The Multiplicity of Music Traditions of Silapathikaram

Prashanthi Ilango

Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Arts and Culture, Eastern University,
ilango1966@gmail.com

Abstract

"The most fascinating Silapathikaram" as praised by Poet Barathy, is the foremost of the five great epics in Tamil. Silapathikaram, which is the embodiment of the essence of Tamil language, comprising literature, music and drama is an excellent master piece of literature created by Ilango Adikal who came from the Chera royal traditions. Multiplicity is a term put forward by post-modern thinkers. Multiplicity means considering all individual components as equals. Multiplicity rejects differences in status. In arts, the notion of multiplicity does not accept the trend that classical art is superior and folk art is inferior. Ilango Adikal too emphasis this fact through the music traditions of Silapathikaram. In this sense, he explains the structural multiplicity of the society and the multiplicity of music traditions which were rooted in the structure that existed in the society. When we consider how the multiplicity of culture is structured in the Silapathikaram society, we find that the society consisted of many edges around the center. At the center were those who were connected to the top level economy of the society while   every margin moving out from the center, depicted those who were gradually becoming low-level in economic growth. In this sense we can understand the social structure of Silapathikaram as follows: At the center of the society is the State, followed by land owners, traders, Brahmins, shepherds, gypsies and veddhas, in that order. At the margins we can find pallar, parayar and ambanar whose lives are also structured in this manner. In this sense, the music traditions of Silapathikaram can be considered under three categories namely classical music tradition, non-classic music tradition and folk music tradition. Classical music traditions prevailed among those of the superior culture   and they consisted of musical events performed before them. Classical music traditions are evident in verses sung in praise of kings, kaathaikal (long poems) and also in musical techniques used in the arangetram of Mathavy.Non-classical music traditions speak of the uniqueness of kuravai songs, ammanai and oonjal songs which relate to the villagers and their lives. Folk music traditions speak of the uniqueness of musical songs such as kurisollum padalkal, nadodi padalkal, ullakai padalkal, etc. Through this study, it could be concluded that a multiplicity of music traditions had been built in Silapathikaram through the multiplicity that prevailed in the society.

Key words: Multiplicity, interaction, structure, ambanavar, edges