CHAPTER VI

A critical study and Analysis of some of the leading compositions of

Ravivarman Tampi

The following are analysed to bring out the proficiency of the composer.

1. His proficiency over classical music in general.

2. His mastery over the various types of classical musical forms.

3. His proficiency in the choice of the classical and regional ragas in interpreting the content of the composition.

4. His command over the classical and sopana talas while choosing appropriate talas, laya etc.

5. His extraordinary brilliance while setting music for each and every portion of the song which brings out the idea of the composition at its best.

6. His supreme command over different languages, rasa, abhinaya, alankara sastra and natya sastra etc., while composing abhinaya songs.

7. The distinctions of Tampi over other poets and composers.

8. Above all, the mighty human qualities in him, which made every idea of his song touching and expressive, Critical Analysis of the Padavarnam ‘Ambagouri’.

Padavarnams are compositions belonging to the field of dance. They are also called as Chowka varnams, suggesting its slow set up and Atta varnams indicating
its relevance to dance. The ideas employed by them are pangs of separation with other bhavas like anger, hatred etc., coming as sanchari bhavas or passing emotional.

As other varnams Pada varnams too have sections like Pallavi, Anupallavi, Chitta svaram, Ettugada pallavi and Ettugada svaram. But unlike usual varnams, Pada varnmas have sahitya for not only Pallavi, Anupallavi and Ettugada pallavi but also for Chittasvarams.

While dancing a pada varnam abhinaya is given for the sahitya and sudha nritta and dance patterns for svara. Not only each section but also each line is enriched with various chollus, jatis and jātis.

Tampi was one of the prominent composers of Padavarnams, and all his varnams except one are Pada varnams. Here the same varnam, which is a stava varnam, is being analysed as it is a rare composition with many distinctions.

1. Structural

The varnam Ambagouri is a stava varnam with the structure of a Pada varnam. It is a rare combination of Pada varnam and Tana varnam. Like Pada varnam, it has sahitya, for not only Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charana but also for chitta svaras. But unlike Pada varnams and like Tana varnams, it does not depict sringara bhava, but conveys bhakti bhava and as such it is a beautiful stava piece on Ambagouri—the family deity of the composer. Unlike Pada varnam which is set to ragas like Saveri, Shahana etc., capable of expressing pangs, this varnam is set to Arabhi, one of the lively ragas rendered in Madhyalaya. Unlike both Padavarnam and Tana Varnam, the above said
varam has a different tala set up i.e., Tisrati, with its charana having a typical eduppu as it starts from the second finger count of the laghu leaving the first finger count.

Like all old Padavarnam this also has a prologue called sanchari after the last svara section of the charana. The sahitya having the Vanchi Bhoopala mudra appeals to the Goddess for protection, blessings and prosperity to all.

2. Literary

The Padavarnam of Tampi, as other Padavarnams has lots of beautiful ideas and literary excellence.

Tampi being a poet of high merit, has a distinctive style and diction noted for their simplicity and sweetness which goes in perfect harmony with the devotional content.

Being a manushakadhanugayi-- a poet of life and human emotions, the theme though religious, one is turned into a touching appeal to supreme Mother for redressing all grievances and giving blessings.

As a gifted poet of extra brilliance and potentialities, his style and diction and marked with simplicity, charm and sweetness. He uses only the familiar words of prayer like Ambagouri, Varadevi, Sadhulokasaranye etc., which immediately penetrates into the heart of the listeners which when touches the heart never leaves it.

As a master of ālankarika sastra (poetics) the rachana is clothed with a variety of prasams like adyaksharaprasam, andyaksharaprasam, Madhyaksharaprasam etc. The very start itself 'Ambagouri Girikanye' and 'Asrayam neeyenye', substantiates
it. The natural flow of potential genius in music and poetry is reflected not only in the selection of rhyming words and appropriate musical phrases but also in the order of symmetrical letters which follow in the words ‘Amba’ and ‘Gouri’ the letter ‘ba’ of Amba is immediately followed by ‘ga’, both are the thirds of their respective rank in the Kadapayati table.

