

**DANCE DRAMAS OF *KURAVAÑCI* GENRE -
A STUDY OF KUMBĒSAR *KURAVAÑCI*, RĀJAMŌHANA *KORAVAÑCI*
AND SĀHAJI MAHĀRĀJA-S *KURAVAÑCI***

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Introduction and scope of study

Kuravañci is a type of dance-drama known as *abhinayanātakā-s* or *nrīttanātakā-s*, which stands out as an example for those dramas which are a combination of dialogues, mime executed for well-structured poetry set to music. This genre is found composed predominantly in Tamil and in a few other languages like Telugu, Samskr̥tam and Marāṭhi. The earliest *Kuravañci* has been traced back to the twelfth century as mentioned in the Tamil text ‘*Aindu Tamizhisai Nāṭya Nāṭakangal*’ published by the Tanjavūr Sarasvati Mahāl Library, mentioned as ‘*Cōzhan Kuravañci*’ and is said to have been composed by Kambar. However there is no evidence of the text being available now, hence we do not know whether it was similar to the many *kuravañci-s* that were composed much later, during the Marāṭha rule in Tanjavūr starting from the latter part of the seventeenth century when King Ēkoji was the ruler, which are probably the earliest ones with the text available. The dance form prevalent in the Tanjavūr court was *sadir*, which was the form of dance used to perform the *Kuravañci* genre of dramas. There are references of the *Kuravañci* genre dramas performed in the royal palace as well as in the temple precincts.

In this paper, a brief study of three dance dramas, *Kumbēsar Kuravañci*, *Rājamōhana Koravañci* and *Sāhaji Kuravañci*, which are considered to be the oldest *kuravañci-s*, for which the text is available, is done. These were composed during the period of King Sāhaji and King Tulaja. The study starts with references from *Tolkāppiyam*, *Silappadikāram* and Sangam literature on and about information related to *kuravañci* like sooth-saying and fortune telling. The story, unique features and other relevant details observed during the study of the three oldest *Kuravañci-s* available, *Kumbēsar Kuravañci*, *Rājamōhana Koravañci* and *Sāhaji Kuravañci* composed during the Marāṭha period provide us a bird’s eye view on the wealth of information about life and times in the period, that particular *Kuravañci* was composed.

References from Literature

Kuravañci Dance Dramas have been classified by as a type of *Siṟṟilakkiyam* (minor literary genres) in Tamil Literature. Tolkāppiyam, an ancient Tamil text talks about the practise of bringing a woman who was a fortune-teller to find out what is in the mind of the distressed heroine.

கட்டினும் கழங்கினும் வெறியென இருவரும்
ஒட்டிய திறத்தால் செய்திக் கண்ணும்
- தொல்காப்பியம்

Kaṭṭinum kazhanginum veriyena iruvarum
ōṭṭiya tīrattāl seytik kaṇṇum
- Tolkāppiyam

In Dr.S.Raghuraman's 'History of Tamizh's Dance' the following explanation is given for the above verse. 'On seeing the reddened eyes of the heroine, the mother, in suspicion and to find out the future, summons *Kaṭṭuvicci* who is capable of foretelling the fortune, through the movements of sea shells.' Hence the heroine pining due to separation from her beloved and the woman who has the prowess to predict the fortune being called was in practise even during the period of Tolkāppiyam.

There are also ample references to sooth-sayers, diviner women and fortune-telling in the Sangam literature. In the Sangam period too, there has been the practise of bringing a fortune-teller to read what is in the mind of the heroine who pines for her hero.

In the below example, the heroine is wasting away pining for her lover. Her mother, not knowing about the love affair, has invited a soothsayer to find out the reason. Here, the friend tells the diviner woman and the family in a subtle way, that the heroine is sick because of her lover.

