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We welcome your articles and your feedback. We can be reached by e-mail at sruti@sruti.org, or by phone; the numbers are listed on the facing page.

Note (and thanks) to contributors

Sruti publications can only get better with active participation from the readers. Hence, your contributions are very welcome. In order to avoid any misunderstandings, and to protect the rights of our beloved organization, we would like to list a few guidelines. Your articles are extremely important to us and we hope these will not scare away any of you potential contributors! As always, feedback is welcome.

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Thank you so much for your wonderful articles that makes issues such as this one worth editing!

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Dear Readers,

Another year has passed and here we are with the final publication for the year, Sruti Ranjani, 2004.

This year we received articles from a different set of people although they are all known to most of you. The contents we are sure will make interesting reading.

We were able to include two articles with recurring themes. One of them deals more with similarities although composed in different time periods and different geographical locations by different saints and composers. The second article is really on variations of a theme again by different composers in different times giving insight into what their beliefs taught them and how they expressed them.

There are two articles on the dance forms popular in Kerala, one of them in depth. Following this, we have an interesting piece about what Carnatic Music is, a much vehemently debated topic followed by the never failing Trinities and interestingly enough one about Post Trinities. We all know that that is a long list and so the author has tried to give representative samples but not make a laundry list of all.

We have three reviews of earlier Sruti performances, a music program, a dance program and the Sruti Day celebrations with many budding artists, many teachers and schools participating with well planned group events.

We were fortunate to get a veteran artist to give his opinions about the music world and another article about a unique modern composer, both from Karnataka. Included also is an article on a veteran tabla artist. Finally, we have included an article on one of the "musts" of Carnatic music concerts: RTP or Ragam, Tanam and Pallavi.

As usual we will be delighted to hear from the readers about the issue and if you are interested in giving us feedback and have articles that are of interest to you we will welcome them. They have to be on music or dance or other performing arts of India, preferably. Sruti will publish them based on their suitability and the decision of the Sruti editorial board.

Thank you and wish you all a happy reading.

Happy Holiday Season and a Very Happy 2005!

T. Sarada & C. Nataraj

November 2004

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President's words

Dear Sruti Members and Well-wishers:

It is my pleasure to write this note personally and on behalf of the Sruti Board. It has been almost a year since we took office, and what a year it has been! It was filled with the traditional business of organizing music and dance concerts, trying out innovative new concepts, forming and nurturing working relationships with local organizations, trying out outreach ideas, improving the organizational structure of Sruti and even addressing some issues. I hope that you have attended some or all of the Sruti concerts, hopefully with your family and friends. With almost one concert a month, it may indeed be practically difficult to attend ALL of them, but please make an effort to attend at least some of them – the fruit of all our work is in your attending the programs, which we try our best to ensure are of the highest artistic & organizational quality. My sincere thanks to all you who attended and a warm welcome to those that missed them.

We arranged a record number of events this year – 11 in all! We started with the annual day-long event, Thyagaraja Aradhana, followed by a dual-Hindusthani concert by Shujaat Khan on Sitar and Debashish Bhattacharya on Slide Guitar. Then we had a weekend of Carnatic music with a vocal concert by Vijaya Siva, followed by a workshop + mini-concert by N. Ramani. This concluded the Spring Season, which we followed up with a summer concert on Sitar by Shafaatullah Khan. After a brief gap of 2 months, we began the Fall Season with a Carnatic vocal concert by Sanjay Subrahmanian and a South Indian Dance performance called Gajamukha, by Jayanthi Raman ad troupe. Then we had a unique Carnatic percussion concert by U. Sivaraman and troupe, followed by a Sruti Day, a day-long celebration of local talent in Classical Indian Music and Dance. The last event of the year is a combined one, with a concert by T.N. Bala on Muruga Ratnamala and a General Body Meeting to discuss organizational matters.

While many of the events are of the traditional type, some are new for us. Foremost, I would like to mention is the concept of Sruti Day. Traditionally, we have had two events every year devoted to showcasing the local talent. The first occurred at the beginning of the year and is the Thyagaraja Aradhana, which provided a forum for exhibiting local talent in rendering music of

Thyagaraja. The second occurred at the end of the year and was called the Composers Day (often combined with General Body Meeting). This event provided a forum to show case local talent in music, which was no longer restricted to that of Thyagaraja. However, Sruti had no forum for exhibiting local talent in Dance. This point was effectively made by members of Sruti at the past General Body Meeting and also conveyed to me and other Board members in personal conversations with Sruti members. Out of this recognition was born the concept of Sruti Day, which, for the first time in the 18 year history of Sruti, provided a forum for local dance talent, with half a day devoted to Music and the other half devoted to Dance. I am happy to note that 5 groups took part this year in the Dance part and hope more groups will participate next year.

Another interesting innovation was in the Thyagaraja Aradhana, wherein we had Sri Pattabhirama Murthy garu (father of Ramana Kanumalla) dressed up as Saint Thyagaraja. He led a procession of youngsters singing Utsava Sampradaya kirtanas.

While the concert by T.N. Bala, called Muruga Ratnamala, may appear to be like a typical Sruti concert, it has new elements in it. It is a premiere performance of works originally created by him, including Tamil lyrical compositions on Lord Muruga, based on the music of Thyagaraja's Ghanaraga Pancharathna kritis. He trained a group of about 15 students over a period of several months and rendered the kritis for the first time ever in this combined format. We are thankful to American Composers Forum for providing us a grant to enable this project.

In conducting the above events, Sruti as an organization formed new relationships and nurtured existing ones. We collaborated with International House in arranging the workshop of N. Ramani and the percussion concert by U. Sivaraman. We worked with Annenberg Center in arranging the dual-concert of Shujaat Khan and Debashish Bhattacharya. We co-organized with Drexel University the dance event Gajamukha. Finally, we worked with Villanova University in arranging Thyagaraja Aradhana, Vijaya Siva concert and Kanyakumari concert. These relationships have been very professional, and rewarding for the organization. These partner organizations provided help in areas of providing auditoria, marketing, production etc. and we thank them all.

While these 11 events were primarily Sruti events, sometimes cosponsored by a partner organization, we also tried to reach out & help other organizations in putting together their own events. For example, Delaware Music Lovers Group conducted a concert by Brij Bhushan Kabra in Wilmington, to which Sruti lent planning and marketing support. We also assisted International House in organizing a Celebration of Commonwealth Nations by connecting up with Nardhana Dance School of Ramaa Ramesh, whose students provided a short performance. Then we assisted the organizers of Karunamayi Celebrations, by connecting up with Shoba Sarma of Naatya, whose students provided a short invocatory dance performance. We thank Ramaa Ramesh and Shoba Sarma for these cooperative gestures.

This year, we also were occupied by important organizational business. Based on the recommendations at the previous General Body Meeting, we formed an ad-hoc committee to look into changes to the Sruti By-laws with regard to the structure and functionalities of the Board. The ad-hoc committee worked over a six-month period and came up with a set of recommendations. These were duly considered by the Board, who then drafted the necessary amendments to the by-laws, which will be presented to the General Body for consideration. This is an important milestone in the growth and evolution of Sruti as an organization. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the ad-hoc committee for the services rendered – the committee consisted of Sudhakar Rao (Chairman), H.Y. Rajagopal, T. Venkataraman, Bala Balasubramanian and Prabhakar Chitrapu. On behalf of the Board, I would also like to express gratitude to having had the opportunity to contribute to this important event in the life of Sruti.

As you know, the Board was assisted by the efforts of the Library Committee (LC), Resources Committee (RC) and Technical Committee (TC). The LC continually brought out publications such as the one you are holding in your hands now and quarterly Sruti Notes. LC also maintained and enhanced the Sruti website, which is the face and point of contact of the organization world-wide! The RC has worked hard to obtain funds for conducting various events. They achieved grants from Philadelphia Music Project to help organize concerts of Sanjay Subrahmanian, Umayalpuram Sivarman and L. Shankar (next year) and from Western Union and Bharatiya Temple for Gajamukha event. RC also obtained a grant from Pennsylvania Council on the Arts for administrative purposes. The TC diligently produced the CD recordings, whose quality and format is of a high professional level. They also operate and maintain the music system during and beyond the concerts, which is a very critical task. I, on behalf of the Board, thank all members of these committee for their tireless energy and time.

If you have read this far into this rather long essay, I am sure you will agree that a lot of effort, time, energy and indeed love for music & dance & the community, went into conducting these events. While the Board and various Committees are the focal points, we enjoyed the help, support and advice of many well wishers of Sruti. We thank them all. We thank all of you who attended and made the events successful. We once again appeal to your continued support in the next year of our tenure.

I conclude with the humbling words of Saint Thyagaraja: Endaro Mahanubhavulu – Andariki Vandanamulu!

Prabhakar Chitrapu
President



Sruti Ranjani, a special publication, being released

Songs from Pilgrimage Similarities of a theme: Impediments for Darshan

T. Sarada, Bharati Nalinakshan and Viji Swaminathan

In the music repertoire there are songs from great composers that have common themes inspired by similar situations. The compositions by themselves offer an interesting study, whether the events leading to them were real or not. In the article given here the situations and the themes have to do with the composers or Bhaktas being denied Darshan of the Deity at the time they visited a particular temple. Equating the inability to viewing as not having the grace of God, they were sorrowful and unhappy. They expressed their agony with touching songs and in some cases pleading for forgiveness and grace. Such situations are believed to have happened to Sri Thyagaraja, Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar, both belonging to the music Trinity, Sri Kanaka Dasa of Karnataka and Sri Nandanar, of Tamil Nadu who was not a composer. In the last case, therefore, the songs were written by Sri Gopala Krishna Bharati to portray the thoughts, feelings and outpourings of Nandanar.

The events (as reported) and the songs are given below and the readers can see that they have a similar theme.

Sri Thyagaraja. "Thera tiyaga radha." [1]

According to a commonly circulated story, during a pilgrimage to various religious places, Sri Thyagaraja went to Tirupati. Following the practice those days, he climbed the seven hills of nearly 3000 feet to get to the temple. The journey for the party lead by Sri Thyagaraja took about four hours and they reached the temple around 11AM. After finishing the rituals Sri Thyagaraja went inside the temple to have Darshan. Just at this time there was the curtain in front of the Deity hiding the viewing and a highly disappointed Sri Thyagaraja interpreted it as a message from the Lord that he does not deserve Lord's grace due to his own ego. Although there is no direct reference to the screen hiding the view of the Deity, the song mentioned here is usually associated with this event. It is "Thera Tiyaga radha" in Goulipantu, Adi talam. The gist of the song is as follows, which is more symbolic than literal. "Could you not remove the screen of anger, arrogance and jealousy that have taken a firm hold of me and prevent me from the reach of Dharma and other noble acts? I have been following you faithfully and so won't you please remove this screen?" laments, Sri Thyagaraja.

The story goes that as soon as he finishes the song the screen is miraculously removed enabling him to have Darshan when he spontaneously sings the song, "Venkatesa Ninnu", in Madyamavati, Adi Tala. The lyrics are not provided for these songs since they are popular songs in the music repertoire.

Sri Dikshitar. "Akshaya Linga Vibho." [2]

Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar was equally fond of visiting different temples in pilgrimages. During one of those trips, he was in Kizhvelur, near Thiruvavur, to visit an ancient Siva temple, where Siva is manifested as Akasa Linga. Sri Dikshitar went with a song he had written for the occasion, "Akshaya Linga Vibho". At the time he reached the temple the day's worship had been completed and the Archaka was in the process of closing the temple gates. Sri Dikshitar requested the Archaka to keep the doors open a little longer so that he could have Darshan and offer his composition specially written for the occasion. The Archaka was not friendly and sarcastically told Sri Dikshitar to wait till the following day and that the Deity would not run away and would be still there. Dikshitar ignored the insult, sat right there and started singing his, "Akshaya Linga Vibho". A huge crowd had collected to hear him and just as he was finishing the temple doors opened by themselves and Sri Dikshitar had Darshan of Siva. The flabbergasted Archaka fell at the feet of Sri Dikshitar and pleaded for forgiveness. This story has been authenticated by Sri Dikshitar's family and was told to the author of reference 2.

The interesting aspect of the song is that Dikshitar did not think that he had done anything wrong and he did not plead guilty or beg for special grace, like Sri Thyagaraja. He did not even refer to his insult by the priest but simply sang the song he had come with. There is just one little statement in the song that Lord Siva is known to grant the desires of all his devotees like the "Kalpaka Tharu" and so to protect him, he said, but then this was written before he knew about the event. The rest of it is a typical Dikshitar composition praising and describing the various attributes of Lord Siva with no reference to his being slighted. Once again the lyric is not given since it is well known.

Sri Gopalakrishna Bharati for Nandanar, three songs

Being born as an untouchable in a society that prohibited his coming near a temple let alone entering one, Sri Nandanar was very frustrated and constantly would plead for Thillai, (Chidambaram) Nataraja's grace and so on. He would repeatedly say that he will go to Thillai the next day and as such he was known amongst the community as Thirunalaippovaar, meaning the blessed-he who will go the next day. Sri Gopalakrishna Bharati wrote the famous Tamil music drama called Nandan Charitram which was based on the saint Nandanar's life story, his moods, Bhakti and spiritual yearnings. The following three songs are written by Sri Bharati to describe events very similar to those of Sri Thyagaraja and Sri Dikshitar; not being able to see the lord in temples due to various reasons. The first episode was in the temple of Tirupungur, a small town on the way to Chidambaram from Nandanar's place of residence. The situation was that since getting closer to the temple was not permitted, the bull or Nandhi which is usually right in front of the Siva Lingam has to move aside so that it will not hide Nandanar's view of the Lord.

