

A Study of the Dance Treatment of the JāVaḷi- SāRamaina Māṭalento of SvāTi Tirunāḷ

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I. INTRODUCTION

Among many composers of the Karnāṭaka classical music, Svāti Tirunāḷ is one among the esteemed musicians of the South India. Known mostly for his compositions on the themes such as, *Bhakti* (devotion) and *Śṅgāra*¹, Mahārāja Svāti Tirunāḷ of the Travancore court is as well popular in the classical dance traditions of India. Considering the delineation of the theme, the construct of the plot and the lilting tune, the compositions are one among the most sought after “items” in the dance repertoire, including the Bharatanāṭya form of south India.

The aim of the present paper is to probe the treatment of one of the most popular Jāvaḷi’s in the Bharatanāṭya repertoire, *Sāramaina Māṭalento* of Svāti Tirunāḷ, to have a better understanding of the delineation of the composition, in terms of dance. This will lead to adept dance choreography to the *Vastu*², true to the *Kavi*’s imagination and further embellishment from dancer’s angle. The analysis is will be carried out based on the principles of *Rasa Sūtra* of Bharata dealt in the Nāṭyasāstra.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- The nature of the paper is theoretical. Hence the concepts and suggestions for/of dance are at a conceptual level.
- Music for dance has only been treated as support to the analysis and the technicalities have not been considered strictly.
- The analysis is based on the *Rasa Sūtra* alone; meaning, the understanding of the *Vastu* is through the angle of *Vibhāva*’s and *Vyabhiçāri*’s. Elements of poetics (*Alamkāraśāstra*) have not been dealt; the author is aware of the fact that, analysis through the poetic concepts has a better scope for understanding.

DANCEABILITY

It is important to define what becomes *Danceable*, in dance. It may be observed that any music and *sāhitya* can be danced by a capable artiste, through his brilliance. However, for the purpose of understanding and appreciating that ‘brilliance’ at least, it is necessary to have some reference points to consider for choreographing or choosing certain compositions.

Alamkāraśāstra is the governing principle for Indian Art, undoubtedly. Many eminent aestheticians like Bharata, Abhinavagupta, Ānandavardhana, Mammaṭa, Śrī Harsā etc.,; and contemporary scholars like Prof. M Hiriyanna, Dr. V Raghavan, *Śatāvadhāni* Dr. R Ganesh, Dr. Shobha Shashikumar and such others have contributed immensely towards Arts and *Alamkāraśāstra*. It is but imperative to study the concepts of Aesthetics to have an understanding of our danceability.

Since, the goal of any art is *Rasa*³, it is imperative to consider the *Rasa* as one among the primary factors of danceability. For the purpose of this study alone, we shall limit ourselves to the factor of danceability as in the light of *Rasa* (as defined in the scope).

RASA

Rasa or the aesthetic experience is the very content and purpose of the arts. *Rasa* was first discussed in the Nāṭyasāstra (5000 BCE) by Bharata muni. *Rasa* literally means taste. Hence, the relish or experience through

¹ *Śṅgāra*: One among the eight *rasa*’s (Flavour of experience) given by Bharata, in the treatise Nāṭyasāstra.

² *Vastu*: Plot, theme and structure.

³ *Rasa*: Aesthetic Experience.

arts is Rasa or *Rasasvāda*. The logical way of understanding Rasa is the *Rasa Sūtra* postulate, which is, *vibhāvanubhāvavyabhiḥārīsaṅyogādrasaniḥpattiḥi* (Nāṭyasāstra, 6.38). That is, the culmination of *Vibhāva*, *Anubhāva* and *Vyabhiḥārībhāva* leads to realisation of rasa.

