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Thyagaraja Aradhana
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The Musical Works of Thyagaraja Prabhakar Chitrapu

How many songs did Thyagaraja write? One comes across various numbers: Some claim that he wrote 22,400 songs, equal in number to the slokas in Valmiki's Ramayana. Others maintain that the number is around 1000. Still others say that only some 800 songs are available. So, I got rather curious and began to list all the songs systematically. I consulted the following well known books on Thyagaraja:

- [1] C. Ramanujachari, The Spiritual Heritage of Thyagaraja, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1981.
- [2] T.K. Govinda Rao, Compositions of Thyagaraja, Ganamandir Publications, India, 1995.
- [3] Bhavaraju Narasimharao, T.S. Parthasarathy, "Sangita Jagadguru Sri Thyagaraja Kirtanal" (in Telugu), Triveni Publishers, Machilipatnam, 1988. Part-1,2,3
- [4] Kalluri Veerabhadra Shastri, "Thyagaraja Keertanulu," published by Swadharma Swarajya Sanghamu, 10 Padma Rao Nagar, Secunderabad, AP & 95 Broadway, Chennai 1, 1975.
- [5] N.C. Parthasarathy, Dwaraka Parthasarathy, "Thyagaraja Kirthanalu", Part I & II, (in Telugu), Tagore Publishing House, Hyderabad, 1994.

I came up with a total of **710 songs**. I must mention that there are some factors that may render this number inaccurate. The first obvious factor is that my search may not be comprehensive. Secondly, there are several songs that are believed to have been composed by others – with Thyagaraja mudra! Why did they do this - to immortalize themselves in a wrong way? Who were these people - clearly they must have been very capable musicians that lived after Thyagaraja's death (1847) and we know most of them by name! The books referenced above claim a total of 23 songs whose authenticity is doubtful. They are: Abhimanamu ledemi (Andali), Diname Sudinamu (Latangi), Elara Sri Krishna (Kambhoji), Endu Bayara Daya Inakulathilaka Daya (Dhanyasi), Evarunnaru (Malavasri), Ganamurthe (Ganamurthy), Garudagamana (Gowri Manohari), Maaravairi (Nasikabhushani), Nata Jana (Simhendramadhyamam), Ni Balama Nama Balama (Anandabhairavi), Paraamukhamelara (Surati), Paripurna Kama (Hamsabhramar), Parulanu Vedanu (Balahamsa), Raghunayaka (Hamsadhwani), Rama Namamu (Atana), Ranganaayaka (Sankarabharanam), Sarasa Netra (Sankarabharanam), Sarasiruha Nayane (Amritavarshini), Tarama Ni Mahima (Kalyani), Vanaja Nayanudani (Kedara Gowla), Vedalenu (Todi), Vinatasuta (Harikambhoji) and Nidu Charana (Simhendramadhyamam).

In any case, the songs available fall into some natural categories. In no specific order, we begin with the set of five matchless, monumental, demanding Carnatic music compositions, namely the *Ghana Raga Pancharatna Kritis*. Whether these were treated as such a set at the time of Thyagaraja is a valid question. The answer that I often come across is “No. They were first so treated by Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer in early 20th century”.

Two musical operas written by Thyagaraja are available, namely *Nauka Charitram* and *Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam*. (He is said to have written a third opera “Sita Rama Vijayam” which is not available today). They contain 20 & 42 songs respectively. Nauka Charitram is a light-hearted account of how Krishna goes out on a boat ride with several Gopikas, when the boat gets caught in a storm. I do find this to be a very unique theme among all of Thyagaraja’s works, in that it is rather secular in spirit and not heavy with devotion or vairagya. In fact, we even see traces of romance in some of the songs, which I found nowhere else in his compositions. Nice to know that Thyagaraja was also human!

