CHAPTER III

SONGS AND MUSIC IN THE KĀMAKUMĀRAHARAṆA

(A) Classical Songs:

One of the special attractions of the Kāmakumāraharaṇa is its songs and music. Songs are marked by sweetness and assonance. In some of the songs the echo of Jayadeva’s Gitagovinda is distinctly noticed. The speciality of the songs is that they are set into classical rāgas and tālas. Kavicandra has composed nineteen songs in Sanskrit verses—all set into classical rāgas and tālas. He has also composed eight Assamese songs termed as maṅgala-gīta¹ which bear the stamp of Assamese nuptial songs sung in a marriage ceremony by the women folk.

The tendency of inserting songs set into classical rāgas and tālas is the peculiarity of the Sanskrit dramas composed in medieval Assam. This trend of rāga-music in dramatic composition in Assam is set by Śaṅkaradeva. In his Brajāvali nāṭakas, Śaṅkaradeva inserted Sanskrit ślokas as well as rāga-music. These songs are called aṅkar-gītas. Aṅkar-gītas are musical execution accompanied with the rhythmic beats. They are rarely or never executed without it. So the rhythmic beat or tāla of a song is always indicated along with the particular rāga. Śaṅkaradeva composed 111 (hundred and eleven) aṅkar-gītas in his six dramas (aṅkīyā-nāṭa).

¹ Maṅgalagītas of the the drama are discussed under the heading “Nuptial songs.”
Kavicandra composed his *Kāmakumāraharaṇa* in the light of the Brajāvalī *Nāṭakas* of Śaṅkaradeva. As he has drawn certain elements from the Brajāvalī *Nāṭakas* the rāga-music also is taken into consideration so as to attract the audience and readers as well. However, the sweetness of the compositions blends well with the sweet melodies accompanied with rhythmic beats. May we, in this perspective, make a survey of the rāgas and tālas utilised in the *Kāmakumāraharaṇa* in the light of the tradition of rāga-music in Assam.

The history of Assamese literature shows that the tradition of music and songs was prevalent in Assam, and Indian music, as fully developed in the early sixteenth century A.D., flooded the shores of the Brahmaputra and the Barāk.

The *Kālikā-purāṇa* has referred to certain melodies or rāgas like Varādi, Vasanta, Mālava, Lalita, Vibhāsa, Bhairava, Kedāra and Dhanāsi in the context of the story of Kendukalai, the chief priest of the Kāmākhya temple during the days of Koch king Naranārāyaṇa.

(i) *Rāgas* (Melodies)

Śaṅkaradeva and his apostle Mādhavadeva composed rāga-music in the form of *bargītas* and *ānikar-gītas*. Total number of *bargītas* are so far available 191 of which 34 are ascribed to Śaṅkaradeva while the rest are attributed to

2. O. C. Ganguly points out to this reference in his *Rāgas and Rāginīs*, pp. 27-29; quoted from *VFMA*, P. 280
3. It is said that Kendukalai used to sing songs with various rāgas in the shrine of Kāmākhya when the Goddess herself appeared in person and danced to the song. *vide*, M. Neog, *VFMA*, p. 280

Of these 34 melodies, Śaṅkaradeva utilised 30 and Madhavadeva 29. The four melodies that Śaṅkaradeva did not employ are Varāḍ(ṛi), Mallāḍa(ra), Rāmagiri and Śyāmagaḍā; and five melodies that Madhavadeva did not employ are Tuḍa, Payār-gīta, Pūrvi, Bhūpāḷi and Sāreng.

Durgāvara Ḍyastha and Pīṭambara Dvīja, two contemporaries of Śaṅkaradeva, employed rāgas in their lyrical kāvyaśas. The Gitirāmāyaṇa of Durgāvara contains 57 songs and each one of it is set to classical melody. Dr. M. Neog records that the rāga of one song is found missing. However, the melodies used in the Gitirāmāyaṇa are: (1) Ahira, (2) Ākāśamanḍalī, (3) Guṇjārī, (4) Cālani, (5) Devajini, (6) Devamohana, (7) Dhanaśrī, (8) Paṭamanaṇjari, (9) Varāḍi, (10) Vasanta, (11) Belowāra, (12) Bhāṭiyāḷi (13) Maṇjari, (14) Mārowāra, (15) Mālaci, (16) Meghamaṇḍala, (17) Rāmagiri, (18)
Śrī-gandhakālī, (19) Śrī-gāndhāra and (20) Suwāi.  