அகவன் மகளே அகவன் மகளே
மனவுக்கோப்பு அன்ன நன் நெடும் கூந்தல்
அகவன் மகளே பாடுக பாட்டே
இன்னும் பாடுக பாட்டே அவர்
நன் நெடும் குன்றம் பாடிய பாட்டே

Transliteration:

Agavaṇ magaḷē Agavaṇ magaḷē
maṇavukkōppu anna naṇ neḍum kūntal
Agavaṇ magaḷē pāduga pāṭṭē
iṇṇum pāduga pāṭṭē avar
naṇ neḍum kuṇḍram pāḍiya pāṭṭē
- *Kuruntokai 23, Avvaiyār, Kuravañci Tinai*

The translation is as follows:

O diviner woman! O diviner woman, with pretty, long, white hair looking like strands of conch shells. Sing the song. Sing it again, the song you sang about the fine tall mountains that he resides in.

The *Prabandha-s* in the Tamil literature is considered ninety six in number as mentioned in the 18th century text *Prabandha Marabiyal* (Author unknown). Among the ninety six listed in *Prabandha Marabiyal*, we do not find *Kuravañci* but *Kurattippāṭṭu* is listed. It is also listed and described in the earlier text *Panniru Pāṭṭiyal* as follows:

இறப்பு நிகழ் வெதிர் வென்றுமுக காலமும்
திறப்பட உறைப்பது குறத்திப்பாட்டே
குறத்திப் பாட்டும் அதனாரற்றே

- பன்னிரு பாட்டியல் சூத்திரம் (217, 218) ¹

Irappu nigazh vetir venrumuk kalamum
Tirappaḍa uraippatu kurattippāṭṭē
Kurattip pāṭṭum atanārarrē

- *Panniru Pāṭṭiyal* (217, 218)

To sing about the ability of astutely predicting the past, present and future by the *Kuratti* is *Kurattippāṭṭu*, as per the above definition. *Kuram* is a type of *Siṟrilakkiyam* which is considered to have evolved from *Kurattippāṭṭu*, which has a lot in common with *Kuravañci* type literature. *Kuravañci* is a work which combines the three types of Tamil Literature viz. *Iyal*, *Isai* and *Nātakam*.

Study of a selection of *Kuravañci* Dance Dramas

Analysis of the Characters in *Kuravañci* dance dramas taken for study

1. **Pāṭṭudai Talaivan:** (The Hero) - He is the one in whose praise the entire drama is based upon. He is either God (E.g., *KumbēsarKuravañci*), King (E.g., *Sāhaji Mannan Mītu Kuravañci*)
2. **Pāṭṭudai Talaivi:** (The Heroine) – The heroine is a young maiden from a noble family, either a princess or of high birth. The heroine is predominantly a *Virahōtkañṭitha Nāyika* who suffers from the onslaught of the cupid, moon, and gentle

¹GovindarasaMudaliar, Ka.Ra, *Panniru PāṭṭiyalMēṟkōḷ Sūttirangaḷudan*, *The South Indian SaivaSiddhanta works*

breeze, suffers from pangs of separation and laments about her condition, awaits the arrival of her sakhi desperately and requests her sakhi to go as a messenger to fetch her lord.

3. **Sakhi/Pāngi/Thōzhi:** (The Heroine's friend) – She is the confidante and messenger for the heroine.
4. **Kuratti/Singi:** –She is the central character who brings in light heartedness with her wit and humour. The *Kuratti* in the *Kuravañci* is one who is a soothsayer, fortune teller or a diviner woman, capable of predicting the past, present and the future. *Kuratti* usually has a small stick and a basket as described in many *Kuravañci*-s. Also she is usually a repository of information regarding the local geography especially about the temples, nearby areas and mountains.
5. **Kuravan/Singan:** – He is Kuratti's husband most often found bird watching or bird hunting.
6. **Nūvan/Kuzhuvan:** – *Kuravan*'s assistant/friend.
7. **Kaṭṭiyangāran:**– He is the narrator who infuses humor, sometimes introduces the lead roles and also at times connects the various events in the play.