Then we have the popular, relatively easier set of compositions called *Utsava/Bhajana Sampradaya Kirtanas*. How many songs form this set? My search came up with 29 songs in this category: They are – in sequence:- Hechcharikaga Rara (Yadukulakambhoji), Koluvaivunnade (Devagandhari), Sita Kalyana (Sankarabharanam), Napali Sri Rama (Sankarabharanam), Nagumomu Galavani (Madhyamavati), Jaya Mangalam Nitya Subha Mangalam (Ghanta), Jaya Mangalam Nitya Subha Mangalam (Nadanamakriya), Patiki Haratiire (Surati), Sobhane (Pantuvrali), Aragimpave (Todi), Pula Panpu (Ahiri), Badalika Dira (Ritigowla), Uyyala Lugavayya (Nilambari), Lali Lali Yani Yuchare (Harikambhoji), Lali Lalayya Lali (Kedara Gowla), Rama Sri Rama Lali (Sankarabharanam), Lali Yugave (Nilambari), Sri Rama Rama Sri Maanasaabdhi Soma (Nilambari), Rama Rama Rama Lali Sri Rama Rama Rama Laavanya Lali (Sahana), Jo Jo Jo Rama (Ritigowla), Melukovayya (Bhouli), Meluko Dayanidhi (Sowrashtra), Raksha Bettare (Bhairavi), Janakinayakunaku Jaya Mangalam (Dhanyasi), Ma Ramachandruniki Jaya Mangalam (Kedaragowla), Patiki Mangala Haarathire Bhamalaara (Arabhi), Lali Gunasali (Kedaragowla) and Makulamunakihapara Mosagina Niku Mangalam Subha Mangalam (Surati). Please note that 3 of the above are also counted in Nauka Charitram or Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam operas.

Next, there is a set of songs referred to as *Divya Nama Kirtanas*, which number a total of 75 according to Kalluri Veerabhadra Sastry. Most of them are about Sri Rama, with a couple being about Tulasi etc. In terms of musical sophistication and complexity, I would think they rank between Utsava/Bhajana Sampradaya kirtanas and the ‘formal kritis’ (heavy

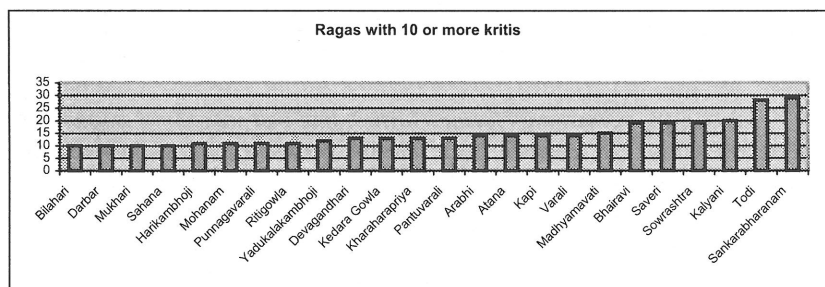
weights!). They range from simple songs like Dasaratha Nandana (Asaveri) to stately ones such as Re Maanasa Chintaya, Sri Ramaam (Todi).

Among the remaining ‘formal kritis’, one can identify a number of groups of kritis. For instance, there are the *Sthala Compositions* written when Thyagaraja was visiting various places (generally around temples). Among them are the well known Pancharatnas (sets of 5 kritis): Srirangam Pancharatnas in praise of Lord Rangaraju/Ranganatha; Lalgudi Pancharatnas in praise of Goddess Sri Lalitha (the Sanskrit name for Lalgudi is Tapas Tirtha, which appears in the kriti lyrics); Thiruvottiyur Pancharatnas in praise of Tripura Sundari (when Thyagaraja visited Vina Kuppayyar at Thiruvottiyur, 6 miles north of Chennai); Kovur Pancharatnas in praise of Lord Siva/Sundareswara (when Thyagaraja visited Sundara Mudaliar at Kovur, 15 miles south of Chennai). At a few other places, Thyagaraja composed songs in praise of the local deity, although not in sets of 5. For instance, he composed 3 songs in Kanchi, 2 songs in Tirupati and 1 song at the Parthasarathy temple at Thiruvallikkeni in Chennai.

There is another interesting Pancharatna termed as *Narada Pancharatna*. They consist of the following 5 songs related to Divine Sage Narada: Narada Ganalola (Atana), Naradaguruswami (Darbar), Sri Narada Muni (Bhairavi), Sri Narada Nada Sarasiruha (Kaanada), Vara Narada (Vijaya Sri).

Of course, one can go on driven by one’s own fancy and come up with various other classes of songs such as Songs about Rama, Songs about other Gods/Goddesses, Songs about People, Songs about his own Life, Songs of Longing and Pleading, etc etc. I shall not bore you with such exercises. But one class does seem to have some merit, namely *Songs about Music & Musicians*. Thyagaraja composed a number of beautiful songs about nature of music – swaras, tala, laya-, about musicians that he revered, about how music should be sung, about how it originates in the human body as well as the concepts of primordial form of sound and music, namely Nada. The ones that I could identify are: Nada loludai (Kalyana Vasantham), Nadopasanache (Begada), Nada Tanum (Chittaranjani), Nada Sudha Rasam (Arabhi), Swara Raga Sudha (Sankarabharanam), Vidulaku Mrokkeda (Mayalawagowla), Raga sudha rasa (Andolika), Samaja Varagamana (Hindolam), Mokshamu Galada (Saramati) and Vararagalaya (Chenchukambhoji).

