

RESEARCH NOTES OF DR. S SEETHA ON THE MUSIC OF THANJAVUR

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Abstract

Dr. S Seetha is a senior researcher and academician, who undertook research on the music of the Thanjavur region. Her work titled Tanjore as a seat of Music was submitted to the University of Madras for the Ph.D. degree and the same was published as a book too. During her research, she had noted down the research information from various sources like manuscripts, official gazette records, sculptures and so on. Her notebooks with the valuable information were uploaded in the website, www.musicresearchlibrary.net. Meanwhile in the year 2014, a presentation was made at the National Seminar organized by the Department of Indian Music, University of Madras, by Dr. V Premalatha on the use of manuscripts as the primary source material by Dr. S Seetha. This article is an extension of the presentation with detailed note on the significance of the notebooks as an important reference for music research.

Keywords: S Seetha, Manuscript, Maratha, Nayak notations, and Thanjavur

INTRODUCTION

The Royal patronage of the Nayak and Maratha rulers of Thanjavur, during the 17th and 18th centuries contributed enormously to fine arts and Letters. In the history of Music, these royal monarchs enriched the prevailing classical music of the Thanjavur region. In the year 1960, Dr. S. Seetha perused an extensive research on the Music of Thanjavur for her Doctoral thesis and submitted the same to the University of Madras. Her study covered the musical, musicological, historical and devotional aspects in and around Thanjavur region. The materials that were available at Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji's Saraswathi Mahal Library (TMSSML) served as the Primary Source material. This article focuses on the valuable information found in the notes of an erudite scholar and a researcher, thereby bringing out the significance of note-making in music research. This article is based on a paper submitted by Dr. V Premalatha titled, "Dr. Seetha's Use of Manuscript as primary source material' at the "National Seminar on Music- Dr. Seetha's contribution", organized by the Department of Music, University of Madras, on 9th October 2014.

NOTEBOOKS OF DR. SEETHA

During the course of research, Dr. Seetha had documented the information from the music manuscripts of TMSSML, in her notebooks. Digital copies of her notebooks containing primary information on the music manuscripts of TMSSML have been

uploaded in the website, <http://musicresearchlibrary.net>. This article aims to showcase the contents of the 'Notebooks of Dr Seetha' that serves as the resource material for the unpublished works on music seen at TMSSML. The reference notes made by her provide the pathway for the current researchers on the unpublished works.

DESCRIPTION OF THE NOTEBOOKS

Dr. Seetha had undertaken an exhaustive research work for which she had consulted many sources such as state gazette records, sculptures, manuscripts, paintings and many published sources like books, journals and periodicals. Among all these, manuscripts (mss) seem to be her prime source material and such references have been exhaustively sighted in the notebooks. Most of the information seen in Seetha's notebooks is reflected in her published work, 'Tanjore as a seat of music'¹ but some stand unique and not found elsewhere. There are altogether two note books and papers, totally comprising around 400 pages.

The contents of these notebooks can be viewed under the following categories:

- Details on Music Manuscripts
- Notations
- Musical Forms
- Rāgalakṣaṇa manuscripts
- Caturdaṇḍi compositions
- Technical Treatises
- Other Miscellaneous information

Each of these are explained below.

A) DETAILS ON MUSIC MANUSCRIPTS

Dr Seetha had provided the list of the manuscript, with Descriptive catalogue number and Burnell catalogue number, along with the beginning portions of the compositions. At some instances, the texts of many unpublished songs in their original scripts (Tamil, Samskr̥ta, Telugu, and Marathi) have been copied. The contents of each of the mss are given in detail (page-wise) and the rāga and tāla of the compositions have been listed. Also, the notes provide cross references and additional information at appropriate places.

¹Seetha S., Dr. Tanjore as a seat of Music. Chennai: University of Madras, 2001

14820 - ms - 98 - Grantha 600 - 1746
 Dhana sri :- इति तत्र ग्रन्थे २००
 no name Sahitya - here 6 km conclude
 Regar are mentioned for some - Tala
 is not mentioned .