Choice of Raga

Tampi establishes his mastery over music and rhythmical excellances, first by selecting a lively raga and a rare tala to express his ideas in this vamam.

The composition is additionally charmed with svarakshara, which comes out of him naturally and effortlessly. This is fully illustrated in the phrases like ‘bhramakari’ (p m g r), sarimargari (s r m g r), tara —tarasa (d p d r s) etc. Also the padam is a collection of excellent and striking sancharas of Arabhi like m g r r, d d p p m g r, d s, p d, m p, m g r s r, m p m g r, d p d r s, r s n d p m g r, etc.

Tampi was overwhelmly attached to the Vanchi Rajavamsam, whether it was kings like Kārtika Tirunal, Svāti Tirunal, Utram Tirunal or Princess like Rani Lakshmi Bai or Parvati Bai. This is reflected in his compositions where Vanchisa mudra also is found even while using Padmanabha mudra. It is worthwhile to be noted here that in a way the Vanchisa mudra helps one to distinguish his compositions from those of others having Padmanabha mudra.

In the anubandha part Tampi signed this composition with the Padmanabha mudra. The Kshetra mudra ‘Tiruvarattukavu’ can also be seen in this vamam. The raga Arabhi has itself got a basic mood of devotion. As such it is the
best medium to create feelings of bhakti in a better way than any other raga. Arabhi is one of the ghanaraga panchaka suited for as starting piece in the beginning of a concert as it is considered as a very auspicious raga for invocation. It is a very old raga, well-known and well established.

Further there is a hint in the pattern of sahitya which points to certain Malayalam meters. Illustration to this is found in the Pallavi itself which can be equated to the old popular Malayalm metre ‘chanchdunni charinjadu’—‘Ambagouri Girikanye’.

As already stated, Tisrajati triputa too has many distinctions. Triputatala varams are very rare among the Padavarnams. Triputa tala is favorite of Padam and Padabhinayam. Here Tampi’s choice falls on the same tala, as it is fully aware of its range and scope.

Tampi’s ‘Ambagouri’ provides a rich feast to the eyes when witnessed at the stage of Mohiniattam and a feast to the ear when heard at a concert platform. The various words employed in the sahitya are noted for abhinaya.

Karunacheyvan—an analysis

Tampi was a born poet a remarkable composer. As one goes through his compositions one becomes in conclusion to determine which, between the musical set up or literary excellances outshines. So melodious is the music and moving are his ideas and so appropriate in his blending them with each other. His versatility in the field was so outstanding that nothing in them was out of the place or less impressive whether it was a Varnam or Kriti, Melappadam, or Mohiniattappadam, Dandakam or Kummi or combination of all and even more, each of them shone everywhere and at any time and
moved all alike. Supreme was the poet and his touching human sentiments, was his tunes, which stunned the listener and stirred his inner soul and revealed a heaven of bliss from which he never wish to return.

As already stated, ‘Karunacheyvan’, is one of the most popular kritis of the poet if not the most popular. Here too, it is difficult, to ascertain which aspect of the kriti viz., the selection of the raga and music or the tala and the tempo or the idea and the diction made it popular.

There are two versions regarding in the origin of the song. It is said that once Tampi had severe attack of rheumatism which made him too cripple and too miserable. When his pain became intolerable he appealed to Lord Krishna of Guruvayur, through the moving song to cure him. Lord Krishna was so kind that, he cured him of his illness and the poet took a pilgrimage to Lord Guruvayurappan Temple and paid homage through a song became the immortal ‘Karunacheyvan’.