Kumbēsar Kuravañci – A study

Kumbēsar *Kuravañci*, composed by Papanāsa Mudaliār is on Lord Sri Kumbēsvār of Kumbakōnam. This *Kuravañci* has the mention of the Marāṭha King Ekōji who ruled Tanjavūr between 1676 and 1683 in the sixth verse given below

இரவலர் திருவான்றஞ்சை யேகோசி ராசன் (பா:6)

Transliteration:

Iravalar tiruvanrañcai yēkoci rāsan

Furthermore, U.V.Swaminatha Iyer in his book 'Ninaivu Manjari' has written an entire chapter about the author of this text, Papanāsa Mudaliār. He says that Papanāsa Mudaliār lived during the 17th Century in Kumbakonam when King Ēkoji was the ruler of Tanjavūr. Hence there is a view that this work was composed during the reign of King Ēkoji. However, in Song 43, *Vācalitukāṇ ādikumbēsar vāsalitukāṇ* in rāgam Ārabi in the third caranam, the lines mention King Tulaja

Tulasi rāsanaruḷ sundara busabela
Vaḷava nēkapati makarā sanpaṇi

Also there are other evidences like the foreword written by S.Kalyanasundaraiyyer mentions that Papanāsa Mudaliār lived during the early part of the 18th century. Hence we can safely conclude that this is a work during King Tulaja's period.

Papanāsa Mudaliār is also said to be the composer of many *kṛti*-s which are popular to date in the saivaite themes E.g., *Naḍamāḍi Tirinta* in rāgā Kāmbōji. His signature (mudra) is Papanāsa that he incorporates in the song without affecting the meaning².

The story line follows the traditional *Kuravañcip* pattern. The play starts with *Kāppu* (invoking the the various deities), *Thōdayam*, the song in Rāgam Nāttai. Then follows the *Mangalam*, following which various deities are invoked. The *Kaṭṭiyakkāran*'s entry is the next part after which the heroine is introduced. Here the heroine Cegan Mohini, seeing Lord Kumbēsvarar come in procession, falls in love with Kumbēsvarar and pines for him. She blames the cupid, breeze and the moon for troubling her when she is all alone and asks them not to torment her in her love-sick condition. She pleads with her dear friend (Sakhi) to help her. Sakhi agrees to help the heroine.

At this point in the story the *Kuratti* enters. This section '*Kuratti Varugai*' has references to many historically significant and divine instances that took place in the place called '*Kuḍantai*', which is another name for Kumbakōnam. For eg., The 19th and 20th line in the section *Kuratti Varugai* is as follows

மேவுபக வன்பிதா வெந்தவெள் ளெலும்பு
பூவாய் தோன்றும் புரிதிருக் குடந்தை

Transliteration:

Mēvupagavanpitāventaveḷ ḷelumpu
PūvāytōṇrumpuritirukKuḍantai

This verse has references to incidents mentioned in the *Kuḍantai Purānam*. There lived a Brahmin named Bagavan in Thirumaraikādu. In order to immerse the funeral remains, he sets out to reach the Ganges. On the way, he reaches the banks of river Kauveri in Kumbakonam, where, before going to take bath he places the vessel carrying the remains of his father on the branch of a tree. He was accompanied by a small boy, who wanted to know if the vessel contained any food. So, when Bagavan was taking bath, the boy opened the vessel only to find lotus flowers instead of bones. He replaces the vessel without saying

²Suvamināthaiyyer, Dr.U.Ve., NinaivuManjari Part 2, Chapter 24, Pg 24, KalaimagalKāriyālayam, Chennai, 1944, Pg:212

anything. After bath, Bagavan returns and both of them proceed to Kāsi. On reaching Kāsi, when Bagavan opens the vessel, the little boy notices that instead of Lotus flowers there were bones. He tells Bagavan how he found lotus flowers inside when he had opened it at the banks of river Kauveri. When Bagavan hears this, he comes back to Kauveri only to find that the bones have indeed turned into Lotuses as the boy had mentioned. Bagavan immerses the remains of his father in Kauveri and the place where he immerses the remains, is known as *Bagavatīrtam*.³