Bhāva is the emotion, which is very subjective in nature. Among many such emotions eight are more pronounced, they are called *Sthāyībhāva viz., Rati, Hāsa, Soka, Bhaya, Utsāha, Krodha, Āścarya* and *Jugupsa*. *ibid.*

Vibhāva's are the determinants or the causal factors. *Anubhāva's* are the voluntary physical reactions and *Vyabhiḥārībhāva's* (thirty three in number) are the transitory emotions, which mostly depend upon the *Vibhāva*. Apart from these, eight involuntary emotions which intensify out of extreme involvement have also been codified by Bharata; they are called *Sātvika Bhāva's*. They are *Sveda* (sweat), *Svarasāda* (choke of voice), *Vaivarṇya* (change of colour), *Romāṇca* (horripilation), *Sthamba* (stupefaction), *Asru* (tears), *Vepathu* (trembling) and *Pralaya* (unconsciousness). (Nāṭyasāstra, 7.93-99).

Vibhāva's are further classified in two factors, they are: *Ālambana Vibhāva* (Casual support) and *Uddipana Vibhāva* (Auxiliary support) (Ganesh: 1: 2010). *Ālambana* is the direct cause and the *Uddipana* are the factors which influence the *Ālambana*.

This forms the overview of the *Rasā Sūtra* postulate.

ANALYSIS OF THE JĀVAḶI

Structure of the composition:

Pallavi:

II saramaina mātalento cālu cālu rā II

Anupallavi:

II sārāsākṣa mīmernto saṁtosāmu mēru mēru II

Čaraṇa:

II somuḍudayāmāyuḍēmi sudhatiki mahābhagyamāyane II

II kāmakoṭiṣumḍara mā bhāgyamiṭulāyane II

II manavi vinarā sāmi ninnu nammiyunnāru maremi II

II ghanudaina sēsūnipai velayu sītī padmanābha II

The *jāvaḷi* set to *Behaḡ* and *Rūpaka Tāḷa*, as per modern day conventions. The composition has *Prathamākṣara* and *Dvīṭyākṣara prāsa-s*, in the *Pallavi* and the *Anupallavi*; and *Sūcītākṣara* in the *Čaraṇa*. There have been debates among scholars regarding the treatment of this composition as *Jāvaḷi* or *Padam*. Discussing them is beyond the scope of the study.

The most conventional method of treating this *Jāvaḷi* in *Bharatanāṭya* is, the *Nāyika* (the protagonist in love) as *Khaṇḍita* - one who is angry with her beloved (based on the *Aṣṭanāyika* codification of Bharata in the *Nāṭyasāstra*). Based on this treatment, the *Nāyaka* (lord *Padmanābha*) becomes a *Bhāminībhīta* (afraid since he has cheated on the *Nāyika*) - conventionally. This classification of the *Aṣṭanāyika's* is by Dr. R Ganesh in his work- "A critical and holistic study of *Uddīpana Vibhāvas* in classical dance with special reference to *Śṛṅgāra rasa*", submitted to Ministry of Human Resource and Development, Central Govt. of India, 2010.

Based on the *sāhitya*, we know that the *sthāyī* is *Rati* (Love). It is obvious that the *Nāyika* is hurt because her *Nāyaka* has cheated on her for another woman, making the context as *Vipralamba Śṛṅgāra* (love in separation- lovers apart for many reasons). We do not get any context as to who the other woman is, and the *Nāyika's* finding out about this, other relationship. On the basis of presentation in dance, there many possibilities for the treatment of this *jāvaḷi*. Let us consider some of the below-

With a general understanding that the context of deceit is not an assumption of the *Nāyika*, since the *Pallavi* says, *sāramaina mātalento cālu ra*; which means, 'Please stop your sweet (tricky and decisive) words, when you do not mean them'. We must infer that, the *Nāyika* is fed up with his behaviour- and perhaps, this is not the first time the incident has happened, as well, since the *Nāyaka*, doesn't seem to give any explanation and is only trying avoid the conversation (as per the *sāhitya* at least) . Here, for the *Nāyika*- the *Ālambana* is the *Nāyaka* and the *Uddīpana* is the other woman. The *Vyabhiḥārī Bhāvas* include - *Glāni* (being sick (emotional) - out of disappointment), *Śrama*- tired of the behaviour, *Dainya* -depression, *Činta*- anxiety, *Smṛti*- recollection, *Vīdā*- shame, *Čapatatā*- inconstancy, *Āvega*- agitation, *Trāsa*- fright, *Autsukya*- impatience. (Nāṭyasāstra, 7.82-93). It may be noted that the *Vyabhiḥārī's* are common to both the *Nāyika* and the *Nāyaka*.

