

KARNATIC MUSIC AND CHRISTIANITY: An Ethnomusicological Approach

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Abstract: Ethnomusicological approach towards Christian music in India has revealed that Christian music in India had a strong interaction with the traditional classical music of South India, i.e., Karnatic music. Protestant Churches in India had tried to adapt native music tradition into their music even before Second Vatican Council whereas Catholic Church in India made serious attempts for inculturation only after the Council. The present paper focuses on the ethnomusicological perspective of the Christian music in India and the multicultural, multireligious interaction of Karnatic music with respect to its adaptability and universality. It also deals with the structural and melodic analysis of the compositions of the leading Christian Karnatic composers of the past and the present, and the analysis of Karnatic musical forms and musical genres available in the Christian musical subcultures of South India.

Keywords: Christianity, Church music, Ethnomusicology, Inculturation, Karnatic music, Musical identity, Raga, Tāḷās

1. Introduction

The history of Christian music in India is very complex and diverse due to various independent ethnic Christian subcultures, which are spread all over the country. South Indian Christians, North Indian Christians, Christians in the North Eastern states

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and the tribal Christian population of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Jharkhand states have very different political, social, linguistic and cultural backgrounds. So also, each Christian subculture has evolved and developed in a unique manner and differently from one another.

The interaction between Karnatic music and Christianity has been an ongoing process for the past many centuries in India. The cultural dilemma, in general, of Indian Christians and the musical identity in particular leads us to find out the interrelationship between Christian faith and Karnatic music in India placing both against the background of inculturation or indigenisation of Christian music.

2. Problem of Musical Identity

In today's society the problem of the cultural identity of Indian Christians is a debatable point. The native Christians in India have been sandwiched between the Western and Indian cultures. Lack of openness from the Church hierarchy and the negative approach of the Missionaries and Colonial powers over the use of local customs and music for rituals and worship have created a difficult situation for the native Christians to develop an open mind towards Indian culture and arts.

On the other hand, a historical analysis shows that the Christians in India had a strong inclination to get rooted in the native culture. Right from the beginning of Christianity in India, the native Christians have tried to accept the customs, traditions, rituals and music of the motherland. But all these attempts were discouraged by the powerful western colonial powers that invaded the different parts of this country during varied phases of history. Reasons for the lack of a continued cultural consciousness towards an indigenous music culture can be attributed to the colonial imperialism, the blind imitation of oriental and occidental cultures that are organically different from the Indian mind and above all the apologetic and polemic attitudes by a group of Christian missionaries. Although from the 17th century onwards some attempts were made to inculturate Indian music into Christian music, Christian music in

India still lags behind in the main streams of Indian music both in Karnatic and Hindustani systems.

If the Church in India bemoans the negative and harmful stance taken during the colonial period, it is high time now for her to overcome the prevailing uncaring attitude, which certainly could be the root cause of the so-called “cultural unconsciousness.”¹ Today the Indian Church is trying to get up from its ‘pretended slumber’, which has pushed it into a cultural identity problem.

3. Ethnomusicological Approach

Cultures, when they come together, mingle in many ways and a certain osmosis takes place. Music is one such ingredient of culture. It is customary for the scholars to study this musical acculturation. This is the approach of an ethnomusicologist. It is possible to talk about the culture and its musical content in its varied stylistic differences. This kind of distinction can be made more easily in music and other arts than elsewhere in culture.²

When we consider some of these ethnomusicological factors, we can find that Karnatic music and other indigenous music genres have influenced Christian music of India. Bruno Nettl divides the study of music in a particular culture into two broad areas: i) the study of the individual group, person, nation in one place and at one time, and ii) the study of music in its spatial (geographic) and temporal (historical) environment.³

In this study I analyze the influence of Karnatic music on the Christian music of Kerala and Tamil Nadu considering the individual and group compositions against the background of geographical and historical environment. Examples are the musical analysis of the compositions of Vēdanāyakam Sastriar as individual composition and the Mārgamkaḷi songs of the Knānāya Christians of Kerala as group composition.

¹Julian Saldanha, *Inculturation*, Bombay: St. Pauls, 1996, 13.