Śukladhvaja alias Cilārāi, the younger brother of Koch king Naranārayana and a contemporary of Śaṅkaradeva, proves his depth of studies on Saṅgītaspāstra by citing the verses on personification of rāgas (melodies) in his Saravati, a commentary on the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva. The rāgalakṣaṇas i.e. the visualisation of rāgas, given by Subhaṅkara Kavi in his Saṅgītadāmodara, are quoted by Śukladhvaja in the context of the melodies used in the Gitagovinda. However, he quotes the definitions without any comment. Mention of one rāgalakṣaṇa would suffice to determine the position of Śukladhvaja:

\[ \text{gurjarirāgah pratimāthatalah} \ / \ rāgalakṣaṇam \]
\[ \text{“śyāmā sukesī malayadrumāṇāṁ} \]
\[ \text{mṛdullasatapallavatalpatā} / \]

4. vide, Neog. M. VFMA, p. 280
5. Ĉūśā-Parinaya is a pācāli-kāvya to be sung in groups.
Ĉūśā-Parinaya ed. by Karavi Deka Hazarika, Dibrugarh, 1998
6. Saravati commentary is recently edited and published by S. N. Sharma and S. Borah, p.10
From the foregoing survey of the names of the rāgas employed by the two saint poets, Śaṅkaradeva and Madhavadeva, and also by Durgāvara and Pitambarakavi, familiarity of the rāgalakṣana preserved in the Saṅgītaśāstras like the Saṅgītadāmodara etc., it may be assumed that Indian music is fully developed by the early sixteenth century A.D. and washed the shores of the Brahmaputra.


Kavicandra composed nineteen Sanskrit songs and employs 13 melodies accompanied with tālas. However, the name of the melodies and rhythm of two of the 19 songs are missing. The list of the rāgas as well as the frequency of their occurrence is given below:

7. Gitagovinda, ed. by Sharma and Bora. The verse reads slightly differently in the Sahkrit Damodara, p. 10
   cf. śyāmā sukeśī Malayadrumānām
       mṛdulasaṭippāvatata-payātā
dsrtēḥ svarānāṁ dadhati vibhāgarī
tantrānukhādakṣina-gurjarīyam

(1) Pāhādiyā-gāndhār — 1
(2) Mallāra — 1
(3) Velāwālī — 1
(4) Sīndhurā — 2
(5) Mālasī — 3
(6) Deśākha — 1
(7) Jayanti — 1
(8) Khaṭa — 1
(9) Karṇāta — 1
(10) Vīhāgaḍā — 1
(11) Bhātiyālī — 1
(12) Guñjari — 1
(13) Kau — 1

Prof. S.N. Sharma observes that among these thirteen melodies the Kau and Khaṭa are usually not found in treatises of music. Kau has been employed by Śaṅkaradēva and Durgāvara (1580-1650) in their songs. Kau is probably an abbreviation of Kauśika. Dr. M. Neog also observes “In the list of Śaṅkara’s and Mādhava’s melodies the name kau alone seems to be unfamiliar to the student of Indian music unless it is connected with Kakubha (Abhilāsārthā-cintāmaṇi, Saṅgītaratnākara, 13th century A.D.) Kakuba (also Saṅgītaratnākara), Kokabha (Kallinātha). Alternatively, could kau have

9. S. N. Sharma, ‘Introduction’ to Rūpakatrayam, p. 0.8
connection with *Kauśika*?10 So far as the name of the melody is concerned there is hardly any information. It may further be mentioned here that the name of the melodies like *Jayanti* is not found in the lists already furnished here. May it be here, therefore, suggested that it is the alternative form of *Jayasrī* as appeared in the post Śaṅkaradeva devotional songs. The *Deśākha* is also an alternative form of *Deśākhya* found in the *Sangītadāmodara* and employed by Jayadeva in his *Gitagovinda*.

(ii) *Tālas* (Rhythm)

It is already mentioned that along with different melodies Kavicandra has also determined the rhythmic beats the songs composed by him. As he is under the influence of Śaṅkarī music as well as the dramatic technique of the Brajāvali nāṭakas he has utilised the *Rāga* music in his *Kāmakumāraharaṇa* and choosen thirteen melodies and six rhythmic beats for seventeen songs.

