

PROJECT ON
“MALLARI AND IT’S FEATURES”

SUBMITTED BY
AISWARYA BIJU
SB18BHA008

FINAL YEAR BA BHARATHANATYAM

ST.TERESA’S COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF BHARATHANATYAM



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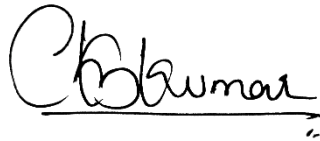
I would like to thank the senior most Bharathanatyam teacher Dr.Beena D and Mrs. Ria Raveendran, Mr. Suresh Kumar, HOD of the department, Mrs. Drishya P.P, Mr. Chandrakumar for their necessary support, guidance, suggestions and encouragement throughout my work.

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I would like to take opportunity to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to our beloved director and principal Dr. Lizzy Mathew who have been a great support and inspiration.

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that, this is a confide record of final year project on the topic 'MALLARI AND IT'S FEATURES', submitted by **Aiswarya Biju** reg no: **SB18BHA008** and submitted partial fulfillment of the requirement of award of BA Bharathanatyam this college.



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INTRODUCTION

Music has been an integral part of temple rituals for many centuries. It is part of the day-to-day activities in a temple. Nadasawaram music has been and is an integral part of our festivals. It has been a part and parcel of temple rituals that are conducted during the different parts of the day. Nadaswaram and Taval are known as the Mangala Vadhyam and Raja Vadhayam. It is no surprise that the temples of Tamil Nadu, they are considered to be the most important aspect of daily rituals. The agamic and other ritual texts speak in detail about the musical offerings to be made in temples. The ragas to be played during each part of the day are also codified. Many temples do have a unique musical tradition played by the artistes in the temples. There are so many musical compositions that are meant for Nadaswaram and Taval. Mallari, Rakthi, Odakooru are some of the compositions that are exclusive to Nadaswaram and Taval. Such exquisite compositions and traditions were preserved by the musicians at the temples and these compositions were being played on a daily basis and during the temple festivals. These musicians were patronized by the temples and were the employees of the temple.

These traditions, which are centuries old, have changed drastically in the last six to seven decades. Reasons for this change are many; ranging from macro-environmental to socio-cultural, resulting in many traditions of the temples being forgotten. Economics has played a huge role in this change and though many temples have every intention of continuing these traditions, lack of funds becomes the sole deterrent.

The Nadaswaram and Taval ensemble known as Periya Melam, have some interesting traditions. Though we don't have the word Nadaswaram in the ancient literature or inscriptions, we can be certain that the tradition of these two instruments dates back to several centuries. Some opine that the instrument mentioned in inscriptions as Thiruchinnam could be the prototype for the current shape of Nadaswaram. Some scholars say it had many names and the current version of the Nadaswaram has evolved over a period of time. The percussion instrument Taval has been the accompaniment of Nadaswaram since time immemorial.

The compositions that are unique to Nadaswaram are played in the daily rituals during the temples. During the procession of the Gods around the four streets around the temple, the procession begins with Mallari. Alarippu is played in Taval before Mallari. Another unique composition is Rakthi played after Mallari and Raga Alapana. The ancients valued their customs and beliefs a lot. They had a good knowledge and awareness of their customs. They understood what ritual was going on as they listened to each mallari. But people today have no connection with their rituals or customs. That is why all these forms are going away from us. It is very important to hold on our traditions, as it is divine and pure.

NADASWARAM – THE MANGALA VADYAM

Nadaswaram, is considered to be one of the most ancient and unique musical instruments of Tamilnadu. It would be appropriate to call this instrument a rare combination of music and divinity. The history and current perspective of the instrument forms the fundamental basis of this presentation.

Our predecessors considered temples as the abode of peace and sanctity. This system of holding the temples as the centre stage of our culture has prevailed for

the last several centuries. Temples have nurtured several arts forms, the important ones being music and dance. Both these formed the basic essence of the bhakti tradition. The credit for such a rich tradition has to be given to the Azhwars and Nayanmars. The Tamil language and the patronage for music were interlinked during the ancient period. The temples in Tamilnadu have been the main inspiration and source of the bhakti tradition. Thus music played a special role as a medium for prayer. Musical celebrations were very popular and Nadaswaram acquired a special status in such presentations. Everyone in the temple precincts and the villages relished the music emanating from Nadaswaram. Thus this instrument became an integral part of temple celebrations throughout south India.

