

GĪTAMS

from Saṅgitānanda Ratnākaram

1. HĀMSADHVANI RĀGAMU — TRIPUṬA TĀLAMU

Ṥ , N — P N — P , | G , R — S R — S , | P , N — S R — G P |
rā . ja — gō . — . . | pā . la — bā . — la . | rāṃ ya — gu ṇa — ṣṛ ñ |

G , R — S , — S , | R , G — R G — P G | P , N — P , — P , |
gā . ra — lī . — lā . | rā . sa — khē . — la na | bhā su — rā ñ — gā . |

G , R — S , — R G | P , N — Ṥ , — Ṥ , | P N Ṥ — Ṛ̇ , — Ḡ Ṛ̇ |
rā . dhi— kā . — la la | nā . nta— rañ — gā . | rā . ja — pa . — ṭṭa ṇa |

Ṥ Ṛ̇ Ṥ — Ṥ , — N P | N Ṥ Ṛ̇ — Ṥ , — Ṥ N | P P , — R G — P N ||
vā . sa — dā . — . sa | nṛ ha ri — sē . — vi ta | pa dām — bu ja — śrī . ||

Refer: Savithri Rajan and Michael Nixon. Shobhillu Saptasvara. Madras. 1982, p. 53.

GITAM

Some centuries ago caturdandi was a central concept in Karnatic music. Thayam, alapana, gitam and prabandham. are the caturdandi, the four pillars of music. Even sixty years ago musicians were lamenting the loss of thayam, and prabandham they were apparently lost even before that generation. Gitam has survived to the present day.

After learning to sing the various svaravalis, the student moves on to gitams. Purandaradasa, who first systematized the basic lessons of Karnatic music, composed gitams. Every student learns his Pillari gitams. Gitams capture the raga bhava, the characteristic expression of the raga, in a very concise form and make it easy for the student to comprehend and learn.

Gitam as a musical form was current before kritis came into being. Thus they do not have the three divisions: pallavi, anupallavi and caranam. They are, however, divided into khandikas, as are prabandhams. Khandika means 'a section' and we find quite a variety of them. Antari khandika, javada khandika, mudra khandika and Abhoga khandika are a few of the varieties. Javada means 'half', and the javada khandika occurs half-way through the composition. The mudra khandika bears the mudra or signature of the composer. In his Caturdandi Prakasika, Venkatamakhin has listed and explained the different khandikas. It is an interesting subject for the musicologist, but lies beyond the scope of this present work.

There are two types of gitams, laksya gitams and laksana gitams. Laksya gitams or sancari gitams are full of raga bhava with the praise of God, the guru, raja or even patron for the theme of the song. Like all other branches of learning in India, music was taught orally. The guru and students laboured together to ensure that the music was understood and sung with all its nuances and in its fullness of expression. The gurukula system was prevalent till recently. Even when books are available, a note is always included saying that we must learn the music from a competent master. So the composers of the laksana gitams wrote the pieces in various ragas and packed the sahityam (words of the song) with all the salient information about the ragas. The arohana (ascending scale), avarohana (descending scale), vadi (principal note of the raga), samvadi (the notes consonant with the vadi), nyasa svara (the note on which the phrases can end), the sruti value of the svaras, the melakarta raga (parent raga) from which the raga derives, if it be a janya raga, and a host of other laksana was included in these gitams. There are laksana gitams by composers representing different schools of musical thought. A comparison of these different schools as embodied in the gitams of Govindacarya, Venkatamakhin and others is a fascinating subject.

The laksana gitams in *Sangita Sarvartha Sara Sangrahamu* are of a general nature, and do not give much information regarding the raga. They are like small compendia of musical terms. [...]