Another view is that the poet though was under the gripping pain managed to reach Guruvayurappan and on seeing the Lord he poured his feeling through the above said song, asking for relief and kind. God cured his illness and blessed him. He stayed there for sometime offering his homage to deity and returned to his native place. Weight age seems to be for the first version, because of the reference which states that God blesses everybody alike, not considering whether a devotee is far or near.

The Theme:-

The idea of the song is devotional. The stayi bhava is Karunam, clothed in the feeling of bhakti. Through this the poet makes one pathetic appeal to the Lord
Krishna of Guruvayur to redress him out of his great physical disabilities related to rheumatism. Stories are many and they all tell as how the Lord cured devotees from various personal ailments and family distress. Many musicians who lost their voices got back with extra sweetness. Many who were lame and disable became normal. Many who had obstacles in marriage and other family problems were blessed with family happiness. ‘The Bhajanamirickal’, still continues and miracles too.

The poet knew about the greatness of the God and he glorifies the same through the kriti. The song starts with direct and blunt question ‘Oh! Lord Krishna of Guruvayur, why this delay in showing mercy on me, who is worshipping your feet? You are well known for solving the problems of your devotees. Why the delay in my case?’

The succeeding stanzas praise him and states that ‘Hari’ is the ultimate refuge for all who are sad and miserable. The song leads with an appeal that he may be cured of rheumatism and be blessed with all joy and prosperity.

The text of the song is given in the appendix. Page 146.

Form

As every Kirtananam the above said also has sections like Pallalvi, Anupallavi and Charanams. There are four Charanams of which the fourth is Mudra charanam, having Padmanabha mudra.

Certain parts of the Kriti is comparable with the Tamil vrittams and also Malaylala vrittam. For example:-
Tamil Tevaram :-

Annayum nee tantheyum nee ādarickum nathanum nee

Malayalam Vanchippattu :-

Vanchi bhoopan vānīdumpol vanchickennum Tiruvonam

Kriti:-

Guruthara bhavasindho durita sanchayamākam

Music:-

The Kriti has two versions. One which is more popular with the people of north is set to raga Yedukula Kamboji, while that popular in the south in the raga Sri. Though both claim their version to be the original, the one in Sri raga is more popular and largely accepted.

The music not only of the charanas but also the Pallavi and Anupallavi are almost identical. But one should not mistake this to be a limitation or shortage of musical excellencies of the composer. Perhaps Tampi could have thought of a music in both ragas with lots of variety and embellishment at every step of the song as he had done in the cases of certain other Kritis. Perhaps he avoided such factors simply because, he did not wish to disturb the basic idea and sentiment of the song. After all it was such a pathetic appeal from a miserable human being at the feet of God. How could anybody disturb its natural flow or integrity not to speak of Tampi—the King of emotion and who is at once the sufferer too? The music as its words was overflowing from his soul while also was searching for understanding souls. In such situation much more than the
musical excellences what is required is a simple melodious medium which is congenial to the flow of emotion. Tampi is fully aware of it and as such employs notes and phrases very cautiously.

The music starts from the Poorvanga or lower octave and proceeds to the higher octave gradually without disturbing the emotional flow. The identical music for all Charanas itself is a good illustration for the same. It suits very well the theme which centers around a pious person who is old, weak, helpless, sick and self surrendering.

**Style and Diction**

They are touchingly simple and melodiously appealing in tune with the grim content of the song. In sharp contrast with the other compositions of Tampi, where literary beauties, musical excellences viz., at each other announcing the perfect mastery of the composer on both, here they are marked by their absence. Except the prasams like Ādyā, Dvitiya, Madhya and Antya no other flourishes and except a moving music capable of taking the feelings directly to the heart of the listener and lingering these for ever, there is little extravaganza what so ever. As one listens to it one forgets every thing else. Only the Lord and devotees persist. Complete identification of the composer and the listener takes place where the listener himself starts praying to God and praises and picturises Him, through the words of the composer.

