Delhi Comparatists

Delhi Journal of Comparative Studies
Volume II, 2022-23
Pages 114-134

Intermediality of Sensibilities: Reinforcement of *Navodaya* Poetry/Song in Kannada[1]

Shashikantha Koudur

Abstract: *The early phase of modern poetry in Kannada in the first few decades of the twentieth century has been identified as the* Navodaya *phase in the history of Kannada literature. Since the early poets were groomed by Western education, this phase showed themes and trends of Western Romanticism, and* Navodaya *has been identified as the Romanticism of Kannada literature. Other literary phases followed* Navodaya *in Kannada—* Navya*,* Navyottara *(or post-*Navya*), etc. All these trends exist in the Kannada literary space, irrespective of their emergence at different points in time. Even though* Navodaya *was the earliest modern literary phase, it found reinforcement through the twentieth century at different junctures as poetry/song. The musicality of its sensibilities and expression submitted the genre repeatedly as music before the public in different ways. An important factor in this reinforcement of the genre could be termed "intermedial."*

The first four or five decades of the twentieth century have been identified as *Navodaya* (rise of the new) phase in the history of Kannada literature. The phase of the fifties and sixties could be correlated with the *Navya* (new or novel) movement; seventies, eighties and

thereafter, could be marked as *Navyottara* (or post-*Navya*). However, we cannot compartmentalise the poetic sensibilities in a rigid sense in these phases, for such compartmentalisation negates the spill overs, overlaps, and continuities. Hence, for example, it would be wrong to say *Navodaya* poetry came to an end after *Navya* emerged. Similarly, even in the *Navyottara* phase, we have seen *Navya* poetry flourish, too. At the turn of the century, we could see literatures of these different sensibilities occupying the Kannada literary space, as though a collage. Of this collage-like scenario, we are specifically interested here in *Navodaya*, a literary phase, a sensibility, and a form of poetry that found reinforcement through the twentieth century. During this time, *Navodaya* poetry/song manifested before the public at different junctures in different ways. We can identify the processes that repeatedly reproduced the genre as part of the concept called "intermediality." At a certain juncture, intermediality called into question the relationship between poetry and song and led to a realignment of aesthetic allegiances towards poetic sensibilities.

Let us first acquaint ourselves with what was rather firmly established as *Navodaya* during the early twentieth century. Prabhushankar, a critic and one of the earliest commentators on *Navodaya*,[2] divides the early twentieth century poetry into several perceivable categories—nature songs, love songs, social songs, patriotic songs, nationalist songs, and so on. Prabhushankar assigns an umbrella term, *Bhavagite*, to these categories together. The latter is a term that loosely refers to a genre of poetry that has an emotional appeal and that can be sung (22). In fact, most of the *Navodaya* poetry could be sung since they are in metrical rhythm. One of the earliest collections of *Navodaya* was brought out by Masti Venkatesha Iyengar in 1922, with the title *Binnaha*, which had *raga*s and *tala*s specified before each of the poems, just as in *kirtana*s.[3] In fact, *kirtana*s had considerably influenced the *Navodaya* sensibilities. When Betageri Krishnasharma (another noteworthy

figure of *Navodaya*) published a collection titled *Bhavagite* in 1926, a good number of *kirtana*s from Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa, and Vadiraja got printed along with the poetry of *Navodaya* poets such as Masti, Krishna Sharma, D.V. Gundappa, and so on. In his treatise on *Navodaya* poetry titled *Kannadadalli Bhavagite*, Prabhushankar takes up the poetry of the then established Kannada poets such as B.M. Srikanthaiah, T.N. Srikanthaiah, KuVemPu, Da.Ra. Bendre, Govinda Pai, K.S. Narasimhaswamy, Masti, etc. for the purpose of exemplification. The famous poet Bendre is said to have been influenced by the *abhang*s, *padas,* and *lavani*s sung by his mother. Many of his poems bear the influence of those songs. If precolonial times presented a hazy boundary between song and poetry, one could identify *Navodaya* as a phase when song and poetry became more aware of each other as cultural genres became distinct and different.[4] In other words, poetry in Kannada became institutionalised during the early *Navodaya*; singing, too, was on its way to become institutionalised as a separate and independent cultural practise, even as it was facilitating *Navodaya* establish itself as a poetic genre. Kirtinatha Kurtakoti, a notable critic in Kannada, likens romantic poetry in English to the genre of *Bhavagite*. He also finds the latter part of the continued tradition of singing poetry (Kurtakoti 51–57). With the themes of *Navodaya* being love of nature, conjugal love, patriotism, love for one's mother tongue, nationalism, etc., the genre was akin to the romantic poetry of Europe.

