



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

MUSICAL PERCEPTION OF KAUTHUVAM

Dr. M Subhasree

Assistant Professor

Department of Indian Music

University of Madras, Chennai, India

Abstract : Kauthuvam or Kavithuvam or Kauttam is a prominent form in the present day Bharatanatyam Margam. Earlier, this was a form that was a dedicated ritual composition performed by the traditional dancers in temples. For decades now, this form has evolved with inevitable modifications, alterations and innovations. This paper will focus on the musical aspects of this Bharatanatyam form and the historical perspective in the rendition through the years. Though there are many oral sources with regard to this subject, the study will deal with the few available textual sources in order to understand the historical development of the form. The structure of the Kauthuvam is generally a combination of solkattu syllables or the rhythmic syllables, that generally do not have any meaning and the meaningful sahitya part. The sahitya is generally in praise of a deities, King, patron and other specific themes. From the Bharatanatyam point of view, Kauthuvam is one of the invocatory compositions in present day margam. This form has a combination of both nrta and abinaya components.

The melodic structure, rhythmical components, distribution of the rhythmic syllables, text or the sahitya have scope for analytical study, so as to evaluate the significant changes that has been created in this dance form till date. The main objective of this paper shall be the musical components of the form Kauthuvam, based on the documentation available in various printed sources.

Keywords: kauthuvam, melody, raga, solkattu, structure, tala

I. Introduction

Bharatanāṭyam is a classical art form of India that has been in vogue many centuries ago. The repertoire of Bharatanāṭyam is so rich logically systematized in order to portray the magnificence of the various aesthetic approaches and concepts. An art form that is not just meant for entertainment but is also a representative of the culture of the region. This art form encompasses variety of forms that have evolved through centuries. The mārgam or the traditional way of presentation of sequential compositions each unique in its structure and presentation. The Kauthuvam is one such compositional form which belongs to the layer of invocatory compositions in a mārgam. The musical component of Kauthuvam is being dealt with in this paper so as to understand the various facets encompassing this dance form.

II. Literature review

The earliest source that is dealt for the present study is a publication by the Tanjore Saraswati Mahal Library titled, “Kōrvayāchē sāhityācē jinnas” edited by A Krishnaswami Mahdick Rao Saheb with assistance from G Nagaraja Rao and additional inputs from K Vasudeva Sastri. This book is a compilation of Dance pieces in Marathi by Serfoji Raja. The various forms that were in vogue during the period of Serfoji Raja are included in this work.

The other work namely the “Naṭanādi vādyā rañjanam” is a compilation of traditional compositions including the kauthuvam-s. This is authored by the Madurai Bharata vidvān Gaṅgaimuttupillai and published in the year 1898.

Tanjore Quartette, the pioneers in the formulating the Bharatanātya mārgam have compiled the Pañcamūrti Kauthuvam and Navasandhi Kauthuvam-s and have given the notation in the book, “Ādi bharata kalā mañjari”

III. Methodology

This paper deals with the musical aspects seen in the form Kauthuvam. The textual sources which mention the Kauthuvam-s are looked upon for the structure of various Kauthuvam-s. The oral tradition or the practice based study is more likely to have been observed as two of the above said works does not give the notation for the Kauthuvam. A structural analytical method with a peep into the musical analysis method is being adopted in this topic.

IV. Discussions

a. Kauthuvam

Kauthuvam was referred to as Kauttam, Kavittuvam, Kautvam that generally meant the poetry or the poetical form. This form has been in the presentation of dance many centuries ago. There are instances of the traditional dancers from the customary families performing Kauthuvam-s during procession of the deities inside and outside the temple during the 19th century. This dance piece was performed during balidāna, which was accompanied by the recitation of suitable mantra-s, beating of the drum and some other instruments to propitiate the god. (Nithyasumaṅgali; pg:122)

b. General Structure of Kauthuvam

Kauthuvam is a combined structure of solkaṭṭu passages and meaningful sāhitya phrases interweaved in alternate patterns. The length of the solkaṭṭu passage may vary for each kauthuvam. The proportion between the solkaṭṭu passage and the meaningful sāhitya is similar in most of the kauthuvam-s. The solkaṭṭu passages are unique to Kauthuvam-s seen in various publications. The earlier Kauttam-s have solkaṭṭu-s that seem to have a blend from Marāthi musical forms as seen in Serfoji’s compositions.