In the Śaṅkarite music *tāla* is the most essential element. Though *tālas* are not mentioned along with the *rāgas* of the *bhogītas* by Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva, these are supposed to be sung with certain rhythmic beats. Reversely, *tālas* are always mentioned along with the *rāgas* in the *aṅkar-gīta*-s by the two saint poets. And to keep up the rhythm of these songs certain musical instruments are used. The instruments used for this purpose are the *drams* — *Mrdaṅga*, *Khol* and *Nāgārā*, the cymbals— *Bar-tāl, Pāti-tāl, Khuṭī-tāl*.

There, the drummers are called \textit{vāyanas} and cymbalists are called \textit{gāyana}s, and both the \textit{vāyanas} and the \textit{gāyana}s have to master the various useful \textit{tālas} before they can give performances particularly in the dramatic representation.

Our author, however, mentions the name of one instrument only, viz. the \textit{Mṛdaṅga}. It shows that \textit{vāyanas} are present in the performance to assist the Sūtradhāra. And the \textit{gāyana} (cymbalists, literally, singers) are also supposed to be there to keep up the \textit{tālas}. The following names of the musical rhythms are seen in \textit{Kāmakumāraharaṇa} : (1) \textit{Rūpaka-jauti}, (2) \textit{Daśavādi}, (3) \textit{Jauti} (Yati), (4) \textit{Cuṭā}, (5) \textit{Magali}, (6) \textit{Ekatāli}. These \textit{tālas} are common to the \textit{tālas} used by the two saint poets, except, however, \textit{Magali} and \textit{Daśavādi}. \textit{Daśavādi} is present amongst the \textit{tālas} enumerated by the Ojas. The \textit{Magali} is not noticed in the Śaṅkari music of Assam. So far as the \textit{Jauti} and \textit{Rūpaka-jauti} are concerned, the \textit{Jauti} or \textit{Yati} seems to be a short form of \textit{Yatimān} of Śaṅkarite \textit{āṅkar-gītās}; and \textit{Rūpaka-jauti} seems to be a combination of \textit{Rūpaka} and \textit{Yati}.

\textbf{(B) Nuptial Songs :}

Another special attraction of the \textit{Kāmakumāraharaṇa} is its nuptial songs. Kavicandra Dvija not only introduces \textit{Rāga}-music in his drama, but also a folk element, i.e., the marriage songs sung by women-folk is added to it. To suit the occasion of the marriage of \textit{Ūśā} and Aniruddha as well as Citralekhā

\footnote{vide, \textit{VFMA}, p. 286 f.}
and Gada, the poet composes eight songs in twenty two verses. All these verses are composed in Assamese language and metre. The metre is *Dulaṭi* of 6, 6 and 8 syllables in a foot. It is a bold step on the part of an Assamese poet to introduce folk elements in a classical Sanskrit play.

It may be recalled in this context that, the Assamese poets, including the two saint poets of Assam, composed various literary works on the themes taken from the Purāṇas, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*; but they are set in and given local expressions. Likewise, Kavicandra also shows his affinity to this trend of Assamese poets. Yet, he seems to be ahead of his predecessors in this regard. It is evident from the fact that he not only uses many local expressions in Sanskritised forms, but also introduces a local feature, i.e. folk elements in a classical drama. This is certainly a bold experiment. These songs add colour to the drama mingling happy notes as well as reflect the ethos of socio-cultural life of the Assamese people in that era. A social marriage is regarded as blessings to a married couple. The sanctity of a married life in Indian society was applauded even by the great thinkers of the west.\(^{12}\)

The marriage songs are sung only in a socially accepted marriage. It may be proved by the two instances of the marriage of Üṣā and Aniruddha — once secretly and once socially. But songs are sung only in the marriage which is accepted by the families.

\(^{12}\) Geothe’s appreciations and comments on the reunion of Šakuntalā and Duṣyanta as depicted in the *Abhijñāna-Śākuntalam* of Kālidāsa may be accepted as an example.
The nuptial songs are the most essential elements of an Assamese marriage ceremony. Different songs with different tunes are sung in a marriage ceremony and they are mostly women's own compositions. A large majority of the songs abound in exquisite literary beauties and customs which shows the creative genius of the composers. Nearly two dozen rites are performed in a marriage ceremony, and because of this the topics of marriage songs are also varied.

The marriage songs may be divided into classical and romantic according as they describe the marriage as symbolical of mythological gods and goddesses as of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Kṛṣṇa and Rukmīṇī, Rāma and Sītā, Hara and Gaurī or Üṣā and Aniruddha, or as the bridegroom and bride. But while the classical descriptions attended with a scriptural (sanctity) beauty, the romantic descriptions breath a soft freshness quite their own.

