

## AVADHĀNAM - A PERFORMING LITERARY ART

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### INTRODUCTION:

This is a word derived from the dhātu डुधाञ् by suffixing it with ल्युट् and prefixing it with अव. The meaning of this dhātu is धारणपोषणयोः meaning sustaining and fostering. Etymology of the word Avadhānam:

1. अवधानं समाधानं प्रणिधानं तथैव च – अमरकोश (प्रक्षिप्त) avadhānam samādhānam praṇidhānam tathaiva ca – amarakōśa (prakṣipta)
2. अवधानं मनोयोगः, तत्पर्यायः समाधानं, प्रणिधानं समाधिः – शब्दकल्पद्रुमः अवधानं मनोयोगविशेषे यद्वशाद्विषयान्तरतो मनोनिवर्तते – वाचस्पत्य
3. Attention, intentness, attentiveness – V. S. Apte Dictionary
4. Concentration, attention – Monier Williams Dictionary

But Vāmana's definition in his Kāvyaśāstra is the most popular: Cittaikāgryam Avadhānam – Concentration of the mind is Avadhānam. This word is used in this sense in the ancient literary works and in śāstra works.

The ancient scholarly art Avadhānam draws upon the mind's strengths viz. memory, intelligence and versification. The avadhāni (the performing artist) versifies extempore to create grammatically flawless, metrically perfect and suggestively creative poetry, without help of any stationery, in response to the challenges/ posers by scholars called prucchaka-s. The key factors for this art are dhāraṇa and pūraṇa viz., memorization and consummation. Providing solutions by extempore versification or otherwise to the questions posed by the prucchaka-s, in 4 rounds, one line per round, in a scholarly and entertaining manner is pūraṇa. Recollecting the lines composed in earlier rounds for continuation thereon, is dhāraṇa. Though there are many varieties of Avadhānam, most popular among

them are **aṣṭāvadhānam** and **śatāvadhānam**. Eight posers are concurrently resolved in aṣṭāvadhāna. Śatāvadhāna comprises resolution of a hundred such posers. The Avadhānam concludes by the rendition of their verses by the prcchaka-s.

For those who think of Avadhānam as some sort of modern day quiz, it would be of interest for them to notice the glaring differences between the two. In a quiz there will be (say) eight participants and one quizmaster, whereas in an Avadhānam there will be eight (or more upto a thousand) quizmasters and just one participant! Quiz is a 'competition' that will keep the participants and the audience on tenterhooks throughout the quiz and will turn out one 'victor' for a momentary rejoicing at the end, but an Avadhānam is a literary 'sport' wherein the lone participant is 'invited' to impart artistic experience throughout the Avadhānam to the audience and also to the so called quizmasters. In quiz the quizmaster is usually more knowledgeable than the participants, whereas in an Avadhānam it is usually the opposite. Quiz is a test just of retention capacity of the participants, whereas an Avadhānam is a test of the ultimate propensity of the mind and intellect of the participant.

### **1) ORIGIN AND CRYSTALLIZATION OF THE AVADHĀNAM ART**

Though the genesis of Avadhānam can be traced back to the genesis of art per se – even prior to that – its crystallization in the form discoursed here occurred much later when literary pursuits gained on the finesse of poetic expression.

Poetry replete with rasa-s whets the literary appetite of connoisseurs; that which is marvelous overwhelms them. The connoisseurs appreciate the technique of versification and extol the poetic & prosodic features of the verses. Kings of yore being accomplished scholars and poets themselves, they relished, fostered and promoted such marvelous verses, fractional narratives (khaṇḍakāvya) and grand epics (mahākāvya), thus paving way for assorted forms of marvel-ridden versification, wherein may be discerned the genesis and furtherance of the literary art 'Avadhānam'. Pointedly, its roots are noticed in Vātsyāyana's Kāmasūtra. Notwithstanding the fact that the origin of Avadhānam in Sanskrit language dates back to 7 century CE, it may be guesstimated that it attained a definite form only

by 11 century CE. In Kannada the earliest are the extempore compositions of a poetess named Kanti of 11 century CE. If we notice the samasyāpūraṇa (poser resolving), dattapadi (embedding cross-lingual incongruent words in a metrical verse), niroṣṭhya (versifying without using the labials p, ph, b, bh, m), prahelike (riddle), āśukavite (extempore compositions) and other extant verses ascribed to the poet-duo Kanti and Hampa, Kanti stands out as the earliest in the lineage of avadhāni-s. It was the Kannada scholar Kavikāma (1200 CE) though, who articulated a robust model applicable to aṣṭhāvadhānam across Indian languages, and it has stood the test of time thence.

## **2) ESSENTIALS AND SPECIALTIES OF AVADHĀNAM WITH EXAMPLES**

Though the name aṣṭhāvadhāna indicates 'eight', it may by choice be in excess of eight or in multiples of eight. In a Śatāvadhāna there will be these same eight+ modules in multiples thereof to add up to at least a hundred. The main components of an avadhānam are varṇane, saṅgīta, vyastākṣari, purāṇapaṭhana, caturaṅga, śāstracarcā, ghaṇṭāgaṇana, puṣpagaṇana, kāvyavācana, lōkasambhāṣaṇā/ aprastutaprasaṅga, citrakathā, pāṭigaṇana, vārakathana, niṣedhākṣari, nyastākṣari, vivargākṣari, chandassambhāṣaṇa, anuvāda, saḥapaṭhana, likhitākṣari, samasyāpūraṇa, dattapadi, ākāśapūraṇa and cards. Śatāvadhāni Dr. R. Ganesh (about whom we shall know more later) has pioneered the inclusion some more components viz., anyōkti, bhāvaprakāśana, citralēkhana, saṅkhyābandha, ślōkābhinaya, uddiṣṭākṣari, nirdiṣṭākṣarī, gītaracane, mānasī etc. and most importantly citrakāvya (inclusive of yamaka, bahusandhāna, bandhakavitva, garbhakavitva) that was hitherto considered an impossibility. Here are brief notes with sample verses on the prominent ones from among the above.

**Niṣedhākṣari:** The Avadhāni composes a verse for a topic and in a meter stipulated by the pṛcchaka letter by letter while at each step the latter forbids him from using a particular letter next. Considering the prowess of the avadhāni, and in order to save time, there has been a convention to spare the last of the four lines of the verse from such restrictions. All the same, there have been instances of not sparing the last line besides posing much more than a single letter

restriction on the upcoming letter. In the example given below, the struck letters are the ones precluded by the *ṛcchaka*.

ತಾಭಾಕಮಚಚ್ಚಕರಣಾದಿಹಿನ್ನೂಸಪ್ರ-

ಛಾಖ್ಯಾಮಠಲವಸನ್ಮದ್ವಹಷ್ಠೃಘ್ನವಸ್ತೃರ್ಗೃಹ್ಯನುನಿದ್ಯತ್ ದ್ವಲಫಿಂಸಂ-

ಛೀಗ್ರಾಮಂ ಛರಕ್ತಸ್ಯಾಪ್ತಸಹವಷಾಸು-

ತಾಪ್ರೇಮಂ ತಾಕಾಪ್ತಾಲಾನ್ತಮ್ಯುತುಕಂ ಛನದೀರಾಘಪ್ತಛಪ್ರಾಜ್ಞಗ್ಜಂ||

(All exemplar verses shown here are compositions of Dr. R. Ganesh and are excerpted from his D. Lit thesis 'ಕನ್ನಡದಲ್ಲಿ ಅವಧಾನಕಲೆ'.)

