CHAPTER VI

TILLANA
Tillana as one of the Prabandha varieties came into vogue and attained immense popularity after the period of the Musical Trinity. The Desi Prabandhas of the medieval period in the history of our music are the forerunners of all the forms representative of the art, sacred, secular, dance and instrumental music. Tillana, characterised by a profusion of rhythmic syllables, is no exception.

There is a widespread conception that the Tillana is derived from the North Indian form Tarana. However, there is sufficient evidence in diverse Lakshana treatises to controverse this view notwithstanding the fact that Tillana got a fillip from the plethora of Hindustani musicians who flocked the Tanjore royal court during the Maratha rule and popularised various North Indian musical forms including Tarana.

Our earliest music and dance treatise, Bharata's Natya Sastra, does not refer to prabandha as such, but Geetha or Geethi - a composition with rhythmic bias, finds a place there. A type of Geethi called Khandika, centred on mystic syllables, was pronounced by Brahma for the proper development of art and Bharata, as his chosen mouth piece, propagated them for the benefit of humanity.
The popular notion that the Tillana is exclusively an adaptation from Hindustani compositions of analogous character like Tarana is ill-founded and Sarngadeva's *Sangita Ratnakara* itself contains incontrovertible data which can help to correct this misconception. Karna Prabandha is described in this treatise as comprising a mixed medley of Svara, Pada and rhythmic phrases interspersed. When Gopala Nayaka was taken away to the north by the Muslims as a prisoner, he endeared himself to his captors through his extraordinary talents and erudition in music. Gopala Nayaka is reputed to have taught Amir Khusru, among other things, the Karana Prabandha which later flowered as the Tillans or the Tarana. Drawing inspiration from this Prabandha and using the traditional form of dhruva pada hymns or quadrains and their shortened syllables employed in Indian vocalising (such as 'tum' 'dar' 'dani' etc.) in combination with certain words from the Persian which also had abstract connotations. Khusru paved the way for the musical form which came to be known as Tarana. Thus one may regard the Tillans or Tarana type of composition to be the product of composite North and South Indian intelligence with roots in the Prabandhas. Some
scholars trace the evolution of Tillana to Kaivara Prabvandha and Jakkani Daru. However, Tillana as its is today had its origin from the 18th century. Virabhadrayya is one of the earliest vaggeyakara to tillana in pantuvarali raga, Adi tala.

Another interpretation regarding the origin of tillana can be traced from Konugol. Konugol means reciting the jatis in conformity with a tala in a musical manner.

The Konugol padatti has lead to the Tillana of South Indian music and the Tarana of North Indian music. Going deeper into the evolution of Tillana, Narayana Tirtha has also used the jatis in his 3rd Taranga, Mohana Raga.

As a form belonging to the sphere of both art and dance music, Tillana finds a place as indispensable captivating item in music as well as dance concerts. In the former it provides a crisp finale after the heavy dose of Ragam, Tanam and Pallavi. In the latter, it comes as a welcome lively change with its quick tempo music following the leisurely Abhinaya for the long drawn out Padam. Being intended mainly to project the pure Nritta aspect of Bharatnatyam, the Tillana enables the dancer to exhibit mastery in this aspect.
with scintillating footwork and poses. The introduction of cross rhythms with unlimited scope for variations confers additional beauty and charm on this composition. In Harikatha kalakshepan, Tillana is traditionally rendered immediately after introductory purva-pitika with a view to evolving the proper musical atmosphere. Sometimes the Harikatha performer may also suddenly switch over to a catchy Tillana in the midst of his discourse just to relieve the monotony of the audience.

Tillana are short and lively composition. Jatis along with Solkettuswara and Chittswara are the major constituents of Tillana. Sahitya is used to sparingly as a vehicle for Devata or Poshaka sthuthi besides the composer's signature. Some Tillana will be devoid of Sahitya.

In the sphere of Abhyasa Ganam too, Tillanas have great value. To the vocalist, singing these compositions would help to impart good training to the tongue since other jatis in the fourth degree of speed have to be rendered with clarity. In the case of instrumentalists Tillans provide scope for useful training in swift bowing or fast plucking.

The Tillana comprises three sections (Trikanda) -
Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charanam. While the anupallavi is made up entirely of jatis, the Charana (which scarcely exceeds one in number) carries the composers' signature in its sahitya besides solfa syllables and jatis. However instances are also known of Dvikhanda Tillana consisting of only Pallavi and Anupallavi or Pallavi and Charanam. In the former case the Anupallavi is constituted of Jatis, Chittasvara and Sahitya.