History of Nadaswaram

Mankind learnt to produce sounds from “shankh”, the conch. Thereafter the horns of ox and bull were selected and holes were made into these and were used to produce musical sounds. Then bamboos and metals were used. Nadaswaram and other instruments like Ottu, Shehnai, Makuti etc., are the culmination of such efforts.

Silapadikaram refers to an instrument called “vangiyam”. The structure of this instrument matches that of Nadaswaram. Since there are seven holes played with seven fingers this was also called as “Ezhil”.

The making of Nadaswaram:

Bamboo, sandalwood tree, copper-brass alloy, wood of “cherungali” and “karungali” trees and ivory are used to make Nadaswaram. It was generally believed that only the wood of the cherungali tree must be used and the age of

the tree must be at least 42 years. To identify the age of the tree an ingenious method was used. A small portion of the bark, if held against a lamp should burn continuously. If it blackens without burning, it is believed that the tree is not of sufficient age.

Each part of the Nadaswaram is related to a deity. The bottom circle to Surya, the Sun God, the upper hole to Goddess Sakti, the inner holes to Lord Vishnu, the body to Lord Brahma, and the seven holes to seven mothers. The music emanating is related to Lord Siva. Such a Nadaswaram is also called “Periya Melam” and “Rajavadyam”.

The length of the present day Nadaswaram is much longer than what it used to be earlier. In olden days they were smaller in length and can be compared to the present day Timiri Nadaswaram, and had a higher base pitch. Sri Ponnuswamy Pillai was the first one to lengthen the Nadaswaram and to use a lower base pitch due to better sound production and appeal to the audience. The wooden Nadaswaram was able to score over metallic Nadaswarams made of silver, sometimes even gold, or other alloys. The present day Nadaswaram is 34 ½ inches long and has a base pitch of ‘D’ or 2 kattai. The tonal quality of this is very appealing and attractive. The Timiri Nadaswaram was normally 18 ¼ inches long, and used base pitch of note B sharp or 7 kattai.

While the instrument is considered to be a Rajavadyam (royal instrument) and also a Mangalavadyam (auspicious instrument), there still is a debate whether it is “Nagaswaram” or “Nadaswaram”. Since it is like a snake, some prefer to call it Nagaswaram; maybe the name Nadaswaram is more appropriate.

Special temple repertoire:

The present-day practise of presenting Varnams, Keertanas, Javalis, Tillanas in Nadaswaram concerts is of recent origin, perhaps 60-70 years.

Earlier, concerts at the temples were significantly different. Ragas were rendered with their full embellishments/laya structure and appropriate to the presiding deity. The Nitya Pooja or daily prayers normally comprised 6-8 rituals. Each time an appropriate raga was rendered on the Nadaswaram. This was the tradition and continues even today. The expert on Agama Sastra-s, Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar, has laid down a detailed structure for Nadaswaram recitals at the temples.

The first pooja, Tiruvanandal, is performed between 5 am and 6 am to wake up the Gods. During such times, ragas like Bhoopalam, Bowli, Malayamarutam are played. During the 7 am Vila Pooja, ragas like Bilahari, Kedaram are rendered. Around 8 am ragas like Dhanyasi, Saveri, Aaveri, and around 10 am ragas like Surati, Mukhari, Manirangu are played. At noon, during the Uchikala Pooja Mukhari, Poornachandrika, Mandari and similar ragas are played. At 8 in the night during the Ardhajama pooja, ragas like Sankarabharanam, Bhairavi, Kambhoji, and at the 10 pm Palliarai pooja, ragas like Anandabhairavi, Neelambari are handled.

Thus, it is a very scientifically laid down structure which was not only appealing but in keeping with the time of the day. The village folk could easily identify the time without clocks merely by listening to the ragas and the songs. Devotees would also be able to know which pooja was being performed. This evidences the fine-tuned prayer scheme prevalent in south Indian temples.