²Bruno Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology*, New York: Schirmer Books, 1985.4.

³Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology*, 225.

According to ethnomusicologists, there are three different approaches for the analysis of individual styles of composers.

i) The Systematic Approach: This is an approach to describe music to identify all possible, or many, or, for practical purposes, a selected group of aspects of music, and to describe each of these aspects in an individual

ii) The Intuitive Approach: This is an alternative to the systematic. This approach is the one which attempts to identify the most striking, the most important aspects of a piece of music.

iii) The Selective Approach: Many ethnomusicological studies do not attempt to describe a piece or a body of music in its entirety but, in one or a group of related aspects.

According to Bruno Nettl and other scholars of musicology, to derive a broad view of the musical culture in any of the musical study, the combination of the three approaches performs better with a systematic, holistic approach to the description and the analysis of music.⁴ The present study focuses not only on 'Church music', i.e., the music used for worship 'within the Church', but also on the entire Christian music, which formulates Christian sub culture, including various indigenous Christian music genres, which come under the parameters of Liturgical (worship), Performing (art music) and Folk Music of the Church.

Although Christianity was an Asian religion by its origin, the missionaries and the colonial rulers have projected it as a western religion during the middle ages and the modern times. Nevertheless, right from its arrival in India, Christianity was highly influenced by the ancient Indian culture such as Upanisādic philosophy, Vēdic literature, music and other arts and rituals. Hinduism, one of the most ancient religions in the world, was generous enough to accept other religions and cultures and there was a comparatively peaceful co-existence of religions in this country of ancient cultures.

⁴Nettl, *Theory and Method in Ethnomusicology*, 135-139.

Right from the early history of Christian music, it has been influenced by the Jewish music, Greek music, Egyptian music, etc., compelling the universal and local Churches to adapt the positive elements from the neighbouring cultures within the given situation. This process was not a blind importation of foreign cultures, rather a willed adaptation of the local music based on the teachings and traditions of the universal Church.

4. Study of Christian Music Styles in Tamil Nadu and Kerala

Tamil Nadu has a respectable percentage of Christians. Madurai, Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Tanjavur, Trichy, Chennai, Coimbatore, Vellore, Thoothukudi and Dindigul are the important Christian regions, where we have the indigenised form of Christian music. Both Catholics and Protestants made early attempts to inculturate Karnatic music into the local Christian music in terms of worship and performance. Among the Protestant groups, Church of South India (CSI)⁵ has made a significant contribution towards this noble cause. Catholic Church has also made several attempts to indigenise Christian music in Tamil Nadu right from the 16th century under the leadership of Jesuit Missionaries such as Roberto de Nobili (Tatva Bodhakar), and Joseph Beschi (Vīra Māmunivar).

Throughout every city and town in Kerala, there is a strong Christian presence and there were efforts towards the cause of inculturation of Christian music. Towards the end of the 19th century Thiruvananthapuram, a border district between Kerala and Tamil Nadu, which had a strong CSI Christian presence became the centre of these activities of inculturation under the leadership of Mōsa Valsala Śāstrikal, who composed a number of Kritīs and Kīrtanās (Christian themes) based on Karnatic rāgās and tāḷās. This composer and the people in Thiruvananthapuram were greatly influenced by the Tamil musicians and Tamil language. In the 19th century people of South Central Kerala (Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta and Kottayam) experienced musical

⁵In 1947 the merging of Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian and some of the Anglican Churches has resulted in the formation of the Church of South India (CSI).

activities of the famous musician Vidwān Kutty (Rāman Iyer, who was later converted into Christian faith). He was a great *vidwān* (expert) of Karnatic music. Kārthikappally Māmmaṅ Bhāgavatar, Mahākavi K. V. Simon, Puthenkavu Māthan Tharakan and Kandathil Varghese Māppila are the other musicians who hailed from this region.

It was in central Kerala (Velur in Thrissur) that the German missionary, Arṇōs Pāthiri started his intense activity of cultural integration by composing the epic work called *Puthenpāna*. Towards the end of the 20th century all these activities were shifted to the town of Cochin (Central Kerala) under the leadership of Joseph Cardinal Pārekāttil with the help of the devotional poet Fr. Abel CMI. During this time numerous Christian songs were composed and published in Karnatic rāgās and tāḷās. K. K. Antony master who composed most of the songs written by Fr. Abel was a learned Karnatic musician.