The Sahitya in the Tillana is in anyone of the South Indian languages besides Sanskrit. The galaxy of prominent Tillana composers includes Swati Tirunal, Tanjore Quartette, Mysore Sadasiva Rao, Kunrakudi Krishna Iyer, Mana Vaidyanatha Iyer, Patnam Subramanya Iyer, Pallavi Seshayyar, Mysore Seshanna, Ramanad Srinivasa Iyengar and Muthiah Bhagavathar.

Tillanas are, concert forms sung in music and dance concerts. Those Tillanas rendered in music concerts are seen to have an emphasis on raga bhava. Sometimes they are in slow tempo also. Jati or 'chollu' has its equivalent in Pataksharas of some prabandha also. The Tillana in vasanta raga 'jham jham taritha jham' of Pallavi Seshayyar may be mentioned as an example. Sangatis also adorn some Tillanas.
Tillanas which are mainly dance forms are generally in Medium and quick tempo and the jatis are arranged so as to give scope for display of a variety of foot work and the drum syllables occur mostly. But nowadays the Tillanas are used for both the concerts and there is no discrimination.

Tillanas have only one charana and the signature of the composer occurs in the charana, where there is an anupallavi and charana, the anupallavi will consist of jatis alone but where the compositions consist of Pallavi and Anupallavi alone, the anupallavi will have the jatis, chittasvaras and sahitya, where there is a distinct charana, it will have words, solfa syllables and jatis. Usually the pallavi is of meaningless syllables. These type of rhythmic cholkettus can be found in some kritis also. 'Sri Mahaganapathy' in Gaula, 'Sri Ganananpathi' in Saurashtra can be cited examples.

Tillanas that figure in music concerts hardly take a few minutes to perform. Most Tillanas are set in Madhyamakala. As an example of Vilamba kala Tillana may be cited Pallavi Seshayyar's Vasantha Tillana 'Jham Jham tarita jham'. Sangatis adorn such Tillanas.

Some tillanas are scholarly compositions. The Kanada Tillana Gowri Nayaka of Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer in
Simhanandana tala belongs to this category as does the Todi Kambarayana Tillana 'Dani tana tirana' of Kunrakkudi Krishna Iyer. Tillana Daru resembles Tillana in beginning and ending with jatis but differs in respect of a large proportion of words in its matu. Krishnaswami Ayya's Tillana Daru in Suruti raga, Adi tala, beginning with the jatis 'Nadiri tani timdari' is an excellent representative of this type of composition.

The vast majority of Tillanas have been composed in Adi Tala. Tillanas in other talas are very few. Apart from Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer's Simhanandana Tala Tillana, Ramanad Srinivasa Iyengar has to his credit a Tillana, in Lakhsmisa tala - one of the 108 talas.

The early composers employed mostly Ghana ragas for composing their Tillanas, but with the passage of time there was a noticeable trend towards the adoption of Desiya ragas.

During the past few years, there has been a welcome spurt in the composition of Tillanas by many senior performing musicians. Their dhatu are characterised by several catchy and fascinating innovations, while their matu are replete with pleasing embellishments like prasa, yati, yamaka, etc. These
highly delectable compositions have become extremely popular with students of music, musicians as well as wide cross-sections of music lovers.

Perhaps the earliest example of the Tillana with the above mentioned characteristics is to be found in Pantuvarali raga Adi tala with 'Acyuta Varada' mudra and hence may be ascribed to Virabhadrayya. Generally the sahitya of the charana in a Tillana is in praise of deity or patron or Raja.

There are scholarly Tillanas set in rare talas like Simhanandana, Hanumant Kumba tala, Lakshmeesha tala etc. Due to the complicated set up of such Tillana they have not become so popular, as the simple Tillanas.

The tala Simhanandana consists of 128 aksharakala for an avarta. In this Tillana we do not find the divisions Pallavi, Anupallavi and Charana. The whole piece is set in two avarta. The first avarta contains Sahitya and the second avarta consists and jati passages. This is the only Tillana that we have in the simhanandana tala. He composed another Tillana in the same raga Kanada with a simple Rupaka tala beginning
with the words 'Ganapathe'.

One more rare Tillana of Maha Vaidhyanantha Iyer is in Mohana Raga, Hanumat Kumba tala, commenced as "Sri Saravana Sambava". The tala consists of 20 metres. There is no divisions into Pallavi, Anupallavi and Unarana. The first part begins with the Sahitya and then followed by a solkattu passage. The Sahitya is in praise of Lord Muruga. It is composed in Tamil language.

