



www.sruti.org

Sruti

The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia

Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir



March 23, 2019



Board of Directors



Shankar Muthuswami
President



Uma Sivakumar
President Elect



Srinivasan Raghavan
Secretary



Santi Kanumalla
Treasurer



Dinakar Subramanian
Director, Publications & Outreach



Balaji Raghothaman
Director, Resources & Development



Nari Narayanan
Director, Marketing & Publicity



Chitra Kannan
Director 1



Revathi Subramony
Director 2

Committee Members

Publications and Outreach Committee



Dinakar Subramanian



V.V. Raman



Lakshmi Radhakrishnan



Harish Bevinahally



Arun Mahadevan

Resources and Development Committee



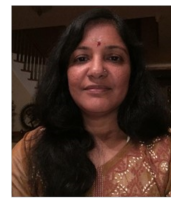
Balaji Raghothaman



Raji Venkatesan



Pitchumani Sivakumar



Renuka Adiraju



Rajee Padmanabhan



Shankar Muthuswami

Marketing and Publicity Committee



Nari Narayanan



Uma Sivakumar



Santi Kanumalla



Geetha Muthuswami



Suresh Tyagarajan



Manasa Suresh

Investment Committee



Santi Kanumalla



Bala Balasubramanian



Nari Narayanan



Venkat Kilambi



Sundar Arunapuram

Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir

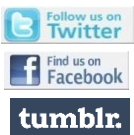
Spring 2019

Table of Contents

From the President.....	Shankar Muthuswami.....	2
From the Publications Committee.....	Dinakar Subramanian	3
About the cover		4
Utsava sampradAya klrtanas of Thyagaraja	M. M. Subramaniam & Prabhakar Chitrapu....	5
Reflection on chEtulAra - Bhairavi – Adi.....	Harish Bevinahally.....	7
Thyagaraja – First among equals	Lakshmi Anand.....	8
Thyagaraja – A Global Composer	Sindura Sridhar.....	12
Singing Utsava Sampradaya Kritis.....	Roshni Srikant	13
Aradhana Crossword	Vasishta Dhulipala	14
Tyagarajasvami’s inspirations	R. K. Shriramkumar	15
Legends and anecdotes associated with some Thyagaraja kritis.....	Rasikan.....	20
Kshetra Darshana with Thyagaraja.....	Bharathi Ramasubban.....	23
Kaveri River and Thyagaraja	T. Parasaran.....	27
Thyagaraja is Here!	Akshara Samskriti Iyer	28
Rāga Varāli Compositions by Tyāgarāja.....	Anuradha Suresh	30
Saint Thyagaraja’s Kovur Pancharatna Krithis.....	Shreya Parigi.....	32
Akshara Samskriti Iyer – Bala Bhavam.....	Rajee Padmanabhan	33
Bhaskari and Sindhu Budhavarapu – Bala Bhavam.....	Mallika Dinakar	34
Influence of pOtana on tyAgarAja	Prabhakar Chitrapu.....	35
Crossword Solution		42
Aradhana Program Schedule		43
About the Artists.....		44

The content in this magazine is published with a spirit of openness of communication and freedom of expression. The opinions contained herein do not necessarily reflect the views of SRUTI, its board or its members. The articles have been published as is with some minimal corrections for clarity.

Connect with SRUTI



@srutipihila

<http://www.facebook.com/srutiphila>

<http://srutipihila.tumblr.com>

Email: info@sruti.org

Website: www.sruti.org

From the President

Dear SRUTI Supporters,

On behalf of the SRUTI Board of Directors, we would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you for our 2019 season. Last year (2018) was another great year in our activities under the able leadership of Srikant Raghavachari & volunteer board of directors.

Our board of directors this year will be as follows:

- Uma Sivakumar who was elected as President-Elect, she has been on board for numerous years as Director 1
- Srinivasan Raghavan as Secretary with his passion to volunteer and support for us
- Nari Narayanan as Director of Marketing, who has supported us in various capacities and has taken up the challenge of marketing SRUTI events
- Dinakar Subramanian as Director of Publications and Outreach, he was been a pillar of support with his knowledge of past performances
- Chitra Kannan as Director 1, our newest member of our board
- Continuing to support our board activities are Santi Kanumalla as Treasurer, Balaji Raghothaman as Director of Resources & Development and Revathi Subramony as Director 2

We have planned a good mix of vocal, dance & instrumental programs all through the year. SRUTI continues to be much sought-after stage for both established & upcoming artists. While we continue to explore other potential venues & partners for our events, our partnership with Bharatiya Temple, Hindu Temple of Delaware, Montgomery County Community College, Community Music School, Montgomeryville Township Recreation Center & other venues is key for all our ongoing activities and in future.

Our season starts off with Sri Thyagaraja Aradhana on March 23rd, for which the Utsava Sampradaya Kritis and Pancharatna Kritis will be rendered by groups led by Dinakar Subramanian and Kiranavali Vidyasankar respectively. The main concert in the afternoon will be presented by Gokul Chandramouli who will be supported by Vijay Ganesh & Kamalakiran Vinjamuri.

Our first program for Spring season will be a veena concert on April 13th by Dr. Jayanthi Kumares, followed by a vocal concert by Sangeetha Kalanidhi Sanjay Subrahmanyam on April 27th. Our 3rd concert will be a Bharatanatyam dance performance by Dr. Janaki Rangarajan on May 4th. On May 11th, we will have a grand concert by Vidushis Ranjani & Gayatri. Our spring season ends on May 18th with our Composers' day, that will feature Bala Bhavam, performance by Dr. T.S. Satyavathi workshop participants, community performances and a main concert by Amrutha Venkatesh.

In addition, we are presenting a dance workshop on May 5th for our community. We are also planning on having an interactive Q & A session with Ranjani & Gayatri on May 10th.

As part of our spirit of partnership, we are planning on having a vocal concert by Vidushi Sankari Krishnan on September 3rd as part of Philadelphia Ganesh Festival activities. Our next vocal concert in Fall, will be with our own Kiranavali Vidyasankar. On September 21st, we will be presenting a sitar concert by Purbayan Chatterjee. Our next event will be a vocal concert by Vijay Siva on October 19th. A grand Bharatanatyam dance performance by Viraja & Shyamjith Kiran will be on October 26th. Our last program for fall season will be by Sangeetha Sivakumar on November 9th.

All these events will not be possible without generous support from our members and community at large. We urge all of you to become a sponsor for our 2019 programs and enjoy all our concerts during spring & fall seasons. We also have a premium Concert Patron for \$2,000, which provides the patron to designate a concert of their choice. SRUTI will recognize the patron(s) on stage and in our publicity material. We request people who are interested in this category to contact me directly at president@sruti.org

Look forward to seeing all of you during our season in 2019.

Warm Regards,
Shankar Muthuswami
President-SRUTI

From the Publications Committee

Dear friends and art aficionados,

Welcome to the **Hindu Temple of Delaware** for our Aradhana. We are pleased to bring you the Souvenir, the first publication from the new committee for 2019. This finished product that you are holding in your hands is unique in a few ways - it contains contributions from established musicians who have performed for us in the last year as well as from serious music lovers and students.

The striking cover for the souvenir has been designed and created specially for SRUTI by Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath, the popular emerging artist who performed for us in 2018. More about the cover in an ensuing section.

Lakshmi Anand, a well-known writer from Chennai has written an article, covering a breadth of topics, in conversation with leading musicians on all things Thyagaraja. We have a deep-dive into the *kshetras* that Thyagaraja has visited and composed on, covered by Bharathi Ramasubban, another popular and upcoming artist in Chennai. R. K. Shriramkumar has contributed a comprehensive article on personalities that have inspired Thyagaraja and his compositions.

This past year, we are very sorry to have lost Shri Parasaran, a longtime member and supporter of our community and have reprinted his article on the significance of the Kaveri river in Carnatic music from last year, in fond remembrance.

Harish Bevinahally, who is a member of our POC team, has written an article on the significance of Chetulara Srngaramu that he will perform on our Aradhana day.

Rasikan has presented a must-read article on some anecdotes surrounding popular compositions. Prabhakar's in-depth treatment of the influence the poet Potana had on Thyagaraja is very illuminating and promises the reader an enhanced understanding of the saint composer.

In addition to an article about Thyagaraja's varALi compositions, we are heartened by the contribution from young students in this issue, through multiple articles, a skit and a crossword. We welcome more participation from them.

We thank the authors sincerely for readily accepting our request to contribute and having taken a concerted effort in delivering solid and thoroughly researched articles. Over the years, the content of our articles has reached a very high level thanks to the interest of many music and art lovers and we hope to sustain this level in the future.

As a long-term objective, we are in the process both collecting and compiling our treasured artifacts such as photographs, audio recordings, and publications in a central repository. Though it is a tedious process, we have gained momentum and we hope to update you later in the year on our progress. If you would like to find out more or want to support us in this endeavor, please e-mail us at publications@sruti.org

Our team is a mix of seasoned SRUTI supporters and newcomers to the area and we are looking forward to presenting quality publications to our audience. Please reach out with any questions, as we are thoroughly excited by our initiatives this year.

On behalf of the Publications Committee
Dinakar Subramanian

About the cover



The lovely painting depicted on the cover of this souvenir is a creation of the versatile artist Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath. She is a brilliant young musician who has recently performed for SRUTI as the featured artist during the 2018 Thyagaraja Aradhana. Besides being a musician, she is an accomplished painter, sketch artist, photographer and an animal rights supporter. I requested her earlier this year to create an artistic piece for our Souvenir, and she happily agreed. The result is the extremely eye-catching and topical painting that she has created.

The painting illustrates Thyagaraja sighting Lord Rama on the hill as presented in the lilting sahAnA kriti—***gripai nelakonna***. For her inspiration for this painting, Aishwarya explains it thus:

"pulakAnkituDai AnandA-Sruvula nimpucu mATalADa valenani kaluvarinca kani"

Upon unerringly beholding Lord Rama atop a hill in a vision, Shri Tyagaraja cannot overcome his feeling of ecstasy. He is unprepared and sheds tears, quivering in bliss, babbling, "I wanted to talk to you." And Lord Rama tells him, he will take care of him in five days and five nights. And on the fifth day, in the month of Pushya, before the dark moon, he becomes one with the Lord.

We are thankful to her for painting this scene for us.

Dinakar Subramanian

Utsava sampradAya kIrtanas of Thyagaraja

M.M. Subramaniam and Prabhakar Chitrapu

The following are excerpts from the article by the authors published in the Aradhana souvenir 2018. We felt it worthwhile to present an elaboration of the groupings of the Utsava sampradaya kritis as they are being presented every year for our Aradhana with a newer kriti from the overall list being added to the repertoire each year.

The interpretation for the theme of the utsava sampradAya kIrtanas alluded to earlier (TA Souvenir 2018) can now be elaborated. The scene starts in the evening, when Rama is welcomed to everyone's attention (heccarika), after which he graces the royal court (koluvu). Then, a ceremonial wedding (kalyANam) is performed for him and his consort Sita. It is now time to retire for the day, and Rama is given a ceremonial bath, with cleansing pastes applied to his body (nalugu). After that, he is given mangaLam and hArati. Afterwards he is invited to retire (Sobhanam) and to the bed of flowers (pavvalimpu). Then he is gently swung (lAli) and sung lullabies (jOla). It is now time for Rama to sleep. Early next morning, he is woken up with respectful invocations (mElukolupu), after which protection (raksha) is sought for him and concluded with grand mangaLam.

Now, we present selected kIrtanAs, with some appreciatory notes.

- Welcome – heccarikagA rAra (yadukula kambhOdhi, khanDa cApu): In the third caraNam, Thyagaraja conjures up a pretty image of Rama's (vishNu's) sister (pArvati as visualized in mInAkshi) who has come to visit with a bird in her hand that merrily voices praising Rama in a mind pleasing manner.

- Marriage to Sita - Sita kalyANa vaibhOgame – (SankarAbharaNam, khanDa cApu): In many of his compositions, Thyagaraja has used the prevailing folk tunes in toto or with some modifications; Here Sita kalyANa vaibhOgamE has the same melody as the popular gouri kalyANa vaibhOgamE still sung at many marriages and other auspicious occasions.

- nalugu songs – nagumOmu galavAni (madhymAvati, Adi), nApAli (SankarAbharaNam, Adi): The lyrics as well as the music exemplify the jolly mood of the occasion especially the delectable and lilting madhymAvati.

- lAli/ Unjal songs – uyyAla lUgavayya (nIlAmbari, khanDa cApu), lAli yugavE (nIlAmbari, rUpakam): nIlAmbari is often associated with sleep inducing mood. It is interesting that Thyagaraja has chosen this rAgam for two of these songs.

- mElukolupu – mElukOvayya (bouLi, khanDa cApu), mElukO dayAnidhi (sourAshTram, rUpakam): Again, the selections of rAgams for this phase is quite appropriate. bouLi is a morning raga often used in suprabhAtams. sourAshTram is thought of an auspicious raga and dlkshitar used it for his salutations to the Sun god (sUryamUrtE namOstutE, Matya). And interestingly, Rama is a scion of Sun lineage (sUrya vamSam).

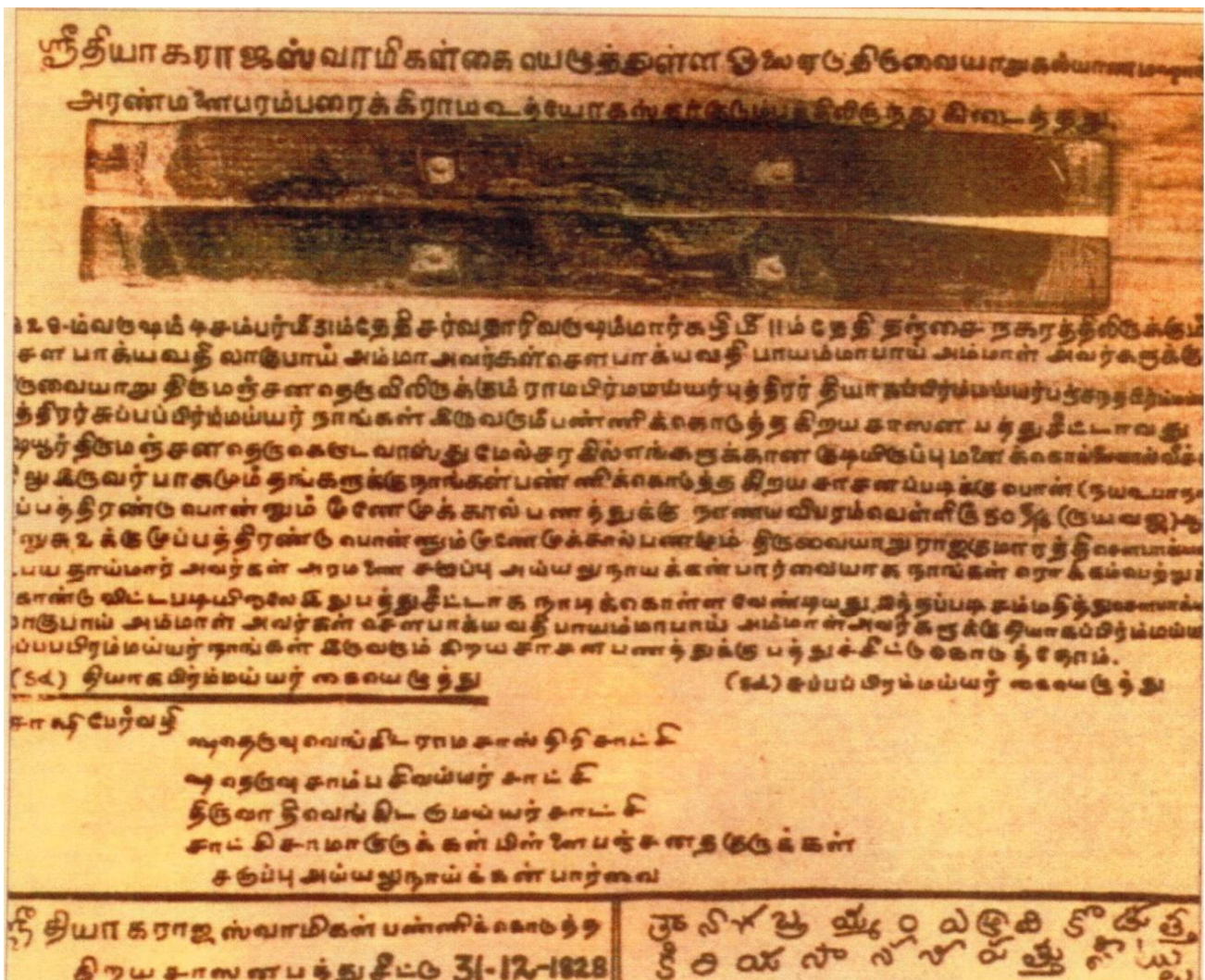
- It is worthy to note is that the musical as well as lyrical levels of some of the compositions rise to a level fit to be rendered in concerts, sometimes with neraval and kalpana svarams; e.g. heccarikagA rAra, patiki hArathIre, lAli songs.

Note: Though, the mangaLam in mOhanam mangaLam is included in Sruti renderings, it actually is considered to be part of prahlAda bhakti vijayam.