Many other interesting references from the *Kuḍantai Purānam* are used in this section. Each line talks about an incident that re-iterates the glory of Kumbakōnam and Kumbēsvarar. *Kuratti* talks about her clan, her land, the hills, the many different temple towns that she has visited explaining the prosperity in each section. The heroine also questions the *Kuratti* about the various rivers that she has seen and also asks her to explain what her talents are. The heroine then asks the *Kuratti* to predict her future. The *Kuratti* tells the heroine about those for whom she had already predicted the fortune and the gifts that she has acquired. She then after praying to *Ganapathi* tells the fortune of the heroine, who in turn becomes overjoyed hearing the *Kuratti*'s prediction and showers her with gifts. With this the first part of the drama comes to a close.

Kuzhuvan's entry signifies the start of the next section. Kuzhuvan and Singan hunt the birds. Singan searches for his wife who is missing for a long time. The play ends with Singan finding Singi, their light hearted bantering and witty verbal exchanges, bavani of Sri Kumbēsvarar and both the Singan and singi singing the praise of the hero.

Yet another interesting feature in this text is that there are three songs (12, 15, and 41) in which Tamil and Telugu are used in the same stanza and this has also been pointed out in the foreword. Here in the example, an excerpt of the first two *caranam-s* is taken from the song 12, *Vantālaiyya Ceganmōginippen*. In this song the composer describes the virtues of the heroine of the drama, the charanam-s (stanzas) of which has two lines in Tamil and 2 lines in Telugu composed such that the important features that add to the beauty of any composition like Edugai (first letter alliteration) and mōnai (second letter alliteration) are present.

³PapanāsaMudaliār, KumbēsarKuravanciNātakam, Pg 33, Dr.U.V.SwaminathaIyer Library Publication-3, Vasantha Press, 1944.

சரணம் 1

அலைக்குளசைந்த் தசைந்து நிலைகொள் கடவுண்மிக
நலக்குடந்தையிற் கும்பநாதர் நன்னாட்டினில்
தளுக்கு செக்குலதோ பலுகு சூபுலதோ
கலகலமனுசுன சிலுகல கொலுசி (வந்தா)

Caranam1

Alaikkulacainddacaindunilaikoḷ kaṭavuṇmiga
Nalakuṭantayir kumbanāṭarnannāṭṭiṇil
Taḷukkucekkulatō palukucūpulatō
Kalakalamanucunasilukalakoluki (vantā)

சரணம் 2

அப்பரவணிவேணி முப்புரதகனர்
ஒப்பில்லாதமணி தற்பரர் நாட்டினில்
உப்புசுக்குப்பிய கொப்பு கொப்புலனு
நிப்பமு கப்பினராஜ வதன (வந்தா)

Caranam2

Apparavaṇivēṇimuppuratakaṇar
Oppillatamaṇitarpararnāṭṭiṇil
Uppucukuppiyakoppukoppulanu
Nippumukappinarāḷavadana (vantā)

Hence the composer PāpanāsaMudaliār has been fluent in both Tamil and Telugu and such compositions are interesting in the performance perspective as well as it is not uncommon to perform a song from a *Kuravañci* dance drama in a Bharatanāṭyam concert before the tillāna.

Conclusions and observations

- Kumbēsar *Kuravañci* is the oldest *Kuravañci* available to us, which is set apart by many unique features in it.
- The rāga-s are not mentioned for many songs in the manuscript that came into the possession of Dr.U.Ve.Swaminatha Aiyer and hence have been published in the same way. In those mentioned we find a frequent use of Pantuvarāli (four times) and Ārabi (twice) and usage of relatively less popular rāga-s like cenda are also found
- Viruttam, agaval, Veṇba, Kaṭṭaḷaikalippa, Kaṭṭaḷaikalitturai and songs with the sections Pallavi, anupallavi and caranam-s are the literary forms observed.