Right from the 16th century, the Portuguese missionaries created a negative image of Christianity among the Hindus in South India through their lifestyles, making gradually Christianity unpopular among the Hindus. The local Church leaders and Christians realized the need for integrating Christianity into Indian culture, even to survive on Indian soil. Just as Christianity, which originated in Asia, when it was taken to the west and became western in its form, the Christian faith when it was transplanted into Indian soil was to be garbed in Indian culture. A Christian, who is born and brought up in the Indian soil is a 'Christian' by faith and 'Hindu' by culture.

Gradually, the cultural adaptation took place at different levels of Christian life such as social customs, worship, music, philosophy and literature. Missionaries like De Nobili, Beschi, C. F. Schwartz, Barthelomew Ziegenbalg, and South Indian musicians Vēdanāyakam Śāstriyār, Vēdanāyakam Piḷḷai, Abraham Pandithar, Mōśavalsala Śāstrikal, Arṇōs Pāthiri, Vidwān Kutty, and others continued the process of inculturation in the Church in South India.

5. Inculturation and Christianity

It is obvious that no culture in the world is pure and independent; every culture has been influenced by the neighbouring cultures and also has a composite nature in its cultural survival. Similarly the non-Christian cultures and religions also influenced the Christian culture not only in India but also throughout the world. Christianity began in a Jewish cultural environment, with a Hebrew or Aramaic vocabulary and background of Semitic hopes and longings. The Gentile converts of the early Church did not accept Judaic Christianity without change. Both Old and New Testament periods give us ample examples of inculturation that have taken place in Judaism and Christianity. The style of chanting during Hebrew worship, to a great extent, was adapted from the Canaanite culture. Later, Christianity had adopted the Judaic style of chanting of psalms into Christian worship. In the early period of the Church music, St. Ambrose had adopted a number of Greek modes or scales into his newly formed modal system such as Dorian and Phrygian.⁶ Taking biblical factors and tradition of the Church into consideration, the Indian Christians have every reason to adopt the Indian ragas, the music of the motherland, into its liturgical and performing music.

According to Michael Amaladoss, inculturation is something beyond acculturation. It is our human response to the faith, a free and spontaneous response rooted in the local culture, an encounter between faith and culture. Nobody can decide a fixed pattern for the process of inculturation.⁷ According to Prof. R. Venkataraman, “inculturation is an informed and enlightened adaptation of the cultural elements of the neighbouring culture into one’s own local culture, but not a blind adoption.”⁸ Even

⁶P. P. Paul, “The Influence of South Indian Art Music on the Church Music of Kerala,” MPhil Dissertation, Madras University, 1997, 3.

⁷Personal interview with Dr Michael Amaladoss, at Chennai, 1-12-2000.

⁸Personal interview with Prof. R. Venkataraman, at Madurai, 15-6-2001.

though the process of inculturation is an ongoing process, at present, music is the only area where we see certain amount of flow in inculturation in India.

It was perhaps mainly in the Protestant circles and that too under the impact of liberal Protestant thinking of the 19th and 20th centuries that the interest began to take shape.⁹ In the past few decades, especially in the wake of a new atmosphere of freedom and creativeness ushered in by Pope John XXXIII and the Second Vatican Council, we have witnessed a growing concern among Catholic thinkers for non-Christian cultures and religion. Therefore, expectations are high today of a new synthesis in which Christian revelation will be moulded to the forms of non-western cultures. "The only doubt in the minds of some is whether this will happen in the highly developed culture of India or other vigorous cultures of Africa. But others are sure that Christianity's third and last great cultural confrontation is with Hinduism."¹⁰

5.2. A Brief History of Christian Music in Tamil Nadu

When at the beginning of the 16th century Roman Catholic missionaries, and two centuries later the first Protestant missionaries, came to India, they found apparently no Christian hymns ready for worship. They believed that the indigenous music was quite unsuited for use in Christian worship and used their own Western hymn tunes and translated the accompanying words into Indian languages.¹¹

These translations of western hymns were no doubt successful in many cases in conveying to Indian ears the rich meanings of the Latin, German, English or other originals. The translations, however, though conveyed much of the original meaning, often failed to appeal to the Indian Christians and others because of the lack of proper Indian metrical or other

⁹Protestant Theologians in India prefer to use the word 'indigenisation'.