References: Please see the Aradhana souvenir from 2018 available online at sruti.org

Prabhakar Chitrapu is a long-time supporter of SRUTI and has served the organization in various capacities since its inception, including President.

M. M. Subramanian is one of the founding members and long-time regular contributor and supporter of SRUTI and has served the organization in various capacities including President.



Photograph of the sale deed that Sri Thyagaraja signed during the partition of his house.
Sent by Shri R. K. Shriramkumar

Reflection on chEtulAra - Bhairavi – Adi

Harish Bevinahally

Pallavi chEtulAra SrungAramu chEsi chootunO SrirAma ||

Anupallavi sEtubandhana surapati sara
seeruha bhavAdulu pogaDa nA ||

Charana 1 merugu bangArandelu beTTi
mETiyau sariga valvalu gaTTi
sura taru sumamula siga ninDa juTTi
sundaramagu mOmuna muddu veTTi ||

Charana 2 molanu kundanapu gajjelu goorchi
mudduga nuduTa tilakamu deerchi
alakala pai rAvi rEkayu jArchi
andamaina ninnuramuna jErchi ||

Charana 3 ANi mutyAla konDi vEsi
housuga parimaLa gandhamu poosi
vANi suraTi chE visaraga vAsi
vAsi yanuchu tyAgarAja nuta anni rOsI ||

Following is a short summary translation¹

"I will decorate you with my hands so beautifully as to elicit the admiration of Gods; you are the architect of the bridge across the ocean ; you will have golden anklets for your feet; your feet will be decorated with paarijaatha flowers; your waist will be decorated with golden beads; your forehead will be bedecked with a sun-shaped pendant; your hair knot will be decorated with precious pearls; your body will be smeared with sweet-scented sandal paste; Saraswati will fan you; Sri Rama, you are the lord worshipped by Thyagaraja"

Chetulara Srungaramu – meaning "decorate (Lord Sri Rama) with my own hands", is a beautiful composition of Saint Thyagaraja, admiring and decorating Lord Rama is apt to be sung during the Thyagaraja Aradhana celebration. Chetulara was originally composed in raga Kharaharapriya but the Bhairavi version is the preferred rendering during the Aradhana celebrations today. Chetulara is also one of the wonderful Thyagaraja kritis where the sangathis naturally bring out the raaga bhava (beauty).

Tradition requires this song be played on the Flute. I remember great flautists including Sikkil Sisters and Dr. N Ramani playing Chetulara in Thiruvaiyyaru, the birthplace of Saint Thyagaraja. As to why Chetulara is played on the flute, it is believed that the great flautist Palladam Sanjeeva Rao (1882-1962) opened the Thyagaraja Aradhana celebrations with a rendering of Chetulara, as flute was considered auspicious in those days. In recent years, playing Chetulara on the flute during the Aradhana is also considered a tribute to Palladam Sanjeeva Rao. Chetulara is also played on the Nadaswaram.

Harish Bevinahally is a resident of Exton, PA and is a long-time SRUTI supporter. He is a seasoned flautist and has performed/accompanied many musicians in the area. He serves as a member of SRUTI's Publications Committee.

¹ The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja (C. Ramanujachari & Dr. V. Raghavan)

Thyagaraja – First among equals

Lakshmi Anand

Renowned vocalist Abhishek Raghuram put it perfectly when he called the Chennai Music Season (referred to as just ‘the season’ by aficionados) a huge cultural extravaganza. Indeed, heritage walks, lectures, lecture demonstrations, interesting combo events (such as sarees and music) etc. abound, besides music, dance and, well, food (but that would take up an entire souvenir by itself). The season is longer now than before – while the dates are thought to be determined by the Music Academy’s schedule of December 15th through December 31st (for music), other sabhas often begin in November itself, going on to mid-January. Rather than demarcate music and dance into separate festivals, many sabhas now offer both throughout, just lengthening the overall season. This eases scheduling, offering options to the many rasikas who make short trips from all over the world.

Thyagaraja passed away on January 6th, 1847 - Pushya Bahula Panchami day. Thus, January sees many ‘Thyagaraja Aradhana’ events throughout the city, practically becoming an extension of the season. It was Harikeshanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar who selected the five Gana Raga Pancharathnams for group singing, when the Thyagaraja Aradhana, in its present form, began in Thiruvaiyaru in 1941. Sumithra Vasudev, musician, scholar and senior student of Sangeetha Kalanidhi R. Vedavalli, says, “The idea of singing pancharathnams is first said to have come about to have some songs that musicians participating in the aradhana could sing together. It was decided that since these songs were in the swara sahitya format, there would be less of stylistic differences that have to be adjusted.”

If ever there was a perfect use of the term ‘First among equals’, Thyagaraja, amongst the Trinity, would be it. His body of work is the largest (about 700, of an estimated 24,000, have reached us) and encompasses pieces in several ragas (over 200 is mentioned), various talams, gaits and, often, many emotions within the same song. He is credited with popularizing the ragas Kharaharapriya and Harikambhoji with the number of kritis he composed in them. He also created several new ragas. Thyagaraja kritis often lend themselves to several sangathis and offer excellent scope for neraval. Entire concerts can be performed with only his works. In fact, for the last several years, senior vocalist O.S. Thiagarajan has almost exclusively presented only Thyagaraja songs in his concerts.

That Thyagaraja was a compositional genius is agreed upon by every practitioner and researcher. His songs, Abhishek says, teach one Carnatic music itself. “They were organic outpourings from the heart. It is thus a challenge to sing them the way Thyagaraja might have intended”. Abhishek, a grandson of Palghat Raghu and a trained percussionist himself, adds that Thyagaraja’s songs have laya embedded as part and parcel of the pieces and one need look no further than the Gana Raga Pancharathnams to understand this aspect.

Abhishek remarks that Thyagaraja songs enhance any concert and that this has been mentioned by many stalwarts. He recounts an anecdote where Lalgudi Jayaraman once returned from a concert and realized that he had not played any Thyagaraja kriti. He promptly sat down in his puja room, played a Thyagaraja composition. Only then did Jayaraman feel fulfilled.

Besides details of Thyagaraja’s trials, tribulations and observations from daily life, RK Shriramkumar, violinist, teacher and authority on all things Carnatic, explains that the composer delivered many lessons and entreaties in his kritis such as:

- **Importance of the Guru in one's life** - Guruleka (Gaurimanohari), Ni cittamu (Dhanyasi)
- **Condemning nara stuti (the extolling of humans)** - Nidhi chala sukham in Kalyani is a classic example
- **Total surrender of body and soul to the Divine** - Ennaga manasu in Neelambari
- **Importance of satsanga (keeping good company) and the shunning of hypocrisy** - Teliyaleru rama (Dhenuka), Manasu nilpa (Abhogi)
- **Importance of Nama Smarana (recitation of the Lord's name)** - Smarane sukhamu (Janaranjani)
- **Lakshanas (qualities) of a true devotee** - Bhaktuni charitramu (Begada)
- **Importance of control of mind** - Manasu svadhina (Shankarabharanam)
- **Importance of not condemning other faiths** - Bhajanaseyave (Kalyani), Vinatasuta(jayantasena), Ninne nera (Pantuvrali)
- **Importance of Bhakti** - Emi jesite (Thodi)
- **Importance of not avoiding Karma**- Ni Bhakti and Yagnadulu (both in Jayamanohari)

While not a frequent traveler, Thyagaraja did make some journeys as evidenced by songs dedicated to the deities in particular kshetrams (RK Shriramkumar):

- **Srirangam** Pancharathnams – Chuta murare (Arabhi), O Rangashayi (Kambhoji), Karuna judavayya (Saranga), Raju vedale (Thodi), Vina rAda nA (Deva Gandhari)
- **Kovur** Pancharathnams – I Vasudha (Sahana), Kori sevimpa rare (Kharaharapriya), Shambho Mahadeva (Pantuvrali), Nammi vaccina (Kalyani), Sundareshwaruni (Shankarabharanam)
- **Lalgudi** Pancharathnams – Lalite (Bhairavi), Mahita pravrdha (Kambhoji), Deva Shri (Madhyamavati), Isha pahimam (Kalyani), Gati nivani (Thodi)
- **Thiruvotriyur** Pancharathnams – Darini (Suddha Saveri), Kanna talli (Saveri), Sundari ninnu (Arabhi), Sundarinannindarilo (Begada), Sundari ni (Kalyani)
- **Kanchipuram** – Vinayakuni (Madhyamavati), Varadaraja (Svarabhushani)
- **Tirupati** – Teratiyaga (Gowlipantu), Venkatesha (Madhyamavati)
- **Nagapattinam** – Evaru teliya (Thodi)
- **Madras** – Venugana (Kedaragoula)

Thyagaraja Aradhanas are a celebration of the composer, Abhishek says. Abhishek suggests that one could have special events to render the kshetram-based pancharathnams too and that one need not confine oneself to the Gana Raga Pancharathnams at aradhanas either. Sumithra mentions that, in their gurukulam, they sing these songs and utsava sampradaya kritis, among others, on Bahula Panchami day.

The utsava sampradaya kritis depict the various practices that are part of the nitya utsava /nitya kalyana utsava thought to be envisioned by Thyagaraja for the pujas he performed for his favored God, Rama, Sumithra elucidates. There are songs depicting various stages of the Nityotsava vidhi such as leading the God to the Mantapa, kalyana vaibhogam, nalungu, neivedyam, vettrilai taamboolam, oonjal, and putting the God to sleep (jojo). These songs are sung in bhajanai performances and also at marriages, and temple rituals such as kalyana utsavams. It is an artiste's preference as to whether it is used in the concert repertoire – even if done so, rarely are all the charanams sung. Badalika theera (Reethigowla) and Melukovayya (Bhowli) are rather popular.

Shriramkumar refers to Thyagaraja's illustration of the nine forms of bhakti (Nava vidha bhakti) in his kritis:

1. Shravanam – hearing stories of God – Rama katha sudha (Madyamavathi)
2. Keerthanam – Chanting or singing God's glories – Intha Saukhyamani (Kapi)
3. Smaranam – remembering the Lord – Shripate (Nagasvaravali), Smarane Sukhamu (Janaranjani)
4. Padasevanam – offering services to holy places/holy work – Shri Rama Padama (Amritavahini), Shri Manini (Purnashadjam), Ni pada pankaja (Begada)
5. Archanam – Performing puja – Tulasi bilva (Kedaragoula), Koluvamare kadha and Aragimpave (both in Thodi)
6. Vandanam – Paying obeisance to God – Vandanamamu (Sahana)
7. Dasyam – selfless service to the Lord – Upacharamu jesevaru (Bhairavi), Tava dasoham (Punnagavarali)
8. Sakhyam – unconditional friendship with God – Chelimini jalajakshu (Yadukula Kambhoji)
9. Atma Nivedhanam – complete surrender to God – Kalaharana (Kedaragoula), Makelara (Ravichandrika), Nivera kula dhanamu (Begada)

His observations/lessons on life and devotion aside, Abhishek says that Thyagaraja's musicianship was par excellence. He refers to Thyagaraja's corpus of compositions in Thodi as so complete that there is nothing left to further illustrate in that raga. To have composed in the appropriate raga, tala, melody and gait for each piece is an illustration of how rhythm, melody and lyric are inextricably intertwined in his compositions. This was only possible because Thyagaraja did not compose his songs as a task he set out to do with the intellect. It came to him through divine grace, says Abhishek. Music is said to express/touch emotions that we might not be able to articulate with words and, since Thyagaraja's kritis are essentially conversations with God, they touch on the gamut of every possible emotion making anyone relate to them, Abhishek Raghuram adds.

Some of Thyagaraja's songs have undergone significant changes over the years and in some cases, the raga itself has metamorphosed. Smt. Vedavalli and her students mention a few. The popular song, Nadha thanu(m) anisham is generally sung as a janya of Kharaharapriya, since the words Sama gana occur in them; however, Chittharanjani is actually documented as a janya of Jhankaradhwani. Seethamma mayamma usually sung in Vasantha was originally in Lalitha. In the Hamsanadham kriti, Bantu reethi, the vivadi notes have been eliminated in the popularly sung current version. Gnanamosagarada sung in Poorvikalyani was actually in Shadvidamarghini – many feel that the latter suits the meaning of the song more appropriately. Nagumomu is sung in Abheri. However, modern versions of Abheri incorrectly use the chatushruti dhaivata instead of the shuddha dhaivata. When Smt. Vedavalli and her students sing any song set in Abheri, the difference is clear and pronounced. Rama Neeyeda, generally sung in Kharaharapriya is documented as set in Dileepakam. Chetulara now often sung in Bhairavi was earlier presented in Natabhairavi and is originally composed in Kharaharapriya. The Vedavalli gurukulam preserves the tradition and sings these songs in the older, documented patantharam.

Sumithra adds that, amongst the Gana Raga Pancharathnams, the Varali pancharathnam has had the structure of a kirtanam with only one charanam (satatamu...) in publications like the Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini (1904). How and when it developed to its present form is not very clear. In the Nattai pancharathnam too, the ordering of the charanams has different versions. Dr. Radha Bhaskar, musician and musicologist, explains a facet of the Arabhi pancharathnam – despite the avarohanam of the raga being SNDPMGRS, Thyagaraja uses only SDP throughout whilst giving the feel of SNDP. The fourth swara sahitya alone of this song though, begins with SND. Dr. Radha says that it is unclear as to whether it was Thyagaraja

himself who actually composed that stanza or if it was actually written by someone else – perhaps being the reason for this stanza generally not being sung.

There are also different ways of singing a pancharathnam. During this past season, for example, popular vocalist Ramakrishnan Murthy presented a Ragam, Thanam, Pancharathnam – (Arabhi - Sadinchane), at the Thyaga Brahma Gana Sabha. He sang the Pallavi and Anupallavi in two speeds and each charanam twice in madhyama kalam. He also did neraval and swarams in thanam style. He explained that the Pancharathnams (except Varali) were designed in Thana Varnam style lending itself to this interpretation. Dr. Pantula Rama is known to have done this earlier. Ramakrishnan added that there was another sampradaya of singing swaram, tanam and sahitya for each of the charanams.

The sabha Mudhra (run by Mudhra Bhaskar and Dr. Radha Bhaskar) heralds the New Year with the unique concept of the Sthree Thyagaraja Pancharathnam - the singing of the Gana Raga Pancharathnams by a group of all female artistes. Dr. Radha explains. “Usually in all Pancharathnam renditions, we see that the male artistes dominate since the songs are sung in C scale which is ideally suitable for them. But female artistes have to maneuver between the upper and lower octaves to match the male sruthi and it is a lot of strain on the voice too. So, a novel idea of an all women ensemble was started and in this, even the accompanists are female – violin, veena, flute, mrudangam, ghatam, kanjira.”

For Dr. Radha, Thyagaraja’s works are full of spirituality but, at the same time, highly scientific and replete with melodic and artistic beauty. “His compositions have had a very strong influence upon the musical scenario of South India in the 18th and 19th century as it revolutionized the very nature of Carnatic music. It has opened up new avenues in terms of raga portrayal as well as in making music reach a wider spectrum. The compositions of Thyagaraja, ranging from the simple to complex, have thrown open endless varieties in raga delineation. It has also been instrumental in paving the way for the music which has come after that and to make Carnatic music what it is today.”

As V. Sriram, historian, author and Secretary of The Madras Music Academy stated so eloquently, it is very likely that at any point in time, someone, somewhere in the world, is singing a Thyagaraja kriti. There can be no greater testament to Thyagaraja’s exalted stature in the Carnatic firmament.

The author is grateful to each and every artiste, referred to in the article, who kindly proffered his/her time, and informative comments. She also expresses her sincere thanks to Sri. Prashant Prasad, Smt. Hemamalini Arunkumar and Prof. Arunkumar Sridharan for their invaluable input. Sri. V. Sriram was kind enough to permit the use of his fact-filled series on Thyagaraja, published in The Hindu, for this article.



Lakshmi Anand is currently based in Chennai after being a long-time resident of PA. Having learned Carnatic vocal in her childhood, she is now an ardent rasika. She has written many articles for The Hindu newspaper, mainly on Classical Music. She is an alumnus of The Pennsylvania State University.



Thyagaraja - A Global Composer

Sindura Sridhar

As Carnatic music enthusiasts, we all know very well how Saint Thyagaraja has made an impact on our everyday lives. We listen to his compositions in the mornings, sing them in the afternoons, and hear them as a lullaby at night. But how is he similar to any other composer in the world? As a student of both Indian classical and Western classical music, I feel that Saint Thyagaraja's impact on classical music was comparable to the impact Beethoven had in the music world with his symphonies. Both composers were immensely dedicated to their art and as a result, produced compositions that are still awe-inspiring today. Isn't it an amazing coincidence that both lived in the same era in different parts of the world, I wonder if they knew of each other and their work?

