

A Journey through Prabandhas

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ABSTRACT: In history, music was broadly divided into Nibaddha sangīta (compositions is about to the framework of tāla) and Anibaddha sangīta which do not conform to the tāla. Prabandha is an ancient musical form which constitutes the Nibaddha part of Gāna. The term Prabandha is explained in music treatises as a composition which is bound by Dhātu and Anga. Dhātu means the limbs or parts of a musical piece. Anga means the various elements that comprise the Prabandha. Prabandha kind of forms were originated during the pre-Christian era and developed through the process of time assuming novel modes and new names. Matanga is that the first musicologist who mentioned Prabandhas in his Brihaddēsi, a treatise on music ascribed to 9th century. Sārangadēva, in his work Sangīta Ratnākara, has given a transparent account on Prabandha and its varieties. The treatment of Prabandha is exclusively explained within the chapter on Prabandha in Sangīta Ratnākara. The study of Prabandha and other ancient forms in their technical, historical, utilitarian aspects will help us to grasp the method of evolution and therefore the development of those forms. This article approaches the structure, internal divisions, the elements of Chhandas or metre, Rāga, Tāla and Rasa of Prabandha in various dimensions.

Index terms: Anga, Dhātu, Gīta, Jāti, Prabandha, Rāga, Tāla, Vādyā,

I. INTRODUCTION

Prabandhas constitute the Nibaddha part of Gāna. They are also referred to as Vastus or Rūpakas. The word Prabandha is forms out of Pra+bandh+Gāna which means well tied or well bound. Prabandha literally means a musical composition set to Rāga and tāla. A Lakshana prabandha may be a piece wherein the sahitya concerns itself with the elucidation of a particular low, phenomena or fact regarding musicology. Eg. Mūrchanakāraka Rāgamālika. Gīta prabandha means a vocal form as opposition Vādyā prabandha i.e., instrumental form and Nrīta prabandha i.e., dance form

In the context of Music, Prabandha could be a comprehensive term which refers to a well-knit composition. Musical compositions in ancient music were called Prabandhas. In Sangīta Ratnākara, Prabandha was defined as a composition which is bound by Dhātu and Anga. Several names are employed besides Prabandha for this type of composition in the various texts. Brihaddēsi calls them Prabandhas. In the Bharatabhāshya, Nayanadēva expounds Prabandha under the heading Dēsi-gītakādhyāya. Matanga mentions 49 Dēsi prabandhas. Prabandha received an in depth treatment in the fourth chapter, Prabandha-adhyāya of Sārangadēva's Sangīta Ratnākara. Sārangadēva explained Prabandha as that which is pleasant; and that which is governed by rules regarding Rāga, Tāla, Chhandas, Vritta and Anga. In his work, Sārangadēva described about 256 forms of Prabandhas with their variations.

Parsvadēva defines Prabandha because the Gītis or songs that is product of six Angas or limbs and four Dhātus or elements. Somēsvara in his Mānasollāsa confirms and expands further. And, Sārangadēva in the fourth Canto of Sangīta Ratnākara sums up the formal features of Prabandha as: Six Angas which just like the limbs of a body are the integral parts of a configuration called Prabandha; and four Dhātus which are like substances or elements that regulate the right working of the body. The Angas and Dhātus were compared with reference to organs of the human body.

II. ANGAS

According to the ancient treatises on music, the six Angas were Svāra, Biruda, Pada, Tēnaka, Pāṭa and Tāla. Sārangadēva pictures them as the limbs or organs of the Prabandha Purusha. Tēna and Pada are like the two eyes. Pāṭa and Biruda are compared to the two hands. Tāla and Svāra are likened to the two feet for the movement of the Prabandha depends on them.

1.1. Svara

This term combines in itself two aspects. Svaras have the symbols Sa, Ri, Ga etc. which indicate the Svaras, Shadja, Rishabha etc. The term Svara basically indicates the tonal aspect of the Prabandha also.

1.2. Biruda

Biruda is related to the Pada aspect. It is the exclamation or words of praise addressed to the prabandha nāyaka expatiating his valour, skill and courage etc. Biruda highlights the Gāna or secular character of the Prabandha. The Biruda was taken out and integrated into a composition, usually within the concluding Mudra-Charana.

1.3. Pada

Pada also is related to the pada aspect of Gāna. It consists of meaningful words or passages apart from Biruda. Kumbha speaks of Pada as being of three types according to the language used. Sanskrita, Prākṛita and Apabhramsa.