¹⁰A. M. Mundadan, *Indian Christians Search for Identity & Struggle for Autonomy*, Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 1984, 194.

¹¹White, *Appreciating India's Music*, 66.

poetic forms. The Indian Christian musicians must have known these facts, but for some reason they did not succeed to impress the missionaries to adopt Indian musical forms.

In course of time there grew up a kind of mixed musical tradition in the Churches in India. Side by side with these translations of Western hymns, there evolved a body of indigenous Indian hymns called ‘Lyrics’, followed by Kīrtanai, Kṛitīs and Bhajans and folk songs composed by able and devout Indian Christians to lay the foundation for the adaptation of Indian music into Christian worship and life in South India.

In Tamil Nadu we find different types of musical genre both meant for worship and performance. Catholic and Protestant Churches have always maintained different musical styles throughout the centuries. Accordingly these groups have developed indigenous musical genres integrating the native musical styles and grammar into the evolving Christian music subculture. Until the 1960s, the missionaries and local elites primarily allowed or encouraged three types of music to be used in Church services: western hymns, western hymns translated into Tamil and classical Karnatic music.

Tamil hymns are simple songs based on Karnatic rāgās and tāḷās. This can be compared to the Kīrtanai of Karnatic music tradition. These hymns have three sections like pallavi, anupallavi and caraṇam. At the beginning stage of this hymnal tradition, songs were written in the existing traditional popular native tunes. At times songs are composed in the western music scales with a simple melody, which could be sung by everybody.

The Tamil Christian Kīrtanai can be classified in two different ways. The first is Kīrtanai with local ethnic styles. Kīrtanai styles among Catholics and Protestants are different in terms of lyrics (sāhitya), sangatīs, and application of rāgās, orthodoxy in the singing style. The second categorization depends upon the structure of the composition, the application of classicism in the singing style, the purity of rāga and gamaka proyōga in the treatment of Kīrtanai singing, the usage of classical tāḷās, use of sangatīs and other musical ornamentation in the melodic

patterns. They are classified as i) Concert Kīrtanai or Kriti ii) Popular or Group Kīrtanai, and iii) Folk style Kīrtanai.

Concert Kīrtanāi is technically known as Kritī. This is the composition, which has elaborate musical embellishments and decorative angās. A few Indian Christians have had the opportunity to receive advanced training in Karnatic singing and rāga interpretation and the knowledge of “South Indian concert” style rāga and tāḷā performance. Some of them had opportunities to perform at Church or Christian events and to record Christian pieces.

In the 18th century, Western missionaries began translating the Bible and Western hymns into Tamil. In 1713, the German Lutheran, Fabricius, translated the first collection of German Chorales. Translators kept the tunes of European hymns and attempted to squeeze Tamil translations into their meters. Much of the Tamil is also highly sanskritised and it was usually translated with the aid of Brāhmin scholars. This non-grammatical, non-poetic, and sanskritised Tamil has evolved into Christian dialect used primarily in music. The fusion of Tamil translations with Western hymn tunes and meters resulted in two musical genres: Pāmālai used by CSI, and Jnānapāttu used by Lutherans.