Having spent this much time on getting an idea of the totality of songs that Thyagaraja wrote, let us now look at the *Ragas* that he composed in. According to my count, he composed in 215 ragas. I constructed the following graph to show some of the ragas in which he composed 10 or more songs.



It is interesting to see that Sankarabharanam tops the list, followed by Todi. Were these Thyagaraja's favorite Ragas? In a conversation with Sanjay Subramaniam, he cautioned me about such conclusions: One must keep in mind that these numbers include simpler kirtanas (of which there are quite a few in Sankarabharanam) as well as heavy kritis. If one looks at the weightier compositions, Todi would be first.

Of the remaining, there are:

- 9 kritis each in Asaveri, Ghanta and Surati;
- 8 kritis each in Balahamsa and Dhanyasi;
- 7 kritis each in Huseni, Kambhoji and Saranga;
- 6 kritis in Nilambari;
- 5 kritis each in Desya Todi, Gowlipantu, Sri Ranjani, Suddhasaveri and Yamuna Kalyani ;
- 4 kritis each in Ahiri, Anandabhairavi, Kannada, Mayamalava Gowla and Narayana Gowla;
- 3 kritis each in Bangala, Devamanohari, Janaranjani, Jayamanohari, Kuntalavarali, Nayaki, Purnachandrika, Purvikalyani, Sri and Suddha Bangala;
- 2 kritis each in Abhogi, Amir Kalyani, Chakravakam, Chandrajyoti, Chayatarangini, Garudadhvani, Gowri Manohari, Hamsadhwani, Hindolam, Isamanohari, Jaganmohani, Kaanada, Kalavati, Kalyana Vasantam, Kanadagowla, Kantamani, Kedara, Khamas, Kiranavali, Kokiladhwani, Latangi, Malavasri, Nadanamakriya, Narayani, Nata, Natakuranji, Navarasa Kannada, Phalamanjari, Ragapanjaram, Ravichandrika, Salaga Bhairavi, Sama, Simhendramadhyamam, Sindhuramakriya, Suddha Desi and Vasanta Bhairavi;
- and just 1 kriti in each of these ragas: Abheri, Amritavahini, Amritavarshini, Andali, Andolika, Bahudari, Bhavapriya, Bhinna Shadja, Bhouli, Bhupalam, Bhushavali, Bindumalini, Brindavanasaranga, Cenciruti, Charukesi, Chaya Nata, Chenchukambhoji, Chittaranjini, Churnika, Devakriya, Devamritavarshini, Dhenuka, Dipaka, Divyamani, Gambhiravani, Ganamurthy, Ganavaridhi, Gangeyabhushani, Ghurjari, Gopikavasantam, Gowla, Gowri, Gundakriya, Hamsabhrumari, Hamsanadam, Hemavathi, Hindola Vasantam, Jaya Narayani, Jayantasena, Jayantasri, Jhankaradhwani, Jingla, Jujahuli, Kaikavasi, Kalakanti, Kalanidhi,

Kalgada, Kamala Manohari, Kapinarayani, Kedaram, Kesari, Kiravani, Kokilapriya, Kokilavarali, Kolahalam, Kunjari, Lalita, Maaruva Dhanyasi, Malavi, Malaya Marutam, Manavati, Mandari, Mangalakaisiki, Manirangu, Manjari, Manohari, Manoranjani, Mararanjani, Margahindolam, Naadavaraangini, Nabhomani, Nadavarangini, Naga Gandhari, Naganandini, Nagaswaravali, Nalinakanthi, Nasikabhushani, Navanitham, Pharaju, Pratapavarali, Purna Lalita, Purnashadjam, Rama Manohari, Ramapriya, Ranjani, Rasali, Ratnangi, Revagupti, Rishabhapriya, Rudrapriya, Rupavati, Saramati, Sarasangi, Saraswati, Saraswati Manohari, Shadvidhamargini, Shanmukhapriya, Siddhasena, Simhavahini, Srimani, Sruti Ranjani, Subha Pantuvrali, Suddha Dhanyasi, Suddhasimantini, Sulini, Suposhini, Supradipa, Suryakantam, Swarabhushani, Swaravali, Takka, Tivravahini, Umabharanam, Vagadhiswari, Vakulabharanam, Varnaspati, Vanavali, Vardhani, Vasanta, Vasanta Varali, Vegavahini, Vijaya Sri, Vijayavasantam, Viravasantam and Vivardhani.