Thyagaraja was highly influential in the development of the Carnatic music as we know it today. Because of his great musical contributions, he was also named a member of the Trinity of Carnatic Music. Thyagaraja composed thousands of devotional compositions, most in Telugu and in praise of Lord Rama, many of which remain popular today. Born in Thiruvavur in 1767, Thyagaraja was the third son of his parents, Kakarla Rama Brahman and Sitamma. In my opinion, Thyagaraja's most memorable compositions include:

- Thera theeyaga Radha – This song was sung by Saint Thyagaraja in his older ages. Thyagaraja journeyed to the Venkateswara temple, hoping to become a “darshan” of Lord Venkateswara. Looking for Lord Venkateswara at the temple, he spotted a curtain, soon he realized that Lord Venkateswara was hidden behind this curtain and was not visible. Disappointed, he sang “Thera theeyaga radha”, meaning “When will this curtain come down?”, showing a strong desire to see Lord Venkateswara. Moments later, the curtain opened, and he came upon a “darshan” of Lord Venkateswara.
- Nenendu Vedakudura – Saint Thyagaraja sang this song at the Kaveri River. One day, the Raja of Thanjavur invited Thyagaraja to sing in his court. He offered him a gift of fifty acres of land and any gold coins. But when Thyagaraja refused, his older brother got angry that his brother did not want all the wealth. So, the angrily threw Thyagaraja's idol of Lord Rama in to the river of Kaveri. Devastated, Thyagaraja sang ‘Nenendu Vedakudura’, meaning, “Where will I search for you?” to Lord Rama.

As you can see, Thyagaraja was very devoted to Lord Rama and Venkateswara. His music inspires us all to become better musicians, and better people in general. We honor Thyagaraja at the Thyagaraja Aradhana because we are inspired by his passion, intelligence, and devotion in the same way as we respect and honor the music of Beethoven.

Sindura is a sixth grader at Wilson Southern Middle School in Berks County. She is a passionate learner and follower of both Indian classical and Western classical music.

Singing Utsava Sampradaya Kritis

Roshni Srikant

Over the years I have grown, slowly and steadily, in my musical journey. I have had many memorable moments along the way. One such experience that I look forward to this year is participating and performing in the Utsava Sampradaya group rendition. The kirtanas' beauty is like that of nectar—its sweetness never diminishes. I am excited to be learning and performing these krithis because of their blissful melodies. Jo Jo Rama is one of the songs which is close to my heart because of the soft, gentle tone of the raga, which is Reethigowlai. The joy of singing in a group also makes it special as I get an opportunity to sing with teachers and other singers in our SRUTI community. Everyone singing is kind and a wonderful listener, and we all share a strong passion for music and singing. A special thanks to Dinakar uncle for teaching me all the krithis and inspiring me to do my best. Overall, I am quite excited to be a part of Utsava Sampradaya group!

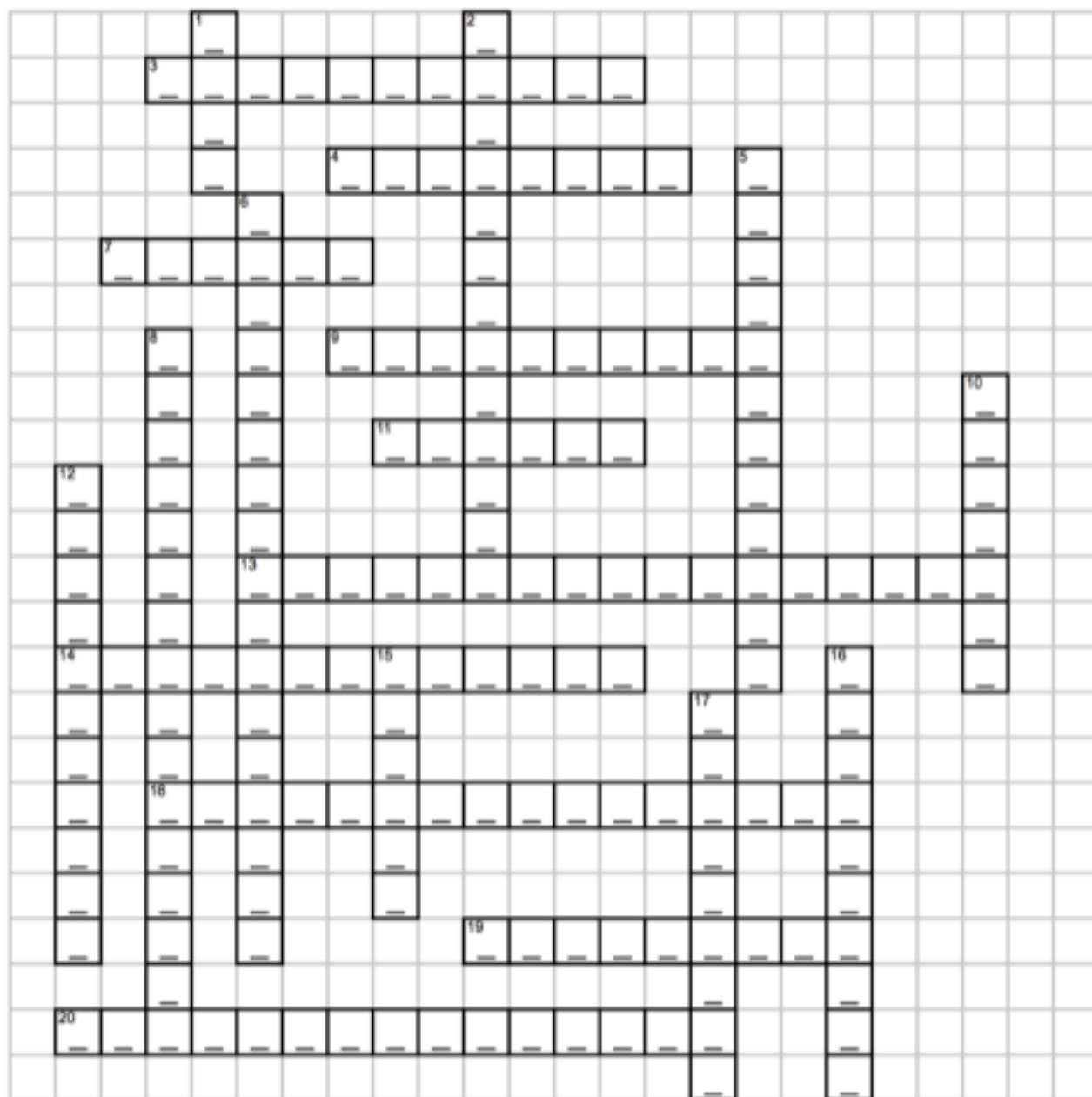
Roshni Srikant is a seventh grader going to Unami Middle School with a love for music and dance. She is a member of the SRUTI Youth Group and also likes to engage in SRUTI events.



A painting of the Rama panchayatana vigraha (idol)
that Sri Tyagarajasvami worshipped.
(photo sent by R. K. Shriramkumar)

Aradhana Crossword

Vasishtha Dhulipala (answers on page 42)



Across	Down
3 - 5 gems of Thyagaraja	1 - Most of Thyagaraja's compositions are devoted to this deity
4 - Rama and Sita got jumbled in this raga	2 - Thyagaraja's masterpiece Chakkani Raja is in this raga
7 - Thyagaraja made compositions in praise of this sage	5 - The name of St. Thyagaraja's only child
9 - A garland of ragas with or without lyrics	6 - The only one of Thyagaraja's 5 gems that is not in Telugu
11 - This tala is in the Indian name for the North Star	8 - Popular Thyagaraja kriti in Hindolam
13 - Thyagaraja's first composition at age 13	10 - Musical variations of a given line
14 - Only composition in a given raga	12 - A lyricist and composer is called
18 - Thyagaraja's last composition in Sahana before his death	15 - If you change the first letter of this raga, it becomes a country
19 - Birthplace of Thyagaraja	16 - A collection of 72 sampurna ragas
20 - This Pantuvarali kriti is about the one who holds Ganga in his hair	17 - The raga before sunrise

Tyagarajasvami's inspirations

R. K. Shriramkumar

The history of Carnatic music is long and illustrious. This hallowed art form has been nurtured, preserved and passed on by several composers of yore. However, the most significant contribution is of the Trinity – Sri Tyagarajasvami, Sri Shyama Shastri and Sri Muttusvami Dikshitar. Their compositions offer us a glimpse into the music of their times, that which preceded them and their own musical and literary genius. The world of Carnatic musicians and admirers owes them a great deal of gratefulness.

The Chaturdandi tradition of Gita, Prabandha, Thaya and Alapa gave way to the tradition of Pada, Kirtana and Krti. Of all the greats who contributed during this period, Tyagaraja's name stands tall. Tyagarajasvami's contribution to Carnatic music stands unparalleled. His compositions cover a wide spectrum of compositions that showcase multi various dimensions of sangita and sahitya.

From smaller compositions to the expansive and ornamented pancharatnas, from divyanama sankirtanas with simple catchy tunes to krtis with dizzyingly elaborate and intricate musical nuances, emotions ranging from dasya bhava to ninda stuti, themes from the religious to the social, ragas with archaic origins to the contemporary ...His compositions encompass almost every possible facet that a musical mind can think of.

His disciple, Valajapet Venkataramana Bhagavatar, in the following verse, reveres him as a personification of Vyasa, Valmiki, Shuka, Prahlada, Brahma, Narada and Shiva, all in one.

*vyAsonaigamacarcayA mrdugirAvalmIkajanmAmunih
vairAgye shuka-eva bhaktiviShaye prhlAda-evasvayam
brahma-nArada eva cApratimayoh sAhitya sangltayoh
yo rAmamrtapAnanirjitah shivah tam tyAgarAjam bhaje*

This article is dedicated at the lotus feet of Sadguru Shri Tyagarajasvami, whose 250th birth anniversary is being celebrated this year and seeks to highlight some of the personalities by whom he was greatly inspired by and their influences on his compositions.

Just like Avadhuta in the Avadhuta gita, acknowledges 21 gurus who taught him the truths of life, Tyagarajasvami repeatedly pays obeisance to the various personalities whose music and poetry spurred his creativity. In the krti *Vidulaku mrokkeda (Mayamalavagaula)*, he offers his benediction to all the Gods, Goddesses and sages who were exponents of music - Lakshmi, Gauri, Sarasvati, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Narada, Indra, Bharata-muni, Kashyapa, Chandikeshvara, Anjaneya, Subrahmanya, Ganapati, Markandeya, Agastya, Tumburu, Nandi and to scholars like Someshvara (a 12th century chalukya King and author of *Manasollasa*, one of the earliest works on Southern music) and Sharngadeva (author of the treatise *Sangita Ratnakara*).

Narada

Legend has it that Sage Narada gifted the treatise *Svararnava* to Tyagaraja. In the krti *Svararagasudharasa* (Shankarabharanam), Tyagaraja signs off saying

*rajatagirIshuDu nagajaku delpu
svarArNava marmamulu
vijayamu galgu tyagarAjuderuke
vishvasinci delusuko o manasA*

The secrets of Svararnava, revealed by Shiva to Parvati have been passed on to Tyagaraja....

Tyagaraja has expressed his reverence for Narada through several compositions like *Naradaganalola (Athana)*, *ShriNarada (Kanada)*, *Naradamuni (Pantavarali)*, *Narada gurusvami (Durbaru)*, *Vara narada (Vijayashri)* and *Shri Naradamuni (Bhairavi)*.

In the Kanada krti, he describes Narada as the one who has the musical knowledge of the Vina that is born of the Vedas....” *Veda janita vara VinA vAdana tatvajna* “a phrase borrowed from the Yagnavalkya Smṛti.

Valmiki

As we know, Rama was Tyagaraja’s ishta-devata (favourite deity) and the influence of various Ramayanas is important. However, the Adi-Kavi Valmiki’s Ramayana had a profound influence on his krtis. Tyagaraja mentions Valmiki in many compositions and echoes the sentiments of Valmiki in several compositions. Valmiki mentions that the story of Rama was sung by Lava and Kusha, the princes who were endowed with melodious voices. Tyagaraja, like Valmiki, also used the medium of music to sing the praises of Lord Rama. Valmiki proclaims that the epic Ramayana is indeed the sublime legend of Sita.

*kAvyam rAmayaNam krtsnam sItAyAh caritam mahat
paulastya vadham iti evam cakAra carita vratah*

Tyagaraja follows Valmiki and tells Rama in the evergreen Kambhoji krti - *mAjAnaki cetta battaga maharAja vaitivi* - you were just an ordinary prince. You became an emperor only when you held our Sita’s hand in marriage.

Tulasidasa

The influence of other Ramayanas, such as the Adhyatma-Ramayana and the Adbhuta-Ramayana is also seen in his krtis. Tyagaraja offers his benediction to several Hari-bhaktas in the prologue to his opera, Prahlada Bhakti Vijayamu. Of these, the foremost is Tulasidasa, author of the famed Ramacaritamanas.

*tuLasi kAnanamanduna
vilasitamuna harini jUci vismaya yutuDai
pulakIkṛta tanuDagunA
tuLasIdAsa varu sannutulu setu madin*

(I extol, the blessed Tulasidasa, who is always in ecstasy singing the praises of the resplendent Hari in the Tulasi forest.)

A special significance for Rama upasakas is the vision of the Lord as resting on the Suvela mountain. Tulasidasa says in his Ramacaritamanas

*Ehi vidhi kṛpArUpa guNadhAm rAmu AsIn
Dhanya te nara ehim dhyAn je rahat sada layalln
'Blessed are those who are immersed in the thought of the Lord (as resting on the Suvela mountain)*

Tyagarajasvami describes such a scene in the Sahana composition Giripai nelakonna. A Rama-upasaka, all life, it is only fitting that Tyagarajasvami is said to have had a vision of this particular scene as a premonition of his departure from the mortal world.

Potana

Bammeru Potana, a 15th century scholar of Telugu and Samskr̥tam, was deemed a jewel of Telugu poetry. He rewrote the Srimad Bhagavata in Telugu as Andhra Mahabhagavatamu, popularly called Potana Bhagavata. His poetry was sweet and his language simple, enjoyed by peasant and cognoscenti alike.

Like Tyagaraja, he too was a Rama-bhakta. In the introductory verses to his Mahabhagavatamu, he says, 'it is Rama who spurs me to write the Bhagavatam – the story of all the incarnations of Vishnu.'

Similarly, Tyagaraja a staunch devotee of Lord Rama sings about the exploits of Krishna in a few compositions, including his opera Nauka Caritramu. The manuscript of the Potana Bhagavata that was used by Tyagaraja for his daily parayana is now preserved at the library of the Saurashtra Sabha in Madurai.

Purandara Dasa

It is said that Tyagaraja was taught Purandaradasa's compositions by his mother. Purandaradasa's influence on Tyagaraja was not limited to just his compositions. He even seems to have modeled his life like Purandaradasa, who sacrificed crores of wealth, took to sankirtana, lived a life of moral rectitude and believed in complete surrender to the Lord.

Purandaradasa's compositions deal with different emotions of experiencing the divine ranging from admiration to argument to sarcasm to romance to total submission. His compositions also impart moral values and meaningful messages for the benefit of all sections of society.

Tyagaraja, inspired by this great Haridasa echoes most of the emotions and sentiments expressed in the Purandaradasa's devaranamas.

Smarane onde salade of Purandaradasa and Smarane sukhamu of Tyagaraja, Katha shravana of Purandaradasa and Rama katha sudha of Tyagaraja are a few examples.

Kshetragna

Kshetragna's padams are very well known and are regarded as the havens of raga bhava. Kshetragna's influence on Tyagaraja's works can be perceived mainly in the structuring of his compositions and the raga contours rather than the content of the lyric. The pallavi-anupallavi-carana format wherein the last two lines of the carana have the same musical structure of the anupallavi is seen in most padas of Kshetragna as well as in Tyagaraja's kritis. The spacing between the syllables of the words in the krti that accommodates meandering raga swirls is probably an influence of the musical structure of the padam.

Ramadasa

Bhadracala Ramadasa was formerly known as Kancerla Gopanna and a clerk in the service of Tana Shah in Golconda. He was initiated to the Rama taraka mantra by Kabirdas. Ramadasa built the famed temple for Lord Rama at Bhadracalam and the story of how the Lord rescued him from the wrath of the Tana Shah is very famous and highly inspiring.

The kirtanas of Ramadasa were also taught to Tyagarajasvami by his mother. He pays rich tribute to Ramadasa in Prahlada Bhakti Vijayamu –

Kaliyugamuna vara Bhadracalamuna.....Shri ramadasu vinutintu madin

And mentions Ramadasa in his other krtis such as Kaligiyunte – Kiravani (*Bhagavatagresarulu narada prahlada parashara ramadasulu*), Emidova – Saranga (*Ramadasuvale naite sitabhama mandalinchunu nito*) and Brndavanalola – Todi (*Ramadasa dasa Tyagaraja nuta*)

Tyagaraja follows Ramadasa in Ramabhakti, construction of compositions and usage of similar thoughts and word phrasings.

Sri Ramula divyanama smarana (Ramadasa) and Manasu Svadhina (Tyagaraja), Ramuni varamainamu (Ramadasa) and Grahabalame (Tyagaraja), Kanti nedu ma ramulannu kanukontini nenu (Ramadasa) and Kanukontini (Tyagaraja) are examples of similar thought and expression. Both have composed a kriti with the opening phrase Na moralakimpa.