Tamil folk music is called grāmiya pāttu (village music) or nāttuppura isai. Christian villages have used folk music during Christmas and other festivals for centuries. A few folk style songs have been incorporated into the ‘classical’ canon of Kīrtanai. Vēdanāyakam Śāstriyār incorporated folk songs in his Bharatanātyam dance drama ‘Bethlehem Kuravañci’. They were used partly to encode the gypsy character and elements of the common people. Some folklore theorists do not consider these as real folk songs but classical folk.¹²

Kathākālaksepam, a traditional folk art form, was immensely popular among the Christians in Tamil Nadu. The word Kālaksepam literally means ‘passing of time’. Actually it is the

¹²Zoe Carey Sherinian, “The Indigenization of Tamil Christian Music,” Doctoral Dissertation, Wesleyan University, 1998, 263.

name applied to the narration of a sacred story, or a discourse, with music, based upon such a story. A person, who is good in both speech and music assisted by a certain number of musical accompanists, tells the story in words and in song to an audience during the evening or night hours. The story or theme chosen may be from the sacred books, such as Mahābhārata, Rāmayaṇa, Bible, etc.¹³

Bhajan is a popular devotional musical form, which has been much used in certain parts of India for purposes of moral and religious instructions and to propagate religious devotion. After the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s Catholics in India as part of inculturation, began to adopt this liturgical music tradition of our country into their worship. A number of Christian Bhajans were composed in almost all Indian languages. This indigenous musical form was mainly adopted by the Catholic Church than the Protestant Churches. Most of the Christian Bhajans are based upon the Karnatic rāgas and tāḷās. This is another evidence to highlight the influence of Karnatic music on the Christian music of Tamil Nadu.

5.3. A Brief History of the Christian Music of Kerala

Christianity in India is from Apostle Thomas who landed in Kerala in AD 52 and established, according to tradition, seven Churches in different parts of the state. Up to the 16th Century there was only one Church in the whole of Kerala named the Malabar Church of St Thomas Christians. But after the 17th century we see the emergence of different rites and denominations with independent music traditions and worshipping styles.

Although in the early centuries, the Christian music in Kerala was very similar to Hindu ritualistic music, after the arrival of the Missionaries from Syria in the 4th century, the local Christian music took a different shape by adopting the Syrian Chants and Hymns into its fold. Later, the arrival of Portuguese missionaries again added innumerable western customs and music styles into

¹³Emmons E. White, *Appreciating India's Music*, Madras: The Christian Literature, 1970, 23.

the worship and other rituals of St Thomas Christians in Kerala. At present the Christian music of Kerala is the sum total of the music of the various Churches and denominations such as Catholics, Jacobites and Protestants. Every Church has got a unique style of singing for the worship.

Other than liturgical music and concert repertory, the Christians in India are enriched with a rich repertory of religious folk songs, which are the combination of various musical patterns and styles, such as Persian, Indian, and Western. Important music genres are: 1) Malayāḷam Hymns, 2) Syro-Malayāḷam Hymns 3) Āṅgalēya Kīrtanās or Western - Malayāḷam Hymns, 4) Kīrtanam, 5) Christian Bhajans, 6) Songs of Cavittunātakam, 7) Musical styles of Puthenpāna 8) Songs of Mārgamkaḷi, 9) Songs of Pariśamuttukaḷi and 10) Folk Songs.

Malayāḷam Hymns are simple songs, which are composed in Karnatic rāgās and tāḷās. These songs are elaborately used for the community worship in the Church. It does not have sections like pallavi or anupallavi; but different stanzas. These songs are very similar to the Gītam of Karnatic music. The song 'Deivame ṅāngalange Vāzhtunnu' was composed in the early 1950s.

Syro-Malayāḷam songs are plain melodies, which are adopted from the Syrian Hymns and Chant tradition. In 1962 when Syro-Malabar Church of Kerala was allowed to use the vernacular in their liturgical worship, bulk of Syrian hymns and Chants were translated into Malayāḷam by the famous liturgical lyricist of Kerala, Fr. Abel CMI. In other words, these songs have Malayāḷam text and Syrian tune. Even today these songs are used by the Syrian Christians of Kerala mainly on three different occasions, which are: i) Eucharistic Celebrations, ii) Funeral Service and iii) Prayers for liturgical hours. Some of these chants and hymns are recomposed according to the tāḷās of Karnatic music. Therefore Syrian hymns and chants are also influenced by the Karnatic music in its struggle for existence.

Āṅgalēya Kīrtanās are the songs, which are written in the vernacular retaining its original English tunes. Missionaries are the main composers of Āṅgalēya Kīrtanās. The song 'Samayāmā rathattil' is an adaptation of a popular western song.

