



## MUSIC IN SANGAM PERIOD

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### Abstract:

The historic period of Tamil Nadu started with the Sangam age. Education in the arts is an integral part of the development of each human being. This study mainly will give importance to the origin and development of fine arts in the History of Tamil Nadu. Fine arts are included Music, Dance, Drama, painting and sculpture. The Tamil rulers were extended their patronage to the growth of Fine Arts. As a continuous tradition of the Sangam age to fine arts had its progress in various fields and inspired the coming generation to develop them in the Pallava age. Religion is the hand maid of art in Tamil Nadu. It will describe the cultural life of the Tamils from the Sangam Period.

**Key Words:** Yal, Panar, Pan, Perum Panar, Siru Panar, Kurinjipan & Mullaipan

### Introduction:

Music (Isai) is the food of love. Both vocal music and instrumental music were familiar and famous during the Sangam age. Music was connected with religion, human beings and time. As we notice earlier, all the five Thinais (regions) Kurinji, Mullai, Marudam, Neithal, Palai had five different stringed musical instruments called yals (aho;) It is also interesting to note that each region had a different melody (pan) of its own bearing the name of the region itself. They practiced separate melody type (Pan) both morning and evening.<sup>1</sup>

Melody was practiced by Pannars. Those who sang according to the melody were known as Panar, Perumpanar and Sirupanar were the two divisions. The songstress was known as Patinlyar. Music was their profession and earned money out of it.

A cowherd dwelling in forest, with the aid of the fire got by the friction of two sticks, makes holes in a small bamboo-stick and shapes a flute. With the help of this flute he plays the tune of palai. Not satisfying with this tune he takes a hollow branch of Kumila tree (cash more tree), ends it like a bow; ties the two ends with its filers and uses them as strings and plays the tune of Kurunchi. Thus he plays the tune of Palai and Kurinchi. (Peruban 172-83)<sup>2</sup>

Men of all professions and sexes in all walks of life utilized their knowledge of music and enjoyed the immense pleasure of it. Rich and poor, and all lands of people practiced music. The sound came while the process of churning curd into butter milk suggests to one poet's mind the roaring of a tiger which frightens the forests (Perum 156). The benefits of music were enjoyed by the ancients in a scientifically perfect manner. The characteristics behavior of each region (Thinai) may be discussed here.

Kurinchi: The women of a hilly tract (Kuratti) while worshipping Lord Muruga sings the Pan (tune) Kurinji and receives. Him (Tirumuruka LL 238-43)<sup>4</sup> Another reference may be cited here. A priest sings the devotional hymns on Muruga but he receives Him in the form of a spirit (Narri-v-3322). Young maidens who are guarding the fields chase away the parrots and other birds by singing a particular song called Alolam. The sweet song sung by the women which an elephant heard from the sky keeps itself quite. The restless eyes that used to be wide awake in search of food closed them – selves in their sheer delight of music (Aham V 102.) As the fury of the uncontrollable elephant even to the taming hand – spear of the mshout, is neutralized by the music of Yal (Kali V.L. 26-27).<sup>5</sup> Thus music served the purpose of domesticating and taming even wild animals.

Another reference from Malaipadukadam (LL 302-4) refers to that the music alleviates the wounded man. The Kurava tribes men fight with tigers, they are fatally wounded. The wives of these men begin to sing just to alleviate their pain. The women also used to sing Vilari pan (tune) in the battlefield near the wounded warriors in order to keep the greedy foxes away which would come by the scent of blood of the wounded warriors (Puram V291). Kanchipan was practiced in order to save the wounded men from the evil spirit (devils) Puram V 281) The above instances exhibit that the Sangam people had so far advanced in the are of music that they were able to distinctly analyse the several effects of the various tune and adopt them accordingly to suit the occasion The Kurathi sang the Valaippattu, while pounding the corn his song was practiced alternatively by two pounding women. Similar tune was adopted by the people in mountainous regions while threshing paddy (Kali V 42 LL 7-8).<sup>6</sup> The soothsayers among the women Kattuvicciyar and the women who distribute aims also used to sing traditional song (Kurum V 23 and Kali V 59)

Mullai: With a view to extend the influence of Mayon (Thirumal) cowherds, they extolled the purity of the divine symbol, found the environment of the kiadred, they sang and danced Acciyar Kuravai of Silapathikaram narrates these songs in detail.

There was a separate class of bards known as Viraliyar. They lived in the palaces and sang in praise of the king early in the morning. Kural, Tuttam, Kaikkilai, utai, Ili; Vilari and Taram are the seven musical notes (Svarams). Tamil musical notes were classified to Kurinjippan, Palaippan; Mullaippan. Marudappan, Neitharppan and Palaipgan. These were again classified into Pakarpan. Iravupan, Kalai and Malaippan

according to the time of a day. Flowers blossomed; elephant's swooned; robbers forgot to steal; ghosts disappeared; foxes ran away by hearing the sweet music.<sup>7</sup>

The people had acquired a remarkable skill in music from early times. They resorted to the common place of the city to enjoy music recitals. Many classes of bards were there. Virali was a class of bards who used to provide music in the public assemblies of the villages. Panar were roaming musicians and dancers singing in praise of the kings. Their woman – folk were called Viraliyar.