11.6.66. [Sangita Makaranda - Sanskrit
 73 sheets - M. 14828. - संगितमकरन्द
 Sangita Makaranda D. 10898.
 not noticed by Burnell - Ms no. 14827
 38 sheets. D-10899. - a. b. - b. c. -
 Copied Volume - 750.] Tala adhyaya -

D. 429 = B. No. 11522 c. (From long paper
 Notebook.)
 Kshetrigopadamulu -
 Series writing.
 1. [यादृशं फलं कृत्वा तादृशं निरिवन्तं मया
 अत्र देवा सुखं वा मन कोषो न विद्यते ॥]
 Contains 28. Padas:-
 Saralehoji pada mulu - Telugu - D. 448-
 B. 11638.
 11636 - 449. 11638 - 448.
 11647 - 447. 11647 - 447.
 11628 - 468.
 11639 - 458.
 11638 - 448.
 11647 - 447.

B) NOTATIONS

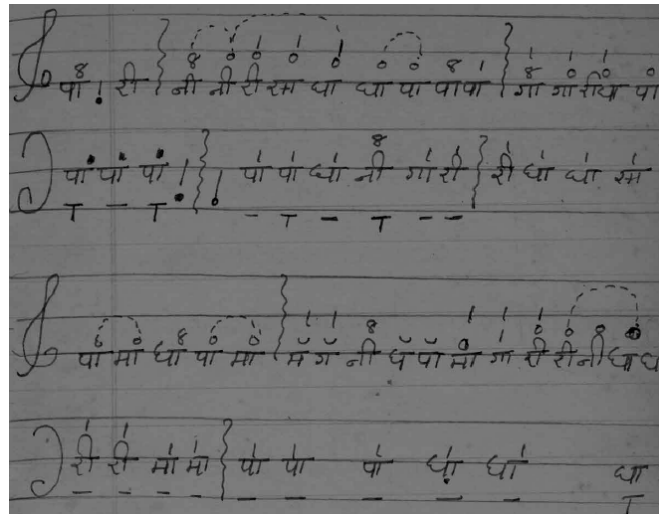
The notebooks of Dr Seetha contain the notations of musical forms such as gīta-s, prabandha-s, ālāpa, varṇa passages, jati passages, portions of śabda-s, daru-s etc. The compositions seen in rare tāla-s like ragaṇamaṭya, dhruvarūpakam and simhandana have also been copied. The notations with tāla indications are copied exactly as given in original mss.

P. 30. श्रीवर्धन प्रबन्धम् ॥ इत्यम्
 गंरि नि रसरि रिमपमगरिस । री म ग गानि ससनि
 ससरभीइइ . म श्रुमव्वत्रअ रैम म मठमिक् आ इ
 ध । ससरसरिसनि । सनिध । नि धप ।
 को । सव्वेठभौ उडम । न अ अ न अ अ
 धधप । रिमप नि नि नि नि म ध ग ग रि स ।
 व म न म म ड मि इ क रा ग म म म म ड ड
 रि रि म म यानि सारि स नि धप । धिसरिम ।
 दि नि दि नि वों गिणां . . गि ण . . अ न वारि वा

Notation of the śrivardhanaprabandha

The svara passages and compositions with specified rāga-s and tāla-s seen in other literary works like naṭaka-s have been noted down. For example, ‘Śaha vilāsa Gītam’ on King Shahaji from ‘Śāha Vilāsa Nāṭaka’ and the work ‘Śahaji Rājaaṣṭapadi’, in praise of Śahaji by an unknown author have been copied.

Seetha has also copied the hand written paper Mss containing western musical tunes in western notations, using Indian solfa names for the svara-s. They refer to the band tunes played by the Thanjavur Palace band.



Copy from the paper Mss, containing western music tunes using Indian solfa names for svara-s

C) MUSICAL FORMS

Dr Seetha provides wide range of information from the manuscripts dealing with musical forms such as, svarajati-s, pada-s, kīrtana-s and daru-s. She also lists the lesser known musical forms from the manuscripts¹ like jakkani, maṅgala, tillāna, abhinaya pada, prabandha-s and other musical forms like varna, cauka varṇa, śabḍa, some jati-s, rakti-s, slōka-s etc. The manuscript on pada-s by the court poets like Girirajakavi- songs in praise of Shahaji, Somakavi², Ramabharathi, Vasudevakavi³, Adi Murti Vaidyappa, Pattabhirama, Sitaramyya, Vasanthayya and Ksherayya have been listed in the note book. The compositions composed by them are in praise of royals and on deities.

