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Antiquity of Ananda Bhairavi raga

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Abstract

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INTRODUCTION

The raga Anandabhairavi, one of the most sublime ragas in Carnatic music but not given due prominence by musicologists, has drawn many scholarly discussions in music fora. The main reason is its antiquity. The greatness, magnificence of Anandabhairavi can be stated as: “Anandabhairavi vaibhavam - asmadjanasukha pradam - rakti raga yoga vaibhavam, raga yoga vaibhavam, yoga vaibhavam, vaibhavam, bhavam, vam”. It is interesting to study the raga whose beauty is indisputable.

Anandabhairavi may not find a reference in the Sangeetha Makaranda or Sangeetha Ratnakara or in the Chaturdandi Prakashika. However, in the latter, there is a mention in the ‘anubandha’ or supplementary portion about this raga.

The fact that this raga figures in many folk melodies, wedding songs like *sisapadya*, *padyas*, *unjal*, *nalugu* and lullabies exist, proves that this raga was very popular and was a raga that covered a wide spectrum of compositions besides comprising a classical (sastriya swaropam) character. It is a raga that is considered auspicious and is used in temple hymns (*Tiruvisaippah*) and lullabies; it is a ‘sarvatha sukhaprada’ raga (eternally joyous) and evokes emotions of karunya, vatsalya and bhakti rasa. This innately expressive raga is most suited for singing sankeertana, sloka/viruttam and padya (verse). It is also used in operas because of the rich aesthetics that it generates. This raga was accepted duly as a Desiya raga in our system. The presence of Kshetranya padam, ‘*Manchidinamu need*,’ and Ramadasu’s popular, ‘*Paluke bangaramayena*’ show that this raga existed much before the Trinity period. The Devaranama of Purandaradasa: ‘*Rama naama payaske*’ and ‘*Hodi nagari mele...*’ are structured with all the anya swara of Anandabhairavi. Another pre-Trinity composition, ‘*nee madhi challaga...*’ by Kavi Matrubhootayya stands as a sterling example of the purity of Anandabhairavi.

Historically one of the prominent rakti ragas, Anandabhairavi, reveals interesting phases in its evolution. Based on the current practice, which has been sanctioned by the musical trinity, the lakshana, recognises this raga as a *vakra shadava sampoorna* janya of the 20th melakarta, Natabhairavi, with the arohana: *s g r g m p d p S* and avarohana: *S n d p m g r s*. Given its divergent structural variations by various musicologists, the raga testifies to its antiquity. For example, Venkatamakhi in the appendix to Chaturdandi Prakashika states about the raga moorchana: “*aarohe tu rishabham tyaktwa dhavakram cha samaashritaam sampoornaam sagrahopeta bhaved Anandabhairavi*”. (Arohana: *sa-ga-ma-pa-da-pa-ni-sa* Avarohana: *Sa-ni-da-pa-ma-ga-ri-sa*). Subbarama Dikshitar structured the moorchana as Arohana: *sa-ga-ga-ma-pa-da-pa-sa-ni-sa* Avarohana: *Sa-ni-da-pa-ma-ga-ga-ri-sa*. Govindacharya in Sangraha Choodamani opined that the ascent goes as *sa-ga-ri-ga-ma-pa-da-pa-ni-Sa* with descent as *Sa-ni-da-pa-ma-ga-ri-sa*. Nadamuni Pandithar in his Sangeeta Swaraprastara Sagaramu presented the arohana as: *sa-ga-ma-pa-da-pa-sa-ni-da-ni-sa* with avarohana: *Sa-ni-da-pa-ma-ga-ri-sa*. Divergence in view is primarily in respect of the ascending order of the notes (arohana). Venkatamakhi omitted the Rishabham in the arohana and accepts *vakra* at the Dhaivatha. Subbarama Dikshitar allowed *dwi-vakra* in the arohana and accepts the sanchara ‘*Sa-ni-Sa*’ but not the ‘*dha-ni-Sa*’. Govindacharya projected *vakra* in the arohana at Gandhara and accepts *dwi-vakra* arohana. Subbarama Dikshitar provided reference that about 170 years before his time, the second Daivatha swara was admitted into this raga and named it Panchasruti Daivatha. However, the conference of the Madras Music Academy has also decided in favour of this ascent and descent order. However, like all things ancient, this raga has also undergone many changes in the course of time as various composers handled it.

