

# THYAGARAJA ARADHANA SOUVENIR

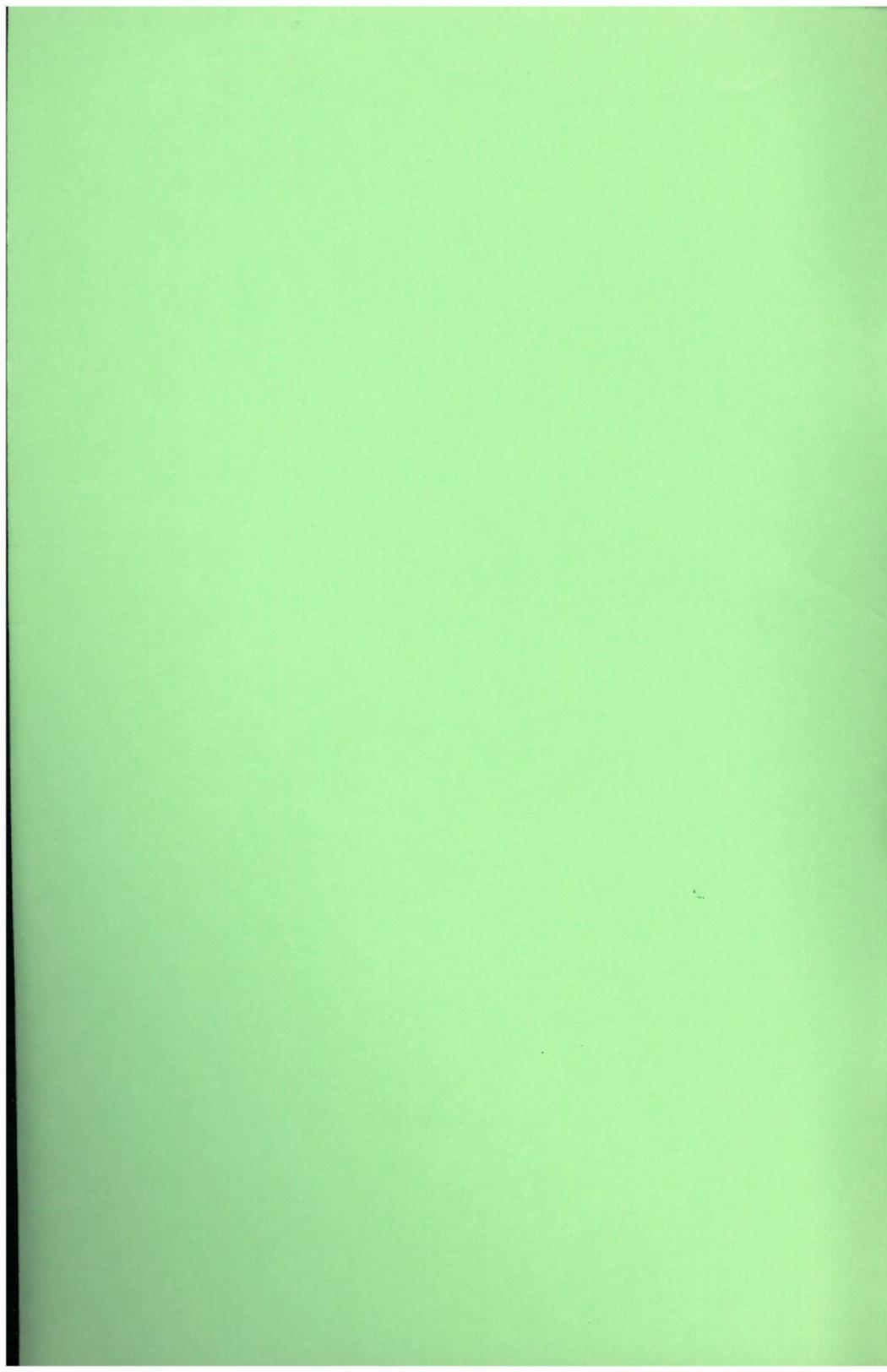
March 9, 1991



With Compliments Of

**SRUTI**

The India Music & Dance Society  
Of The Delaware Valley



**THYAGARAJA  
ARADHANA  
SOUVENIR**

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## From the editors:

The Thyagaraja Aradhana souvenir needs no introduction. Now in its third year of publication, it has become an integral part of SRUTI's annual tribute to Saint Thyagaraja. While the rest of the Aradhana festivities celebrates Thyagaraja in song, the souvenir celebrates him through the written word.

With this issue, we have attempted to vary the traditional format of the souvenir. While we have retained the text of the Pancharatna kritis, which has become, by popular demand, a standard feature of the souvenir, we have tried to arrange the articles that follow, around a theme. Though Thyagaraja sang "Sangeeta gnanamu bhakti vina sanmargamu galade manasa," establishing devotion as an intrinsic part of his music, we wondered if he could at all be considered as a non-devotional poet. We asked prospective contributors then, to address the theme of "the non-devotional poetry of Thyagaraja". Dr. H.Y. Rajagopal, therefore, focusses on Thyagaraja's philosophy; Dr. Prabhakar Rao Chitrapu discusses Thyagaraja's perception of the "Truth in Sound"; Mr. D.N. Viswesweriah approaches the saint as a moralist; and Ms. Sashi Nandakumar Baliya points out his deification of music itself.

The article by Rasikan on the celebration of the Aradhana and the U.S. is another departure from the familiar in this issue. Motivated by SRUTI's desire "to foster a mutually beneficial relationship with sister organizations throughout the U.S.," Rasikan acquaints us with the Aradhana celebrations of sister organizations in some of the major U.S. cities.

