



Prosody In Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita's Vāra Kṛti-S

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Abstract

Prosody is one of the most beautiful distinguishing features of language. It is very interesting to understand that in any kind of communication, be it prose, poetry or song, if the elements of prosody are adhered to, it gives a unique experience to the listener or reader. Indian Classical Music is one of the richest music legacies in the world because of brilliant composers who enlightened the practitioners and *rasika*-s of the art. This paper deals with how the concept of prosody is incorporated into the compositions of the great composer Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita, mainly his Vāra Kṛti-s. To do this, the different terms or elements in prosody are considered and suitable examples depicting the usage of these elements in Dīkṣita's kṛti-s are illustrated. This study shows how versed Dīkṣita was in terms of language, aesthetics, grammar and poetry. It also allows aspiring composers to draw inspiration and write the *sāhitya* adhering to these prosodical elements.

Introduction

The unique function that distinguishes the human race from its animal counterpart is 'Language'. Prosody is the property that adds rhythm to language. Prosody is defined as the study of the elements of language that contribute towards acoustic and rhythmic effects in poetry and prose.¹ It is derived from the Greek word '*Prosōdia*' that means 'song sung to music', proving that music and prosody are interlinked. Music performances happen everywhere. Performers add variation to music. They manipulate sound properties like frequency, time, amplitude, timbre, and so on. These are collectively known as 'music expressions', which tend to communicate emotions. In speech, the acoustic change in frequency, amplitude, etc is called prosody. It is a systematic, rule-governed feature. Musical prosody is that which creates acoustic variations in dimensions which in turn creates expressions. It determines the length of a syllable, whether the syllable must be short, or long, with a combination of long and short syllables forming the meters of poetry, giving it a rhythmic effect. Musical prosody is a complex rule-governed form of auditory stimulation, and it can influence or impact listeners in systematic ways².

¹ Gross, Harvey S.. "prosody". Encyclopedia Britannica, 9 Aug. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/art/prosody>. Accessed 25 September 2022.

² Carolin Palmer, Sean Hutchins, "What is Musical Prosody?", Psychology of Learning and Motivation, Academic Press, Vol.46, 2006, Page 245-278, ISSN 0079-7421, ISBN 9780125433464.

Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita (24th March 1775 – 21st October 1835), one of the Trinities of Carnatic Music (Tyāgarāja and Śyāma Sāstri being the other two), was born in Tiruvarur and got exposure to Sanskrit, the Vēda-s and North Indian Music during his stay in Varanasi with his guru Cidambaranātha Yōgi³. Dīkṣita is one of the most prominent composers who brilliantly utilized the concept of prosody in his compositions.

Metrical Patterns in Kaṛṇatik Music

There are two types of compositions – the ones with sāhitya (eg. Svarajati, Varṇam, Kṛti, Padam, Jāvāli, etc) and the ones without sāhitya (eg. Jatisvaram, Mallari, etc). In this study, we deal with the compositions with sāhitya.

A song is measured music, in other words, it is musical poetry; whereas an ālāpana is unmeasured music, in other words, it is musical prose. A composition may have prose or poetry in its sāhitya. A versified prose is where yati and prāsa occur at proper places. In other words, it is like a punctuated prose. Metrical sāhitya is called padya sāhitya. Non-metrical sāhitya is called gadya sāhitya⁴.

Prosody in the Compositions of Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita

The sāhitya in Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita's compositions are rich in metrical patterns like Yati, Prāsa, Yamakam, etc., along with strong mantra, tantra and other vēdic elements. The terms will be clearly explained with the help of Vāra kṛti-s of Muddusvāmi Dīkṣita as examples.

NB: In cases where examples of Vāra Kṛti-s cannot be quoted, other compositions of Dīkṣita are given.

- Pāda
- Prāsa
- Yati
- Gaṇa
- Antarukti
- Yamakam

Pāda

A verse or line of poetry is termed a Pāda. It is usually one-quarter of a stanza. In Kaṛṇatak Music, a Pāda is one full āvarta or cycle or one complete line of music, whichever is longer.

In tāḷa-s like Ādi, Mīśrajhampa, Khaṇḍa Aṭa, etc, a Pāda is usually one or a maximum of two āvarta-s. Eg. Budhamāśrayāmi (Nāṭṭakuriñji – Mīśra jhampa), Śrīśukra Bhagavantam (Paraju – Khaṇḍa Aṭa).