The first song in the sequence of events is: "Vazhi Maraithirukkudu malai pola Madu padutthirukkudu. (Like a mountain a huge bull is hiding the way, thinks Nandanar.) The song is rendered in different Ragas by different musicians and hence no Raga is mentioned. For want of space it is not reproduced fully here but the idea is similar to what this article has depicted earlier.

In the case of Nandanar, according to Sri Bharati, the next song advances the story in an unexpected twist. It is Lord Siva Himself who recognizes the impediment and it is He who tells the Nandhi to move a little so as to clear the view!

"Satre vilahi Irum Pillai", Raga: Purvi Kalyani. Talam Adi

Pallavi

Satre Vilahi Irum Pillai
Sannidhanam Maraikkutham.

Anupallavi

Narthavam puriyum nammidath (u)
Thirunaalaippovar vandhirukkilar, Satre

Caranam

Bhaktiyil Karai kandavan avan
Parthup parthu undavan
Chittam kuraiyil namadu selvam
Mutrum kuraiyum dayavu seydu Satre

Siva is telling Nandi, "Move a little aside, my son, since the viewing is getting hidden.

"My Bhakta, who has done many penances and he who has been telling always that he will visit Thillai tomorrow, has come to us and so move a little aside..."

"He has gone beyond boundaries in Bhakti and he absorbs spiritual things carefully and if he suffers agony we all will lose all that we possess and so, please, move aside..."

It is noteworthy that Sri Bharati writes the song as though it would be easier to move the Nandhi than change the Social taboo, of those days. The story continues that the Nandhi actually moved aside in this place so that Nandanar could see the Lord. This is incidentally a well known pilgrim center in Tamil Nadu, with the Nandhi a little aside and not in the exact center hiding the viewing, in front of the Siva Lingam. Sri Bharati's song may have been inspired by the displaced location of the Nandhi in the Tirupunkur temple; there is also another temple in Tamil Nadu with the Nandi a little aside. Whatever the inspiration, the song has an uplifting moral touch.

The next song in the series commemorates the next hurdle of Nandanar and this was also written by Sri Gopalakrishna Bharati. This song is as though Nandanar himself is making his pleading this time, in the famous Chidambaram temple.

"Varugalaamo ayya". Raga: Manji. Talam, Chaapu

Pallavi

Varugalamo Ayya Undan aruginil ninru kondadavum padavum nan

Anupallavi

Parama krupaanidi allavo inda parayan upacharam sol-lavo

Undan paramananda tandavam parkkave nan ange varugalaamo

Caranam

Bhumiyl pulaiyanai pirande nan punniyam seyyamal irundene

Sami un sannidi vandhe Bhava sagarattaiyum izhandene karai kandane saranam adaindene Tillai varadaa paritaapamum pappamum tirave Varugalaamo

Nandanar asks, "Could I come close to you, my Lord, sing your praises and delight in your nearness?"

"Are you not great and benevolent? Can't this untouchable come, worship and see your blissful cosmic dance?"

"I have been born on this earth as an untouchable and have not done any holy act. Coming here I have lost the ocean of birth and death, have seen the shore of hope and have fallen at your feet to attain salvation. Oh Lord of Thillai, (Chidambaram), all my disgrace and sins will be removed once I come closer to you and so could I..."

The end is as expected; a union of Nandanar with Lord Siva.

One more Bhakta/composer who faced a similar prohibition like Nandanar is Sri Kanaka Dasa.

Sri Kanakadasa, BAgilanu theradu [3]

Kanakadasa (1508-1606 A.D.), one of the foremost saint-composers of the tradition of the Haridasa movement, belonged to the *Kuruba* caste (shepherd community). One of the prominent disciples of Vyasaraaya the great guru of Madhwa Philosophy, Kanakadasa composed over 200 songs in addition to five major works - *Mohana Tarangini*, *Nalacharitre*, *Ramadhyna Charitre*, *Haribhaktisara* and *Nrisimhastava*. His compositions, which cover diverse aspects of life and religion, exalt Bhakthi as the mode of salvation, and denounce caste hierarchy and prejudices. Most of his compositions have the *Mudra Kagineleyadi Keshava*.

According to a legend associated with the Krishna temple in Udipi, Kanakadasa was denied entrance to the shrine because he was not a Brahmin by birth. Overcome with disappointment and distress, Kanakadasa went round the temple and standing outside, burst into singing, appealing to Lord Krishna to give 'Darshan'. Suddenly, a slit appeared in the wall near where he stood and the idol turned to grant him 'Darshan'. A small window, which was later constructed where the slit appeared, stands today as a tribute to the great saint-composer, reminding visitors that caste and creed are no barriers to devotion, saintliness and poetic prowess. Visitors to the temple invariably try to have 'Darshan' of the idol through *Kanakana Kindi* (Kanaka's peephole).

The following composition is often associated with the legend of Kanakana Kindi and is believed to have been composed by Kanakadasa at the time of the incident. In these lyrics, he appeals to the Lord to respond to his entreaty and open the door to accept his services.

BAgilanu theredhu

*Bagilanu theredhu sEveyanu kodo hariye
koogidharu Dhvani kELalillave narahariye*

[Lord, open thy door and accept my services
Don't you hear my calling to you oh Lord?]

paramapadhadhoLage viShaDharana thalpadhalli nI
siri sahitha ksheeravAriDhiyoLiralu
karirAja kaShtadhalli AdhimoolAyendhu
kareyalAkshaNa bamdhu odhagidheyO narahariye

(bAgilanu...)

[In your abode of Vaikunta, you were resting on the great serpent with your consort Lakshmi, when the elephant king cried out in anguish "O Primordial Lord, please save me". You instantly answered the call and released him.] This refers *Gajendra Moksha* -the story of the cursed elephant who is caught by a crocodile but is rescued by Lord Vishnu.

kadukOpadhim KaLanu Kadgavane pididhu ni
nnodeyanellihanendhu nudiye
dhRuda bhakuthiyalli shishuvu bidadhe ninnanu bhajise
sadagaradhi sthambhadhindhodedhe narahariye
(bAgilanu...)

[When the evil king, in great ire, brandished his sword and demanded "where is your God? Is he in this pillar?" and the young son answered "yes" and prayed to you with supreme devotion, you obligingly appeared, bursting from out of the pillar!] This refers to the well-known story of *Prahlada* and *Hiranyakashipu*.

yamasuthana rANigakshayavasavananiththe
samayadhalli ajamiLana poredhe
samayAsamayavumte bhaktha vathsala ninnage
kamalAksha kAgineleyAdhi kEshavane
(bAgilanu...)

[You saved the honor of Draupadi (wife of Yudhishtira, son of Yama) with 'akshaya vasana' (endless robe). You also gave protection to Ajamila, a sinner. O Lord Adikeshava of Kaginele, you have come to rescue your devotees at all times.] Ajamila, on his deathbed, desperately called for his son, who was named after Narayana the Supreme Lord. Although Ajamila had led a very sinful life, because he chanted the name of Narayana, he was relieved of all his sinful deeds.

There are a few themes that have been explored by the composers either similarly or differently. Another example that comes to mind is the theme inspired by the nine planets that have been traditionally linked with guiding the destiny, health, welfare and happiness of the humans. See the article on Navagraham in this issue.

Readers who have come across such recurring themes and how the different composers approached them are cordially invited to write to us about them.

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3. Songs of Three Great South Indian Saints. By William J. Jackson

Acknowledgements

Rasikan helped us with some valuable discussions about the song of Sri Thyagaraja. The same was the case with the Nandanar episodes and he supplied us with the miss-

ing words for one of the lyrics of Sri G. Bharati.

Dr. T. Sarada, a chemist by profession, is a long-time supporter and life member of Sruti. She is a music enthusiast and contributes frequently to Sruti publications. Bharati Nalinakshan is a Carnatic Music rasikai and is an amateur singer. She and her husband share their time living in Mumbai, Chennai and Mclean, VA, catching up with all the cultural activities. Dr. Viji Swaminathan has contributed to Sruti in many capacities: as President, editor, and chair of several committees.

Navagraham in Carnatic Music Variations of a Theme

T. Parasaran

Navagraham evokes many emotions in many people in India, particularly in the Southern part of the country. The skeptics dismiss it as a lot of balderdash; the scientifically inclined ones call it superstitious but the ones with faith endow them with attributes of Devatas and one of the Grahams is even elevated to "Iswarhood", as in "Saniswara".

(It could as well be that the name is a distorted version of the original name for the Graham, Sanaicharaha meaning, "The slow mover", in Sanskrit, derived from "sanaihi charathi". For Saturn astronomically being the slowest of the six planets around the sun in our solar system, it is a fitting name.)

Be it as it may, Navagraham is very much in the Hindu psyche. In many of our rituals before undertaking a major task we start off with Ganesh puja followed by Navagraham Santhi puja to invoke the propitious intervention of the Grahams for the successful completion of the undertaking in question.

When I was asked to write the above article, I thought that it was quite a coincidence; during my recent trip to India I had the good fortune of attending a multimedia dance festival by Abhinaya Natyalaya of Chennai, consisting of performances on Ganapathi, Venkatadri Mahatmyam and finally Navagraham Ula in the Shanmukhananda Hall in Mumbai. In the last program, each one of the Grahams (the planets) is explained scientifically and then the descriptions of the Graham starting from the complexion, the vastram or garb he is adorned with and finally the Sthalam or geographical town where the Graham is worshipped as a demi-god was shown in a

video presentation. Next came the *piece de resistance*, the dance drama of one episode on each Graham followed by a stage representation of the graham in the accepted form and dress and vahanam. The finale was a procession of all the Navagraham that left a lasting impression on the audience.

Coming back to our point of discussion we see many references to appease the Grahams or invoking a higher power to ensure the invokers well being. Many strong believers in religion scoff at giving too much importance to Navagraham and astrology because after all the planets can only reflect what has been ordained by God. Therefore meditating truly on the chosen Deity should be sufficient to ward off all the negative happenings that could be caused by the planets. Both Purandhara Dasa and Sri Thyagaraja believed in this and did not think of offering prayers to the Grahams. [1]

A very similar approach is seen in an early reference to the topic from early seventh century CE Tamil literature. It is an invocation by the child saint, Sri ThiruGnana Sambandar. In his famous and oft quoted set of verses from Tevaram, the songs and poems praising Lord Siva, there is the "Thirukkolaru Padigam". The title means poems to remove bad happenings caused by Grahams. Those who are aficionados of Carnatic Music would be familiar with late Sri Madurai Mani Iyer and later Sri T. V. Sankaranarayanan singing this "Veyuru Toli pangan". The gist is as follows. He who is the half of Parvati, of beautiful shoulders, He who has the throat that swallowed the poison and He who plays the Veena, He who wears the Ganga which has no blemish and the moon on His head, has entered our minds and so all the nine Grahams (These are listed by

their names in the poem) are not only good to us the devotees but indeed very good. This is sometimes rendered by artists as a post pallavi light piece, more like a, “palastuti or Kadai kaappu”, to assure the listener that no evil will befall them. [2]

A rather similar idea is seen in Sri Purandhara’s composition sung in Atana, which is self explanatory.

“Sakala graha bala nine sarasijaksha
nikhilavyapaka nine visvarakshaka
Ravi Candra Budha nine Rahu Ketu nine
Kavi Guru Saniyu Mangalanu nine
Divaratriyu nine...”

Sri Thyagaraja’s, Revagupti Raga, “Grahabalamemi” is a slight twist of the same idea.

“Grahabalamemi Sri Ramanu-
grahabalame balamu
grahabamemi Tejomaya vi-
grahamunu dhyaninchu variki (navagraha)
grahapedala pancha papamulana-
grahamulu gala kaamaadiiripula ni-
grahamu jeyu Harini Bhajinchu
Thyagarajuniki rasikagsarulaku”

This is a beautiful piece as a composition with a clever play of the word Graha: Anugraha, vighramu, nighramu, for example. It is clear in Sri Thyagaraja’s mind just as in Sri Purandhara’s that no importance should be attached to astrology for it is the Lord who is the basis of all the forces of planets, He being the sarvagraha adhara Bhuta. thus resembling the Tevaram concept. [1]. The story goes that this was the response of Sri Thyagaraja when his disciples wanted him to write some prayers for Navagraham just as Sri Dikshitar did for one of his suffering disciples.

Sri Dikshitar had a different attitude and being a strong believer in astrology being himself an adept in the Sas-

tra, (as was Sri Syama Sastri), he did believe in rituals and local traditions. He, therefore, did not have any second thoughts about writing songs to appease the Grahams. Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar wrote individual compositions on the Navagraham or at least there is no contention to say seven of them. It is the belief of many Carnatic Music pundits that the first seven were written by Sri Dikshitar definitely but the last two were added to the set later on. [3]

It appears that one of his foremost disciples, Thambi Appan suffered from an incurable stomach-ache and the astrologer in Dikshitar attributed the ailment to the transition of Guru or Brahaspati. He thought that singing Guru’s praise would appease Guru sufficiently to ensure a cure for his disciple. The story goes that the disciple sang the song daily, faithfully as instructed and was cured. The same story is told differently in different references that the transit was Sani’s and not Jupiter, but the main idea is still the same. Satisfied that it worked Dikshitar was prompted to complete the series of writing on all the Navagraham so that whoever wanted to appease the Navagraham thus could do so. [4, 5]. A listing of all the seven Navagraham kritis, of Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar [6] is given in the accompanying table.