- The text is full of metrical structures rich in lyrical beauty which according to Dr.U.Ve.Sa and Gopalakrishna Bharati is due to the fact that the composer Pāpanāsa Mudaliār was a scholarly composer well versed in music and literature.⁴

Sāhaji Mannan Mīthu *Kuravañci*

The hero of this *Kuravañci* is the Marāṭha ruler *Sāhaji* II who ruled Tanjavūr between 1684-1712. A.D. History has it that King *Sāhaji* was a poet himself and his period was considered to be the golden period. During his period two other *Kuravañci*-s have been composed namely the *Tyāgesar Kuravañci*, *Rājamōhana Koṛavañci* and Mohini Vilāsa *Kuravañci*. MuttuKavignār, the court poet of King *Sāhaji* is the composer of this work. This work is in manipravālam.

The characters in the play are *Sūttiratāran* (the one who introduces the play and explains about it), Kaṭṭiyakkāran (the one who opens the play), King *Sāhaji* (The hero), Irāsakannigai (the one who falls in love with King *Sāhaji*), Sakhi (the dear friend of Irāsakannigai), *Kuratti* (the one who tells the fortune of the heroine) and Singan (*Kuratti*'s husband). This play was enacted at the *Nāṭṭiyasālai* (the dance area) of King *Sāhaji*'s Palace at Tanjavūr.⁵ It is to be noted that the *Singan*'s assistant *Nūvan*'s character does not exist in this play.

The play starts with *Thōdayamangalam*, which is a composition in Samskr̥tam in Rāgam Nāttai. This is followed by *Mangala Daruvu* in Telugu. Sri Vināyakar Daruvu that follows this is also in Samskr̥tam. There are dialogues for the *Sūttiratāran* in between the songs which serves as a means to communicate the connection between the various songs and helps the audience in understanding the story. The Heroine who is ensnared with love after seeing King *Sāhaji* in procession enters. She conveys her predicament to Manmata (cupid), the moon and the gentle breeze gently admonishing them for torturing her further.

Tūtu: In this *Kuravañci*, this section is descriptive and elaborate. The heroine pleads the swan to go inform her plight to her lord and fetch him. When the swan does not return even after a while, the heroine *Irāsakannigai*, requests the parrot to go with her message. When the parrot also does not return, she sends the bees in the garden. When even that attempt fails she sends

⁴Suvamināthaiyyer, Dr.U.Ve., NinaivuManjari Part 2, Chapter 24, Pg 24, KalaimagalKāriyālayam, Chennai, 1944, Pg:212

⁵Venugopalam.V, AinthuTamizhisaiNāṭṭiyaNāṭakangal, Sagaji, Page 84, SarasvatiMahal Library, 1990

the cuckoos. Finally when none of the above messengers return back, the heroine tells her predicament to her dear friend and begs her to go. Also she first asks her sakhi to fetch the *Kuratti*.

When *Kurattienters*, the heroine questions her about the places, hills, temples that she has visited. She also particularly questions the *Kuratti* about the rivers, flora and fauna, naturally available medicines, precious gems in the mountains and customs and traditions of the *Kurava* clan. All these songs are well connected by dialogues exchanged between the heroine and the *Kuratti* and the songs stand as exemplary examples of poems in simple Tamizh easily understandable and contains wealth of information which gives us an insight into the life and society at the time this *Kuravañci* was composed which could be either the end of seventeenth century or the early part of eighteenth century.