Navya poetry, on the other hand, used free verse–without a specific metrical rhythm. It drew heavily on the modernist literature of the West. In terms of sensibilities, it was quite opposed to *Navodaya*—it was rather born of the disappointment with the Nehruvian governance and came down heavily on the romantic sentiments of the earlier poets. Poetry was filled with stark sarcasm against the present, reeking of traditionalism. *The Navyottara* phase represented the literature of marginal identities such as Dalits, women, and other

minority groups that got educated and started expressing themselves afresh. It was filled with the energy of protest against injustices of several kinds.

The initial bond between the *Navodaya* poetry and music has been continuous through the twentieth century, though different poetic phases intervened. *Navodaya* poems could be heard sung on different platforms serving different public occasions. One Nanjanagudu Sampatkumaracharya is rather the first important name that we come across, who sang *Navodaya* songs.[5] Some of the popular songs sung by him were "*Mane tumbisuva hadu*" by V. Sitaramayya, "*Karunalu ba belake*" by B.M. Srikanthaiah, "*Vanasuma*" by D.V. Gundappa, "Udayavagali" by Huyilagola, etc. Gudibande Ramachar, another singer, sang and popularised "*Doni sagali munde hogali*" of KuVemPu and "*Gangavatarana*" of Bendre. We do not have much information about the audiences for these songs except that some of these were sung in private circles during family celebrations such as marriages and other such get-togethers.

Meanwhile, the gramophone industry sensed the popularity of Kannada songs in North Karnataka. HMV brought out some of the very popular recordings of Sita Mulki and Sushila Tembe with music direction from N.K. Kulakarni. Encouraged by the popularity, HMV further ventured to record Bendre's poetry in the voice of the then emerging Bhimsen Joshi. Thus, songs such as "Uttara dhruvadim," "Nanna harana," "Nanu *badavi ata badava*," "*Shringara masa*," etc. came to the public fore as gramophone recordings (Aravind, *Sugama Sangita*). We do not come across any study on the audiences of this gramophone music. Hence, we could only imagine the effect of reproduction in terms of ringing of tunes and phrases in the minds of Kannadiga audiences to keep up the currency of the *Navodaya* genre and give it a certain continuity.

All India Radio (AIR) had a wide audience, since it was a public institution and could be played in open and publicly accessible places. At the time when India became independent, AIR had a reach of 11% of the population.[6] In terms of community listening to the AIR, in 1953, each day had a listener statistic of 1,25,320 people (Thangamani 168). This was apart from the sets owned privately by the households. This was phenomenally different from the accessibility to gramophone players. Although gramophones may have had their own limited private/public sphere, there was also a phase when gramophone records were extensively played by broadcasting corporations. The Madras Corporation used to play gramophone records until 1937, when they required a licence from the Indian Phonographic Industry. Gramophone records were played by them from 10 to 11 AM on Sundays and on public holidays (ibid 339).[7]

After the 1940s, the AIR adopted a new category that it called 'light music'. Musicians including some doyens of Carnatic and Hindustani music sang in this category too—Bhimsen Joshi, Jayavanthidevi Hirebet, B.G. Ramanath, M.L. Vasanthakumari, and Kumar Gandharv among them. They sang songs of KuVemPu, Bendre, Pu.Ti. Narasimhachar, etc. There was a remuneration of one hundred rupees to the poets, and all the poems by a certain poet could be used by the AIR upon such payment. However, remuneration for the light music singers was only symbolic—the female singers were given *arasina-kunkuma* and the male singers, *tambula* (Aravind, *Sugama Sangita* 82).[8]

By 1945, a new singer-composer, P. Kalinga Rao was becoming a known face in AIR, Mysore. One of his songs that had become popular by then was "*Udayavagali namma cheluva Kannada nadu*"[9] written by Huyilagola Narayana Rao. It was a poem exuding

Kannada nationalism, pining for the unification of Karnataka which had been part of different administrative units. This song had almost become the morning tune of AIR. Kalinga Rao adapted modern Kannada poetry, patriotic songs as well as the *pada*s of Dasas to a variety of tunes, sometimes borrowing from Carnatic music and most other times taking cues from folk and non-classical genres, and even Western music. He composed and sang the poetry of well-known poets such as K.S. Narasimha Swamy, G.P. Rajaratnam, Gopalakrishna Adiga, etc. (Keshava Rao). In other words, much of what he sang belonged to the *Navodaya* and the folk genre. They did not have elaborate elucidation of *raga*s and the song sequence was quick. Along with Kalinga Rao, there were two popular female singers—Mohan Kumari and Sohan Kumari. And with all these singers, there were several nontraditional instruments on stage such as the trumpet, the guitar, and so on, apart from the traditional accompaniments such as the harmonium and the *tabla*. On the whole, in the very presentation of this orchestra, there was a certain novelty not experienced by the Kannadiga audience until then. Thus, Kalinga Rao was the pioneer of a new trend of Kannada music that helped shape light music further and expand the audience base. He became so popular that income from music for him seemed to flow incessantly. He is famously said to have stated '[w]herever I set my foot, I find money" (ibid).