Narayana Tirtha

The great advaitic sanyasin Narayana Tirtha's Krishna Lila Tarangini seems to have been a great influence. The opera Nauka Caritramu was inspired by the pranks of Krishna that Narayana Tirtha has sung praises of in his work. Similar usage of words can also be seen.

Narayana Tirtha offers his prayers to Lord Ganesha in the introduction of the Krishna Lila Tarangini.

*girirAjasutAsUnuh karirAja varAnanah
paripanthigaNadhvamsi surasevyo virAjate*

Tyagaraja also employs the same turn of phrase in his composition on Ganesha, Girirajasutatanaya in Bangala.

The phrase '*yAga yoga tyAga bhoga phalamosange*' in the krti Ragasudharasa in Andolika is a resound from the line '*yAga yoga rAga bhoga tyAga sambandham vina*' in the Taranga '*rAma krSHNa govindeti*'.

The construction and usage of prasa in the Taranga '*krSHNam kalaya sakhi*' of Narayana Tirtha and the krti '*rAmam bhajeham sada*' of Tyagaraja are strikingly similar.

Upanishad Brahman

Ramacandrendra Sarasvati, also known as Upanishad Brahman, of Agastyashrama in Kancipuram was a great advaitic scholar. He was a childhood classmate of Tyagaraja's father Ramabrahmam. A great Rama Bhakta, he has written one of the best commentaries to the Adhyatma Ramayana. His works, in the footsteps of Narayana Tirtha and Jayadeva, called the Rama Taranga and Rama-ashtapadi, respectively are famous. Shri Muttusvami Dikshitar set the Rama Ashtapadi to music and unfortunately the music is not available to us today.

Upanishad brahman sent a Shrimukham to Tyagaraja from Kancipuram and invited him to visit the holy city. This is still preserved in the Saurashtra Sabha in Madurai.

In the work, Namārtha Viveka or Upeya nama viveka, Upanishad Brahman says that Rama nama signifies the Supreme Brahman. Tyagaraja conveys this thought in the krti Telisi rama cintanato – Purnacandrika (*rAma yana brahmamunaku peru*)

Upanishad Brahman also explains that in the word Rama, the syllable 'ra' is derived from the Narayana ashtakshara mantra and 'ma' is from the Shiva panchakshara mantra. Tyagaraja very beautifully conveys this sentiment in the krti Evarani (Devamritavarshini).

The Divyanama compositions of Tyagaraja are inspirations from Upanishad Brahman's Divyanama sankirtanas

Melattur Venkatarama Shastri

The Melattur Bhagavata Mela tradition had its origins in Kuchipudi in Andhra but eventually migrated down south to Tanjavur during the Islamic invasion. Thus, their dialogues are retained in original telugu. They recount and dramatise several stories from the puranas, but their most famous rendition is of the Prahlada carita and Narasimha avatara. Tyagaraja must have witnessed the performances of the Bhagavata mela and the influence is clearly seen in the dramatic sequences of his own Prahlada Bhakti Vijayamu.

Margadarshi Shesha Ayyangar

Shesha Ayyangar, a great devotee of Lord Ranganatha of Shrirangam, was a trendsetter for the Trinity and several other composers who followed him, hence the epithet 'Margadarshi' (one who shows the path). Unfortunately, very few compositions of his are available today. Shades of Shesha Ayyangar's alliterative prowess are seen in some of Tyagaraja's kritis. For example, the phrase '*nArada gAna lola*' in Ayyangar's Athana kriti pAhi shri ramA-ramaNa is the opening phrase of a krti of Tyagaraja in the same raga (*nArada gAna lola natajana paripAla*)

Sharngadeva

The krti nAdatanumanisham in the raga Cittaranjani is the essence of the invocatory verse – '*Brahma granthijavande nAda tanum...shivam shankaram*' of the Sangita Ratnakara by Sharngadeva. Tyagaraja resonates with Sharngadeva's definition of nAda as the unison of 'na' that is prANa and and 'da' that is agni

–
*na kAram prANa nAmAnam da kAram analam viduh
jAtah prAnAgni samyogAt tena nAdobhidhlyate*

In the krti Mokshamu galada in the raga Saramati, Tyagaraja refers to this unison of Prana and Agni.

Influence of the Varnam

The construct of a Varnam is distinctly different from that of a krti. The musical spaces between syllables are much longer and are spread out over the tala with several points of inflection. Some of the great varnam composers of the pre-trinity times were Adiyapayya, Pallavi Gopalayyar and Melattur Virabhadrayya. Though Tyagaraja did not compose varnams, the construct of some of his compositions such as Jagadanandakaraka (Nata) and Koluvaivunnade (Bhairavi) seem to showcase the musical settings of a Varnam.

Nama sankirtana tradition

Exposure to the Nama sankirtana tradition and its influence is seen in the Utsava sampradaya and Divyanama kritis of Tyagaraja. These compositions have a pallavi followed by multiple caranams. The tunes are simple and highlight the words, which are in plenty and profound.

Tyagaraja picks a leaf off ‘Manasa sancarare’ the composition of the great advaitic sanyasin, Sadashiva Brahmendra by composing a krti in Punnavarali with the same opening phrase as the ascetic composer.

Maratha Varkari Saints – Tukaram, Namdev and Jnandev

The story of how a Panduranga and Rakhumayi temple came to be in Tiruvaiyyaru goes thus. One of the Maratha rulers of Tanjavur, probably Serfoji I, married a princess from Pandharpur and built a temple for Panduranga and Rakhumayi on the banks of the Kaveri just like how the Lord resides beside the Chandrabhaga river in Pandharpur. This little shrine is just a few yards away from Tyagaraja’s house on Tirumanjana vidhi. During Tyagaraja’s time, this temple would have resounded with bhajans and the abhangas of the Varkari saints of Maharashtra.

Tyagaraja has paid homage to Tukaram, Namdev, Jnaneshwar and other devotees of Panduranga in the preamble to Prahlada Bhakti Vijayamu-

‘mariyu pANDuranga nAmadeva jnanadeva sahadeva jayadeva tukArAma shri nArAyaNa tirthAdi bhagavad dAsulanella praNamilli

This is but a mere drop from the ocean that is Tyagarajasvami’s bhakti, prowess and genius. When the incomparable saint sings ‘*endaro mahAnubhAvulu andariki vandanamulu*’ it imparts to humanity the significance, importance and greatness of the virtue called humility.

To Tyagarajasvami and the other luminaries who have shaped and contributed to this incredibly beautiful art form, let us bow down to them in complete surrender and gratitude.



R K Shriramkumar is a senior musician and guru to many upcoming musicians, and a cherished Sruti well-wisher who has performed for us many times. The above article was written by him for the festival souvenir of IFAA, San Diego for Thyagaraja’s 250 birth anniversary (2017). It is reproduced here with their kind permission.

Legends and anecdotes associated with some Thyagaraja kritis

Rasikan

Thyagaraja was by far one of the greatest music composers ever. He had many disciples and his fame spread far and wide. In fact, Thyagaraja himself attests to this in his Todi kriti, *Daasarathe nee runamu*, wherein in the anupallavi, he says that his fame reached far-away lands thanks to Shri Raama, the “Rasika Siromani.”

Thyagaraja died just 172 years ago, a period perhaps too short to fully deify him—complete with attributions of miracles and a comprehensive body of mythology.

Even so, myths and legends exist. Some biographers of Thyagaraja believe that Harikatha exponents have been partly responsible for the propagation of the myths and legends surrounding some of his kritis. After all, these storytellers would recognize that mere recitations, chronologically or otherwise, of Thyagaraja's life and achievements would be rather dry. So, they stoked the interest of their audience with embellishments, and in the process, created and perpetuated these myths.

In this article, we discuss anecdotes and myths associated with a few well-known kritis and, where applicable, add comments about their veracity or otherwise.

Perhaps the two most popular kritis associated with a story are *Thera theeyaga radha* in Gowlipantu and *Nidhi saala sukhama* in Kalyani.

The context for the first one goes as follows: during a pilgrimage, Thyagaraja visits Tirupathi. As he arrives at the inner sanctum, he finds that a screen (thera) is hiding the idol of the deity. The kriti, supposedly, is pleas to the deity to open the screen and provide Thyagaraja an unobstructed vision of the idol. As he finished the kriti, the screen (miraculously) opens.

Assuming that this event did happen, we can adduce other possibilities. For instance, it is not unusual in many temples for priests to close the screen while they decorate the idol. Thus, it is possible that the conclusion of the song could have coincided with the scheduled opening of the screen. However, some scholars question the veracity of the event itself, based on the deep philosophical ideas expressed in the kriti. In particular, Thyagaraja seems to be imploring Lord Venkataramana of Tirupathi to remove the screen of ignorance rather than a physical screen.

The anecdote associated with *Nidhi saala sukhama* is that the king of Thanjavur, having heard of the greatness of Thyagaraja's musical output, sends his emissaries with valuable gifts and to request that Thyagaraja visit his court and perhaps sing the king's praises. Thyagaraja spurns the advances and the invitation. The kriti is full of rhetorical questions, such as comparing the (pseudo) comforts afforded by wealth against the genuine comfort of being in the presence (sannidhi) of Lord Raama. It concludes by questioning the pleasure of singing in praise of mere egoistic mortals as against kritis on Lord Raama.

Scholars doubt the veracity of this event based partially on the fact that Thanjavur then was under British occupation, and the ruler was paid a nominal upkeep. Is it more likely that Thyagaraja composed the kriti in a saddened mood after his brother, angry at Thyagaraja's refusal to monetize his obvious genius, partitioned the ancestral home in a fit of pique? The partitioning itself did happen, since Thyagaraja himself reflects on it in his Madhyamavathi kriti – *Nadupai palukeru narulu*. In the anupallavi, he bemoans that he was (perhaps unjustly) blamed for the splitting.

Another event about wealth and station is believed to have occurred when a famous musician, Shatkala (six speeds) Govinda Maaraar from the state of Travancore visited Thyagaraja. After exhibiting his extraordinary musical prowess, he extended an invitation to Thyagaraja, on behalf of the prince of Travancore, to be a court musician of that state. Thyagaraja rejects the offer, again questioning if state honors and high positions could replace the peace obtained from pure bhakthi towards Shri Raama. The kriti in Saalaga Bhairavi – *Padavi ni sad bhakthi* – reflects that view.

One popularly held view is that Thyagaraja composed many kritis spontaneously; i.e., they poured forth with no apparent forethought. Mozart, the great Western classical music composer, had the reputation of writing an entire work in one sitting. There are parallels in other fields also of such achievements. The

Swiss mathematician Leonard Euler and the Indian mathematician Sririvasa Ramanujan are two such examples. They would just write pages after pages of equations, formulas, and even theorems.

The above remarks lend credibility to Thyagaraja having composed the Todi kriti, *Daasarathe nee runamu*, referred to earlier, spontaneously when a pilgrim from distant Varanasi visited him after learning about his greatness.

But, an anecdote associated with the Bilahari kriti, *Naa jeevadhara*, seems to defy credulity. Many Thyagaraja kritis in Bilahari are exuberantly brilliant. This kriti, in particular, bristles with extraordinary sangathis. Yet the myth suggests that he composed it while reviving a man presumed dead after drowning in a well.

Scholars believe that Thyagaraja composed the Darbar kriti *Mundu venuka iru pakkala* before embarking on a long pilgrimage. This is regarded as a prayer to Shri Raama to provide him a (virtual) security shield, as it were. However, the storytellers spin an interesting story around this kriti.

During the aforementioned pilgrimage, Thyagaraja spent some time at the residence of a wealthy patron, Sundaresa Mudaliar, in Kovur near Chennai. When Thyagaraja and his retinue were about to leave, the patron, knowing that Thyagaraja would not accept any monetary gift, swore the disciples to secrecy and stashed a purse in an inconspicuous corner of the palanquin carrying the composer. They had to pass through a forest infested with brigands who started pelting stones at them. Thyagaraja tried to calm the disciples saying since they did not carry any material wealth, they had nothing to fear. The disciples quickly confessed to their deceptiveness. Thyagaraja said that if it was the will of Shri Raama to harm them, so be it; He would take care of it. Suddenly, to everyone's surprise, the dacoits fell at Thyagaraja's feet, saying that two dazzlingly beautiful young men attacked them with bows and arrows, and they realized that Thyagaraja was no ordinary person. Thyagaraja immediately understood that Raama and Lakshmana had rescued them! The episode concludes with Thyagaraja composing the kriti.

Endaro mahanubhavulu in Sri ragam is arguably the most beautiful among the famous Pancharatna kritis. One legend about this kriti suggests that Thyagaraja composed it when he hosted Govinda Maaraar, the savant from Travancore, mentioned earlier. However, it is difficult to visualize that such a monumental kriti, with its superb handling of Sri ragam, the laya intricacies and multiple complex charanams of different dhatus, being composed on the spot. Scholars opine that though it probably is not beyond the ken for a genius like Thyagaraja, it is more likely that Thyagaraja had already composed the kriti and taught it to his disciples. Thyagaraja could then have regaled the maestro with the song, perhaps even treating the latter as a mahanubhava also. If so, what a tribute indeed!

Finally, in a lighter vein about how incongruously Thyagaraja's kritis are sometimes rendered, there is the story of S.G. Kittappa, a famous stage actor in Tamizh Nadu who was also a well-known musician. He was famous for rendering with great élat the Kharaharapriya kriti *Raama nee samaanam evvaru*, where Thyagaraja extols Shri Raama as being peerless. As soon as Kittappa entered the stage, the audience would clamor for him to sing that kriti even if he was donning the role of Ravana, the archenemy of Raama!!!!

Rasikan is a longtime supporter of SRUTI. He is also a frequent contributor to SRUTI publications.



Kshetra Darshana with Thyagaraja

Bharathi Ramasubban

IDuleni malayamArutamuce gUDina kAveritaTamandu...

This land of the Chozhas, Tiruvaivyyaru, at the confluence of the Kaveri with four other rivers, with its unparalleled breeze, the swaying divine trees and nectarine notes of the cuckoo. This land that is envied even by Lord Siva.



Idol of Sadguru
Thyagaraja in procession
on Tirumanjana Veethi

I couldn't but hum these lines from the charanam of Sadguru Thyagaraja's Muripemu galige in Mukhari as I walked to the banks of the Kaveri along Tirumanjana veethi. The day was Pushya Bahula Panchami, the day he left his mortal coils and became one with Nadabrahmam. The entire street was agog, carrying the saint's idol in procession. Once the procession left, I made my way to the river bank. One can't reach the river without stopping at this tiny temple (part Maratha and part South Indian in architecture) of Panduranga Vitthala and Rakhumayi. Just how grand this place must have been in Tyagarajaswami's times! The Kaveri breeze, laden with the chants, abhangas and bhajans of the varkari sampradaya, wafting all the way to the saint's house at the beginning of the street. In his later years, he goes on to pay obeisance to Panduranga, Jnaneshwar, Tukaram and Namdeo in the opening verses of his opera, Prahlada Bhakti Vijayamu. How much of an influence these saints of Maharashtra and their music had on our own Tyagarajaswami is a question for another day. Today, as I sat on the steps leading to the river, not very far from Bavaswami ghat (the saint's final resting place), I thought it only natural that the saint hardly ever felt the urge to leave his beloved Tiruvaivyyaru, with its perennial waters, fertile lands, rich culture and musical heritage.

As we all know, Tyagaraja's contemporary, Muthuswami Dikshitar travelled extensively and composed on several deities. Even Purandaradasa, from two centuries before him, visited and composed on several kshetras. Through their compositions, we get a glimpse of the music of those places, some anecdotal evidence and meticulous chronicling of temple details (iconography, sthala purana, special forms of worship, festivals, etc.). Tyagarajaswami has often questioned the need for pilgrimage when salvation awaits at the feet of the Lord. One such example is the kriti kOTinadulu dhanuShkOTi (Todi), wherein he reprimands his mind, 'Why do you travel and seek out sacred places and rivers when the holiest of holy rivers are at the tip of Sri Rama's bow?'

Nevertheless, he did undertake a journey to Kanchipuram and its surrounding towns, almost towards the end of his life. He must have been close to seventy years of age at that time. This places the time of his departure from Tiruvaivyyaru to Srirangam, Lalgudi, Madras, Kanchipuram and Tirupati to somewhere between 1837 and 1839. In a time when travel was fraught with perils, what prompted him to do so, that too at such an advanced age? The reason behind this decision was an invitation from Upanishad Brahman, a great scholar, advaitin and seer from Kanchipuram. This letter of invitation (or *Srimukham*) is still preserved at the Saurashtra Sabha in Madurai. Upanishad Brahman was a dear friend of Tyagaraja's father,

Ramabrahmam. Incidentally, Muthuswami Dikshitar had also visited Upanishad Brahmam in the early 1800s and set to tune the latter's Rama Ashtapadi.



Image of Tyagarajaswami, his padukas and tambura at the Saurashtra Sabha, Madurai
(Photo Credit: Hindu article dated 3rd May, 2018)

LALGUDI

The logistics for the journey were taken care of by Kovur Sundaresa Mudaliyar, a dubash of the British East India Company and a great admirer of the saint's music. So Tyagaraja set out with his disciples and first visited Lalgudi, also known as Tapastirtha kshetra of Siva as Saptarishishwara and Goddess Srimati. He composed a set of 5 kritis, two on the Lord and three on the Goddess. The set, comprising *ISa pAhimAm* (Kalyani), *dEva srl tapastIrtha* (Madhyamavati), *lalite srl pravrdhE* (Bhairavi), *gati nIvani* (Todi) and *mahita pravrdhE* (Kambhoji), is known as the Lalgudi Pancharatna kritis.