The playing of ragas is keeping with the temple rituals. Rendering of Mallari, Pancha Nadai, Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi etc during the procession of the deities were the traditions prevalent over many years. In recent times, Madurai Sri Ponnuswamy Pillai, Tiruveezhimalai brothers, Tiruppambaram brothers and Sri Karaikurichi Arunachalam contributed to the change in the concert format from the earlier raga-oriented approach to the present format of handling of Varnams, Kritis, Keertanas, Tillanas etc.

WHAT IS MALLARI ?

Mallari is instrumental music played only on the nagaswaram. There is a set of solkattus set to particular patterns of svaras. This pattern is played on the instrument as a tune and on the tavil in the form of jatis. Mallari is usually played in Gambira Nattai as the raga stands for the Veera rasa. There are two major types of mallari - chinna mallari and periya mallari. Ther mallari, Thripata mallari and misra chappu mallari together they are called Periya mallari. The rest is known as Chinna mallari. While chinna mallari can be played on all days, periya mallari can be played only on specific days. Ther mallari is mainly done in khanda jathi. Originally, mallari was played in all temples. Later on, it was divided into Siva mallari (played at the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram) and Vishnu mallari (played at the Tyagaraja temple in Tiruvarur). Like the tradition during the temple rituals, there also prevailed a special pattern for temple processions, the most important being the rendition of Mallari. During processions, whenever Deeparadhana was performed, the Nadaswaram and the Tavil played as an ensemble – a rendering based on Tillana in raga Gambheeranata. This is called Mallari. This practise continues even today.

It was Muthuswami Dikshitar's father, Ramaswami Dikshitar who formalised the utsavarituals in the Tiruvarur temple and specified the stages of mallari to be played during the daily pooja and annual festivals. This was a custom followed by all the nadaswara vidwans at the temple.

Mallari is a unique composition and there are many other types of this composition.

One significant mallari is tripata tala mallari, based on seven beats either as "takita takadhimi" (3 + 4) or "takadhimi takita" (4 + 3). Ther mallari which has

5 beats is the only mallari used during procession days. Except a few like triputa mallari and ther mallari, taligai and other mallaris do not have any specific tala structure (beats). Mallaris are usually set to four or eight avartas or tala cycles. Solkattus used in Mallari, are Mridangam solkattus (i.e imitating sound of different strokes on the drum and facilitate precisionist.)

According to the legend, during the Siva Tandava, Siva's anklet came off and fell on the ground producing basic drum sounds, "Tha dhi Tom Nam". This has formed the basis of jatis for several percussion instruments like the Mridangam. Using two hand strokes, the sollukattus like "Dhim Dhim, Tham Tham" could be derived. This forms the basis of the mallari presentation, wherein the performer intertwines the Alarippu and the special jatis of the Taval, "Kunda kundagu – Diruta Kundagu", to the raga Gambheeranata. The mallari is usually played in all three speeds: vilamba, madhyama, and drutta. This same mallari is then played in tisra gati followed by kalpanaswara.

Each performance weaves a unique type of Mallari. Comprised solely of tathakaram (thaval syllables), mallari has a fixed laya structure which may be rendered in third speed, fourth speed or even six, depending on the vidwans' expertise

Subsequent to the detailed presentation of Gambheeranata, the other Ghana Pancha ragas, namely, Nata, Gowla, Arabhi, Varali and Sriragam are played. Todi is also rendered. Of the nine known types of mallari, only five are chiefly in use today.

The five types of Mallari are:

Teertha Mallari – while the Tirumanjanam is brought

Taligai Mallari – while the Naivedyam is brought

Kumbha Mallari – while giving the Poornakumbham

Ther Mallari – when the deity is taken up for procession

Purapattu Mallari – when the procession of the deity starts

One significant Mallari is Triputa tala Mallari, based on seven beats either as “Takita takadhimi” (3 + 4) or “Takadhimi takita” (4 + 3).