1.4. Tēna or Tēnaka

The anga refers to the word Tēna. The word Tēna seems to have served as a kind of text in Prabandha singing. This consists of auspicious phrases like 'Tēna Tēna' of the Bhandīra bhāsha. Tēna could be conceived of as the declined form of the word Tat. In the Prabandha rendering, the vocal syllables – meaningless and musical in sound – with many repetitions of the syllables or feels like tenna-tēna-tom, conveying a way of auspiciousness, used to be sung after rendering Rāgālāpti before the most section of the Prabandha i.e. the Dhruva

Tēna, which was originally employed in the Tēna-karana of the Prabandha, gained greater importance in the playing of the Vīna. The Tēna rendering on the Vīna, was derived from the Tēna-karana, which was meant to be played on the Vīna in the Nanda form of songs of the Viprakīrṇa class of Prabandha. The Tēna could be a particularly endearing segment of the Vīna-play of the Carnatic music

1.5. Pāṭa

Prabandha have another variety of meaningless text known as Pāṭa. This anga consists of the rhythmical sounds related to the Rudra vīna, the conch and certain drums. Pāṭa could be a more comprehensive word and includes not only the Jatis or konugol but also sounds peculiar to some musical instruments. These Pāṭas are listed in the course of the description of Vādyā Prabandhas.

Pāṭa, was a characteristic feature of the Suddha-Sūda-Prabandhas. This anga caused to the creation of recent forms like the Tillānas. This became an independent musical form and could be used more with dance. Ta, ddhi, thom, tem, ka, kha etc are examples of these Pāṭa syllables.

1.6. Tāla

Tāla is the musical metre used in Prabandhas. In the Prabandhas, Dēsi tālas are used. In a few Prabandhas, tālas like Chachatputa are mentioned. Parsvadeva has called the measure of time and action Tala -'tālah kālakriyā manam'

III. JĀTIS OF PRABANDHA

A Prabandha must have a minimum of two angas. Therefore a Prabandha can have two, three, four, five or six angas. The number of angas present in a Prabandha determines the Jāti of the Prabandha. According to the amount of angas present, Prabandhas were classified into five Jātis. They are Mēdini, Ānandini, Dīpani, Bhāvini and Tārāvali.

1.7. Mēdini Jāti

This type of prabandha had all the six angas. This Jāti was also known as Sruti Jāti. Example: Rāmaswami Dīkshitar's Prabandha in Hamsadvani Rāga, Matya tāla beginning with the words chandasēla

1.8. Ānandini Jāti

This is a kind of Prabandha which had five of the above Angas. This is also called by the Jāti, Nīti Example: Pallavi Sēshayyar's Tillāna in Dhanyāsi Rāga, Ādi tāla. During this Tillāna has all the Angas except Tēnaka.

1.9. Dīpani Jāti

These types of Prabandha consist of four of the above Angas. It is also called Senā Jāti Example: The Viriboni varna in Bhairavi Rāga, Ata tāla furnishes a decent modern parallel of Dīpani Jāti prabandha since it's four of those angas, the Pāṭa and Tēnaka are being absent.

1.10. Bhāvini Jāti

This Prabandha had three of the above Angas. Kavita was the other name of this Jāti The kriti like 'Nīmadi challaga' in Ānandabhairavi Rāga furnishes an honest modern example of a Bhāvini Jāti prabandha as much as it has the Angas, the pada, Tāla and Svaras, the opposite Angas being absent.

1.11. Tārāvali Jāti

This prabandha had only two of the above Angas. This Jāti is also known as Champu Jāti.

A composition just like the Jātisvara furnishes a parallel example in modern music of Tārāvali Jāti prabandha since it has only two of the six Angas viz., Svāra and Tāla. Tāla was a continuing anga for all the Prabandhas. No Prabandha might be conceived with just one anga.

IV. DHĀTUS

Dhātu is defined as a part or section of a Prabandha. Thus the number of Dhātus in a Prabandha indicates the number of sections in it. Normally four Dhātus are recognised in Prabandhas. The 4 Dhātus or the constituent limbs of a Prabandha were:

1.12. Udgraha

Udgraha is the first section of the Prabandha. It is the introductory section which corresponds to the Pallavi of a kriti. Here the song is first grasped, hence the name Udgraha.

Udgraha consists of a pair of rhymed lines, followed by a decorative passage. After this there will be a passage of text describing the topic of the composition. Thus there should be pair of lines within the Udgraha and within the third section in addition.

Now, as regards the Udgraha, the couplet with which the composition started and which introduced the textual and therefore the theme of the Prabandha, it had been now assigned the name of Pallavi; suggesting that which is blossoming.