As mentioned above there are various rites to be performed in various occasions. Mention may be made of a particular rite, called 'gāthiyan–khundā' (grinding of a fragrant root) which is performed on the night preceding the day of a marriage. This is to be performed with some privacy by seven āyatis (virtuous women having husband and children). Language of the songs sung on this particular occasion and their tune, bears a degree of serenity which is unrivalled and almost thrilling because of its mystic touch. A song sung on this occasion is quoted from the Nāmatī, a collection of marriage songs by D. Neog is as follows:
ujani rājare / gandhe gāthiane / nāmanī rājare pāṭa /
kanyāre māk / ati sulakṣaṇī / āpuni dhārīche pāṭa //
dinat bandī hale / teji sūruje / rāti bandī hale tara /
sāto āyatiye / gāthian khundiche / ārulī jolakā diyā //
telat bandī hale / telini paruwā / sālat bandī hale hāti //
makarā jālāte / kṛṣṇāi bandī hale / nupuwāi kālindri rāti //
telar meli diyā / telini paruwā / sālar meli diyā hāti /
mākarā jāl kāti / kṛṣṇāik meli diyā / puwāi yak kālindri rāti //
makarā jālate / kṛṣṇāi bandī hale / kino rukmiṇīre māyā /
sāto āyatiye / gāthiyan khundiche / ārulī jolokā diyā //
cāndo cikuṇe / surujo cikuṇe / cikuṇ saragare tara /
ātaitkai cikuṇe / dekhi thai āhicho / bāhi candanare darā //
bārio nāhibā / khāriyo nāhibā / āhiba svāmi suā /
sāto āyatiye / gāthiyan khundiche / ārulī jolokā diyā //

The literal English rendering of the song would be:

"From the upper country comes the fragrant root, from the lower country comes the stone slab; the mother of the bride has auspicious signs about her, and she herself holds the stone roller. The scarlet Sun is imprisoned at daytime, the star is imprisoned at night: the seven virtuous women are grinding the fragrant root, oh! shower the ūlulu sound of blessings. The ant of the oil (cockroach) is imprisoned in oil, the elephant in its gaol; Kṛṣṇa has been imprisoned in the spiders web, and the dark night never dawns. Oh! release the oily ant from oil and elephant from the gaol; break the spider’s web to release
Kṛṣṇa and let the dark night dawn. What spell must Rukminī have known that
Kṛṣṇa has been ensnared in the spider's web! Ye all, shower the auspicious ālulu sound, for the seven virtuous women are grinding the fragrant root. The moon is beautiful, the sun is beautiful, and beautiful are the stars; but most beautiful of all the things we have seen is the bridegroom that looks as sandal paste kept last night. No widow should come, no barren woman must come, but those with blessings for the husband must come; Oh, shower the auspicious ālulu sound for the seven virtuous women grind the fragrant root."

Another auspicious rite of the marriage ceremony is the pānītolā, the collection of sanctified water for bathing the bride or the bridegroom by the āyatis (priest to the ceremony). For bathing the bride or the bridegroom, water have to be collected from an auspicious place, particularly from a river. The āyatis should be accompanied by men with various musical instruments like dhol, khol, mṛdanga, tāl, etc. to create an auspicious atmosphere. The first song of the Kāmakamāraharana describes the names of different musical instruments played by men in the 'pānītolā' -rite and also suggest how everybody enjoys the situation.

The second song depicts the collection of water from the river in a golden pot. The occasion is graced by the auspicious ālulu sound showered by the young ladies (sakhīgaṇa) and also the marriage songs sung in pleasing tune.

by them. The rites bei-phuruwa\textsuperscript{14} and nowuwa follow.

The third song depicts the after-bath rites. After walking around the bei, a temple like temporarily made hut, the brides were dressed up with best of their ornaments and dresses, then they are ready for the ceremony (marriage). The song also depicts the beautiful forms of the brides.

The fourth song depicts the personal beauty and the feelings (sentiments) of Aniruddha, whereas the fifth song depicts the happy mood of the guests coming for attending the marriage of these two couples.