The Ther Mallari which has 5 beats is repeatedly handled on the procession days. No other Mallari is handled during the procession day.

Except a few like Triputa Mallari and Ther Mallari, Taligai and other Mallaris do not have any specific tala structure (beats). These would depend on the performer’s creativity.

HISTORY AND EVOLUTION

Mallari (mallArI) is played as the first musical item in nadaswaram music during temple festivals before the temple deity is taken out in procession.

Though mallaris are played in many temples, many artists today play mallaris that have come from the tradition belonging to the Chidambaram Nataraja temple.

The form and compositions of Mallari are generally believed to be the offshoots of ‘Prabhandham’. Even though there are possibilities that the word “Mallari” may have a tamil origin, we cannot say from which language it originally is.

“Malla” means wrestler or Palanquin bearer and “Ri” means the voluminous sound produced by the palanquin bearer when they carry it. To equate this sound, the work mallari came to be used particularly in temples.

An agama “Dhvajarohana vidhi” speaks about a tune called Mallara that should be sounded when the deity starts from its abode. The Mallara might have by the course of time, corruptly gained the name “Mallari”. Interestingly, there is a raga called Mallara a janya of Kharaharapriya (22nd Mela) with the scale, S R g m P D P S,, S D P m R S,.

There is also another story related to the name mallari. In the past, it was the ‘mallarhal’ people who carried the Lord on their shoulder and brought out for procession. In order to relieve their difficulty, the nadaswaram and tavil vidwans played musics. And thus, it was called mallari.

In earlier days, when the backward community people were not allowed to enter the temple premises, and they could worship the lord only when the deity was taken for the rounds on the chariot (in Tamilnadu) or on the elephants (in kerala) Mallari was played on nagaswaram as an indication tune. Mallari is rendered in Gambheeranattai in order to bring the Gambheerya rasam on the lord’s face while defending the enemies. And this is the reason why an Alarippu on the thavil precedes the Alapana of gambheeranattai on the nagaswaram. Mostly, Mallaris are played on talas viz, Khanda triputa, Misra Triputa, Sangeerna Triputa, Misra jhampa etc and rarely in adi tala, and various variations of tempo, such as vilambham, Madhyam, Drutham and Tisram etc are also portrayed.

In earlier days, in order to inform the people regarding the commencement of deity’s procession, fireworks, (Sushira) Wind instruments like Kombu, Ekkaalam, Namari and percussive instruments like Thappu, Thaarai, Udal were adopted and played. Even then the musical form Mallari played on the nagaswaram was the most significant ways among them.

There is also a belief that, mallaris are originated from kings court, talking about the firm of the kingdom.

When the king returns from war sand, people receive him with kumbham and then *kumbha mallari* was played. When the flag is hoisted as part of the kings victory, *kodi mallari* is played. When the king goes to bathe *theertha mallari* is played. When the food is brought to the king *thaigai/ daliya mallari* is played. And finally *nada mallari* shows the achievements of the king to the public.

TYPES OF MALLARIS

Mainly there are five types of mallaris:

- 1) Theertha
- 2) Thaligai
- 3) Kumbha
- 4) Purappattu
- 5) Ther

MUSICAL ASPECTS

- All mallaris are played only in *gambhiranattai* raga.
- A *gambhiranattai* raga alapana is played just before the mallari. The order, thus, is the following:
 1. Playing the shruti
 2. Playing the tavil *alarippu* (in khanda nadai)
 3. Performing the raga alapana of *gambhiranattai*
 4. Performing the mallari
- Playing of mallaris in three speeds and in tisra nadai has become a common practice, especially in *purappattu* mallari. This raises the possibility of mallaris having been the precursor to pallavi singing
- Eduppu of all mallaris is at samam (beginning of the talam cycle)
- *tha, dhi, thom, nam...* like syllables are used

- “*tha dhi ki Na thom*” phrase usually occurs in the end (some artists have set mallaris with different ending phrases)
- Some mallaris have yatis included in their structure (especially the *gopucca yati*)