We hope this souvenir presents Thyagaraja to you in a new light, and inspires you to respond with newer perspectives for future issues.

We thank all contributors for their time and effort.

ENDARO MAHANUBHAVULU, ANDARIKI VANDANAMULU !

Editors: Anand Kuchibotla  
Swarup Raman  
G. Sridhar  
M.M. Subramaniam

## CONTENTS

	<u>Page No.</u>
Editorial	ii
Portrait of Sri Thyagaraja	iv
1. Pancharathna Kritis	1
2. Music as a path and salvation: Thyagaraja's Philosophy <i>by H.Y. Rajagopal</i>	8
3. Sound, Music and Liberation <i>by Prabhakar Rao Chitrapu</i>	12
4. Thyagaraja as a Moralist <i>by D.N. Visweswariah</i>	15
5. The Importance of Music to Thyagaraja <i>by Sashi Nandakumar Baliya</i>	18
6. Thyagaraja Aradhana in Tamil Nadu and U.S.A. <i>by Rasikan</i>	20
7. A Last Word from SRUTI	

## GHANA RÀGA PANCHARATHNA KIRTANAS

### 1. Nàta Ràga - Àdi Thàla



Sri Thyàgarāja

- Jagada+ananda-kàraka Jaya Jànaki Pràna-nàyaka
1. Gagana+adhipa Satkulaja Ràja Ràjeswara  
Sugunàkara Sura-sèvyà Bhavya-dàyaka Sada Sakala
  2. Amara-thàraka Nichaya-kumuda-hitha Pari-pùrna+anagha  
Sura Sura-bhùja Dadhi-payòdhi-vàsa Harana  
Sundara-thara Vadana Sudhà-maya Vachò-brunda Gòvinda  
Sànanda Màvara+ajaràpta Subhakara+anèka
  3. Nigama Niraja+amruta Poshaka+animisha-vairi  
Vàrida Samìrana Khaga-thuranga Satkavi Hrudàlaya Aganitha  
Vànara+adhipa Nathàmghri Yuga
  4. Indra-nìla-mani Sannibhàpa-ghana Chandra  
Sùrya-nayana+apramèya Vågindra Janaka Sakalèsa Subhra  
Nàgèndra-sayana Samana-vairi Sannuta
  5. Pàda Vijitha Mauni-sàpa Sava Paripàla Vara-mantra Grahana  
Lòla Parama Sànthachittha Janakaja+adhipa Saròja-bhava  
Varada+akhila
  6. Srushti-sthityanta-kàraka Amita-kàmita Phalada Asamàna  
Gàthra Sachìpathi Suthàbdhi Sudhàkara Kusuma Vimàna  
Surasàripu Karàbja
  7. Làlitacharana Avaguna Suragana Mada-harana  
Sanàtanà-janutha
  8. Om-kàra Panjara-kìra Purahara Saròjabhava Kèsava+adi Rùpa

- Vàsava-ripu Janakànthaka Kalà-dharàpta Ghrunàkara  
 Saranàgatha Janapàlana Sumanò-ramana Nirvikàra  
 Nigama-sàra-thara
9. Kara-dhrutha Sarajàla+asura Mada+apaharanà Vanisura  
 Suràvana Kavina Bilaja Mauni Kruta-charitra Sannuta Sri  
 Thyàgaràja Sannutha
10. Puràna-purusha Nruvara+athmaja+asritha Para+adhina  
 Khara-viràdha-ràvana Viràvana Anagha Paràsara Manòhara  
 Avikruta Thyàgaràja Sannutha
11. Aganitha-guna Kanaka-chèla Sàlavidalana Arunàbha  
 Samàna-charana Apàra Mahima+adbhutha Sukavijana  
 Hrut-sadana Sura-muni-gana Vihita Kalasa Niranidhijà-ramana  
 Pàpa Gaja Nrusimha Thyàgaràja+adi-nutha

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## 2. Gowla Ràga - Àdi Thàla

- Dudukù-gala Nannè Dora-koduku Bròchurà Enthò
1. Kadu Durvishaya-krushtudai Gadiya Gadiyaku Nindàru
2. Sri Vanitha Hruthkumudabja Avàng-mànasà Gòchara
3. Sakala Bhùthamula-yandu Nivai-yundagà Madi-lèka-bòyina
4. Chiruta-pràyamula-nàdè Bhajanàmruta Rasavihina  
 Kutarkudaina
5. Paradhanamula-koraku Norula Madi-karaga-balki Kadupu-  
 nimpa Thirigi-natti
6. Thana-madini Bhuvini Saukhyapu Jivanamè Yanuchu Sadà

- Dinamulu Gadipè
7. Thèliyani Nata-vita-kshudrulu Vanitalu Svavasamauta  
 Kupadisinchi Santasilli Swara-layambu Lerungakanu  
 Silàthmulai Subhakthulaku Samànamanu
8. Dhrushtiki Sàrambagu Lalanà Sadanàrbhaka Sènàmitha  
 Dhanàdulanu, Dèvadi-Dèva Nera Nammithi-gàkanu, Nì  
 Padàbja-Bhajanambu Marachina
9. Chakkani Mukha Kamalambunu Sadà Nà Madilò Smarana  
 Lèkanè Durmadandha Janula Kòri Pari-thàpamulachè Dagili  
 Nogili Durvishaya Duràsalanu Ròyalèka Sathathama  
 Paràdhinai Chapalachitthudanaina
10. Mānavathanu Durlabha-manuchu Nenchi Paramānanda-  
 monda-lèka; Mada Matsara Kāma Lōbha Mōhulaku Dāsudai  
 Mōsabōthi Gāka; Modati-kulajudaguchu Bhuvini Sudrula  
 Panulu Salpuchu Nuntini Gāka; Narādhāmulanu Rōya Rasa  
 Vihinamayinanu Sādhimpa Thārumāru
11. Sathulaku Konnallasthikai Suthulaku Konnallu  
 Dhanathathulakai Thirigithinayya Thyàgaràjāptha Ituvanti