The heroine asks the *Kuratti* to tell about her previous experience in fortune-telling and asks her to list out the gifts that were given to her. A small excerpt from the *Kuratti's* reply is given below with transliteration

அங்க தேசத்தில் வங்க தேசத்தில்
aṅgadēcattilvaṅgadēcattil
இங்கிதக் குறி சொன்னேன்
iṅgithiṛ kuṛiconnēn
அட்டியும் தங்க சுட்டியும்ரத்னச்
Aṭṭiyumtaṅgakaṭṭiyumratnac
சுட்டியும் அவர் தந்தார்
Cuṭṭiyum avar tantār

அச்ச நாட்டில்மச்ச தேசத்தில்
Accanāṭṭinilmaccadēcattil
உச்சிதக் குறி சொன்னேன்
Uccitakkuriconnēn
ஆடையும் சில மூடையும் குறக்
āḍaiyumcilamāḍaiyumkurak
கூடையும் அவர்தந்தார்
kūdaiyum avar tantār

The above song is replete with *Edugai*, *Mōnai* and *Iyaibu*, and the rhyming words which are used to make the poem beautiful also gives us a wealth of information on the practises of gifting the soothsayer and names of the different places, names of different ornaments and accessories prevalent in the time of this *Kuravañci*.

The heroine then asks the *Kuratti* to tell what is in her mind. The *Kuratti* reads the palm of the heroine after invoking many deities. The *Kuratti* correctly answers the heroine and tells who and what is in her heart. The *Kuratti* also mentions that King *Sāhaji* will wed *Irāsakannigai* within a time frame of three *nāzhigai*-s. One *nāzhigai* is sixty minutes. Hearing this the heroine is elated and showers the *Kuratti* with gifts promising her more after she becomes King *Sāhaji*'s consort. She then sends message to the King through her friend.

After this there is a section where there is conversation between the *Sūttiratāran* and the *Singan* which is full of humor and wit. Similarly the next conversation is between the *Singi* and the *Singan*. The play ends with the union of King *Sāhaji* and *Irāsakannigai* and *Singan* and *Singi* witness it, which is another unique feature of this work.

Observations

Kāmbōji, Nāṭṭai, Tōḍi, Bhairavi, Sourāśtram are used in addition to a few rare *rāga*-s like Kaṇḍāvam and Dēvagupti. In addition to *ādi* and *caputālam*-s we also see *aṭatālam*. It is interesting to note that both the *Kuravañci* dramas that were composed during King *Sāhaji*'s time, has predominantly the *Daruvu* type of compositions. This work also has only *Daruvu*-s and *Vacanam* (dialogues).

Rājamōhana *Koravañci* – A Study

This work was composed by Girirāja Kavi, a poet in the court of King *Sāhaji* II who ruled Tanjavūr during the period between 1684 A.D and 1712 A.D. Unlike many other *Kuravañci* authors, about whom many details are not available, we have ample details about the life and contribution of Girirāja Kavi.⁶ This work is completely in Telugu follows the style of writing of *Kuravañci* dance drama-s. It is to be noted that the following *Kuravañci* dance drama-s, Tyāgesar *Kuravañci* (Tamil), *Sāhaji Maṇṇaṇ Kuravañci* (Tamil) and *Mōhini Vilāsa Kuravañci* (Samskr̥tam and Tamil) were also composed during the reign of King *Sāhaji* II. Hence it is not surprising to observe that there are many similarities in the sequence of events and the story line between the *Rājamōhana Koravañci* which is in Telugu and *Sāhaji Maṇṇaṇ Kuravañci* composed by Muttu Kavignar.

⁶Seetha, Dr.S., Tanjore as a seat of music, University of Madras, Chennai, 2001, Pg: 136

The drama starts with a *Dvipada* with description of how King Sāhaji comes on the royal procession and the heroine charmed by his beauty, falls in love with him. Then she goes into the garden with her friends. The heroine's beauty is described elaborately and she is referred to as the 'Rājakanyakāmini' or 'Rājakanyaka'. She condemns the beautiful moon, gentle breeze and cupid for troubling her and asks them to leave her alone. She then asks the Parrot, Cuckoo, bee and swan to go as a messenger and inform her love to King Sāhaji, but to no avail. In order to know the future she requests her friend to bring a *Kuratti*. The *Kuratti* in this work is called *Jaganmōhana Koravañci*. She is described to have a basket and on her back she has a baby tied to her. The heroine asks her to tell where she is from, what are the places, temple towns, rivers, hills that she has visited. In this section we come to know the names of many places that existed during the time when the *Koravañci* was composed.