SRIRANGAM



Muthangi sevai at Sri Rangam (Photo credit: www.srivaishnavam.com)

They travelled next from *bhUloka kailASa* (how he refers to Lalgudi in a lesser sung chranam of Isa pahimam) to *bhUloka vaikuNTham*, Srirangam. In his kritis composed Srirangam, we have a little more clarity as to the time of his visit. The charanam of *O rangaSAyi* (Kambhoji) clearly states that he, Tyagaraja, has come to see the *mutthangi sevai* of Lord Ranganatha (*mutyAlasarula yuramunu gAna vacciti*). The *mutthangi sevai* (when Perumal is bedecked in fabric studded with gems and pearls) is performed only in the month of Margazhi (December-January), as part of Vaikuntha Ekadasi festivities. 'Come, let us behold Lord Ranganatha, resplendent in jewels, riding on a horse vahana,' sings Tyagaraja in *rAju veDale* in Todi. In the Devagandhari kriti, *vinarAdanA manavi*, he, yet again, refers to Ranganatha on a horse vahana but does not mention any navaratna alankara. So it may be fair to assume that Tyagaraja probably composed these two kritis (Todi and Devagandhari) on the same day. *karuNa jUDavayya* in Saranga, once again, refers to a specific event at Srirangam. The saint beseeches Ranganatha to hold his hand when He comes out with His divine consorts (*ubhaya nAccurulu* – Sri devi and Bhu devi) and the twelve azhwars. It is said that this procession of the Lord along with his ubhaya nacchiyars and twelve vaishnavite saints takes place on Sankranti (Pongal) day. The fifth kriti of the Srirangam pancharatna is *jUtAmu rArE* in Arabhi.

MADRAS AND NEARBY TOWNS

Tyagaraja was hosted by his disciple Vina Kuppaiyer and Kovur Sundaresa Mudaliyar, during his sojourn in Madras. Music historian V Sriram, during a music heritage walk of George Town, pointed out the erstwhile locations of Vina Kuppaiyer's house on Ramaswamy Street and Kovur Mudaliyar's on Bunder Street. Unfortunately, both are in a sad state of dilapidation today. Tyagaraja is said to have composed the Kedaragaula kriti *veNugAna loluni* (in praise of his disciple's family deity) at Kuppaiyer's home. In later times, this house functioned as the office of renowned musicologist Prof P. Sambamoorthy.

Kovur Sundaresa Mudaliyar requested Tyagaraja to visit his home town, Kovur, a small suburb of Madras, and compose in praise of Lord Sundaresa and Goddess Sundarambika, the presiding deities. There is a story that the rich dubash, initially, wanted the saint to compose a song in his praise but Tyagaraja abhorred *nara stuti* in any form and instead composed on the deity of Kovur (Sundaresa) who had the same name. Legend has it that Tyagaraja and his retinue, when returning from Kovur, were set upon by a group of bandits. The saint stepped out of his palanquin to explain to the highwaymen that he was not carrying any material possessions. He was surprised to see a group of frightened bandits asking him for the identity of two youths who had been engaged in a counter attack. There was no one else there. But Tyagaraja knew that Sri Rama and his beloved brother Lakshmana had come to their rescue. He composed 5 kritis at Kovur: *I vasudha* (Sahana), *korisevimpa rAre* (Kharaharapriya), *sundareSwaruni* (Shankarabharanam), *Sambho mahAdeva* (Pantuvrali) and *nammi vaccina* (Kalyani).

The group must next have travelled slightly further north of Madras, to Trivottriyur, to visit the shrine of Padampakkanathar (Tyagaraja, like the deity at Tiruvarur) and Vadivudai amman (Tripurasundari). Tyagaraja seems to have composed exclusively on the Goddess here. In *sundari ni divyarUpamula* (Kalyani), he exclaims 'O Tripurasundari! It is indeed my fortune to witness your celestial worship on this auspicious Friday (kala kala mani surasatulu varusagA koluvu SukravArapu muddu tripurasundari)'. He also refers to the Friday worship in *dArini telusukoNTi* (Suddhasaveri). In the Saveri kriti, *kannatalli nIvu*, he denounces all worldly wealth. He berates those who display their wealth and obviously states his displeasure in speaking of wealthy persons. It is not clearly known if this is a direct outcome of Kovur Mudaliyar's request. The other two kritis in this pancharatna are *sundari nannindarilo* (Begada) and *sundari ninnu varNimpa* (Arabhi).

KANCHIPURAM

Tyagaraja and his disciples finally reached Kanchipuram and stayed with Upanishad Brahmam, which was the actual reason for embarking on this journey. During his stay at the holy city of Kanchi, he composed one kriti each, in praise Lord Varadaraja (*varadarAja ninnu* – Swarabhushani) and Goddess Kamakshi (*vinAyakuni valenu brovavE* - Madhyamavati). The temple of Kanchi Varadaraja is also known as Hastigiri or Hastishaila (elephant hill). In the charanam of his Swarabhushani kriti, Tyagaraja says, 'It seems to me, that your divine hill is indeed Vaikuntha (*varagiri vainkuNTha maTa varnimpa*)'. He also deems it his fortune to witness the Lord's famous Garuda seva.



Garuda sevai at Kanchi Varadaraja Perumal Temple

TIRUPATI

The next stop was Tirupati via Arakkonam. But not before halting at Walajahpet. This was the hometown and residence of Tyagaraja's foremost disciple, Venkataramana Bhagavatar. Some accounts say that they went to Madras, Tiruvottriyur and Kovur after visiting Tirupati. Mysore Sadashiva Rao, yet another prolific composer, was also present in Walajahpet and is said to have composed a song in praise of Tyagaraja. Unfortunately, neither the lyrics nor the tune to this song are available to us today. When they reached Tirumala, the Lord was hidden from view, behind a screen, and Tyagaraja sang *teratlyagarAda* (Gaulipantu) only to have the screen open and have a glorious darshan of the Lord of the Seven Hills. But the screen he refers to, in this kriti, is a metaphor for a mind blinded by the screen of ignorance, envy, arrogance and pride. Yet another kriti at Tirupati is *venkateSa ninnu* (Madhyamavati). In 1988, an inscription of these two kritis was installed on the eastern wall of the temple to immortalise them and to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the saint's visit to Tirumala. This goes to show that Tyagaraja was in Tirumala circa 1838.

OTHER KSHETRAS

There are also two kritis at Nagaipattinam (*karmame balavanta* – Saveri on Goddess Nilayatakshi) and Sirkazhi (*nIvanTi daivumunu ShaDAnana* – Todi) that are attributed to Tyagaraja. It is not known if these shrines were visited as a part of this trip or at an earlier period. Incidentally, all three of trinity, Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar (*ambA nIlAyatAkshi* – Nilambari) and Shyama Shastri (*nIlAyatAkshi* – Paras) have composed on Nilayatakshi. At Nagaipattinam, Tyagaraja (*a la* Dikshitar in *saundaraAjam Ashraye*) references the taming of the ocean by the Goddess. It is not known if there was a tsunami-like event during or just before the Trinity's time and this is what is mentioned by both composers. According to Professor Sambamoorthy, the sthala purana of the Nilayatakshi-Kayarohanesha temple does not record any such instance. So Tyagaraja must be referring an actual flood or tidal wave. In the Todi kriti, he refers to Sirkazhi as Brahma-puri.

After a hiatus of 2 years, the saint returned to Tiruvaiyyaru, the place closest to his heart. Back to the confluence of five rivers and unmatched breeze, carrying the Vedic chants of priests and the mesmerising notes of bhajana. Here he would live on for almost another decade, immersed in *rama-bhakti* and *sangita-upasana*. And he continues to live on in all of us and travel across the globe through his music, his bhakti, his genius.

References:

Vaggeyakara caritamu in *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini* by Sri Subbarama Dikshitar.

'Tyagaraja's songs trails' by Sriram V in *The Hindu* dated 15th Feb 2018.

Introductory thesis by Dr V Raghavan in *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja*



Bharathi Ramasubban is an A-grade artist of All India Radio and belongs to the GenNext of young musicians making her mark in Carnatic music. Her music has been honed by Vidvan P.S. Narayanaswamy and learns from Vidvan R.K. Shriramkumar. She holds a master's degree in Biotechnological Law & Ethics from the University of Sheffield, UK.

Kaveri River and Thyagaraja

T. Parasaran

Shri Parasaran left us last year. In his remembrance, we are republishing his article in this Souvenir. His erudition and presence at SRUTI concerts will be dearly missed.

Kaveri is one of the sacred rivers mentioned in Vedic rituals. It is also the life blood of people in South India. It is mentioned in many sacred literatures in Tamil. In the Aarati song of Lord Muruga, for example, Arunagiri Nathar includes the river. Sri Thyagaraja appeared to have been especially fond of the river and its sacredness.

One of his earliest associations with it was the context for his famous song, “Kanugontini” in Bilahari [1, 2]. The story goes that when he came to learn that the Rama idols he was worshipping were thrown in Kaveri by his brother in a fit of anger, he was in great grief. The river was in floods at that time and hence he was at a loss as to how he would find them. The floods subsided just then showing him where the idols were, making him break into raptures. The song is also considered to be one of his compositions for celebrating his completion of two crore of Rama Nama japam. (One crore is ten million.)

Thyagaraja had much pride and respect for Thiruvaiyaru, or Panchanada, the five rivers city, where he lived. He was proud that he was a native of the Tanjavur region which he would refer as “Chola Seema”. In his song, “Muripemu galige gada”, “O Rama are you not happy that you have secured a charming and excellent place known as Panchanada Kshetram in the Chola country, on the banks of beautiful Kaveri? The place is worthy of being coveted even by Lord Siva.”

In the song, “Sari vedalina i Kaverini judare” Thyagaraja paid glowing tributes to Kaveri. “Look at Kaveri, gloriously moving, graciously fulfilling the desires of all people without differentiation. She moves rapidly, she roars fearfully, and she remains still with full grace. She is worshipped by devotees and compared to Goddess Rajarajeswari by them” A note here about the choice of the raga A-Saveri for this composition. It was believed to have been intentional and was chosen with ironic humor, says an account of this choice [2]. A popular saying in those days was that the bank of Kaveri and the melody of Saveri are equally transporting. It was used by Muthuswami Dikshitar referring to Lord Ganesa on the bank of Kaveri, in the pallavi of his Saveri raga kriti, “Karikalabha mukham”. He wrote, “Kaveri thata stitham Saveri raga nutam”.

In the second charana of his kriti, “Ennado rakshincite”, in Saurashtra, Thyagaraja sees Kaveri as an embodiment of divinity and his Rama, ever concerned with saving human beings. “Does she not share their concern for the need for water and send in advance the western wind and start the spring? She is thus a harbinger of the abiding love of Lord Rama.” In the Kriti, “E papamu jesitira”, in Atana he again sang that Lord Rama should bless him since Thyagaraja lived in panchnadapura! Here Thyagaraja played a clear pun on the word Nada. “Rama is Nada Rupam and the place I am living in is Nada pura, or place of Nada. I have heard that you are Nada Rupam and I believe that. So, I am asking you, even though I am also living in Nada Puram why are you slighting me?” In his Srirangam trip he was linking Kaveri with everything he said about Ranganatha swami. In, “Vinarada”, raga Devagandhari, he appealed to Ranganatha of Kaveri to listen to him, implying that like the river he should listen to people. In the song “Raju vedalenu” in raga Todi he went into raptures about Ranga puri made holy by river Kaveri and fit to be the abode of Lakshmi Devi.

Thyagaraja thus echoed the profound love and feelings of residents of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu for the life-giving river, Kaveri. The additional delight is Thyagaraja's sentiments are clothed in beautiful poetry and melodious music and will stay for eternity.

References

- [1] Sri Thyagaraja Swami Kirthanas. T. S Parthasarathy. Higginbothams Chennai., 4th edition 1982.
[2] Thesis by Dr V Raghavan in Spiritual Heritage of Sri Thyagaraja, By C Ramanujachari. Sri Ramakrishna Math Chennai 1966.



T. Parasaran was a strong supporter of Sruti for many years. He enjoyed Music, Indian and western classical including operas.

Tyagaraja is Here!

A roleplay by Akshara Samskriti Iyer

Cast / Characters:

Student 1 – Sruti
Student 2 – Laya
Student 3 – Sahitya
Teacher – Keertana Aunty
Tyagaraja

Script:

Scene 1 (Music classroom)

Students and Teacher are having a class

Teacher: Hello, Sruti, Laya and Sahitya. What would you like to learn today?

Laya: Can we learn a Tyagaraja kriti, Keertana Aunty?

Sruti: Isn't it Tyagayya?

Keertana Aunty: That's what you call it, since you're Telugu speaking. Let's get started.

Sahitya: I love Tyagaraja songs! What song should we learn?

Keertana Aunty: Of course. How about... hmm. *Ponders the thought for a bit* Hmmm... Aha! How about *Nagumomu Galavani*? It is a very fun song!

Laya: Yay! I know it though...

Keertana Aunty: That's okay. You can relearn it, and make sure you have everything right!

Laya smiles

Sruti: Why does everything have to be correct?

Sahitya: So that we won't upset Tyagaraja or God. You don't want to upset either, do you?

Sruti and Laya: No!

Students giggle

Keertana Aunty: Why don't we ask him ourselves, girls? *Smiles*

Students: How?

Keertana Aunty: You'll see.

Black

Scene 2

Students: *Looking around at this new environment in amazement, mouth agape* Wooooah...

Keertana Aunty: Welcome to Tyagaraja's hometown! *Smiles* This place is called Tiruvaiyyaru. *Points to a tiny one-room hut* This is Tyagaraja's home. Why don't we go inside, and ask Tyagaraja how to properly sing *Nagumomu*, since that's the song we're learning!

Laya: Sure! *Knocks on door*

Tyagaraja opens door with a surprised look on his face

Tyagaraja: Hello! I don't get that many visitors anymore. Welcome. Come inside, please. I am Tyagaraja. Who are you?

Keertana Aunty: I am Keertana, and these are my students, Sruti, Laya and Sahitya.

Students wave with huge smiles on their faces

Tyagaraja: I have just finished composing a song. It's called *Nagumomu Galavani*. Would you like to hear it?

Laya: Of course! We'd love to hear it! *Smiles*

Tyagaraja: Alright. *Nagumomu galavani namanoharuni, jagamelu shuruni janaki varuni. Nagumomu galavani...* *Finishes song*

Sahitya: Wow. That was amazing!

Sruti: Yes, it really was!

Tyagaraja: I'm glad you liked it. *Smiles*

Keertana Aunty: Yes, it was very good. We have some questions for you, Swami.

Tyagaraja: But of course! Ask away!

Sahitya: When were you born?

Tyagaraja: I was born on May 4th, 1767.

Laya: What are your parents' names?

Tyagaraja: My parents are Sitamma and Kakarla Ramabrahma.

Sruti: What was your first Telugu composition?

Tyagaraja: I believe it is *Tavadasoham* in Punnagavarali raga. I was very young then.

Sahitya: What inspires you to compose?

Tyagaraja: What I find inspiring is singing the praises of my favorite deity Rama.

Laya: What do you think are the important qualities for a composer?

Tyagaraja: They will need inspiration, a good cultural grounding, expertise in music and poetry and of course, creativity. And don't forget about having fun!

Sruti: What is different about our South Indian composers?

Tyagaraja: We all have different composition styles and use many different languages, even if they are not our mother-tongue. We also bring a blend of the three of you - sruti, laya and sahitya - after which you have been named! We have bhakti in our hearts, so our compositions combine mind and heart.

Sahitya: How do compositions go from being mediocre to great?

Tyagaraja: I'd say that it will automatically make a dent in history if the quality of the music and poetry is high. But in our culture, we believe that the magic ingredient is *bhakti*, which will take your work across time. Look at Jayadeva, Purandaradasa or Bhadrachala Ramadas. What inspiring composers!

Keertana Aunty: Wow, Swami! Thank you for these amazing insights! Well, now it is time for us to leave. I hope you see us sing your songs in the future. Thank you!

Black

Scene 3

Laya: That was fun, but our class time is over...

Keertana Aunty: I guess we'll learn something else next class, since the experience with Tyagaraja -

Sruti: Tyagayya...

Keertana Aunty: Yes, as I was saying, we practically learnt *Nagumomu* from him. See you all next class!

Smiles

Sruti: Bye Keertana Aunty!

Sahitya: Yes, Bye!

Laya: See you later!

Ten-year old Akshara Samskriti Iyer comes from a family with strong artistic and cultural moorings. She receives musical training from her mother Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar and has been performing full concerts since age 7.



Rāga Varāli Compositions by Tyāgarāja

Anuradha Suresh

Tyāgarāja's compositions are a confluence of *bhāva*, *rāga*, and *tāla* in the natural order of importance. He is a Sangita Siddhanti. As mentioned by Prof. P. Sambamoorthy, "Tyāgaraja belongs to the order of composers who, like star shine forever".