The Kannada Movement of the 1960s, Janaki Nair says, 'had two principal aims: to build up cultural resources that drew on and strengthened the Kannada language, and to secure jobs for sons-of-the-soil' (Nair, *The Promise of the Metropolis* 248). She further says that it was the anxiety of the Old Mysore region to withdraw from its cultural dependence on the Madras Presidency and to foreground the 'indigenous cultural productions' (ibid.). Bangalore saw a heavy influx of Tamil labourers from the year 1942 (Nair, "Production Regimes, Cultural Processes" 276). This migration from the neighbouring state went on in a

big way until 1955. The labourers were absorbed into the many public/private sector and large-scale industries that had emerged in Bangalore such as HMT, ITI, HAL, MICO, and so on. The paranoia felt by the middle-class Kannadiga employees of these factories, who were in lesser number than the Tamils, led to the burgeoning of several Kannada Associations in these industries and factories. These associations were active on the Kannada cultural front and, from time to time, gave public programmes in Kannada. This reached its peak during the celebration of the *Rajyotsava* (state-formation day) in the month of November. There were plays and music programmes. Kalinga Rao was sure to get an avenue on all prominent platforms during the *Rajyotsava* days. Thus, it was the middle-class employees of these factories and industries, as well as many other Kannadiga job aspirants of these industries, who became the audience for a new music that Kalinga Rao presented.

The Bangalore-centric Kannada movement of the 1960s mediated in the field of music and tried to shape the destiny of light music in Kannada. Littérateurs such as A.Na. Krishna Rao played an active role in this process. Apart from the street activism that enabled the choice of musicians for the music festivals, one could see their interventions in defining the musical taste. A.Na. Krishna Rao published an essay in a journal called *Gayana Ganga*, where he dictated the terms for modern music. According to him, one of the reasons why Carnatic music staggered was that it heavily depended on the *Kriti*s of Tyagaraja.[10] Though the services of Tyagaraja could not be ignored, his lyrics contributed only to the religiosity of the time and did not help the all-round development of the country. He said that they needed to adapt the works of modern poets to music and should have *Kriti*s depicting the varied life of modern times (Krishna Rao 86–88). Krishna Rao was a charismatic person; he was a prominent and confident cultural protagonist in the Bangalore of the 1950s and 1960s. He could persuade many musicians to take up modern Kannada poems for performance, apart

from *Pada*s and *vacana*s.[11] Kalinga Rao was one such musician who was influenced by Krishna Rao. Thus, light music and modern poetic sensibilities in regional languages were blended around the mid-twentieth century—a process that seemed to be a phenomenon beyond the Kannada regional boundary.

In certain cases, the category of light music seems to have been strengthened as a reaction to film music by the 1960s. There was a certain paranoid sense of 'corruption of taste' among elites that was wrought by the film music. Hence, light music was conceived as a via media to retain the supposedly eroding audience base for classical music and prevent the drift towards film music. An article in the *Journal of Madras Academy of Music* reflects this:

> The demand for the film song records is so great that all the stations of the AIR give programs of film music several times a day under different headings. The popularity achieved by the film songs and the publicity offered for them are sure to develop gradually a total aversion to Karnatic music among the majority of the masses that listen to them. If ever Karnatic music should attain such popularity among the masses of our country it could be done only by light music in Karnatic Ragas like Mohanam, Bilahari, Kambhoji, Hamsadhvani, Sriranjini, Huseni, Hindolam, Poornachandrika, etc. Such light music will consist of light songs sung by good voices supported by an orchestra of both Indian and western instruments…. These songs must be composed in the spoken language of the people, Tamil in Tamilnadu, Telugu in Andhra Pradesh, Canarese in Karnataka and Malayalam in Kerala and Sanskrit, which is understood in all parts of the world. They should be not only

> in Bhakti Rasa, but also in Sringara Rasa, Vira Rasa, Hasya Rasa, Adbhuta Rasa, etc. There must be songs in praise of God, Nature, Mother country, Mother tongue and other subjects which are of permanent interest to mankind. (Rajagopalan 121–123)

