *Sootha* draws a new word, a new word of hope and new reality.

Society is dynamic and nothing is permanent except change. Realities are always changing and it is evident that the new realities pose new challenges. It is the bounden duty of a socially responsible creative mind to explore solutions for them from time to time.

Hence *Sootha*Theatre or *Sootha Rangasthala Shastram* is contemplated and designed for adding certain new dimensions to the Indian theatre thought in particular and the world theatre consciousness in general.

In 24 th chapter of *Natya shastra* Bharata Muni classified the heroes (protagonist) as four different categories as below

“Dheeroddhataa Dheeralalita Dheerodaathastathaiva cha,
Dheeraprashantakaaschaiava Nyakaa: parikeertita:[Natya shastra 24.17]

and also indicated the social classes (Varnas) to which these four belong. He categorically mentioned that Dheeroddhata is passionate in nature with all noble qualities who are gods and demigods, Dheeralalita are courageous with delicate heart: mostly kings and royals; Dheeraprashanta is self-controlled and always exhibits the spirit of tolerance who belong to Brahmin and Vaishya communities. Finally Dheerodaatha who is in authoritative position namely commanders and ministers.

The classification was done millennia back and time has brought innumerable changes; people from the lowest rungs of the society assumed highest positions and their glories were sung by the bards in different forms of literature. They carved their niche proclaiming their talents and claiming their positions in the histories. The story behind the origin of Natya shastra is itself a documentary evidence for the deprivation of education and other means of respect and honor to Shudra and Dalit in the history. It not only happened in Indian Literature, Aristotle also felt that the tragic hero must be of noble origin.

Proposal for DheeraDalitudu and DheeraShudrudu as Kavya Nyakaas.

Shudras and Atishudras are the true builders of Indian culture. From their grief and sweat emerged folk culture—it flourished and crossed the borders of the continents. Folk traditions breathed life into classical arts as their nurturing womb. Their vocational artistry transcended oceans. Through their far-sighted vision, Indian civilization spread to the four corners of the world.

As sages, seers, philosophers, creators, poet-scholars, rulers, and reformers, the consciousness of Dalits and Shudras has become multifaceted and global. Shudra communities are proving themselves as innate leaders by embracing leadership traits. They lead systems forward, propelling them ahead.

Along with political and social leadership, they have risen to the level of Kavya Nayaka (Epic Heroes) also. Number of examples can be quoted like Gosangi (Dalit) in Amukta malyada, Srikrishna Devaraya, Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (both Shudras) who ruled kingdoms and made

their indelible mark in literature .For these reasons, DheeraDalitudu and DheeraShudrudu are to be considered along with the four namely Dheerodhatta, Dheerodaatta, DheeraLalita, and DheeraPrashaant out lined by Bharata Muni in Natya Shastra .

It aligns with Arthur Miller's concept of " Tragedy and the Common man " where in he proposes that ' a character becomes a tragic figure when they are willing to lay down their life , if need be to secure one thing : their sense of personal dignity and their rightful place in the world .'Much contrary to Aristotlian hero Miller argues ' the high bred characters , royalty , nobles , the rich and others of esteemed social standing do not have a monopoly on experiencing the catharsis provided by unfolding of a tragedy .In to each life some rain must fall , regard less of whether one is a king or a commoner . The common man is a suitable subject for tragedy .

Another important contribution of Bharata Muni Natya Shastra is ' Rasa Siddhantam ' to the world of Aesthetics .He formulated the following shutra for evocation of Rasa

" Vibhaavaanubhavaa sanchaari bhaava samyogaath Rasa nishpatti : " [Natya Shastra 6.31]

And also he enumerated eight Rasas as

" Sringara haasya karunaa roudra veera bhayaanaka

Bheebatsaadbhuta samjnaa chetyashatou naatyee rasaa:smrutaa: [Natya shastra 6.15]

and Shanta Rasa was later on included in the chain of Rasas .Chaitanya Rupa Goswami proposed Bhakti as another Rasa and Madhura Rati as its Sthaayee Bhavam.

In Soota Ranga sthala shaastram , Chaitanyam (Consciousness)is proposed as Eleventh Rasam conceptualising " Ekaadasa Rasa Siddhaanatam.... Vibhrama as its Sthayee Bhavam"

In the spiritual realm, the concept of *rasa* first appears in the Taittiriya Upanishad. "Raso vai sah" [Taittiriya Upanishad 7th chapter 2 sloka]. The formless Brahman expressed itself as its own self. It is called self-existent. It is described as "Ekam advitiyam Brahma" (One without a second).

This Brahman is the embodiment of *rasa*. Beings experience bliss only by attaining this *rasa*. *Rasa* is the source of satisfaction or joy. Without consciousness or Chaitanyam, *rasa* remains unfulfilled.

In the Mundaka Upanishad:

*"Om Dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā samānaṃ vrkṣaṃ pariśasvajāte | tayor anyah pippalaṃ svādv
atty anaśnann anyo 'bhi cākṣīti ||"[MU Truteeya Mundakam 1(45)*

Two birds perched together on the same tree. One bird eats the tree's fruits—experiencing *rasa*, deluded that this experience is eternal and pleasurable. The other knows the truth: sitting quietly with out experiencing the taste of the fruits knowing fully well that this world's existence and experiences are born of illusion. It is full of consciousness or chaitanyam , it is not enamoured by experiences and bound to nothing .

Thus, one bird symbolizes delusion (Bhrama), the other consciousness or Chaitanyam .

When the thick mist of delusion gets scattered the first bird enters the state beyond delusion (*vibhrama*) which leads to Chaitanyam .

Application of Chaitanya Rasa:

Examining Girish Karnad's play *Yayati*, based on the Mahabharata, reveals Chaitanya rasa flowing like a stream. Yayati, son of king Nahusha, marries Devayani (daughter of Guru Shukracharya) and later loves Sharmishtha (daughter of Asura king Vrishaparva), who were friends. While bathing in a lake, their clothes mix due to wind. Devayani, in arrogance, accuses Sharmishtha of taking hers. The argument escalates; Sharmishtha throws Devayani into a well and leaves. Yayati rescues her, accepts her hand in marriage upon holding it, and takes Sharmishtha as a maid at her insistence. In the palace, he falls in love with Sharmishtha. Devayani complains to her father Shukracharya, who curses Yayati with premature old age. Appeased, Shukracharya says: whoever takes your old age will give you their youth. Of his five sons—Yadu, Turvasu, Druhyu, Anu, Puru—only Puru agrees. Yayati regains youth; Puru ages.

Yayati believes sensory pleasures and physical youth are keys to ultimate happiness. But he realizes: "Desire is never quenched by enjoyment; it grows stronger like fire fed with ghee." He returns his son's youth, accepts old age, and retires to the forest—a clear shift from hedonism to renunciation.

At the play's end, reflecting on long-held delusions:

Yayati: "I swap. A simple swap of skins. But the hunger remains the same. Thousands of years of youth have not brought me a second of peace." [Act 4]

Application to Consciousness-Rasa: Until now, deluded that "the body is me, its pleasures eternal," he even took his son's lifespan. Dispelling delusion, he attains *vibhrama*, gains Chaitanya . In that state of Chaitanya , he realizes youth—mere muscles and skin—yields no eternal joy.