Tyāgarāja's style is simple, and beautiful. It takes a genius to write a simple style. His styles captivate both elite scholar as well as a lay person. He adopted this style to reach out to humanity at large. The mellifluous flow of the language, the easy diction and the sweet-sounding words make his songs to be understood in a simplistic approach. This article is a study of few of Varāli compositions by Tyāgarāja,

There is a total of fourteen compositions in Varāli by Tyāgarāja.

1. I mEnu kaligina - Adi
2. indukEmi - Misra Chapu
3. kana kana rucira - Adi (rettai kalai)
4. karuNayElAgaNTE - Adi
5. dharanu nI sari - Adi
6. nOrEmi Sri rAma - Adi
7. pAhi rAma ramaNa - Adi
8. pAhi paramAtma - Adi
9. bhavasannuta - Adi
10. marakata maNi - Adi

11. ETi janmamidi - Misra Chapu
12. vaddayuNDEdE - Misra Chapu
13. SrI rAma jaya rAma - Misra Chapu
14. SrI rAma SrI rAma - Adi

Nee Pogadakunte is not included in the list due to the debate on the validity of the composition. The ghana rāga pancharatnas are the most scholarly contribution in South Indian Music by Tyāgaraja. Kanakanaruchira, composed in Varāli depicts the indescribable love he has for Lord Sri Rama in such poetic excellence, melodic beauty, and spirituality.

The two salient features of this pancharatna:

1. All charanas are intricately woven with svaraaksharas.
2. Each charana has a different ending phrase and svara pattern showing the composer's intelligence in helping a student to develop in the art of svarakalpana. The svara phrases of six svara syllables for endings of charanas are *grgmpm*, *pdpmgm*, *mpdnM*, *sndpm*, *Pdpm*, *mpdp*.

This is the only pancharatna in two Kala Adi thala indicating that Varāli takes slow tempo for descriptive compositions and in this piece, there is a beautiful blend of svara and sahitya exploring the beauty of Lord Rama in a leisurely manner in a typical bhakthi and Karuna rasa on which Varāli is based on.

Vārāli is present in his operas Prahaladha Bhakthi Vijayam and Nowka Charitram. The kriti, "Eti Janmamidhi Ha" is part of Tyāgarajā's opera, Prahalada Bhakti Vijayam. This kriti depicts Prahalada's despair in not finding his Lord. This song is completely different from Kanakanaruchira, which is a descriptive composition. In this song, the composer is asking an emphatic question – what kind of life is this?? He is expressing his emotion of despair in the melodic movement. The kriti itself has a different start with Gandhara as graha svara (whereas the Kanakanaruchira starts in Panchama) - but the beauty is that in this kriti, it does not move gradually in the Anupallavi - but rather jumps abruptly in to tara stayi Gandhara - making the listener or the performer to feel the emotion of sadness and contemplative mood that Prahalada or rather Tyāgarajā himself felt. Kriti is filled with sadness and helplessness that Prahalada feels when he is deprived of being with his Lord Vishnu. Rāga bhava and the tempo of the song brings out mystic feeling of despair in listeners as the composition is meant to be.

Tyāgarajā's composition, "Karunaelāgantē" is comparatively a faster kalapramānā for Varāli and he brings out the rāga bhāva without compromising on the nadai.

Though he has composed several songs in this rāga, every song independently stands by itself. The dhatu of one does not resemble that of other. Each kriti is distinct from the other in melodic and literary setting. The setting of each song changes, though it is in the same rāga. Each composition introduces great scope for changes from song to song in the same rāga.

Tyāgarajā is the master of rāga and rasa. His compositions are steeped in bhakti rasa. He is lyrical composer and his experiences made him depict his Varāli compositions in different phases of the rāga, thus bringing out different rasā for the same rāga and giving each one of them a unique identity.



Anuradha Suresh is a long-time resident of the Bay Area and teaches CTE credential courses. She is also the Founder/Director of Shruthi Swara Laya, Fremont, CA.

Saint Thyagaraja's Kovur Pancharatna Krithis

Shreya Parigi

Saint Thyagaraja has composed thousands of kritis. It was interesting for me to learn about the different sets of kritis that he has composed, such as the Ghanaraga Pancharatnams, the Lalgudi Pancharatnams, and the Kovur Pancharatnams.

There is an interesting story behind the composition of the Kovur Pancharatnams. It is said that on the way to Tirupati, Saint Thyagaraja visited the Sri Sundareswarar temple which is situated in a very small village called Kovur, close to present day Chennai (about 22 km) and encountered some bandits. The thieves threw rocks at the palanquin in which the composer was seated and tried to steal some of his belongings. The Saint got down and explained to the bandits that he was on a pilgrimage and was not carrying anything of value. The robbers conceded as they saw that he was speaking the truth. They then asked as to who threw rocks back at them during the attack. Saint Thyagaraja was confused as he had only two people with him, both of which retreated as soon as the assault began. The bandits insisted that two young men threw rocks vigorously at them. Then, the composer realised that this must have been none other than his beloved Lord Rama and his brother Lakshmana who had come to his rescue in a time of distress. He thought that there was a divine power to this place and so he decided to visit the temple once again. As he entered the temple, he was overjoyed to see the deity Sri Sundareswara, and he expressed his ecstasy by composing five kritis that described the Lord's brilliance. The Kovur Pancharatna Kritis, are "Ee Vasudha" in Sahana, "Kori Sevimparare" in Kharaharapriya, "Shambo Mahadeva" in Pantuvarali, "Nammi Vachina" in Kalyani and "Sundareswaruni" in Sankarabharanam.

As a student of Carnatic music, I feel blessed to have learnt two of these beautiful musical compositions, "Nammi Vacchina" and "Shambo Mahadeva". The Kovur Pancharatna Kritis are in praise of Lord Shiva, which is unlike the rest of Saint Tyagaraja's compositions, which center mostly around Lord Rama. The fact that he was able to compose such beautiful kritis in such a small and dusty temple, exhibits his overwhelming devotion for God and his creativity.

Sri Thyagaraja's compositions have made the Sundareswarar temple famous which now draws over 200 visitors per day. I wish to go and visit this town and temple the next time I go to India, and get the opportunity to stand, perhaps in the same spot, where the great composer once stood. I hope to experience the same devotion as Saint Thyagaraja did as he composed the kritis.

Now that I know the context, I think I can truly appreciate the value of learning these compositions as well as others of Saint Thyagaraja even more.

Shreya Parigi is a 9th grade student at Spring Ford High School. She has been learning Carnatic music for over 7 years from Smt. Revathi Subramony and enjoys learning about the history behind the art. She is a member of the SRUTI Youth Group (SYG).



Akshara Samskriti Iyer – Bala Bhavam

Rajee Padmanabhan

Akshara Samskriti Iyer's performance for SRUTI's Bala Bhavam concert in December 2018 had many of us in the audience marvel in wonderment at the immense musical intelligence and maturity imbued in one so young, someone whose age was at that time not yet in two digits. Akshara's co-artists Kamalakiran Vinjamuri and Srihari made for an excellent team, with their support and encouragement.

Akshara's confidence was apparent right at the beginning with the Begada varnam, Intha chalamu jesithe, which she sang in two speeds, with clarity. The sprightly Kamalamanohari krithi of Muthuswami Dikshithar, Kanchadalayadakshi, came next, with its chittaswarams rendered with the necessary punch.

An alapana in Sriranjani raga was sung with verve. Kamalakiran's sensitive response set the stage for the Papanasam Sivan kriti Ini oru kanam. Akshara's clear enunciation of the sahityam is commendable. Kalpanaswarams at Tamarasadalaakshane, starting off the beat, at half edam and the koraippu showed Akshara's deep grasp of layam.

Lathangi ragam was taken up for a detailed alapana, with slow and fast akaara phrases that showcased Akshara's vocal fluency and her bhava-aligned imagination. An audible gasp of surprise coursed through the audience as she took up Taanam, which was a definite highlight of the day. Ragam Talam Pallavi is the challenge to master for any aspiring Carnatic musician and taking one up is indeed evidence of Akshara's precocity. The sahityam for the Pallavi was: *Velaney Unadu Padam Thunaye, Valli Manaalane*.

The Pallavi was set to Adi Talam, in Tisra Nadai, with Akshara doing Anulomam (Talam is constant and multiples speeds of sahityam). Kalpanaswarams followed in both slow and fast speeds with a brilliant koraippu, with a perfect landing. Kamalakiran's violin is sweet and lustrous at the same time and his returns on alapana, tanam and swarams were thoroughly enjoyed. Srihari played a spirited tani in tisra nadai.

Chitravina Ravikiran's Gambhiranattai tillana was rendered with panache. The Tiruppugazh, Erumayil Eri Vilayadum, concluded this remarkable concert.

After the hour-long concert, this reviewer was left with a sense of utter amazement and admiration at Akshara's musical prowess, in addition to prayers for a long and successful musical journey for Akshara in the years to come.

Akshara's music and approach clearly reflected the guiding influence of the storied lineage she hails from, that of Gottuvadyam Narayana Iyengar, Chitravina Narasimhan and Chitravina Ravikiran in addition to her own mother, Kiranavali Vidyasankar. Akshara's swanubhava showed that the lineage is not and will never be a burden on her young shoulders, for she shows the promise of taking it to new heights.

Rajee Padmanabhan is a music aficionado and a long-time supporter of SRUTI and currently serves in the Resources Committee.

Bhaskari and Sindhu Budhavarapu – Bala Bhavam

Mallika Dinakar

Continuing with the youth-led Bala Bhavam series, Bhaskari and Sindhu Budhavarapu presented a concert accompanied by Siddharth Ashokkumar on the violin and Srihari Raman on the mridangam in December 2017.

To begin the concert, Sindhu started with a short alapana in Hamsadhwani, highlighting the ragam's brightness through a range of swarams. They started off the concert with the popular kriti *Vatapi Ganapatim* in Hamsadhwani, a vibrant and apt beginning to the concert. To culminate the piece, they presented a few, brisk rounds of kalpanaswarams which showed their energy. They continued the concert with the same brisk energy and pace, with the kriti *Sakala Grahabala* in Atana composed by Purandaradasa.

The pace of the concert then shifted to a slower tempo with one of Shyama Shastri's swarajatis, *Amba Kamakshi*, in Bhairavi. To add an interesting effect to the pallavi line, Bhaskari sang in Madhya stayi, while Sindhu sang in the Tara stayi, adding a nice touch to the song that duos in particular are fortunate enough to exercise. The piece was overall very calm and meditative, to go along with the bhaki-laden meaning of the song. I also would like to acknowledge Siddharth and Srihari's accompaniment, as they matched Bhaskari's and Sindhu's voices, as well as the mood of the song perfectly, without sounding intrusive.

They proceeded with the kriti *Bhogindra Shayinam* in Kuntalavarali, before singing the main piece for the concert. For their manodharma focus, the duo undertook Kalyani as their ragam of elaboration, with Bhaskari beginning the alapana covering the lower range of the ragam. Sindhu picked up at Pa and covered the upper range of the ragam. They both showcased the raga's brilliance by singing all the key phrases of Kalyani, highlighting the important notes, Ga and Ni. They sang the kriti, *Vasudevayani*, from Thyagaraja's Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam. The line "raga tala gatulanu pAducunu" was the line that they decided to focus on for neraval and kalpanaswarams, for which there was a strong exchange between Sindhu and Siddharth for the neraval. Bhaskari joined in for kalpanaswarams, and they were able to build up to a strong final korvai. Srihari concluded with a nice tani avarthanam, performing different variations of gatis.

Bhaskari and Sindhu concluded the concert with a thillana in the raga Kaanada composed by Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar, a fitting end to the concert. Overall, Bhaskari and Sindhu performed a very dynamic concert, with strong accompaniment by Siddharth and Srihari, and I look forward to seeing them perform again in the future.

Mallika Dinakar is a Carnatic vocalist and student of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar. She is a freshman at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Influence of pOtana on tyAgarAja

Prabhakar Chitrapu

*This article is a collaboration of the author with his sisters
Vijayalakshmi Tummalapalli & Annapurna Sattiraju.*

It is quite common for great artists to be influenced by earlier artists or other role models. Additionally, it is also not uncommon that there comes a break point in time when the artist's style changes into their own creative and distinctive style. For example, this is evident in Beethoven's compositions, when his earlier works was reminiscent of Mozart's works, but then starting with the 5th symphony, Beethoven imprinted his own distinct stamp and signature. We see such transitions in van Gogh's paintings etc.

Coming to tyAgarAja, do we see any influences on his compositions by his predecessors, and we do notice a break point, where his distinctive style - either in music or lyrics - begins to blossom? From what I am aware of, I do not believe that these topics have been deeply investigated and documented.

What IS known, based on a myriad of biographies and his own compositions, is that he deeply respected and regarded his predecessors, some mythical and some historical. For example, in several of his compositions, tyAgarAja reverentially refers to personalities such as nArada, vAlmiki, purandara dAsu, rAmadAsu etc. But we do not exactly know in detail whether this was simply an expression of his reverence or whether their works actually influenced tyAgarAja's works in visible ways. Alas, even the question of a possible break point in his compositional style is made even more complex by the the fact that the chronology of his compositions is not known. The only exceptions are a few compositions, where the dates can be deduced from the anecdotes associated with them.

In some of tyAgarAja's biographies, there are repeated references to the fact that tyAgarAja was influenced by a 15-16th century Telugu poet, called bammera pOtana or briefly just pOtana. However, any detailed exposition of such an influence was not easy to come by. In this article, I attempt to dig a bit deeper into this topic and share my thoughts on the possible influence pOtana on tyagaraja.

Who was pOtana?

I hope that the readers be tolerant as I devote a few lines to introduce pOtana and also state some interesting facts about his main literary work, SrImadAndhra bhAgavatam. While I do this for the benefit of the non-telugu speaking readers, I think that some of these details would interest even those telugu-speaking readers, who may already be familiar with pOtana and his bhAgavatam to some extent.

pOtana and pOtana bhAgavatam are generally household names among Telugu speaking people in India and abroad. According to Wikipedia, pOtana's time period was 1450-1510 AD, although a recent reference [1] argues that pOtana was born around 1372 AD and that he wrote bhAgavatam around 1400 AD. He hailed from a village called bammera, near the town of Warangal (which was referred to as Orugallu, Eka Sila nagaram etc) in the present state of Telangana in southern India.

pOtana is credited to have written 4 books, the magnum opus SrImadAndhra bhAgavatam, bhOginI danDakam, vIrabhadra vijayam and nArAyaNa Satakam. Of these, the first work, commonly referred to as "pOtana bhAgavatam" is the most popular and beloved work by the vast majority of the Telugu speaking people. Poems and episodes from this work are regularly recited in several households, taught in schools and lectured about in temples & other venues.

pOtana bhAgavatam has a total of 9005 poems as well as prose sections (called vacanam's). It is organized into 12 Sections, called skandam's. A fact that is not as widely known is that pOtana bhAgavatam was not written completely by pOtana alone!! pOtana wrote only 8 Sections, namely Sections 1-4 and Section 7-10. The remaining 4 Sections were written by gangana (Section 5), singana (Section 6) and veligandala nAraya (Sections 11&12)!

Furthermore, these details are revealed by the text in the bhAgavatam itself, which also exposes a rather special structure of these Sections. Each Section ends with a detailed paragraph in prose (gadyam), in which there are details of who wrote the Section and what the contents of that Section were! For example, the prose paragraph at the end of Section 1 says "*idi Srl paramESvara karuNA-kalita kavita-vicitra kEsana-mantri-putra sahaja-pAnDitya pOtanAmAtya praNItambaina Srl mahAbhAgavatambanu mahA-purANambu-nandu naimiSaraNya-varNanambunu, SaunakAdula praSnambunu,Sringi-SAPabhItunDai uttarAnandanunDu gangA-tlrambuna prAyOpavESambunanunDi Suka-sandarSanambu sEsi mOkshOpAyamu aDuguTayu, anu kathalu-gala prathama-skanthamu*" - meaning that it is the first section of Srl mahAbhAgavatam containing stories such as description of naimiSaraNya etc. and written by pOtana, son of kEsana-mantri & a natural scholar!

Similarly, the ends of Sections 5,6, 11-12 state that they were written by gangana singana and nAraya respectively! Another interesting fact is revealed in the way the last author nAraya was introduced. He is referred to as "pOtanAmAtya-priya-Sishya-velingandala-nAraya" -

meaning veligandala nAraya, who was a dear student of pOtana!

As to why pOtana bhAgavatam had to be written by 4 authors, there are two possible accounts [1]. The first is simply logistical – time periods, death of pOtana etc. The second account was fascinating. It is well known that pOtana refused to dedicate his bhAgavatam to the local king and instead dedicated it to the Universal God SrIrAma (more on this important aspect later in this article). Apparently, the local king was angered by this and had the bhAgavatam buried! The story goes on to presume that when the work was recovered, some sections were damaged and had to be re-written!

