

Tuyilunarttu Pattu: Wake-up Songs of the Gods

L.S. RAJAGOPALAN

*Kausalya supraja rama
Purva samdhyā pravarttate
Uttistha narasardula
Kartavyam daivamahnikam*

Most people remember these familiar lines as the first lines of *Venkatesa Suprabhatam*. But these are the lines used by sage Visvamitra to wake up Srirama in the Balakanda of *Valmiki Ramayana*. Perhaps this is the first *Tuyilunarttu Pattu* (wake-up song) we have in India. In the *Puranas*, occasions can be seen where not only men, but gods also are woken up from sleep (Yoganidra). In *Devi Mahatmya (Brahmanda Purana)*, when the *asuras*, Madhu and Kaitabha, tried to assault Brahma, Brahma seeks the help of Nidradevi (goddess of sleep) to wake up Mahavisnu who lies in yoganidra.

*Tustava yoganidram tamekagra hṛdayasthitah
nibhodonarthaya harerharinetrakrtalayam*

*Visvesvvarim jagaddhatrim sthiti samhara karinim
Nidram bhagavatim visnoratulam tejasah prabhuh*

Thus the concept that gods should also be woken up from sleep entered into temple rituals as well.

In the temples of Kerala, in the early morning before the sanctum sanctorum is opened, usually, Sankhu (Conch) is blown and Maddalam, Itakka, etc., are played. In some temples, playing of Nagasvaram is customary. Nagasvaram used to be referred to as Pandi Vadya which came from Pandya kingdom. The implication is that it is not originally from Kerala. Perhaps, Kurumkulal used to be played in these places. Mostly, Tuyilunarttu (waking up) is confined to blowing of Sankhu.

In neighbouring states such as Tamil Nadu, there is a practice of singing the Tuyilunarttu Pattu in the temples. In the temples of Tamil Nadu, there is a custom of leading the deity to the sleeping chamber in the night. (In Kerala, this is followed only rarely as in Thiruvanchikulam temple, etc.). There is also a practice of waking up and bringing the deity in the morning. The songs used to wake up the deity are referred to as Tuyilunarttu Pattu. They are also called Tiruppalli Elucci Pattu. The song composed by the sage Tontar-Atippeti-Alvar for waking up Lord Ranganatha of Sriranga is sung by Tamilians even in the houses in the month of Dhanu (December-January).

*Katiravan gunadisai sikharam vantu anaintan
ghana irul akantatu kalayam polutay
madhu virintu olukina mamalarellam
vanava rajarkal vantu vantu inti
etir disai niraintanar ivarotum pukunta
irunkalir irramum pitiyotu murasum
atirttalil alai katal pontrulatu enkum
arangathamma palli eluntarulaye
(Bhupala Ragam, Ata Talam)*

Attur Ravi Varma, a member of the Trichur Kathakali club has translated these verses into Malayalam :

*Katiravan kilakke dikkil vannananhu
kariyirul ninnitappol
malarukal ten nirannu virinnu
devar manavarum tan munnennu tirakki
kalca kanuvantiridisayil nirnnu
ivareriya konpanmarum pitikalum perumparayum
naludikkilum kataliranpamutirkkumpol
arannhattamma tuyilunaru*

(The sun has arrived in the east
Then black darkness disappeared
Flowers bloomed, full of honey
Gods and men pushed forward
On opposite sides to watch the scene
The elephants and she-elephants on whom they mounted
Along with the giant drums roar on all four directions like sea
O Arangattamma, awake!)

While waking up Lord Ranganatha, Arangattamma (divine consort), Lakshmidēvi, is first awakened.

In olden days, this was sung in Puranir raga. Since Tamilians have lost this raga now, it is sung in Bhupala raga. We in Kerala still preserve Puranir raga. When a Kathakali performance is concluded and Dhanasi (concluding song) is sung, it is almost morning. We sing that Dhanasi in Puranir Raga.

Let me state that other ragas which are to be used in the morning are Bhupalam, Bauli, Malayamarutam, Bilahari, Desaksi etc.

Now we maintain the tradition of Tuyilunarttu Pattu only in the month of Karkkitakam (July- August). *Panas* are entitled to sing it. In Tamil Nadu, those with a vocation of singing were referred to as *Panas*. *Pan* means *raga*. One who sings *pan* is *Pana*. They had a high position in the society. The *Panas* of Kerala also claim this tradition. Besides, they also claim that they are descendents of Tiruvarangatt *Panas*. In Tiruvarangam, i.e., Srirangam, there was a *Pana* very many years ago. He used to stand outside the temple tower and sing

praising the deity. Thus, one day, as usual he was standing, engrossed in singing. This became a hindrance for the priest to enter the temple. The priest asked the 'untouchable' to give way. The singer, engrossed in singing, did not hear this. The priest picked up a stone and threw it at the singer. The Pana got wounded and blood came out. When the priest entered the sanctum sanctorum, he found that blood has come out of the idol. Immediately, a voice was heard: 'The stone thrown at my devotee has wounded me. Go immediately, carry him on your shoulder and bring him inside'. The stunned priest rushed out to the tower. Outside, the Pana was still singing. Not heeding his protests, the priest carried him on his shoulder and brought him inside the sanctum sanctorum. The Pana transformed to a divine body and became one with the idol. So the legend goes. From that day, he was known as Tirupan Alvar. His songs are available even in print. The Panas who come here to sing Tuyilunarttu Pattu are said to be the descendents of the divine Pana of Tiruvarangam. In the Collumoli recited by them before singing, it is said that the Tiruvaranga proceeded to praise and sing.