All the above analysis is based on the available number of kritis, which is 710. What if really Thyagaraja wrote 22,400 kritis? Our results might very well be turned upside down! So, we should be cautious in translating these results to Thyagaraja's personality and preferences.

Even if one would dispute the 22,400 number, there are 2 very specific issues that I want to bring to your attention. Thyagaraja himself in his own songs refers to (1) Sata Raga Ratna Malika and (2) Kirtana Susatakam. The first comes from the song "Raga Ratna Malika che" in Ritigowla raga. It refers to a garland of 100 kritis in 100 ragas. Do we know what songs and ragas these are? The second phrase comes from the song "Aparaadhamula noorva" in Vanali raga. In it, he pleads that he, who composed a set of 100 good songs, should be saved. Again, which are these songs? Is it possible that Thyagaraja is using these phrases in a loose way, saying 100 for 'many'?

Elsewhere I read that Thyagaraja composed in all 72 melakarta ragas. I have to recheck carefully, but I don't think my collection has them all. Are the others simply lost?

And then there is the question of the dates of various compositions. When did Thyagaraja write which song – date/month/year? At least do we know the sequence in which the songs were written? Which were during his early years, which during his middle age and which when he was a ripe old man? Other than a very few examples, my readings did not reveal much in this direction. Given that Thyagaraja had several students that faithfully copied down the lyrics and swaras of each and every song in a very systematic way, could they not have noted down the date of compositions in some corner? Or did they? I'd only love to know!

As is often the case, when one begins to ask hard questions about the

great man that lived but only 150 years ago – when even photography was available in its early days! – I find myself with more questions than answers. Disheartening at first. But then... sometimes, is it not better to *think* about some questions rather than be *fed* with lots of answers? May be.

Finally, I must remind myself that real purpose of music is not to be written about, not to be thought about – it is to be heard. It is to be affected in one's body and mind and soul (if there is one). It is to be carried to higher heights of purity, excellence and inspiration. It is to feel the gratitude to Thyagaraja – the creator and to the Musician – for rendering it today; for Providence – for willing us to listen.

So, I started to make my own collection of renderings of Thyagaraja's songs – as many as I could lay my hands on, but all in vocal style, as I like to listen to the words as well. I did not want to be limited to only my favorite singer(s) – for, all trained musicians interpret and celebrate Thyagaraja in their own unique, scholarly and human ways.

So, I chose as many singers as possible. I ended up with 53 artists – some beginners and others veterans. They are: M.L. Vasantakumari, M. Balamuralikrishna, Hyderabad Brothers, Bombay Sisters, Maharajapuram Santanam, M.S. Subbulakshmi, Nagavalli Nagaraj, Indu Vasudevan, Jesudas, Sitalakshmi Madhavan, Sudha Raghunathan, Voleti Venkateswarlu, Srirangam Gopalaratnam, Nedunuri Krishnamurthy, Sanjay Subramaniam, T.M. Krishna, G.N. Balasubramaniam, D.K. Pattammal, Hyderabad Sisters, D.K. Jayaraman, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, K.V. Narayanaswamy, Musiri Subramania Iyer, Madurai Somasundaram, Sangeeta Sivakumar, Shankaran Naboodri, Madurai Mani Iyer, Nityashree, Balaji Shankar, T.N. Seshagopalan, Araikudi Ramanuja Iyengar, N.V. Parthasarathy, Raji Gopalakrishnan, Radha Jayalakshmi, Ashok Ramani, Savitri Ramanand, Rudrapatnam Brothers, Trichur Ramachandran, O.S. Thyagarajan, S. Gayatri, Sheela Ramaswamy, T.V. Shankaranarayan, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Priya Sisters, Sugandha Kalamegham, Sowmya, Sriram Gangadharan, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Neyveli Santanagopalan, M.S. Sheela, Unnikrishnan, Sandhyavandanam Srinivasarao and Jon Higgins.

I have been able to record a total of 348 songs on some 25 tapes. If you like to copy them, please do get in touch with me. I will be happy to share them with you – all admirers of Thyagaraja are friends, by my definition! The sound quality is mostly OK, although sometimes poor. But then, it is Thyagaraja's music and rendered by some the best musicians of our times. Diamonds keep their value even in dirty mines, don't they?

[Prabhakar Chitrapu is a lover of music, language and philosophy. He contributes frequently to Sruti's publications.]

