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MUSIC AND SANGAM TAMILS

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ABSTRACT

Music is the language of emotion. It is one of the fine arts and is the finest of the fine arts. It is concerned with sounds which are calculated to excite pleasant feelings in us. The system of music was developed by the genius of man himself. Man is immersed in music from birth till death. The infant in the cradle stops crying when it hears the lullaby. Pupils are able to learn many things through songs. Workers like to sing in order to forget their fatigue in the work. People in general are attracted by devotional songs and Keerthanais. Even in the house of a dead person, we hear the mournful singing, and it is continued, while the body is being taken either to the graveyard or to the cremation ground. Thus we find that music is intimately connected with the life of man. Music is of universal appeal influencing alike the scholar and the pay person, the old and the young, the man hearing of good music serves to nourish the nervous system. The delicate fibrils of the inner ear are touched only when the highest type of classical music is heard. Otherwise they tend to become idle structures and lost their responsive nature are long.

INTRODUCTION

Music, one among the fine arts, has been utilized in several ways through human history. In human life, music is bound with the life itself music with a pleasing sound is classified into a one amongst *MuthTamil* by

early Tamil people. Music is the direct immediate medium for the expression of the innermost feelings of the heart.^[1] Silappathigaara Arumbatha Uraiyasiriyar says that Music means *pann*. Aristotle said that Music is not easy to determine to nature of music on, why anyone should have

knowledge of it. He made a definition between those who have only theoretical knowledge and those who do not perform cannot be good judges of the performances of others. [2]

MUSIC AND MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF EARLY TAMILS

Adiyaarku Nallar of the twelfth century A.D wrote script for Ilangovadigal's Silappathigaaram which belongs to second century A.D In that work he denotes a list of music books as long forgotten and lost. [3] They are

- Perunaarai
- Perungurugu
- Panjabharathiyam- Narathan
- Isai Nunukkam- sigandiyar
- Indira Kaaliyam- Yaamacendrar
- Panjamarabu- Arivanaar
- Bharatha senapatheeyam- Aathivaayilar
- Mathivaanar Nadaga Thamizhnool- Pandiyan Mathivaananaar
- Kootha Nool – Satthaneer

These books have existed till the time of Adiyaarku Nallar and are now extinct. Only the names of these books are now available. Music, which holds a great place in human life has great place in

literature, which is based on human life. Among fine arts both the theoretical and practical (material) evidences are found only for painting and sculpture. And the other three fine arts namely music; drama and dance have only theoretical evidences from literature. The development of music is researched starting from the book Tholkappiam, which is of the forerunners of Tamil books.

Tholkappiyam gives information about 'seyuliyal's like paripaadal and pannathi, and koothar, paadini and paanar who dedicated their life for the art of music. Tholkappiyam talks about the string instruments like yaal, Air hole instruments like kuzhal and beat instruments like parai, thannumai and muzhavy.

The kings of sangam period encouraged the art of music. People loved music having both the knowledge and the sense of understanding the passion for music.

The music and the instrument varied according to the 'Nilam' (ambiance). Both instrumental music and lyrical recitals were developed during this period.

The forms like 'paadal', 'paatu', 'panuval' meant the same, Iraipaa'.

There were eleven types of ‘pann’ according to sangam literature. They are.

- (I) Ambal pann (This music came from flute).^[4]
- (II) Kanji pann (This music was playing to give peaceful mind for those who suffering from wound that got in the battle field.).^[5]
- (III) Kaamarappann (One who had the element of pleasure and joy).^[6]
- (IV) Kurunji pann Paniurapaan (One who that provide a sense of fear).^[7]
- (V) Panjurapann(This music provides a sense of fear).^[8]
- (VI) Sevalipann (This music is giving sorrow feelings).^[9]
- (VII) Naivalapann (the one which can be sung during day).^[10]
- (VIII) Padumalaipann (the one sung in very high tone key and tenor).^[11]
- (IX) Paalai pann (The song of mid day).^[12]
- (X) Marutha pann (the one with sense of joy to be sung in the morning).^[13]

- (XI) Vilari pann (The song about morning for a loss).^[14]

In several songs of Sangam literature the information about the musician Paanar, Viraliar, Porunar, Kinaiyar, Kodiyar, Vayiriyar are found.

‘Paanars were excellent in music composition and singing. They talented in singing songs with the stringing of ‘Yal’. They sung along with their wife. They went and praised the patrons through which they earned gifts for their life. Some Paanars served as the mediator and solved the problem ‘Oodal’ (family problem between husband and wife) solvers. They composed music with both seeriyal and periyal.

The woman of the Paanar family line was called as Viraliyar and Paadini. The woman who engaged herself in singing and dancing was called as Viraliyar and sometimes she interested only singing was called as Paadini.