Porunar were another class of bards who accompanied the king to the battlefield. They were known for their talents, ready with an skill. Paraunar and Panar belonged to the same class. But Porunar were more esteemed than Panar by the rulers. They were more gifted poets and musicians than the Panar.<sup>8</sup>

Isai denotes that which moves or melts people. The Ahananuru states that even wild animals were stunned by the spell of sweet music. The verses of the Paripadal are attuned to music. Rhythmic variations of notes were called Pannuppeyarthal. Ripples of musical notes were called Uyavari. Tala or time marks the three stages, pan tukku and seer. A melodic phrase was called pan. Pans varied in their symphony, depending upon the hours of the day and the content of the musical text.<sup>9</sup> The morning pan was marudam and the evening pan was sevvalli. Marking time by means of clapping palms is also mentioned. There were musical treatises which dealt with the intricacies of the musical phraseology.

Seven notes – kumal, tottam, kainilai, ili, vilari, and taram were known. Different tunes were accorded to different tinais and different times of the day. The Silappadikaram presents the qualification of a competent musician. The indigenous system of music had attained a considerable measure of development.

- ✓ Pannars: Panar, Porunar, Kuttar, Viraliyar, Kodiyar and viraliyar were some of the musicians lived during the Sangam period. Isaippanar, Yalpannar, Mandaippanar were some of the division of the Panars. They used to play with Siriyal. The former one was called Sirupanar and the latter Perumpannar.
- ✓ The kings liberally donated to the musicians. Even the chieftains granted villages to them
- ✓ Musical instruments: The musical instruments according to the literatures are classified into.
  - Tokkaruvi
  - Tulikkaruvi
  - Narambukkaruvi
  - Kanchchakkaruvi
    - The Tokkaruvi are percussion instruments are – Murasu mulavu, tannumai, kinai, patalai, tattam, latari, tudi, akului, mattari etc.
    - The Tulaikkaruvi of wind instruments are tumpu, trumpet, flute, conch etc.,
    - Narambukkaruvi or stranged instruments are tumpu, Yal, Parai and Vil. Kurunji yal, Mullai yal, Marudam yal, Neithal yal and Palai yal are the special instruments used in each land. In short the music of the Sangam age had a tremendous emotional appeal.
    - Kanchcckkaruvi or bell metal instrument are mentioned in Malaipadukadam.<sup>10</sup>

Varieties of musical instruments were used in the Sangam age. One hundred and eight patterns of musical instruments are mentioned in the Silappadikaram. Certain instruments were used as aids to vocal music; some were used for independent instrumental play; and some were played as accompaniments to dance and drama.

At the local festivals and individual ceremonies, musicians displayed their talents. The Tamils of different tinais had their separate musical instruments. The musical instruments are classified as torkaruvi, narambukkaruvi, tulaikkaruvi, and kanchchakkaruvi.

#### **Torkaruvi (Percussion Instruments):**

Percussion instruments are greatly based on the principle of tala or rhythm. Sangam works mention murasu, mulavu, tannumai, kinkinai, patalai, parai, tattam, tontakan, pampa, mattarai, etc.

Adiyarkunallar gives a list of thirty – two leather musical instruments. The rulers had the drum of justice, the drum of valour and the drum of sacrifice. Pani and akuli are smaller types of a drum. Padalai is a drum with a single eye. Murasu is a big drum. It had a unique honour in the King's Palace. It was considered as an important feature of war and battlefield. Mulavu is identified with the modern matalam, and was played on one side with fingers and the other side with stick. Tannumai was a kind of drum used for the announcement of war or other common affairs. For other kinds of announcements of a private or social character, the drum used was parai. For the announcement of death, mattarai and tontakam drums were used. Tudi and tatari were small drums on which skilled drummers played with their fingers. Tudi was useful in cautioning agriculturists against sudden floods. Tatarai was used to scare away birds.<sup>11</sup>

Ellari, also called Sallipandil and mahuli, is a kancha tala and a cymbal made of bronze plates. The musical instruments were duly provided with sheaths called Kalappai for protection and durability.

#### **Tulaikkarivai (Wind Instrument):**

Wind instruments are considered by the scholars as the earliest musical instruments of the Tamils. They are either mouth – blown or bellow – blown. Flute is the most common instrument. Bamboo, ampal stem and konrai fruit were for making flutes. The Paripadal refers to a flute with five or seven holes. Tumpu is a flute

of a longer size with a slight difference. Udukompu was a musical instruments used during festivals and wartimes.<sup>12</sup>

**Narambukkaruvi (String Instrument):**

Yal is considered as the oldest instruments. Various varieties of yal prevailed. Adiyal was made of 1000 and more strings. Vilyal, Changodayal, Chemmunaikkohi, and Periyal were other prominent types of yal. There were four kinds of yal. Peiyal was played on with tow strings, maharoyal with nineteen strings, Sakotoyal with eleven strings and sengottuyal with seven strings. Pannars were also called as yalpannar.

**Kanchakkaruvi (Metal Instruments):**

The Malalipadukadam mentions different kinds of cybals. Pantil was made of well – melted bronze and it was circular in shape. The sound of bells was also considered as a musical accompaniment for dance performance.<sup>12</sup>

Musicans were patronized by rulers and lotus flowers made of gold were presented to them. Pari and Chola Nallankilli were some of the renowned patrons of music.

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