¹ manuscript titled “Marathi Saṅgīta Padāni C.M 909 Vāhi 2067”

² pp: 60- 64 book2, Seetha notes 0066. Pdf

³ viracitāni śāhajimahārāja saṅgīta padāni mss. 11649

| Śringāra padas - Opening Sahajya | | Tala - Telugu - | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------|
| S.NO | Pada | Pages | Raga | Tala - |
| 1. | Kannula santu ga - | 1 | Bhairavi | Adi - |
| 2. | Chelimi Kojinda | 5 | Vasanta Bha. | Adi - |
| 3. | Ninnu nera nammi | 5 | Kapi | Ala. |
| 4. | Sami ke ra nirani of Sahajya | 6 | Madyamaavali | ? |
| 5. | Alika fesi | 9 | Kambhadi | Adi - |
| 6. | Adi samaya murada | 10 | Kalyani | Adi. |
| 7. | Ninnu nera nammi sa | 12 | Sama Kalpani | chapa. |
| 8. | Ninne nammi hanura | 13 | Bhindavani | Adi - |
| 9. | Uraka kopamu - | 14 | Saveri - | ? |
| 10. | Kopamela - | 15 | " | Adi - |

Sample of the list on śringārapada-s seen in Mss

The pada manuscript seen in the Marathi Bundle¹ of TMSSML has been dealt extensively. Pada-s of Kesavaraj, Bhanasutha, Lila viswambhas, Daskalyan, Anamakavi, Govinda das, Ramanand, Rukmangada, Basavalingam, Lila Viswwanbas, Shamdas, Dīgambautha, Sri Rangaraja Joshi, GopalaRaghunatha, Chaitanya, Ekajanardhan, Siddhanagesh, UddhavaSiddhan, Mamaprabhu, Shivram, Devdoss, ShahajiDasavishnu and Nilakhantasuta have been listed.

| CM 909 | | मराठी संगीत पदांनि | | 2.6.66 | |
|------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----|--------|---------------|
| Vahi 2067. | विटी दांडु । यारे रवेने | --- | --- | --- | Kesavaraj. |
| 2064. | चेंडु पदा । रामा रामा जये | --- | --- | --- | Bhanasutha |
| 2061. | श्री कृष्णिग । धनवंता फडे बाई | --- | --- | --- | Lilaviswambh. |
| " | फुगडी । आपुळिगे मांडि बाई | --- | --- | --- | do. |
| 2049. | नांगर । नीज वेंच नांगर वरुनी | --- | --- | --- | Kesava |
| " | अज्ञान शोक । सुखे वाडीतीते सुख | --- | --- | --- | Daskalya |

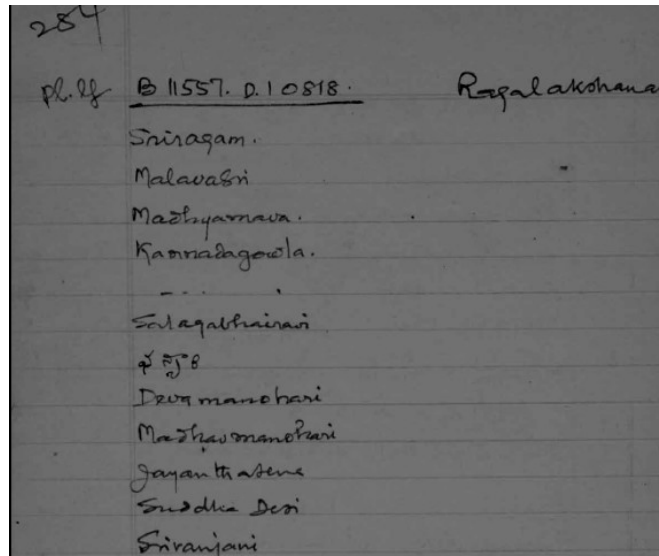
Sample of the pada list from Marathi Bundle

D) RĀGALAKṢAṆA MANUSCRIPTS

One of the main collections of the TMSSML is the manuscripts on the lakṣaṇa-s of rāga-s. These have been composed by Śahaji and published by Dr. Seetha². Exhaustive lists on each rāgalakṣaṇa manuscript, along with their contents, containing rāga details, have been provided by her. She has made notes of her understanding or opinion as remarks. Also, other information such as, scribal signatures, remarks on the rāga-s, personal notes relating to mss have been incorporated in the notes.