Porunar used ‘Parai’ as their instrument. Along with singing and composing ‘Yal’ they used ‘Thadaari’ (large leather instrument).

The male musician who played the leather instrument ‘Kinai was called

‘Kinaignar .The female was called ‘Kinai magal’. They play Kinai in kings’ court, battle field, and festivals and also at the early morning.^[15]

The men who blew ‘Sangu’ (Conch shell) called as ‘Kodiyar’. They are used playing various musical instruments.^[16]

The men who played ‘Vayir’(stomach) were called ‘Vayiriyar’. They composed both in battle fields and king court.^[17]

Sangam musical instruments are divided into four types Narambu karuvi (string instruments), Thulaikkaruvi (hole instruments, Thor karuvi (leather instruments) and Kanjarkaruvi (pot instrument).

The instruments of melodies (pannosao) are like Yal, Kinnaram, Kuzhazh, Sangu, Thoombu (Vangiyam, Neduvangiyam), Vayir and some Percussion musical instruments are (Thaalavisas karuvi) like Thannumai, Muzhavu, Murasu, Parai, Sirumusha, Kinai, Thudi, Thadari, Pathalai, Elairi, Aagvli, Mathari, Maguli, Sillari (sallari), Oombai, Kottu, Paandi, Tjattai, Kullir and Inniyam were found in sangam literature.

As the Pathinen Keelkanakku books mentions more about virtue (Aram), the information about the art of music are scarcely found. These books have records evidences about Yaal (Which triggered human emotions), Muzhaa(which was composed with suruthis, Thudi (a beat musical instruments) and the Paanars who could compose several ‘Pans’ in ‘Yal’.^[18]

Silappathikaram which has a deep record of all the three arts music, dance and drama several information about music is present wide spread songs. The people of that period had a good taste for taste for music.^[19]

Thannumai, the instructions to play Kulala Isai, the structure of Yal , stringing of Yal and composing music were written by Ilango vadigal. In about twelve out of the thirty chapters Ilangavadigal mentioned in detail about Isai paadalgal, (musical songs), their tradition story and their techniques.^[20]

In Arankertra kathai chapter, he describes about the eligibility and the skill of Isaiyaasiriyar, Kuzhalasriyan, Yalasiriyar and Thannumalyaasiriyar. In Venirkathai the origin of four notes (Naangu Jathi pangal) of Maruthayal is said. In Aaichiyar kuravai, composing of Mullai pann is excellently detailed.^[21]

The information about music in these 'Kaathais' are well explained by Arumbathauraiyaasiriyar and Adiyaarku Nallar.

Silappathikaram also said about the structure of severed musical instruments, the pleasant sound produced by composing those instruments, midatrisai music produced by of the combination of musical instrument and midaru.

The information about the four types of musical instruments leather, air hole, string, Kanjakkaruvi are mentioned in Silappathikaram .It highlights the percussion and non-percussion musical instrument like Thannumai, Muzhavu, Murusu, and parai and the parts of the string instruments like Yal.

Ilangovadigal records that the early Tamils of Kurunji, Mullai, Marutham, Neithal composed 'Paadarpann' on the basis of land.

Women sang 'Varippaas' like Ammaanai vari, Kanthugavari, Oosal vari and Vallaipattu related to their amusements.^[22]

The author of Manimegalai says that the Tamils had very intellectual knowledge about thaalam and surithi.^[23]

Manimegalai contains notes about yal which helps in the perfect composition of 'Pann' the technique by which music is produced from Magaraveenai, Kovalar Mullai kulaloothiyamai, Thannumai karuvi, Mulavu and Murasu which is used as an instrument for spreading news.^[24]

The period from 3cen.A.D to 6th cen.A.D was considered as the Dark Age by the historians in TamilNadu. During this period, the art of music almost become out of practice. Kaarai kaalammaiyar of this period has written Thiruppathigangal Nattapaadai, in 'Inthalam pun'. This is the very first pun found after the period of silappathgaram and paipaadal.^[25]

Then the poets of Thevaran like Appar, Sundarar and Sambandhar of 7th CA.D wrote several 'pann'. Thiruneelaganda Yalpaanar who lived during this period at Thiruvarukkam katha puliyur went to Seerkalipathi along with his wife to see Sambanthar and composed the songs of Sambanthor in his Yal to sing it across all over Tamilnadu for the sake of art of music. The type of Yal he used was

Sagada Yal. In Thavaram there are names for about twenty musical instruments. All these musical instruments are used to compose songs of worship.^[26]

In 9th C.A.D Arivanaar writes Panjamarabu, a book of grammar for musical drama. These mentions in detail about the pann like string, Kulal, Kandan, Thol (leather), Koothu and the types of 'Isaipattu'. It reveals the ancient Tamil's passion in the musical techniques.^[27]