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### 3. Àrabhi Ràga - Àdi Thàla

Sàdhinchane O Manasà

1. Bòdhinchina Sanmàrga-Vachanamula Bònku-chèsi  
Thà-pattinattu
2. Samayàniki Thagu Matalàdenè
3. Dèvaki Vasudèvula Nèginchinatu
4. Rangèsudu Sadganga Janakudu Sangitha Sampradàyakudu
5. Gòpì-Manòradha Mosanga-lèkanè Gèliyu Chèsè-vàdu
6. Vanithala Sadà Sokka Jèyuchunu Mrokka Chèsè  
Paramàtmu-dadhiyu-gàka Yasòdha Thanayundanchu  
Mudhambunanu Muddhu-betta Navvuchundu Hari
7. Parama Bhaktha Vatsaludu Suguna Pàràvârundu  
Àjanmam-anghudi Kali Bàdhala Thirchu  
Vàdanuchunè-hrudayambujamuna Jùchuchundaga
8. Harè Ràmachandra Raghukulèsa Mrudubhàsha Sèshasayana  
Paranàri Sòdharà Javiràja Thuranga Ràjaràja Vinutha  
Niràmayàpaghana Sarasiruha Dhalàksha Yanuchu  
Vèdukonnanu Thà Bròvakanu
9. Sri Venkatèsa Suprakàsa Sarvònnatha Sajjanamànasa  
Nikèthana Kankàmbaradhara Lasanmakuta Kundala Viràjitha  
Harè! Yanuchu Nè Pogadagà Thyàgaràja-gèyudu  
Mànàvèndrudaina Ràmachandrudu
10. Samayàniki Thagu Matalàdene; Sadhbhakthula Nadatha  
Litlanenè Amarikagà Nà; Pùja-konenè Alugavaddhanenè;  
Vimukhulathò Jèrabòku-manenè; Vetha Galgina  
Thàlukommanenè; Damasamàdi Sukhadàyakudagu Sri  
Thyàgaràjanuthudu Chentha Ràkanè

### 4. Varàli Ràga - Àdi Thàla

Kana Kana Ruchirà Kanakavasana Ninnu

1. Dina Dinamunu Manasuna Chanavuna Ninnu
2. Pàlugàru Mòmuna Srì Yapàra Mahima Danaru Ninnu
3. Kala Kala-manu Mukha-kala Galigina Sitha Kulukuchu  
Ora-kannulachè Ninnu
4. Bālārkaḥhasu Chèla Manimaya Mālālamkrutha Kamdhara  
Sarasijāksha Varaka Pòla Suruchira Kiritadhara Sathathambu  
Manasàraga
5. Sàpathnìmathayow Suruchichè-karna Sùlamaina-màta Vinula  
Chuirukkana Thàlaka Sri Harini Dhyànimchi Sukhimpaga-lèda  
Yatu
6. Mrugamadalalàma Subhanitala Varajatàyu Mòkshaphalada  
Pavanamànasutudu Nidhu Mahima Delpa Sita Thelisi Valachi  
Sokkalèdharìthi Ninnu
7. Sukhàspada Vimukhambudhara Pavana Vidèhamànasa  
Vihàràptha Surabhùja Mānitha Gunāmka Chidānanda Khaga  
Thuranga Dhrutaradhānga Parama Dayākara Karunàrasa  
Varunālaya Bhayāpahàrà Sri Raghupathè
8. Kāminchi Prēmamīra Karamula Nīdu Pādakamalamula  
Battukonuvādu Sākshi Rāmanāma Rasikudu Kailāsa  
Sadhanudu Sākshi Mariyu Nārada Parāsara Suka Saunaka  
Purandara Nagajā Dharaja Mukhyulu Sākshigāda Sundarēsa  
Sukha Kalāmbudhi Vāsāsarithulakè
9. Sathathamu Prēma Pūrithudagu Thyàgaràja nuta mukhajitha  
Kumudahitha Varada Ninnu

### 5. Sri Ràga - Àdi Thàla

- Endarò Mahànubhàvulu+Andariki Vandanamul+endarò
1. Chanduru Varnuni Anda-chandamunu Hrudaya+  
aravindamunu Jùchi Brahma+ananda+manubhavinchu  
Vàr+endarò
  2. Sàma-gàna-lòla Manasija-làvanya Dhanya-mùrdhanyul+  
endarò
  3. Mânasa Vana-chara Vara Sanchàramu Nilipi Mùrthi Båguga  
Podaganè Vâr+endarò
  4. Saraguna Pàdamulaku Svântamanu Saròjamunu Samarpanamu  
Sèyuvâr+endarò
  5. Pathitha Pàvanudanè Paràthparuni Gurinchi Paramàrdhamagu  
Nija-màrgamuthonu Pàduchunu Sallàpamuthò Swara-laya+adi  
Ràgamula Teliyu Vâr+endarò
  6. Hari-guna Manulagu Saramulu Galamuna Sòbhillu  
Bhaktha-kotul+ilalò Thelivito Chelimitò Karuna+kalgi  
Jagamellanu Sudhà-drushtichè Bròchu Vâr+endarò
  7. Hoyalu-mìra Nadalu+kalgu Sarasuni Sadà Kanula Jùchuchunu  
Pulaka-sarìrulai Ananda Payòdhi Nimagnulai Mudambunanu  
Yasamu Gala Vâr+endarò
  8. Parama Bhàgavatha Mauni-vara Sasivibhakara  
Sanaka-sanandana Digìsa Sura Kimpurusha Kanakasipu-suta  
Nàrada Thumburu Pavana-sùnu Bàlachandra-dhara  
Suka-saròja-bhava Bhù-sura-varulu Parama-pàvanulu