¹ manuscript titled "Marathi Saṅgīta Padāni C.M 909 Vāhi 2067"

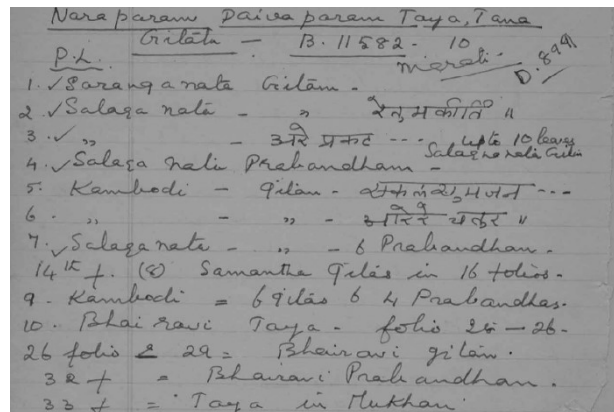
² "Raga Lakshanamu of SahaMaharaja", Seetha S Dr ed. Madras, published by Brhaddhvani, 1990.



Sample Rāga listing from the notes from Raga lakaṣaṇaMs

E) CATURDAṆḌĪ COMPOSITIONS

The four components ālapa, ṭhāyā, gīta and prabandha together constitute the Musical form caturdaṇḍī. There are separate sets of manuscripts containing these components. Seetha has provided consolidated lists specifying the Burnell number and manuscript details along with the mudra-s. She also specifies that those manuscripts¹ belonged to the Nayak period. There are separate lists of the compositions seen with mudra-s like Venkatamakhi, MudduVenkatamakhi and Raghunatha and such compositions have been copied.



List referring to caturdaṇḍī forms

¹ Mssgītāḷuprabandhāḷu.B.No: 11589, D.No: 892, Pdf: 426- 431, Notes Of Seetha.

F) TECHNICAL TREATISES

The works titled Mēlādīkārakṣaṇa, Śāhaji Rāgalakṣaṇamu¹, “Saṅgītamuktāvali by Devanacharya²” and “SaṅgītaMakaranda” seen in TMSSML have been identified and mentioned by Dr Seetha. The brief description on these works such as the authorship, mēla classifications, colophon notes and select portions have been copied in the Notebook.

G) OTHER MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Dr. Seetha has presented whatever she had collected during her research in the notebooks. However, some details do not find mentioned in the printed book. In such as a case, these notebooks prove to be the primary reference. Information such as, historical details, anecdotes, articles, journals, records relating to the musical aspects come under this category. Some are furnished below.

- Dr Seetha had copied an article in Tamil written by Dr. U.A. SvaminathaIyer from Aivagainilacheidigal- pg:21 based on the Sangam work Kuruṅtogai³
- She has given brief notes about the chowka varaṇa from Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarṣini, notes on the svarajati and thāyam. There are also mentions about the TMSSMLM-series- 69 Usha Parinaya, where entire story is described.
- The notes provide the list of Bulletin works in GOML referring only the names 54 works in Tamil literature. But the detail of the specification is not known.⁴
- Seetha had also copied the Audio broadcast and interview notes. In p. 163-165, there appears a radio talk delivered by V. Sundara Sharma, in the Telugu script. In p.166, gives the information of Sri Varahappa Diksita, and the musicians of the King of Thanjavur. The notebook also contains the details on the Radio Broadcast Programmed by T.V. Dharma in 1624, a talk on western musical works of King Serfoji.
- The mythological story of Lord Tyagesa of Thiruvavur, noted from Tyāgarāja Leelai by Rajagopala Pillai has been mentioned.
- The Article “BhosleVamsaCharita” seen in TMSSML series 1951 no: 46, in Tamil by V. Srinivasachari has been copied, which provides the clear-cut history of Thanjavur Maratha rulers.
- The notes provide interesting information regarding the performances of dēvadāsi-s in the Thanjavur court. Regular dance performances by the dēvadāsi-

1 This work has been published by Dr Seetha

2 it is related to the nṛtṭa and the methods or the practical approach of a dance / or nāṭya performance.

3 Pg: 28-30 Book 3, Seetha notes 0067.pdf

4 25-27 Book 3, Seetha notes 0067.pdf

s in the court of King Amarasimha who gave special encouragement to fine arts, also seen mentioned. According to one of the state records,¹ the dancing girls dissuaded from entertaining Amarasimha in his court at Tiruvidaimarudur and composing in praise of him. A particular dēvadāsi was asked to pay a fine for doing so and Amarasimha's minister was asked to give an explanation for holding such dance performances, in spite of the East India Company's instructions not to do so².

OBSERVATION

A careful study of the notes made by Dr Seetha reveals the following.