Perugathai kaapiuyam written by Konguvelir consists of a tremendous amount of information on music. Music was learnt mostly by women. There were institutions for teaching music. Separate music groups were available for Koothu, Paadal and Naadagam. Music was also used to solve 'Oodal' of women. Uthayanan tamed elephant composing music by a Yal called 'Kodapathi'.^[28]

If music forms the base of Tamil and has been written into its concept as the language of self-realization, then it is necessary to find the meaning of music as conveyed in Tamil. Isai enjoys the status given in Tamil alone of coequality with *gnosis or gnana*, meaning thereby the 'way of liberation. Thus the primordial sound or *aharm* becomes Siva Himself. He takes on

meaning as the Manifesto of the letters of the alphabet in Tamil. The musical notes belong to the all-pervading *sruthi* in which the 'life' or *uyir* letters have their being. In Saiva metaphysics the musical notes are *stula* (gross), *Suksma* (Subtle) and *para* (transcendent).^[29]

Prof. Chandra pandey in his "Comparative Aesthetics" speaks of the metaphysical base of musical notes which is the Saiva concept. The same is applied to the birth of the Tamil language where Siva, presiding over the First Sangam became manifesto of the letters of the alphabet in which life (*uyir*) takes embodiment as *uyirmei*. An ancient work, namely the commentary to the Iraiyanar Ahapporul, makes mention of this Sangam held at South Madurai, the original capital of the Pandyas. This sangam comprised 549 celebrities of the divine order including *Muruhan* and *Ahattiyanar* (Agastya). Historians attempting to read profanity into this sacred history have failed to realize the unique and distinctive character of the Tamil language as being the only vehicle for metaphysical truth more especially in combination with music. The whole of its development into the world's most beautiful poetry set to music giving evidence of the wonders in it of self-realisation, is sufficient proof that

Siva alone could have guided its birth and development.^[30]

That the language produced the mightiest men-seers, poets, musicians, an exalted kingly order and dancers is sufficient evidence of the tremendous power behind the language. Prof. Pandey also observes, “The philosophy of music is connected with the ultimate source of all sounds is *Bindu*, which is also *Para-Nada* to distinguish it from *Nada* which evolves out of it.” The significant fact is that Tamil is inextricably tied with music and all Tamil was written as poetry designed thereby to be sung.^[31]

The Tamil musical instrument, the *veenai* belonging to Sarawathi was used by wandering bards called *Panar* while the cowherds known as *Kovalar* played the flute. Also *mulavu*, *tondagapparai* and *kinai* were used as percussion instruments. This shows the extent of influence music had on the common people in their avocations giving them inward realization and relief from boredom.^[32]

The *yazhl*, flute and drum find an important place in *Silappathikaram* where the courtesan Mathavi symbolizes the highest development where dance became integrated with music to give the former the

needed self expression, Music was stored in the seven notes of the octave which had astronomical relevance to the zodiac with twelve signs standing for the twelve semi-tones in the octave. Prof. S. Ramanathan has already dealt with this in his contribution to the “Cultural Heritage” series.^[33]

The growth of *Pann Isai* so closely associated with the main God, of Tamil metaphysical poetry was the concern of royalty as such, meaning thereby that the *Chera*, *Chola*, *Pandiya* rulers were infused with the living tradition of the Tamils. The Temple represented the simultaneous development of Thiru-murais and the task was carried *Othuvar-moorthis*. It was through the latter that Tamil grew into a great oral tradition with temples becoming sacred simultaneously with *thevaram* and *thiruvasham* on the lips of almost everyone, thus giving vent to the entire people’s affective energies. The desires of the animal sphere were obliterated so that the social order developed a marvelous rhythm and coherence. Nature and culture are necessities and they exist in man and tradition ensured that fools do not enter the arena. The maturity of Tamil growth music was that people were able to pass into the

meridian of life whilst all the time creating culture. That expressed the way where living matter becomes a transformer of energy. On the other hand, the trends arising out of modern influences to allow industrial techniques to overrun the religious and cultural outlook and transformation has deprived the vast majority of the Tamil people of the opportunity to give vent to their affective energies.^[34]

CONCLUSION

Unlike anything else in the world, Tamil music represents an unbroken tradition. Despite foreign invasions and their positively harmful influences, the pan system still continues and grows into many and variegated ragas unknown even to the Northern system. In Tamil Tradition, ownership of the means of production belonged primarily to the spirit which meant keeping the music within the myriad varieties that the temple represented. That alone enabled growth into maturity for the art making it the right of every man who is endowed to demand that he is given the opportunity to become an artist.

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