At that state of realization no traces of the other nine *rasas* can be seen only consciousness-born enlightenment Chaitanyam

After giving his youth:

Puru: "I have given you my youth, father; I don't feel I've lost anything. In this withered body, I feel a strange stillness." [Act 4 of Yayati drama]

Application: Seeing his father's desire as his own dissolves his ego. This isn't seen in other sons. Delusions about life, youth, pleasures vanish; he transcends *vibhrama*, attains Chaitanyam . Now, like a detached spectator, he watches himself and the illusory play around him indifferently.

Chitrlekha (Pur'u's wife), seeing her father-in-law still youthful:

Chitrlekha: "If a father can wear his son's youth like a new garment, then who are you? And who was he? These bodies are just costumes in the masquerade." [Act 4]

Application: She fully escapes delusion about life and bonds, comparing bodies to changeable clothes. Questioning bonds' value when skins swap.

In this play, the conflict's root is between Devayani and Sharmishtha—shows stark contrast: initial ego to post-*vibhrama* consciousness.

Devayani starts with authority-arrogance, envy; ends: (I won all battles... But now, this cursed youth, —I stand alone in a desert I created.)

Realizing ego brings no satisfaction despite power, wealth, status—she stands as a true woman. Under consciousness's streams, introspection begins. Her "desert" is but inner void.

Sharmishtha, Vrishaparva's daughter, becomes Devayani's maid, then Yayati's beloved—her life conflict-ridden: "Devayani thinks she made me a slave. But my body is in chains, not my spirit. Now, seeing this youth-exchange, I realize we are all slaves to desires. Queen or maid, bondage is the same."

This play exemplifies consciousness-rasa verification. Captive to Yayati's hedonism, Devayani's ego, Sharmishtha's freedom-craving, Puru's sacrifice, Chitrlekha's beauty-love—all delusion-bound. When delusions dissolve, they gain true vision, immersed in consciousness.

Oedipus The King : A Prime Example of Chaitanya Rasa in World Literature.

Oedipus lives in overconfidence, believing himself powerful enough to conquer even fate. The Sphinx (a terrifying monster) asks: "What creature walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening?" No one solves it, but Oedipus uses his intellect to answer: "Man!" Deluded that his knowledge saves Thebes, he ignores pleas to save the people from plague. His wife Jocasta's brother Creon reveals Apollo's oracle: the plague stems from former king Laius's unpunished murder, demanding the killer's death as remedy.

Delusion (*Bhrama*)

Oedipus is deeply deluded, believing he conquered fate and protects Thebes with intellect and competence. Comparing himself to gods: "Here I am myself—you all know, the world knows my fame: I am Oedipus." [Scene 1 Page No 121 of 7 Famous Greek Plays Pub by Vintage Books , NewYork]

These words reveal delusion; he sees himself invincible. Pride from solving the Sphinx's riddle fuels this ignorance: believing he can alter his fate is the core *bhrama*.

True Vision (*Vibhrama*)

Truths unravel sequentially. Through the shepherd's testimony, Oedipus learns he killed his father and married his mother. Prior delusions melt like hail in rain.

Oedipus: "Oh! Oh! All brought to pass—all true! Thou light, may I now look last on thee—I who have been found accursed in birth, accursed in wedlock, accursed in shedding of blood.[Page No 170]

In *vibhrama*, he rejects outer world's light, turns inward. Ignorance's darkness yields to consciousness's light.

Consciousness (*Chaitanyam*)

Unable to face truth, he blinds himself. Physical sight lost, inner vision awakens (*inner awakening*). Consciousness means not just mental growth or situational awareness, but courage to accept truth. He abdicates the throne, exiles to wilderness—a figure of compassion, purified mind in consciousness form.

Post-blinding:

Oedipus: "Apollo, friends—Apollo ordained my agonies. But the hand that struck my eyes was mine, mine alone—no one else—I did it myself." [Page No 175]

Accepting fate while owning responsibility marks profound consciousness. Recognizing sin and publicly embracing it transcends other *rasas*. External illusions gone, inner light dawns via *vibhrama*—knowledge-eye born from physical illusion.

Touching his children:

Oedipus: "Children! Where are you? Come here, to my hands—a brother's hands, a father's hands—that once bright eyes of your father now see as they see. I, your father, who saw nothing, knew nothing, became your father through the woman who bore me. I weep for you, though I cannot see; I weep thinking of life's bitterness men force you to endure." [Page No 180]

World drama's most tragic scene: Oedipus self-blinding. Stage-view sees physical violence, but beyond: evolution from "outer sight" to "inner consciousness." Start: sighted but blind in delusion, ignorant of birth-secrets, sins. Eyes led to pride, outer illusions. Truth brings *vibhrama*; deeming sinful eyes unfit ("These eyes that saw father killed, mother wedded cannot see world"), he blinds with Jocasta's gold brooch-pins.

Macbeth: Chaitanya -Rasa in a Tragic Hero's Fall

Macbeth, a Shakespearean tragedy, illustrates Chaitanya -Rasa through a valiant general's delusion-to-awakening. Macbeth, a heroic warrior, wins battles and expands the kingdom, earning King Duncan's admiration. Three witches ignite latent ambition by prophesying his kingship. Deluded that regicide will yield endless bliss, his wife Lady Macbeth amplifies this, urging him during Duncan's visit: "Oh no, I'm afraid the servants woke up, and the job is not done. It would ruin us to fail in murdering the king... I placed the daggers where Macbeth couldn't miss them. I would've killed Duncan myself if he didn't resemble my father in sleep." [Act 2 Scene 2]

Delusion (*Bhrama*)

He ruthlessly murders sleeping Duncan, sparking downfall. Kingdom gained, peace flees; one crime begets more to conceal it. Pre-murder hallucination:

Macbeth: "Is this a dagger which I see before me, / The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee... Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible / To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but / A dagger of the mind, a false creation / Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?... I see thee still, / And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood." [Act 2 Scene 1]

This bloody vision marks first delusion-crack. He kills friend Banquo; at the feast, Banquo's ghost torments him. Lady Macbeth, regicide's instigator, despairs over indelible bloodstains: "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood / Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather / The multitudinous seas incarnadine, / Making the green one red."

True Vision (*Vibhrama*)

Crimes compound paranoia; witches' riddles haunt. Learning Lady Macbeth's suicide, he speaks utter disillusionment—a shift from heroic killer to detached seer.

Consciousness (*Chaitanyam*)

Macbeth: "She should have died hereafter... Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day / To the last syllable of recorded time. / And all our yesterdays

have lighted fools / The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! / Life's but a walking shadow,
a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more. It is a tale
/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing."[Act 5 Scene 5]

A warrior craving king ship, who slew a guest-king, now grasps life's meaninglessness. Delusions shed, he attains Nirveda-Chaitanyam (dispassionate insight)—unmatched by any one of the prior *rasas*. Macbeth evolves from ambition's slave to life's absurdity's witness. Heroic vigour yields to philosophical void—heights of Chaitanya Rasa via total disillusionment.

Chaitanya Rasa in Wole Soyinka's Death And The King's HorseMan . He views delusion as forgetting one's roots and culture, succumbing to foreign cultural fashions. When awarding him the Nobel Prize in 1986, the Academy praised him as a writer who discovered the drama of human existence with a broad cultural perspective and poetic depth. In his speech on the occasion Soyinka said that Drama is not just a mirror to society; it is a lamp showing the impending catastrophe to society.