The Kambararamayana Tillana of Kunrakudy Krishnayyer has acquired fame throughout South India. This Tillana is in a verse form. It has pallavi, anupallavi and three charanas. It is set in adi tala, in Todi raga. He has composed one more Tillana which commences as 'Dhim tatara' in Kapi raga, Adi tala. This Tillana has sahitya from the pallavi till the charana. In pallavi and anupallavi we come across both the jati passages and as well as the sahitya. The charana part contains the sahitya which has 4 avarta followed with a solkettu passage. The first 3 avarta has only sahitya. The fourth avartas consists jatis as well as sahitya.

Patnam Subramanya Iyer and Ramanad Srinivasa Iyengar composed Tillanas and it took a definite shape during their period. The lakshananas figuring in their
Tillanas are the syllable 'Tillana' occurring either in the pallavi and anupallavi. Jatis figured in the anupallavi and the charana is in praise of deity or patron, composed in Telugu language and their Mudra occurs in the sahitya part. The jatis follows the sahitya in charana. The present day Tillanas are all in the same manner.

One noteworthy feature in Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar's Tillanas may be mentioned is the Kapi raga Tillana beginning with the words 'Taradi banana' set in Lakshmeesha tala. It is one of the 108 talas taking the aksharakala 25, but originally this tala is of 24 units. It has 2 divisions as pallavi and charana. The jati syllables in the last part of the charana is in the pattern of Gopucha Yati.

Muthiah Bhagvatar has to his credit a list of Tillanas which are all in praise of 'Chamundeswari' his Ishta devata and the Patron while he adorned the Mysore Court of Nalwadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar. He composed in Hindustani style and other ragas figuring in his Tillanas are Vasanta, Durbari Kanada, Hamsanandi, Hamir Kalyani etc. All are set in Adi tala.

The three sections figure in his Tillanas,
pallavi, anupallavi and charana. He has composed two Tillanas in Hamir Kalyani, both has one line of chittasvara after the charana, followed with jaits. They are composed in Telegu language.

All the Tillanas have a jati pattern which conclude with sahitya part in charana and these are completely different from that of anupallavi. The syllable Tillana figures in his compositions either in the pallavi or anupallavi. His (Muthiah Bhagavatar) knowledge in Hindustani music is revealed in Tillanas. In the progression of datu, some of his Tillanas resembles Tarana of Hindusthani music.

Vina Seshanna one of the most prolific Tillana composer has composed several Tillanas on his patron chamraja Wodeyar. He adorned the court of Mysore. His famous Tillana 'Dhirana tana dhimta' was composed by him, when there was a delay in his request for funds being granted. The Charana of this composition expresses his total dependence of 'Chamarajendra' in a melting manner. When Subbanna sang this piece to the ruler on behalf of his friend, the ruler was moved and immediately made generous grant to Seshanna.

Among his Tillanas, some are in Carnatic ragas like Todi, Bhairavi and some are in Hindustani ragas
like Darbari Kanada, Behag, Hindustani Kapi. The Tillana 'Dani Udani Tadani' in Darbari Kanada resembles the tarana of Hindusthani Music to a great extent in the development of the datu. In the Tillana 'Nadiridittom' in Khamas raga the phrases like Gg ggg ss gg pp mr g, s occur suggesting phrasing of western music. Most of his Tillanas are in talas belonging to Carnatic music. The Tillana 'Nadiriditoom' in Kamas raga set to Chaturasra triputa has different sections starting at different points in the tala. Pallavi starts at the first finger count, anupallavi at the second finger count and the charana begins at the visarjitha of second druta.

Veena Seshanna Tillanas are full of vina technique and few compositions have sangatis such as Pharaz, Darbari Kanada, etc. He composed in Kannada language.

The only one available tillana of Ootukadu Venkata Subbaiyer is in Suruti raga, Adi tala. The whole piece is full of jaits and solkettu, swaras and has sahitya, in the 2nd druta of the 1st avarta in the pallavi. The anupallavi has sahitya in the second avarta, and the charana commences with the solkettu swaras and has sahitya,
avarta in the pallavi. The anupallavi has sahitya in the second avarta, and the charana commences with the solkettu swaras for the two avartas and followed the sahitya and the jati passages figured at the end of the compositions. It is in Tamil language in praise of Sri Krishna.

Swati Tirunal Maharaja of Travancore has to his credit a few tillanas which are in Malayalam language. Some has no sections. Only one tillana in Kalyani raga Triputa tala has the sections pallavi and anupallavi but has not sahitya.