**The Choice of the Raga**

It is said that the original raga was Yedukula Kamboji. May be or not, the widely accepted version is in Sri raga. May be because Sriraga blends with the idea much better than the other. Each stanza identifies its best expression in the raga not only
as a whole but also in the minute details. There is total understanding between even the
words and their letters and sancharas and the notes. To illustrate a few,

The first word of the song ‘Karuna’—the central bhava of the song and
there cannot be a better word to denote it. It is tuned to the jiva sanchara of the Sri raga R
Gr s exactly identical with the beginning of ‘Srimula’ in the famous Dikshitar Kriti
‘Sreemooladhar chakra vinayaka’. The next ‘Cheyvan’ is tuned to the supporting
phrase of Sri raga n s R. The poet does not want to sustain the mood of the song in
the succeeding words or the svara sancharas for them. So he gives as hovering around
the same svaras and in the same stayi as mandrastayi is apt for depicting sōkam.

RR gr s / n s n s R / Rrs / r gr s

Karu....na Chey....van...e...nthu

S ns r / r gr s n n / r sp / N/S ;

Ta...ma...sarn..............Krishna.

Both the sahitya as well as music, stayi (matra, madhya ) laya (vilambam)
and the Svara sancharas and the flow hover between matra stayi Pa and madhya stayi
Ga only. There cannot be a better substitute to convey the idea – helplessness, grief and
sōka bhakti or expression of the same through music. That is why the song is considered
to be a master piece.

Critical appreciation of the padam ‘Entu cheyyendu’

Raga : Sourashtram

Tala : Talamalika
Padams are usually the essence of bhava, wedded with the appropriate svaras, sancharas etc in its respective ragas. Sōka padam depicts the pangs of separation (Vipralambha Sringara) and are generally set to slow tempo. The music often had identical set up even for Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanas. This is done so, so that the stayi bhava ie., Karuna rasa of the Vipralambha is not disturbed.

Tampi sticks to many norms of a traditional sōka padam of the nayika in separation.

1. Like most of the similar padams, this also is an appeal of the nayika in separation, to her friend to convey her pathetic condition to her beloved.

2. Like other padams, this is also set to one single raga, to retain the integrity of the stayi bhava through out. The music with selective and appropriate sancharas is schemed with in the middle stayi, with very simple and moving sancharas. There is no room for literary excellences or other such musical sparks.

3. Like other padams, this too has different sections, like Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanas.

4. Like other padams, the last charanam of this padam too can be treated as mudra charanam, as it contains ‘Vanajanabha’ a synonym of Padmanabha

5. Like other padams of Kerala composers, this too is composed in Manipravalam, with a very simple style and diction. The words are the most appropriate, melodious and gives maximum scope for expression (abhinaya). The words ‘alarsaran’, ‘rajani karuchi’, ‘thavarathikaruti’, ‘malayamaruthan’, ‘madanan’, ‘viraham’, ‘paranarimarude chilli’ etc., are a few illustrations.
6. Like other padams this also is enriched with appropriate literary beauties and charms like prasam.

But being a versatile and master of music, Tampi introduces certain novelties which make the piece, a remarkable variation from the set norms. To cite a few: -

1. Unlike other Vipralambha Sringara padams set to slow tempo, this is set to medium tempo.

2. Unlike other padams this is combined with the patterns of different speed viz

   “Entu cheyyendu jannyyo” (part of pallavi)

   “Sudati tavarati karuti muharapi kutuki tava pati” (part of charanam)

3. Unlike other similar padams which have an Universal tala structure, this is in the form of Tala malika with sections set to different talas. Here the pallavi is set to Chathurasra jati ekam, anupallavi to Adi, first section of every charanam to Rupakam and the succeeding to Misram. This is not done in other padams because change of tala would disturb the mood and its uniformity. Such a device is adopted here in order to keep the distinctions between the roles of the nayika, sakhi and nayaka.