Thus, a longing for songs or poems in the modern idiom could be seen across borders. The idea that such songs and music would prevent the 'vulgarity' of film music was becoming part of common sense. B.V. Keskar, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting in Nehru's cabinet, who was the head of All India Radio, had himself commented in 1952 that film music was "becoming more and more vulgar and their tunes are concocted [of] irrational cocktails of Western dance tunes." The amount of light music broadcast on AIR also gives us an indication of this. That the category of "light music" was the third item consuming the highest amount of time, shows the popularity of this category in 1965.[12] Keskar had appointed Ravi Shankar, the sitarist, to the AIR to form *Vadya Vrinda*, an orchestra ensemble. Much of Ravi Shankar's experimentation in fusion music (Western music with Hindustani music) took place in the AIR studios, New Delhi, during the programmes of *Vadya Vrinda* (Alonso) programmes. This was to be one of the earliest attempts in putting to use non-classical or semi-classical music as a via-media to win over an audience for classical music or even to ward off the influence of "vulgar" music. However, when it came to vocal music, it needed lyrics—lyrics that had to gel with modern sensibilities in the spoken languages. In Kannada, it was *Navodaya* poetry that came to be fore grounded at such a juncture.

Huvina Korike (meaning, floral request), a novel music programme on AIR, Mysore, started catering to the demand that more songs be in Kannada in the light music genre. It was a special programme where the same song of a poet was sung in different ways by different singers, that too, in the presence of that poet. This programme became popular soon and ran

for more than a decade. Famous singers such as Bhimsen Joshi, Mysore Vasudevachar, Titte Krisnayyangar, T. Rukmini, C.K. Thara, Vasumathi, M.N. Ratna, and R.K. Srikanthan participated in this programme. *Navodaya* poets such as KuVemPu, D.V. Gundappa, Pu.Ti. Narasimhachar were present on several occasions to see their songs composed in different ways by different composers/singers (Aravind, *Sugama Sangita* 83).

Padmacharan emerged as an important music director for the Bangalore Akashavani[13] in the 1960s and 70s. He was considered to be a man of wisdom and keen literary sensibility who could critically appreciate Sartre, Russell or Tagore, on the one hand, and Vemana, Annamacharya, Purandaradasa or Tyagaraja, on the other. Poets of the time, especially the younger ones, considered themselves fortunate if Padmacharan took up their poems for composing (Nisar Ahmad 272). Not only his compositions, but also the orchestra ensembles he put together earned him a good name.

Bangalore Akashavani started a programme called *Navasuma* (meaning, new flower) in 1975. Each month, a new poem was selected from a poet and set to music. Poets like Gopalakrishna Adiga, Da.Ra. Bendre, D.V. Gundappa, KuVemPu, Pu.Ti. Narasimhachar and G.P. Rajaratnam wrote poems specifically for this series. Two more Akashavani programmes, ‘MSIL Gitegalu’ and ‘Gitalahari’, gained popularity in the 1970s. The first one was broadcast by both Bangalore and Dharwad Akashavani. Each song that was broadcast fetched Rs. 25/-. Poems of many important poets of Kannada, including Gopalakrishna Adiga, Pu.Ti. Narasimhachar and Rajaratnam were composed and sung in this programme. Many new singers got introduced to the Kannada audience through these programmes. Ratnamala Prakash, Shimogga Subbanna, Malathi, Jayapal were some of these new singers, and many of these made a big name in the realm of light music subsequently. However, the more

important name that emerged during this time was that of Mysore Anantaswamy,[14] who used to compose the songs for MSIL. He gained similar fame as Kalinga Rao in composing and singing *bhavagite*. Subsequently, another singer of MSIL, C. Ashwath, also emerged as an equally eminent singer-composer. However, with the programme coordinator H. Jaydev leaving MSIL, the programme also stopped in 1980 (Aravind, *Sugama Sangita* 92–95).