It may be noted that the first seven are in different Talas and all of them are exquisitely executed with so much of information packed about the Grahams and it is no wonder that they have been popular in the Music repertoire.

I believe that the readers may remember many more references, anecdotes and music pertaining to the Navagraham and it would be interesting to hear from them on the topic. I want to thank my sister Sarada for the write up on Tevaram and for typing the script.

Kritis	Raga	Tala
Suryamurthe	Saurashtra	Chatusra Dhruva
Chandram Bhaje	Asaveri	Chatusra Matya
Angaraham	Surati	Chatusra Rupaka
Bhudham Asrayami	Natakurunji	Misra Jampa
Bruhaspate	Atana	Tisra Tripata
Sri Sukra Bhagavantam	Paras	Kanta Ata
Divakara Tanujam	Yadukula kambodhi	Chatusra ekam
Smaraamyaham Sada	Rama manohari	Rupaka
Mahasuram Ketum	Samara	Rupaka

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Personification of Saint Thyagaraja during Sruti's Thyagaraja Aradhana 2004

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Classical Dance Art Forms of Kerala

Kala Menon

The state of Kerala is the narrow coastal strip situated in the southern most part of India. Bordered by the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea, it is well-known for its distinctiveness in language, attire, art forms and its humble yet exotic geography. It is the land where Ayurveda took its roots, where the influence of Sanskrit is obvious and where Adi Shankara, the exponent of Advaita philosophy was born. Kerala is a melting pot where several ethnic and religious groups such as Hindus, Christians, Jews and Muslims co-exist. There are at least about 35 different tribal people in this state. The state is a priceless repository of several different classical and folk dance art forms that not only represent preserved tradition but also the welcoming of outside influences.

Kerala has a long cultural tradition associated with the temple that has witnessed the evolution of the different classical dance art forms. *Koothambalams* or temple-theaters are unique architectural institutions within the precincts of Kerala's temples that are marvels of structural workmanship that surpass their modern counterparts with respect to acoustics and illumination. The *Koothambalams* are elaborately decorated with plantain trees, bunches of tender coconut and coconut leaves in preparation for a performance. The stage itself, however, is generally kept very simple. This is the theatre where kings and ministers, aristocrats, scholars, warriors, poets and intellectuals gathered to witness dance and music performances. Kerala has five main classical dance art forms: Koodiyattam, Krishnattam, Kathakali, Mohiniattam and Ottamthulal.

The only surviving link we have with the traditional Sanskrit dance-drama of India is the *Koodiyattam* which has flourished in the *Koothambalams* of Kerala since before the tenth century A.D. *Koodiyattam* literally means "dancing together". It is *Kathakali's* 2000 year-old predecessor. Kulasekhara Varma Cheraman Perumal, an ancient King of Kerala, is believed to be the creator of this art form. It is strictly staged in accor-

dance with the tenets of Sage Bharatha's *Natyashashtra* and deals with the plays of eminent Sanskrit dramatists such as Bhasa, Harsha, Kalidasa, and Saktibhadra. Traditionally, the performers have been members of the *Chakiar* and *Nambiar* castes (temple castes of Kerala). *Chakiars* enact the male roles and the *Nangiar*s (women of *Nambiar*) take female roles. The actors and actresses render verbal acting in stylized Sanskrit and in Prakrit (a colloquial form of Sanskrit). Dramatic gesture language, chanting, exaggerated expressions of the face and eyes, together with elaborate head-dress and make-up are integral parts of this art form. A *Vidooshaka* (royal clown) humorously tells the audience in the local language, Malayalam, the thematic development of the text. Music is provided by the *mizhavu* drums, the small cymbals called *idakka*, *kuzhal* - an oboe like wind instrument, and the *shankha* or conch shell. Performances usually last several days, the first few days being devoted to introductions of the characters and incidents from their lives. The theme for the rest of the days is based on mythology.

Krishnattam, another form of group dance-drama is yet another fore-runner to *Kathakali* in its origin, and is performed in the well-known Krishna temple in Guruvayoor. It is based on the Sanskrit poem, *Krishnagiti*. This dance form is believed to have been created by a Zamorin king, Raja Manaveda, in the seventeenth century after a miraculous vision of Krishna at the Guruvayoor temple. The traditional performance lasts for eight days and is presented as a sequence of eight plays that cover the whole span of Krishna's life from his birth or *Avataram* to *Swargarohanam* or ascension to the heavens. *Kelikottu* is the first event of the evening carried out at around 6 PM by playing the drums (*maddalam*), cymbals (*ilathalam*) and the gong (*chengila*) at the East *Nada* or entrance to the temple to inform the neighborhood about the performance scheduled for the night between 9 and 10 PM. A lamp is then lit in the make-up room at dusk. The actors start their make-up with the actors sitting around the lamp. As soon as the Sanctum Sanctorum is closed at the end of all the

daily rituals, the *Kali Vilaku* (a huge oil lamp) is lit in front of the performance area from the lamp in the make-up room. The musical instruments are now brought to the stage and the musicians take their respective positions. The text of the plays is sung in the soprano style by two main singers. The visual effect is enhanced by varied and colorful facial make-up with larger-than-life masks made of light wood and cloth padding. The characters that do not have masks have specific facial colors predominantly dark green, flesh tint and deep rose. The characters of Krishna, Arjuna and Garuda wear dark blue vests and the other characters wear red vests.

The word Kathakali literally means “story play”. This is a form of dance-drama which also originated in the seventeenth century in Kerala. It is believed that one of the Rajas of Kottarakara wrote the first play for Kathakali. This art form requires several years of rigorous training to attain complete control of the body and expression of emotion so as to be able to render all its nuances through facial expressions and hand gestures. Kathakali is a group performance that takes place on a temple premise or at the house of a local landlord in a temporary *pandal* (canopy) and is based on the two epics, Ramayana and Mahabharatha as well as on stories from the Puranas. The only source of light on stage during a traditional Kathakali performance is usually a big bell metal lamp placed at the center of the stage. Here again, *Kelikottu* is at about 6 PM using the *madalam*, *chengila* and *elathalam*. *Arrangukeli* announces the beginning of the performance. This consists of a pure drumming sequence and is usually followed by the *Thodayam*, a piece of abstract dance that is also invocatory in intent. This piece is performed by the junior performers in the group with very little make-up. The recitation of the *Vandanasloka*m (prayer song) is followed by *Purappad*. The intent of this piece is to introduce the main character of the story in full costume and make-up. Next comes the *Melappadam* which is a musical piece to introduce the vocalists and the drummers. The main story is then enacted which may last well into dawn. The culmination of the performance is marked by *Dhanasi* which is a pure dance

number. Dance passages known as *Kalasams* or pure dance sequences are used to enhance the bhavas. There are several kinds of characters in Kathakali. These include: *Sathwika* (the hero), *Kathi* (the villain), and *Minukku* (females). Kathakali requires elaborate face make-up that has an established color code. Each character is instantly recognizable by their characteristic makeup and costume. The faces of noble male characters are predominantly green. Characters of high birth that have an evil streak are given a green make-up with red slashes on the cheeks. Extremely angry or excessively evil characters wear red make-up and a flowing red beard. Hunters have a black make-up base. Women (played by men) have yellowish faces. The materials that comprise the makeup are all locally available. The white is made from rice flour, the red is made from Vermilion. The black is made from soot. The makeup is so elaborate that it looks like a mask.

Mohiniattam is a semi-classical dance form of Kerala. It is essentially a solo dance, performed by women. The word *Mohini* means a maiden who steals the heart of the onlooker. The word Mohiniattam literally means ‘Dance of the Enchantress’. This form of dance was originally called *Dasiyattam* because it originated as the temple dance performed by *Devadasis* and portrayed feminine love in its many forms - maternal, devotional and also carnal. In the main pieces of this art form, *lasya* (grace) and *sringara bhava* (facial expressions of beauty and love) are given more importance than *Nritta*. The white and gold costume, the traditional hairstyle and the highly graceful movements in medium tempo, contribute to the aesthetic effect of this art form. Mohiniattam is characterized by distinct swaying movements of the upper body. The eyes play an important role in accenting the direction of the movement. The basic dance steps of Mohiniattam are the *Adavus* - *Taganam*, *Jaganam*, *Dhaganam* and *Sammisram*. Mohiniattam is mentioned in some eighteenth century texts, but it appears that the art form was revived during the reign of Maharaja Swati Tirunal, a 19th century ruler who was a great patron of the arts. Under Swati Tirunal, Mohiniattam became popular as a solo

dance tradition with musical compositions set to the Carnatic style of music and a distinct repertoire. Over the past few decades, the repertoire of Mohiniattam has been developed and expanded by dedicated performers who have ensured that this beautiful dance style retains a distinct identity among the classical dance styles of India. Apart from mythology, Mohiniattam contains a range of themes from nature. The language used in the lyrics is an aesthetic mixture of Malayalam and Sanskrit called Manipravalam

Ottanthullal is known for its simplicity of presentation style among all the classical dance forms of Kerala and evolved as part of social reformation. It is a solo performance combining dance and verbal recitation. This type of performance is frequently staged during temple festivals. Mythology combined with distinct humor, satire and social criticism form the basis of this art form. The accompanying musicians sing the verses with the dancer who explicates the verses with the help of gestures and expressions. The orchestra is made of mainly the *thoppi madalam* (a special drum) and a pair of cymbals. Ottanthullal is believed to have been developed by a genius by the name of Kunchan Nambiar who lived in the 18th century. The story goes that Nambiar, who used to play the *Mizhavu* (the percussion instrument) during a *Chakyar Koothu* performance was caught taking a nap and was fired by the angry dancer. Nambiar is said to have then developed Ottanthullal overnight to present to a highly appreciative audience the very next evening. Although the truth behind the reason for the origin of Ottanthullal has been questioned, Nambiar has tried to bring out through this dance form, the social conditions of his time, including class disparities and the whims and weaknesses of the rich and influential members of society.

This dance form has make-up that looks similar to that of Kathakali. A single presentation may last up to two hours in length. The dancer dances and simultaneously sings and this requires intensive training, a flexible body and a strong communicative voice. The dancer has also to rely on a good memory so he can remember and recite long verses. The emotions presented in this dance form are mainly bravery, humor, irony, anger and devotion. The erotic element is altogether absent. The dancer wears a long tape of white and red colored clothes wound around the waist to form a knee-long skirt. The vest is decorated with colored beads and glass as well as with ornaments. The face is painted green, the lips red and the eyes are highlighted with black dye. The headgear is extensive and very decorative. Bells are worn on the legs just above the calf. Unlike Kathakali or Koodiyattam, Ottanthullal does not use curtains for entry and exit or background scenes and props.

No account of the classical dances forms of Kerala can ever be complete without explicitly mentioning the important role that the Kerala Kalamandalam has played in the very existence today of these various art forms. Established by the outstanding poet scholar, Vellathol Narayana Menon along the banks of the river Bharathapuzha in Cheruthuruthy, a small village in Trissur district in 1930, this institute has played a major role in not only preserving Kerala's dance art forms, but also in training young talent and recruiting the best in Kerala to carry out the training. It also brought increased patronage and resurrected both Mohiniattam and Kathakali from near-extinction.

Dr. Kala Menon is a connoisseur of the arts and is a research scientist in oncology at the University of Pennsylvania.

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KOODIYATTAM

Srinivasan Pisharath

In terms of international theatrical history, Koodiyattam, the Sanskrit drama that originated in Kerala almost 1800 years ago, can perhaps claim the greatest antiquity. It draws upon the plays of eminent Sanskrit dramatists of ancient India and was recently deemed as among the “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by UNESCO. Koodiyattam has also been the model for the many theatre art forms of Kerala, including the well-known Kathakali, and is considered the most advanced of all in its aesthetics and practices.

The prefix “koodi” in Malayalam primarily means “together” and “attam” means dancing; simply put, Koodiyattam is an art form where several actors come together on the stage. The performance practice of Koodiyattam, while following the rules and aesthetics of Bharatha Muni’s *Natya Sastra*, has many distinctions in theatrics and acting. One finds in Koodiyattam a much more of “natyadharmi” or a highly stylized form of acting. The method of acting is quite drawn out and complicated that it conveys meaning only to the select few who are erudite and well-versed in the theatric grammar, codes, and conventions. Hence, Koodiyattam is quite restrictive in its appeal. In addition, in the olden days, Koodiyattam was inaccessible to anyone except members of the Brahmin and other ‘higher’ castes, and it was restricted to the temple as sacred art.