**Samasyāpūraṇa** – A *ṛcchaka* poses as a problem a metrical line that is seemingly incorrect, inappropriate, indecent, misleading, misconstrued or distorted. The *avadhāni* has to complete the verse so as to lend credence to the inconsistent line given. For example: 'ಸುರಿದುದು ಹಿಮಶೈಲದಲ್ಲಿ ಲವಣಕಬಂಧಂ' (Salty/ Sugary body oozed out from the freezing mountains) is a line of a verse in the *kanda* meter. The solution is based on the story of Pārvati crying over the beheading of her son Gaṇeśa by Śiva. Multiple meanings of the word *kabandham* (body/ a lot) help in the resolution of the problem.

ಹರಶೂಲಾಹತಿನಿಹತಂ

ವರತನಯಂ ದ್ವಾರದಲ್ಲಿ ಕಡೆಯಲ್ ಕಂಡೀ|

ಪರಿಯಂ ಶಂಕರಿ ಶೋಕಿಸೆ

ಸುರಿದುದು ಹಿಮಶೈಲದಲ್ಲಿ ಲವಣಕಬಂಧಂ||

(Translation: On seeing her son killed, at the door, by the trident of Śiva, Pārvati cried resulting in a lot of salt being poured out in her abode, the Himalaya)

**Dattapadi** – The *ṛcchaka* requests for a verse on a given subject, in a specified meter and specifies four words that are to be used in the verse to be composed. These words are usually from a different language/s, inappropriate or unrelated to the subject on hand. The *avadhāni* renders a verse as per the stipulations of the *ṛcchaka*. For example: Sine, Cosine, Tan, Cot are the words given for inclusion in a verse, not as English words but to be embedded in the vernacular composition of a verse in *kanda* meter that describes a war:

ಕಂದ|| ರಿಪುಸೈನ್ಯಂಗಳ್ ಕಲೆಯಲ್

ವಿಪುಲಂ ಮೃತಿ, ಆರ ದಾಹಕೋ ಸೈನ್ಯಸಮಿ-

ತ್ತಪನಂ ಮೈಕಟ್ಯಾಂತರ-

ಮುಪಮಿಸಲಿಲ್ಲಂ ಸೋಗಕ್ಕೆ ಶನಿಕಾಟಮಿದೇ||

**Nyastākṣarī:** Nirdiṣṭasthānavinyastākṣaram nyastākṣaram bhavēt. The prcchaka provides a topic and stipulates a meter, and states four letters that have to appear at definite places one each in the four lines of the verse. The letters stipulated for the four lines in that order in the verse given below were: 6<sup>th</sup> letter ಭ್ರಾ, 3<sup>rd</sup> letter ಕ್ಷ, 5<sup>th</sup> letter ಪ್ರ and 1<sup>st</sup> letter ಕ್ರೀ:

ವಿದ್ಯುನ್ಮಲಾ|| ಆಶಾಂತಾಕಾಶಾಭ್ರಾಗ್ರಂ ಕೂ-

ತೇಫೇಕ್ಷಚಿಪ್ಪಂ ಪುಹಿಪ್ಪಚಿಪ್ಪನ್ನಂ|

ನಾಶಾಕ್ಷಂ ಭೀಪ್ರಧೋಷದ್ವಂ ವಾ

ಕ್ರೀಶಕ್ತಂತ್ಯಂ ವಹ್ಯುತ್ಪಾತಂ||

**Citrakāvya** is poetry that is composed in amazing patterns among which are:

- Varnacitra: Examples are yamaka, ēkākṣara, dvyakṣara, sthānīya, murajākṣara, guṇitākṣara, mālākṣara, svarākṣara, vyañjanākṣara etc. Verses composed using only specific letters or letters of a particular range etc.
- Nānārthacitra: Examples are arthadvayī, arthatrayī, pañcārthī, saptārthī, bhāṣācitraślēṣa
- Garbhacitra: Examples are varṇagarbha, padagarbha, vṛttagarbha etc. A verse within a verse wherein the meters and topics of the embedded and whole verses are different.
- Gūḍhacitra: Examples are kriyā-kāraka-saṁbarṁdha-pāda-vasuguptas, cyutākṣara, dattākṣara, mātrācyutaka, bimducyutaka, saṁjñāgūḍha, abhiprāyagūḍha
- Arthacitra: Examples are antarlāpi, bahurlāpi, prahēlike, akṣaramuṣṭi, beḍagu, nusul, caduru, muṁḍige, ogaṭe etc.
- Gaticitra: Examples are sarvatōbhadrā, ardhabhramaka, muraja, gōmūtrikā, caturāṁgaturāṁgagati, gajapada, rathapada, gatapratyāgata, pratilōmānulōma etc.
- Bandhacitra: Examples are khaḍga, cakra, padma, śara, cāpa, darpaṇa, śakti, musala, paṇava, vyōma, nāga, kalaśa, ratha, dhvaja, hāra, chatra, āṁdōlikā, paraśu, gade, brahmadīpa, siṁhāsana, śūla, śaṁkha, cāmara, svastika, kāñcī, tūṇa, dviśṛṅgāṭaka, vividiṭacitra, garuḍagati, ulūkhala, ḍhāla, kaṁkaṇa, vīṇā,

gōpura, gavākṣa, pādukā, śaṭaka, liṅga, hala, kuṁṭa, matsya, kūrma, śṛṅga etc.

Citrakāvya is difficult to accomplish in script - all the more difficult extempore - and most all avadhāni-s refrain from this and resort to uddiṣṭākṣari or nyastākṣari. An example of Bandhacitra:

ವಸ್ತು: ದೇವೀಸ್ತುತಿ

ಚಿತ್ರಪ್ರಭೇದ: ಷೋಡಶಕುಂಡಲನಾಗಬಂಧ

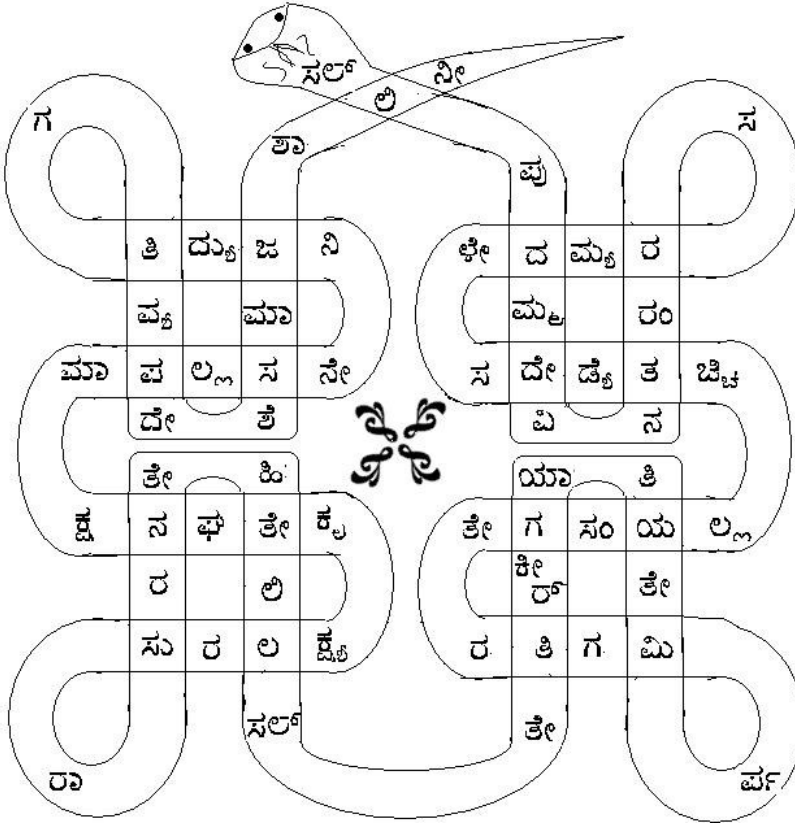
ಭಂದಸ್ತು: ಉತ್ಪಲಮಾಲಾ

ಸಲ್‌ಲಿಪುದಮ್ಮ ದೇವಿ! ನತರಂ ರಸರಮ್ಯದಳೇ! ಸದೇಡ್ಯೆ! ತ-

ಚ್ಚಿಲ್ಲಯಸಂಗತೇ! ರತಿಗಮಿರ್ಪಮಿತೇ! ಯತಿಯಾಗಕೀರ್ತಿತೇ!

ಸಲ್ಲಲಿತೇ! ಹಿತೇ! ನರಸುರಾಸುರಲಕ್ಷ್ಯಕೃತೇ! ಘನಕ್ಷಮಾ-

ಪಲ್ಲಸನೇ! ನಿಜದ್ಯುತಿಗತಿವ್ಯಪದೇಶೇ! ಸಮಾಜಶಾಲಿನೀ!



**Varṇane** – Elaborating on the subject posed by the prcchaka, the avadhāni composes an entire verse extempore per round. In this section, the avadhāni may even be asked to translate a verse from another language in the specified meter and with the same import of the original verse.

E. g. the portrayal of the appearance of an old man:

ವಾರ್ಧಕಷಟ್ಪದಿ|| ನಡುಗುತಿಹ ಕರಗಳಲಿ ಯೌವನಸ್ಮೃತಿಕಾವ್ಯ-  
ದೊಡಪುಗಳ ಬರೆಯುತಿಹನೇನೊ ಮೇಣ್ಣಂಜಾದ  
ಬಿಡುಗಣ್ಣಳಾಸನ್ನನಿರ್ವಾಣದೀಪ್ತಿಯಲಿ ಗತವಸಂತದ ರುಚಿಯನು|  
ಪಡೆಯೆ ಪಡಿಗಾಣಲುಜ್ಜುಗಿಸಿರ್ಪನೇನೊ ಮೇಣ್  
ಜಡತೆಯೊಡವರೆದ ಜೀರ್ಣಾಂಗಕಂಕಾಲತೆಗೆ  
ಪೊಡವಿಸೊಗದೊಡತನವ ಕುದುರಿಸಲ್ಕೆಸುತ್ತ ಮುದಪನಿವನೆಗೆಡೆದನೇ||

**Kāvyavācana:** A verse from a famous literary work is sung by an accomplished singer-ṛcchaka and the avadhāni identifies the work, the author and explains the circumstance of the verse in the work. Versification is such a child's play for Dr. R. Ganesh that he explains the sung verse in an extempore verse set to the same meter and renders it in the same raaga that the ṛcchaka did.

**Aprastutaprasaṅga or Lōkasambhāṣaṇā:** This is meant to disturb the avadhāni with unrelated chit-chat to prove that the avadhāni remains unfazed despite. One other purpose is to keep the audience agog through the otherwise scholastic exercise. Current day politics, posers, picking up humour from within the proceedings of the Avadhānam, jokes, audience participation through the Aprastutaprasaṅgi – anything goes here.

**Ghaṇṭāgaṇanam:** Intermittently during the Avadhānam a bell is chimed. At the end of the Avadhānam, the Avadhāni has to state the number of times the bell was chimed. **Puṣpagaṇana** is similar to this. Herein a ṛcchaka hurls a flower on the Avadhāni's back intermittently.

**Caturaṅgam** is a game of chess. It is no more practiced now for it cannot be made visible to a huge audience. A game of **cards** is suicidal if made public!

**Vyastākṣari:** The Avadhāni will get to intermittently glance at random (compound) letters and their positions in each of the four lines. He has to memorize it and recite the arranged verse in the fourth round.

**Nirdiṣṭākṣari:** The ṛcchaka shows to the avadhāni a few times during the Avadhānam a verse penned by him but concealing alternate letters (odd or even) or by showing just the exact vowel suffixes of the letters sans the consonants or vice versa. In the fourth round of the Avadhānam the avadhāni composes a full verse containing them and in the meter and topic given. Here are two charts. The first one is the ṛcchaka's poser and the second the avadhāni's solution.

ಕೆ		ಪ್		ನ್		ಗ್	
ಜ್		ಮ್		ಸ್		ಭ್	
ಚ್		ತ್		ಯ್		ಡ್	
ರ		ಫ್		ಷ್		ದ್	

ಕಾ	ಳೀ	ಪ	ತೇ	ನ	ಮೋ	ಗಂ	ಗಾ
ಜ	ಟಾ	ಮೌ	ಳೀ	ಸಿ	ತಾ	ಭ	ತೇ
ಚಂ	ಚ	ತ್ತೇ	ಯೋ	ಯ	ತೀ	ಡ್ಗೇ	ಯ
ರ	ಮೇ	ಟಾಜ್	ತೇ	ಷು	ಸುಂ	ದ	ರ

**Uddiṣṭākṣari:** The ṛcchaka states a meter and a topic. He then, intermittently throughout the Avadhānam, asks of the avadhāni letters at random and fills them in a table in the witness of the audience.

**Sañkhyābandha:** Is a magic square of 5x5 that totals up to the same number when added vertically, horizontally, diagonally and the four corner numbers + central number. The ṛcchaka gives the total number at the beginning of the program, and intermittently throughout the Avadhānam asks for the numbers that go in random squares. Though this is the current standard, there can well be arithmetic mensuration, algebraic, trigonometric posers etc. The renowned Shakunataladevi's mathematic art can well be called gaṇitāvadhānam.

**Saṅgīta:** The ṛcchaka asks the avadhāni to sing a song (even his own composition) in a certain raaga. Dr. R. Ganesh has accorded value addition to many of the above modules. For Saṅgīta he has sung extempore a song on a given topic in the raaga rendered by the ṛcchaka on an instrument. This is truly endearing to the audience. On the same lines is nāṭyāvadhānam.