The success of the above Akashavani programmes partially contributed to the proliferation of the audio cassette industry in the late 1970s. One of the poets whose songs became popular through the MSIL programme was K.S. Nisar Ahmad. Popularity of some of his songs like *Kurigalu sar kurigalu* (Lambs Sir, Lambs), *Benne kadda namma Krishna* (Our Krishna stole the butter), and *Ella maretiruvaga* (When I forget all that), made him confident enough to invest in production of audio cassettes recorded with his songs. He took a bank loan and, with the help of some of his best friends, he took up the business venture. Mysore Anantaswamy joined hands with him by composing and rendering his voice to a bouquet of songs—some of them already popular through Akashavani and some of them new. The collection came out in 1978 and was titled *Nityotsava* (Nisar Ahmad 295). This venture was an extraordinary commercial success. The venture brought enormous popularity to the poet and the singer, indicating a vast potential for a new musical entrepreneurship in the cassette industry. The poet Nisar Ahmad himself was involved in dubbing his cassette initially. However, soon he found it to be a daunting task, with the demand for the cassettes being in thousands. He could hardly dub ten to fifteen cassettes a day with difficulty. On the suggestion of his friend, he sold the rights to a company called ‘Amarnath’. This relieved him of the worries of dubbing, marketing, and selling the cassettes. But this was claimed to be the first music cassette based on a poetic collection in any Indian language. Once *Nityotsava* set a precedent of success, many audio-recording companies such as Nadalahari and Lahari were

born (Aravind, *Sugama Sangita* 99). One H.M. Mahesh from coastal Karnataka ventured into audio cassette production from Chennai, establishing Sangeetha Cassettes in 1982. Dr. Rajkumar inaugurated the company by singing a song on Raghavendra Swamy (Aravind, *Sangitayana*). In subsequent years, the company made huge growth recording the doyens of classical and light music. Thus, audio cassette production with recorded light music became a regular feature and a burgeoning enterprise in the Kannada culture industry in the 1980s. The years between 1984 and 1990 have been identified as the golden period for the electronic industry in India, when huge numbers of transistors, cassette players, B&W TV sets and other audio products entered the domestic market.[15]

It is largely in this phase that the term *Sugama Sangita* came to be used to refer to the Kannada light music genre. The phrase has the connotations of "being/going easy," of "something that can traverse well" or "move smoothly," etc. This was basically in comparison to classical or *raga* music that *Sugama Sangita* "moved smoothly"—without the difficult and swift meanderings, slides, twists and turns of the classical or *raga* music. With his novel collection in the *Sugama Sangita* genre, Nisar Ahmad came to be called the *Nityotsava* poet, after his first cassette. Based on his popularity with the radio programme, he had made a calculated and timely decision to produce audio cassettes at the pertinent moment. More importantly, the very decision to write and publish the collection *Nityotsava* was an important one in the twentieth century trajectory of Kannada literature. Nisar Ahmad had already published four collections of poetry in the *Navya* or the modernist style. Only after that he turned towards *Bhavagite*. He says some people considered it revolutionary; some others termed it craving for popularity. According to him, he hardly wrote poetry yearning for a favourable review. He says:

> I had engaged in writing being well aware that I had a large audience before me. Many contemporaries had scoffed at me saying that I had started writing [poetry] in a low taste….[16] I was aware that poetry was becoming an intellectual circus [in *Navya*], and it was in need of the magical touch of lyrical quality. I thought that poetry that was detached and distanced from the ordinary folks and was circulating in the spheres of university-colleges needed to reorient and permeate the different strata of society. It was time for poetry to free itself from the weight of artificiality and egotistic imagery and to dance in the felicity of songfulness. (Nisar Ahmad 294–295)[17]

It is important to note the decision of the poet to change from *Navya* to *bhavagite* or *Navodaya* at a specific juncture when technology enabled him to reach out to the public at an unprecedented rate. It was not just Nisar Ahmad who changed his course from *Navya* to *bhavagite*, even N.S. Lakshminarayana Bhatta had followed suit. Bhatta experienced a lack in the musicality of *Navya* poetry. During his time with Akashavani, he distanced himself from the *Navya* style and adopted the lyrical songfulness of *bhavagite* (Aravind, *Sugama Sangita* 87), be it "nature song, patriotic song or family-oriented song" (Bhatta, quoted in Chandragutti 350). By taking to write such songs, Bhatta was resorting to the themes of *Navodaya* poets and so was the case with Nisar Ahmad. B.R. Lakshmana Rao, whose poetry was also used in the light music industry, agrees that he turned to *bhavagite* only later and that he was called a neo-romantic, with other poets.[18] In fact, many *Navodaya* poems were newly composed during the 1980s and made into cassettes. For example, *Mysuru Mallige*, an audio cassette came out in 1982, which was from an anthology of the same name published in 1942 by K.S. Narasimhaswamy. Composer-singer for this collection was C. Ashwatth, and the collection was brought out by Sangeetha cassettes. On similar lines, there were other

collections from the *Navodaya* period that were represented as *Sugama Sangitha* during the late twentieth century. The trend was picked up by other newly emerging poets of the time, who took up similar themes and rhythmic style as in *Navodaya*, writing poems for *Sugama Sangita* during this phase.