- Ghanulu Sàsvathulu Kamala-bhava-sukhamu  
Sada+anubhavulu Gàka Endarò
9. Nì Mènu Nàma Vaibhavammulanu Nì Paràkrama Dhairyamula  
Sàntha Mânasamu Nivulanu Vachana Satyamunu Raghuvara!  
Nì Yeda Sadbhakthiyu Janinchakanu Durmathamulanu Kalla  
Chèsinatti Nì Madi Neringi Samthathambunanu  
Guna-bhajana+ananda Kirtanamu Sèyu Vâr+endarò
  10. Bhàgavatha Ràmàyana Gita+adi Sruthi Sàsthra Purànapu  
Marmamulan Siva+adi Shan-mathamula Gùdhamula Muppadi  
Mukkòti Sura+antharangamula Bhàvamula Neringi  
Bhàva-ràga Laya+adi Saukhyamulache Chira+ayuvul+kaligi  
Nirapadhi Sukha+atmulai Thyàgaràja+aptulaina Vâr+endarò
  11. Prema Muppiri-gonu-vèla Nàmamunu Dalachè-vàru Ràma-  
bhakthudaina Thyàgaràja-nuthuniki Nija-dàsul+endarò

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## MUSIC AS A PATH AND SALVATION

### Thyagaraja's Philosophy

H. Y. Rajagopal

A distinguishing feature of Thyagaraja as a composer is that he has left a large number of Kriti on the art of music itself. In these Kriti, he expounds his concept of music, its purpose and practice, and most important, its value as a Yoga and a Siddhi, a path and realization. There are also other Kriti, in which he makes references to the art or to the Supreme Being (or to his personal god Srirama) using musical imagery. A study of these Kriti would be most rewarding as they provide an insight into his mind and heart that, unfortunately, today's concert stage does not offer.

True to the Indian tradition, Thyagaraja believed that the purpose of music, like that of all other arts, was spiritual upliftment. To him, all other uses of music were base, profane. "The only song worthy of the name is what is surely in the praise of the Lord," declares he in his Bhairavi Kriti *Rama Kodandarama*. In *Samayamu delisi* in Asaveri he states unequivocally "it is immaterial whether a song that does not refer to Srirama is sung or not." Devotion or unswerving attachment to the Supreme Being is, according to him, the most essential requirement for the proper course of music. The Dhanyasi Kriti *Sangita Jnanamu* makes it clear: "music without devotion would lead one astray; it is something sublime that great sages and saints have practised and that its real efficacy is known only to a person knowing the right and the wrong, and the worthlessness of worldly things, and one who has subdued the six inner enemies - lust, anger, avarice, delusion, elation and intolerance." Music is not for making a living, nor for self glorification or pleasing the rich and mighty for favors. As one committed to the path of Dharma, Thyagaraja says in his Ranjani Kriti *Durmargachara* that he cannot bring himself to flattering the wicked and the depraved for personal gains.

If one would spend his life time singing the praise of the Supreme Being with no other distractions and coveting no worldly possessions, such a life would be the best of all possible lives on

earth (*narajanmame narajanmamu*). "Who would be happier than the one who sings tunefully the Lord's name for ever?" he asks in his moving Kanada Kriti *Sukhi Yevaro* ('Nityamaina Susvarapu ganamuto, nirantharamu, Thyagarajanuta, sukhi yevaro ...'). The happiness that this 'sukhi' enjoys is no ordinary happiness, it is divine bliss, the ultimate goal of all spiritual aspiration. At this stage all conscious effort ceases and 'sukhi' seems to function effortlessly. Perhaps it is this effortlessness that Sage Yajnavalkya refers to in his Smṛti: "He who knows the truth of Veda music, is an expert in Śrutis and their varieties, and understands tala, reaches the path of salvation without exertion". In Thyagaraja's view, knowledge of music not only makes it easier for one to reach the path of salvation, but it is also a prime requisite. He asks in *Mokshamugalada*, "How can one devoid of real devotion and knowledge of divine music attain salvation?" And he goes further yet. Music is not only a means for attaining salvation but salvation itself. It is not just a means to mukti but mukti itself. In his Mukhari song (*Sangitha sastra jnanamu*) he says that the knowledge of music gives the bliss of oneness with the Supreme Being. Again, in the famous Sankarabharana Kriti (*Svararaga sudharasa*) he says that bhakti combined with the life giving 'rasa' of svaras and ragas is itself heaven and salvation. It was Thyagaraja's conviction that while a jnani attains liberation after numerous births, he who has by nature a devoted mind and has knowledge of music is a liberated soul here on earth, a 'jeevanmukta.' He believed that those who have knowledge of svara, nada and omkara are true jeevanmuktas. This belief derives further strength by regarding the object of all devotion and pursuit as the embodiment of music itself. This again follows the Indian tradition, the most familiar example of which is for a dancer to regard Shiva as the supreme dancer (Nataraja). Thyagaraja refers to Rama as 'Sangitalola,' 'ganalola.' In the Sriraga Kriti *Endaro*, we hear of the Supreme Being being referred to as 'Samaganalola.' In *Sadhinchane*, Rama is 'Sangitha Sampradayakudu,' the maintainer of the musical tradition. Rama is 'Nadabrahmarupa.' In *Nadasudharasa*, he regards sound (music) as having personified itself in Rama and uses beautiful musical imagery to expand the concept and evoke a picture of Rama: "the seven notes are the seven bells of the bow and the ragas the bow itself; the styles Dura, Naya, and Desya are the three strings of the bow; the steady pace the arrow, and the melodious and apt variations are his speech ..." By conceiving of the Supreme Being