Sri Thyagaraja's Pancharatna Kritis

Sreesudha Palepu

Saint Thyagaraja's ghana raga Pancharatna kritis are well known and are a permanent part of Thyagaraja Aradhanotsavam. During his pilgrimage Saint Thyagaraja wrote many kritis on some local deities. Some of these were grouped as Pancharatna kritis later on. Two examples are given below.

Kovuru Pancharatnas (on Lord Sundareswara Swami)

SONG	RAGAM	THALAM
1 Nammi Vachina	Kalyani	Roopakam
2.Kori sevimpa rare	Kharaharapriya	Adi
3.Sambho Mahadeva	Panthu varali	Roopakam
4.Ee vsudha nivanti	Sahana	Adi
5.Sundareswaruni	Sankarabharanam	Adi

Thiruvathiyur Pancharatnas (on Goddess Tripurasundari Devi)

SONG	RAGAM	THALAM
1.Sundari nannu	Begada	Roopakam
2.Sundari nee divya	Kalyani	Adi
3.Darini Thelisikonti	Sudha saveri	Adi
4.Sundari ninu varnimp	Aarabhi	Chaapu
5.kanna thalli ninu	Saveri	Adi

[Sreesudha Palepu is a music enthusiast and a recent addition to the Library Committee]



Where Mythology meets History Sri Thyagaraja's Meeting with Saint Narada

T. Sarada

World over, great persons are the subjects of biographies. At the same time there are also tales about them that are more like myths than history; India is no exception to this. The following story, on Sri Thyagaraja, is one of those. It is more in the realm of myth than history.

Sri Thyagaraja, as we all know, devoted his entire life to Bhakti and worship through songs. What shaped his life is the stuff of myths and it goes like this.

As a boy, Thyagaraja learned about music from his maternal grandfather, Vina Sri Kalahasti Iyer, his first guru, who gave Thyagaraja many books, (scripts) related to music. The collection, notably, contained "Naradiyam". Thyagaraja had many doubts while reading this and so was constantly thinking about it. He would pray to Narada, since he believed that Narada was the only person to remove his doubts about this script. How his doubts were cleared is described as follows in different accounts with minor alterations.

One day, when Thyagaraja was getting ready for an oil bath, a stranger, a "yatiswara", came and told him that he had come a long way to listen to Thyagaraja's singing. Thyagaraja obliged him and asked him, later, to eat in his house before going away. The stranger, there upon, gave him some manuscripts (inscriptions on palm-leaves, during those days) for safekeeping. He told Thyagaraja that he would take a bath in the river and return for eating. He never returned. Very unhappy that this had happened, Thyagaraja searched everywhere and asked everyone he met but no one had even seen the visitor. Thyagaraja did not eat that day and went to bed hungry, tired and sad. In this state, when he was dozing, he had a vision of Sri Narada appearing before him and telling him that it was he, Narada, who came to see him earlier that day. He was, further, told that the manuscript was the famed musicology book, "Swarnavam" which would clear all Thyagaraja's doubts about music and was meant for him. Narada then blessed him telling that from then on Thyagaraja would live a life of devotion, continue with the mission of spreading both music and worship of God through music.^{1,2}

Sri Thyagaraja, in gratitude, wrote songs, acknowledging this rare gift and blessings from Sri Narada. A partial list of songs and references to Narada in his compositions are given here. Narada Gana lola, in Athana, Sri naradamuni, in Bharavi, Naradamuni in Pantuvarali, Narada guru, in Dharbar, Vara Narada, in Vijayasri, Sri Narada in Kanada and so on. Then there are, also, numerous references to Narada, in many of his com-

positions. (1,2&3)

The details given in all these stories appear like authentic documentations. Maybe, there was an unaccountable visit from a totally unknown person. Maybe, people really believed that in the lives of great Bhaktas nothing was impossible. Maybe, it helped people those days to understand why Thyagaraja wrote so many songs on Narada. The question still is, how did Thyagaraja get the script of "Swarnavam"? Why does he single out Narada to write so many songs on him when all his other songs are on traditionally worshipped deities?

Sources.

1. Thyagaraja Ganamrutam. S. K. Sitadevi Chellm Iyer, Volume 1. Editor, A. S. Panchabhakesa Iyer. Ganamruta publications. Chennai. 1967.
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[T. Sarada, a member of the Library Committee, is an admirer of all classical arts.]

Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana Utsavam

Sreesudha Palepu

Every year on pushya-bahula panchami day, Which falls in the period of December-January February, Carnatic music lovers, and musicians alike, gather in Thivayyaru, in Tamil Nadu to pay their respect to the great composer Sri Thyagaraja. This festival is known as Thyagaraja Aradhana-otsavam.