The Kauthuvam-s are rendered as single composition as there are no segments. There is no refrain or concluding with the first line or so. This is one long composition having the solkaṭṭu and sāhitya passages alternating in a melodic movement. The solkaṭṭu passages and the sāhitya passages are first recited by the naṭṭuvanār or the guru handling the naṭṭuvāṅgam and then sung with the tune by the vocalist. This is being practiced presently.

c. Kauttam-s in Kōrvayāchē sāhityācē jinnas

The different forms are composed based on a particular theme. They start with Jaya Jaya followed by śaraṇu, sēvai, sollu, śabdham, varṇam, padam, svarajati, abinayapadam, tillāna, jakkiṇi, gītam, prabandham, tripuṭam, ślōkavarṇam, kauttam and concluded with maṅgalam. It is interesting to note that all the above forms contribute in forming a single nirūpaṇam which is based on a purāṇic episode or theme. An additional feature is that all these forms

figuring in a single nirūpaṇam is based on a single raga individual to that compilation called as the nirūpaṇam. The rāga and tāla for each of the Kauttam are different. The sāhitya passages are in Maharāṣṭrian language. But it is to be noted that the rāga-s are from the South Indian system. The rāga-s and tāla-s employed in these kauttam-s are as follows:

Rītigaula, Ādi

Bilahari, Ādi

Kēdāragaula, Rūpaka

Bhairavi, Ādi

Kalyāṇi, Savāri

Duśēṇi, Ādi

Nīlāmbari, Aṭa

All the above Kauttam-s have a similar structure. Each kauttam has two segments namely the ṣabdha or the sollu and the sāhitya. This form starts with a ṣabdha or the sollu followed by the meaningful sāhitya. The sāhitya is then followed by a different sollu passage and thereby is concluded. The text of one Kauttam in the rāga Rītigaula is produced here for reference.

Rāga Rītigaula

sollu

Kauttam

Ādi tāla

tarikīṭu jhōntajjaka tarikīṭa taka takanaka taka jaka

tarikīṭa dhimmi |

taka ṇaka jhantari kiṭa tatdhanāku |

jhēkiṇaṇaka jhaṅkiṇaṇaka jham |

kiṇa jhamṇaka jhaṅkiṇa janakaja |

ṇaka jhaku kunda takatidhi tā tatta ||

sāhityam

ātā yāvāri | umē barōbari |

sarabhāvatāri | sakaḷā tāri |

jham jham janakiṭa | jaga jaga ṇanta |

.....

dhari takkiṇaṇaka jhantari kiṭataka

kiṇaṇaka jhantari kiṭa taka | takku dhikku || 1 ||

Meaning: The lord śaṅkara who is also a śarabhāvatāri is protecting the universe along with umā.

It is to be noted that the splitting of the solkaṭṭu phrases are indicated with the symbol | so as to understand the placement to some extent. The meaning of the sāhitya is also given at the end of each Kauttam. The sāhitya is in Marāṭhi language.

d. Pañcamūrti Kauthuvam

This is a single compositional kauthuvam, which is dedicated to the presiding five deities namely, Vināyaka, Muruga, Sambandar, Caṇḍikēśvara and Naṭarāja. This kauthuvam is tuned in rāgamāika sung by the early prominent naṭṭuvanār-s. The Ghana rāga-s namely, Nāṭṭai, Gaula, Ārabhi, Śrī and varāli are used in this kauthuvam. These were sung and performed when the deity Naṭarāja was taken in procession on Tiruvādirai day. This commences with the solkaṭṭu followed by sāhitya in praise of the deities mentioned above and concludes with a solkaṭṭu. Though this Pañcamūrti kauthuvam is considered a sole composition, the kauthuvam-s in praise of Vināyaka, Muruga and Natarāja are also performed as individual compositions. The tāla-s mentioned for this kauthuvam is ādi, catuśra ēkam, sarvalaghu, catuśra ēkam and sarvalaghu respectively. All the above tāla-s constitute the universal rhythmic patterns of four.

e. Navasandhi Kauthuvam

These are traditional kauthuvam-s that are dedicated to the nine sandhi-s or the directions as the name implies. These are performed in temples during the commencement of utsavam-s, on the day of dvajārohaṇam and other ritualistic occasions. These are performed to propitiate the aṣṭadīkpaḷa-s or the guardians of eight directions and the brahma at the centre. This include Brahma sandhi, Indra sandhi, Agni sandhi, Nṛtti sandhi, Varuṇa sandhi, Vāyu sandhi, Kubēra sandhi and Īsānya sandhi. All these nine sandhi-s have the rāga-s and tāla-s specified.