as the ultimate sound and immersing oneself in it ceaselessly, one is in union with that Being. In that extraordinary Kriti in Kalyanavasantham, he tells himself 'Nadaloludai brahmananda mandave' -attain the bliss of brahmananda, O mind, by losing yourself in nada. To Thyagaraja, music thus is not only a means to an end, but the end itself. It is a Yoga as well as a Siddhi.

On the artistic plane, Thyagaraja's achievements are phenomenal. He expanded the horizons of Karnatak music to an extent that remains unmatched by anyone else. He brought into vogue many ragas. The number of compositions and their quality are truly extraordinary. In his hands, as well as those of Syama Sastry and Muthuswamy Dikshitar, the Kriti attained perfection of musical form and content. In his Sriranjani Kriti *Sogasuga*, one finds a definition of a Kriti, as it were: "Kritis which expound the true words of the exalted Upanishads, which are marked by correct placement of svaras and rhythmic turns and pauses, which reflect true devotion and vairagya, which are full of nine rasas and are as delectable as draksharasa." Note here the seemingly incompatible requirements of vairagya and being full of nine rasas. This clearly shows how both the spiritualist and the artist in him are at work here. It is the bhakti and vairagya that provide the proper path ('Sanmargamu') or direction to music as we have already noted in his *Sangitha jnanamu*. Another point to note here is the reference to 'draksharasa.' In Sanskrit literary criticism, two types of works are recognized: 'narikelapaka' and 'drakshapaka.' The first is a composition whose beauty lies hidden, which one will be able to appreciate only after some exertion (just as one has to break the shell of a coconut in order to get to the milk inside.) The other is a composition that can be enjoyed immediately. It is full of rasa, in and out, that can be tasted right away. Music, which of all arts, has the most immediate power to transport a person, falls aptly in the second category. Thyagaraja wants his compositions to preserve that intrinsic nature of music. No wonder, his Kritis have such wide appeal to novices and cognoscenti alike, whether the Kritis are the simple spontaneous outpourings of a bhakta and a mystic, or the most elaborately structured compositions of a master craftsman. It is also this draksharasa concept that perhaps makes him insist again and again on 'susvara,' music that is pleasing to the ear. In the Kriti *Sukhi yevaro*, we already noted the reference to 'Susvarapu ganamu'. Again in the Kriti *Sogasuga*, the phrase 'Svarasuddhamuto' appears, meaning maintaining purity of

notes. In the Todi Kriti *Kaddanuvuriki*, where he lays down clear directions for the practice of music, he again insists on 'Susvara:' "Nidura nirakaranchi, mudduga tambura batti, suddhamaina manasuche, susvaramuto, baddu tappaka, bhajiyinchu." "Casting off your sleep, sit down comfortably with your tambura, with a clear mind sing with devotion, intoning the svaras correctly and melodiously, according to the tradition." With all the insistence on 'Susvara,' it is sad to reflect how this very element has been most neglected in today's Karnatak music. The importance of tala is duly recognized, but not exaggerated as in present day music. The very beginning of *Sogasuga* is ecstatic as it refers to the joyful sound of a beautiful Mrdanga. This brings to mind a Kannada song of Purandara Dasa, who lived almost two centuries before Thyagaraja, in which he says "Tala beku, takka mela beku," meaning "we must have tala and the right accompaniments .. Yet, with all that, if love is absent, Hari won't listen to the song."

In Thyagaraja, we find a supreme example of the Indian artistic tradition. Through his artistic genius and his deeply spiritual way of life, he took the art of music to the noblest heights. In him, we find the ecstasy of a creative artist as well as the profound serenity of a Yogi. In him, the path and the goal are one.

(Based on material taken from "The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja", by C. Ramanujachari & Dr. V. Raghavan, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1966.)

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## SOUND, MUSIC AND LIBERATION

Prabhakar Rao Chitrapu

*(Following are some reflections of the author on what music must have meant to Thyagaraja, based on a few of his songs, and discussions with others in the past. The songs referred to are: 'Ni balamaa naama balamaa' in Ananda Bhairavi raga, 'Mokshamu galadaa' in Saramathi raga, and 'Ragasudha rasa paanamu' in Andolika raga.)*

Sound has a prominent place in Hindu philosophy. Before the universe came to be, there was only sound, or waves. Now we call them Omkaram or Pranava Naadam. Then, on the will of God, from that Om came matter and life, making up the world that we are.

To Thyagaraja, sound, in its native as well as musical forms must have meant a lot. He is said to have recited the word 'Rama' some 95 crore times ! Any sound repeated almost a billion times will have an effect that we probably cannot even imagine: effect, not only psychological but also physiological. Haven't little drops of water falling lazily through the years carved astonishing caves here in Pennsylvania ?! No doubt, analogies are not proofs, but they do caution us against hasty rejection of an idea, however laughworthy it may sound at the first instance.