Tanjore district, Tamil Nadu. is a very beautiful place with lofty temples, music and dance. Like any other nice village in India, Tiruvayyaru, a village in this district is blessed with serene atmosphere, beautiful paddy fields and rivers flowing nearby. Sri Thyagaraja's parents moved to this place when Thyagaraja was approximately eight years old. He lived here all his life.

Sri Thyagaraja was born in a village called Thiruvavarur, also in Tanjore district. Perhaps it is a coincidence or the soil itself is blessed by

Gods that the three most revered composers of Carnatic music tradition, Sri Thyagaraja, Sri Syama Sastri and Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar were all born here.

It is believed that Sri Thyagaraja was born in 1767, as the third son of Sri Ramabrahmam and Seethamma. The then Tanjore king, Thulajaji was a great patron of arts and music and he was very generous to Sri Ramabrahmam. Sri Ramabrahmam earned his living by giving religious discourses in Ramayana and singing bhajans. Thyagaraja, as a child participated in all the activities of his father. During one of the daily poojas, Thyagaraja sang NAMO NAMO RAGHAVAYA ANISAM in the raga DESIYA THODI a kriti which he composed spontaneously. Hearing this krithi Sri Ramabrahmam brought Thyagaraja to the great guru Sri Sonti Venkataramanayya for additional musical training. From then Saint Thyagaraja composed hundreds of kritis on his favorite God Lord Sri Rama who was a hero, a friend and everything else to him.

Thyagaraja passed away in 1847. Thyagaraja did not have sons. He had a daughter. After his death his remembrance ceremonies every year were performed by his grand son. This got discontinued after the grand son's death. It was at this time that the disciples of Saint Thyagaraja, the Umayalpuram brothers continued the ceremonies, with singing of Sri Thyagaraja's songs. This was the beginning of the Aradhana festival, in their native village. But at Tiruvayyaru, it was the Tillaistanam brothers (Narasimha Bhagavatar, Panchu Bhagavatar) who were the disciples of Tillaistanam Ramu Iyengar, who in turn was the direct disciple of Thyagaraja who carried on the tradition of Thyagaraja Aradhanotsavam.

Thyagaraja Aradhanotsavam is done all over the world now, where ever there are Carnatic music lovers. Anyone interested in paying homage to the composer can participate in these Aradhanotsavams. Musicians who can play instruments like veena, violin, mridangam, ghatam can perform. The high point of this festival is *unchavritti*, wherein all senior musicians walk on the streets of the village singing Sri Thyagaraja's songs just as he did during his life.

Dweller of The Milky Ocean: Two Compositions of Sri Thyagaraja

T. Sarada

Following his moods but not changing his goal of constantly reminding himself and everyone else about Bhakti, Sri Thyagaraja often chose a theme to elaborate on, but used different styles to do so. We saw one such pair last year, in "Nagumomu". (Please see Sruti Aradhana 2002 issue). A second example of such twin compositions, is, "Kshira Sagara". As in the previous case, one of these is a kriti in Devagandhari, with plenty of scope for elaborating on the music aspects, using embellishments. It allows enjoyment of not only the lyrics but the melody also. The second, in contrast, is a Utsava Sampradaya Kirtana in the raga Anandabhiravi. This is a prayer in verse. The only purpose of this piece is to concentrate on the words, with feelings of Bhakti. It is not meant for showing off the musical scholarship or prowess of the singer. With clever selection of words and using either intimacy or formality of the language, Sri Thyagaraja can lead the singer and the listener into the path he chooses. The results are always exhilarating and fulfilling, in totally different ways.

Here are the two compositions with their meanings.

The Utsava Sampradaya Kirtana, Kshira Sagara.

Ragam, Anandabhiravi, Talam, Jampai.

Pallavi

Kshirasagara vihara Aparimita gora padaka vidhara
Krunjanaganana vidhura nigama sanchara sundhara sarira (Kshira)
Caranas

1. Satamaha hita vibhanga Srirama samanaripu sannutanga
Sritamanava antharanga janakaja srungara jalaja brunga (Kshira)
2. Rajatiraja vesha Srirama ramaniyakara subhusha
Rajanuta lalitabhasha SriThyagarajadi Bhakta bhosha (Kshira)

Meaning. In this song it would appear that Sri Thyagaraja is directly addressing Rama and so the simplest way to translate is to highlight his intent.

Pallavi

Oh, player on the milky ocean! Remover of the endless and heinous sins!
Keeper of the cruel people at a distance! Dweller and traveler in the spiritual literature, You have a beautiful appearance!