MALLARI IN DANCE

As we already discussed, mallari has no lyrics or sahithya portions. Therefore, there is no possibility of abhinaya in mallaris. There is a set of solkattus set to particular patterns of svaras. This pattern is played on the instrument as a tune and on the tavil in the form of jatis. Thathakaram like *tha dhim thom nam* are used in mallari. Therefore, rhythm is very important in mallari. Although there are many mallaris, *purappattu mallari* is the most commonly used in dance. There are no special rules or procedures for performing mallari. Different jathis set into particular talas ended with suitable *theermanams* are used in it. Mallari, played traditionally on the Nadaswaram when the ‘*utsava moorthy*’ or temple deity is being taken out in a procession, is performed as an invocation item in a Bharatanatyam repertoire. It is of pure *nritha* format. Most of the mallaris are started with *madhyama kalam*. After that the speed is changed to the *vilamba kalam*. After that again *madhyama kalam*. Then some jathis are done in *tisra nadai*. And then ends in the *madhyama kalam*. The body movements in the mallari performance are lively and elegant.

Theertha Mallari

This is played daily while bringing water from water sources (temple tank) to bath the idols of the temple deity. It is sung while temple priest is carrying the water in a pot to the temple. *Theertha mallari* is mainly done in *misra chappu talam* and *gambheeranattai* ragam. It shows the water for the lord’s *abhishekam* being brought from the pool.

Thaligai mallari

This played when the naivedya prasadam is brought. In this we can show how the naivedya prasadam is brought for the Lord. It is done in khanda jathi as well as in misra chappu thalam.

Ther Mallari

This is played when the deity is brought to the ther before the start of the procession.

A ther mallari set to khanda Eka talam (1 kalai).

Purappattu Mallari

Purappattu mallari is widely used in dance. It has been set and attempted by many nadaswaram artists, especially those belonging to the Tanjore region. They are set usually in all three sthayis – from madhyamam/pancamam of mandhara sthayi to pancamam of tara sthayi. They have been set in a variety of talams – right from rupakam to sankirna dhruvam.

The order of speeds/nadaais in the traditional way of playing purappattu mallaris is the following:

- 1) Madhyama kalam
- 2) Vilamba kalam
- 3) Madhyama kalam
- 4) Tisra nadai (3 times)
- 5) Duritha kalam
- 6) Madhyama kalam finish

Kumbha and Ther Mallari

Kumbha mallari is played when the purnakumbham is given while ther mallari is played when the deity is taken out in procession

Mallari are of different types. As quoted earlier there is no lyrics and it is always denoted in 'thatha-kalam'.

Mallari played in a siva temple during the deity's procession on Kaalai Vaahanam (Ox-headed palanquin) is known as 'Periya Mallari'.

According to nagaswaram exponents, during the time when the deity starts from the abode to the chariot, mallaris are played in Triputa Talam where it is in 4+3 proportion. (Thakadhina- Thakita). There are other small mallaris too, which are called "Chinna Mallari".

Mallaris are played strictly for temple rituals.

PRESENTATION

Mallaris, come in varied forms and thalams, and are generally set to ragam Gambeera Nattai. There is no sahithyam or lyrics in a mallari.

There are 2 interpretations to answer the question why GambheeraNattai?

1. It is to picturise the Gambheeryam or majestic appearance of the lord on the palanquin or chariot with all his ornaments and jewelled costumes.
2. According to tradition, any ritual connected with god should commence only with the numbers 5. 5 swaras in this case. Five has a significant value; Panchabhootha, Panchakriya, Panchasakthi and so on.

That is why a pentatonic raga which evokes veera rasa is employed

It may be observed that even before the commencement of nagaswaram the Tavil artist would play “Alarippu” which is in Khanda gathi. Only then a short alapana of gambheera nattai is played then the Mallari would follow. Even in dances in the temple, they would start with a mela prapthi in the same khanda gathi. After the raga alapana, they played Rakthi. Playing rakti ragas is unique to the Nadaswaram tradition. Ragas like Kalyani, Kambhoji, Todi, Bhairavi are rendered with an exhaustive alapana in various tala structures. This is known as Rakti Melam. In South Indian music tradition, such a presentation is not found in other instruments or even in vocal music. About 60-70 years ago when Varnam, Kriti and Keertanas were not being handled, the highlight of a Nadaswaram concert was the RaktiMelam. Performers use to play for hours, or even days together, elaborating on each and every nuance of the raga.