There was a practice of singing Tuyilunarttu standing outside the tower before sunrise on the first day of the month of Karkkitakam and receiving rights from the Devaswoms (temple authorities) in the temples of Trichur Paramakkavu, Vatakkunnathan, Thrprayar, etc. In some temples, even though this practice is discontinued, they used to sing in the houses only after singing in front of the temples. This ritual is almost discontinued. Even then, in some regions, the traditionalists have not discontinued this. During my investigations, what a Pana told me was interesting: Many householders in his territory sold their houses and paddy fields to Christians and shifted to towns. On losing income, he learnt Christmas carols. He is said to maintain his rights by singing them in the houses of the newcomers.

While singing in houses, the Pana sings playing the Utukku and the Patti (female Pana) repeats. From their songs, we can understand that in olden days, they used to sing playing the *vadya* (musical instrument) Tuti. Tuti is a musical instrument similar to *Itakka*. It is played using a *Kol* (stick). For some reason, Tuti has been changed to Utukku. In Malabar region, Tuti is more popular.

When they begin to sing, a sloka is recited, not strictly with tala (rhythm). This is referred to as singing Kalatra. There are Kalatras dedicated for deities of each temple. Some Kalatras are in pure Tamil. This may be due to the strong influence of Tamil tradition. In the Kalatra about the deity of Thrprayar, the abridged Ramayana story is told. I have observed some Panas singing some slokas from *attakathas* (performance text for Kathakali) Once I and my friends really shed tears of joy, hearing a particular Kalatra specially preferred by a Pana. This sloka is said to be composed by Kururamma:

*Unni vava kuliccituka kurikalumittunnam ni kumara
innallo nin pirannal calipotiyumaninnentivannam natappan
ennivannam yasodavacanamutanekettonnu mellecciricco-
runnikannare bhavam mama punarorunal kanmatin bhagyamunto?*

What they sing about *Bhagavati* (goddess) begins somewhat like this :

Siva bodi maha bodi
ganga Bhagavati urakkamoliya
 [Note : *bodi* = *Bhagavati*]

They sing about *Mahavisnu* :

Entumele evatammilume
tuyil kontu bhagavanum
arayalinte vatakke poya
kompatinmel palli kontu
kanniverrila nakaratinmel
palli kontu bhagavanum

The story of this song goes like this: Lord *Srinarayana* sleeping in the *Palali* (milk ocean) did not wake up. Many attempts were made to wake him up, but of no use. An astrologer was brought and the positions of the stars were ascertained. It was concluded that the Lord will wake up only if *Tiruvarangatt Pana* sings *Tuyilunarttu Pattu*. Arrangements were made to bring the *Pana*. When he came and sang, the Lord opened his eyes and blessed all.

I have observed the songs of *Panas* beginning with ragas such as *Natta*, *Puranir*, *Bhupalam*, *Anandabhairavi*, etc. There are many who can sing in other ragas as well. When the opportunities for their traditional vocation became reduced, many *Panas* became *Nagasvaram* players. There are many who can play at a good standard. There is a saying: *pantunto panan pottu puttitt* ('Has a *pana* ever yoked buffaloes?'). Even though this is said in jest, there is some truth in it. Their attitude is towards art. *Panas* are musicians, that art is well-mingled with their race. By tradition, they are blessed with good voice. It is no wonder that they have more aptitude in singing than in any other vocation. There was a notable incident during my investigations. After approaching a *Pana*, collecting details and recording the songs, I said: Now let us stop. Then that *Pana* sang in *Madhyamavati* raga briefly and stopped. Very happily, I asked: "Why is this so?" He replied: "Shouldn't it be so while stopping?" He did not know that the name of the raga was *Madhyamavati*. It is their practice to stop after concluding by singing in *Madhyamavati*.

A sad incident: A *Panar Mahasabha* (grand meeting) was organized in *Trichur*. Even though there was no invitation, I went there to keep abreast of developments in the practice of the traditional art. I met the organizers and collected details. There were programmes by children: *Bharatanatyam*, light music etc, etc. When I asked about *Tuyilunarttu Pattu*, the reply I received was: Who wants that *Tuyilunarttu Pattu*?

If we do not do the needful to restore the pride the *Panas* have lost in their traditional art, the loss would be definitely ours. In most of the temples, *Nagasvaram* is played. *Nagasvaram* is important for *Kavati Attam*. There are two institutions for teaching temple musical instru-

ments. But there is no institution in Kerala to teach Nagasvaram. This may be because it is Pandi Vadyam.

Translated by A. Purushothaman. The original article was published in Malayalam in the Souvenir (2001, pages 71-79) of the Kathakali Club, Trichur. The translator thanks Dr Harindranath for preparing the electronic version and Mr P. Radhakrishnan Nair for providing the correct text of the verse 'Unni Vava'.