According to the preface in the book, Adi Bharata Kalāmañjari, “It is said that Navasandhi music used to be sung about 200 years ago in the temples when it was a musical form. It was during the time of Tanjore Quartette, Ponniah, Chinniah, Sivanandam and Vadivelu and their fathers that Navasandhi was choreographed into dance form and the sons of the Tanjore quartette Sabhapati and Mahadevan were performing this in temples.” The rāga-s and tāla-s constituting the Navasandhi are tabulated below.

Brahma sandhi	Madhyamāvati	Tiśra ēka
Indra sandhi	Gurjari	Miśra cāpu
Agni sandhi	Nāṭṭai	Catuśra jhampa
Ema sandhi	Dēśākṣi	Catuśra ēka
Niruti sandhi	Kuntalam	Tiśra ēka
Varuṇa sandhi	Varāli	Catuśra ēka
Vāyu sandhi	Makuṭa rāmagiri	Catuśra rūpaka
Kubēra sandhi	Māḷavaśrī	Tiśra ēka
Īsānya sandhi	Malahari	Khaṇḍa ēka

As like Lakṣaṇa gīta-s, the sāhitya of the Navasandhi kauthuvam-s are significant for the detailed description of each sandhi, the presiding deity, suitable rāga, paṇ and tāla, nṛtta type each particular sandhi. All the nine kauthuvam-s commence with the similar solkaṭṭu ‘tā tei tei tattā’. The kālapramāṇa of these kauthuvam-s are comparatively in a slow tempo. The melodic part of these kauthuvam-s are so rich portraying the lakṣaṇa or the specifications of the sandhi, the specific rāga, tāla and other relevant details. The Brahma sandhi kauthuvam set in the rāga Madhyamāvati is discussed here for further understanding.

f. An overview of Brahma sandhi kauthuvam

This kauthuvam is set in the tāla Tiśra ēka, which is also reckoned as the short rūpaka (two kaḷai) of one anudruta and a druta. The jīva svāra of the rāga Madhyamāvati is highlighted in this composition throughout. The commencing phrase is r , m , p , , , n , , , p , n , ś , , , establishes the ascent or the ārōhaṇa krama of the rāga. The corresponding solkaṭṭu is 'tā tei tei tattā kiṭataka' which is common to most of the Navasandhi kauthuvam-s. However, the work Naṭanādi vādyā rañjanam directly starts with the solkaṭṭu as follows.

'takkiṇam tarikiṭa takirtakiṭa dindḍīm

dikkiṇam tirikiṭa dikirtakiṭa thontōm

takkiṇata dikkiṇata toṅgutonkiṭataka'

This kauthuvam has a combination of svāra patterns with long kārvai-s and short hrasva svāra syllables. This gives a feeling of mixed rhythmic flow of vilambita and madhya layam, so that there is no monotonous flow in the rendition. The range is also widespread from mandra sthāyi madhyama to the tāra sthāyi madhyama.

The sāhitya has beautiful description of the sandhi and its specifications.

dā tā venum brumma sandhiyum

sāvītri gāyatri sarasvati maṅgaiyar samētarāi

Brahma is referred to as,

sakalabhuvana sṛuṣṭi stitikartarām

madana simmāsanādiparkku

The musical terms follow in the sequence.

caccapuṭam vādyam madhyamāvati gītam

sa ri ma pa ni sa kamalamadu niruttam

catura amsāsiyam brumma tāḷam

tatdi takatā tāditaka

mēgarāgap paṇ vilāṅgiyē

aḍiyavarkku aruḷ seyyum brummanadu sandi kavutvam

This kavutham has a very relaxed pace, suiting to show the abinaya for the sāhitya passage which has so much of descriptive facts.

g. Kauthuvam-s at present

In present day scenario, there is a blend of traditional kauthuvam-s being performed and there are also new emerging kauthuvam-s which are created for thematic productions or any other exclusive purposes. The Kauthuvam-s are composed in varied range of rāga-s from popular ones to apūrva rāga-s suiting to the mode of presentation.

The form that was earlier done in temples, gradually entered into performing in the courts and halls of Kings palaces. Eventually, the kauthuvam-s were in praise of the patrons and rulers. In the present day format, the Kauthuvam-s are being performed in praise of the deities. In the work, Natānādi vādyā rañjanam nine traditional kauthuvam-s are compiled. These are supposed to be authored by Madurai Bharata vidvān Gaṅgaimuttupillai. The rāga is not mentioned but the tāla or the rhythmic framework is alone mentioned for each individual Kauthuvam-s. The notation is not prescribed though.