**Citralēkhana:** The avadhāni draws a picture (lines or in colour) in consonance with the topic given by the ṛcchaka. Dr. B. K. S. Verma whose prowess has made a performing art out of an installation art like drawing is truly a sterling Citralēkhanāvadhāni.

**Likhitākṣari:** The avadhāni has to decipher what the ṛcchaka has conveyed in sign language with a flourish of his hands. This is default communication among



the deaf. For reason of the audience not being able to gather it even after such deciphering, it has been excluded from Avadhānam. It is of interest that the game 'dumb charades' is very much on these lines. A similar component is nētrāvadhāna wherein the prcchaka and the avadhāni are to communicate with eyes, or the avadhāni has to decipher from watching the movement of the pen what a prcchaka is writing in his notepad at a distance. As these do not entail dhāraṇa, they cannot do full justice to the Avadhānam process.

**Nāṭakavācana:** An extract of a play is read out by the prcchaka as if he were playing the role (Vācīkābhinaya), and the Avadhāni translates the prose/verse to Kannada extempore in the same vācīkābhinaya (Trans-reading with feeling), states the name of the play, the author and explains the situation in the play.

### 3) DEVELOPMENT OF AVADHĀNAM IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES

It may be logically comprehended that the crystallization of Avadhānam art happened since the beginning of 7<sup>th</sup> century CE viz., the genesis of erudition era in the realm of Sanskrit language, that it attained a clear form by 8-9<sup>th</sup> century CE, and that it stabilized by 10-11<sup>th</sup> century CE. This can be substantiated by evidences from epigraphical accounts and oral tradition. It is a matter of pride for Kannada language that the first comprehensive record of precise characteristics of Avadhānam art is available in this language. In his śṛṅgāraratnākara (1-6, 7), Kavikāma says thus:

ಜಗದೊಳ್ ಸನ್ನಿಹಮಾದ ನಾಟ್ಯದಿಗಳಿಂ ಭಂದಕ್ಕೆ ಬರ್ಪಂತು ನೆ-  
ಟ್ಟಿಗೆ ಮಾತಾಡುವ ಬಲಿ, ಚಿತ್ತದೊಳೊರಲ್ದಿದ್ದರ್ಥಮಂ ಕೂಡೆ ನಾ-|  
ಲಗೆಯಿಂ ರಂಜಿಸುವೊಂದು ಬಿನ್ನಣಮದಿನ್ನಾವಂಗೆ ಪುಣ್ಯಕಥಾ-  
ಗಿಗೆ ಸೈಪಿಂ ದೊರೆಕೊಳ್ಳುವಾತನೆ ವಲಂ ಶೃಂಗಾರರತ್ನಾಕರಂ||  
ಎಸಕಂಬೆತ್ತ ಮತಿಪ್ರಕಾಶಮದನ್ನೇನೆಂದಪೆಂ ಚೇಟಿ, ನಾಲ್-  
ದೇಸೆಯೊಳ್ ನಾಲ್ವರ ಕಂಟದೊಳ್ ಬರೆಯೆ ಕಬ್ಬಂ ಬೇಟಿನ್ನೊಲ್ಲತ್ತಲಾ-|  
ಡಿಸುವಂ ನೆತ್ತಮನಿತ್ತಲೋಲಿದೊಡೆ ತಪ್ಪಂ ಪೇಟ್ಟುದಂ ತಿರ್ದಿ ಯಾ-  
ಲಿಸುವಂ ಗೀತಮನೆನ್ನುವಂ ನಗಿಸುವಂ ಶೃಂಗಾರರತ್ನಾಕರಂ||

Let us study these two verses. Per first verse, it is clear that Kavikāma was capable of composing metrical verses extempore by using adages and the lingo of the masses. Another of his remarkable abilities is his understanding of what is

anticipated by the audience! This may well be a variant of the mānasīkrīḍā stated by Vātsyāyana. This hitherto unknown trait of versifying by comprehending the minds of the listeners is a divine achievement. The meriting of the title 'sukavimukhamāṇimukura' is proof of this. It should not be lost sight of that such erudition and gaiety are achieved in the realm of extempore versification.

The second verse here is Avadhānam incarnate:

- 1-4: Versifying extempore for four ṛcchaka-s in consonance with the respective literary constraints posed by them;
- 5: Playing chess by moving the designated pawns;
- 6: Listening to a vocal musical rendition of an extract from a kāvya and stating the name of the work and the author, analyze the verse's finesse and flaws, refine it and expound on the import of the verse;
- 7: Rendering his verses in consonance with śṛti and rāga and
- 8: Entertaining the audience through witty replies to questions or witty remarks during interaction with the ṛcchaka-s.

The unparalleled merit of such articulation of the essence of Avadhānam lies in the fact that it hasn't seen expression in ancient Indian literature either previously or later. The 'ನಾಲ್ಕೆಸೆಯೊಳ್ ನಾಲ್ವರಕಂಠದೊಳ್ ಬರೆಯೆ ಕಬ್ಬಂಬೇಱ್ವ' are the four ṛcchaka-s to the left of the Avadhāni viz., niṣedhākṣari, samasye, dattapadi and citrakāvya/nyastākṣari/ varṇane in the current model of Avadhānam. The parallel in the current model of Avadhānam to the 'ಓದಿದೊಡೆ ತಪ್ಪಂ ಪೇಱ್ದುದಂ ತಿರಿಯಾಲಿಸುವ' is the kāvyavācana or purāṇapaṭhana, wherein is identified the work that contains the rendered verse, its author and the impassioned delineation of the context of the verse in the said literary work. The 'ಒಲ್ಲತ್ತಲಾಡಿಸುವಂ ನೆತ್ತಮನ್' is a game of chess, which was an integral part of Avadhānam till some time back, but had to be discontinued as it proved insipid on not being visible to the entire audience and also because better substitutes like sañkhyābandha, ghaṇṭāgaṇana and puṣpagaṇana were available. The 'ಗೀತಮನೆನ್ನುವಂ' is the well established aśukavite of the current model, which is not so much a test of memory as much as it entails extempore composition of embellished delectable verses. 'ನಗಿಸುವಂ' is that very

entertaining aspect of the Avadhānam called aprastutaprasaṅga that attempts to, by dispensing humour, caters to those in the audience that are not acculturated to appreciate literary perspicacity. The underlined aspects are explained in detail in the last chapter (Essentials And Specialties Of Avadhānam With Examples).

The fact of the subsistence in the current model of Avadhānam of a good ninety percent of what was articulated by Kavikāma is proof of the fact that this art form had crystallized 800-900 years ago. Thus Kavikāma, an Avadhāni himself, and one who has documented for all posterity the antiquity of the Avadhānam art, is venerable to us.

Notwithstanding the fact that an antiquated reference to Aṣṭāvadhānam is available in Kannada, a clear record of Śatāvadhānam pertains to 12-13 century CE. There is literary evidence to **Pratāparudradēva**, the **Kākatīya** king enthroned in 1295 CE, consecrating Mallinātha (the grandfather of the accomplished critic Kolacala Mallinatha) in gold in veneration of the latter's successful performance of Śatāvadhānam.