Regarding the Thevaram music it is said that it was only Thirugnanasambhandar who started it with the song ‘Thodudaiya Seviyan’. This song was originally sung by the oduvars in the raga gambheeranattai in khandachappu. All these contribute to the point that Mallari should be rendered only in the pentatonic raga Gambheeranattai preceded by Alarippu in khanda gathi.

The thavil artiste begins the allarippu ‘thom thom tha thom thom tha, kuntha kunthakum, kuntha kunthakum. Then the nagaswaram artiste renders the ragam Gambeera Nattai elaborately and plays sorkattus beginning in madyama kaalam, gradually increasing the tempo into duritha kaalam and subsequently reduce the tempo to vilambam.

Once again, the artiste switches over to madyama kaalam, duritham and does thisram before increasing the pace to duritham and finally comes back to madyama kalam.

As a prelude, alarippu is rendered in the prakaaram (outer corridor), consisting of sancharas in Gambhiranattai, khanda-nadai thavil strokes and corresponding tanam-style phrases on the nagaswaram. Mallaris are invariably set to Gambhiranattai raga in a specific tala. Comprised solely of tatthakaram (thavil syllables), mallari has a fixed laya structure which may be rendered in trikala, four speeds or even six, depending on the vidwans' expertise. Of the nine known types of mallari, only five are chiefly in use today, namely theertha, thaligai, kumbha, ther and purappattu mallaris.

An interesting variant was a *ragamalika mallari* featuring four ragas – Gambhiranattai, Gowla, Ranjani and Bilahari. An aural treat, it was a legacy inherited from past generations of stalwarts.

Each temple, whether in Tiruvarur, Srivilliputhur, Chidambaram or Tirupati, has a distinct mallari marabu (tradition). It is a demanding feat in which trikala is rendered within two avartanas, while kalpanaswaras and tani avartanam showcase prodigious vidwat. To gain expertise, mallari must be imbibed from one's guru, through keen observation and assimilation. Fluent interpretation can spring only from experience.

TALA SYSTEMS OF DIFFERENT MALLARIS

Periya mallari, commonly set in khanda-jati tripata tala (nine beats) with options extending to sankirna-jati ata tala, is featured in the processions of Panchamurthi or Siva on Rishabha vahanam. Illustrating a mallari in sankirna-jati tripata tala (13 beats), the artist's Gambhiranattai prelude glowed with luminous passages. Temple ambience came alive as the staccato rhythm supported a majestic gait. Ther mallari, usually in khanda nadai (five-beat tempo) generates a disciplined march. Kumbha mallari is played during the poornakumbha ritual. Taligai mallari is set to chatusra gati and played in a

single tempo (kaala) in the upper octave, in Vishnu temples, when the naivedhyam (offering) is taken from the kitchen to the shrine. Chinna mallari may be played at all temple purappadu (procession). One such, with a laya grid of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2 in ascent and 6,6,5 in descent (total 64, chatusra triputa) was demonstrated in six kalas in a stunning display of skill.

DEVELOPMENT

Mallari is instrumental music played only on the nagaswaram. There is a set of solkattus set to particular patterns of svaras. This pattern is played on the instrument as a tune and on the tavil in the form of jatis. Mallari is usually played in Gambira Nattai as the raga stands for the Veera rasa. It was Muthuswami Dikshitar's father, Ramaswami Dikshitar who formalised theutsavarituals in the Tiruvarur temple and specified the stages of mallari to be played during the daily pooja and annual festivals. This was a custom followed by all the nagaswara vidwans at the temple. There are different types of mallaris played for different pooja vidhis (temple rituals). Theertha mallari, thaligai mallari, kumbha mallari, ther mallari, purappattu mallari, pallia rai mallari, triputa mallari etc. Out of these purappattu mallari was only rendered in bharathanatyam. But now everything else is being used. In the past mallaris are strictly done for temple rituals only. But now it is being performed in bharathanatyam recitals. It is done in the recital as an invocatory item just like pushpanjali.