His play *Death and the King's Horseman* is set during World War II in the Yoruba kingdom. The king dies, and according to their tradition, the king's horseman (Elesin Oba) must also sacrifice his life so the king's soul reaches the afterlife safely.

Elesin prepares to fulfill this ritual. Yet, he loves life as much as he is ready to sacrifice it. As his final wish before death, he wants to marry a beautiful young woman from the market. Society, honoring his sacrifice, consents to this marriage. Afterward, the ritual is delayed. One night, Elesin begins his death trance to ritually end his life.

Meanwhile, British District Officer Simon Pilkings learns of this self-sacrifice in the same town. To the British, it is barbaric murder, legally equivalent to homicide. At the same time, the British prince is visiting the town. Pilkings fears any untoward incident during his visit would tarnish his administration. As Elesin nears the final stage of his sacrifice, Pilkings arrives with his forces and arrests him. Thus, Elesin's life is spared, but the tribe's faith is shaken. They feel the king's soul is lost in the wind, and great danger looms over the kingdom.

Meanwhile, Elesin's son Olunde, studying medicine in London, returns to his village. Expecting his father to have sacrificed per tradition, he comes to take the body. Learning his father is alive and imprisoned by the British shocks him deeply. He grieves that his tribe's honor is lost, blaming his father's weakness and British arrogance. Resenting British interference in their rituals and tribal beliefs under colonial policy, Olunde commits the self-sacrifice his father could not.

Elesin, in jail, sees his son's body. Realizing his son's death stems from his own attachment to life, he grasps a harsh truth. Crushed that he failed to uphold tradition and protect his son as a father, in intense remorse and self-loathing, he strangles himself with iron chains right there. Pilkings tries to save him, but fails.

Due to faith in an old system and its collapse, both father and son lose their lives. Soyinka's play reveals the chaos when a race loses its essential existence and strong beliefs shatter.

Contact with foreign culture pressures local culture. The Yoruba culture depicted here strikingly resembles India's sati practice. In both, the victim's desire to live outweighs ritual purity. This life instinct was sacrificial in ancient times, but doubts now arise about afterlife benefits, heavens transmitted through these rituals. A rational, scientific consciousness emerges today that withstands logic and empirical tests.

Barbaric rituals keep people in collective delusion. Soyinka's goal is to reveal the mental anguish when that delusion breaks. Elesin Oba says: "I was no longer the master of my own will. My feet were held on the Earth by those I left behind, and my eyes were filled with the sweetness of the World. It was not you (Pilkings) who stopped me, but my own weighted Soul." [Scene 5]

The tradition requiring Elesin's self-sacrifice for the king's salvation is barbaric, yet the desire to live is an eternal aspiration. Recognizing and accepting it shows Elesin's consciousness. His words to Pilkings: "You thought you were saving my life, but you only helped me betray my destiny. I stayed alive because I was a coward who loved the warmth of the Sun more than the honour of my people."

Olunde, a young man studying medicine in London, comes to witness his father honoring tradition through self-sacrifice. But the situation is different: his father lives, imprisoned by the British. With his opposing belief and respect for his society's values—what is Olunde's duty?

To understand his inner conflict when answering it himself, we must interpret his conversation with British officer Pilkings and Mrs. Pilkings. His words must be seen not as mere three beliefs but as racial soul honor. Speaking to Jane Pilkings about self-sacrifice and barbarism, he questions their collective destruction: “I am not talking about the slaughter of innocent people. I am talking about the systematic disposal of lives by your people in the name of war, which you don't even understand. You call it sacrifice for the nation, yet you shrink in horror from a ritual that ensures the continuity of the world.”

In his words, he fully defends Yoruba culture: “What you call a ‘barbaric custom’ is to us a necessary passage. It is not a matter of ‘dying’. It is a matter of honour and the transition of the soul. My father’s life is a small price for the harmony of our entire race.” On Western thinking: “You have no respect for what you don’t understand. You destroy what you can’t control, and you call it civilizing the world.”[Scene 4]

Rather than defending Yoruba culture, Soyinka exposes the human slaughter by Western powers in the name of civilization and colonial policy through war mania, and their condescending view of local cultures. This is Soyinka’s true dramatic consciousness or Chaitanya Rasa.

Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman to illustrate the flow of Chaitanya Rasa theory. This play is a perfect specimen of how a "common man" moves from a state of deep delusion to a tragic, yet heightened, state of consciousness (Chaitanyam)

The play is about Willy Loman, a 63-year-old traveling salesman who has spent his entire life chasing the "American Dream." He believes that if a man is "well-liked" and "personally attractive," success is guaranteed.

However, the reality is bleak: Willy is exhausted, his sales are failing, and he can no longer drive safely. His eldest son, Biff, once a high school football star, is now a "lost" wanderer who cannot hold a job. His younger son, Happy, is a shallow womanizer. As Willy’s mental state deteriorates,

he slips into "day dreams" (flashbacks), reliving past moments to find where he went wrong. When he is finally fired by his young boss, the gap between his illusions and reality becomes a chasm.

In the climax, following a brutal confrontation with Biff, Willy realizes that his family—specifically Biff—actually loves him. To provide for them, he commits suicide by crashing his car, believing the 20,000 dollars insurance payout will finally give Biff the "start" he needs to become a "great man."

Willy Loman lives in a perpetual state of Bhrama. He believes in a false "Universal Law"—that popularity equals prosperity. He ignores the cold, mechanical nature of capitalism. "Sthayi Bhava" The Vibhrama (The Departure of Illusion) occurs through a series of painful "shocks":

- * The Job: Being fired proves that his "years of service" mean nothing to the machine of industry.
- * The Son: Biff screams the truth at him: "I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!" This is the irreversible transition. The "Departure of Illusion" happens when Willy can no longer hide behind his lies. He is stripped naked of his pretenses.

Application of Chaitanya Rasa (Awakening/Consciousness)

According to Sootha Ranagasthala Shaastram Chaitanyam is the transition from ignorance to truth. In Willy's case, the "Awakening" is twofold:

- * Recognition of Love: He realizes Biff doesn't hate him; Biff loves him. This is his first true emotional awakening.
- * The Ultimate Assertion: Willy's suicide is not an act of cowardice in the context of the play; it is his final understanding of life. He recognizes that as a "Salesman" (his identity), he has failed, but as a "Father" (his truth), he can still provide value.

In this tragic end, Willy finds his "essence." He sacrifices his physical self to validate his metaphysical worth. He chooses to be "worth '20,000' dollars rather than be "nothing."

Impact on the audience

The Chaitanya Rasa is not just felt by Willy; it is transferred to the audience. When the play ends with the "Requiem," the audience experience an "Awakening" about the cruelty of social systems that judge a human being's worth only by their productivity. The "Illusion" of the system is shattered, leaving the viewer with the naked realities of the society.

It is an awakening of Chaitanyam in the masses which is the ultimate goal of good drama.

Research Findings

Hero Prototypes Expansion

Bharata classifies nayakas: Dheerodhatta (gods, passionate), Dheerlalita (kings, delicate-courageous), Dheerodhaata (commanders), Dheeraprasaanta (Brahmin/Vaishya, tolerant) (NS 24.17). Historical shifts demand DheeraDalitudu (e.g., Gosangi in Amuktamalyada) and DheeraShudra (Shivaji, Krishna Devaraya), folk culture builders spreading Indian civilization globally. Aligns Miller: commoners secure dignity via tragedy, contra Aristotle's nobility.