As per tradition, Koodiyattam is performed in Koothambalams by a community of male actors called Chakyars and female performers called Nangiars, assisted by drummers called Nambiars. The artists are initiated to the art at an early age and were traditionally supported by the temple so that they can dedicate most of their time to rigorous training. The performances (sometimes lasting up to 41 days) usually begin at night, after the close of rituals in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple and continue until midnight or before the commencement of the morning rituals. The first day may have the form of a sacrificial offering to the deity with invocatory rituals and certain ab-

stract movements performed behind the curtain. In the next phase, the main character introduces himself by presenting his personal history and sometimes even his past life. Here, the actor has full freedom to choose which legends associated with the character he wishes to emphasize and interprets the character in a most elaborate way. The complete enactment of the play, from beginning to end, happens on the very last day as a concluding ritual. Orchestral support is mainly through drums known as ‘mizhavu’ and the make-up and costumes (which is less ornate than in Kathakali) exaggerate the salient ‘rasas’ or emotions of each character. A ‘Vidushaka’ or royal jester, who periodically enters the stage, provides comical relief and a link between the spectator and the characters of the play.

The repertoire of Koodiyattam includes plays written by Bhasa, Harsha, Neelakantha, and other dramatists of ancient India. Also included are plays written by playwrights native to Kerala such as Adi Sankara’s disciple, Sakthibhadra, who composed “*Ashcharyachudamani*” and Kulasekhara Varma Cheraman Perumal, an ancient king who composed *Subhadradhananjayam* and *Thapathesamvaranam*. The actual text of a play provides only the bare minimal text for the Koodiyattam actor and the production of the play is delineated by elaborate manuals called Attaprakarams and Kramadeepikas which have been handed down Chakyar families for generations through a master-disciple tradition. These choreographic texts vividly describe the method of action, movement, recitation of the text, gesture, elaboration, and other nuances including stage production and even payment to the artists!

As mentioned previously, Koodiyattam is an art of elaboration of action which extends the performance to unbelievable heights of imagination. In this method of action, the poetic quality of a Sanskrit play with multiple layers of meaning, figures of speech, and implied meaning is explored to its fullest. The extension of the performance text is so elaborate that single Acts (Ankams) of plays are

treated as full-fledged plays and can stretch up to forty nights. For example, in *Anguliyankam*, the sixth Act of *Ascharyachudamani*, Hanuman is the only character on stage and the context is his crossing the ocean and discovery of Sita in the Ashoka Garden in Lanka. In the process, Hanuman describes several related incidents such as Ravana's conquest of Svarga, the descent of the divine river Ganga, and the birth of Hanuman himself. The performance text, replete with verses from other sources and from previous Acts, provides the actor with immense possibilities of displaying his talent. In addition, he/she can explore the dhatus, upamas, and other aspects of Sanskrit poetry through actions and expressions. The entire story of Ramayana by integrating the three plays—Sakthibhadra's *Ascharyachudamani*, Bhasa's *Prathimanataka* and *Abhishekanataka*—was in the repertoire of the Koodiyattam artist. This cycle of plays had twenty-one Acts and took a full year (with approximately 5 hours of performance each night) for its enactment!

Theatric communication in Koodiyattam, except for the Vidushaka (royal clown) and other crude characters, happens primarily with *angikabhinaya* (gestures and actions) and *satvikabhinaya* (facial expression). The actor first recites the respective verse in a very slow and stylized manner (*vachikabhinaya* = acting via speech) while providing the literal meaning of the text with gestures and minimal facial expression. Then, he/she is free to explore the hidden meanings and nuances of the text to its fullest using mostly *angika* and *satvikabhinaya*. Here is where the virtuoso of the artist becomes apparent; an experienced actor can explore one sloka for almost two hours according to his/her knowledge and talent.

While hand movements are accomplished using *mudras* described in *Natya Sastra*, the face is the main field of action in Koodiyattam. The actor in Koodiyattam has perfected the art of facial expression to reach unimaginable heights. The movements of the eyes, eyebrows, cheeks, and lips are so subtly worked out that any emotion can be conveyed to the spectator quite intensely. Of vital importance is *netrabhinaya* or the *abhinaya* through the eyes, which is so refined and awe-inspiring that it can portray whole activities, actions, and feel-

ings. Stalwarts of Koodiyattam such as Mani Madhava Chakyar are world-renowned for their facial expression. Legend has it that an old time Koodiyattam artist used his eyes to simulate "lifting and hurling a huge stone" and caused a menacing dog to run for its life!

The degree of formalism that characterizes Koodiyattam is more than any other art in Kerala. The interest of the spectator in watching a play is not to unravel the story or action for he/she is familiar with the poetic text, the course of action, and even the performance details. The ideal spectators of Koodiyattam are cultivated theatergoers who concentrate on each nuance and expression on the face of the actor and savor every aspect of the elaborate improvisation. Such a high level of awareness expected from the audience is probably the reason why Koodiyattam had limited appreciation at all times. However, there were popular elements, such as the 'Vidooshaka', which maintained a balance in this erudite art and made it somewhat more accessible to a wider range of spectators.

Being a ritualistic and orthodox art, Koodiyattam stubbornly resisted change until 1949 when it was first performed outside the temple. However, starting a school in the Kerala Kalamandalam had to wait till 1965. The school broke the age-old practice and admitted students from outside the Chakyar community. After this, two more schools, Margi and Ammannur Gurukulam ensured the continuation of this theatric tradition. These schools now represent the three *sampradayas* of Koodiyattam and have opened up new possibilities for its training and performance. Patronage today mainly comes from the Government and agencies like the Sangeet Natak Academy. Also, the unique theatre language of classical theatre in Kerala has caught the attention of numerous scholars and theatre people from all over the globe and is leading to a wider acclaim and revitalization of Koodiyattam.

Srinivasan Pisharath recently finished his Pharm D. He is very much interested in classical arts such as Carnatic music, kathakali, poems, mohiniyattam, Sanskrit, and Hindu scriptures.

The Year in Pictures



Scenes from Thyagaraja Aradhana 2004



KARNATAKA SANGEETHA – WHY KARNATAKA?

H.K. Chandra Sekhar

In India music is as old as language itself. The poets who wrote the Vedas worked within a musical framework, which came under a Vedanga called Shiksha. Music that started with the Vedas was carried by oral tradition in the guru-shishya parampara through many centuries. The musical system that started rather spontaneously (*svayambhootha*) was first put down in a book form in Bharata Muni's time and the work was called Natya Sastra. This was probably in 300 A.D. and was the first authoritative text for the whole country. There were other authors of music such as Mathanga who wrote a musical treatise-'Brihaddesi' in the 10th century and Kahola whose work has been lost. From that time onwards musicians continued to experiment and innovate and new musical vistas were derived in different parts of the country. It turned out that each area of the vast country experimented with its own language and developed novel systems of singing. A general dichotomy occurred in the country around 1200 A.D. into the southern (*dakshinadi*) and northern (*uttaradi*) traditions.

Karnataka System

The art of music practiced in Karnataka, Andhra, Tamilnadu and Kerala came to be called as Karnataka music and this incorporated the southern tradition. Politically, Karnataka has comprised large parts of South India at different times. This is especially true of the Vijayanagara empire which extended over large portions of the present day Karnataka, Andhra, Tamilnadu and Kerala and was in fact called the Karnataka empire. This period witnessed the development of the principles and practices crucial to the evolution of Karnataka music. It is also a historic coincidence that these principles and practices were influenced by musicians, composers and musicologists who hailed from Karnataka or migrated from Karnataka. This is by no means to deprecate the great and immortal contributions of Andhra, Tamilnadu and Kerala which have made what Karnataka music is today. Indeed the name Karnataka Music or its anglicized form, Carnatic Music, is recent in origin. The first available textual mention of the names Hindusthani and Karnataka dates from only 1917.

Some Stalwarts

Sharngadeva, a gifted musicologist, wrote 'Sangita Rat-

nakara' in 1200 A.D. and he lived in Devagiri of the Karnataka kingdom (presently in Andhra Pradesh and called Doulatabad) This is the earliest work on Karnataka Music. From that time onwards Karnataka music got a clear identity by Sage Vidyaranya, the Prime minister of Vijayanagara Kingdom.(1350 A.D.). In addition to his political status he was also the head of Sringeri Shankara Peetha and edited several volumes of Vedabhashyas. He is also credited with the authorship of a treatise called 'Sangita Sara'. His brother Sayanacharya was also a widely respected musicologist. Govinda Deekshita who came after Vidyaranya's time wrote several books on music (one called Sangita Sudha) and quotes sentences from Vidyaranya's Sangita Sara extensively. He was a minister in the court of Achyuta Nayaka of Thanjavur (about 1650 A.D.) His son is the famous Venkatamakhi, the author of the highly regarded musical text 'Chaturdandi Prakashike' The name Chaturdandi refers to four dandis (pillars) and it was considered that the entirety of the musical system rested on four genres.: alapa, sthayi. Gita and Prabandha. The trilogy of raga, tala and prabandha – differences in treatment of which distinguishes Karnataka Music from Hindusthani Music rests on Chaturdandi. This text book is valid even today and is considered as significant as Panini's Sanskrit grammar. Kshetragna, who wrote love poems in Telugu with the pen-name of muvva gopala lived during the same period (1650 A.D.) About 1700 A.D Chikkadevaraya Wodeyar, the maharaja of Mysore wrote a collection of tender poems called Gita Gopala utilizing saptapadi – seven lines in a poem. About 150 years after the publication of Chaturdandi Prakashike, Tyagaraja and Deekshitar appeared on the scene. Their compositions were built on Venkatamakhi's musical system. In Vidyaranya's time there were 15 melakartha ragas and these had increased to 72 by the time of Venkatamakhi. Presently these 72 melakartas form the basis of Karnataka system. Among the giants of Karnataka music haridasas of Karnataka stand out as musicians without parallel.....

The role of Haridasas

The Haridasas-literally meaning servants of God, flourished during the time of Vijayanagara empire. These were Vaishnava saints who embraced dvaitha philosophy and have been traditionally classified into Vyasakoota (the sanyasins) and their saint-disciples comprising of Dasakoota (the householders). All the

saints used Kannada language and the art of music for their teachings. These haridasas were ardent devotees of Panduranga Vittala of Pandharapura and performed sangita seva (musical offerings). They received royal patronage as well as public acceptance. They replaced Sanskrit, the lingua franca of the elite, with Kannada, a vernacular language, to communicate spiritual, religious, ethical and social values. Sacred lore was enshrined in a colloquial idiom through music and these saints were proficient singers and composers. They laid the foundations of what is today called Karnataka Music. Sripadaraya (15th century A.D.) inaugurated the musical movement. Purandaradasa (1484 A.D. to 1564 A.D.) became renowned as Karnataka Sangita Pitamaha (great father) and the haridasas in general left a deep and abiding influence on later composers including Shyama Sastry, Tyagaraja and Muthuswamy Deekshitar. Sripadaraya was a contemporary of Kallinatha, the commentator on Sharngadeva's Sangita Ratnakara. Vyasaraaja, Vadiraja, Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa lived in the 15th and 16th centuries and they were contemporaries of many distinguished musicologists such as Ramamatya (author of Svara Mela Kalanidhi), Poluri Govinda Kavi (author of RagaTala Chintamani), Pundarika vittala (author of Sadraga Chandrodaya, Ragamala, Ragamanjari and Nartananirnaya), Tallapakam Annamacharya and his disciple, Bhadrachala Ramadas, Nijaguna Sivayogi and the Jain composer, Ratnakaravarni. Pundarika Vittala is reputed to have founded Mela Prastara Ragas. By the time Purandaradasa became prominent Ugabhoga, Suladi, Gita and Prabandha forms of musical compositions had already become popular uplifting the soul of common people with teachings of the scriptures. Simultaneously the principles of music was becoming established. The musical scale was standardized and melodic classification was carried out. Sripadaraya introduced the four stringed thambura as the drone instrument. Haridasas along with Veerashaiva saints such as Palkurike Somanatha (14th century A.D.), Chandrasekhara, Nijaguna Sivayogi (both of 16th century A.D.) introduced an amazing wealth of technical vocabulary.

Among the haridasas Purandaradasa gets the credit for founding the system of teaching Karnataka Music. He composed Sarale (Svaravali), Janti (varase) and Tala Alankaras and a group of songs called Pillari Gitas. He introduced Mayamalavagoula raga scale for the beginner. It was also a Mela reference scale and had a large number of ragas grouped under it. The talas employed for the beginner were called Suladi Talas and these talas systematized the conceptual underpinnings for maintenance of rhythm. Haridasas created the Pada form, first developed by Narahari Thirtha. Pada is the prototype of Kriti and Javali and it is retained in its

original form in the present day Devaranama.

Haridasas of Karnataka indisputably shaped the music of their time and prepared for the future by influencing the composers who came after them. Tyagaraja acknowledges the unmistakable influence of Purandaradasa. Tulajaji the Maharashtra, ruler of Tanjore (1729-35 A.D.) writes of the music of Haridasas in his book Sangita Saramrita. He venerates Vyasaraaja and Purandaradasa as great composers. Songs of Haridasas were very popular in Tamilnadu as recently as 19th century. Eminent exponents of Hindusthani Music have popularized the Kannada songs of Haridasas.

From Sharngadeva to Venkatamakhi (about 650 years) the southern system of music was expanded and established on a firm footing by mostly people from Karnataka. Many Kannada words like Thavi, Ela, Ovi, Kaivada- have gone into the descriptive lexicon. In the final analysis people from Karnataka formulated and codified the music (*Shastrakartas*), the Andhra musicians added the innovation and experimentation (*Lakshyakartas*), and the Tamil musicians presented the music in all its glory (*Prayogakartas*)

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Trinities Among US

Random thoughts after reading Prof. William Jackson's "Songs of Three Great South Indian Saints"

K. R. Ramaprasad

Symmetry is an important element of the great Cosmos. The English poet William Blake has aptly verbalized this for us: "What immortal hand or eye could frame thy fearful symmetry?" Symmetry is around us. If its recognition is a basis for order in what appears to be a chaos, it is also an immense aid to humans in the marshalling of the world around us. We find this in the way we sort the information we have, be it religion, art, music or science.