The famous Dhanasri tillana is originally composed by Swati Tirunal in Mulanchanidhanyasi - Chempata tala (adi tala). It is said to be tuned by the present day musician Lalgudi Jayaraman - Violinist, to Dhanasri raga, Adi tala which has 2 sahityas in North Indian languages.

The tillanas figuring till the end of 19th century appear in a similar manner, but with slight development from the time of Virabhadrayya. Coming to the modern development in the form Tillana, we find many modern composers who have to their credit in composing tillanas in light ragas.
Based on this principle of Tayam (Graha bhedam) Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna has composed a beautiful 'Raga tala malika tillana'. Here Kalyani raga is the fundamental melody. The other ragas used are Sankarabharana, Mohana, Hindolam and Darbari Kanada. Among these ragas Sankarabharana alone is the major raga and the other three ragas are the janya ragas of the resultant scales which would otherwise have been got from Kalyani through the process of graha bheda.

This may be illustrated as follows:

1. The 1st and the basic melody is Kalyani - the 65th Mela.
2. The Pa-Murchana of Kalyani is Sankarabarana.
3. Mohana: The Ri-Murchana of Kalyani is Hari-kamboji the 28th mela. By omitting the svaras Ma and Ni (which will be pa and sa of Kalyani respectively) Mohana is obtained.
4. Hindola: The Ma-Murchana of Kalyani will result in a scale without the perfect 5th. Roughly, the scale can be understood as having the note of Hanumatodi mela, with Pratimadhya acting as Panchama. In this the svara Ri and Pa of the scale (which will be Pa and Sa of Kalyani respectively) are omitted.
This can also be viewed as the ga-Murchana of the above Mohana.

Thus the composer was handling the concept of graha bhedam in his tillana by using other ragas derived from the normal resultant scales. Besides, it has been presented in such a way to appear that a particular phrase of the basic melody (instead of one svara) is switched over to suit the new raga. This is because of taking varjya-vakra prayogas as the keys for graha bhedam.

Thus the transition of ragas is so smooth and natural and that it takes the listener to a new field of melody, the principle of graha bhedam being handled in the above tillana is of unique beauty.

Each section including the Pallavi starts with Kalyani, the original tune and only undergoes the process of graha bhedam, and again in Kalyani after singing into a beautiful place of a new raga. There is no Makuta svara of linking passage as such exists to lead to the Pallavi. The natural finish of each melody helps itself to be connected with pallavi. This is another special point to be noted.

The Prabandha Mudra occurs in the last section in Darbari Kannada 'Samarpinchitini raga tala malikache
Tillana' i.e., the Tillana being composed as a raga tala malika is presented. The vaggeyakara mudra also figures as 'Muraligana neda rupa' in the same section.

The rare and beautiful pattern of jatis figuring in this tillana met with in the first two sections shifting to Sankarabarana and Mohana respectively has such new phrases:

Thanta jham, Nana nathanam, Taja Kujam, Tattara, Tahakura, Nari, Tatta na etc.

Thus the Ragatalamalika tillana stands as an excellent example of its type.

His another tillana is 'Gatibheda priya Ragamalika tillana'. The raga Mudra occurs in the last part of each section.

'Priyamaina gati bheda pancha ragamu - lalo rachitamai kharaharapriya maina tillana' Composer Mudra occurs in the first charana.

The whole composition is set in different nadai. The first section pallavi and anupallavi are set to chaturasra nadai, the four charana are set in Tisram, misram, Sankirnam and Khandha nadai respectively.
Each section of the charana ends respectively repeating the anupallavi (Set in Gurupriya). But no mukthayi svara or linking passage as such exists to lead to the anupallavi.

He composed a tillana with raga mudra giving its arohana and avarohana in the charana part. The Tillana begins with the words 'Tilla a nadrudim' Kuntala varali raga - Adi.

Padmasree Lalgudi Jayaraman has to his credit a number of Tillanas with all rhetorical beauties like jati patterns, swaraksharas, etc. The swarakshara beauty figures in the charana in one of his Tillana in Bihag raga - Adi tala.

Dr. Padma Subramaniam also composed some Tillanas. She has composed a Tillana 'Nadrudrudhim' in Hamsanandhi raga - Adi tala taking the Sahitya from Mahakavi Subramanya Bharathiyyar's song 'Ethanai Kodi'.

The syllables figuring in a mridangam also occur in a Tillana with permutation and combination of jatis with beautiful rhythmic patterns so to say both ancient and modern tillanas are similar either in dance or concerts but varies according to the composers talent and skill.