

# MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MALAYALAM COMPOSITION OF C S KRISHNA IYER – ‘GANESA VIGNANGALAKATIDUM’

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## Abstract

*Kerala is a land rich in diversity in the fields of not only art, culture, literature, education, sports, but also in contributing to the world with great excellence in almost every field. There are great number of composers of Kerala who has contributed in the field of Carnatic classical music, but academically not enough explored yet. Geographically and practically, Carnatic music grew and developed in the southern states of India. There are many prodigies in Kerala who captured the full essence and contributed as musicians and Vaggeyakara. They have done many remarkable works even in various languages. Many have gone unnoticed, but today's efforts are being made to trace the Vaggeyakara-s and their contributions so vigorously. This article explores one such Vaggeyakara, C S Krishna Iyer.*

**Keywords:** C S Krishna Iyer, Gambiranattai, Musical Analysis, Kerala Composer, Malayalam

## INTRODUCTION

Palghat is the one among of the traditional place of Carnatic music in Kerala. There are many great Vaggeyakaras nurtured and contributed to the world of the Carnatic music by their excellence. C S Krishna Iyer is one among the pioneers from the list. He taught and contributed in various ways to establish knowledge and commitment to the next generation. From learning and practicing music to excellence, from teaching to composing music, C S Krishna Iyer had also been into organizing music events like Kalpathy Festival (Ganapathy, 2011). Even though there are attempts taken by connoisseurs and enthusiasts to explore his life journey as published and available in various media, studying about this personality and his musical excellence is a due work as there are not much research work or literature available till date on the contribution of him.

**Aim and Objective:** The composition chosen for this study is not popular and is quite unexplored in the field of music performance. This study aims to analyze the various elements of the composition along with exploring the composer's biography and musical mind to establish significance of the musical work.

**Research Methodology:** A composition in Gambiranattai Ragam by the composer is selected using a simple random sampling method. Key aspects of the song—such as language, notation, musical and lyrical elements, relevance in concert settings, word meaning and similar expressions and overall melody—are analysed on the background of devotion.

**Material and methods:** For deeper understanding of the biography of the composer and the musical nuances of the composition, a field work has been done by the researcher at the birth place of C. S. Krishna Iyer and the resource person was interviewed (Ambikapuram Sivaraman, the direct disciple of C S Krishana Iyer) for observing the practical demonstration of the composition and collecting information. Secondary sources were also investigated to substantiate the study with research data.

## STUDY AREA

### Life sketch and contribution: Background study

C S Krishna Iyer was born in Kerala, on March 23 in the year 1916 at famous Agraharam Kalpathi at Palakkad District to C S Subramanya Iyer and Tailambhal. He did his schooling in BMG High school, where he performed acting along with singing in the drama “Gule Bhakavali” (Ranveendran, 1985: 209). He was a regular Concert listener in temple around him<sup>1</sup>. His father realized the musical taste of Krishna Iyer and sent him to the Sangeeth Vidwan Shankara for the basic level of knowledge. He sent him to the Chidambaram Annamalai University for his best future. There he had opportunity to get trained under expert and great gurus

like T S Sabesa Iyer and Shri Thanjavur K. Ponnaiah Pillai, Maha Vidwan Tiger Varadachari in the Tanjore style. It was a great opening for him.

Under the rigorous training of his gurus, Thanjavur Ponnayya pillai, and Sadheshaiyer, he developed traditional way of singing, pitch perfection, different style of singing manodharma and get adequate knowledge in vast number of Krities. Shri Iyer has been a regular concert performer since 1937. He became a good teacher even in his young age. He taught various rare compositions of Ghanam Krishnaiyer, Ramaswami Sivan without any public acknowledgement and reputation to disciples. Because of these qualities, maestro Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyengar honoured him as 'Musicians of Musician'.

C. S. Krishna Iyer was known to be among few Vaggeyakaras possessing the three attributes of being a musician, teacher, and humble natured. Many students have received guidance from him. He taught in traditional manner, to sing Varnams on four different speeds, to develop manodharmam singing, etc. Reputed musicians like K. V. Narayana Swami, Mangad Nadeshan, Parashala Ponnammal, R. Venkhita Ramanan, Shyamala Kumanri, Ambikapuram Sivaraman, Sadhanam Hari Kumar, and many more.

C S Krishna Iyer also contributed to structure the Swati Tirunal Compositions together with Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, and K S Narayana Swami. He popularized the compositions of Ghanam Krishnaiyer, Anayya and Ramaswami Sivan. He has composed number of compositions in different raga varieties like vakra ragas, bhashanga ragas, audava ragas, rare ragas etc. in Malayalam and Sanskrit.