4. In the literature of padams in which the nayika sends message to her beloved through her friend, the nayika hints her disbelief at her assurances, stating that her Lord would come. Interestingly remembering the false promises of the hero which forms the theme of certain similar padams here, the nayika is remembering the words of the friend which assured her that her lover would arrive.
Dramatically the words of the sakhi is remembered by the heroine as a reminder to her friend. So the dancer has to assume the role of sakhi expressing the words of assurance as well as the role of the heroine depicting her pangs of distrust and frustration and impatience in turns. She has to show her helplessness contained in first line of the pallavi 'Entu cheyyendu jannayyo' then her distrust for 'Innu nee chonnathum poyyo' and then her frustration 'Hantha pāthiravayallo' for the anupallavi and impatience 'Arikil kānthan vanneelallo'.

The different roles starts from charanam, first in the role of heroine and she asks:

"Oh! Friend didn't you tell me that my beloved would come." (Varumennallo sakhi nee cholli)

"But alas! He has forgotten me." (Varanenne marannanalle).

"Could be that some other lady must have caught him with her beautiful eyes" (Paranariyude chilli pāttilakkikondatalle)

In the following, she assumes the role of the friend and says her words.

She says:

"You called me Oh! Sudhathee and told me that he is enormoured by your beauty and love sports, your beloved would surely come by night to you immediately."

"Sudhati tavarati karuti muhurstapi
Kutuki tava pati sapati nisi dridamingu"
6. Unlike other compositions of Tampi which are at once long poetical in suggesting certain meters. This padam doesn’t suggest any clear-cut metrical patterns. It is an abhinayappada in its true sense, beautified by natural flow of prasam and other embellishments which add to the beauty of the song. Please refer the rhymes in the words like “Chilli”, “Alli”, “Cholli”, “Talli”, “Tava pati”, “Tavarati”, “Sudhati”, “Supati”, “Alarsaran”, “Avagata”, “Virutan”, “Viravil” etc.

The above said padam of Tampi is unique and stands as monumental glory to his genius in all the field of literature and arts.

Because of its complicated arrangements of words and ideas in accordance with the typical abhinaya and musical set up, Tampi himself provided a very distinctive traditional music patterns, without which, the song could never be handled by the singers or dancers. Though brilliant, original version was forgotten by many, it was kept alive by certain family ladies of the old south Travancore including my great grandmother Gourikutty Pillai who learnt it directly from Kuttikkunju Tankachi, during her stay in the ‘Kamukara veedu’ inside the fort. From her it was passed on to my aunt and guide Dr. Leela Omchery, the grand daughter of Gourikutty Pillai. The parampara is kept alive by Dr. Deepti Omcheri Bhalla—Reader in the Faculty of music, University of Delhi who sings as well as dances it.

The text of the padam is given in the appendix...
A Comparative study of the styles of Tampi and Svati Tirunal

Svati Tirunal

1. Mainly a composer
2. Mainly a devotee living in highest plain
3. Compositions are marked for their short balanced and weighed words.
4. The natural flow of Svaraksharas adds beauty to the compositions.
5. Highly musical.
6. Padmanabha mudra or its Paryayas
7. Svati Kritis do not suggest anything about the composer and his personal details.
8. Kritis themselves provide many Musical groups like Navaratri Kritis,

Tampi

1. Mainly a poet
2. Mainly a mundane poet living among masses.
3. Compositions are marked for their exuberant Poetical excellences and literary beauties.
4. A variety of prasas like Adi prasa, Anupraska, Madhyaprasa and Alankaras are interwoven with the Sahityas.
5. Highly poetical.
6. Padmanabha Mudras and Vancheesa mudra.
7. But in Tampi’s compositions every idea is centered around the personal details of the composer
8. Here such groups are not found.
Navavidha bhakti etc.

9. The compositions of Svāti depict Nishkama bhakti, they are serene and highly dignified.

9. Tampi’s padams reflect personal and family miseries.