In all these happenings, there seemed to be a tension between the conceptualisation of a poem and a song. It takes us back to the point we noted earlier about poetry and music becoming distinct arts in the modern period. It was a question that led to a hierarchised understanding of a poetry and a song, assigning the former a privileged position, and the latter, a lesser status on lines of the written and oral practices. This also had implications for the "writer," hierarchising a "poet" and a *mere* "song writer," privileging the former. For example, B.C. Ramachandra Sharma, a *Navya* poet, made a clear distinction between a poem and a song. He was against the singing of poetry for two important reasons: one, because when we appreciated a poem that is sung, there was no clarity as to whether we liked the poem for its poetic quality or for its musicality. The latter aspect, he believed, came in the way of appreciating the poetic quality of a piece, and hence, a sound judgment would not be possible, as though musicality or songfulness never determined good poetry even partially. Second, it would be wrong to call something a poem that was written with the sole purpose of reaching the common man or the larger public. In his opinion, a worthy poem was actually meant for a minority in a society. An average person may not be able to appreciate it (Sharma, answering a question in Chandragutti 389). By this logic, if a poem attained popularity because it was musical, it could be called a song at most, but not poetry. This dense connotation of elitism resonates in D.R. Nagaraj, an important critic of Kannada, when he theorises on similar lines; but this time, medium and orality are in question:

> The poet desires to express some experiences or a certain aggregation of feelings. That could be based on love, sex, religion, or some other experience. This is an issue that arises in a context when a very specific and highly personal experience is generalised. Put in simple words, new orality oversimplifies the uniqueness of the poet and makes it hollow, instead of generalising it. The medium of new orality itself characteristically executes this process of oversimplification mercilessly… [In this process] Words needed to present particular experiences undergo a special repetition. Popular poetry delivered by mass media or even what could be considered as cassette poetry has this form—repetition of the same words, repetition of the same state of feelings. In such a milieu, talent has less of an avenue to exert itself. (Nagaraj 244)

Nagaraj seems to be addressing the *Sugama Sangita* context quite directly, without specifying it though. The new orality of poetry in the context of *Sugama Sangita leads* to repetitive and drab expressions, especially because it was delivered through mass media exemplified by the cassette. He points out the difference between the pre-modern scheme of repetitions and the modern ones. In the premodern context, repetition was a vehicle to carry the poetic matter. However, in a new orality, repetition was *both* the vehicle and the matter it carried. In this sense, repetition, or rather repetitiveness nurtured by the medium in new orality, was an undesirable feature. On the other hand, N.S. Lakshminarayana Bhatta, a strong advocate of *Sugama Sangita*, argued that the poetic quality could not decrease just because a poem yielded itself to a perfect musical composition (Bhatta, responding to a question in Chandragutti 352).

Both Ramachandra Sharma and Nagaraj disown the poetry that reaches the larger public, either because it is written for a wide audience and communicated through a channel of the mass media via the "new orality." It can be gathered that the "public" or the specific "audience" to whom the poetry reaches is the matter of concern in the way both argue here. Though Nagaraj seems to address the nature of the poetry, he is more concerned with the ultimate reach of that poetry. He is apprehensive about the "attractiveness and the power" (Nagaraj 243) of such mass media in the new orality of *Sugama Sangita*, which cannot exist without a subject for itself, which is the larger public. Such a scenario, in turn, causes the poetry to become worthless by oversimplification. Therefore, what is intended instead, is either a smaller audience, who can understand the poetry better or an audience that can be reached without the help of the new orality–without the help of cassette players or TV sets; that is, without the technological retrieval of orality. By speaking about "new orality," the early *Navodaya* was spared from criticism and judgement. This is clearly a process of distinguishing between the audiences or specific publics rather than a process of determining what poetry is.

Conclusion

Bourdieu suggested that "there is no such thing as an objective 'public' but only a shifting social character" defined by varying methodologies (quoted in Middleton). Following this, we could surmise that poetry and genres exist with their specific publics or audiences simultaneously. That is, it is possible to find poems of not only *Navodaya*, *Navya* and *Navyottara* (or even other poems) sensibilities with their respective audiences coexisting, but also different *Navodaya*s—with the new technology, the new medium and the new orality. Above, we have seen reinforcements of *Navodaya* at different intervals: during the gramophone period, during the proliferation of radio programmes, and during the cassette

revolution. The nature of reinforcement was different each time—with the last one making a certain set of poets and critics seek the *Navodaya* sensibility and certain other set of them, distance from it. There takes place a realignment of allegiances to poetic sensibilities upon the advent of a new technology to reproduce music/poetry here, especially when a set of poets give up a poetic genre and take up a different one. A further and more thorough light needs to be thrown on each of these reinforcements. Similarly, an examination as to the nature of relationship between a specific medium and a certain kind of genre/movement is required. With the proliferation of social media use (which is not taken up here), data analytics on such usage could throw some interesting insights on the changing nature of consumption of poetry/song by specific audiences. "Intermediality" as a study of media and their publics could thus throw seminal light on the nature of relationship between the publics themselves, which is a need of the hour in the present Indian context. The enormity of the work is daunting. How much could be done remains to be seen.