Chaitanya Rasa Theory

Evolves rasa from eight (NS 6.15) plus shanta/bhakti to eleventh: Chaitanyam, sthaye vibhrama, evoking ecstasy beyond delusion. Upanishadic: rasa as Brahman-bliss; Mundaka birds symbolize bhrama (fruit-eater) vs. chaitanyam (witness). Sutra adapts: vibhava (triggers), anubhava (expressions), sanchari (transitory) yield consciousness, fulfilling "Raso vai sah."

Play Analyses Table

Play	Delusion (Bhrama)	Vibhrama Trigger	Chaitanyam Realization	Rasa Impact
Yayati (Karnad)	Youth/sensory pleasures eternal	Son's sacrifice, desire unquenched ("fire fed ghee")	"Hunger remains"; bodies as costumes; renunciation	Transcends hedonism to stillness
Oedipus Rex	Invincibility post-Sphinx; fate conquerable	Patricide/incest revelation	Blinds self: "Hand that struck eyes mine"; inner vision	Pity-fear to compassion; accepts fate

Macbeth	Regicide yields bliss; ambition endless	Crimes' paranoia, wife's suicide	"Life... tale told by idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"	Hero to detached seer; nirveda
Death and King's Horseman (Soyinka)	Ritual over life-love	Colonial arrest; son's suicide	Elesin: "Not you stopped me, but weighted soul"; Olunde critiques West	Cultural delusion shatter; honor vs. hypocrisy
Death of a Salesman (Miller)	Popularity=sucess (American Dream)	Firing, Biff's "dime a dozen"	Love recognition; suicide for insurance=worth	System cruelty awakens audience

Findings confirm Chaitanya Rasa universality: characters shed illusions (ego, desire, culture-blindness), attaining awakening transferable to audiences, elevating theatre to moksha-tool.

Global Comparisons

Indian: spiritual/cosmic, rasa/music/dance integration, dharma-preach. Greek: individual flaw/fate. Shakespeare: conflict/character. Others: cultural clash (Soyinka), systemic (Miller). Sootha adds social justice, folk elevation.

Conclusion

Sootha Theatre revitalizes Natya Shastra, proposing inclusive heroes and Chaitanya Rasa for contemporary resonance. Analyses affirm delusion-to-consciousness arcs across cultures, positioning Indian theatre as philosophical quest to Ananda, beyond Western limits. It urges socially responsible drama addressing change, preserving dharma via Puranic narration modernized.

Future: stage Sootha productions applying Ekaadasa Rasas, fostering global equity-spirituality dialogue.

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Structural similarities and variations in the compositions of the Music Trinity – Śyāma Śāstri, Tyāgarāja and Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita

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Abstract

The last 250 years has witnessed a phenomenal surge in the number and variety of compositional forms that have adorned the field of Karnāṭak music. Karnāṭak Music boasts of a huge repository of compositional forms ranging from simple to complex, each varying in structural, rhythmical and melodic organisation. There has been a noteworthy shift from devotional and bhakti oriented compositions to more musically serious and technically rich compositions. In other words, the concept of Art music (P. Sambamurthy) began to dominate the music scene with the emergence of great composers (vāggēyakāras) like the Music Trinity (also referred to as Trimūrti) namely Śyāma Śāstri, Tyāgarāja and Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita. The contribution of the Music Trinity is invaluable and indispensable so much so that their compositions form the bulk of Karnāṭak performances / concerts. The enormous impact and impression left by the trinity in the music world has resulted in music being discussed as ‘pre-trinity’ and ‘post trinity’. The Trinity have undoubtedly left their permanent footprints in the annals of Karnāṭak music and their era is rightfully referred to as the Golden period of Karnāṭak music.

This paper focuses mainly on the structural analysis of the compositional form Kṛti which was the hallmark of the trinity. The form Kṛti is said to have been inspired by the compositional form ‘Kīrtana’ which existed from the 15th Century seen through the compositions of the Tāḷlapāṅka composers (Annamayya and others). The structural organisation of the Kṛti is very similar to the Kīrtana, which is perhaps why some scholars even refer to the Kṛtis as Kīrtanas till today. (Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśini by Subbarāma Dīkṣita only mentions the term kīrtana). But the Kṛtis of the trinity are far superior in its melodic, lyrical and rhythmical arrangement truly proving the ingenuity of the Trinity in giving a new dimension to pure art music.

Keywords: Music Trinity, Tyāgarāja, Śyāma Śāstri, Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, Kṛti, Carnatic concert

Methodology:

The mixed methodology (Quantitative and Qualitative) is applied to this study where a bulk of compositions of the Music Trinity was collected, analysed and interpreted with regards to the melodic and rhythmical structure, highlighting the special features and contributions of each of these three composers.

Introduction

Compositions of the Music Trinity

The most significant musical form handled commonly by all the three composers is the Kṛti. Each of them have also composed compositional forms exclusive to them and not handled by the other two. The three composers lived around the same period (18th Century) and this may have resulted in the influence of one over the other in terms of melodic arrangement and compositional structure, though lyrically all three composers exhibit very different styles.

1.1 Musical Forms handled by Śyāma Śāstri

Śyāma Śāstri has composed fewer compositions (about 300) as compared to Tyāgarāja and Dīkṣita, of which about 75 to 100 compositions are in circulation. His major contribution is in the form of three magnificent Svarajatis (Rāvē himagiri in rāga Tōḍi, Kāmākṣi in rāga Bhairavi and Kāmākṣi in rāga Yadukula Kāmbhōji) that are very different in melodic, rhythmical and lyrical content as compared to the popular Svarajatis taught as part of Abhyāsa gāna (formative lessons). Śyāma Śāstri is said to have composed a few Gītams (Santatam Ennai in the rāga Paras in Ādi tāḷa, Sārasākṣi in the rāga Savēri in Tripuṭa tāḷa and Pārvati Janani in the rāga Bhairavi set to Khanda Maṭya tāḷa, are among the few mentioned in T.K. Govinda Rao's '*Compositions of Śyāma Śāstri* ') and has handled the Varnam form (Dayānidhe in Rāga Bēgaḍa set to ādi tāḷa, Nīvē gati in rāga Kalyāṇi set to tiśra jāti maṭya tāḷa, Sāmini in rāga Anandabhairavi set to Aṭa tāḷa and Nāmanavini in rāga Saurāṣṭram set to Catuśra Aṭa tāḷa, also found in T.K. Govinda Rao's '*Compositions of Śyāma Śāstri* ') and has several Kṛtis to his credit. Majority of his compositions are set in simple Telugu language and very few in Sanskrit and Tamil. His Kṛtis exhibit his profound bhakti towards Devi (goddess Kāmākṣi and her other forms) treating himself as a child and the goddess as his beloved and compassionate mother, whom he fervently

beckons to protect and bless him. The Kṛtis are set in the format of Pallavi, Anupallavi and Caraṇa (most of them consisting of plural Caraṇas). His compositions bore his mudra ‘Śyāma kṛṣṇa’. Some compositions have the rāga mudra like the Bhairavi svarajati, Kṛtis like Nannu brovu lalita.