He had also contributed his teaching as a faculty in Swati Tirunal College, Trivandrum during 1940s (Paul, 2016). Shri Krishna Iyer was granted the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi Fellowship in 1994 as well as the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi Award in 1972 for his services to Carnatic vocal music<sup>2</sup>.

He was also the founder principal of Palakkad college on 1957 and retired on 1974. He was considered a genuine music lover and more than that a good human being. This paper further analyzes one of his compositions in the raga Gambiranattai.

### **Ganesa Vignangalakatidum<sup>3</sup>**

Pallavi

Ganesa Vignangalakatidum

Inayadi saranam sivakumarasubrahmayagaja

Anupallavi

Guna dhosa vivechanam nalki sat

Guna satya jivitham arulenam

Charanam

Vyasa bharatham ezhuthiya devane

Vasa vadya sakaladevanuthane

Dasa janabheeshta varadhane sarva

Patra pushta pooja svikruthane

Madhyamakala Sahityam

Mushika vahanane modhaka priyane karikalabhavasumukhane

Asrithavalsala Apatbhandhavane Adidevane ainkarane

### Notation

Raga: Gambhiranattai Talam: Adi

Aroh: s g m p n ś Avroh: ś n p m g s

### Pallavi

		X	1	2	3		X	V		X	V	
1		g, g,	,, g,	,,,	,, m,		m g m p	; p p		m g p m	g, s,	
		Ga ne	sa		vig		nan	ga la		ka	ti dum	
2		m g p m	m g s,	g,,	,, m,		g m p n	ś n m p		m g p m	g, s,	
		Ga ne	sa		vig		Nan	ga la		ka	ti dum	
3		m g p m	m g g s	ṇ s g,	,, m,		g m p n	ś ḡ ṁ ḡ		ś n p m	g m g s	
		Ga ne	sa		vig		Nan	ga la		ka	ti dum	
		m g p m	g, s,	P, ṇ,	s,,		g m p ś	, n p,		ś n p m	g m g s	
		I na	ya di	sa ra	nam		si vaku	mara su		brahma	nyagaja	
		g m p np	m g s,	P, ṇ,	s,,		g m p ś	, n p,		ś n p m	g m g,	
		I na	ya di	s ra	nam		si vaku	mara su		brahma	nyagaja	

### Anupallavi

1		g, m,	p ś n p	p, p,	, ś,,		ś, ś,	, ś,,		,, ś,	,,,	
		Gu na	dho	sa vi	ve		chanam	nal		ki		
2		g, m,	p, ḡ ś np	p, p,	, ś,,		ś, ś,	, ś,,		, ś n ḡ	ś n n,	
		Gu na	dho	sa vi	ve		chanam	nal		ki		
		g, m,	p, ś ś np	p, p,	, ś,,		ś, ś,	,, ś,		,,,	,, ś,	
		Gu na	dho	sa vi	ve		chanam	nal		ki	Sat	
		ś, ḡ,	ḡ p ṁ ḡ	ś, n ś	ṁ ḡ ś ḡ		ś n p,	,, ṁ ḡ		ś n p m	g m p m	
		Gu na	sa	tya ji	vi		tam	a		ru le	nam	

### Charanam

1		p,,	m, p,	,, p,	p,, p		m g m p	p, n n		p m g m	g s g m	
		vya	sa bha	ra	tha me		zhu ti	ya de		va	ne	
2		p,,	m, g np	,, p,	p,, p		p m g m	p n ś ḡ		ś n p m	g s r m	
		vya	sa bha	ra	tha me		zhu ti	ya de		va	ne	

	p , , ,	m , g ,	p m g ,	g , s s		s , g m	p , m ,		p , p ,	p , , ,	
	va	sa va	dhi	sa ka		la de	va		nu tha	ne	
	p , ś n	p n ś ,	ś , , ,	ś , , ,		ś , ś ,	g , g ,		g p m g	ś , , ,	
	Da	sa ja	na	bheesh		ta va	ra da		ne	sarva	
	ś , , ,	g , p ,	, , n ,	, m p ,		n , , ,	n ś m g		ś n p m	g m g s	
	Pa	tra pu	sta	poo		ja	svi		krta	ne	

### Madyamakala Sahityam

	g m p m	g m g s	g , , m	, m , m		n p n ,	, , g ś		ś n p p	ś n ś ś	
	Mushika	vahana	ne mo	dhaka		priyane	kari		kalabha	vasumukhane	
	n ś g g	g m g s	s , s s	p , ś n		ś , ś ,	ś n , p		g , n p	m g s ,	
	Asrita	valsala	a pat	bandava		ne a	di deva		ne ainga	rane	

### Meaning

**Pallavi:** May Lord Ganesa keep all obstacles away. May all human (beings) take refuge at the divine feet of Ganesa, the elder brother of Subramanya.