Glossary of Vernacular Words

Abhang: A form of devotional poetry sung in praise of Vitthala in Marathi. *Abhang*s are sung as *bhajans* and sung during pilgrimage to Pandharpur.

Bhavagite: *Bhava* refers to sentiment or emotion, and *gite* is a song. Hence, these are songs or verses written by poets with lyrical quality that are composed, set to tune, and sung. This genre of song became popular in Kannada in the twentieth century. Many poems of the *Navodaya* phase could be sung and almost all that could be sung, are called *Bhavagite*. This genre may not be considered literature proper by elitists, and could be considered part of popular literature. However, in this article, the term has been used almost synonymously with the *Navodaya* poetry, as has been suggested by Prabhushankar (2000) and Kurtakoti (2006).

Kirtana**:** A genre of Bhakti songs credited to medieval composers like *Dasa*s such as Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa (and even Tyagaraja and a few others in Carnatic music till early nineteenth century), etc., which mostly come from oral tradition. Much is also available in manuscript (and print) with the *raga* and *tala* before each of them. The poetry of *Dasas* is also called *pada* in the Kannada Bhakti repertoire.

Kriti: A genre of performance in Carnatic music. It is loaded with musical phrases and there is less emphasis on the lyrics as the main motive of performance is to display the beauty of a *raga*.

Lavani**:** Marathi folk songs sung at a quick tempo. These traditional songs are performed in the Marathi folk theatre by female performers accompanied by dance.

Pada: Songs of *Dasa*s. A term that is more in use than the term *Kirtana*. The latter term may point to the Sanskrit literary culture whereas the term *Pada* is more embedded in the Kannada aura. But in common usage, these terms could be used interchangeably.

Vachana: Part of the Kannada Bhakti repertoire, a genre of literature from the Virashaiva movement of the twelfth century. They are more like prose sayings than poetry. However, they too were composed and sung starting from around the 1940s.

Notes

[1]The subject of this paper was part of a panel discussion at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, on Romanticism and Pedagogy in December 2021. I am thankful to Prof. V.B. Tharakeshwar for putting me to think on these lines. Subsequently, I am thankful to Prof. T.S. Satyanath for providing me some supporting materials and prodding me to see the intermediality factor in this phenomenon. I am also thankful to him for going through this paper and making a few initial comments on it. I am also indebted to the anonymous referee for the suggestions.

[2]Prabhushankar is held to be the first doctoral student of Kannada Department, Mysore University, and a student of an important *Navodaya* poet, K.V. Puttappa, more popularly known as KuVemPu.

[3]Readers may refer to the glossary for words not in English unless explained here for immediacy's sake.

[4]'Composing' has been a special art in the field of music. But, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, this composite art was withering away into two distinct arts–writing poetry and performing music. So, when Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV wanted the Mysore musicians to compose in Kannada, he had to deploy two sets of people—first, song writers in Kannada and second, musicians per se who would set tunes to those songs. Very few musicians could still write and compose too–Muttaiah Bhagavatar being one such example. For more on this, see Koudur. Whereas a distinction could be made between poetry and song, a distinction could be further made within poetry that is read and that is sung. Moving to the Tamil context, Amanda Weidman has tried to understand the phenomenon of *Tamil Isai* (Tamil music) placing it in the context of institutionalisation of Carnatic music. As music and literature began to emerge as two distinct and 'mutually exclusive fields' in late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the analogy of language came to be increasingly used with music, though it was first seen in the discourses about music in the West. Music was likened to language and once this relationship was established, there were contentions about whether music was a 'universal language' or it should be represented by one's mother tongue. According to Weidman, it was basically this tension that led to the demand for Tamil music and disputations as to how valid this demand was (Weidman).

[5]I refer to the same repertoire when I interchange between *Navodaya* poems and *Navodaya* songs.

[6]For more on this, see https://prasarbharati.gov.in/growth-development-air/

[7]In the year 1931–32, for example, Madras Corporation broadcasted 42 hours and 6 minutes of South Indian and English music through gramophone records in almost equal proportions.