Kīrtanam is a song, which is composed in a particular Karnatic rāga and tāḷa. This has the sections like pallavi, anupallavi and caraṇam. In the singing style, pallavi will be repeated after anupallavi and caraṇam. In the 1960s we see the flooding of Kīrtanās in the Kerala Church music.

Christians have employed the popular singing methods like Bhajans in various degrees in their worship. Bhajan being the liturgical music of India, many attempts were made by the Christian musicians to compose and develop Christian Bhajans. Fortunately, it has got positive response all over India. The All India Seminar held at Dharmaram College, Bangalore in 1969 has emphasized the need of developing Christian bhajans for worship. The emergence of National Biblical, Catechetical and Liturgical Centre (NBCLC) in 1969 in Bangalore and Bhajan collection published by them was a landmark in the history of inculturation of Christian liturgical music in India. Gradually Bhajans occupied a prime place in the Christian worship all over the country. The Indian liturgy prepared and introduced by Dharmaram College, Bangalore was another significant step towards this noble cause. A number of Bhajans, Nāmajapās and Sahaśranāmās have been composed. Many records and cassettes have been released.

Cavittunātakam (dance drama), a theatrical tradition of the Latin Christians of Kerala, may be considered musically the most sophisticated Christian art form. Cavittunātakam became very popular in the seventeenth century¹⁴ and “in a way is the Christian counterpart of Kathakaḷi”¹⁵ “originated and grew into a popular form of entertainment under the patronage of Portuguese missionaries.”¹⁶

Mārgamkaḷi (Play of the way), performed by St Thomas Christians, is the most important among the traditional Christian

¹⁴Sabina Rafi, *Cavittunātakam*, Kottayam: Sāhitya Pravartaka Co-operative Society, 1964, 17.

¹⁵Chummar Chundal, *Christian Folklore*, Thrissur: Kerala Folklore Academy, 1988, 73.

¹⁶Chundal, *Christian Folklore*, 74.

songs of Kerala.¹⁷ Mārgamkaḷi combines elaborate singing and vigorous body movements that require training in martial arts. It is performed by a group of twelve men representing the twelve Disciples of Christ. They move in circles around a lit lamp with eleven wicks, representing Christ.¹⁸ The song has more than four hundred lines divided into fourteen padam (sections) composed in various vṛttams (poetic meters). It describes the missionary activities and the martyrdom of Apostle Thomas in South India. The text, which may have been composed originally in Syriac, assumed its present form in Malayāḷam in the early seventeenth century. The music of Mārgamkaḷi combines elements of Syrian liturgical chants, South Indian folk music, and the metric patterns of the South Indian classical music. The extensive use of the seven beat Tāḷam from the South Indian classical music is very conspicuous and is an example of how the Christian art forms and musical genres are influenced by Karnatic music.

7. Critical Analysis of Music Compositions

7.1. Kriti: Eluntaruḷum

Rāgam: Rēvagupti (Jayna of 15th Mēḷakarta), Tāḷam: Ādi, and
Composer: Vedanayakam Sastriyar

Pallavi

|| s, r r, g g, p, p p | p g g p d, | , , d p ||
e – lun ta ruḷum yēsu svā--- mi---- --
|| g, p, , d p, g, g r | g p d p g r, , | s, , , ||
e – lun ta ru ḷum yē-su-svā--- mī --

Anupallavi

|| p g, p p, d, s s, sr, s, | d r, sd, p, | g p d p g p g r ||
vilunta lakai yalin toliyatolum surarum va-ra lācē

Caranam

|| s, r, , g g, p p p p | p g g p d, | d, d s d p ||
istirikal kanta varkkam etutēnt prēta-lankā
|| g, p, , d p, g, g p g r | s r g g | p, p p ||

¹⁷Jacob Velliyan, and S. Kurian Vembeni, *Mārgamkaḷipāttu*, Kottayam: Hadusa, 1995, 25.