Charanas

Oh, destroyer of the enemies of Indra! Sri Rama, you are worshipped by Siva! You are intimate with those who seek you! You are like the bee that is buzzing around the lotus of Love of Janaka's offspring!
You came in the garb of a great king of kings! You are decorated with

beautiful jewels on your arms! You are praised by kings! You have sweet speech! You are the protector of Bhaktas like Sri Thyagaraja!

Given the above thoughts spoken in a formal poetic language, Sri Thyagaraja shows clearly that this song meant for worship and as entertainment. There is, hence, no scope to get distracted with the music. The music is incidental and is just a vehicle for the prayer like verses. He also uses the tradition of writing kirtanas here and thus the song has only multiple charanas and but does not have the pallavi, anupallavi and charanam format of a typical kriti.

In contrast to the formal sounding Kirtana, "Kshira sagara viharā", his second composition, "Kshira sagara sayana", in Devagandhari is a celebration of the intimacy and joy he feels on seeking and demanding Srirama's attention. This song, therefore, gives plenty of scope for raga and Bhava elaborations.

The Kriti, "Kshirasagara sayana".

Raga, Devagandhari. Tala, Adi

Pallavi

Kshira sagara sayana nannu chitalabetta valena Rama (Kshira)
Anupallavi
Varana rajunu brovanu vegame vachinadi vinnanura Rama (Kshira)
Caranam
Narimaniki jiralichinadi nade ne vinnanura
Deerudou Ramadasuni bandhamu dirchinadi vinnanura
Nirajakshiki niradi datina ni kirtini vinnanura
Taraka Nama Thyagarajanuta dayato nelukora Rama (Kshira)

Meaning. Once again, in the song Sri Thyagaraja is directly addressing Srirama but the language is informal, a true spoken language showing the intimacy and personal relationship he feels.

Pallavi

As the one who is reposing on the milky ocean, Rama, have you to make me suffer in grief?

Anupallavi

I (have) heard that you came so fast to protect the king of elephants, Gajendra

Charanam

I (have) heard long back that (you) gave saris to Draupati. I (have) heard that you released the earthly bondages of the steadfast Sri Ramadas. I also (have) heard the glory of your crossing the ocean for the sake of the lotus eyed (Sita). You are the one with the ever protecting and redeeming name and you are worshipped by Thyagaraja! Protect me with grace and mercy!

With alternating awe and intimacy and with selected reminiscences like these, expressed in an informal and intimate tone who can resist being swayed by the lyric? Who can resist playing with the musical notes, raga sancharas and dwell on the twists and turns unique to the composition? Also, every music lover would remember the sancharas in the caranam especially with the words, "taraka Nama, Thyagarajanuta", if nothing else.

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Uthsava Sampradaya Keertanas

A great devotee of Lord Rama, Thyagaraja is believed to have composed over 2000 songs mostly in Telugu and some in Sanskrit. Simple, beautiful and soul stirring, his style appeals to the layman and the scholar alike. The Uthsava Sampradaya Keertanas composed by Thyagaraja, of which there are twenty-seven, deal with rituals associated with traditional worship and are sung in devotional congregations. These musical pieces, set to very simple classical ragas, are rendered as a group on the occasion of Thyagaraja Aradhana. Some of them are given below.

Melukovaiya Raga: Bowli, Tala: Jampa

Pallavi

Melukovaiya mam meluko Rama
melaina Seetha sametha na bhagyama

Charanams

naradadulu ninnu kori nee mahimalev
varigapadu sunnaripudu - thella
varaga vachinadi sri rama navaneetha
kshiramulu baguga naragimpanu vega
rajarajeshwara parajamukha saketha
raja sathguna thyagarajanutha charana
rajanaya vibudha gana rajadulella ninu
poojimpa gasina reejagamu palimpa

Hecharika

Raga: Yadhukulakambhoji, Tala: Jampa

Pallavi

hecharika kaaraaraa he raamachandhraa
hecharikakaaraaraa he suguna saandhraa

Anupallavi

pachchavil thuni kanna
paalitha surendraa

Charanam

ninuchooda vachchu bagi nigarambu chiluka
manaSu ranjilla nee maHimalanu paluka
minuvaaSulella virulanu chaala jiluka
gana thyaaga raaju ganu kona muththu kuluga

Seetha Kalyana Vaibhogame

Raga: Sankarabharanam, Tala: Jampa

Pallavi

seetha kalyaana vaibhogame
raamaa kalyaNa vaibhogame

Charanams

pavanaja sthuthi paathra paavana charithra
ravisoma vara nethra ramaneeya gaathra
bhaktha jana paripaala paritha sarajaala
bhukthi mukthitha leela bhoodeva baala

nigamaagama vihaara nirupama sareera
nagadha raaga vidhaara natha logaadhaara
paramesanutha geetha bhavajaladhi bhodha
tharani kula sanjaatha thyagarajanutha