From the point view of treatment in dance, *Uddīpana's* (for the *Nāyika*) can be factors like, *Nāyaka* trying to explain the situation (he may be truthful or untrue- depending on the dancer's decision of handling the choreography). That, he was late (may be) in arriving at the decided spot or to *Nāyika's* house because of some very specific and important work (again, the context depends on the dancer's choreography) or may be that *Nāyika* herself or her friend spotted both of them (*Nāyaka* and the other woman) - somewhere, in a happy pastime. The *Uddīpana* can also be that, *Nāyika* feels cheated for she trusted her *Nāyaka* without reason (out of

sheer love alone) and Nāyaka betrayed and ignored her and her trust was totally shattered. In both the cases, it is to be noted that the Vyabhiçāri- Glāni and Srama becomes pronounced as a Vibhāva.

Although, the sāhitya does not refer to the Nāyaka part of the conversation, as part of *Sançāri* (elaboration of the context), which is a prominent feature in a classical dancer, we can include the Nāyaka part as well, giving a completion to the conversation (Pallavi of the song) and giving a connection to the Anupallavi; it may also serve as conjunction.

From the Pallavi and the Anupallavi, we understand that the Nāyika is a *Madhyama* (of reasonable attitude and nature). There are many beautiful and poetic explanations for understanding the Uttama-Madhyama and Adhama classifications, and one prominent among them is by their nature.

For an Uttama Nāyika, the reasoning is very clearly thought and also expressed- this is the essential nature of an Uttama character. Many a time, an Uttama Nāyika is more bothered about the latter consequence, than the former situation. One more way of understanding an Uttama Nāyika may be the honesty and truthfulness in her conviction and hence (as a reaction) will be very direct about her feelings albeit expressed very subtly, essentially. Either the Uttama Nāyika expresses her grief through silence or if expressed it will be very subtle. However, the thought and actions of the Uttama Nāyika will be harmonious.

In the case of an Adhama character, the possibility of a conversation, reasoning or explanations may be very limited since she is not bothered about the consequences and will act more out of spite (repenting the words and actions may be a possibility; but at that moment, she would have lost her will). This is the essential nature of an Adhama. The expressions will be crude and sometimes, illogical and sometimes, does not consider anything but herself. This logic does not prominently suggest that she is greedy or self-centred, just that she is inconsiderate.

In the case of Madhyama Nāyika, the action-reaction factors, the logic-reasoning factors do not necessarily match always. This is a state which is between Uttama and Adhama. In the case of Madhyama nature, the Nāyika will have choicest of words and clever ways which are intended to inform the Nāyaka that, 'she is hurt and needs to be given attention'. The Madhyama Nāyika might not mean any harm, but it is such that some of the words and actions are done essentially to hurt the Nāyaka. Like in the case of our Jāvaḷi, the Pallavi starts with the sarcasm that, "It is wonderful that, you can talk so sweetly oh my lord and I am in nothing but ecstasy for loving you". The Anupallavi as well suggests the same- *sārasākṣa mīmeṁto saṁtoṣamu mēru*, which means- 'Oh lotus eyed one, the happiness you have got these many days must be immense'. It can be interpreted in two ways, viz., the Nāyika telling Nāyaka that, he must be "so happy" with her (Nāyika) that he thought of another woman (sarcasm). And, Nāyika inferring (and in turn telling the Nāyaka) that happiness he has received from the other woman must be very immense. Also, the sarcasm in the first *Çaraṇa- sudhatiki mahābhagyamāyane*, which means- 'that woman is very lucky (to have you)' comes from the same attitude of being depressed and hence envious towards the other woman, for now, the other woman is the consort of her lord. If anything, the Nāyika is angry towards the other woman. Whichever way it may be interpreted, the very first reading of the sāhitya suggests sarcasm and she is very direct about it. To add more to the dance interpretation, the Nāyaka can be a Pāntha and arriving at the assumption that he must have been with the other woman when he was out for some work (or at least, not while in the presence of the Nāyika).