In Rūpaka or Cāpu tāḷa, it is usually 4 or 8 āvarta-s.

Eg. Aṅgārakam Āśrayāmyaham (Suruṭṭi – Rūpakam) – 8 āvarta-s.

In exceptional cases, it consists of 3 or 6 āvarta-s.

Eg. Cintayamākanda (Bhairavi Rāga – Rūpaka tāḷa) – One Pāda is 6 āvarta-s.

Mānasa Guruguha (Ānanda Bhairavi Rāga – Rūpaka tāḷa) – One Pāda is 3 āvarta-s.

³ Venkatrama Aiyar, T, L, "Life of Muthuswami Dikshitar", National Book Trust, 1968.

⁴ Prof P Sambamoorthi, "South Indian Music – Book IV", The Indian Music Publishing House, 8th Edition, 2014, Chapter 14.

Prāsa

Prāsa is an embellishment to poetry. In simple terms, it refers to rhyming patterns.

There are mainly 4 types of prāsa – Ādi prāsa (Mōnai), Dvitiyākṣara prāsa (Edugai); Antya prāsa and Anuprāsa.

Ādi prāsa – The 1st syllable of different lines gets repeated.

Eg. In the anupallavi of the kṛti Candram Bhaja Mānasa (Asāvēri – Catusra Maṭhyam), the first syllable ‘i’ gets repeated (Indrādi, Indum, Indirā).

Dvitiyākṣara prāsa – The 2nd syllable of different lines gets repeated. This can be found in all the compositions, especially the 2nd syllables of Pallavi and Anupallavi.

Eg. Surya – Kārya – Ārya (Sūryamūrtē – Saurāṣtram – Catusra Dhruvam), Aṅgārakam – Śṛṅgāraka – Maṅgaḷam (Aṅgārakam Āśrayāmi – Suruṭṭi – Rūpakam) and so on.

Antya prāsa – The ending syllable gets repeated.

Eg. In the madhyamakāla sāhitya in caraṇam of Budhamāśrayāmi (Nāṭṭakuriṅgi – Mīśra jhampa) – the syllable ‘tam’ gets repeated (Mahitam, Rahitam, Hitam, Sahitam); in the caraṇam of Sūryamūrte (Saurāṣtram – Catusra Dhruvam), the syllable ‘nō’ gets repeated⁵ (Bhānō, Sūnō, Kṛsānō, Svabhānō).

Anuprāsa – Repetition of similar letters, syllables, or words.

Eg. In the kṛti Sūryamūrte, words rhyming to Sūrya occur thrice (Sūrya, Kārya, Ārya).

In the kṛti Śri Śukra Bhagavantam (Paraju – Khaṇḍa Aṭa), rhyming words like Vimśa, Navāśa, Trimśāśa, etc occur.

In the kṛti Māyē tvam (Taraṅgiṇi – Ādi), words rhyming to ‘Māyē’ occur many times (Dhyāyē, dhyēye, kāyē, samudāyē, upāyē and so on).

Yati

The letter occurring after a pause in a pāda is termed yati. The pause can be actual or imaginary. Alliterating the initial syllables of āvarta-s in a yati creates a pleasant musical resonance. There are 6 types of Yati, namely, Sama, Gōpuchcha, Srōtōvaha, Mṛdaṅga, Ḍamaru and Viśama Yati.

Eg. Māyē tvam (Taraṅgiṇi – Ādi)

Sarasa kāyē

Rasa kāyē

Sa kāyē

Āyē

Tyāgarāja Yōga Vaibhavam (Ānanda Bhairavi – Rūpakam)

Śam

Prakāśam

Svarūpa prakāśam

Tatva svarūpa prakāśam

⁵ Prof P Sambamoorthi, “South Indian Music – Book IV”, The Indian Music Publishing House, 8th Edition, 2014, Chapter 14.