- Dr. Seetha in her book 'Tanjore as a seat of Music' gives the references to the sources at appropriate instances. Also the brief descriptions of Mss referred have been quoted in the published work. But from her notebooks, that she had used to note the details reveal the in-depth study made by her. These notes of Dr. Seetha, (such as, lists of the compositions from Mss, samples of notations, reference notes etc.,) serves as the source providing the details of exhaustive materials found in TMSSML.
- The Chronology of the Maratha rulers with their court musicians and poets has been listed in notebook. At many places the mudra-s have been highlighted and questions marked, to ascertain the time period of the composer. Examples such as, "Tyaga" mudra, "Giriraja" mudra etc., have been highlighted. This shows that the scholar had approached the available works in Historical perspective.
- The brief biography of Vāggēyakāra-s, and the contribution by the Royal Patrons of Thanjavur Rulers from the times of Vijayanagar kingdom to the British Raj is also been documented. It provides the brief information on the Cultural history of Thanjavur king-s.
- The information found in the Burnell catalogue in Telugu and the catalogue given by the Andhra University on TMSSML have been transliterated and copied by her and they have been mentioned as reference at appropriate places. This provides the exact information on the available sources on unpublished works of TMSSML.
- References to Government records, Mōdi record-s, gazette records, relating to Artshave been copied in the notebook. TheMōdi manuscript³ containing the payments along with the denominations for the musicians and the dancer's fora

1 Modimss- O.B. 52-2) in p.105

2 Only brief information is mentioned by Dr. Seetha, in her published work

3 (Modimss- O.B. 52-2) in pdf.105, seetha notes 0066. Pdf

recital has been copied by her. This provides the actual outlook of the socio-political aspects during the corresponding time period¹.

- Seetha has copied the Audio broadcast and interview notes². But the source has not been mentioned. But this serves as additional information.
- Seetha has also mentioned the Western Music book seen in the library, but the source for the same is not known. From the present day's context, this could be probably considered as the primary source material.
- The travel records, letters, inscription of the temples, copper plates and the colophons from the manuscript catalogues and Index of the TMSSML, Egmore Museum and GOML have been mentioned by the scholar. Also, the transcription of the copper plate grants, the inscriptions and endowments given by kings for Musicians, Dancers for the Ritualistic Rights are available in the notes. This information contributes as source to understand the Socio-economic condition.
- The manuscripts on the Musical forms such as, Caturdaṇḍi forms, pada-s, varṇa-s, daru-s, and Geya Nataka-s or musical plays have been listed exhaustively. Also, the compositions containing various mudra-s and the Illustrations on Caturdaṇḍi forms have been furnished from the Rāgalakṣaṇamss. Even select Nataka-s (Sitāvatikalyānam by Giriraja³) have been copied. The information helps in understanding the unpublished works and provides adequate scope for the study on various musical forms and is only available in the notebooks.

The compositions unknown or the lesser known composers like Giriraja, Somakavi, Ramabharathi, Vasudevakavi, AdimurthiVaidyappa, Pattabhirāma, Sitaramayya, Vasanthayya, Shahaji, Kshetraiyya, and Svarajati of Virabhadrayya can be explored, as the exhaustive list is given in the notebook .

Dr. Seetha has copied the names of the scribes and notes seen in the unpublished works. This emphasizes the accuracy of the notes in providing the information of the primary sources.

CONCLUSION

Research in music involves systematic and clear documentation of the collected information, followed by detailed analysis. Dr. Seetha visited Thanjavur and

¹ Brief information on this is given but the reference is not seen in the printed book

² In Page: 163-165 notes of the audio broadcast on the musicians is seen in telugu script and it also contains a radio talk delivered by V. Sundara Sharma on western musical works of king Serfoji

³ D: 587 B.No: 630 note book of Seetha, 0066 pdf

the neighboring areas for collection of research materials. During her time, when there was no modern tool for copying and recording the information, handwritten notes were more predominant. The notebook of Dr. Seetha gives a detailed picture of the research material that she had tried to document. Although her research work was utilized for her Ph.D. thesis, which was then published, her notebooks still serve as a valuable source of information. The notebooks of Dr. Seetha prove as one of the best guides for note making and research methodology in Music. The cross references and citations to other works showcase the systematic approach of her study and stands as a testimony for the Music heritage of Thanjavur and research methods in Music.

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- <https://www.dropbox.com/s/elxnhybd4d62igh/MssE-TeTmSkt-SeethaS-NoteBooks-0066.pdf?dl=0>