¹⁸Chūndal, *Christian Folklore*, 49.

ratin murai tēdi-yitō āsa rikka van tār
 || p , g , , p d , s s r s | , d s , r s , , | s s r s d d p , ||
 ma ka -ta la ūr mariyūmakilntu tri sit-tē tṛa
 || p , d , , s s , s d d p | , g p , d p , | g p d p g p g r ||
 aka makilinta postālār- a ti- sayit tu ppo- tṛa---

Pallavi has two tāḷāvartanam and anupallavi has got only one tāḷāvartanam. But, there are four tāḷāvartanam in the caranam.

This Kṛiti is set to Ādi tāḷām. The madhyamakāla phrases make the Kṛiti more vibrant. Sāhitya style is very simple. The theme of the Kṛiti is narration of the resurrection of Christ. The composer tells how Mary Magdalene and Apostles found the empty tomb of risen Christ.

7.2. Kīrtanam Śrī mari sutanē

Rāgam: Śankarābharanam (29th Mēḷakarta), Tāḷam: Ādi,
 Composer: Abraham Panditar and Language: Tamil (Panditar)

Pallavi

s , g r	g m p ,	gmpm	g , sn	
śrī ma ri	sutanē	tiruvadi	saranam	
s , g r	g m p ,	----	----	
śrīmari	sutanē	----	----	

Anupallavi

g , m p	, m p ,	d n s n	d p m g	
mādhaya - para-	paranena taravaru			
s , s , n , p d n	s n d p	m g r s		
Manuve -lenu -	manukula varanē			
r s g r m g p m	d p n d	s , p ,		
nidhamunai mulumana	tudanadi pā-di			
r s g r m g p m	d p n d	s , p ,		
(śrī mari)				

Caranam

p , m g , r s n		r s n d	p , p ,	
a-va la-katu tit		tidu tiru	nā tha	
d , n s , r n s	g r g m	p , p ,		
jī va lō -ka vazhi		taru uru	vō nē	
p , m g , r s n		r s n d	p , p ,	
a-va la-katu tit		tidu tiru	nā tha	

|| d , n s , r n s | g r s n | r s n d ||
 dēva dē -va nena tikalula kavarudan ||
 || s n d p n d p m | d p m g | p m g r ||
 makilula karumadi tolutida tuti peṟu-

(śrī mari)

This is a small Kīrtanam in the rāga Śankarābharaṇam and it is set to Ādi tāḷam. This song is addressed to Jesus Christ. The Composer asks the Lord to show him the path of true life. The melodic structure is very simple.

7.3. Tāna Varṇam ‘Sandhya kālamāyita’

Rāgam: Hamsadhvani (Janya of 65th Mēḷakarta), Tāḷam: Ādi, and Composer: Mōśa Valsala Śāstrikal.

Pallavi

|| g , p , n p g r s , r , g , , , | g p n p g r s ṅ | p ṅsr grsr || san-
 dhya kā-la- mā-yi tā--- en-ba- ndhu-vām yē-su vē-- || g r s r g p g
 r s r g r s ṅ p , | p ṅsr g , p , | g p n p g r sr || a-nti - kē- - - nī-va-
 nnu--- vasicī- tē-ṇam-en-ra-ksaka-

Anupallvi

|| g , g , p , , , g , p n s n p , | g p n , s n p g | r g p n s , , , ||
 ba-ndhu vāi--nī-ni- nnī-til eniykku- dō-sa-me-nnu- mē---
 || s n p g p n s r s r g p g r s , | g r s n r s n p | s n p g n p g r ||
 e-ntu- sam-bha-vi-cce- nnā-lum va-nnī ti-lle- ni-sca- yam--

Mukthayi Svaram

|| g , g , g r s ṅ r , r , r s ṅ p | ṅ , s , g r s r | g p n , r s n p ||
 || n s r g p g r , g r s r s n p g | p n s , r , s r | g p , n , ṅ s r ||

Caraṇam

|| s , , , s n p , g p g r g r s r | g g p , g p n , | r s n p g p n , ||
 rā- - - vi- le- unarnnu nān--stutiykkum ni-nne pri-ya- ne---

