
MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS USED IN TEMPLE RITUALS

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For many centuries, temples in India have been not only places of workship, but also seat of learning. Students pursued their studies under their Acharyas, in the holy precincts of temples in a spirit of reverence and devotion. Temples in the past also played an important part in the preservation and development of fine arts. Music in its triple aspect of gita, vidya and nritya (vocal music, Instrument Music and Dancing) was given a prominent place in temple vituals. There are instances of vinaikkam i.e land given in perpetuity to vaimkas by rulers in return for performance on the vina during temple virtuals. Many saivite temples have eduvors who recite selections from the Tevaram during temple services. The Vaishnavite temples have the Araiyaars. The veda parayan goshtis provided the Lymnal music.

The nagaswaram party provided instrumental music in temples. Incidentally it might be mentioned that the correct name of this instrument is only nagaswaram and not nadaswaram. The name nagaswaram was possibly, given to the instrument because its tone colour resembled that of the bhujanga swaram, the snake charmer's instrument. Muthuswamy Dikshitar himself in his song, "Tyagaraja mahadhvajarooha" in Sriraja, relating to the festival at Tiruvarur temple has answered this question in an unmistakable manner. We come across the words: Nagaswara maddaladi vadyam in the song and the word nagaswara here rhymes with the corresponding satvitya,

Agama siddhanta etc., in the previous line. The nagaswara not more than seven hundred years old. It is neither mentioned in the old works nor do we come across this instrument in to earlier sculptures. In the mural paintings in the Padmanabhapuram palace, in Travancore, the nagaswaram is depicted but there paintings belong to the late medieval period.

Panchamukha Vadyam

In some temples we hear special instruments being played during rituals. The Panchamukha vadyam is the pride of the shrines at Tiruvarur and Tiruturaippundi, in Tanjore District. It is played sale and also in Conjunction with the suddha maddalam. Parasaiavas are the previledged class of people entitled to play on this instruments. The present performer on this instrument in the Thiruvarur temple is a descendant of Tambiyappa, one of the disciples of the Composer, Muthuswami Dikshitar.

The Panchamukha vadyam is a five-faced drum with plain drum heads. This complex instrument belonging to the group of memberanoplones is of interest both from the musical and scientific points of view. It is development from the ancient Kudamuzha-

(FlKoh is a drum with a pot shaped resonator) and families to students of Tamil literature. There is a fine sculpture of the Kudamuzha in Avadaiyarkoil. Arunagirinathar in his Bhuta-Vetala Vaguppu (g+jNtjhs tFg;G). There is a sculpture of a figure playing upon the Panchamukha Vadyam in the stone ratham (Chariot) facing the sanctum sanctorum in the Nataraja temple at Chidambaram. In the pedestal of the metallic image of Nataraja is Thiruppungur temple. Tanjore District, Banugopan is depicted as playing on the Panchamukha Vadyam.

The Panchamukha Vadyam has a big shell of bronze and from the top of the shell emerge five hollow cylinders. The open ends of these cylinders are covered with skin. The drum heads are all on the same level. They are played with the two hands. The faces are struck successively and sometimes simultaneously. Special sequences of jatis([jpf;]) are played on this instrument. The Central face is slightly larger than the peripheral ones. The five faces are named after the five faces of siva-the central one bearing the name “Sadyo jata” and the four peripheral faces, Isanam, Tatpurusham, Aghoram and vamadevam. Being a big and a weighty instrument it is mounted on a four-wheeled Carriage. The tone colour of this instrument resembles that of the tablatarang, Since the instrument has a Common resonating Chamber, it follows that even when one face is struck, the other faces will vibrate. This can be viusally seen by sprinkling rice flour or particles of fine sand on the unstruct drum faces. The notes heard are perfectly musical and the drumfaces are appropriately enough, tuned a notes which bear the samvadi or anuvadi relationships. This Vadyam is a music Cum-rhythmic instrument.

Ritualistic music, instruments and dancer in Navashandhis

In the Kanikagamam, details relating to the ragas, talas, Pans (gz;fs;), instruments and danas to be performs in the pavasandhis during the Brahmotsava are clearly given. In some temples the appropriate slokas are recited at the concerned sandhis, but the question is whether the Vocalist, instrumentalists and dancers do comply faithfully with the meaning of the sloka. When Gurjari raga has to be played, invariably the nagasvaram player plays a light tune for the entertainment of these assembled and when Bhujanga lalitha mittam has to be performed, the dancing girl, if one is available dances something familier to her in this manner musical frauds are being perpeprated in the holy preciets of temples.

Sarvadyam

Sarva Vadyam, literally all instruments, is an interesting institution by itself and is performed only in a few temples. In the temple at Cheyyur in ctrigleput district, the sarva vadyam is performed during the annual Brahmotsavam Cheyyur is also familier to musicians as the place where lived the composer. Cheyyur chengalvaraya sastri in the last century. He has to his credit a number of kristhis in Telugu and Sanskrit. He has composed some sabbas. He is also the author of the Telugu opera sundaresa vilasamu.