Finally, there are a few details regarding the publishing of pOtana bhAgavatam in print. According to [1], pOtana bhAgavatam was first printed in 1848 by brahmaSrI purANam hayagrIva Sastri by vAviLLa publishers. Sastri gAru collected and consulted twenty copies of pOtana bhAgavatam available to him and produced the first print version. It would follow that any copy of pOtana bhAgavatam before 1848 would have to be a handwritten version, either on paper or on palm leaves. This will be relevant for us later in this article. Those interested in knowing more about pOtana and his bhAgavatam may refer to [2,3].

tyAgarAja, pOtana and bhAgavatam

The following details are presented in [4, pp. 118-119]. tyAgarAja was presented a hand-written paper copy of pOtana bhAgavatam by his prominent student vAlAjapET venkTaramaNa bhAgavatAr, on the occasion of tyAgarAja's 60 the birth anniversary (shashTABdipUrti). The copy was "possibly hand-written by the student himself and is now in the saurAshTra sabha in Madurai", Tamil Nadu, India. Furthermore, "the paper on which the bhAgavatam is written bears the watermark impression: 1823, 1824 and 1825. In the water mark impression, we see the spade of Trade mark and also name of the firm: Wise and Co." Figure below shows a picture of a page from this manuscript.



Paper notebook of Tyāgarāja's *kṛtīs* in the Saurashtra Sabha Collection, Madurai. (Courtesy Marcia Plant Jackson)

Apparently, this copy of the bhAgavatam was used by tyAgarAja for his daily pArAyanam [4, pp. 118-119]. I would guess (no references are available on this) that tyAgarAja could have been reading/reciting pOtana bhagavatam poems even before this event (since that would have been a good reason for vAlAjapET venkTaramaNa bhAgavatAr choosing to present it in the first place. In any case, it is written in most biographical accounts that tyAgarAja was fond of pOtana bhAgavatam. For example, P. Sambamoorthy in [4, pp.144-145] says that Thyagaraja was "passionately fond of pOtana's bhAgavatam".

It is also referenced in tyAgarAja's biographical accounts that his mother would sing songs of PD, Ramadas, Narayana Tirtha [5], but I was unable to find any references about his mother reciting pOtana bhAgavatam poems. This is surprising because several poems and several chapters of pOtana bhAgavatam are very popular in Telugu speaking families. For example, gajEndra mOksham, rukmiNi kalyANam, prahlada caritram are known by-heart by many housewives, students and scholars.

Influences

Now I will address in the categories of "Life Values, Ideas expressed in the Compositions and the Linguistic Style", the central question of this article - what, if any, are the influences of pOtana and pOtana-bhAgavatam on tyAgarAja and his works.

Influence in Life Values:

rAma bhaktas:

Both pOtana and tyAgarAja were bhaktas of SrIrAma, amply evident from the numerous compositions of tyAgarAja addressing SRIrAma. pOtana was, in a dream, urged by SrIrAma to write bhAgavatam in telugu. In the following poem in the bhAgavatam, pOtana says that it is rAmabhadruDu who actually is making him say/write the bhAgavatam.

*palikeDidi bhAgavatamaTa
palikinceDuvADu rAmabhadrunDaTa
nE palikina bhavaharamagunaTa
palikeda vEronDu gAtha palukaganEla?*

It is interesting that pOtana was initially a Saivaite, and later became more liberal in accepting all forms of Gods as representing a single universal Truth. At this point, SrIrAma became his ishTa daivata and remained so. Similarly, it is written that tyAgarAja was originally devoted exclusively to SrIrAma and later in his life broadened his view to embrace all forms of the Universal Principle.

Simple Living:

Both pOtana and tyAgarAja led simple lives. tyAgarAja practiced unca-vrutti (practice of not accumulating but asking for alms needed for the day). While it is argued by

some that this may not have been literally true (considering that he had many students living with and learning from him), it is true that he disdained the value and accumulation of wealth. Perhaps the most well-known example of this is the rejection of the gifts sent by the local king (more on this later in the article). Additionally, there are two anecdotes, where some money was being secretly given to him by his prosperous admirers, and which he promptly discarded when he came to know of them. One is in the context of mundu-venuka kriti in darbAr rAga, and another was an anecdote attributed to Sundaram Mudaliar in Chennai.

pOtana was initially probably not such a simple man, since he did embrace the graces of local kings (in fact, dedicated his bhOginI danDakam to the local king), but later rejected the corruption of the rich and powerful, and led his life as a simple farmer.

Influence in Ideas

Now, we will investigate on some common ideas or concepts expressed by tyAgarAja in the lyrics of his compositions and poems of pOtana.

Spurning of wealth: An example of a common idea that is generally quoted in many tyAgarAja's biographies is that of spurning the gifts and wealth offered by rich and powerful people.

It is a well-known anecdote in tyAgarAja's life that the local king, sarabhOji, offered several expensive gifts to tyAgarAja, and that tyAgarAja refused them steadfastly despite tyAgarAja's brother, japESa, pressuring him into accepting the gifts. In this context, tyAgarAja was supposed to have composed the kriti "nidhi cAla sukhama?" in rAga kalyANi. In this, tyAgarAja debates whether wealth or the closeness of SrIrAma is superior.

*p. nidhi cAla sukhama rAmuni sannidhi sEva sukhama nijamuga palku manasa
a. dadhi navanIta kshIramulu ruciyO dASarathi dhyAna bhajana sudhA rasamu ruciyO
c. dama Samam(a)nu gangA snAnamu sukhama kardama dur-vishaya kUpa snAnamu sukhama
mamata bandhana yuta nara stuti sukhama
su-mati tyAgarAja nutuni kIrtana sukhama*

Similarly, pOtana was apparently approached by the local king, sarvajna singa bhUpAla, for pOtana to dedicate the bhAgavatam to him. In the following famous poem, pOtana describes what happened then.

kAtuka kanTinIru canukaTTu payimbaDa nEla yEDcedO kaiTabhadaitya mardanuni gAdali kODala yOMadamba yO hATakagurbhu rANi ninu nAKaTikim gonipOyi yalla ka rNATa kirATaIkakula kammatri Suddhiganammu bhArati.

Effectively, he says that the Goddess of Letters, sarasvati, appeared to him in a dream with tears flowing down to her breasts (*kAtuka kanTi nIru canukaTTu vayimbaDa*), for the fear that pOtana might actually offer the bhAgavatam to the king. Seeing this vision, pOtana assures Her (*O madamba! O hATaka garbhu rANi!*) that he would never sell Her to evil cruel humans (*karNATa kirATa kIcakula*) and pleads Her (*bhArati!*) to trust him.

Further, in the following poem, pOtana declares that he would dedicate his works to SrIhari, instead of offering them to corrupt human beings.

immanujESvarAdhamulakicci purambulu vAhanambulun sommulugonni puccukoni sokki SarIramubAsi kAlucE sammeTapOTulambaDaka sammati SrIharikicci ceppe nI bammera pOtarAjokaDu bhAgavatambu jagaddhitambugan.

Here pOtana is saying (free translation): Instead of offering to such lowly human kings and receiving lands, carriages and wealth in return and subsequently suffering from them, this one bammera pOtarAju has decided to dedicate to SrIhari and is writing bhAgavatam for the benefit of the world.

The word that pOtana used to describe the rich, powerful and corrupt people is manujEsvara+adhamulu (human kings + lowly people). tyAgarAja uses exactly this expression in the durmArgacara+adhamula (followers of bad paths + lowly people) in rAga ranjani. In fact, the meaning of this kriti comes even closer to the above cited poem of pOtana.

p. durmArga car(A)dhamulanu dora nIv(a)na jAlara a. dharm(A)tmaka dhana dhAnyA daivamu nIvai(y)uNDaga c. paluku bOTini sabhalOna patita mANavulak(o)sagu khalulan(e)ccaTa pogaDani SrIkara tyAgarAja vinuta

In this kriti, tyAgarAja uses powerful words to condemn the idea of serving corrupt people and those who offer their literary works to the like. Effectively, he says:

- I will not serve those that are the lowly among those that tread the path of vices.
- When the Lord himself is the wealth and nourishment, I will not serve the lowly....
- The wretched ones who offer their literary skills in the courts of kings to down-trodden humans, I will never acknowledge! Oh SrIrAma!

In another kriti, gaTTi gAnu ceyi paTTEdennaTikO in rAga bEgaDa, tyAgarAja elaborately laments about the futility of serving the rich and powerful, who are ignorant and degenerate.

p. gaTTigAnu nanu ceyi pattEd(e)nnaTikO a. puTTina nATan(u)NDi iTTi vidhamulE kAni c1. goppa tanamu manad(a)ni madam(e)ppaTikini talak(e)kki

tappu palukul(A)Ducu tAn(u)ppatillucunu
teppuna(y)ingitam(e)rugaka meppulak(A)Sincu(y)A
cappani prabhuvula kaDananu trippaTa(y)ElarA(y)anucunu
c2. varamaina sajjanulanu paricArakulan(e)llanu
sari jEsi dAnam(o)sagi param(e)ncakanu
kari dhana madamulu kaligina narulanu pUjinceDu(y)A
taram(e)rugani dhanikula anusaraNam(E)larA(y)anucunu
c3. Siva pUjala mariyunu mAdhava pUjalun(o)narincucu
bhuvu tA sari jEseDi vAr(e)var(a)nucunu(y)encu
avivEka dhana mattula Siva Siva vEDaga vadd(a)ni
kuvalaya daLa lOcana suvibhava tyAgarAja vinuta

In the caraNams, tyAgarAja asks why he/one should follow those who become headstrong by their presumed greatness, speaking falsehoods, seeking quick praises, insipid lords, swollen with the pride of riches, ignorant people intoxicated by wealth...

The above examples hopefully convince the reader that both pOtana and tyAgarAja looked down upon material possessions and associated vanities and conveyed these beliefs in their poems and kritis respectively.

P. Sambamoorthy, author of the authoritative and definitive biography of tyAgarAja [4] says "Some disciples were assigned the task of keeping a constant vigil night and day to wait for the moments when new songs would emerge from the mouth of the composer, extempore. These new compositions usually emerged after his Parayanam of Valmiki Ramayana and Potana Bhagavatham, every day. Sometimes these extempore songs came out at odd moments, like the dead of night." Based on this, we can certainly infer that several of his compositions were triggered by what he read in pOtana bhAgavatam! In the following, I will try to find some concrete examples.

Krishna based compositions/works:

Although tyAgarAja was primarily a rAma bhakta, he did compose kritis on several other deities, such as Siva, pArvati, ganESa, narasimha, krishNa etc. Consider the compositions of tyAgarAja on krishNa such as sAdhincenE, vENugAnalOluni, etc. In addition, there is a full musical play naukA caritram, which is entirely based on a story about krishNa.

While the episode of naukA caritram is not found in pOtana bhAgavatam, the other musical play of tyAgarAja, namely prahlAda bhakti vijayam, has a prominent place in pOtana bhAgavatam.

The other popular parts of pOtana bhAgavatam are gajEndra mOksham and rukmiNI kalyANam. The ideas of gajEndra mOksham occur in more than one composition of tyAgarAja: vAraNarAjuni ...in the very popular kriti kshIrasAgara Sayana in dEvagAndhAri rAga, nAmoralanu vini kriti in Arabhi rAga etc.

So, one could argue that, next to SrIrAma, krishNa gets the second most significant place in tyAgarAja's compositions. Could this be because of the influence of reading pOtana bhAgavatam regularly (daily)? I would like to posit so.

In the kriti ennagAmanasuku rAni in rAga nIlAmbari

p. ennaga manasuku rAni pannaga SAYi sogasu pannuga
kanukonani kannul(E)IE kannul(E)IE kaNTi minnul(E)IE

c1. mOhamutO nlla vAri vAha kAntini kErina SrI harini
kaTTukonani dEham(E)IE dEham(E)IE(y)I gEham(E)IE
(ennaga)

c2. sarasija malle tuLasi viruvAji pArijAtapu virulacE
pUjincani karamul(E)IE karamul(E)IE(y)I kApuramul(E)IE
(ennaga)

c3. mAlimitO tyAgarAjun(E)lina rAma mUrtini lAlinci
pogaDani nAlik(E)IE nAlik(E)IE sUtra mAlik(E)IE (ennaga)

I would like to bring your attention the rhetorical questioning style: Why those eyes (kannulEIE) that cannot see (kanukonani) the beauty (sogasu) of vishNu (pannaga Sayi)? Why those hands (karamulEIE) that do not worship (pUjincani)? Why that tongue (nAlikeIE) that does not praise (pogaDani) SrIrAma (rAmamUrti)?

There are at least a couple of poems of pOtana that have similar ideas.

kamalAkshu narcincu karamulu karamulu; SrInAthu
varNincu jihva jihva;
surarakshakuni jUcu cUDkulu cUDkulu; SEshaSAyiki mrokku
Siramu Siramu;
vishNunAkarNincu vInulu vInulu; madhuvairi davilina
manamu manamu;
bhagavantu valagonu padamulu padamulu; purushOttamuni
mIdi buddhi buddhi;
dEvadEvuni cintincu dinamulu dinamulu;
cakrahastuni brakaTincu caduvu caduvu;
kumbhinIdhavu jeppeDi guruDu guruDu;
tanDri hari jEru maneyeDi tanDri tanDri.

In this, pOtana says:

Only those hands (karamulu) that worship (arcincu) vishNu (kamalAkshu) are (real) hands;
Only the tongue (jihva) that describes (varNincu) vishNu (SrInAtha) is (a real) tongue;
Only the sight (cUDkulu) that sees (cUcu) vishNu (sura rakshaka) is (a real) sight;
Only the head (Siramu) that prostrates to (mrokku) vishNu (SEshaSAyi) is (a real) head;
Only the ears (vInulu) that listens to (AkarNincu) vishNu are (real) ears;
Only the heart (manamu) that is attached to (davilina?) vishNu (madhu vairi) is (a real) heart;

Only the mind (buddhi) that rests on vishNu (purushOttama) is (a real) buddhi;
 Only that day (dinamu) when thinking about (cintincu) vishNu (dEva dEva) is (a real) day;
 Only that education (caduvu) that expounds about (prakaTincu) vishNu (cakra hasta) is (a real) education;
 Only the teacher (guruDu) that teaches about (ceppeDi) vishNu (kumbinIdhava) is (a real) teacher;
 Oh a father! Only the father (tanDri) that tells one to reach hari is (the real) father;

It may interest the reader to know that this poem (as well as the next one) are from prahlAda caritram part of the bhAgavatam, when prahlAda is talking to his father about the value of dedicating one's life to the pursuit of vishNu. Indeed, the last line clearly suggests it.

It is true that the meaning of the above poem is in the "positive" (that is, he says what a real hand/eye/. Should be) unlike the meaning in tyAgarAja's above kriti which is in the "negative" (that is, he says that hand/eye...that does not worship/see/... is not a real hand/eye/...). However, I do think that the overall thought structure is similar.

Actually, the next poem in the same prahlAda caritram of pOtana is in the "negative", making it more aligned with tyAgarAja's thought construction.

<i>kanjAkshunakugAni</i>	<i>kAyambu</i>	<i>kAyamE?</i>
<i>pavanagumphitacarmabhastrigAka,</i>		
<i>vaikunThubogaDani</i>	<i>vaktrambu</i>	<i>vaktramE?</i>
<i>DhamaDhamadhvanitODi Dhakka gaaka,</i>		
<i>haripUjayulEni</i>	<i>hastambu</i>	<i>hastamE?</i>
<i>taruSAkhanirmitadarvigAka,</i>		
<i>kamalESujUDani</i>	<i>kannulu</i>	<i>kannulE?</i>
<i>tanakuDyajAlarandhramulu gaaka,</i>		
<i>ckari cinta lEni janmambu janmamE?</i>	<i>taraLa salila</i>	
<i>budbudambu gAka,</i>		
<i>vishNubhakti lEni vibudhunDu</i>	<i>vibudhuDE?</i>	
<i>pAdayugamutODi paSuvu gAka.</i>		

Here pOtana says:

Is the body (kAyamu) that does not belong to vishNu (kanjAksha) a real body?....
 Is the mouth (vaktram) that does not praise vishNu (vaikunThu) a real mouth?...
 Is the hand (hastam) that does not do hari pUja a real hand?...
 Are the eyes (kannulu) that do not see vishNu (kamalESa) real eyes?...
 Is the life (janmamu) without thinking about (cinta) vishNu (cakri) a real life?....
 Is a scholar (vibudhuDu) that does not have vishNu bhakti a real scholar?...

naukA caritram

tyAgarAja composed a musical play called naukA caritram, which is a playful account of gOpikas taking krishNa out on a boat ride. Subsequently, they get caught in a storm, pray to krishNa and are saved. The musical play consists of 35 songs and is a delightful description of joy, mischief and playfulness. It is one of the rare works of tyAgarAja where devotion etc do not play a major part and the work can be enjoyed as a secular musical work.

While there is no corresponding account in pOtana bhAgavatam, there are elaborate and equally delightful accounts of rAsakRiDalu, which describes the playful incidents of krishNa and gOpikas (daSama skandam - pUrva bhAgam, episodes 38-39-40).

Is it possible that some of the ways in which tyAgarAja narrated his playful accounts were suggested by similar ones from pOtana? However, this question merits deeper research.