The number three, in this context, makes its presence felt repeatedly. We have many instances of these. A few examples would be: Father, Son and the Holy Ghost; Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; the triad of the elements that chemists recognized long ago; and closer to the present context, the great Trinity of Carnatic music.

Undoubtedly, Thyagaraja, Dikshitar and Shyama Sastri played a stellar role in the development of Carnatic music and much has been written about them to need even a synopsis here. But more importantly for the present discussion, their contemporaneous life on earth, geographical proximity, just to mention some extraneous details, coupled with their unique contributions to the developing Carnatic music of the times distinguishes them as the Trinity of the Thanjavur delta. Perhaps other facets from their individual lives and works could be marked out as further justification, if one is needed, for this label.

The Thanjavur Trinity have so dominated Carnatic music that this begs the question whether there were other trinities whose lives and works, however much important and enjoyed by posterity, have not earned the same public and academic exposure. It is against this background that the book, "Songs of Three Great South Indian Saints", authored by Prof. William J. Jackson and published a few years ago [1] is a timely and much needed contribution to the dialogue on Carnatic music. The book is about the times, lives and the music of *three* stalwarts who pre-dated the Thanjavur Trinity, namely, Annamacharya, Purandara Dasa, and Kanaka Dasa. As leading figures in the bhakti movement, their role in the renaissance of Hinduism, no less their contribution to the development of what came to be called Carnatic music, cannot be overstated.

Readers are familiar with Prof. Jackson's earlier schol-

arly works on Thyagaraja [2,3]. He brings to this work the same thoroughness and academic objectivity that makes for engrossing reading. There is an initial chapter on bhakti as a pathway to God as developed in Hinduism. It is this tapestry into which are woven the lives and works of the three saints.

If a label were needed, perhaps the Vijayanagara Trinity would be apt to group these three saints [4]. They all lived around 1500 A. C. E, during the glory days of the Vijayanagara empire. As exemplars of the bhakti movement, they had more in common than the Thanjavur Trinity. Purandara Dasa and Annamacharya met in person, as did Kanaka Dasa and Purandara Dasa. They were *all* Vishnu bhaktas, with their chosen mudras being some manifestation of Vishnu on earth. Purandara Dasa and Kanaka Dasa took the bhakti philosophy to the masses, even to those who could be considered illiterate, with significant effects on the 'world view of South Indian Hindus'. This pro-active stance of these Dasas distinguishes them from the later Thanjavur Trinity. As an interesting aside to these thoughts, it is to be pointed out, as Jackson has done, that two of them were brahmins and the third (Kanaka Dasa) was not. But the later, through his own spiritual pursuits, became one of the authentic voices of the Bhakti movement, reinforcing the wisdom that barriers are man-made and can be transcended.

"Songs of Three Great South Indian Saints" has *three* facets to it. As mentioned above, there is first a scholarly exposition of the Bhakti movement in India. The analytical and easily readable exposition of this vast subject in a small number of pages is testimony to the author's deep knowledge of Indian history, philosophy and music. Then there is a brief biography of each of the subjects of this book. Those already familiar with the contents of the author's book on Thyagaraja [1] will appreciate better the brief biographies of the three saints here. One sees many common threads in their lives that deserves a separate treatment. Finally (and this is a great service that the author has rendered to music lovers, especially the young Indians growing up outside India), there is a translation of some selected works of each of the three vaggeyakaras, which help to understand much better their lives, their mission and more significantly the 'dynamics of Bhakti images'. Each section is so well organized topically and structurally that it could stand as an independent work, facili-

tating easy comprehension of any part of interest. It makes for a very pleasurable reading.

Jackson contrasts the Bhakti philosophy found in Hindu religion with what he terms the linear approaches found in Western civilization, an approach that dictates either/or approach, leading to segregation of human capacities. Such a linear approach, for example, isolates passionate love from spiritual devotion. In the holistic approach, characteristic of the Bhakti marga, the co-existence and co-acceptance of all these results in a value world of continuum. It is a fact of Indian history that this holistic approach was eroded with the arrival of colonial England's values in the 19th century. As the author puts it, some educated Hindus became ashamed of the celebration of femininity as recounted in the plays of Krishna.

Bhakti is truly an egalitarian path to spiritual realization. It is a path accessible to all and it ennoble the struggles of ordinary people. This is one of the rules of thumb in the Bhakti movement. There are other interesting ones that Jackson mentions in the book.

Against this backdrop of Bhakti philosophy, the reader can only relearn the lives of the Haridasas, what they accomplished and what is so gloriously sung in their works. Their role in the renaissance of Hinduism can never be overestimated. Naturally, with the fall of the

Vijayanagara empire, the dasa movement itself waned in the dust of galloping horses and marauding invaders. But their voices are still heard every time a devaranama is sung. The dasas are no more, but their message of Bhakti is the stuff of our lives.

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[3] A recent book by T. J. S. George on the life of M. S. Subbulakshmi [M. S., *A Life in Music*, HarperCollins, 2004] has a dedication page in which Veena Dhanam, Bangalore Nagaratnamma and dancer Balasaraswathi are referred to a Trinity by the author.

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Some Post Trinity Composers: A survey

Rasikan

It is accepted by many that the contributions by the Trinity (Syama Sastry, Thyagaraja, Dikshitar) signify a watershed in the Carnatic music world. Dikshitar excelled in delineating the raga swarupa. The compositions of Syama Sastry are full of bhakti bhavam towards Ambal, his ishta devatha; he also used the technical embellishment of swara sahityams in many of his compositions. While the contributions of each of the Trinity were profound in many respects, those of Thyagaraja were arguably the most influential on later composers. In particular, almost all of these composers have faithfully followed the kriti format that Thyagaraja perfected. To that extent it may be claimed that the Carnatic music that we hear today is Thyagaraja music.

This article is a short survey of some post Trinity composers and a brief discussion highlighting their contributions to Carnatic music. The material is culled from the few books in my collection and some other sources.

Thus, it is by no means exhaustive. Also I have not included those composers whose works consist primarily of Padams, Javalis etc.

Junior contemporaries of Thyagaraja

Thyagaraja was still alive when Swati Tirunal (1813-1846), the Royal composer of Travancore, died in 1846. However, he was 46 years younger than Thyagaraja and so can justifiably be called a junior contemporary of the Trinity. It is to Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer that we owe the popularity of Swati Tirunal's compositions. Some of the famous ones are *Deva deva* (Mayamalavagowla), *Mamava sada janani* (Kanada), *Mamava sada varade* (Natakurinji), *Pankajalochana* (Kalyani), *Sarasija nabha murare* (Todi). *Bhogeendra sayinam* in Kuntalavarali is a lilting melody. He has composed two well known ragamalikais: *Pannagendra sayana* and the Dasavatara ragamalikai *Kamalajasya*. His Ramayana

kriti *Bhavayami Raghuramam*, originally in Saveri was retuned to a brilliant ragamalikai by Semmangudi. The works of Swati Tirunal also include varnams, tillanas, bhajans. Lately there has been some controversy regarding of the authorship of many of Swati Tirunal's pieces.

Subbaraya Sastry (1803-1861), the second son of Syama Sastry had the unique privilege of studying with each of the Trinity. His Reetigowla gem, *Janani ninnu vina*, is one the staples of the concert repertoire. Many of his kritis have beautiful swara sahityams, a la his father's; good examples are *Sankari nee yani* (Begada), and *Ema ninne* (Mukhari). Again like those of his father, most of his compositions are in praise of goddess Ambal. However, the Hamir Kalyani kriti, *Venkata saila vihara* is on the deity of Tirupathi.

Gopalakrishna Bharathy was a wandering minstrel. An interesting anecdote relating to his composing *Sabapathikku veru deivam* in Abhogi as a result of his meeting with Thyagaraja was published in Sruti Notes. His Kambhodhi kriti, *Thiruvadi charanam*, is one of the most popular kritis in that ragam. Sanjay Subramanyan has recently released a CD album, titled Tillai, consisting of five of Bharathy's works. Bharathy's monumental opera, Nandanar Charithram, where he depicts the travails of a lowly born bhaktha of Lord Siva, is very well known.

The Tanjavur Quartette (Ponnaiah, Chinnaiah, Sivanandam, Vadivelu) studied with Dikshitar. Ponnaiah's composition, *Amba Neelambari*, in Neelambari follows very closely the music of Dikshitar's kriti in the same ragam, *Amba Neelayadakshi* and is said to be a tribute to his guru. They were, for a short while, musicians at the Travancore court of Swati Tirunal. Vadivelu was one of the first South Indian musicians to have mastered the violin and as a recognition of his musicianship on that instrument, the king presented him with an ivory violin. Some works known as Swati Tirunal's have been ascribed to Ponnaiah or Vadivelu³. The quartette also composed many varnams and swarajatis for dance and are famous for designing the margam format for the Bharatanatyam performances.

Late 19th century/early 20th century

Subbarama Dikshitar (1839-1906) was a grandson of Baluswamy Dikshitar, brother of Muthuswamy Dikshitar. His greatest contribution is the five volume Sangeetha Pradarshini. This is a compendium of more than 250 kritis with notations of the Trinity (mostly of Dikshitar) apart from many lakshnana geethams, varnams etc.. The book is often cited as the authentic versions of

Dikshitar's kritis. He introduced the symbols currently used for notating the typical gamakams in Carnatic music. Among the compositions of Subbarama Dikshitar is *Sankaracharyam*, the stately Sankarabharnam kriti in Sanskrit whose music follows the structure of Dikshitar's kritis.

Patnam Subramania Iyer (1845-1902) was among the most prominent composers of the late nineteenth century. He was a disciple of Manubuchavadi Venkatasubba Iyer, a cousin and a senior disciple of Thyagaraja. Both of them composed kritis and other pieces with the mudra of Venakatesa leading to a confusion as to which piece is whose. In particular the well known navaraga varnam, *Valachi vachi* is sometimes attributed to the latter. Patnam is famous for his tuneful kriti *Raghuvamsa sudha* in Kadana kuthuhalam, a top favorite with instrumentalists. The brilliant chittaswara for this kriti is unforgettable. Some of the other kritis of Patnam Subramania Iyer often heard in the concert circuits are *Ninnu joosi*, (Sowrashtram), *Paridana* (Bilahari), *Aparadumulannu* (Lathangi), *Marivere dikkevarayya* (Shanmukhapriya), *Nijadasa varada* (Kalyani), *Anu dinamunu* (Begada). His renditions of Begada were supposed to have been so masterly that he was also called "Begada" Subramania iyer.

Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan (1843-1893) was a contemporary of Patnam Subramania Iyer. Although known more as a great vocalist, he has to his credit, the monumental melakarta ragamalikai in 73 ragas! The pallavi is in Sri ragam and the piece goes on delineating all the 72 melakartas in order. There are many technical features in this piece, one of which is the smooth (chittaswara) transition from one raga to the next, the scales of some of which may differ from the previous in only one swaram! It takes almost one hour to render the complete ragamalikai! M.S. Subbulakshmi has done full justice to this great piece in a (commercially produced) cassette/CD.

Vaidhyanatha Sivan was inseparable from his elder brother Ramaswamy Sivan (1841-1898). The brothers often traveled together with the elder brother acting somewhat as a manager of the gifted younger sibling. Some kritis are attributed to one or other, sometimes to both. The better known ones are *Pahimam Sri Raja Rajeswari* (Janaranjani), *Sri Sankara* (Nagaswarali), *Ekkalathilum* (Natakurinji). The first two also have lilting chittaswarams.

There are a number of stories of friendly and sometimes not so friendly rivalry between Patnam Subramania Iyer and the Sivan brothers.

Ramanathapuram (Poochi) Srinivasa Iyengar (1860-1919) was one of the two disciples of Patnam who rose to be prominent composers in their own right [the other was Mysore Vasudevacharya]. Among the more famous of Poochi's kritis are *Saraguna palimpa*, (Kedaragowla), *Parama pavana Rama* (Poorvi Kalyani), both with chittaswarams.

Both Patnam Subramania Iyer and Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar have also composed many varnams, javalis and tillanas.

Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar (1877-1945) experimented with many rare ragams. One of them is Niroshtha (*Raja raja*). A feature of this ragam is that one does not touch the upper and lower lips to pronounce its scale: Sa, Ri, Ga, Dha, Ni, Sa; Sa, Ni, Da, Ga, Ri, Sa. Other ragams that he introduced to Carnatic music through his kritis include Vijayanagari (*Vijayambike*), Karna ranjani (*Vanchatonu ninnu*), Valaji (*Jalandhara*), Vijaya Saraswathy (*Saranam Vijaya*). Madurai Mani Iyer, who learnt directly from him and T.N. Seshagopalan who learnt from one of his disciples have popularized many of Muthiah Bhagavathar's kritis. The latter has also cut a CD of Muthiah Bhagavathar's works.