Koluvaiyunnaade

Raga: Devagandhari, Tala: Adi

koluvaiyunnaade kodhandapaani

Salalitha madhulai saaregu seelulai
Valachuchu kori vachi Sevimpaga

udu raajamukudu seshasayyapaini chelangaga gani
puda mikumari sugandhamu pooya namminavaaralake
kada kantini korina varamiyya thyaagaraaja nendarutha
adukadugugu madupula nandheeya sree raamayya

Sobhane

Raga: Panthuvvaraali, Tala: Rupakam

vadhanadhyuthi jitha soma - vasudha maanasa kaama
madha maanava gana bheema - maampaahi sree raama

Sobhane, Sobhane

janakasutha hruth ramana - jamadhagnija matha haana
pranathaaka nala varana - paahimaam muni charana

vikalitha mohapaada - vidhu koti sankasaa
bhagavan sakalaa deeSaa - paahi paapa vinaasa

vara thyaaga raajanutha - vaarija sambhava dhaatha
parama kalyaana yutha - paahi maam subha charitha

Nagumomu

Raga: Madhyamaavathi, Tala: Adi

Pallavi

Nagumomu galavani naa manoharuni
jagamelu surooni janaki varuni

Samashti Charanams

devadi devuni divya sundaruni
Sree vasudevuni Seetha raaghavuni

nirmala kaaruni nikilaaga haruni
dharmaadi mokshambhu dayacheyu ganuni

bhodhadho palumaru poojinchu nenu- aa
raadhinthu Sree thyaaga raaja sannuthuni

Pathiki Haratheere

Raga: Surati, Tala: Adi

Pallavi

Pathiki haaratheere ----- Seetha

Anupallavi

athi mruduthara sathya bhashanuniki
akhilanda nadhuniki Seetha

Charanam

rajavibhakara rajadharama
rajasukhaja virajuluchoodaka
rajamanamagu kajulu ghallana
rajitha thyaga rajanuthu neeki

Stories Behind 'Endaro Mahanubhavulu'

T. Sarada

There are different versions of stories circulating in the music circles and quoted by music lovers as to what prompted Sri Thyagaraja to write "Endaro mahanubhavulu". In the recent Telugu movie on Sri Thyagaraja, the incidence was portrayed as follows. Sri Thyagaraja was invited by the then Tanjore king to sing in his presence and Sri Thyagaraja, of course, politely refused as it was against his principle. But his Guru, Sri Sonti Venkataramanayya wanted him to sing and Sri Thyagaraja could not disobey his guru. He, therefore, agreed to do so in a public place where many great music exponents had assembled to participate in the events of the day. During his turn, Sri Thyagaraja wanted to acknowledge the collective greatness of all those assembled and sang, "Endaro mahanubhavulu".

The second story is much older.¹ and is believed to be documented. At one time in his life Sri Thyagaraja was visited by two great musicians who were also Bhaktas of renown. One was Shadkala Govindha of Kerala and the other was Sri Ramadas who resided in Varanasi. They were both musicians of outstanding fame and were, also, great Bhaktas. Both came to Thivayyaru at the same time since, it appears that the timing was prompted by dreams that they had, to go and see Sri Thyagaraja. According to the legend, Sri Rama, the chosen deity of Sri Thyagaraja wanted to show Sri Thyagaraja that he was not alone in his life mission but there were many others who were pious and devoted. The three met and discussed music and sang songs to entertain and discuss their life mission. Sri Thyagaraja, then, realized the purpose of the meeting: that there were many such Bhaktas, besides him who used music as the vehicle to express love of God and propagate Bhakti Margam. It was in this context that he sang spontaneously, "Endaro mahanubhavulu".

The second story also appears in a slightly different form². It says that Shadkala Givindha Marar of Kerala visited Thiruvayyar and sang for Sri Thyagaraja. He was a musician of outstanding talent and was well versed in many instruments and some he could play simultaneously. His capacity to sing pallavis in six tempos earned him the epithet, "Shadkala". After hearing his prowess in manipulating the rhythm aspects of his selections and so on, Sri Thyagaraja asked his students to sing his earlier composition, "Endaro", to honor Sri Givindha Marar.

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2. Biography series., Sri Thyagaraja. Professor P. Sambhamurthy. National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1968.

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