1.2 Tāḷa structure and variations in Śyāma Śāstri compositions

Śyāma Śāstri’s compositions are mostly set to Miśra cāpu tāḷa (eg: Ninne namminanu in rāga Tōḍi), Ādi tāḷa (eg: Sarojadaḷanētri in rāga Śankarābharaṇam), and rūpaka tāḷas (eg: Himādrisute in rāga Kalyāṇi). There are few compositions set to ādi tāḷa tiśra gati (ādi tāḷa comprising of three counts for a beat for eg: Śaṅkari Śaṅkuru in rāga Sāvēri)) and in Tripuṭa tāḷa (eg: Enneramum in rāga Punnāgavarāḷi). Śyāma Śāstri experimented with different rhythmical patterns within the same Tāḷa. For instance he seems to have preferred the miśra cāpu tāḷa over other tāḷas. But in many of his compositions the organization of the usual miśra cāpu tāḷa of 3 +4 (Ta ki ṭa + ta ka dhi mi) is reversed as 4 + 3 (ta ka dhi mi + ta kit a). The reversed organisation of 4+3 is termed as Vilōma cāpu (P. Sambamurthy). This term however does not appear in any ancient texts. Mīnalōcana brōva in rāga Dhanyasi, Nannu brōvu lalita in the rāga Lalita are perfect examples of this rhythmical structure. While it may seem like a simple reversal of the rhythmical structure, the intricacies within this structure are astounding. The very gait of the kṛti, its melodic fluidity and the arrangement of the sahitya fitting perfectly into the tāḷa structure is magical and a true sign of his creative genius. A common feature that can be observed in many of his miśra cāpu tāḷa and vilōma cāpu tāḷa Kṛtis is the placement of a sahitya or syllable on second beat or the ‘dhi mi’ .

For eg: *kāmākṣi amba anudinamu maravakane*

The notation of the above lines in as follows: (the dhi mi is highlighted)

n , , , , **n p** || d , , , , **p m** || p , , , , **d n** || s , , , , **d n** || s r g m p **m g** || r
kā , , , , **mā** **kṣī** **am** ba **anu** dinamu mara **vaka** nē

In the above lines the placement of the sāhitya on the second beat (dhimi) sets the melodic construct apart from other Kṛtis in the same tāḷa enhancing the overall aesthetic effect of the

composition. In the above line words like ‘anudinamu’ maravakane, kamalamukhi, padayugame etc also show his liking for the 5 akṣarakāla words, which he uses profusely in his compositions.

Another interesting observation with regards to Śyāma Śāstri’s penchant for unique rhythmical setting is seen in the kṛti Himādri sute in rāga Kalyāṇi which commences on the second beat of the rūpaka tāḷa. The Anupallavi follows the same eḍuppu (start point), but the Caraṇa starts on the first beat after a lapse of two mātras. The musical setting of the kṛti is cleverly organised to fit into this tala structure. His creative genius is evident in the setting of the kṛti Birāna varālicci, which has the exact melody (dhātu) of the Kṛti Himādri sutē but is reckoned with ādi tāla tiśra gati. Both Kṛtis though sounding exactly the same have a distinctive appeal owing to their rhythmical settings and different sāhitya (mātu) befitting the two different tāḷas (having the same akṣarakālas)

Rarely we find compositions in tāḷas like khaṇḍa jampa (Sarievvaramma in rāga Bhairavi), tiśra maṭya (Bṛhannāyaki in rāga Madhyamāvatī), miśra jampa (Dēvi nannubrōva and Rāvē Parvatarājakumāri both set to rāga Kalyāṇi). The Varṇam in Kalyāṇi (Nīvē gati) is also set in tiśra maṭya tāḷa.

1.3 Melodic Structure and special features in Śyāma Śāstri compositions

The melodic construct of the Kṛtis of Śyāma Śāstri are as follows:

- Pallavi commencing in the Madhya sthāyi followed by Anupallavi in the tāra sthāyi and caraṇa being set in a combination of sthāyis. For eg :- Ninnuvinaṅga mari in rāga Pūrvikalyāṇi where Pallavi begins on the Madhya sthāyi ṣaḍja. The anupallavi commences on Madhya ga and proceeds to the tāra sthāyi. This kind of a melodic structure can be seen in most Tyāgarāja Kṛtis as well.
- Pallavi commencing on the tāra sthāyi, the Anupallavi commencing on the Madhya sthāyi and the caraṇa also commencing on Madhya sthāyi proceeding to tāra sthāyi.
For eg :- Sarōjadaḷanētri in rāga Śankarābharaṇam and Sarievvaramma in rāga Bhairavi
- In many Kṛtis the dhātu (melody) of the anupallavi repeats in the concluding lines of the carana akin to the melodic construct of Tyāgarāja kṛtis.

For eg:- Ninnē namminānu in rāga Tōḍi – the lines in Anupallavi

‘*pannaga dharuni rāṇi sukha pāṇi*’ - the melody of this line along with all the saṅgatis is repeated in the 3rd line of the caraṇa – ‘*kāmākṣi kaṇcadalāyatākṣi*’

- The melodic setting of the Bhairavi Svarajati warrants a special mention here. The pallavi commences on the mandra sthāyi niṣāda. Rest of the caranas begin on every note of the arōhaṇa of rāga Bhairavi; for instance the first caraṇa begins on Madhya sthāyi ṣaḍja, the second on the riṣabha, third on gāndhāra and so on.
- Some compositions have identical dhatu (melodic structure), as mentioned earlier, that fit into the framework of two tāḷas – For Eg: The Kṛtis ‘Himādri sute’ and ‘Birāna varaliccci’ are both set to rāga Kalyāṇi and have identical tunes, but are performed in rūpaka tāḷa and ādi tāḷa tiśra gati respectively.
- The inclusion of the svara sāhitya passage in most of Śyāma Śāstri kṛtis is the highlight of his versatility. Usually the svara portion of the Svara Sāhitya is sung after the Anupallavi and the sāhitya is sung after rendering the Caraṇa. Eg: Pālimcu kāmākṣi in rāga Madhyamāvatī
- Śyāma Śāstri’s kṛtis are replete with literary beauties like Svarākṣaras, particularly seen in the svara sāhitya.

Śyāma Śāstri’s compositions are considered as the blueprint for understanding the nuances and intricacies of a rāga. Every composition explores the length and breadth of the rāga in all its hues and colours and his exceptional rhythmical acumen elevate the standards of his compositions placing them on par with the other two members of this elite group.

2.1 Musical forms handled by Tyāgarāja

Tyāgarāja was the most prolific composer of the music Trinity. He is said to have composed thousands of compositions out of which about 750 compositions are available and are mostly in Telugu language. Some of his compositions are in Sanskrit. Lord Rāma was his lifelong ‘Iṣṭa dēvata’ or favourite form of the divine and remains the central focus of the main body of his compositions. He has composed some Kṛtis on other deities while on his pilgrimage which have been later termed as his group Kṛtis (Pañcaratnams) namely – Śrīraṅga Pañcaratnam (on

Raṅganātha Swami), Lālgudi Pañcaratnam (on Lord Śiva and Goddess Śrimati) Kōvūr Pañcaratnam (on Lord Sundareswara) Tiruvoṭṭriyūr Pañcaratnams (on Goddess Tripurasundari). With regards to the musical forms, Tyāgarāja mainly composed Kīrtanas and Kṛtis. There is no evidence of him composing other forms like Gīṭams, Varṇams, Padams etc. His Divyanāma Kīrtanas and Utsava sampradāya Kīrtanas constitute the bulk of purely devotional outpourings, popularly sung in Bhajana traditions and his Kṛtis are a significant part of music concerts. Tyāgarāja is hailed as the pioneer of musical operas and has composed three operas namely – Naukā Caritram, Prahlāda Bhakti Vijayam and Sītārāma Vijayam. Tyāgarāja's monumental contribution to the world of music is the five Pañcaratna kīrtanas composed in ragas Nāṭṭa, Gauḷa, Arabhi, Varāḷi and Śrīrāga (the five Ghana rāgas) that are considered 5 gems.