The sixth, seventh and the eighth songs depict the teasing of the bride and the bridegroom along with the priest. Our playwright does not even hesitate to make humour even of Nārada, which runs as follows:

\begin{align*}
\text{dādi gomphacaya} & \quad \text{hāte mocaraya} \\
\text{hari dhvani kare ghane /} & \\
\text{hāse khalakhali} & \quad \text{bāve kākhatali} \\
\text{bara kautuhalamane //} & \end{align*}

"He repeatedly utters the name of Hari, smearing his mustache and beards: laughing loudly and blowing his armpit in amusement." [The marriage songs are quoted as it is in the appendix (B)]\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Bei is a temple-like but temporarily made for bathing the bride or the bridegroom. The bride or the bridegroom should make pradaksīna round the Bei led by his/her mother.

\textsuperscript{15} Please see Appendix B
(C) Musical Instruments:

The musicians are collectively known as gāyanas and bāyanas, those who sing and those who play instruments. The gāyanas and the bāyanas are the most essential in the Śaṅkarite music in Assam, and they are also utilised in the Kāmakumāraharaṇa-nāṭaka. As in a Vaiśṇava drama, the Mārdāṅgika (lit. bāyana) is present on the stage to assist the Sūtradhāra as well as to keep up the tālas of the rāgas of the songs. Generally the bāyanas use the khola, an ablong conical type drum which under expert finger touch becomes a thing of lyrical melody and instrument of rhythm.

Besides the Mṛdanga, names of other musical instruments are also mentioned, more particularly those used on the occasion of marriage ceremony. In the auspicious functions like pānītolā and nuwuwa such instruments are played. These instruments are: Mṛdaṅga, Khol, Dhol and Dhāk (Dhuluki), Dagara, Tabala, Bheri, Khaṇjari, Saṅkha, Veṇu, Viṇā, Kāli, Tori etc.

cf. bhaila vara rāṅga bajāwe mṛdaṅga
tāla khola ḍhola ḍhāk
bajāwe khaṇjari bheri kāli tori
dagara veṇu viṇāka.

damādam dam bāje manoram
gomukha saṅkha tabala.16

16. KH, VI. 17-18
In this way, Kavicandra shows his deep knowledge of Indian music as well as the local music of Assam particularly the Śaṅkarite music and prove their application in the social and cultural life of the people of medieval Assam. His great achievement is the application of folk culture, viz. nuptial songs, in a classical drama. And, these folk elements add beauty to the play and ensure pleasures to the audience as well as to the readers.

The \textit{Saṅgitadāmodara}, a work on Indian Classical music, emphasises upon the use of musical Instruments in a musical performance. His contention is that since Indian music rests on \textit{tāla}, i.e. the rhythmic beat and this \textit{tāla} is produced through instruments. For this purpose he speaks about four kinds of instruments, viz. (i) \textit{Tatam} (stringed instruments) (ii) \textit{Suśiram} (wind blowing instruments)\textsuperscript{17} (iii) \textit{Ānaddham} (leader instrument) and (iv) \textit{Ghanam} (metal instruments). So, following the line of the \textit{Saṅgitadāmodara}, instruments mentioned by our author, may be classified in the following way:

1. Tata - \textit{vīnā}
2. Śuśiram - \textit{Veṇu, toḍi} (toḍahī), \textit{kāli, śaṅkha}
3. Ānaddha - \textit{Mrdaṅga, Khol, Dhol, Dhāk, Tabala, Bheri, Gomukha}
4. Ghana - \textit{Tāl, Khaṅjari}

\textsuperscript{17} cf. \textit{tālena rājate gitarī tālo vāditasambhavah / garīyastena vāditram tacca turviham caturvidyate // tataṁ śuśiramānaddham ghanam itthairī tātur vidham / tataṁ tantrī gamārī vādyairī vāraśādyairī śuśirāṁ tathā / cārām vānaddhamānaddham śanaṁ tālādikairī matam //}

—Chapter IV
From the foregoing discussions on songs,— both of classical and Nuptial, as well as musical instruments, it appears that Kavicandra Dvija is well-acquainted with the music prevalent in Assam during his time. The science of music, according to the Saṅgītādāmodara of Śubhaṅkara Kavi, is a combined product of song, instrument and dance. The music has that power which is enchanting and all pervasive.¹⁸ So our poet is successful in employing music in his Kāmakumāraharaṇa.

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¹⁸. Compare:

\[
\text{gitavidyā}....... /
\text{gitāṁ vādyāṁ tathā nṛtyāṁ tauryatrikamidaṁ matam} \parallel
\text{paramānandavivardhanamabhimataphaladam vaśikaraṇam} / 
\text{sakalajanacittaharaṇam vimuktibijam paraṁ gitam} \parallel
\]

—Saṅgītādāmodara - II