Another important suggestion we must observe here is the purposeful repetition of the words- *çālu* and *mēru*. The repetition of the word cannot be an interpolation of the sāhitya since the oral tradition of both dance and music has followed repetition of the word twice. Staying true to our human nature, any person will commonly stress upon a word or sentence in the conversation twice or more or change the intonation of the voice in order to establish the intention. True to nature, the Kavi has done the same here. This being a conversation between the Nāyika and the Nāyaka, certain words (in this case, *çālu* and *mēru*) are stressed to establish that the Nāyika is using it to convey something very specific.

Like our previous understanding, the Nāyika has self assumed the reason for the Nāyaka to go to another woman is the fact that, he must not be truly happy with her. The sarcasm is very evident through the Anupallavi, which comes out of disappointment, loss of trust and self doubt. Meaning, the action-reaction of the Nāyika toward her Nāyaka is a logical transition from Pallavi to Anupallavi- where she is first disappointed to learn about the turn of events in her life, the reason behind it and now, her reflection over it. She is self-assessing her own state. So, the Nāyika is actually lamenting here more than confronting the Nāyaka. This will also give us a clue to treat the Nāyika as a *Svīya*⁴. Borrowing from the second *Çaraṇa*, the *Svīya* treatment seems more logical. She says, *manavi vinara svāmi ninnu nammiyunnāru maremi-* which means, 'can't you see my love toward you? I have only you and nobody else. I have nowhere to go but be with you'.

⁴ *Svīya*: *Svīya*, *Parakīya* and *Sāmānya* are the classification as per their socio-marital status; One devoted to her husband, one married and in love with another and the one who has many partners, respectively.

Further, let us concentrate on the word *çālu* (and its repetition) and Svīya argument; the word *çālu* along with its repetition suggests disappointment, tiredness and exhaustion of the Nāyika. The Svīya argument and the repetition of the word *çālu* is further justified by the logic: even after the turn of events in her life, the Nāyika is willing to forget all of it and give him another chance since, she is in love with him, at the end of the day, (like in the suggestion of the second *Çaraṇa*) ergo, the suggestion of disappointment and exhaustion.

It can also be, sure about the fact that Nāyaka will continue his mistakes, she uses the word *Çālu* to say, ‘*this is no news to me*’- when he tries or pretends to give an explanation; there by suggesting helplessness. One more possibility can be- she is so embarrassed about this irrevocable factor in her life that she doesn’t want her neighbours or anybody to know about this pathetic situation, and wants to quickly get away with it. Hence, not even asking for any explanation, the Nāyika is simply pulling the Nāyaka inside her house, before anybody can spot her state; again suggesting disappointment.

Another possibility for the Jāvaḷi can be-

The treatment of the jāvaḷi from the angle of a Sāmānya Nāyika. The Sāmānya Nāyika is so aghast at the recent turn of events that she does not know anything but to get back one of her very promising and wealthy suitor; and her reaction (or rather confrontation or even trying to win the suitor back) after a sudden loss of fortune. This interpretation comes from the overall picture of the Jāvaḷi. Here the Nāyika becomes a *Kaniṣṭha* (least preferred) and a *Madhyama* Nāyika- with a slight shade of an *Adhama* attitude.