In fact, what was this Rama that Thyagaraja worshipped ? Mostly, we think of the Rama that married Sita, killed Ravana etc.- the mythological Rama. But look at these words of Thyagaraja:

*Ni balamaa, naama balamaa ?  
Nijamuga telupave, O manasa !*

He is asking himself whether the greatness (strength) is due to him or his *name* !!

Given that Life is, the next most important concept in Hinduism is Liberation - Mokshamu. All worthy human effort is to seek and pursue it - a Hindu value. The normal path to Mokshamu (not that there are so many as to be able to draw statistical conclusions!) is to lead the life of an honest seeker, and access that Liberated state

after the death of the physical body. However, Thyagaraja says that there can be no Mokshamu if one isn't liberated during one's own lifetime - a Jivanmukta.

*Mokshamu galadaa bhuvido jivanmuktulu gaani vaaralaku ?!*

But what in Thyagaraja's view can bring about this liberation in ones' own lifetime ? or at least, what prevents it from being realized ? In the same song, he says

*Sakshatkara, ni sadbhakti, sangeeta jnana vihinulaku,  
Mokshamu galadaa ?*

There is no Mokshamu for one who does not have (bhakti and) knowledge of music.

To a layman like me, Sangeetam is no more than sound ordered to please the ear and to convey meaning. What does Thyagaraja see in Sangeetam, that makes him attribute such absolute necessities to music ? In the next stanza, he attests the fundamental nature of music.

*Praana + anala samyogamu valana  
Pranavanaadamu Saptaswaramulai baraga,  
Vina vaadana loludau Siva mano vidhamerugaru...*

When Praana (the essence of Life) and fire (the physical elements) come together (as in the human body), the premordial Omkaram, that existed before creation, became and flowed as musical notes, in which the heart of Iswara revels. To the one ignorant of this, ..there can be no liberation !

In another composition, Thyagaraja answers the question of the Jivanmukta in a positive way. He gives a graphic description of one such:

*Raga sudha rasa paanamu chesi raajillave, O manasa !*

*Yaaga yoga thyaga bhoga phalamosange  
Sada sivamayamagu naadomkara swaravidulu*

May I shine by indulging in the sweetness of music.  
I *do know* that those who understand music, -and understand it to be the Omkaramu, the constant manifestation of Siva, and the giver of the fruits of yaga, yoga, thyaga and bhoga - are indeed the Jivanmuktas.

Thyagaraja must have seen a musical world. Wherever he looked, whatever he thought must have come through the medium of music. The falling of a raindrop, the passing of a vehicle, the blowing of a breeze. The genius of Thyagaraja gives us a glimpse of the Truth in Sound.

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Music lovers do not generally realize that the great composer in his compositions was about as morally demanding as, say, Purandara Dasa or Jesus Christ. It looked as if Thyagaraja lived simultaneously at two levels of reality: the first was the ordinary waking existence (what the philosophers in India have termed "Vyavaharika Satte") and the other was the divine existence (or "Paramarthika Satte"). In the latter, Rama, Sita and all the characters of Ramayana were as real to him as his own wife and relatives. Often enough he did mix the two and from that mixture flowed musical compositions the like of which the world has not seen and may indeed never see.

With regard to his worldly life, he, unlike most seekers of the divine, paid scrupulous attention to it. Here I am reminded of the story once recounted by the great musicologist, Prof. Sambamoorthy in Madras. It would appear that Thyagaraja was strict about the visitors to his house not spitting betel juice within a certain radius of his house, but that he made just one exception in the case of his great friend Shyama Shastrigal. The story at once illustrated that Thyagaraja was a careful house-holder who, however, exercised discretion. That same good sense made him extremely angry over the shams and humbugs existing in the society during his time, especially in the religious field. In his Saveri kriti "Balamu kulamu", referring to mere religious observances without any inner conviction, he asks rhetorically whether the crows and fish who dip into water have had their morning ablutions; whether the cranes who keep their eyes closed are meditating and whether monkeys who live in the forests are doing Vanavasa? As a Rama bhakta himself, he expresses in the Mukhari kriti "Kshinamai tiruga" that siddhi achieved by yoga or mere scholastic learning does not lead to divine grace but only to rebirth. Thyagaraja is even more forthright in his kriti "Bhakti bhikshamiyave" in Shankarabharana where he says that deceitful people teaching the Puranas and Shastras are no better than

corpses dressed up in lace turbans and adorned with jewels! In a very colorful simile he asks, in his Abhogi kriti "Manasu nilpa shakti leka pote", whether the Somayaji (the high priest who performs yagas with the help of his wife) will go to heaven even if his wife is a debauchee. In this context, one is reminded of Jesus Christ scolding the scribes and pharisees of his day. Obviously only true men of God can speak out so boldly against sham religious practices.

Thyagaraja was evidently a keen observer of men and their behavior. This was made easier because he lived in a small town and in a rather closed society, and the physical proximity of his neighbors brought to him easily the news of their doings. Again and again, and in differing phrases, he talks of men's attraction to other people's wives. Thus, in his famous Shuddha Dhanyasi kriti "Enta nerchina enta juchina", he says that if a man does not follow the right path, despite all his learning and pilgrimages, he is likely in the end to become a slave to women. Again in another famous kriti "Rama neeyada prema rahitulaku" he says that a man devoid of true devotion knows as much of the sweetness of God's holy name as a mere man in the clothes of a woman can know of maidenly chastity or the ability of a tiger's cub to produce cow's milk, even if that cub had put on the mask of a cow. (Charles Dickens, speaking of one of his merciless characters, virtually uses the same analogy: this character, according to the novelist, could produce as much human kindness as a tiger could of cow's milk ! How great men, separated by time and space can think the same thoughts !)