ಕೋಲಚಲಾಕ್ಷ್ಮನೃಪಾಭಿಷೇಕಮಲ್ಲಿನಾಥೋ ಮಹಾಯಶಾಃ|

ಶತಾವಧಾನವಿಖ್ಯಾತೋ ವೀರರುದ್ರಾಭಿಷೇಕಃ||

Thence, there is historical evidence that Śōṇādrinātha ḍiṇḍima Bhaṭṭāraka who belonged in early 15<sup>th</sup> Century CE was a Śatāvadhāni. By stating “ಸಮಸ್ಯಾಶತಂ ಸದ್ಯಃ ಸಂಸದಿ ಸಾಧು ಪೂರಯತಿ” in her Śrīrāmāyaṇasāraḥkāvyaṭilaka, Madhuravāṇi has professed to her prowess in Śatāvadhānam. Her rival wife Ramabhadraṁbe has clearly stated in her Raghunāthābhyudayam that there were several male and female Śatāvadhāni-s in the court of her husband Raghunathanāyaka. To be reminisced here is the unequivocal statement of Rāmadeva in his Vidvanmōdataraṅgiṇi that his father Raghavendra Bhattacharya of Navadvēpa in Bengal, who belonged in 17<sup>th</sup> century CE, was a Śatāvadhāni. Despite it being probable that Avadhāni-s existed in the Telugu country ever since the days of Mallinātha, if we are to reckon only those that are clearly documented in history, then we get to know that most Avadhāni-s of the Andhra country belonged in 18-19 century CE. Prominent among these are the erudite Divākara Tirupatiśāstri and Cellapiḷla Vēṅkaṭaśāstri duo (the famed kiṅkavīndraghaṭapañcāna), Veluru

Shivaramashastry, Pisupati Chidambarashastry, Kavyakantha Ganapatimuni, Garikipati Mallavadhani and Paravastu Venkatarangacharya. Also belonging in Andhra country are the late Ceruvu Satyanarayanashastry (who recently performed a Śatāvadhānam) and Dorbala Prabhakarasharma.

Though Telugu literature, which was inspired by and profusely drew upon Sanskrit literature, had its genesis much after Kannada literature, it took to greater heights the champu format, painting and Avadhānam art of the latter. The first Telugu Avadhāni in recorded history is Peddanamatya (1300 CE). Next in chronology were Avadhāni-s Nacana Somana and his contemporary Bhattumurthy (Rāmarājabhūṣaṇanāmāṅkita). Due credits have to be accorded to Returi Rangaraju who for the first time expounded on the methodology of Avadhānam and also stated the divisions of an Avadhānam. Chintalapalli Chayapati, Nelluri Veeraraghavaiah et al who belonged in mid 17<sup>th</sup> century CE were also Avadhāni-s. Their contemporary duo poetesses Rangarajamma-Krishnajamma were Śatāvadhāni-s. Kalahasti bard Gudarū Venkatadasu, Shishtu Krishnamurthyshastry, Akalankamu Krishnakavi et al were masters of several forms of Avadhānam-s.

Post this, the period of phenomenal renaissance of Telugu Avadhānam is the 70-80 year period from later half of 19<sup>th</sup> century CE to early 20<sup>th</sup> century CE. Abhinavapaṇḍitarāja and Māḍabhūṣi Venkaṭācārya are the first ones whose Avadhānam-verses are available to this day; they are adept at Aṣṭāvadhānam and Śatāvadhānam. Subsequent to these are the Devapalli brothers, Subbarayashastry-Venkatakrishnashastry, who earned fame as Avadhāni-s. The Telugu kavisarvabhōma Sripada Krishnamurtishastry is also a Śatāvadhāni. But it is the renowned Kinkaveendrapanchanana-s, the very capable Sanskrit-Telugu Avadhāni duo Tirupati-Venkatakavi (Divākarla Tirupatiśāstri and Cellapiḷḷa Vēṅkaṭaśāstri). This duo heralded the golden era of Avadhānam in Andhra country. Their contemporary Kashi Vēṅkaṭarāmāśāstri was also a Śatāvadhāni. Vēṅkaṭa-Rāmakṛṣṇa bards (Pōlēṭi Vēṅkaṭarāmāśāstri and Vēdula Rāmakṛṣṇaśāstri) who lived about the same time and Popporapu brothers (Vēṅkaṭasubbarāyakavi and Vēṅkaṭaramaṇakavi) were renowned Avadhāni-pairs. It may be said that the proliferation of the Avadhāni ilk thence was by the

successive generations of disciples of Tirupati-Vēṅkaṭākavi duo, prominent among who is Veluru Shivaramashastri, whom the Avadhānam history of Andhra country has accorded recognition as the crown prince of the Avadhānam kingdom of Tirupati-Vēṅkaṭākavi. Next in chronology were the scholastic Pisupati Chidambarashastri and Avvari Subrahmanyashastri who were bilingual Avadhāni-s. Piṅgaḷi Lakṣmīkāntaṁ and Kāṭūri Vēṅkaṭēśvararāvu too were a pair like their mentors, and were achievers in Avadhānam and poesy. Gāḍēpalli Vīrarāghavaśāstri, Purāṇaṁ Sūryanārāyaṇatīrtha and Cilakūri Rāmabhadraśāstri too were disciples of Tirupati-Vēṅkaṭākavi. Prominent among the Avadhāni-s of the 20th century CE are Māḍugula Veṅkaṭasūryaprasādarāvu, Kōṭi Vīrāṅjanēyaśarma who has performed Aṣṭāvadhānaṁ-s in excess of a thousand and Būraḍa Gunnēśvaraśāstri. The tail of the 20th century CE brought up two significant Avadhāni-s: Smt. Prabhavati and Ashavadi Prakasharavu who, despite being born a Harijan strove to overcome the hurdles of that 'socially backward' label and established himself as a favourite Avadhāni. To be always reminisced are two luminaries: the scholarly poet-researcher Dr. Betavolu Ramabrahmam who, being well established in the realm of Telugu Avadhānam, revolutionized Telugu literature by being the backbone of contemporary poesy, and the exceptionally talented C. V. Subbanna renowned for his Aṣṭāvadhānaṁ performances in excess of a thousand.

Prominent among the Andhrāvadhāni-s in the later part of 20<sup>th</sup> century CE and early 21<sup>st</sup> century CE are Śatāvadhāni Dr. Medasani Mohan, Madugula Nagaphanisharma, Garikipati Narasimharao, Śatāvadhāni Ganduri Dattatreyasharma and Kaḍimeḷla Varaprasad. Besides these there were/are other Avadhāni-s in the Andhra country.

Just as with other art forms, an exploration into the genesis and background of the Avadhānam art too fails to lead us to a precise provenance. But this much is true that it is a very native Indian art form that has sprouted from the worldly literary tradition, has received encouragement under the guardianship of the Vedic locution, has received augmentation from various localized linguistic eloquence and has percolated into the different languages.