20th century

Mysore Vasudevacharya (1865-1961), was a giant among the modern composers. His *Pranamamhayam* (Gowlai), *Brochaver evarura* (Khamas), *Ra ra rajeeva lochana* (Mohanam), *Palukavademira* (Devamanohari) are evergreen gems. He was in the faculty of Kalakshetra and worked with the great Rukmini Devi in composing music for many of the dance dramas produced in that arts institution. As mentioned earlier he was a disciple of Patnam Subramania Iyer. His book "Nan kanda kalaviduru" is supposed to contain vignettes of his guru kula vasam experience including the storied rivalry between Patnam Subramania Iyer and Maha Vaidynahta Sivan.

Papanasam Sivan (1890-1973) was perhaps the most famous of the twentieth century composers. Actually, his real name was Polagam Ramiah. Sivan is a moniker sometimes attributed to persons deeply involved in the worship of Lord Siva. Also since he lived in Papanasam for a long time he came to be known as Papanasam Sivan. A prolific composer, he has hundreds of, by some estimates more than 2,500, kritis to his credit. Most of his kritis are in Tamil with a few in Sanskrit. His kritis are often heard in concerts. Some of the more famous ones are: *Karthikeya* (Todi), *Kaana kann kodu*

(Kambhodhi), *Mahalakshmi* (Sankarabharanam), *Unnai allal* (Kalyani), *Kapali* (Mohanam), *Srinivasa thiruvengkata* (Hamsanandi), *Ini oru ganam* (Sri Rana-jani) and the moving Navarasa Kannada kriti (*Devi, Undanukku*) *Nan oru vilayattu bommaiya*. In fact, if a weighty kriti in Tamil is presented in the pre RTP segment of a concert, the chances are that it is by Sivan. Indeed, his influence among the Tamil musicians is so pervasive and strong that he is sometimes referred to as Tamil Thyagayya! His kritis in Sanskrit include *Srinivasa thava* (Karaharapriya), *Narayana* (Sama). Sivan is one of the few who were not prominent concert musicians, yet to be awarded the Sangita Kalanidhi by the Madras Music Academy. The marghazhi (middle December to middle January) bhajana processions led by Sivan around Mylapore temple are legendary. Many prominent musicians of those days used to join him in the procession. Sivan had composed music for some of the dance dramas performed at Kalakshetra. He also composed for many movies of the thirties and forties. Most of them are in chaste Carnatic music ragams. Indeed, some of them, for example, *Ma Ramanan* (Hindolam), could also be heard in concerts.

The great vocalist G.N. Balasubramanian (1910-1965) has composed kritis mostly in praise of Ambal. Noteworthy among these are *Paramukha elanamma* in Kanada, *Saraswathy* in Saraswathy, *Sada palaya* in Mohanam. His disciple, M.L. Vasanthakumari has given an album of some of her guru's compositions.

Contemporary

The multi faceted genius, M. Balamurali Krishna is probably the most prominent among the contemporary composers. He has composed a kriti in Sarva Sri, a ragam whose scale consists of just four swarams, Sa, Ma, Pa Sa; Sa Pa, Ma Sa! He is also one of the three who have composed at least one kriti in each of the seventy two sampurna melakarta ragams. [The other, as far as I know are, Koteeswara Iyer and D. Pattammal. Dikshitar also has composed in all the 72 melakartas, but he followed the asampurna scheme.] For some reason, we do not hear many of his compositions in the concerts except for some tillanas.

T.N. Bala off Havertown, PA, is well known to us in the Delaware Valley. His composition in Shanmukhapriya, *Vilayada idhu nerama* was popularized by the (late) Maharajapuram Santhanam. A compilation of some of his kritis, Murugaratnakara, was recently published as a book.

Another composer with a Delaware Valley association is H. Yoga Narasimham (1897-1974) whose son H.Y.

Rajagopal is one of the founders of SRUTI. Yoga Narasimham studied with Mysore Vasudevacharya. An album of some of the kritis of Yoga Narasimham sung by M.S. Subbulakshmi was released a few years ago. His lilting Ranjani kriti *Sadasaranganayane* with a nice chittaswaram is gaining in popularity as are many of his other compositions. Yoga Narasimham also brought into light some rare ragams like Latantapriya and Bhanudhanyasi. with kritis in these ragams.

Others

The fame of some composers rest on a few but brilliant kritis. Many of them have some of the best chittaswarams. Mysore Sadasiva Rao is one of those composers. His Harikambodhi kriti *Saketa nagaranada* has a scintillating chittaswaram. Another composition with a brilliant chittaswaram is *Gajavadana* in Todi by Etta-yapuram raja. The chittaswaram focusses on the gandharam of Todi with a brilliant sequence of swarams around that note. The Anandabhairavi kriti, *Neemathi sallaga* of Mathrubudayya was very popular a few decades ago.

While most of the above composers are Vaggyeyakaras, i.e. those who wrote both the dhatu (melody) and the matu (lyrics) of their kritis, there are extant some pieces where one person wrote the matu for which some other(s) provided the dhatu. Prominent among these lyricists is Ambujam Krishna. Madurai Sundar (of Detroit) has an album of some of Ambujam Krishna's works.

The influence of Thyagaraja and his music was felt among the composers in many ways. A disciple of Thyagaraja, Vinai Kuppayyar paid a tribute to his guru

by composing *Koniyadina* in Kambhodhi with sangatis in the style of *O rangasayi*. We have seen how most post Thyagaraja composers used his kriti format to structure their outputs. Some composers also used the Thyagaraja 'mudra' in their compositions with the hope, I presume, that this would ensure these kritis would be performed as long as Thyagaraja was famous. Many such 'spurious Thyagaraja' kritis have been unearthed. One of the most famous of them is the Simhendramadhayamam kriti *Needu charanamule*. This kriti by K.V. Srinivasa Iyengar is still being included as a Thyagaraja kriti in some books! And some other eminent lyricists, presumably enamored by the dhatu of some of Thyagaraja's kritis, have used them and replaced the matu with their own lyrics.

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An ecstatic moment during the concert by Debashish Bhattacharya on slide guitar accompanied by Shubhashish Bhattacharya on the tabla

Sanjay Subramaniam Concert - Classicism at its best!

Kamakshi Mallikarjun

Sanjay's concert was eagerly anticipated in our household and it was definitely worth the wait. The enjoyment was increased triple fold because of the fantastic accompanists. His concerts are also moments to 'Expect the Unexpected' - songs that I have not heard before, interesting swara patterns, neraval at a different point and these definitely make it more of a delectable treat.

Sanjay started with a brisk Sri Raga Varnam. He seemed to have a slight cough but it did not seem to get in the way of his singing. In Shri Maha Ganapati (Gowlai) he sang the Chitta swaram in the slow speed first (actually more challenging in misra chapu tala!) and then the second speed. Sanjay did neraval on the line Kuvalaya Svavishana. I found it very interesting because I have usually heard the neraval done on Prakaaasha karo for this song. Sanjay and Mannargudi Eswaran seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves as they brought multiple laya nuances to the chitta swara lines that also had sollukattus. Next came Nee Dayache Rama in Yadukula Kambodhi and SriRanjani Ragam followed by Ini Oru Kanam.

The central piece of the concert was Kadanuvairiki in Thodi. Sanjay's Thodi Alapana was full of bhava and the gamaka-laden prayogas brought out the essence of Thodi. It seemed like Sanjay was having some trouble nailing some of the faster brigas during the raga rendition. I also felt that Nagai Muralidharan's exposition of Thodi was even more masterly and sublime. Sanjay did justice to this majestic kriti. The neraval was on the line of Nidhura Nirakarinci. In software development, we refer to some folks who are so technically adept that the functionality of the application just gets in their way. That is what came to mind when Sanjay did the neraval in second speed; the words just seemed to get in the way of the musical phrasing! Swaras were excellent with a lot of mathematical wizardry and nadai changes. The numerous variations on Pa Paa Dha Pa Ma were

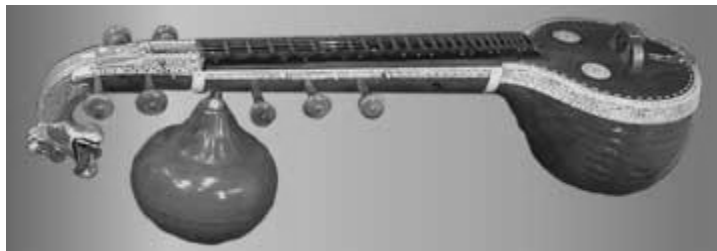
neat. Mannargudi's Eswaran's Tani avartanam was full of nadam and I really liked his subdued playing. During the Tani avartanam he indicated that he was playing a Mohra, a Korvai etc.

Sanjay then sang the song Chumma Chumma in Adana. The RTP in Begada was superb. Sanjay's ragam and tanam rendition was just marvelous; he definitely brings out the jeevan of the raga and there is so much azhutham (depth, emphasis) in his musical phrases. He reminded me of Bhimsen Joshi with all his hand and body movements that seemed to complement the singing! Again, Nagai Muralidharan's depiction of the raga was so melodic and soulful; there were touches of MSG (M S Gopalakrishnan) in his playing. The words of the Pallavi were Venkata Ramana Sankata Harana. I was surprised that the talam was Mishra Chapu; I expected it to be more exotic! The ragamalika swaras were in Saranga, Yagapriya (a vivadi mela karta, number 31; there is a beautiful Dikshathar kriti called Kalavati in this raga and I could definitely see shades of that ..), Ranjani.

The Tukkadas were very nice and were all songs that I haven't heard before and so that added to my enjoyment! Haridasulu (Yamuna Kalyani), Dasaratha Sutha in Jonpuri preceded by a Viruttam (Sloka), Hari Vasa (Sindhu Bhairavi), Vizhikku Thunai (Surati) and a Thirupugazh in Chatusra Jathi Dhruva Talam (first alankaram talam).

A very intelligent, dedicated singer with the essence of classicism. Splendid accompanists! A totally satisfying concert and my deep thanks to Sruti for making it possible for us to have the opportunity to hear such wonderful concerts in our own backyard.

Kamakshi Mallikarjun, an engineer by profession, is a frequent contributor to Sruti publications.



Review of Sruti Day, November 20, 2004

T. Parasaran

The Sruti day started with promise of a fine lineup of programs albeit shakily at first because of the sound system in the new venue for Sruti, namely the Bharatiya Temple in Montgomeryville, PA. With the glitches ironed out soon, the day turned out to be great.

Bhavani Prakash Rao of New Jersey and group presented, “Nilotpalamal Vibhakti” songs of Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar, as the starting program. The singing began after a highly informative and interesting introduction to Sri Dikshitar’s music in general and his Vibhakti Kirtanas by Bhavani’s husband Sri Prakash Rao. There were demonstrations by Bhavani, where appropriate. The group consisted of Bhavani, the coordinator, lead vocal and Veena with Indu Kannan, Radhika Murali and her son, Ananthapadmanabha Rao all vocal artists. Prakash Rao and Kumar Kanthan provided either vocal or Mridangam support for the songs. Nirupa Kumaraswamy gave Veena support.

Bhavani started the program with the 57th verse from Sri Adi Sankara’s Soundarya Lahiri which has a reference to the, “Nilotpalam or the blue lily”, eyes of Parvati. After the Ganesa Stuti, by Dikshitar, all the eight Vibhakti songs based in different Gowla Ragas were presented. The order of the Vibhakti in the Sanskrit language was not followed exactly since that would have had very similar Ragas adjacent to one another thereby diminishing the pleasure of listening.

This was no small feat. That this presentation required a tremendous amount of practice and efforts were obvious. The artists deserve our congratulations, appreciation and thanks. Sruti organizers had made the lyrics and meanings of all the Vibhakti Kirtanas available to the audience thereby adding to the enjoyment of the listening.

The next group led by Srimati Lata Suresh made an equally impressive ensemble singing of the compositions of Sri Swathi Tirunal. The participants were Lata Suresh, Rathipriya Suresh, Lata’s daughter, Kamakshi Mallikarjunan, Preeti Arunapuram, Shalini Kannan and Sruti Iyer. They started with Swati Tirunal’s, “Maya Malava Gaula Varnam”, followed by “Parama Pususha” in “Vasantha”. Next Latha sang his “Suddha Saveri” composition that was meant to be a Nava Ratri Kirtana, she said and the final rendering was of Swathi’s Tillana in Dhanasri.

The third program was a delightful performance by UPenn Sargam with Veena, Violin and Mridangam. After the invocation piece “Pranamamyaham”, a piece was played on the Veena by Sowmya Joisa. The highlight was an elaborate Raga Alapanam of “Sankarabharanam” on the violin by Sruti Iyer followed by Thanam on Veena by Srikar Prasad and then the composition, “Swara Raga Sudha Rasa” by both of them. The final piece on violin by Sruti Iyer, “Enna Thavam Seydaayo” a composition of Papanasam Sivan, had melody, beauty and Bhavam. The artists were efficiently accompanied by Kartik Mukundakrishnan on Mridangam. That the next generation young artists exhibited so much talent is very heartening to realize and they deserve all kudos for their accomplishments.