Sakala tatvasvarūpa prakāśam

Śivaśaktyādi sakala tatva svarūpa prakāśam

Gaṇa

The prosodical foot is termed gaṇa. There are 8 types of gaṇa-s and a few upa gaṇa-s. Let us look at the 8 types of gaṇa-s and their patterns:

1. Ma gaṇa – 8 8 8 (Śrīnāthā)
2. Bha gaṇa – 8 1 1 (Kāraṇa, Mānasa)
3. Ja gaṇa – 1 8 1 (Karāḷa, Prakāśa, Śaśāṅgam)
4. Sa gaṇa – 1 1 8 (Śirasā)
5. Na gaṇa – 1 1 1 (Sarasa, Anīśam, Kiraṇam)
6. Ya gaṇa – 1 8 8 (Kṛsānō)
7. Ra gaṇa – 8 1 8 (Mālinī, Ātmanē)
8. Ta gaṇa – 8 8 1 (Saurāstra, Kēyūra)

where 8 – guru (Long) and 1 – laghu (short)

While adhering to the prāsa syllables, the length of the syllable was also identical – hrasva for hrasva (short) and dīrgha for dīrgha (long). Eg. Sūryamūrte – Kāryakāraṇātmaka (Prathamākṣara and Dvīṭīyākṣara prāsa – identical syllable and also identical length).

Antarukti

In some instances, the words and names are dissected to conform to the rules of prosody. This license to dissect words has been enjoyed by composers since ancient times. Such splitting of words to suit the music is even found in Sāma gāna. It also occurs because an equitable distribution of words in the sections of an āvarta enhances the listening effect.

The type of splitting where the surplus syllables in a pāda are tacked on to the prior āvarta of the pāda to conform to the rules of prosody. This property is termed antarukti⁶. However, utmost care should be taken while singing such that the meaning of the word does not get compromised while splitting.

Eg.

Na || vāmśa Hōra (Śrīśukra Bhagavantam – Paraś – Khaṇḍa Aṭa)

Ut || tuṅga Kamaṇīya (Cintayamākanda – Bhairavi – Rūpakam)

Para || mātmani (Mānasa Guruguha – Ānanda Bhairavi – Rūpakam)

Samu || dāyē (Māyē tvam – Taraṅgiṇi – Ādi)

Nava || nīta hṛdayam⁷ (Ānanda Naṭana – Kēdāram – Mīśra cāpu)

Kā || tyāyanīpatē (Tyāgarājāya Namaste – Bēgaḍa – Rūpakam)

The type of Padacchēda where the surplus syllables in a pāda are tacked on to the prior āvarta of the pāda to conform to the rules of prosody. This property is termed atītagraha⁸.

⁶ Prof P Sambamoorthi, “South Indian Music – Book IV”, The Indian Music Publishing House, 8th Edition, 2014, Chapter 14.

⁷ Subarama Dikshitar, “Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini – Part IV”, The Music Academy Madras, 1977

⁸ Prof P Sambamoorthi, “South Indian Music – Book IV”, The Indian Music Publishing House, 8th Edition, 2014, Chapter 14.

Yamakam

When identical words or syllables are rhymed in one section or sections of a composition but have different meanings, it is called Yamakam. Here, the change of meaning is sometimes made into effect by changing the division of words (Maḍakku in Tamil).

For example, in the kṛti Kamalāmba Bhajare in Kalyāṇi rāga set to Ādi tāḷa, the word Kamala is used to portray the name of Dēvi, the flower 'Lotus' and a place 'Kamalāpura'.

Conclusion

Without debate, song is earlier than poetry and poetry is earlier than prose. In other words, padya is earlier than gadya. The rules of prosody evolved naturally over time and became the regulating factor in compositions, serving as a guide to the correct rendering of pieces, to correctly writing sāhitya. Prāsa is a distinctive feature in South Indian languages. Tēvāram is one of the earliest forms of music where prāsa is found. In Jayadēva Aṣṭapadi-s, dvitīyākṣara prāsa is not found, but antya prāsa is found. Composers like Nārāyaṇa Tīrttha, Margadarśi, Sēṣayyaṅgār, the musical trinity, etc used the beauty of prāsa in their compositions. On the other hand, the followers of Jayadēva like the composers of Śivāṣṭapadi, Rāmāṣṭapadi, etc did not include the dvitīyākṣara prāsa, instead, they used antya prāsa only. Till the 15th century, only poetry was found in the sāhitya of musical compositions. Versified prose was first used by Tallapākam composers of Tirupati. Purandara Dāsa, Bhadrācala Rāmadasa and Tyāgarāja and his disciples also used versified prose in their compositions.

Dīkṣita is arguably a revolutionary composer who used prosody in such a brilliant and inimitable manner in his compositions, throwing light on the fact that language can be expressed so aesthetically beautiful and appealing.

References

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