The idea underlying the performance of sarva vadyam is musical homage to God through the four-fold channels of gita, vadya, nritya and Kavita. The function starts with the recitation of selections from Tevaram, Tiruvachagam, Thirupallandu, and iruppuzazh by the eduvar and this is followed by pushpanjali. The Nandikesvara Vadyam (msidangem) and Brahmatalam are next played and this is followed by a nrittam. Different musical forms, like gita, Varna, Kirtana pada and tillana, are sung and this is followed by the singing of literary forms like Churmika, ashtaka, venba, Kalittogai, varieties of viruttam, ammanai, Vannam and ula. The playing of different instruments like tiruchinnam, murali, mukhavina, takor, vadyam, mallari, dhanka, conch, navuri, bhujanga svarsam etc., follows. Items of classical dance and the matric dances like bhujanganrityam are also given. More than seventy-two items figure in this programme. It is an education, entertainment and a spiritual experience to witness a performance of sarva vadyam. The whole programme lasts for about four hours.

Temple Bells

Bells are hollow metallic instruments, closed at one end. They belong to the diaphanous group. The bells are struck by a freely suspended clapper from inside or by a winged hammer or mallet from the outside. In the former case, the clapper strikes against the inner surface of the bell and in the latter, the hammer strikes against the outer rim of the bell. Temple bells are huge in size.

Many of the major shrines of South India have huge bells. They are sounded during the rituals. The pitch of the note given by the bell bears a samvadi relationship to the note given by the Conch, which is sounded along with it. For instance, the notes given by the conch and the bell in the temple at Chidabaram bear the Sapa relationship.

In addition to the huge bells, there are small hand bells which are of interest from the technical point of view. These bells, which have no clapper, are small in size. There is a bell called veeramani in the Kulatuppuzha, Devaswom in Travancore. This temple is 28 miles from Tenkasi and is on the Tenkasi-Trivandrum Road. This bell is gulf-shaped and is made of karodu. It has a weight of 1.5 palams- just more than a pound. Its height is 3 ½ and the diameter at the lip end is 4. The pitch of the veeramani is exactly 'B' of the chromatic pitch-pipe. When a hard stick is made to graze along the rim, a solemn note suggestive of the pranava nadu (Aum) emanates. Gradually the volume of the note increases and on a still evening or night, the note can be heard for the distance of half a furlong. There is a slightly bigger bell in the sangita Vadyalaya, Madras. This also gives the omkara nada when rubbed along the rim with a stick. This bell is of the shape of the traditional bell. Its height is 10 ½ and the diameter of their lower end is about 4 ¼ “.

Musical Instruments used in Temple Rituals

1. Stringed Instruments

The tone of stringed instruments being weak and thin, they are not used in temple rituals. The rituals take place mostly in open air or in large mandapas. Stringed Instruments

are out of place in such surroundings. There is also the difficulty in tuning the instruments within the available space of time and amidst noisy surroundings. Further the strings of the instruments may get loose frequently and the task of retuning them correctly in the midst of noise becomes a difficult task.

The only stringed instrument used in the temples at Tirunelveli, Tenkasi and courtallam is the sarangi. It is used by the oduvar as an accompaniment to his own hymnal music or to the hymns of the Tevaram sung by another oduvar. This sarangi's has four strings and there are no sympathetic strings. Nandam is used in some temples in Kerala. This instrument has a few frets. In some temples, bhajana parties form part of the regular temple establishments. They perform on Fridays and other sacred days. In some temples, Tambura and violin are used. The gettu vadyam is sometimes used during Tiruppugazh recital.

2. Wind Instruments used in the temple rituals

The wind instruments used in temple rituals are: Chinnam (made of brass), Chinna Nagaswaram (Mukha Vina), Ekkalam (Ekkalai), Gown Kalam (Gowri Kalai), Kombu Nukha vina, Nabari (udu (CJ) kombu), Nagaswaram, Namasi, Ottu, Pullanguzhal (Flute), Sangu (Conch), Silver Ekkalai (used in Srirangam temple), Tiruchinnam, Tuttari, and Tutti (Suti). Stone Mukha is used in the temple at Azhwarthirungari. The Timiri nagaswaram 1 ½ in length was used in former times and now the Bari nagaswaram about 2 ½ in length is used.

Drums used in Temple rituals

Bali maddalam, Bari tavil, Berigai, Beriyal, Chandra pirai, Chendai, Dakka, Dakki, Damaram (a pair of conical drums, kept on the back of a bullock and played upon by a bey riding on it). Dhanki, Dama vadyam, Danka, Davandai (big and small varieties) Idakkai, Jakki, Jayabheri, Kanaka toppatai, Kavana maddalam, Kimkittu, Lavandai, Maddalam, Maskupalagai, Moganai, Mridangam, Muttu, Nagar (big and small), Nagara, Nagara chatti, Panchamukha Vadyam, Periya udal, Siriya udal, sanna udal, Sanmidhi udal, savandai, suddhe Maddalam, Surya Pirai, suthu maddalam, suthu tasil. Tappu Palakai, Timilai, Udal, Udal Vadya chatti vira kandi, Vira maddalam, vira Malahari, Vira Vandai, Viranam, Vangu and Takkai, a drum resembling the Idakka in shape and played in the temple at srirangam on the occasion of Kawsika Ekadasi and Vaikunda Ekadasi.

Idoplonas and in Temple rituals

Cymbals and Bells: Barimani, Baritalam, Brahmatalam, Brihat talam, Jalra, Kaimam, Kaitalam, Kothumani (nfhj;Jkzp), Kuztritalam (used in Tevara and Tiruppugazh recital), Nattuva talam, Periya talam, sekandi, Semakala, sendi, sirutalam.

In the temples in Kerala, the panchavadyam comprising Idakka, Timila, chenda, Chengala and Kombu are used. Udukkai, pambai and kaichilambu are used in the temples of village Deities.