Thyagaraja in his "Telisi Ramachintanato namamu" kriti in the raga Purnachandrika emphasises the need for utter devotion to the Lord, for, otherwise the meditator may be thinking of Ramā, a woman rather than Lord Rama! In the Pancharatna kriti "Duduku gala nanne dora" the great composer gives in one piece the many possible evils that befall an insincere and godless person. Although the first person singular is used throughout this kriti, it refers not just to the composer, but to mankind in general.

Generally, however, the "I" in his kritis refers to himself personally and like all the bhaktas he exaggerates his faults. In his very colorful kriti, the famous "Dachukovalena, Dasarathi" in the Todi raga, the great saint-composer asks Rama why He is holding His mercy from his devotee even after (1) Sita put in a good word on his behalf just when the Lord is fondling her with kisses; (2) when Bharata has likewise spoken favorably on Thyagaraja's behalf to the Lord when massaging his feet, and (3) when Lakshmana had similarly acted while serving the Lord ! All this will doubtless appear strange to a modern reader, but just to show that Thyagaraja was no mere dreamer, I will quote a simile he has used, which would certainly have done credit to that most sensible and witty statesman we had in India, the late C. Rajagopalachari, who could at a moment's notice turn the tables on just about anybody on earth. Thyagaraja, in his Kapi kriti "Meevalla gunadoshamemi, Shrirama", after saying that his blemishes are his own, and not due to the Lord, asks rhetorically if the son-in-law is responsible if one's daughter is unable to stand the labor-pains? In our frustrated moments, when we are apt to blame others, we might ask ourselves just such a question. If only we knew how to compose kritis a tenth as beautiful when we are frustrated! There are numerous pieces in which Thyagaraja expresses great personal anguish, mainly because of the Lord's supposed neglect of his faithful devotee and of the cruel behavior of his peers towards him; but for all the anguish the saint suffered, all that the music lovers of his and future generations received was unmatched divine not. In point of fact, most of his disciples whose mother tongue was Tamil barely understood the verbal meanings unless their guru explained to them, but of the bhavas of the compositions as they listened, there could be little doubt in the disciples' minds, otherwise the kritis may not have survived from generation to generation.

Ten thousand miles away from where they were first composed in the 18th century they are being sung with fervor here today towards the close of the 20th century. Proof enough!

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## The Importance of Music to Thyagaraja

Sashi Nandakumar Balijs

In "Sangitha gnanamu bhakti vina" (Dhanyasi), Thyagaraja says that music without bhakti (devotion) is useless, and can not help anyone to gain moksha (salvation). So he used music to show his bhakti for his favorite god Rama, and wrote songs praising Him. But in some of his songs Thyagaraja praises music itself was his favorite god.

In one of his songs, "Sobhillu saptaswara" (Jaganmohini), Thyagaraja praises music as being the light shining through even the gods. "Worship the beautiful goddesses presiding over the seven swaras... who shine through the navel, heart, throat, tongue etc. and in and through Rik and Sama Vedas, the heart of Gayatri Mantra, and the minds of gods and holy men and Thyagaraja." In "Raga ratna malikache" in Reetigowla, he sings that Rama himself shines with the jewelled garland of songs made for him by Thyagaraja.

Sometimes Thyagaraja pays respect to the gods because they too love music. In "Vidulaku" (Mayamalavagowla), he pays obeisance to all the gods as they are well-versed in music, and suggests that he honors them because they are music lovers, that they are "worthy of Thyagaraja's respect" because they are upasakas of music.

Music itself, he says, can give one whatever the gods can give. In "Ragasudharasa" (Andolika), he says "The nectar of Ragas gives one the beneficent results of Yaga, Yoga, Tyaga, and Bhoga." In "Nadaloludai" (Kalyana Vasantham), he says

that the highest bliss can be attained "by losing yourself in Nada," and goes on to say that even "the Trinity, and all the gods and the great sages have followed this path [of music]".

Finally he says in the Sankarabharanam Kriti "Swararagasudha", "To know and realize the nature of Nada, originating from Muladhara, is in itself bliss and salvation." So instead of being a means of worshipping God, to attain salvation, music, to Thyagaraja, becomes salvation itself.

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**Thyagaraja Aradhana  
in  
Tamil Nadu and U.S.A.**

**Rasikan**

Thyagaraja Aradhana was celebrated this year in many parts of Tamil Nadu, India on January 5, 1991. Arguably, the most important place where the Aradhana is celebrated is at Thiruvaiyaru, a small town in Thanjavur district.

Thyagaraja spent most of his life in Thiruvaiyaru. A short time before his death, he took the vows of a sanyasi. On his death, he was buried on the banks of the river Kaveri and a samadhi raised at the site. Around 1912, Bangalore Nagarathnammal raised a small mantapam surrounding the samadhi. Inside the mantapam, there are vigrahas of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, and Anjaneya; these are apparently the very ones that Thyagaraja used in his puja. A statue of Thyagaraja in a prayer posture faces the vigrahas. On the walls of the mantapam, there are inscriptions of many of his songs, with individuals and institutions contributing to this effort.

It is in this setting that many musicians annually gather around Pushya Bahula Panchami time to pay homage to the composer who practically defined Carnatic music as we know it today.