- Gaṇapati kauthuvam – saruvalaghu
- Subramanyar kauthuvam – saruvalaghu
- Sīrgāzi sambandar kauthuvam – saruvalaghu
- Cidambara naṭēsar kauthuvam – saruvalaghu
- Tiruvālaṅgāḍu kāḷi kauthuvam – tiśira jāti laghu
- Tiruceṅgōḍu viṣṇu kauthuvam – saruvalaghu
- Śrīvilliputtūr nācciyār kauthuvam – saruvalaghu
- Madurāpuri sokkar kauthuvam – Tiśira jāti tiripuṭai cāpu
- Dārukāvanam mahāliṅga kauthuvam – saruvalaghu

h. Rāga-s in Kauthuvams

The rāga-s that are being used for Kauthuvam-s shall be dealt with in this segment.

- The Ganapati kauthuvam is popularly rendered in Gambīranāṭṭai or Nāṭṭai. Since this is an invocatory piece, this rāga might have been chosen to establish the musical atmosphere for the performance.
- Another common Kauthuvam is Naṭēsa kauthuvam that is being performed widely. This is sung in Hamsadhvani, yet another rāga suitable for an auspicious commencement.
- Subramanya Kauthuvam is predominantly sung in the rāga Ṣaṅmukhapriya, a rāga symbolizing Muruga himself. There are also other versions in the rāga Gaula.
- Viṣṇu Kauthuvam is sung in Nāṭṭai. Śrīvilliputtūr nācciyār kauthuvam is sung in Malayamārutam.
- Kāḷi kauthuvam, is sung in the rāga Gaula and Khaṇḍa naḍai.

However, there are slighter variations in the choice of the rāga-s rendered today.

V. Discussion

Kauthuvam-s the compositional form which was a part of the ritualistic tradition, gradually moved to the nāṭya presentational form in courts and later to the performance stages. This form has been passed through the generations undergoing slight modifications. With regard to the structure, all the kauthuvam-s have a mixed pattern of solkaṭṭu passages and meaningful sāhitya. However, the solkaṭṭu passages are different for each kauthuvam. The concluding solkaṭṭu ‘*takku dikku takkiṭṭa tonkiṭṭa kiṭatakaḍan taṅgi kiṭataka dikki tām tattattām*’ is commonly seen in many of the kavuthuvam-s. This is musically sung, yet restricting it to the tāra sthāyi so as to avoid the distortion of the solkaṭṭu. As the solkaṭṭu passages are sometimes complex in some Kauthuvam-s, the melody has not been made that much complicated as it may affect the aesthetic value of the composition. The solkaṭṭu have to be more precise even while sung with tune. So the melody ought to be not that much intricate. The sāhitya is seen in different languages such as Tamil, Marāṭhi, a blend of Samskr̥t words interspersed with Tamil. Though the earlier publications have not mentioned the rāga for the Kauthuvam-s (except Navasandhi), the Kauthuvam-s have maintained more or less same melody though

the ages that has been passed on through oral tradition. The text of the Kauthuvam-s especially the Pañcamūr̥ti and Navasandhi have not undergone major changes. Ādi bharata kalā mañjari follows the similar text as given in Naṭanādi vādyā rañjanam with only few variations in the solkaṭṭu part. In present days, many Kauthuvam-s are being composed suiting to the emerging needs. Tirukkōṇēśvara kauthuvam is composed in the rāga Rasāli, which is not a common rāga. Pañcamūr̥ti kauthuvam is sung in rāgamālika as it has five different solkaṭṭu and sāhitya passages pertaining to five different deities.

This traditional form, still surviving with all its glory has many artistic facets and can be well understood in the rendition. In recent times, this Kauthuvam, which had so much complex solkaṭṭu passages, rich in its musical fervor has undergone many reductions both structurally and musically. The rich musical content which was once prevailing in this form, is being ignored and just been rendered as a dance form with less or hardly any melodic aesthetic value. Many kauthuvam-s are being composed just for the sake of thematic value and presented on elite platforms. The artistic fraternity can ambitiously look on to the traditional kauthuvam-s which are still in vogue and enrich its value which in turn is a process of preserving the same for further generations to follow.

References:

- Serfoji Raja. *Korvayache Sahityache Jinnas : Dance pieces in Marathi*. Tanjore: Sarasvathi Mahal Library; 1958.
- Kittappa Pillai K P and Sivanandam K P. *Adi Bharata Kala Manjari*. Chennai: Natyalaya; 1963.
- Gangaimuttu Pillai. *Natanadi Vadya Ranjanam*; 1898.