If the Nāyika were to be honestly in love with the Nāyaka, like she claims to be, then there would have been some explanation or expression of her love in the conversation. The entire poem talks about his action or decision to prefer some other woman over her and how she has been affected by this. For example- in the second *Çaraṇa*, the Nāyika says, *manavi vinara svāmi ninnu nammiyunṅāru maremi*- which means, ‘*can’t you see my love toward you? I have only you and nobody else. I have nowhere to go but be with you*’. The word ‘*Maremi*’ needs to be observed here. It means, ‘*what else do you want?*’ Here again, the Nāyika is much bothered about what she has offered and she can offer to Nāyaka, suggesting a *Mada* of the Nāyika. The treatment of the entire jāvaḷi, will change based on this attitude of the Nāyika. In fact, the very Pallavi suggests the decisiveness of the Nāyika and her state of irritation when she has found out that the Nāyaka has found somebody else. The sarcasm in the Anupallavi and the first *Çaraṇa* as well fits into the attitude of the Sāmānya Nāyika. The sentence, ‘*kāmakoṭi suṁdara ma bhāgyamiṭulāyane*’- can be her way of trying to convince the Nāyaka to stay back with her, for she feels she is more superior. This suggests that state of mind of the Sāmānya Nāyika – The Nāyaka was favouring her and now he isn’t. Interestingly, in this treatment as well, one of the prominent Vyabhiçāri-s is disappointment only; however, it has spurred out of the *Rajas* of irritation and “the want” of winning him back.

Further developing this treatment, the word *çālu* may be used in a tricky way to say, she (The Sāmānya Nāyika) has seen enough like the Nāyaka, and she knows for sure (or so she thinks), that they will come back to her finally after all the experiments (because the Nāyika is in the assumption (rather sure) that, she is ‘the best’). Or, it can also mean to say, ‘*now that you (Nāyaka) have seen around, you have come back, is it?*’. Or, it can also mean, her sheer pretention of listening to the Nāyaka, rambling about his experiences. In this way of treatment, both the women- the Nāyika and the other woman can be Sāmānya. Or it can be one as Sāmānya and the other as Svīya or Parakīya. It doesn’t really matter however, since the context of the other woman is not significant at all. Of course, most of the above things may not really “seem” appropriate or decent when danced on stage. It completely depends on the dancer’s maturity to handle the context and the characters. The idea of the treatment of Jāvaḷi, through the context of a Sāmānya Nāyika was further developed with the suggestions of Dr. Shobha Shashikumar.

It may be noted that the feature of Nāyaka as a *Narmaprasādaka*, the one who is trying to please a Khaṇḍita, can come as auxiliary. This factor can be inferred as suggestion, in the over-all image of the poem. This however, does not come in the choreography since there is no prominent scope for the Nāyaka’s response. The Nāyaka can as well be *Virahin* (suffering from the pangs of separation from his beloved) based on the responsive states of the Nāyika. Making the Nāyaka to be a *Kāntāvidheya* (obedient to his beloved) or *Narmaprasādaka* (trying to please his beloved) can be the exit (of the dancer) with a positive shade; this can even be a beautiful sequences of dance (of Korvai), and giving a happy ending.

One of the most common mistake dancers and choreographers commit today is the turning a blind eye, toward the intrinsic quality and the suggestions which the sāhitya offers. Based on the over-all observation (or rough reading the sāhitya), the treatment in terms of choreography is determined. Like many cases, the case of Khaṇḍita is treated as *Raudrarūpiṇi*, (the sthāyi to be *Krodha*). The very fact that Khaṇḍita can happen only if the sthāyi is Rati is completely forgotten which is an *Anauçitya*.

The job of the sāhitya is to open a canvas. It is ultimately the capacity of the dancer to explore this canvas and utilise it to the maximum. That is why even an average sāhitya can be made as a hit (successful item) in dance. As to make the sāhitya convincing is up to the dancer which is at the level of execution (of course the

scope which Sāhitya has to offer, matters the most). Once, the execution has won the game that means, the sāhitya and Kavi's purpose is fulfilled. It is imperative to thoroughly understand the factors of Aesthetics for it makes our dance apt and relishable and hence intangible. It is heartening that dance academics and education in the field of arts is fast growing and people are much aware about it today. Many thanks to the efforts of scholars and Sahrdayas like Dr. Sukanya Prabhakar for encouraging both Sāstra and Prayoga.

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