I chanced to pass through Thiruvaiyaru on January 2, 1991 and was able to observe some of the preparations for the Aradhana celebrations. There was a large pandal in front of the mantapam with a raised stage in the middle where the musicians would perform. Seating was on the floor which was really the

sands on the banks of Kaveri. I estimated the pandal would accommodate more than thousand people.

There was evidence of commercial interests in the Aradhana celebrations. Banners from banks and other industry fluttered from vantage points. The Doordharshan (Indian TV) crew were all over, setting up cameras. TV was to broadcast live the singing of Pancharatna kritis.

I watched on TV the main Aradhana program on Saturday 5 January. The broadcast started at 9:00 am and ended at 10:15 am. When the TV coverage began, a group of flutists were playing the Bhairavi kriti "Chetulara singaramu chesi jootheno". This was followed by the group singing of the famous Gana raga Pancharatna kritis. The well known violinist Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan conducted the group singing. The group singing was followed by puja inside the mantapam.

As the TV camera panned the faces of various musicians, I could recognize D.K.Jayaraman, T.R.Subramanyam with a cute little girl next to him confidently singing all the five kritis, violinist T. Rukmini, flutists Sikkil Sisters, and Mandolin Srinivas. But, a large number of leading musicians were conspicuous by their absence.

Although the Aradhana was on the 5th of January, the individual performances commenced on the 3rd itself and lasted till the 7th. Performances were given continuously from early evening to late night. Doordharshan broadcast half hour prerecorded segments of some of the performances over a number of days. Surely the organizers must have put in tremendous efforts to run the celebrations over such a large scale.

Apart from the major celebrations at Thiruvaiyaru, there was a parallel program at Madras organized by Dr. Balamurali Krishna. A large number of leading musicians participated in this celebrations. Also many music sabhas in and around Madras and elsewhere in India celebrate the Aradhana on different days over the next few months. In that respect they are not very different from the celebrations in USA and Canada where the dates vary from a Saturday very close to Bahula Panchami in North Jersey to the Memorial Day weekend in May at Chicago. And always on weekends! Below are reports on how the groups in some regions of USA celebrate the Aradhana:

**Philadelphia:** Since 1987, "SRUTI", has been celebrating the Aradhana on a Saturday early in March at the Berlin Hindu Temple. The day long program commences with group singing of Utsava/Bhajana Sampradaya kritis and the Pancharatna kritis. This is followed by individual performances starting with children's program. "SRUTI" uses the Aradhana to recognize high caliber musicians settled in this country and give them an opportunity to perform at a greater length. A large voluntary force prepares and serves lunch and snacks.

Prior to the emergence of "SRUTI", for four years (1981-84), Magazine India Fine Arts Forum organized the Aradhana at different locations. The format was the same except for two major differences:

1. There was no group singing of Pancharatna kritis,
2. The Aradhana was combined with Rama Navami celebrations.

**Pittsburgh:** The celebrations here are held under the auspices of the S.V. Temple. The annual celebration, started by a handful of enthusiasts in 1976, now attracts 150 to 200 people. The group singing of Pancharatna kritis follows early morning puja. Individual performances follow without break till about 3:00 PM. A full length concert, usually by a group of visiting artistes from India rounds up the day. Although there is no specific lunch break, the organizers serve lunch and also dinner specially prepared by volunteers for this occasion.

**Boston:** About 12 or 13 years ago, Ms. Lalitha Mani started the annual Aradhana celebrations on a small scale. Up until three years ago, the organizers used to rent a school. For the past three years, the Aradhana is conducted at the Boston Temple, usually in April, around the time of Rama Navami. The attendance varies between 75-200 people. The format is to start with group singing of Pancharatna kritis followed by individual performances; children always perform ahead of adults. The organizers use a lottery system to decide on the sequence in which the adults perform.

**Chicago:** The Chicago Thyagaraja Utsavam, a non profit organization, conducts the Aradhana during the Memorial Day Weekend. As the name of the organization indicates, this group's main activity is the annual celebration. The origins of the group was a small nucleus of music enthusiasts of Chicago, and Madison and West Bend, Wisconsin. During the late 70's the Aradhana was celebrated at private homes. It has now grown to be a 2 day festival attracting hundreds of music lovers.

The Saturday events commence with group chanting of Vedic hymns and Sahasranamas,

followed by group singing of Pancharatna kritis. The individual performances starting with those of children go on till late in the evening. Some years, they also have had Bharatanatyam choreographed from Thyagaraja kriti(s). The music lovers of the area gather the next day (Sunday) at one of the temples in the Chicago area to hear a full length concert by visiting artistes from India.

The Chicago Thyagaraja utsavam also publishes a brochure in conjunction with the Aradhana. A feature of this brochure is the publication of the songs to be sung by the children. These songs are hand written by the children in a language of their choice (Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, English... )!

**North Jersey:** North Jersey music lovers group led by Ms. Simanthini Kautha celebrate the Aradhana on a Saturday as close to the Pushya Bahula Panchami as possible. In doing so, they are ready to brave the cold and possible snow or ice. The day long program consists of group singing of Pancharatna kritis, Individual performances, and a mini concert. A feature of their Aradhana program is the music related competition for children. There are two categories of competition: (a) Essays on music and Thyagaraja and (b) singing/performing on an instrument a Thyagaraja kriti. The competitors are grouped according to age groups. A panel of judges pick winners who are awarded prizes.

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## A LAST WORD FROM SRUTI

*We hope that you have enjoyed reading our Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir. We look forward to your continued support for SRUTI, and invite you to actively participate in future events.*

*We, from Sruti, take this opportunity to wish you and your family all the best. May peace be with you.*

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