In the following lines of the Padyam starting with అంగవంగకాశ్మీరకాంభోజి-

*Angavangakasṁrākāmbōja k-
aṭṭamagadapāncāla
baṅgālavaitarba guru saga kōsala
parparamālavamatṣya
kōṅgaṇaKēraḷamāḷavasourāśṭra
gūrjarasindukarnāta
ṭēṅgaṇapuḷintakarahāṭavarahāṭa
vanga kanaka kām̐bīra
lāḍakowḷamahārāśṭrapōda
virāḍadēsamulucūci
mēḍisāhēndrudēlecolādēsamu
pōdirōṇē cūḍavasti*

many places are listed like anga, vanga etc., which gives us an insight into the names of the places that existed at that time. The heroine next asks the *Koravañci* to list the islands that she has visited. Now we get to see the following names Kocci, kollam, kozhumbu, Singalam, ilangai, mannār mentioned in the island category. The heroine next asks the *Koravañci* to tell about the hills that she has visited. The *Koravañci* lists the following hill names, Kanakagiri, Simhagiri, Garudagiri, Rajatagiri, Himātri, Kantamātanagiri, Malāyatri, udāyatri, Mantrātri, Astātri, Gōvardanagiri, Sēsāḍri, Simmāḍri, Anjanāḍri, Sañjīvimalai, Sattiyamalai, Sōṇamalai, viruṣāpātri and cakkiramalai. Now the heroine asks the *Koravañci* to tell her what all are there in these hills. For which the *Koravañci* replies in detail. She says that she found Sandal wood trees, Himalayan Cedar trees, Teak tree, Dilo Oil tree and many other varieties of plants. Next the princess asks the *Koravañci* about the various animals that she has seen. The *Koravañci* is also asked to list out the 'fragrance emanating animals' that she has come

across. In this section we find a few unique names of animals listed, like, *Kastūrimāṅgal*, *Javvādu Pūṇaigal* and *Punugu Pūṇaigal*. Next on the request of the heroine, the *Koravañci* lists out the medicines found in the hills, the precious gems found in the hills, the rivers that she has passed and the temple towns that she has visited. Next the *Koravañci* talks about the practises followed by the people in her community. The following are mentioned by the *Koravañci*. She says that in their community

- If the husband goes away, then our brother-in-law is our husband.
- At night they make strands with shells and other beads
- They get drunk and eat cat's meat
- Singan stays at home and we take care of him very well.
- Their weddings take place for seven and a half hours.
- They live amidst nature not minding sun, shade, wind and rain.
- Singan drinks alcohol.
- They pray to Kollāpuriamman.
- She has come here, to the land ruled by King Sāhaji II, to see the Jē Jē Kuṛatti community.
- The followings types of Kuṛatti communities - Nāṭṭukkuṛatti, Malaikkuṛatti, kāttukkuṛatti, Jē Jē Kuṛatti
- She describes herself to be a malaikkuṛatti

The heroine satisfied with all this information, further questions the kuṛatti about her previous experience in fortune telling and the gifts received by her for the same. Here the *Koravañci* mentions about many jewellery items that she was gifted in various regions. Through this section one come to know the common names of jewellery which were in vogue then like *cudāmani*, *vairampatittakundalangal*, *valiyugam* and *kēyūram*. Then the *Koravañci* prays to her favourite deities and starts the job of fortune telling. She asks the princess to bring a dust picker full of pearls and some food. Then she prays to Kollāpuriamman and starts telling the heroine about her good fortune. There is a description of King Sāhaji's beauty, valour and virtues. The *Koravañci* reads the mind of the heroine and astutely predicts that King Sāhaji is the one, who has captured the heroine's heart. She also assures the heroine that the King will come to her and wed her within a time span of three days. The heroine overjoyed on hearing this showers the kuṛatti with many gifts.