2.2 Tāḷa structure in Tyāgarāja compositions

- Tyāgarāja has composed Kṛtis in common tāḷas such as ādi, rūpaka, khāṇḍa cāpu, miśra cāpu and miśra jhampa. Most of his kīrtanas (Divyanāma and Utsava Sampradāya) are in simple tāḷas like ādi, rūpaka and some in khanda cāpu.
- Tyāgarāja's contribution to the realm of tāḷa and rhythm comes through his pioneering efforts in popularizing the Dēśādi and Madhyādi tāḷas in many of his compositions, which became a signature style of his śiṣya parampara and a major source of inspiration for many composers after his period and in recent times. Tyāgarāja was exposed to the bhajana tradition from his childhood and was well versed in the compositions of Bhadrācala Rāmadāsu and other composers. This may have been his inspiration to use the Dēśādi and Madhyādi tāḷa structures in his compositions. The Dēśādi and the Madhyādi consist of a single tāḷa with 4 kriyas namely – a visarjitaṁ (vīccu or wave of the hand, which is a niśabda kriya) followed by three beats (śaśabda kriya) (P. Sambamurthy). The eḍuppu or place of melodic ascent in Dēśādi tāḷa is after the lapse of three mātrās. The Madhyādi tāḷa consists of the same structure, except that the eḍuppu is after the lapse of two mātrās. Dēśādi and Madhyādi tāḷas denote the differing formats of composition set-up in the same Tāḷa structure. (K. Harish Narayan). Thus the reckoning of both these tāḷas are identical differing only in the eḍuppu. Presently these two tāḷas are being reckoned as ādi tāḷas in concerts more as a matter of convenience. The Dēśādi tāḷa is reckoned as ādi tāḷa one kaḷa and the eḍuppu of the melody is after the lapse of 3 mātrās (after 1 mātrā in the little finger)

and the Madhyādi is reckoned as ādi tāḷa 2 kaḷa, the eḍuppu being on the first beat after the lapse of 2 mātrās. Madhyādi tāḷas when reckoned with ādi tāḷa ends in one and half tāḷa cycle, because of which an akāra phrase is usually added to complete the second āvarta.

Example of Dēśādi tāḷa reckoned as ādi tāḷa : Mākēlara in rāga Ravicandrika

, , , * m , g , m | **g** , , r | s , , r ||
g , , * mā kē la **rā** . . vi cā . ra
mu . .

- In the above notation, the melodic construct of this tāḷa is such that on the first beat after the laghu, there is an arudi like pause for three mātrās and this is a common and noteworthy feature for most of the Dēśādi tāḷa Kṛtis. (See the svāra highlighted above)
- The Dēśādi and Madhyādi tāḷa Kṛtis of Tyāgarāja started to be reckoned as ādi tāḷa perhaps for the convenience and ease of singing Niraval or Kalpana svaras for these compositions. The eḍuppu for Dēśādi after a lapse of one and half beat is also termed popularly as ‘onrarai ādi’ (1 ½) eḍuppu.

Examples of Dēśādi tāḷa Kṛtis:

- Brovabāramā – Rāga Bahudāri
- Marugēlara - Rāga Jayantaśri
- Mākēlara – Rāga Ravicandrika
- Teliyalēru Rāma – Rāga Dhenuka

Examples of Madhyādi tāḷa Kṛtis:

- Enduku peddala – Rāga Śankarābharaṇam
- Rāmakathā sudhārasa – Rāga Madhyamāvati
- Dinamani vaṁśa – Rāga Harikāmbhōji
- Tyāgarāja has employed atīta eḍuppu in the Pallavi of his Aṭhāṇā rāga Kṛti – ‘Cedebuddhi mānūrā’ and used anāgata eḍuppu for most compositions. Kṛti ‘Nīdayace’ in rāga Yadhukula Kāmbhōji and the Pañcaratna Kīrtana ‘Endarō mahānubhāvulu’ in rāga Śrīrāga commence after a lapse of 4 mātrās (on the little finger). This can be compared to the unusual eḍuppu of ‘Himādrisute’ of Śyāma Śāstri.
- Most of Tyāgarāja’s compositions are set in the medium tempo, couched in fewer words (mātu), easy time measures and above all encompassing a very clear picture of the rāga

depicted in the most impressive manner. He has composed several kṛtis in a single rāga in different time measures.

- Kṛtis like ‘Evarimāṭa’ in Kāmbhōji rāga, ‘Kārubāru’ in Mukhāri rāga ‘Cakkanirāja’ in Kharaharapriya rāga bring out the glory of the rāga set to a slower, descriptive tempo akin to an ālāpana.

2.3 Melodic Structure and special features in Tyāgarāja compositions

- Bulk of Tyāgarāja’s compositions are set in the Pallavi, Anupallavi and Carana format. Many Kṛtis have just a single caraṇa Eg: ‘Manasuviṣaya’ in rāga Nāṭṭakuruṅgi
- Many Kṛtis have Pallavi, Anupallavi followed by plural caraṇas. Eg: ‘Mahita Pravṛddha’ in rāga Kāmbhōji
- His Divyanāma kīrtanas (including the Utsava Sampradāya Kṛtis) are in the format of Pallavi followed by plural caraṇas without the Anupallavi. For eg: the Kīrtana ‘Tava dāsōham’ has a Pallavi followed by 7 caraṇas. Eg 2 : Vinarāda nāmanavi in rāga Dēvagāndhāri has Pallavi followed by 3 caraṇas with the same dhātu.
- In the Kṛtis, the Pallavi generally consists of 2 lines, the Anupallavi also has 2 lines and the caraṇa has 4 lines. Eg: Telisirāma in rāga Pūrṇacandrika.
- In a few Kṛtis the Pallavi has a single line, Anupallavi has 2 lines and caraṇa 4 lines Eg: ‘Girirāja suta’ in rāga Bangāḷa.
- There are Kṛtis where the Pallavi, Anupallavi and Caraṇas are of same length of 2 lines, with the Anupallavi and Caraṇa sharing the same dhātu. For Eg: ‘Tanavāri tanamu’ in rāga Bēgaḍa.
- A distinctive feature of Tyāgarāja’s Kṛtis is the repetition of the dhātu (melody) of the anupallavi in the concluding lines of the caraṇa.
- In some Kṛtis the Pallavi and Anupallavi have 2 lines each but the caraṇa is very long and may have 8 or more lines. Eg: ‘Evarimāṭa’ in rāga Kāmbhōji and ‘O Raṅgaśāyī’ in rāga Kāmbhōji. This kind of a musical setting may be an inspiration from Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita’s compositions having long drawn out caraṇas.
- Tyāgarāja is universally hailed as the architect of ‘Saṅgatis’ or melodic variations incorporated into the sāhitya or theme occurring in particular sections of the composition.