Linguistic Style

Finally, let us consider the linguistic styles of pOtana and tyAgarAja.

Simplicity:

It is widely recognized that both tyAgarAja and pOtana's styles are generally simple. It should be noted that even though this is a general characterization of their works, both have composed highly complex works. For example, the ghana rAg pancaratna kritis of tyAgarAja would fall in this category.

There are numerous examples to illustrate the simplicity of the linguistic styles of tyAgarAja and pOtana, and here are just a few.

pOtana bhAgavatam poem examples:

kalaDanduru dInulayeDa
kalaDanduru paramayOgi gaNamula pAlam
kalaDandur-annidiSalanu
kalaDu kalanDaneDi vADu kalaDO, lEDO?

This is a poem of pOtana in the gajEndra mOksham episode, where the elephant is tired and almost giving up praying to vishNu, wondering whether He is really exists or not!

nI pAda kamala sEvayu
nI pAdArcakulatODi neyyamunu, nitAn-
tApAra bhUtadayayunu
tApasa mandAra, nAku dayasEyagadE.

This is a poem from the introductory sections, where pOtana is praying to his favorite deities and asking for good

qualities, such as serving the Lord, friendship with His devotees and piety to all living beings.

*palikEDidi bhAgavatamaTa
palikincu vibhUnDu rAmabhadrunDaTa, nE
palikina bhavaharamagunaTa
palikeda vEronDu gaatha balukaga nEIA?*

This is also an introductory poem, where in pOtana is saying that what he utters is apparently going to be bhAgavatam, the one who makes him utter it is apparently SrIrAma and that what he utters is going to liberate people, so why would he utter any other story?

Turning to tyAgarAja, I include three examples, wherein there is a similar sense of linguistic simplicity:

nA moralanu vini (rAga Arabhi),

*p. nA moralanu vini EmaravaleNA pAmara manujalaO O rAma
a. tOmara nArAcamulai manasuku tOcena bhakta pApa vimOcana
c1. ibha rAj(E)ndruDu ekkuvaina lancam(i)ccinad(E)mirA sabhalO mAnamu pOvu samayambuna sati(y)Em(i)ccenurA O rAma
c2. bhAgavat(A)grEsara rasik(A)vana jAgarUkuD(a)ni pErE rAga svara yuta prEma bhakta jana rakshaka tyAgarAja vandita*

mAru palka (rAga SrI ranjani)

*p. mAru palkag(u)nnAv(E)mirA mA manO-ramaNa
a. jAra cOra bhajana jesitina sAkEta sadana
c. dUra-bhAram(a)ndu nA
hRday(A)ravindam(a)ndu nelakonna dArin(e)rigi
santasillin(a)TTi tyAgarAja nuta*

nanu pAlimpa (mOhana)

*p. nanu pAlimpa naDaci vaccitivO nA prANa nAtha
a. vanaja nayana mOmuna jUcuTa jIvanam(a)ni nenaruna manasu marmamu telisi
c. sura pati nlla maNi nibha tanuvutO uramuna mutyapu sarula cayamutO
karamuna Sara kOdaNda kAntitO dharaNi tanayatO tyAgarAj(A)rcita*

Of course, it is hard to further quantify this idea of simplicity, except to say that the words chosen are not heavy and complex words. Their sounds are also not complex and tongue twisting, but rather easy to say and hear. For example, there are few compound sounds (involving more than one consonant per phonetic unit). Counting, the four pOtana poems have 1 of 51, 2 of 46 and 1 of 52 compound phonetic sounds respectively. Similarly the four tyAgarAja compositions have 11 of 130, 7 of 68, 5 of 99....compound phonetic sounds respectively.

prAsa

prAsa is a linguistic construction wherein there is a repetition of similar sounding words in a poem. pOtana revelled in the use of this technique, as evidenced by many examples. We see that also tyAgarAja's lyrics, which I hope to illustrate with these two examples:

pOtana:

*aDigedanani kaDuvaDi janu
aDiginaDanu maguDa nuDuvaDani naDa yuDugun;
veDaveDa siDimuDi taDabaDa
nDugiDu naDugiDadu jaDima naDugiDu neDalan!*

Here we see the sound Da repeats itself several times. Incidentally, it is a poem from ganEndra mOksham episode, wherein pOtana is describing how hurriedly vishNu is leaving vaikunTha to save the elephant. The fast repeating Da sound suggests the hurry and anxiety too.

For tyAgarAja, I would like to suggest yOcana kamala lOcana in rAga darbar. Here the sound 'cana' repeats often.

*p. yOcana kamala lOcana nanu brOva
a. sUcana teliyakan(o)rula yAcana sEtun(a)nucu nlku
tOcena dyuti vijit(A)yuta virOcana nannu brOvan(i)nka
c. kEcana nija bhakta nicaya pApa vimOcana kala birudul(e)lla koni
nann(E)cana kRta vipina cara var(A)bhishEcana tyAgarAja pUjita*

Linguistic phrases:

I conclude this essay with linguistic phrases that I found to have been used by both pOtana and tyAgarAja. Of course, I looked for such phrases that would not be very common in poetry. Yet, I would hasten to admit that I cannot solidly infer that tyAgarAja did indeed borrow these phrases.

Consider the expression "nanu kannu talli nA bhAgyama" used by tyAgarAja in his kEsari rAga composition. There is a poem by pOtana which also starts as "nanu kannu tanDri, nA pAli daivama".

nannu kannu talli nA bhAgyama nArAyaNi dharmAmbikE |

*nannu ganna tanDri, nApAli daivama,
nA tapa:phalamba, nA kumara,
nAdu cinna baDuga, nA kuladIpika,
rAgadayya, bhAgyarASi vagucu.*

Consider the beginning of the rItigouLa rAga kriti "jO jO rAma" by tyAgarAja.

*p. jO jO rAma Ananda ghana
c1. jO jO daSaratha bAla rAma jO jO bhUjA lOla rAma
c2. jO jO raghu kula tilaka rAma jO jO kuTila tar(A)laka rAma
Etc.*

There is a poem by pOtana that also is structured similarly:

*jO jO kamaldaLEkshNa,
jO jO mrugarAjamadhya, jO jO krishNA
jO jO pallava karapada,
jO jO pUrNEnduvadana, jO jO yanucun.*

Consider the tyAgarAja kriti "mATi mATi ki telpa valenA" in rAga mOhana.

*p. mATi mATiki telpa valenA muni mAnas(A)rcita caraNa
rAmayya nItO
a. sUTig(o)kkaTE mATa cAladA nATi modalukoni sATi lEni
nItO*

There is a poem by pOtana that starts with the same phrase "mATi mATiki vrElu maDaci..."

*mATimATiki vrElu maDaci yUrincuncu nUrugAyalu
dinucunDu nokka-
Dokani kancamulOni doDisi cayyana mringi, cUDu lEdani
nOrusUpu nokka-
Degu rArgura caldu lelami bannida mADi kUrkonI kUrkonI
kuDucu nokka-
Dinniyu dagambamci yiDuTa neccelitanamanucu
bantenagunDulADu nokaDu,
krishNujUDu manucu ginkurinci paru mrOli
mEli bhakyarASi mesagu nokaDu
navvu nokaDu, sakhula navvincu nokkaDu
muccaTADu nokaDu, muriyu nokaDu.*

It is also interesting to note that this in this poem, pOtana beautifully describes how krishNa and his male friends are having fun playing, eating etc: stealing food from each other's plates, sharing pickles, stuffing themselves with delicious items, laughing, making others laugh, etc.

Conclusion:

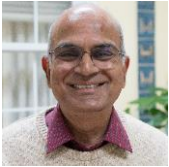
It is often written in tyAgarAja's biographical accounts that he was influenced by pOtana and pOtana bhAgavatam. However, details and specifics were hard to come by. In this article, I provided an informal analysis of the similarities and feel that the claims are now reasonably well substantiated. Any comments are most welcome and may be sent to chitrapu1955@gmail.com

Acknowledgements:

Firstly, I would like to thank Vidya Jayaraman, who first posed this topic of detailed comparison of tyAgarAja and pOtana, which led this fascinating study for me. I would also like to thank my friend, William Jackson (author of several popular and detailed books on tyAgarAja), for providing insights and guidance in the preparation of this article.

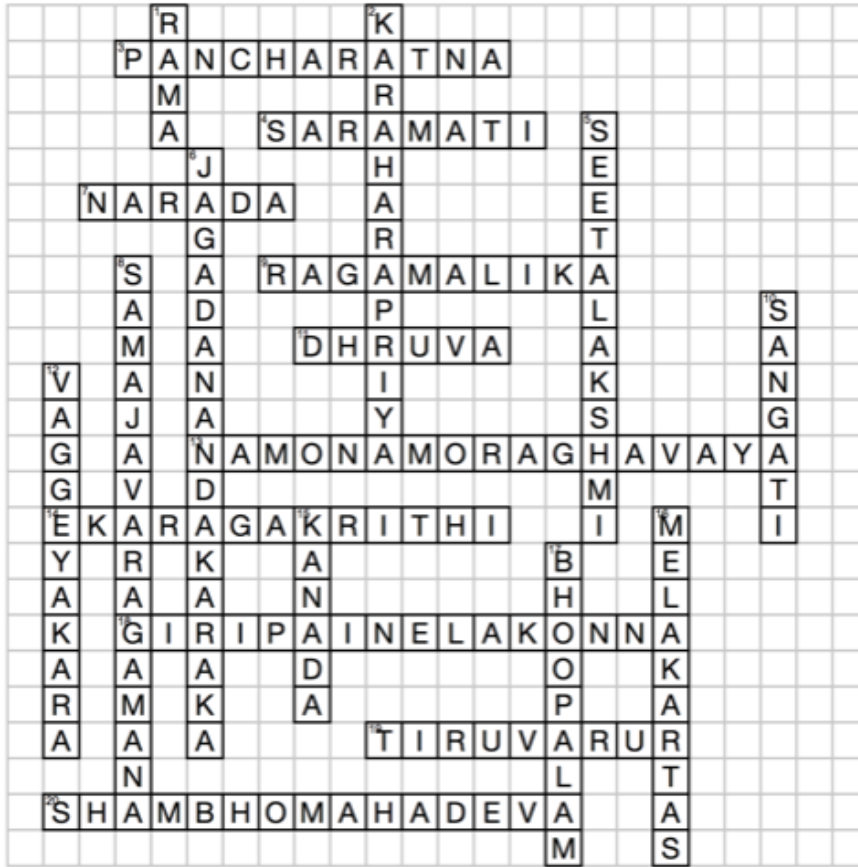
References:

- [1] "pOtana SrImahAbhAgavatam", originally written by pOtana-gangana-singana-nAraya and published by unnavarAmamOhana rAo, publisher "nava ratna book house, vijayavADa, 2013. Including a critical essay "Andhra bhAgavata vimarSamu" by sEshAdri ramaNa kavulu, "SrI bhAgavata mudraNamu - 1948" by niDadavOlu venkaTa rao.
- [2] Website for downloading pOtana bhAgavatam in 12 skandas and their word-by-word meanings https://pothana-telugu-bhagavatham.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_14.html
- [3] TTD Website for downloading pOtana bhAgavatam in 8 volumes <https://tirumalatirupationline.com/ttd-potana-bhagavatam-books-free-download-pdf/>
- [4] P. Sambamoorthy, "Great Composers - Volume 2: Thyagaraja".
- [5] Kalluri Virabhadra Sastri "Thyagaraja Kirtanas: viSesha vivaraNam" (in Telugu).



Prabhakar Chitrapu is a long-time supporter of SRUTI and has served the organization in various capacities since its inception, including President. Prabhakar has a deep interest in classical music, language, literature and philosophy and contributes his views frequently to Sruti publications. He maintains a website devoted to Saint Thyagaraja at www.thyagaraja.org

Crossword Solution



Vasishta Dhulipala is a 9th grader at Downingtown East High School. He has been learning Carnatic music for the past 7 years from Smt. Revathi Subramony and enjoys reading and playing chess. He is a member of the SRUTI Youth Group (SYG).

Aradhana Program Schedule

Hindu Temple of Delaware, Hockessin, DE

Morning Session

- **8:00am** – Pooja
- **8:20am** – Utsava Sampradaya Kirtanas led by Dinakar Subramanian, with Swetha Narasimhan on the Violin, Harish Bevinahally on Flute, Harsha Kanumalla on Mridangam, P. Sivakumar on Kanjira and Ravi Iyer on Ghatam
- Chetulara (Bhairavi) – Flute rendition by Harish Bevinahally, Swetha Narasimhan on Violin and Srihari Raman on Mridangam.
- Pancharatna Kritis led by Kiranavali Vidyasankar, with Swetha Narasimhan on Violin, Harish Bevinahally on Flute and P. Sivakumar and Harsha Kanumalla on Mridangam and Ravi Iyer on Ghatam
- Individual/Group Singing

Lunch – 12:30pm

Afternoon Session

- **1:15pm** – SRUTI Board of Directors introduction
- **1:30pm** – Vocal Concert by Gokul Chandramouli, Kamalkiran Vinjamuri on Violin and Vijay Ganesh on Mridangam
- **3:45pm** – Individual/Group Singing (continued from Morning Session)
- Mangalam and Harathi



SRUTI is pleased to invite local youth to be part of the Sruti Youth Group (SYG) with an aim to promote involvement of young and energetic kids in Indian performing arts and music. Children of SRUTI members who are in grades six and above are eligible. SYG members support Sruti by helping with the event management, artist interviews, outreach activities, presentations and audio/video recordings as well as managing Sruti's YouTube presence. The SYG provides an excellent platform to learn and grow and to have an opportunity to interact with like-minded peers and high-caliber artists. In addition, all members receive a certificate and volunteer credits. Interested members should contact the SYG coordinator, Uma Sivakumar at vice-president@sruti.org

About the Artists



Gokul Chandramouli

Dr. Gokul Chandramouli is a disciple of Sangeetha Kala Acharya Smt. Kalyani Sharma. He has also learned from Smt. Bhagavati Mani, his maternal grandmother and Neyveli Santhanagopalan, his paternal uncle. Gokul has performed widely in India and the U.S. Gokul is currently working at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

Gokul is a Carnatic musician who believes in music as a way of life and nAdOpAsana as a means to salvation. Gokul has been a great source of musical guidance to students and musical lovers in the DC Metro area. He is a featured artist at various concerts and gives highly informative lecture demonstrations on the nuances of Carnatic music.

He holds a PhD in Public Policy from the University of Maryland – College Park and a Masters in Energy Systems Engineering from IIT-Bombay. Gokul is a mentor and role model to many students and a truly inspiring artist.

Kamalakaran Vinjamuri

Kamalakaran is a senior at George Mason University. His initial guru was his grandfather, Sri. Parthasarathy Iyengar. Then, he had some training from Smt. Malladi Vijayalakshmi. His father, Sri. Subhash Vinjamuri, started teaching him the violin at the age of 7. He is also receiving advanced training from Sangeetha Kalanidhi A. Kanyakumari.

He won several prizes in different music competitions, both in India as well as in the US. Kamalakaran has won many prizes in the Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana. In December 2010 and 2013 music seasons, Kamalakaran got the **Best Performer Award** from Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha, Chennai. Kamalakaran was awarded the Lalgudi G Jayaraman Award, as best violinist in the 2014 Gokulashtami Series in Krishna Gana Sabha. Kamalakaran has been performing in all major venues in India and the US since 2009, including at the Kennedy Center. In the 2014 Spirit of Youth series, and the 2016 and 2017 Music Seasons, Kamalakaran was selected as the best violinist in the prestigious Music Academy in Chennai.

Vijay Ganesh

Vijay Ganesh, a seasoned mridangist, has been learning this divine art since the age of 6. He had his tutelage under the great and illustrious master, the late Vidwan Sri. Kumbakonam Rajappa Iyer.

Vijay Ganesh has over the years established himself as a Mridangam artist and has performed extensively in music festivals in India and USA. He has accompanied many eminent Carnatic musicians, vocalists, instrumentalists and outstanding Hindustani musicians. He is an All India Radio, Chennai graded artist and has won many awards including the Best Mridangist award from the Music Academy.

Preserved at the Saurashtra Sabha, Madurai—the paadukas belonged to Thyagaraja.
Photo courtesy of Shri R. K. Shriramkumar



Wishing SRUTI community a musical season !

Meena Upadhyay

Financial Services Professional

New York Life Insurance Company

379 Thornall Street, 8th Floor, Edison, NJ 08837

Bus. 732.494.5300; Cell. 732.529.5814

mupadhyay@ft.newyorklife.com

*Build a strong financial future for
your family and your business.*



2019 Event Lineup



Sruti
The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia

www.sruti.org

Sruti 2019 sponsorships
are now available at

www.sruti.org



Jayanthi Kumaresh
Apr 13

Sanjay Subrahmanyam
Apr 27



Janaki Rangarajan
May 4



Ranjani and Gayatri
May 11



Amrutha Venkatesh
May 18



Sankari Krishnan
Sep 3



Kiranavali Vidyasankar
Sep 14



Purbayan Chatterjee
Sep 21



Vijay Siva
Oct 19



Viraja & Shyamjith Kiran
Oct 26



Sangeetha Sivakumar
Nov 9