The second part starts with the Singan roaming around in search of the kuṛatti. There is a light-hearted bantering and dialogue exchange between the sūttiratāran and Singan. After this the Singi/kuṛatti enters and after a small argument between the Singan and Singi, they unite. At this juncture the heroine, *Rājakanyaka* enters and asks the kuṛatti about the promise that she has given her. The kuṛatti sends the heroine's friend as a messenger to the King. The friend returns with the good news that the King will come very soon to wed the heroine. The work ends with a mangalam in praise of the King.

Observations and conclusions of the study

- This is probably the only *Kuṛavañci* that is in telugu, since mostly *Kuṛavañci* were composed in Tamil. Since this is a complete work in Telugu, the entire composition consists of *Dvipada*⁷, *Daruvu*⁸, *Vacanam*, *Padam*⁹ and *Padyam-s*¹⁰ which are different types of metrical structures found in Telugu Yakshagāna-s and other Nritya Nātakā-s in Telugu.
- It is interesting to note that there is not even a single composition that has the components Pallavi, Anupallavi and Caranam, and in this aspect also, it is very similar to the Sāhaji Maṇṇan *Kuṛavañci*. Both these dance drama-s consists of many Daruvu-s as compared with other kinds of compositions.
- Rare ragas like Bijīvanti, Rēgupti is used. Āhiri is used three times in the work.
- Many interesting references to the practises followed by the different Kuṛava clans is mentioned via the character kuṛatti, in addition to interesting geographical, topographical information, details about flora and fauna.

Inferences

- From the study we can understand that *Kuṛavañci* dramas give us information on literature, dance and music existing in the time when the drama was composed.
- We also find sociological, anthropological, historical, cultural, mythological and geographical, topographical information in abundance in addition to information on flora and fauna.

⁷A Dictionary of South Indian music and musicians by P.Sambamoorthy (Edition:1952, Madras), defines *Dvipada* as a musical form figuring in operas and set to time. It is a distich or a couplet. It is referred to as *Iraṇḍaḍikkannūn* in Tamil and consists of two lines of poetry.

⁸A Dictionary of South Indian music and musicians by P.Sambamoorthy (Edition:1952, Madras), defines *Daru* as a story song figuring in operas and dance dramas. The word is derived from the ancient musical form, *druva*.

⁹Tanjore as a seat of music by Dr.S.Seetha describes Pada to signify the words of a prabhandha type of composition. It is descriptive of the glory and of the nayaka to whom the prabhandha is addressed.

¹⁰A Dictionary of South Indian music and musicians by P.Sambamoorthy (Edition:2007, Chennai), defines Padya as metrical literary forms found in operas.

- Many *Kuravañci* dance drama-s have lost their importance and popularity after demise of that particular King to whom it has been addressed. The decrease in popularity and performance as well as information regarding *Kuravañci*'s performances can be attributed to the abolition of Devadāsi system, since the main performers in the drama-s were Devadāsi-s.
- In the *Kuravañci* dramas we find a mix of both Ghana rāga-s like Tōdi, Bhairavi as well as rāga-s which give a folk flavour (enhanced by the metre and simple language used which can easily be understood even by a lay-man). Hence the popularity of these dramas was relatively more which is proved by the vast number of *Kuravañci*-s that has been composed in both India and Srilanka.
- A study of *Kuravañci* dramas help us to understand the characters from different social strata, since details about their behaviour, dressing and way of speech can all be deciphered by analysing the text which is essential both in the view point of a performing artiste as well as a dance/music historian.

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