1.13. Dhruva

Dhruva is a very important section of the Prabandha. This Dhātu is the essential or the constant section which corresponds to the Charana of a kriti. Dhruva is that the main body of the song; and, is that which is repeated. Dhruva is so called because it is rendered repeatedly because it is mandatory. It is also said the Dhruva is within the Udgraha itself. Udgraha ēva yatra-syād Dhruvah

1.14. Mēlāpaka

This is a section that links up or unites the above two which corresponds to the Anupallavi of a Kriti. The Mēlāpaka should be rendered adorned with ornamentation or Alankāra. It is the bridge that connected the Udgraha and Dhruva. And therefore the music here is in an exceedingly higher register and its flow is natural. Usually Mēlāpaka consists of the rendering of an Ālapti which is technically called Prayoga. In this section, Ālapti devoid of a meaningful text is rendered with Gamaka.

1.15. Ābhoga

Ābhoga is the concluding section which corresponds to the Madhyamakāla sahitya or the Chittasvara of a kriti. Once the Ābhoga is sung, Dhruva could be repeated. It is in this section that the name of Vāggēyakaras (composers) is recorded.

In addition, there is another Dhātu called Antara or between Dhruva and Ābhoga which is found only in Sālaga Sūdas and not in other Prabandhas. Sārangadēva speaks of 5 Dhātus including Antara separately.

Of these four Dhātus, the Mēlāpaka and Ābhoga were dispensable angas. The Udgraha and Dhruva were indispensable Angas. As regards the Dhātus, Udgraha, Mēlāpaka, Dhruva and Ābhoga were said to be just like the Dhātus (energies or doshas) of Vata (wind), Pittha (bile) and Kapha (phlegm) that support (Dharana) and sustain (Bharana) body functions and also the physical constitution; and, Prakriti which is that the basic nature of body.

Similarly, Prabandha was also classified per the amount of Dhātu-s : Dvi-Dhātu (Udgraha and Dhruva); Tri-Dhātu (Udgraha, Dhruva and Ābhoga); and Chatur-Dhātu (Udgraha, Mēlāpaka, Dhruva and Ābhoga).

These four Dhātus correspond to Sthāyi, Antara, Sanchāra and Ābhoga of Hindustani music.

V. VARIETIES OF PRABANDHA

According to Sangīta Ratnākara, Prabandhas were classified into two types, Nirryukta and Aniryukta prabandhas.

1.16. Nirryukta prabandhas

The Prabandhas which conformed to the foundations such as Chandas, Tāla etc are Nirryukta prabandhas.

1.17. Aniryukta prabandhas

Aniryukta prabandhas are the songs which don't conform to the principles of the composition. In addition to the varieties mentioned above, there are Uttama (superior) and Adhama (inferior) prabandhas based on their quality. A Prabandha which has all the requisite good qualities and is devoid of defects and is an original composition is regarded as Uttama prabandhas. Prabandhas which do not have these qualities are called Adhama prabandhas.

VI. CLASSIFICATION OF PRABANDHAS

Prabandhas have been placed by Sārangadēva in three classes, Sūda, Āli, and Viprakīrṇa. Parsvadēva has spoken of three types of Prabandhas. (1) coming in the Sūda krama (sequence of Sūdas), (2) coming in the Āli krama

(sequence of Ālis) and (3) Viprakīrṇa. Of these he has given the order of Prabandhas and their descriptions only in the Sūdakrama. He has given the descriptions of Ali and Viprakīrṇa prabandhas of Sangīta Ratnākara individually under the classes Niriyukta, Aniryukta and Ubhayātmaka.

1.18. Vadya Prabandha

In the Vādyā chapter of Sangīta Ratnākara, Prabandhas for Avanaddha vādyas (drums) have been given. In these there are Dhātus such as Udgraha as in sung Prabandhas. 43 such Vadya prabandhas have been described in Sangīta Ratnākara. In accordance with the Dhatus, these Vādyā prabandhas are based on hard and soft Pātas at the end of which comes Dēnkāra i.e. the den sound. These Prabandhas are used in bright dance forms.

1.19. Nṛitta Prabandha

Just like Gēya (sung) and Vādyā prabandhas, Nṛitta prabandhas have also been spoken of. In these along with the Gīta prabandhas and Vādyā prabandhas, dance was performed. But instead of calling them Nṛitta prabandha they have been called 'Paddhati'. The most remarkable feature of these Prabandhas is that there is only one dancer (female) in them and but a large group of singers and instrumentalists. This whole group including the dancer is called 'Sampradāya'. There are 72 singers and players and one dancer.

VII. CONCLUSION

Although, Prabandha, was disappeared, its influence has been long lasting in Indian Music. The structures of Rāga, Tāla and all other elements prevalent within the music of today are all derived from Prabandha and its traditions. Many forms in music have emerged from the root of Prabandha. Thus, Prabandha is, truly, the ancestor of the complete gamut of sorts of patterns of sacred-songs, art-songs, dance-songs and other musical forms created since 17th century till in this day and age.

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