PRESENT SITUATION

In carnatic music Mallari is associated to Nadaswaram instrument, the Mangala vadyam (auspicious instrument). Redention of Mallari is an important part of Nagaswaram repertoire. Nagaswaram music is a part of every day temple ritual. During deepaaradhana's and temple processions Mallari is played with this instrument along with Taval. The common ragas in which Mallari's are presented are Gambheera nattai, Nattai, gowla, and Arabhi. The present day practise of presenting Varnams, Keertanas, Javalis, Tillanas in Nadaswaram concerts is of recent origin, perhaps 60-70 years. Earlier, concerts at the temples were significantly different. Ragas were rendered with their full embellishments/laya structure and appropriate to the presiding deity. The Nitya Pooja or daily prayers normally comprised 6-8 rituals. Each time an appropriate raga was rendered on the Nadaswaram. This was the tradition and continues even today. The expert on Agama Sastra-s, Sri Ramaswamy Dikshitar, has laid down a detailed structure for Nadaswaram recitals at the temples.

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Thus it is a very scientifically laid down structure which was not only appealing but in keeping with the time of the day. The village folk could easily identify

the time without clocks merely by listening to the ragas and the songs. Devotees would also be able to know which pooja was being performed. This evidences the fine-tuned prayer scheme prevalent in south Indian temples.

The playing of ragas is keeping with the temple rituals. Rendering of Mallari, Pancha Nadai, Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi etc during the procession of the deities were the traditions prevalent over many years. In recent times, Madurai Sri Ponnuswamy Pillai, Tiruveezhimalai brothers, Tiruppambaram brothers and Sri Karaikurichi Arunachalam contributed to the change in the concert format from the earlier raga-oriented approach to the present format of handling of Varnams, Kritis, Keertanas, Tillanas etc. Like the tradition during the temple rituals, there also prevailed a special pattern for temple processions, the most important being the rendition of Mallari. During processions, whenever Deeparadhana was performed, the Nadaswaram and the Taval played as an ensemble - a rendering based on Tillana in raga Gambheeranata. This is called Mallari. This practise continues even today.

Each performance weaves a unique type of Mallari. During the Siva Tandava (the frenzied dance of Lord Siva), his anklets gave rise to the Jati-s, "Tha dhi Tom Nam". This formed the basis of jatis for several percussion instruments like Mridangam. Further sounds emanating while striking the two hands on the mridangam produced "Dhim Dhim, Tham Tham". This forms the basis of the Mallari presentation, wherein the performer intertwines the Alarippu and the special jatis of the Taval, "Kunda kundagu - Diruta Kundagu", to the raga Gambheeranata.

Subsequent to the detailed presentation of Gambheeranata, the other Ghana Pancha ragas, namely, Nata, Gowla, Arabhi, Varali and Sriragam are played. Todi is also rendered. Though there are different types of mallaris. Purappattu mallari is used mostly in bharathanatyam. There is no written rules or

procedures for a mallari performance. Therefore, there is no restriction on doing mallari choreography. Now many people have started doing other mallaris.

CONCLUSION

Traditions are very much part of the culture we create, hence seeing them in isolation does not help in creating long-term sustainability. Such vast musical traditions that once existed in temples are now slowly declining and many temples do not even have musicians associated with them.

Nagasawaram-thavil music is so inseparably woven into the fabric of temple ritual that one is synonymous with the other. Even the Gods wait for a signal to set out in ceremonial procession beyond the temple precincts. That signal is the mallari, played since ancient times by melam artists.

Mallari as known to everybody is a musical form played on Nagaswaram at the outset of any deity's procession. It is in a way, a signature tune and anyone can easily understand that the temple deity has commenced the rounds.

Such is the greatness of this instrument! Every temple should nurture this instrument and restore the traditional practises. This will not only provide a livelihood for many artistes, but will also protect this endangered and ancient art. Schools imparting detailed training and coaching should be established in every city/town. Let us all unite and nurture this ancient temple art form.