Ettugadesvarās

1. || p , , , , , g , , , , r , s , , , | , , r , , , g , | p , g , p , n , ||
(rāvile.....)
2. || s , n p g , r s r , g r s n p , | n s r g p , s r | g p n , r g p n ||
(rāvile.....)
3. || s n p g r g p n p g r s n r s , | s n p n s r g p | r g p n p n s , ||
|| r s n p g s n p g r n p g r s r | s g r p g n p s | n r s g r p g r ||
(rāvile.....)
4. || n , , , , , r s n p p g r n s r | g , , , , , g r | p g n p s n r s ||

	n r p g r n r , g r , p n r s n	g p , n p , n r	p g r n s , r g	
	, g r p g n p s n r s , p g n p	s n r s , n p s	n r s , r s n p	
	r , s n p s , n p g n , p g r s r g p , , , r g	p n , , , g p n		
 (rāvile.....)

This varṇam is presently notated by Prof. R. Tyāgarājan of Swāti Tirunāl Music College. Although apparently it draws some similarity with the traditional Hamsadvani Varṇam, the melodic structure of the Varṇam is entirely different. Composer has followed the traditional structural pattern of Tāna Varṇam.

Varṇam is set to Ādi tāḷam. The tāna pulses in the layam give the tāna effect. The theme of the song is evening prayer and composer invites Jesus to come to his life and bless him. He says, “If God is with me, I lack nothing”.

7.4. Bhajan: Om Jagadeeswara

Rāgam: Śankarābharaṇam, Tāḷam: Caturaśra Ēkam, Language: Sanskrit, and Produced by: NBCLC, Bangalore.

	sd	sr	g,	g,		rg	,g		g,	r,	
	ōm	jaga	dī-	svara		sadā	pi		cin	maya	
	ss	rr	s	n	d	n		s,	,,	,,	,,
	jaga	dī-	svara	van		dē	--		-----		
	sd	sr	g,	pp		pd	,d		p,	p,	
	ōm	pari	pū	jita		parā	pa		rāt	ma--	
	pd	<u>dp</u>	m	g,	rg		p,	,,	,,	,,	
	ana	vara	tam	van		dē	--		--	--	
	pd	<u>dp</u>	m	g,	rg		r,	,,	,,	,,	
	ana	vara	tam	van		dē	,,		,,	,,	
	ss	rr	s	n	d	n		s,	,,	,,	,,
	ana	vara	tam	van		dē	--		-----		

This popular Bhajan has been composed in Ādi tāḷam and its melody is very plain. It only covers the scale of the rāga Śankarābharaṇam so as to give more scope for congregational singing.

8. Conclusion

Karnatic music, one of the leading classical schools of music in the Indian subcontinent has become an important school of music all over the world. Though this music was traditionally associated

with the Hindu religion, it is high time to think about its universal dimension as we have in Western and Hindustani systems of music, so that Karnatic music could retain its universality and establish its capacity to transcend the religious barriers.

Today Karnatic music is not a parochial system of music, but an internationally accepted system of music, which has a strong traditional and systematic foundation. When we try to analyse this school of music in terms of form and content, it is very vivid that the methodology of Karnatic music (rāga and tāla systems) can be considered as its form and the Hindu mythology, Vēdic, Upanisādic and Bhakti traditions as its content. The question is whether we can separate these two elements and substitute the content with any other religious and non-religious themes by retaining its original musical form, which is the Music Methodology of Karnatic music. Of course, in the past, quite a few individuals have tried in this line. But today we are looking for a well-organized and systematic foundation for this 'new thinking'. However, I am sure, in course of time this new target can be achieved with properly guided research and hard work. In the present world where we face uncountable communal riots and religious intolerance, culture, especially performing arts, has become an important factor of communal harmony and religious tolerance to bring peace in peoples' life. When cultural integration is on the move in the Church in India, it is a clear sign that religions are coming together in terms of culture and arts.

In the past few centuries Karnatic music has already shown its adaptability and universality by accepting the positive aspects from the other music systems and religions. I am sure, even in the 21st century Karnatic music will show its universality, by which themes from other religious faiths can be incorporated into its content. This is possible mainly because of the fluid nature of Hindu religion and its culture, which has accommodated almost all important religions in the world under its religio-cultural umbrella. This type of mutual respect and peaceful co-existence can be achieved through the powerful medium of Karnatic music.