Saṅgatis are technical beauties developed gradually, increasing in complexity which raise the aesthetic value of a composition. They enhance both the rāga bhāva and the sāhitya bhāva. This ornamentation has inspired many later composers and has become a permanent inclusion for most compositions. The Saṅgatis are not incorporated randomly anywhere in the sāhitya. They are included only where it is befitting of the sāhitya. Eg: In the Kṛti ‘O raṅgaśāyī’ in rāga Kāmbhōji the saṅgatis occur in the word ‘O’ but the words ‘raṅgaśāyī’ remain constant, alluding to the undisturbed, sleeping posture of Raṅganātha Svāmi.

- The Kṛtis ‘Brōcēvarevare’ in rāga Śrīrañjani, ‘Śrī Raghuvara’ in rāga Kāmbhōji, ‘Endukunirdaya’ in rāga Harikāmbhōji and his Pañcaratna Kīrtanas are all in the format of a Svarajati. The melodic construct of the Kṛtis consist of a Pallavi followed by caraṇas in different dhātus and the Pañcaratnams consist of Pallavi, Anupallavi followed by Svara sāhitya passages exactly like the Svarajati. In all the Pañcaratnams (except for the Varāḷī Pañcaratnam) and Brōcevārevare the svara sāhitya passages are sung in madhyamakāla. These compositions, though mentioned as kīrtanas, resemble the svarajati of Śyāma Śāstri.
- The Madhyamakāla passages, which are the hallmark of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita compositions feature in some of Tyāgarājas compositions. There are Kṛtis where the Pallavi and Anupallavi are set in sama kāla (normal tempo), but the entire caraṇas are in madhyamakāla. For eg: ‘Koluvaityunnāḍē’ in rāga Dēvagāndhārī, ‘Yuktamugādu’ in rāga Śrīrāga. In the Kṛti ‘Yōcana’ in rāga Darbar there is a madhyamakāla phrase in the Anupallavi itself. Eg: *“tōcanādyutijitāyuda virōcana nannubrōva inka”*. The caraṇa of this Kṛti is entirely sung as Madhyamakāla. Similarly the anupallavi of the Pañcaratnam ‘Jagadānandakāraka’ in rāga Naṭṭa the second line is sung as madhyamakāla. Eg: *“suguṇākara surasevya bhavya dāyaka sadā sakala”*.
- Some Kṛtis of Tyāgarāja have elaborate saṅgatis and intricate variations occurring in the Pallavi and Anupallavi, but the caraṇa is set in an apparent madhyamakāla format in a simple straightforward melody. Good examples of this type of compositions are: ‘Rāma bāṇa’ in rāga Sāverī, where the Pallavi and Anupallavi have many saṅgatis adding to the grandeur of the Kṛti, while the caraṇa has 8 lines set in a madhyamakāla format. A

similar composition is ‘Elateliyalērō’ in rāga Darbar where Pallavi and Anupallavi have many saṅgatis followed by a short simple Caraṇa.

- The virtuosity of Tyāgarāja lies in the fact that he has composed numerous compositions in the same rāga using varied tempos and time measures, elucidating the versatility of the rāga. For Eg : He has composed over 30 Kṛtis in rāga Tōḍi consisting of simple melodies (Rāju veḍale, Aragimpavē) and intricate and complex melodic structures (Kaddanuvāriki, Dācukōvalēna, Endudāgināḍō etc)
- The melodic mould of Tyāgarāja kṛtis are somewhat akin to Śyāma Śāstri where the Pallavi may begin in the Madhya sthāyi or Tāra sthāyi, the Anupallavi forays into the Tāra sthāyi and the caraṇa is a summation of all three sthāyis.
- Kṛtis like Girirāja sutha in Rāga Baṅgaḷa and Daṇḍamu peṭṭēnura in Rāga Balahamsa are very simple tunes, almost resembling the Noṭṭu svara compositions of Dīkṣita.

3.1 Musical forms handled by Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita was the youngest among the music Trinity, who ingeniously combined intellectual approach and musical prowess with profound Bhakti and philosophy into his immortal compositions. He was a Vainika, a scholar of tantra and mantra śāstras, jyōtiśa (astrology), knower of the Upaniśads, a staunch devotee of many deities, an avid traveller of various Kṣētras (spiritual places / temples), who infused all this divine knowledge into his compositions. Dīkṣita’s contribution towards the compositional form Kṛti is enormous and the variety in his compositions is unparalleled. He has composed a large number of group Kṛtis like Kamalāmbā Navāvarṇam (group of 9 songs on Goddess Kamalāmbā) Abhayāmbā Navāvarṇam, Navagraha or Vāra Kṛtis, Pañcaliṅga sthala Kṛtis, Śōḍaśa Gaṇapati kṛtis and several Vibhakti Kṛtis. He composed on many gods and goddesses and included exhaustive details relating to the Kṣētras, the festivals, sthala vṛkṣa, vimānas, the sanctum sanctorum, and other iconographical and architectural details in these compositions.

Core of his compositions are in high flown Sanskrit language, usually set in slow tempo replete with gamakas reflecting his leisurely vainika style. He has very few maṇipravāḷa Kṛtis

(compositions set in more than one language) to his credit (Śrī Abhayāmbā ninnu in Śrīrāga, Venkaṭācalapate in Karnāṭaka Kāpi).

Dīkṣita has one Varṇam to his credit namely ‘Rupamujūci’ set in Tōḍi rāga, ādi tāḷa. This Varṇam is given in the SSP as Dīkṣita’s composition, but some scholars attribute it to some other composer. Apart from this he has composed one ciṭṭasvara for a Varṇam composed by his father Rāmasvāmi Dīkṣita. This Varṇam is in rāga Śrīraṅjani, set to ādi tāḷa and an interesting fact is that only the first ciṭṭa svara was composed by Rāmasvāmi Dīkṣita. The second was composed by Śyāma Śāstri, third by Cinnasvāmi Dīkṣita and the fourth by Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita.

Dīkṣita has also composed several Noṭṭu svaras (English tunes couched in Sanskrit words), which are a unique fusion of Karnāṭak music and western melodies set in the Western C Major scale corresponding to rāga Śankarabharanam. Dīkṣita used ‘Guruguha’ as his mudra in his compositions as well as skilfully incorporated the rāga mudra in most of the Kṛtis.

Out of the 72 Rāgāṅga rāgas (mēḷas in the Venkaṭamakhin lineage) Dīkṣita has composed Kṛtis in 69 rāgāṅga rāgas, the notations of which are available in the treatise Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśini.

3.2 Tāḷa structure and variations in Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita compositions

- Dīkṣita has handled more variety of Tāḷa structures in his compositions as compared to the other two composers. He has composed in the Sulādi sapta tāḷas, the seven types of tāḷas as the rhythmic cycles for the seven Vāra Kṛtis (Kṛtis composed for each day of the week). The Kṛtis are sequentially in Dhruva, Maṭya, Rūpaka, Jhampa, Tripuṭa, Aṭa and Eka tāḷas, in the same order in which the Alankārams are taught to beginners.
- Dīkṣita has also composed in Khaṇḍa ēka tāḷa Eg : Śrī Dumdurgē in rāga Śrīraṅjani, Śrī Kamalāmbike in rāga Śrīrāga.
- Apart from rare tāḷas there are compositions in common tāḷas like ādi, rūpaka, tripuṭa, jhampa, aṭa etc. There is no mention of mīśra cāpu or khaṇḍa cāpu tāḷas in the Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśini (SSP).