**Anupallavi:** May Lord bless us with the attributes of honesty in our daily life along with the conscience of good and bad.

**Charanam:** Ganesa who wrote Bharatha with the instruction of Vyasa, the one who is hailed by the Gods, fulfills the wishes of the devotees. He accepts all offerings from devotees.

**Madhyanakala sahityam:** The Composer describes various features of Ganesa as musika vahanan, the beloved one, one who have the face of elephant (Gajamukhan), the one who provides shelter and the protector from the dangers and first born.

Carnatic Compositions in various languages always enrich culture and deepen the music's significance. The Carnatic compositions in Malayalam, are not new in this music world. Although the Kritis in Malayalam language, are comparatively less, but it is gaining importance in this modern age. Notably, the composition "Ganesha Vignangalakatidum" in Gambiranattai by C. S. Krishna Iyer holds immense importance.

### RAGAM GAMBIRANATTAI

Gambiranattai is the Janya raga of the 36th Melakartha raga Chalanattai. This is an old raga also called Nattapadai in Tamil literature. Gambiranattai consists of five svaras such as shadja, Antara gandhara, shuda Madyama, Pancham, Kakaḷi Nisadha. G, M, N are raga chaya svaras. Gambiranattai is a gamaka varika rakti raga and sarvakalika raga. Gambiranattai raga having two rasa such as Veera and Bhakti. Veera rasa prayogas are "s g m p n", 'g m p n,,', 'g n p,,,' etc. while rendering the phrase 'sgmp', svara 'G' must be more stressed than the other svaras. The svara Madyama are rendering without oscillation. The Svaras Gandhara and Nisadha are more oscillating svaras with the shadja. It produces raga bhava to this Gambiranattai. Using grahabedham, when the 'G' of Gambiranattai taken as shadja the result the pentatonic raga Bhupalam is revealed. Similarly, when the 'M' taken as shadja the result the pentatonic raga Hamsanadam is obtained.

List of some compositions in the raga Gambhiranattai.

Composition	Talas	Vaggeyakara
Girija Ramana	Adi	Mysore Vasudevachar
Amma Anandadhayini	Adi	Bhalamurali Krishna
Sri Jalandaramasrayamyaham	Adi	Mysore Maharaja

## MUSICAL ANALYSIS

This kriti consists of Pallavi, Anupallavi, Charana, and Madyamakalasahityam. The Gandharam or ‘g’ is the graha svara (commencing svara) in the pallavi and anupallavi. The use of ‘g’ is elongated for 14 aksharakalas in the pallavi. The first line is sung with three different sangati-s and each sangati is arranged systematically and followed by the sequential order of the Arohana and Avarohana phrayoas.

1	g, g, , , g, , , , , , m,   m g m p ; p p   m g p m g, s,
2	m g p m m g s, g, , , , , m,   g m p n ś n m p   m g p m g, s,
3	m g p m m g g s n s g, , , m,   g m p n ś ġ m ġ   ś n p m g m g s

The subsequent lines have one sangati each. The Svaraksharam ‘G’ in Pallavi indicates the sukshma svaraksara, and ‘G’ in Anupallavi indicates the suchita svarakasara.

While singing the phrase “m g s, g, , , ,,” holding on ‘g’, ‘g’ is sung as ‘mg mg mg’ having the svara ‘m’ as anusvara<sup>4</sup>. The composition “Sri Jalandharamyaham... has the same prayoga in the svara ‘g’.

p, , , , , ,	p m g m p, ś n	n ś, n p, p m	m g p m m g g s	
Sri	ja	lan dara	masra	
s, n, g, s,	g, , , , ,	g, m, g m p,	m p n, p m g m	
Yamya	Ham			

“ ‘m g p m g, s,’ ‘ś n p m’ and ‘g m g s’ ” prayogas are frequently used in this composition.