The final segment of the music program for the day was another excellent rendering of both familiar and practically unheard of but equally impressive songs of Harikesanallur Muthia Bhagavathar. Hema Ramamurthy, Bharati Sena, Poornima Narayan and Hema Bhargava were the vocal artists with a very proficient Harish Bhavanahalli on the flute and Karthik Mukundakrishnan ably accompanying them on Mridangam. They started with the Mohana-kalyani, “Siddhi Vinayakam”, then sang, “Sarasa Dhala” in “Saramati” and switched to Yoga Narasimhachar’s composition, “Raja Bhoga” in “Gowri Manohari”. They ended their short program with Sri Bhagavathar’s, “Raja Raja” in the rare Raga, Niroshtha that has neither of the notes “Ma” or “Pa”.

The second half of the day’s program was dedicated to classical dance items presented by three different dance schools coming from a larger geographical area than usual. The first set of dances was presented by the students of Rama Ramesh and had a sampling of some of the traditional pieces. Special mention should be made about the delightful duet danced by Rama’s daughter, Rathi and partner about the cosmic dance of Lord Siva followed by a dance describing the cosmic dance (Ananda koothadinar) by the same artists. The last program of this group was a full length Varnam of Sri Lalgudi G. Jayaraman in the Raga, Charukesi which was done with great attention to details and Bhava by Rathipriya the daughter of Latha Suresh. Her happy mood was contagious. Incidentally, Lata Suresh gave vocal support to the dances by singing the lyrics.

The second group to dance was from Kala School of

Dance from Scranton PA. After some short numbers presented with great enthusiasm, Leela Baikadi executed two beautiful numbers, “Ujjayani” of Sri Subhramanya Bharati and “Mahishasura Mardhani”, with measured force and enjoyable footwork. The end was a fitting Pushpanjali followed by an innovative Mangalam piece by a group of five dancers.

The last program of the day was another gracefully performed Varnam by Sudha Mokkapatti a student of Ramya Ramnarayanan. The performer gave a Sanchara Bhava detour executed with grace and subtle beauty during an instrumental elaboration for the composition of Swati Tirunal, “Sarasija nabha”, that deserves a special mention.

On the whole, Sruti Day was a well attended music and dance program day and was a great way to end a whole

year of great cultural programming.

The author wants to thank Sri M.M. Subramaniam for providing the names of all the music artists, Viji Swaminathan and T. Sarada for assisting me with details of some other relevant information about the different programs including names, songs, and dances.

The author regrets his inability for not recording the names of all the dance participants. He wants to assure the readers and the performers that he is very appreciative of their contributions and enthusiastic participation that have made the Sruti Day memorable.

Sri Parasaran is a chemist by profession, is a regular contributor to Sruti publications. He is a long time life member of Sruti and an avid music enthusiast.

Gajamukha: A Review

Meena Pennathur

Audience of Philadelphia witnessed a ballet presentation Gajamukha at Mandell theater on October 9, 2004. The ballet featured classical as well as folk and contemporary dance styles. Through Gajamukha Dr Jayanthi Raman portrayed the stories on Ganesha, the elephant headed deity of Hindu epics.

The production unfolded with a pure dance piece in three different classical styles Bharathanatyam, Kuchipudi and Mohini Attam immediately followed by an item the music for which was composed by Padmavibhushan Dr. Balamuralikrishna. The interesting story of how Lord Ganesha gained his elephant head was narrated next. Following was a contemporary dance number relating the waxing and waning theory of the moon, which was presented with a tone on humour. The dilemma of Nandi in judgment of the winner in a game between Shiva and Parvathi was done well. The ballet concluded with a worship of Lord Ganesha duplicating the rituals commonly seen in the temples of South India.

Parts of the music for the ballet were compositions of Adyar Lakshman, Dr. Balamuralikrishna, Lalgudi-Jayaraman, Bhagavatulu Seethrama Sharma, Ganesha, Rajhesh Vaidhya and lyrics by Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao and Professor V V Subramanian. The ballet was presented with live music with O S Arun (Vocal), Rajhesh Vaidhya (Veena), V K Raman (Flute), N K Kesavan and Radhakrishnan (Percussion).

In my personal opinion, the contemporary segment did

not fit well with a devotional theme of the ballet, though I might have been more tolerant of the same in a social setting. Narendra Kumar did a brilliant job as a mouse carrying Lord Ganesha after a heavy meal and once again he was good as Nandi. The dancers were very efficient and quick in their costume changes. The lighting and stage setting was very well executed. The live music was not all that I had expected. Out of four stars I would give this ballet a rating of two stars.



Meena Pennathur is a connoisseur of classical music and a regular contributor to Sruti publications.



Pu. Ti. Narasimhachar, A Creator of Exquisite Operas in Kannada

H. Y. Rajagopal

Diversity has in many ways contributed to the richness of Indian culture, but it has also had some negative effects. The profusion of languages has no doubt given us many outstanding literary works but unfortunately some of the best writers and their works in a given language are hardly known outside its boundaries. One such figure is Pu. Ti. Narasimhachar, a highly acclaimed Kannada poet, creator of exquisite operas, essayist, and aesthete, whose birth centenary is being celebrated all over Karnataka this year.



Narasimhachar was born into an orthodox Srivaishnava family in 1905 at Melukote, a holy temple town in Karnataka. This was the place that sheltered the great Ramana during his exile in Karnataka in 12th century. After his early schooling in Melukote, Narasimhachar went to Mysore for higher education, where he came under the influence many outstanding scholars at the University of Mysore, the most notable of whom was Professor M. Hiriyanna, under whom he studied Philosophy and Sanskrit. It is to him that he dedicated his first volume of poetry. That was a remarkable period in the history of Kannada literature when it was undergoing a sea change and a new genre of poetry, known as *Navodaya Kavya*, was being created under the leadership of Professor B.M. Srikantaiah. Putina (as Narasimhachar came to be known) absorbed a great deal of the zeal and fervor of the new movement but conditioned it with his own introspective outlook. He very soon caught the attention of those that were at the forefront of the movement, such as Masti, the great story-teller and mentor to many a future literary celebrity, as well as that of critics and scholars and went on to produce some of the most outstanding works of prose and poetry, and, what is of particular relevance to us here, the opera. His works stand out both in quality and quantity. His collected works fill three volumes, each about 800 pages long. He is highly respected for his scholarly writings, especially his interpretation and advancement of the *Rasa theory*, which he has expounded in his poetical work *Rasaparakasha*.

Gitanataka or Opera

Putina has composed 23 operas. Most of these are based on classical themes drawn from the Ramayana and Mahabharata and Bhagavata (such as *Ahalya*, *Sriramapattabhisheka*, and *Gokula Nirgamana*) but there are also a few celebrating the beauty and joys of nature (such as *Sharadvilasa* and *Vasanta Chandana*). Many of these have been produced over the radio and on stage.

The remarkable thing about these operas is that the music manifests itself as an integral part of the play, as an organic element of it. The musical content of these operas is as noteworthy as the lyrical. To the ubiquitous question whether the words came first or the music, his answer is very interesting: "When my mind is in a certain disposition, it is swarmed by musical notes. These are not the recollections or the imprints of some great music I had heard in the past but melodies I had never heard before. In the stillness of the night they have glowed like stars in the vast space of my auditory universe. I have cast words at them in order to catch them. Isn't a song born after all of the union of the note and the word? Word is a cloud and the note the lightning that enlivens it. Word is the net and the notes are the birds ensnared in it." And he has gone to great lengths to capture those midnight birds, as many instances show. With a beating heart he has gone to V. Doreswami Iyengar, the famed veena player known for his sensitivity and delicate touch, early in the morning to tell him of the notes and phrases he heard in the night, not resting until the maestro got them right on his veena. Narasimhachar was not a trained musician in the formal sense but he had a tremendous intuition, an instinctive and uncanny appreciation for the right note and the right *sanchara*. He had heard some of the best music of his day and his contemplative mind must have absorbed its quintessence into its innermost recesses.

Nor were the words he cast to catch those melodies ordinary by any means. In most musical compositions that one hears these days the text is mostly a collection of clichés and have no poetic value. Narasimhachar's songs are an exception. They are excellent lyrics too.

B.V.K. Sastry, the erudite music and art critic, narrates two incidents that attest to his intuitive musical ability. At a workshop he had organized under the auspices of the Karnataka Music and Dance Akademi, the object

was the exploration a single raga, Todi, in all its aspects as depicted by various compositions. One of the songs chosen for discussion was Narasimhachar's "*Sharadeeshobha*," from his opera, *Sharadvilasa*. It seems when MLV, one of the leaders of the workshop, heard it, she was so struck by the novelty of the handling of the raga and the structure of the song, she wanted to know more about the composer of the song and his compositions. She asked if he were a performing musician and when told that he was a famed poet and writer who never had any formal training in music, she wondered how he must have acquired such exquisite *manodharma*. In the other instance narrated by Sastry, Semmangudi, in his capacity as the chief producer of music for All India Radio, once visited the Bangalore station, when one of Narasimhachar's operas, *Deepalakshmi*, was being rehearsed. When he heard one of the songs, *Are Mohana*, in Kamach, he was curious to know who the composer was. When told about Narasimhachar, it seems he exclaimed that such a composition couldn't have come from anyone less than a great musician.

V. Doreswami Iyengar was associated with Narasimhachar for many years and had nothing but admiration for his extraordinary conception of raga. He has said that it turned out to be a blessing that Narasimhachar did not have formal training in music otherwise he might have lost that bold, adventurous, and fanciful spirit in his exploration of ragas. Narasimhachar experimented with raga combinations and creation of new ragas and used them to remarkable effect in his operas. Some of the new ragas he created are Yaman-Behag, Rituvilasa, Vasanti, Sanjivini, Harini, Gandharalola, and Rishabhavilasa. And there are several unnamed ones too. Theirs turned out to be a great collaboration - with sensitivity and patience, Doreswami Iyengar was able to respond to Narasimhachar's musical impulse and capture those unusual notes.

Gokula Nirgamana has for its theme the maturing of Krishna. The action takes place on the last night that Krishna spends in Gokula. Those idyllic days of sporting with shepherd girls, of music and adventure are about to be over. Krishna is on his way to taking on the larger role of the redeemer of the world. After playing his flute all night long, he leaves it in a thicket on the banks of Yamuna, planting a seed of hope in the aching hearts of his beloved Gokula men and women that he may yet come back someday in the future, pick up that flute and play. Some of the most beautiful songs of Narasimhachar are to be found here, his very first opera. *Krishnana kolalina kare* (Sindhubhairavi), *Kolalanudu Govinda* (Ranjani), *Sakha Hari* (Kharaharapriya), *Akko Shyama* (Pantuvrali) and sev-

eral other songs from this opera became extremely popular and have remained favorites for generations of listeners. In this as well as his other operas, one can clearly see that his songs are rooted in chaste classicism but take on a special aura, a resplendence of their own by the freshness of his approach to the raga. In the radio production of *Sriramapattabhisheka*, Balamurali Krishna and Srirangam Gopalaratnam rendered some of its songs most movingly.

Narasimhachar was a truly enlightened man. True to the best Indian tradition, he combined both *adhyatma* and science in his view of life. A happy man with a loving wife and a large family, he enjoyed the friendships of some of the most eminent men of letters of his day. He won many honors for his literary achievements, including the most coveted *Pampa Prashasti* of the Government of Karnataka (named after the great 10th century Kannada poet, *Pampa*), honorary D.Litt. of University of Mysore, Padmasri from the Government of India, Fellowship of the Central Sahitya Akademi, and commemorative volumes dedicated to him. Toward the end of his life, he could not see or hear too well. Maybe, his trusted companions, the ragas, kept him company to lighten the burdens of old age, I sometimes wonder. He passed away in Bangalore in 1998, leaving behind a remarkable treasure house of literature and music for generations to enjoy.

Personally, it has been my great good fortune to have met him several times here as well as in India. Narasimhachar's daughter Padma and her husband Dr. H.V. Rangachar live in New Jersey and are well known to many members of the Indian community of this area. My wife Vimala and her sister Dr. L.G. Sumitra had the unique distinction of learning the songs of *Gokula Nirgamana* directly from Narasimhachar and popularizing them. We are grateful for his memory.

It would be most rewarding for our artists and writers of neighboring regions to explore Narasimhachar's operas. Maybe there are others like him in other languages too waiting to be explored and such an exploration would greatly enrich our art and culture.

Dr. H. Y. Rajagopal, a founder member of Sruti, is an engineer by profession and a music enthusiast. He has served on several Sruti managing committees.

Recognized Versus Deserving Artists

Jayawant Bantwal

The author of this article comes from Hindustani Classical Music background. As such, the focus here is centered around Hindustani Classical Musicians, which will be obvious from the examples set forth. However, it is entirely possible to find similar examples in Carnatic Music and other forms of Art. The author wishes to make it clear at the outset that he is an admirer of the recognized artist mentioned in this article and many others. The tone of the article is suggestive of empathy for the deserving, but unrecognized ones.

Recognized artists, for the purpose of this article, are those who are fully recognized and generally famous. Indeed many or most of these Artists may be outstanding in their field. Deserving Artists, on the other hand are pre-eminent and excel in the quality sought in their field, but may not be widely recognized. This phenomenon has existed for not just decades, but perhaps millenniums. This can be easily perceived in the comparison of the mighty Arjun and Karna or Ekalavya, who of course could not grow up to the potential under the circumstances that existed at the time. No matter what the field is, there are always the famous ones who are virtually worshipped by the followers. On the other hand there may be others who are equally or more proficient, but generally unnoticed or not recognized to the full extent. An attempt is made here to illustrate the above mentioned point with two examples, one from the medieval age and the other from the 20th century.