3.3 Melodic Structure and special features in Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita compositions

- Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita was the first composer to explore the division of a composition into just two sections namely Pallavi and Anupallavi and Pallavi and Carana. In the present day musical parlance it is termed as Pallavi and Samaṣṭi caraṇa, (P.Sambamurthy) though Subbarāma Dīkṣita does not use this term in his book (SSP).

There are many compositions in the Pallavi and Anupallavi format. For Eg: ‘Māmava mīnākṣi in rāga Varāḷī.

There are only two Kṛtis that are given as Pallavi and Caraṇa namely ‘Tyāgarāja yōga vaibhavam’ in rāga Anandabhairavi and ‘Śrī guruguha’ in rāga Dēvakriya. The samaṣṭi caraṇa is a composite section and it stands for both the anupallavi and caraṇa, giving the composition a wholesome appeal. But this term is not used in the SSP.

- Most of his Kṛtis have long drawn out caraṇas. The concept of plural caraṇas that we find in Tyāgarāja Kṛtis and Śyāma Śāstri Kṛtis are not found in Dīkṣita Kṛtis. Many Kṛtis have a long single caraṇa. Eg: Bālagōpāla in rāga Bhairavi, the Navāvarṇams etc. We can find parallels of this in some of Tyāgarājā’s Kṛtis.
- Dīkṣita’s monumental contribution is the Madhyamakāla sahitya, which is an integral part of most of his compositions. There are two types of Madhyamakāla sähitya seen in Dīkṣita’s compositions - The first type is where the speed of the melody is doubled up in relation to the basic tempo of the song.

Eg 1: Madhyamakāla sähitya in pallavi, anupallavi and caraṇa of the Kṛti

Aṅgārakam āsrayāmyaham - Rāga Surati - Tāḷa Rūpakam

The second line of the Pallavi - “*mangaḷa vāram bhūmikumāram vāram vāram*” is set in madhyamakāla tempo. Here the madhyamakāla sähitya is not set to an entire āvarta. It comes as the second half of the āvarta.

Third line of Anupallavi - “*mangaḷam kambuḷam manjuḷatara padayugaḷam*”

Concluding lines of Caraṇa - “*bhānu candra gurumitram bhāsamāna sukaḷatram*”

Eg 2 : Madhyamakāla sāhitya in Anupallavi and Caraṇa of the Kṛti

Vātāpi Gaṇapatim - Rāga Hamsadhvani - Tāḷa ādi

The third line of the anupallavi - “*vītarāginam vinuta yōginam viśvakāraṇam vignavāraṇam*” is in madhyamakāla.

Concluding lines of the caraṇa - *Karāmbujapāśa bījāpuram kaluśavidūram būtakāram ... is in madhyamakāla*

Eg 3: Madhyamakāla only in the Caraṇa of the Kṛti

Concluding lines of the caraṇa : *purandarādi dikpāla sanandanādi muni varāḷi vanditam abhinava guruguha nanditam anantakīrtim*

Eg 4: Entire Anupallavi set in Madhyamakāla

The Kṛti ‘Kaṇcadalāyatākṣi’ begins in the regular tempo, but the Anupallavi is set completely in Madhyamakāla tempo – “*kunjara gamanē maṇimaṇḍita manjuḷa caraṇē*. The caraṇa commences on the regular tempo and concludes with a madhyamakāla passage – “ *ēkānēkākṣari bhuvanēśvari ēkānandāmṛta jhari bhāśvari*”

- Another variety of Madhyamakāla sāhitya can be seen in Kṛtis like Bālagōpāla in rāga Bhairavi, Mīnākṣī mēmudam in rāga Pūrvikalyāṇi, where it is set in the same tempo as the original melody, but there will be no extra elongations or kārvais for the syllables that occur in the lines. Every syllable will correspond to a svara (similar to Gītams and Svarajatis) This is termed as “apparent madhyamakāla” by Professor Sambamurthy in his South Indian Music Book III.

Eg 1 - In the Kṛti Bālagōpāla the caraṇa concluding lines are set in apparent madhyamakāla - ‘*Drōṇa karṇa duryōdhanādi hara draupadi māna samrakṣana*

Eg 2 - In the Kṛti Mīnākṣī mēmudam the anupallavi third line is also set in apparent madhyamakāla - ‘*mīnalōcanī pāśamōcani mānini kadambavana vāsini*

This apparent madhyamakāla format is somewhat akin to the svara sāhitya passage of Śyāma Śāstri Kṛtis. In the latter, the svara passage is sung after the anupallavi and the

sāhitya is sung after the carṇa, whereas the svara part is not sung for madhyamakāla sāhitya.

- A significant aspect of Madhyamakāla sāhitya and Svara sāhitya passages is that they commence only on the sama eḍuppu.
- Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita's composition 'Māyetvam yāhi' in rāga Taraṅgiṇi is structured like a svarajati in the sense it consists of a Pallavi and is followed by 4 caraṇas, akin to Tyāgarāja's Śrīraghuvara. This composition also has a ciṭṭasvara in the end.
- Dīkṣita has also composed solkaṭṭu svara passages for some of his Kṛtis.

Eg 1: Viśālākṣīm in Rāga Kāśirāmakriya has a solkaṭṭu passage in the end of the composition.

Eg 2: Anandanaṭana Prakāśam in rāga Kēdāram

Eg 3: Śrī mahāgaṇapatiravatumām in rāga Gauḷa

Findings

- The most noteworthy feature common among the music Trinity was that all their compositions were composed on the bedrock of Bhakti.
- The compositional form Kṛti was indeed their foremost preference and contribution as compared to other compositions.
- The melodic structure of the Svarajati seemed to have appealed to all three of them, resulting in individual compositions in the similar mould.
- Tyāgarāja and Dīkṣita employed the madhyamakāla passages in their Kṛtis.
- The Pallavi, Anupallavi and Caraṇa structure was used by all three composers for their Kṛtis.
- In the realm of literary beauties and prosody, all three composers have strictly followed the dvitīya akṣara prāsa in all of their compositions. They have also employed svarākṣarams in many of their kṛtis. But since this paper restricts itself to the compositional structure in terms of melodic and rhythmical setting, the lyrical setting is out of the scope of this paper.

- With regards to variations in structure among the Trinity, it is observed that the Pallavi and Anupallavi (otherwise understood as ‘Samaṣṭi carana’) is unique to Dīkṣita.
- Tyāgarāja and Śyāma Śāstri have composed kṛtis having multiple caraṇas, which mostly repeat the dhātu (melody) of the first carana. This is not found in Dīkṣita’s kṛtis.
- The Dēśādi and Madhyādi tala structure is unique to Tyāgarāja, just as the Vilōma cāpu is the signature style of Śyāma Śāstri and the sūlādi sapta tāḷas are of Dīkṣita.

The music trinity ingeniously combined philosophy with artistic virtuosity making their compositions immortal and relevant till the present day. The greatness of their contribution cannot be undermined so much so that their compositions are indispensable and are even now the mainstay of present day concerts.

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