The melody used in the Anupallavi is very much suitable for this composition and it ranges till tara Stayi sancharas. Whereas, the phrase ‘m ġ ś n p m’ touches the svara Tara Stayi Madyama and concluding the stanza travels using the phrase ‘pmgm’. Charanam commencing with the svara ‘p’. Charanam is melodically very appealing and less complicated. ‘p’ is the dominating svara in the Charanam. The range of the Charanam is between shadja to Tara stayi panchama. The last line of the Charanam explore the combination of svaras “s,,g, p,,n, mpn,,,” respectively 4+2,4+2,2+4. Madyamakala sahitya gives complimentary boost up for this composition. It consists Janta prayogas in the svaras ‘p’ ‘g’. The range of svaras travels between madya stayi shadjam to tara stayi m̃ (madyamam). The notable phrases used in madyamakala sahityam are- (1) g m p m g m g s g, , , (2) ġ ś ś n p p ś n ś, , (3) ś, n p, m g, (4) n p m g s,

The ranjaka prayogas:- m g m p ; p p, - m g p m g, s, - g m p n ś n p m – ś n ġ r̃ ś n n, - ġ p̃ m̃ ġ ś, - n ś m̃ ġ ś n ś ġ ś- ġ ś ś n p.

Adi talam is very fitting for this kriti. This Madhyamakala composition, is appealing to the audience in both musically and lyrically. All the stanzas begin on beat (sama eduppu). Anahata prayogas occur twice in this composition. Here the words like ‘sat’ in Anupallavi, and the word ‘Sarva’ in charanam, render before the beat.

## LYRICAL ANALYSIS

The language of the compositions is Malayalam. At the same time, there are similar Sanskrit words such as modhaka, priyan, karikalabhavasumukhan, Asrithavalsalan, Apatbhandhavan, Adidevan, Vignaṅgal, inayadi, sharanam, gunadhosa, sat guna, Abhistam etc... This composition has many rhetoric uses of Malayalam words of regular practice of devotion such as Arulenam, nalkidum, ezhutiya. This song is an expression of a devotee to the Lord Ganesa, the bestower of boons. The devotee seeks blessings, refuge and protection to his loving God Ganesa.

Malayalam words similar in Sanskrit	Meaning	Malayalam words similar in Sanskrit	Meaning
Vigna	Obstacles, hindrances	Asrithavalsalan,	One take refuge, depended
Priyan	Beloved	sat guna	Good deeds
Guna dhosa	Good and bad	Sharanam	Refuge
Vivechanam	Discernment	Inayadi	refuge at your feet
Nalki Abhistam	Give Your will, desire	Adidevan	First being, infinite, first born
Arulenam	To provide, to bless (with respectful)	Apatbhandhavan	one who save from danger
Modham	Joyful, serenity	Karikalabhavasumukhan	Gajamukhan (elephant-faced one)

Literary ornamentations like Dwitiyakshara prasa, Antyakshara prasa and Anuprasa are presented in this composition.

### Prosody

#### Dwitiyakshara prasa

1 Vyasa bharatha

Vyasavadhi

#### Antyakshara prasa

1 Varadane

Dasane

Svīkrtane

2 Mukhane

Ainkarane

#### Anuprasa

1 Mushika vahanane modaka priyane Karikalabha Vasumukhane

Asritavatsala Apatbandavane Adidevane Ainkarane

### OBSERVATION

Krishna Iyer's kriti, when examined closely, reveals his unique style and ideal fit for the concert value. His composition in the raga Gambiranattai is an apt for the beginning of Concert as mallari begins. This Madhyamakala composition, is appealing to the concerned audience both musically and lyrically. However, the compositional patterns of traditional mallari do not consist lyrics, however the present



composition of C. S. Krishna Iyer has both musical and lyrical value in it. Even though, the composition is based on Gambiranattai Ragam, it has distinctive differences from that of mallari in general.

As the composition is in Malayalam language, of course it has its own attempt in strengthening musical, lyrical and cultural value to the concerned audience group. As the lyrics have more usual expression of devotion therefore it is easier for the common people to grasp the inner meaning of the composition and to lead the attention to the sense of devotion (bhakti) while indulging with the composition.

## CONCLUSION

Kerala is blessed with many Vaggeyakara-s. The musicians with prodigal personal attributes spend the lifetime to minute details of their own perception of contribution or creation. In this process, many a times, the work of them remains unexplored and aloof from general people. Even though, the composers, many a times, contribute in teaching music to the youngsters with enthusiasm, however, this do not always contribute to popularise the great creation by them. This study exclusively deals with one of the compositions of C S Krishna Iyer as an attempt to understand the dynamics of it keeping his life works as anchor point for exploration. During the study, it has also been possible to establish the identity of the raga reflecting the various elements, lyrical ornamentation, exploring the biography of the composer and musical mind to establish significance of the musical work.

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