### History of Avadhānam art in Kannada

We are by now equipped with the contribution of Kavikāma in this regard. The next sterling scholar who we can identify in this lineage is Śrīkaraṇaḍa Vishvanatha (1234 CE). A native of Channarayapattana, this brahmin was a village chieftain (Shanubhog). The epigraph in Haranahalli of arasikere taluk scripted by him calls him ‘ಉಭಯಹಸ್ತಲೀಖಿಕುಶಲನ್ ಅವಧಾನಚಕ್ರವರ್ತಿ (Ambidexterous king of Avadhānam)’. ‘ಗದ್ಯೋಪನ್ಯಾಸಮುದ್ಭಾಷಿತಪದಗತವರ್ಣಾರ್ಥಕ್ಷರತ್ಯಾಗಮಿಚ್ಛಾಪದೋಪನ್ಯಾಸಪರಿಣತ’ is what the Jain poet Mahabala says in praise of the Avadhānam-abilities of his senior Bhavasenavratī, a Jain monk. These serve as variations of chitrakavita for Avadhānam. An epigraph of Gauribidanur states that a certain Soma (1320 CE) received honorarium at Pennamagani in the Kodur district of Guttidurga State. That this Soma is the renowned Telugu poet Nacana Somana is beyond ambiguity. A Kannadiga living close to the Andhra border, this poet would have migrated to Telugu country. A few scholars think that this man was indeed the first Telugu Avadhāni. But most researchers and Avadhāni-s do not concur; they think Cerikonda Dharmanna (1503 CE) is the first Telugu Avadhāni. Whatever the fact, it is clear that the Octa-lingual poet Nacana Somana who lived in a border land and who was conversant with the methods of Aṣṭāvadhānam took it across the border into Andhra country and popularized it there.

Candraśēkhara (1430 CE) who was in the court of Prauḍhadēvarāya was renowned as an octa-lingual poet and Avadhāni. It is clear from his own words ‘ಅಷ್ಟಭಾಷಾಕವಿವರಬಣಾಖ್ಯನೊಲಿದುಪೇಟ್ಟಿಂ’ (ಕನ್ನಡ ವಿಶ್ವಕೋಶ, ಸಂಪುಟ ೧, ಪುಟ ೮೫) that Īśvarakavi, the author of Kavijihvābandhana, was an octa-lingual poet akin to Candraśēkhara, wherefore it is probable that he too was an Avadhāni. Madhava (1500 CE) is one indisputable Avadhāni that has made Kannada literature proud. This Brahmin bureaucrat belonging in the Kauṇḍiṇyagōtra was a Shiva devotee and was a valorous warrior. A verse that expounds on his erudition from Mādhavālamkāra, a work of his that is fortunately available, merits citation here:

ಭರತಂ, ಛಂದಮಳಂಕೃತಂ, ಮದನಶಾಸ್ತ್ರಂ, ಗಾರುಡಂ, ಚಾಪವಿ-  
ದೈ, ರಸಂ, ಪಾಡು, ನಿಘಂಟು, ಕಲ್ಪಿತಲಿಪಿ, ಪ್ರಖ್ಯಾತಶಿಲ್ಪಕೃಮಮಂ,||  
ಕರಣಂ, ವ್ಯಾಕರಣಂ, ಸಮಸ್ತಶಕುನಂ, ನಾನಾವಧಾನಂಗಲೇ|  
ಹಿರಿಯೂರಪ್ರಭು ಮಾಧವಾಂಕನೊಳೆ ತೋರ್ಕುಂ ನೋಡೆ ಭೂಪಾಲನಾ||

It can be rightly observed here that the Avadhānam-s encompassed here are the likes of ṇṛtyāvadhānam, gītāvadhānam, śāstrāvadhānam and especially sāhityāvadhānam, and are rich with the many fascinating facets of art. Back then a mélange of śāstra-s and arts was construed to be śatāvadhānam. The exponent of many a śāstra and art, Madhava, therefore is exemplary and venerable to Avadhāni-s who aspire to make it big.

In the section ‘Academic Symposia’ in the chapter ‘Yogavijaya’ of Bharatēśavaibhava by Ratnākaravarṇi (1557 CE) is a report about the display of various literary skills in the court of the sons of Bharata, wherein are cited scholars who ‘composed a śataka per second, and an epic per hour as if they were stringing beads’ and those that ‘performed a cent/ millenary/ lakh Avadhānam-s’. Even if we admit to exaggeration in the words of this poet, it nevertheless may be construed to testify that Aṣṭāvadhānam and Śatāvadhānam were well established in the Kannada language by the time of Ratnākaravarṇi, that Sahasrāvadhānam was rumoured about and that Lakṣāvadhānam was conceptualized.

Gurulingavibhu (1550 CE), a contemporary of Ratnākaravarṇi, was well versed in the arts and sciences such as music, scripts science, literary ornateness and scriptures. In his work Bhikṣāṭanacaritre he prides in his ability to compose fourfold poetry viz. sukavitva-sumadhura-vicitra-vistāra, and to cause delight to the ears of accomplished poets. The vestiges of an art form akin to Avadhānam can be espied here. Kṛṣṇaśarma (1700 CE) who penned Sarajāhanumēndracarite had earned such titles as ಕಾರ್ಯಖಡ್ಗಕವಿತ್ವಕರಣಿಕ, ಕಕಾರಚಾತುರ್ವಿಧಕೃಮಾಚಾರ್ಯಧುರ್ಯ, ಲಕ್ಷಣಕವಿ, ಕುಕವಿನೀರ್ವೇರು, ಪ್ರಚಂಡಝಂಝಾಮಾರುತ-ಆಶುಕವಿ. His wind-speed extempore poesy, fourfold poesy and adherence to stipulations are but typical of avadhānavidyā. A political stalwart in the kingdom of Hyder Ali, the scholarly pradhāni Vēṅkāmātya (1730 CE) was greatly revered. Information that can be gleaned from the titles merited by him stand testimony to his abilities in the art form ‘Avadhānam’.

It can thus be noticed that the Avadhānam art in Kannada, a la the Sarasvati river, made an appearance now and went into obscurity then, but has somehow flown unceasingly. Nevertheless, it appears that it has mostly relied on Sanskrit post

18<sup>th</sup> century CE. It may be noted here that Ānavatṭi Śrīnivāsācārya, Mānavalli Narasimhaśāstrī, Rudrapaṭṇaṁ Vēṇkaṭarāmaśāstrī et al, though were Kannada litterateurs, have performed Sanskrit Avadhānam-s. The renaissance of Avadhānam in Kannada happened in the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century CE. To be noticed here is that the impetus to such renaissance was probably provided by the Avadhānam tradition of the Andhra country. Though it is paradoxical, it is true that the Avadhānam tradition in Andhra country that was sourced from Kannada country, later aided the renaissance of the same in the latter country. And the persona causata was Beḷḷāve Narahariśāstri.