[8]*Arasina-kunkuma* and *tambula* were the traditional, symbolic and sometimes ritualistic tokens given away to respectful guests. They were not really gifts–they were turmeric-vermilion for female singers and betel leaves and nuts for male singers. This meant that remuneration was yet to be systematised for the light music singers.

[9]Meaning, let our beautiful Kannada land rise! Kalingarao's rendering of the song could be heard at https://youtu.be/tbMJ0wabW3I.

[10]One of the three prominent composers of Carnatic music from early nineteenth century Tanjore region. The other two are Muttuswamy Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri.

[11]*Vachana*s are part of the Kannada Bhakti repertoire, a genre of literature from the Virashaiva movement of the twelfth century.

[12]'News' was the component consuming maximum amount of time at 39815 hours; 'classical music' consumed 33419 hours and 'light music' consumed 22011 hours in that year (Baruah 54).

[13]All India Radio was renamed as Akashavani in 1957.

[14]Another important musician-composer of light music in Kannada after Kalinga Rao. There is a reference to music programmes of these two musicians on adjacent streets in Mysore when, as soon as Anantaswamy began to sing, audience of Kalinga Rao seem to have moved to the former's programme, indicating a shift in the taste for light music. Later, Anantaswamy came up with innumerable cassettes of light music in Kannada.

[15]See ELCOMOS_Report.pdf (meity.gov.in)

[16]He was also called with a moniker "Cassette Kavi" (a cassette poet) mostly pejoratively to mock at his turn to *bhavagite*.

[17]All translations from Kannada are mine.

[18]"Nisar Ahmed: The Poet of 'Nityotsava' and Beyond," *The Hindu*.

References

Alonso, Isabel Huacuja. "Radio, Citizenship, and the 'Sound Standards' of a Newly Independent India," *Public Culture*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2018). 117–144.

Aravind, Jayashree. *Sugama Sangita* (Kannada—Light Music). Hampi: Kannada University, 2008.

Aravind, Jayashree. *Sangitayana: H.M. Mahesh Jivanagathe* (Kannada—The Journey of Music: Life Story of H.M. Mahesh). Bangalore: Ankita Pustaka, 2014.

Baruah, U.L. *This is All India Radio: A Handbook of Radio Broadcasting in India*. Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1983.

Chandragutti, Sarfraz. *Sugama Sangita mattu Kannada Adhunika Kavite*, (Kannada—Light Music and Modern Kannada Poetry). Bangalore: Sahana Prakashana, 2007.

Keshava Rao, B.S. *Kannadada Kogile: Kalinga Rayaru* (Kannada—The Koel of Kannada: Kalinga Rao), 1993. Bangalore: Sagar Prakashana, 2003.

Koudur, Shashikantha. *Reinventing Dasa Sahitya: Literature and Music in Twentieth Century Karnataka*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Hyderabad, 2008.

Krishna Rao, A.Na. “Karnataka Sangitada Bhavishya” (Kannada—The Future of Carnatic Music). *Gayana Ganga*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1960). 86–88.

Kurtakoti, Kirtinatha. *Kirtinatha Kurtakotiyavara Ayda Barahagalu* (Kannada—Select Writing of Kirtinatha Kurtakoti). Heggodu: Akshara Prakashana, 2006.

Middleton, Richard. “Locating the People: Music and the Popular.” In Martin Clayton et.al. eds., *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Nagaraj, D.R. *Sahitya Kathana* (Kannada–An Account of Literature), Heggodu: Akshara Prakashana, 1996.

Nair, Janaki. “Production Regimes, Cultural Processes: Industrial Labour in Mysore,” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (1993). 261–281.

Nair, Janaki. *The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore’s Twentieth Century*. New Delhi: OUP, 2005.

Nisar Ahamad, K.S. *Acchumecchu* (Kannada—Close to the heart/Favourite). Bangalore: Premasai Prakashana, 1996.

Prabhushankar, *Kannadadalli Bhavagite* (Kannada—Bhavagite in Kannada), 1966. Mysore: DVK Murthy, 2000.

Rajagopalan, N. “Light Classical Carnatic Music.” *Journal of the Madras Academy of Music*, Vol. 34. No.1–4 (1963). 121–123.

Thangamani, Pon. *History of Broadcasting in India: With Special Reference to Tamil Nadu 1924–1954*. Chennai: Ponnaiah Pathippagam, 2000.

Weidman, Amanda. “Can the Subaltern Sing? Music, Language and the Politics of Voice in Early Twentieth-Century South India.” *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (2005). 485–511.