Many readers must have seen the movie "Baiju Bawra". The theme of the movie is not a fiction. It is based on the life and music of a great Musician called "Baiju" or "Nayak Baiju" of extraordinary musical ability. Many scholars credit Baiju with the introduction of "Dhrupada", which is considered as the predecessor of the modern Hindustani Classical Music System (A later name for "Dhrupapada" is Dhrupad, which is in vogue even today.) However there are other scholars who are of the opinion that Nayak Baiju did not introduce Dhrupad, but was a big time contributor to Dhrupad System. Today we have two styles of North Indian Music. The most popular style is Khyal Gayaki. Most of the time, we, in U. S. A., as in India, hear Khyal Gayaki. The other style is Dhrupad, which was very popular during the period of Emperor Akbar whose court musician was the great Miya Tansen. Coming back to the equally great, but not fully recognized in the same proportion was Nayak Baiju, who dedicated

his life to Music, developed new Raags and composed many compositions. He was Miya Tansen's contemporary, although a bit senior. Just like Tansen, he was a tremendous performer and was endowed with Yogic Concentration. As legend has it, Miya Tansen could cause rain to come down with a Raag known as Megh Malhar or cause candles (or the equivalent) to light up with a Raag called "Deepak." It is said, Nayak Baiju had the same powers. Both musicians had several accomplishments. But the point, here is, Baiju could not achieve the same degree of success and fame, as Tansen did. Of course the distinguishing factor here was Emperor Akbar. No attempt is made here to take anything away from Miya Tansen, who was not only extraordinary, but had earlier displayed remarkable wisdom and courage in Gwalior, which paved the way to smooth continuation of Music.

Another example is from the 20th century. This is in the field of the percussion instrument Tabla. Acharya Pandit Taranath Rao Hattangadi (1914-1991) was one of the greatest Tabla Masters. He was famous. But the fame and recognition that he achieved were not commensurate with his contribution to the art. Pt Taranathji was born in Mangalore and moved to Bombay right after High School. He started learning Tabla under Pandit Vishnuji (a competent teacher and Bombay-trained Tabla Player), at the age of 4, which continued until he left Mangalore. His final Guru in Bombay was Ustad Shamsuddin Khaan Saheb. Taranathji had a total of 44 years of training under his belt. He was the most sought after Tabla Player of Bombay and later became the most sought-after teacher. He played with all the leading Artists of India many a time. This included Pt Ravi Shankar, U. Ali Akbar Khan, their Guru, the Great U. Allauddin Khan Saheb, U. Hafeez Ali Khan (Amjad Ali Khan's father and Guru), Pt Pannalal Ghosh, any Artist one can think of, like Pt Suresh Babu Mane, U. Bade Gulam Ali Khan, U. Amir Khan, Smt Hirabai, Smt Gangubai, Pt Bhimsen and many, many others. Pt Taranathji was considered Guru of Gurus. Ustad Ahmed Jaan Tirkwa was not only his senior, but also a friend and discussed Tabla with him from time to time. Pt Ravi Shankar held him in high regard and made him the Professor of Percussion in his School in Bombay and later brought him to U. S. A. in 1968. Taranathji also trained other great Tabla Players in rare Taals so that they could provide accompaniment to the renowned Artists, as he was not in a position to do that at that particular time, due to Bursitis.

Taranathji is said to have taught more than 2000 students, who are active in different parts of the world. He taught percussion in Los Angeles area for nearly 13 years. He has accompanied countless number of Artists. He has performed on the BBC Television. At the age of 75, he gave a Tabla Solo at a Television Program in New Jersey, which lasted nearly 45 minutes. This author had the honor of accompanying him on the Harmonium at that Program. He was also an accomplished player and teacher of Pakhawaaz. He also played Mridangam and had the honor of spending time with Vidwan and Guru Mani Iyer of Palghat. He invented Fiberglass Tabla. He could make Tabla and taught this Art to a few disciples. He has composed dozens of Tabla Boles, like Kaydas, Tukdas, Parans, Relas, Gats, etc. He has composed Taals like Jagadamba (19 Matras) and Rishi Taal (22 Matras).

He was highly regarded by other Musicians and Schol-

ars and was awarded titles like, Sangeet Koustubha, Tabla Wizard, Vadan Kushal, etc. However, unfortunately, he did not have the good fortune of receiving the most coveted titles like Padma Vibhushan or even Padmashree, although other Artists who looked upon him as their Guru or who received direct or indirect training from him, were more fortunate. Pandit Taranathji dedicated his entire life to Tabla, performance and teaching. He pursued this art with a spiritual zeal. He used Tabla and rhythm as a vehicle to Perfection. Material benefits were not important to him. However to reach the pinnacle of success, in terms of recognition, in a subjective world, often it takes more than art, dedication and ability. It would be of benefit to have "Akbar" on the side. After all, the meaning of Akbar is "Great"!

Jayawant Bantwal, a connoisseur and teacher of Hindustani Music, is an accomplished Tabla player and has accompanied many world renowned musicians.

Reflections on Music by Sangeetha Kalanidhi Shri R. K. Srikantan

Primarily, music is an art to be listened to carefully and not read about. Even the most expertly written book on music cannot go beyond one-way communication, i.e. it cannot offer an interactive learning experience. Music most fully mirrors man in all his infinite variety. A music performance is an incarnation of a series of ideas implicit in the work art.

Listening is a rare talent like any other talent or gift. It varies in degree from person to person.

A work of art does not grow old; it is outside time and space. Art is a human experience. It excels life, enhances it and gives meaning to it. It is both personal and beyond the personal. Art is essentially related to emotion and synthetic in its outlook.

Music education is a liberating force, and it is also a democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances.

Of late, there is a tendency to lay greater stress on the manipulation side of music than on the aesthetic side. The primary appeal of music as of any art is to the emotion. To make music mechanical is tantamount to killing it. That is why we lay greater emphasis on Bhava. A Raga though based upon Swaras and grouping of Swaras is something very much more than these; the Swaras are the form but the life of the Raga is its

Bhava. To bring out the Bhava of a Raga requires skill and inner sensitiveness. A composition is the embodiment of Raga Bhava and Sahitya Bhava. The structural excellence brings out the Raga Swaroopa while renditional excellence brings out both the Raga Bhava and Sahitya Bhava.

“When art, which ought to be a vital impulse vibrant with life and scintillating with upwelling emotion, descends to formalism and conformity with rigid intellectual patterns and formula, its death knell is sounded. Art in India has always been considered a sacred function; music and devotion went always hand in hand.”

Rigid and disciplined practice, efficiency, transparency, uncompromising attitude in maintaining high classical and traditional values, is a must for a student and a successful performer. In a performance, the team should share interests, values and goals. There should not be one-upmanship between them. A performance should be rich, full and keep the audience anchored. Supreme confidence in oneself and innovative ability is the engine for good results and success.

Sri R. K. Srikantan is a very well known musician and musicologist, and needs no introduction. He was awarded the Sangeetha Kalanidhi in 1996.

[Extracted from an interview by Dr. Dinakar Subramanian.]

Ragam Tanam Pallavi

Rajee Raman

As a rasika, deconstructing a Pallavi (in a Ragam Tanam Pallavi) has always been a challenging aspect in appreciating a Carnatic concert. I completely understand that deconstruction is not a prerequisite for a pleasurable aural experience of the Pallavi, rather just an added value. With that disclaimer, I humbly attempt to explicate some of the terminology and rhythmic intricacies involved in a Pallavi.

As often noted, Ragam Tanam Pallavi (RTP) is the piece de resistance of a concert. It rightfully deserves that eminence. RTP is a touchstone of an artist's versatility and virtuosity. The word Pallavi is derived from the three syllables *Pa - Pada* (words), *La - Laya* (rhythm) and *Vi - Vinyasam* (variations). After the almost free-form improvisations in Ragam and Tanam, Pallavi involves elaborating (Neraval) a single line of sahitya set to one full tala cycle (avarthana), followed by Kalpanaswaras. Here's a quotation from BRC Iyengar's book on a definition of Pallavi. "Accommodating limited sahithya within the frame work of a complete avarthana of any thala, which is ideally suited for innovation and creativity, in a variety of eduppus (commencing point) and gathis, and set to defined graha, can be called a shuddha Pallavi."

In short, Pallavi proceeds thus: an elaborate neraval is followed by Trikalam and Kalpanaswaras. Some of the terms and their significance in a Pallavi follow.

Angas:-

A Pallavi has two sections (angas), the poorvanga and uttaranga. The point of division of these two sections is what is called the arudi (also called pada gharbha). The gap between the arudi and the commencement of the uttaranga is Vishranti (resting time).

Eduppu:-

The eduppu (commencing point) may be at various positions, like samam (with the beat of the thala), atitham (before the beat) or anagatham (after the beat). Pallavis commencing at athitham or anagatham (for e.g. 1/4, 1/2 or 3/4 after or before Samam) are naturally more difficult to deal with.

Kalai:-

Pallavis are also set to 2-kalais, 4-kalais or even 8-kalais. This means each akshara in the sahithya is computed as 2, 4, and 8 matras (Matra is the lowest time

resolution of a tala), respectively.

Nadai or Gathi

Nadai/Gathi predicates the number of aksharas in the tala. The familiar Adi Tala is Chatushra (4) Nadai/Gathi – the other variations are Thisra (3), Khanda (5) and Misra(7). There are DwiNadai Pallavis with the purvanga and uttarangas in different nadais.

Jaathi

Jaathi of the Tala denotes the amount of beats that a laghu can take. For a lack of a better explanation, Adi tala is Chatusra Jaathi Triputa Tala, Khanda Jaathi Triputa- a beat and 4 finger counts and a Misra Jaathi

Triputa- a beat and 6 finger counts.

Let's consider a Khanda Jaathi Triputa Tala Tisra Nadai 2 Kalai Pallavi.

Khanda Jaathi Adi tala implies a total of 9 counts (considering the four finger counts).

Tisra nadai means 3 matras per akshara

2 kalai requires 2 aksharas per count.

Hence the total matras for this pallavi- $9 \times 3 \times 2 = 54$

As you can deduce, a different combination of the nadai, kalai and jaathi can lead to the same number of aksharas. For the question of whether a Pallavi can be rendered in more than one tala the answer is theoretically yes, but a whole lot is dependant on the aesthetics of the sahitya.

Anuloma, Pratiloma and Viloma Kramas- Trikalam

Trikalam as the name indicates means 3 speeds or kramas.

Pallavis can be a veritable playground for mathematical innovations. There are many interesting and innovative pallavis (for e.g. ragamalika pallavis, gopuchha yati pallavi etc.) that deserve an article to themselves.

Hope the above gives a peek into the complexities involved in performing a Pallavi that is intellectually and emotionally stimulating. My references have been primarily web-based including the newsgroup rec.music.indian.classical, Sangeetham.com and Carnatica.net. Any corrections are welcome.

Rajee is a software engineer by profession, and a connoisseur of classical music and dance.

SRUTI EVENTS IN 2004

March 6, 2004	Thyagaraja Aradhana. Musical tribute to the composer by Sruti Members. Featured artist: Professor Subbulekshmi & Kalyani Ramani Radhika Mani on the violin and Suresh Ramachandran on the mridangam.
April 9, 2004	An Evening of Indian Classical Music by Ustad Shujaat Khan on sitar and Debashish Bhattacharya on slide guitar. Accompanied by Shubhankar Banerjee & Shubhashish Bhattacharya on the tabla.
May 8, 2004	Carnatic Vocal Concert by Vijay Siva. R.K. Shriramkumar on the violin, and J. Vaidyanathan on the mridanga.
May 9, 2004	Workshop and Mini Concert by Dr. N. Ramani with C. S. Anuroop on the violin and Dr. P. K. Swaminathan on the mridanga.
June 6, 2004	A Carnatic violin Concert by Kalaimamani A. Kanyakumari with Embar Kannan also on the violin, and Thiruvavur Vaidyanathan on the mridanga.
July 11, 2004	Movie: The Speaking Hand: Zakir Hussain and the Art of Indian Drum and a sitar concert by Shafaatullah Khan; Pandit Ramesh Mishra on Sarangi and Amit Das on tabla (presented with International House).
September 11, 2004	Carnatic Vocal Concert by Sanjay Subramanian with Nagai Muralidharan on the violin and Mannargudi A. Easwaran on the mridangam.
October 3, 2004	A classical guitar concert by Pandit Brij Bhushan Kabra (presented by Delaware Music Lovers in collaboration with Sruti) accompanied by Ustad Kadar Khan on tabla.
October 9, 2004	Gajamukha - A Dance Event by Jayanthi Raman and Dance Ensemble with bharatanatyam, kuchipudi, mohiniattam, folk and contemporary dances.
October 30, 2004	Carnatic Rhythm Ensemble Event by Padmabhushan Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman (Mrudangam) accompanied by Nemani Somayajulu (Jalatharang), E. M. Subramanian (Ghatam) Nagai Sriram (violin), and Mattanur Sankarankutty (Chenda) Unnikrishnan (Thimila, Edakka and Sanku).
November 20, 2004	Sruti Day by Local Talent. Neelothpalambike Navaavarnams of Dikshitar. Music by different composers presented by three local groups; dance by individuals and groups.
December 4, 2004	Murugaratnamala by Sri. T. N. Bala and Group followed by the General Body Meeting.