Beḷḷāve Narahariśāstri (1882-1961 CE) was born in Beḷḷāve in Tumkur district. He was well-versed in Kannada and Sanskrit Avadhānam. He is the author of many a play and epic. His scholastic commentary on the Jagannathavijaya of Rudrabhatta is of great utility. Influenced by the Telugu Avadhāni Pisupati Chidambarashastri who performed a few Sanskrit Avadhānam-s in Mysore, Beḷḷāve Narahariśāstri resolved to perform Avadhānam in Kannada and got himself apprenticed to Sri Pisupati. He learnt the 'tricks of trade' in just eleven months and successfully gave his maiden performance on 12.10.1921 in the residence of Sri A. B. Srikantaiah in Bangalore. Though documents reveal that Sri Beḷḷāve Narahariśāstri has performed a total of thirty Avadhānam-s (between 12.10.1921 & 17.02.1924), a total of just 133 verses of his are available to us. There is no evidence as to whether he kept up with the Avadhānam art thereafter. In summary it may be said that Beḷḷāve Narahariśāstri's achievement in Avadhānam is of historical significance, is rich with the finesse of poesy and has served as encouragement to future Avadhāni-s.

The Avadhānam art went into oblivion for about six decades after the era of Beḷḷāve Narahariśāstri. It was only in mid 1980s that it surfaced again, thanks to Sri Lanka Krishnamurthy (1924 to 1996 CE). A Telugu Avadhāni that this scholarly litterateur was, it is no surprise that he was causative of grooming and encouraging Avadhāni-s in Kannada.

Dr. Josyam Sadanandashastri who was a Telugu teacher in Anantapur is a canarese, but the language was confined only to domestic conversation; for



generations they studied and transacted in Telugu. At his Telugu Aṣṭāvadhānam performance in Bangalore, he came in contact with Sri Krishnamurthy. On getting to know of Sri Josyam's canarese ancestry, it occurred to Sri Krishnamurthy to cause Sri Josyam to revive the long-forgotten Avadhānam in Kannada. He went on to cajole and convince Sri Josyam into assuming the responsibility. He immediately tutored Sri Josyam in classical-Kannada grammar, initiated him to Kannada classics of the likes of Pampa and Ranna, and groomed him to perform Avadhānam in about two years. Thus, Kannada Avadhānam that had resurfaced and disappeared in the era of Bellāve, was reinstated by Dr. Sadanandashastri under the exalted tutelage of Sri Lanka Krishnamurthy in the 1980s.

The credit for revitalizing the Avadhānam art in Kannada realm in all its splendour, and pioneering the inclusion of hitherto unknown and unexplored facets into it goes to śatāvadhāni Dr. Raya Ganesh. Academically Dr. Ganesh has a UG degree in Mech. Engg. and a masters degree in Metallurgy. He then chose to pursue literature (MA Sanskrit and D. Lit. Kannada).

Initiated to language, literature, art and sciences at the tender age of ten, he studied the epics, the classics and various sciences on his own. This self-motivation serves as metric for all achievements of Dr. R. Ganesh. Inspired by classical metrical poesy, he took to writing verses. By sixteen he had wallowed enough in poesy and took to composing sublime verses in the most complex of meters and ornatation. And he earned fame for doing this extempore. In-depth study of Indian culture-literature, in-depth cogitation about all and sundry matters, a detailed understanding of Indian and Western arts honed his dexterity by fuelling his creativity and versification.

When he was nineteen, he had the opportunity of watching a Sanskrit aṣṭāvadhānam organized by Sri Lanka Krishnamurthy. That was when he came to 'know of the existence of such an art form'. Realizing that he was equipped with the linguistic and artistic abilities required thereof, he gave a successful aṣṭāvadhānam performance the very next day (09.11.1981) with his friends in audience! It is our good fortune that he evinced interest in this art. By now he has given Avadhānam performances in excess of one thousand, and five

śatāvadhānam-s in Kannada/ Sanskrit across the globe. His unique achievement is the performance of the first recorded successful Kannada śatāvadhānam on a single day (15.12.1991) wherein he composed 108 verses extempore. It was Sri Lanka Krishnamurthy who encouraged and organized this. Thus the credit for giving Kannada a full śatāvadhānam goes to Sri Lanka Krishnamurthy.

To Dr. R. Ganesh goes the credit of incorporating into Avadhānam the most challenging module 'citrakavitā'; in fact it was considered implausible and impossible even by the mighty Andhra avadhāni-s. And none else has experimented as much in the realm of Avadhānam - aṣṭabhāṣāvadhāna, dviguṇita/caturguṇita aṣṭāvadhāna etc. He has much other firsts to his credit among which are versifying in the maximum number of meters (64) in a single śatāvadhānam, non-stop versification for 24 hours, rāṣṭrāvadhāna, śāṅkarāvadhāna, kṛṣṇāvadhāna, rāmāyaṇāvadhāna, mahābhāratāvadhāna, nāṭyāvadhāna, gītāvadhāna, advaitāvadhāna, kālidāsāvadhāna etc. He is Karnataka's first and only caturbhāṣāvadhāni, aṣṭabhāṣāṣṭāvadhāni and śatāvadhāni.

Sri Ganesh Bhat Koppalatota is a young poet who evinced interest in versification at a young age. He was smart enough to seek out śatāvadhāni Dr. R. Ganesh for honing his abilities. He soon blossomed into an extempore versifier. He has penned a few khaṇḍakāvya-s. When he was invited to give a maiden aṣṭāvadhāna performance under the auspices of padyapaana ([www.padyapaana.com](http://www.padyapaana.com)), he carried it with the ease and proficiency of a seasoned avadhāni content-wise and time-wise. He has since given a dozen performances all over Karnataka. His hold over classical Kannada and his handling of meters is fine. Given that he is young, he is poised to go a long way and enrich the art in his own way.

Another of Kannada aṣṭāvadhāni-s is Kabbinala Vasanta Bharadvaj. His maiden performance (01.11.1991) was graced by the presence of the venerable Sri Lanka Krishnamurthy. He is especially known for his yakṣagānāvadhāna and Tulu language avadhāna. Also known in the realm of Avadhānam are tri-lingual Avadhāni Sri Umesh Gautam (Kannada, Hindi and Konkani) and Kabbinala

Balakrishna Bharadvaj. An academician by profession, Sri Ramakrishna Pejattaya is a Sanskrit-Kannada Avadhāni.

Dr. R. Shankar whose domicile is Karnataka is renowned nationally as an able Sanskrit Avadhāni with exemplary retention and extemporaneous abilities. Unique are the classical finesse and simplicity that Dr. Shankar infuses into his citrakavitā-s. Venkataramana Halasakhanda and Subrahmanya Bhat are two other Sanskrit Avadhāni-s. These two also compose Kannada verses.

Sri H. A. Vasuki has warmed up to the art by giving two formative aṣṭāvadhānam performances in Sanskrit under the auspices of Padyapaana. Grooming with encouragement from śatāvadhāni Dr. R. Ganesh, he is poised to take it up rigourously in the days to come.

#### **4) FUTURE AND PROPAGATION OF AVADHĀNAM**

There is no need to fret about the future of pure art in general and of classical art in particular; there may be the need to contemplate about the future of artists rather! Art's future is the same as its history. The locus of the future of art has always been the next erudite artist. Unless the artist is a genius, s/he cannot contemporize or perpetuate or decide the future of an art. Only by virtue of the quality, capability and caliber of the artist can art have a greater future. Erudite artists endeavour to extend the frontiers of and infuse novel dimensions to their chosen art, which in turn enriches the art and lends a further lease of life to it. The future of art can be discerned in such endeavours of making it a living tradition.