Even within the Carnatic music Trinity (Thyagaraja, Dikshitar, Shyama Sastri) there was no structural uniformity when it came to this raga. Originally in the Thyagaraja tradition, the *Antara Gandhara* swara did not figure, though now-a-days this note is being employed while rendering his Anandabhairavi compositions. The Dikshitar strictly avoided this swara. In Shyama Sastri the *Antara Gandhara* is very much in existence. The unique feature of Anandabhairavi raga is that though its *poorvanga* and *uttaranga* are independent of each other they seem to be interlinked by an invisible aesthetic thread. The *Madhyama* and *Gandhara* on one side and *Nishada* and *Shadja* on the other, serve as the *jeeva* and *nyasa* swaras respectively. It is a well established fact by musicologists that Anandabhairavi raga was a musical force even in the pre-Trinity period.

According to Smt. Geetha Bennett, daughter and disciple of Dr. S. Ramanathan, this raga which had two distinct musical halves, has been a subject of bio-research. The dominance of the *anya swara Dhaivatha* was so great that it obliterated the original Daivatha swara. She stated at the ‘Raganubhava session-Anandabhairavi’ held on November 15, 1999 at Music Academy, that the “ornamentation stemmed from swara-sequencing and anuswaras, while gamakas regulated the *rasanubahava*. An overdose of gamakas was not welcome. Nevertheless, fragmentary felicity though fine, was only a part of an integral whole, the effect of which was merely aesthetic excellence. This was the guideline adopted by great composers including the Trinity.”

If we look deeper into this raga, we can see that it takes all the notes like *Chatusruti Rishabha, Sadharana and Antara Gandharas, Suddha Madhyama, Suddha* and *Chatusruti Daivatha, Kaisiki and Kakali Nishada* in addition to *Shadja* and *Panchama*. The only exception is the absence of *Shuddha Rishabha* and *Prati Madhyama*. The *anya swara* (odd notes) of *ga, dha* and *ni* (all sharp notes) are used in Anandabhairavi for enriching the raga bhava but actually they are not found in the parent (melakarta) scale. Of the three *anya swara*, it is very interesting to note that the *Chatusruti Daivatha* is integral to the scale itself in both arohana and avarohana and it is not just a visiting note. In fact, it is impossible to elaborate the raga without the *Chatusruti Daivatha*. Phrases in both the ascent and descent as in *p d p s - s n d p - p d n d n p - g m p d p* make use of *Chatusruti Daivatha*, which occurs in all the regular prayoga. Contrary to this, the *Shuddha Daivatha* is admitted only sometimes in phrases like *p d m p g r - g m d p m g r - g m p D D m p g r*. The notes of *Antara Gandhara* and *Kakali Nishada* are usually found in specific and rare sanchara like *p m g G M - m g r G m p m M - s n d n s r s*. They are used rarely when concluding the raga alapana and are called *alpa prayoga* but these notes enrich the melodic singularity of the raga. The long characteristic oscillation (*kampita*) on the *Sadharana Gandhara, Kaisika Nishada* and *Suddha Madhyama* express the urging tone of the raga and are sung as in the phrases *s g r G, m g r G - P m g r G - s G r g m p p d p s N - s g r N - S s N s n d p - d p M p s N*. The slight quiver in rendering *Ma* for instance in the phrase *d p M - G m p m M* with feeling touches at the heart strings. The *Shadjam* is very often rendered with a characteristic downward grace from the position of *Ga*. While elaborating the raga, an ideally relaxing halt is made on *Sadharana Gandhara* and *Panchama*. Most of the compositions set to Anandabhairavi start on *Shadja, Panchama* and *Gandhara* swara. The structure of this raga itself lends scope to creativity. Inherently, the raga has its brakes on racy rendition of swara during the manodharma but then a proper sequencing of swara patterns would bring out the glory of this raga. At the same time, while dealing with sub-phrases, pitfalls should be avoided since this raga has close resemblance to

allied raga like Reetigowla, Huseini, Bhairavi . The repertoire of Anandabhairavi is such that we are exposed to variety of experiences that touch us and go like cool breeze. While Shyama Sastri's 'Marivere gati....' is a masterpiece in Anandabhairavi, Thyagaraja's 'neeke teliyaka' and Dikshitar's 'Thyagaraja yoga vaibhavam...' are exquisite examples of the range of this raga.