The propagation of art can be achieved in many ways, but it is the connoisseurs that have to do it. If the artist endeavours to do it, art suffers. Artist becoming a propagandist sounds the death knell of the art and the artist. The connoisseurs too should not engage in it as if it were business. The very expression of enjoyment by the connoisseurs serves to propagate the art. It is banal to dismiss this as idealist or utopian. It cannot be denied that there are platforms that propagate the arts. Nevertheless, they inevitably come with an aliquot of undesirable elements. E. g., we are unsure as to how much of space is available in print and electronic media (such as facebook, twitter, blogs and whatsapp groups). If available, absent may be the attention span of the target group; it may totally escape their attention! Without so much as even considering the fruitfulness of these avenues, Avadhānam performances should be webcast, telecast, stored

on the www, audio/video recordings made available and the performances should be well discussed and documented. Institutions like [www.padyapaana.com](http://www.padyapaana.com) and [www.shaale.com](http://www.shaale.com) do it.

Given that Avadhānam is an outcrop of the basic arts viz., literature, music, painting, sculpting and dance, we would do well to endeavour to develop these basic arts. Just as an increase in the underground water table suffuses surficial sources such as rivers, tanks, wells etc., applied arts such as Avadhānam and theatre (including movies, TV and internet) receive fillip from enrichment of the basic arts. Chastity should be inculcated by one and all in relish, in the self, in life and in acculturation. Not enough can be said about this. In fact we are witness to the futility of such an appeal.

Avadhānam can gain popularity only if there are enough Avadhāni-s to sustain it. Parallely Avadhānam looks up to the domain of connoisseurs, pursuers of literature and versifiers to turn out prcchaka-s in sufficient numbers. Considering that today's materialistic world dwells on avocation and reward, Avadhānam cannot expect enough opportunity; much less, revel in any great measure. It calls for practicing it without grumbling at its low profile. In his 'Kannadadalli Avadhānakale' Dr. R. Ganesh has analyzed these and other aspects in great detail.

## **5) AVADHĀNAM ORGANIZATION**

'yōjakastatra durlabhaḥ' goes the saying. We can readily see the relevance of this considering that Avadhānam is not a very paying art. There probably has never been an entry fee for the performances, and it has thrived solely on the encouragement by kings then, and of late on the interest shown by connoisseurs and connoisseur groups who organize Avadhānam-s. As recently as last century, we know that a Beḷḷāve Naraharīśāstri has received honour from the Mysore king. There is really no need to put on record the myriad such antecedents that dot the two millennia CE.

The question is of availability of Avadhāni-s than of organizing an Avadhānam. No amount of connoisseurs can engender an Avadhāni, but when connoisseurs encourage the basic and applied arts, the propensity for able ones taking to this

art increases. It is truly a good-fortune for a land to get to relish the art of an Avadhāni well versed in not only the arts, but in itihāsa, śāstra and darśana-s.

Another requirement is ṛcchaka-s. The Kannada country witnessed the exponential growth of Sri R. Ganesh as an Avadhāni. Too very soon he was well sought out to give Avadhānam performances far and wide. Identifying ṛcchaka-s became a herculean task. This was earlier assumed by the likes of Sri Lanka Krishnamurthy and Sri Shankaranarayana Upadhyaya who would scour the entire State for just eight ṛcchaka-s. It may well be presumed that such was the state of affairs in the preceding centuries as well. Of late, Sri R. Ganesh trained a small group of interested people in chandass and versification. He gave a fillip to it through the online platform [www.padyapaana.com](http://www.padyapaana.com). As he gained popularity and request for his Avadhānam increased, availability of ṛcchaka-s became a non issue. While crediting his initiatives for solving the number crisis in the ṛcchaka domain, it must be said that such initiatives aimed only at kindling interest about poesy in the aspiring, and that they definitely were not missions to groom ṛcchaka-s for Avadhānam-s. When a request for an Avadhānam performance would be received by Dr. R. Ganesh, he would just ask anyone around to inform 'any eight'. From a challenging phase of 'rummaging' for eight, it became an intricate phase of 'picking' eight from a craving panel!

The eventual aim of Avadhānam (or any art for that matter) is enjoyment/ rasāsvāda. It is possible that the Avadhāni slips sparingly in the matter of meter or something else. The ṛcchaka should not then hasten to expose it. He should rather subtly bring it to the notice of just the Avadhāni - to the exclusion of the audience - so that the Avadhāni makes amends and the flaw is checked from going on record for all posterity.

The handling of the eight divisions is in itself a challenging task. Ṛcchaka-s such as sankhyabandhi and aprastutaprasaṅgi should exercise restraint not to over burden the Avadhāni. The very presence of these modules is enough to prove the steadfastness of Avadhāni's retentive abilities. It should be borne in mind that Avadhānam is no competition. It is a literary sport wherein the audience is served

a relishable art. An Avadhānam should take cue from the coherence typical of an orchestra.

The less said about the role of a 'samanvayakarta' the better. He is a mediator who sets right the flaws in poesy of the ṛcchaka-s and compensates for lack of retention in the Avadhāni by jogging his memory during the performance of Avadhānam. It has been a black mark on the Avadhānam art and the Avadhāni especially in the Andhra country. The art is rid of this negative aspect in Kannada country.

An aṣṭāvadhānam is a simple affair, but śatāvadhānam calls for organized management, for it is conducted over a few days. There is really no need to emphasise the importance of a suitable auditorium and acoustics. Owing to media revolution of late, it is possible to rope in ṛcchaka-s from across continents through teleconferencing, and it is possible to serve the art to viewers worldwide through webcast/telecast. Media also comes in handy in advance announcement of such events.

The Avadhānam concludes with the ṛcchaka-s reciting their verses. This is followed by honouring the Avadhāni and the ṛcchaka-s. A record of the economics of the event would be helpful to others aspiring to organize Avadhānam-s. Documenting the entire proceedings in all detail will augur well for posterity.

## **6) BENEFITS OF AVADHĀNAM IN CONTEMPORARY CORPORATE ERA**

As stated unequivocally, Avadhānam too is an art like any other, and the only benefit from an art is enjoyment/ rasāsvāda. Border experience and threshold experience, which the psychologists and art critics have propounded, are bestowed in an Avadhānam. In no other art form can be witnessed such a mélange of the many rasa-s and beauty of myriad poetic expression.

Another benefit of Avadhānam is erudition. Just as honey is both relishable and tonic, so is Avadhānam. Avadhānam serves as a repository of the constituents of poesy viz., grammar, meter, alaṅkāra etc., and the language forms in use presently and previously in all dialects. Being a performing art, it endeavours to contemporize such benefits and take them forward.

Not much can be exclusively said about 'Avadhānam's significance in contemporary corporate era'. Corporates being the economics centres of today, they should assume the role of the kings of yore in encouraging art and artists. Infosys Foundation has. A few others have.

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