



Sruti

The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia

www.sruti.org



Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir
March 25, 2023

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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.

From the President's Desk

Dear Sruti Family and Friends

Greetings! It gives me immense delight to welcome you all to our 2023 programs. After an unbelievably light winter, I am sure we are ready to embrace Spring in all its glory. What better way to usher in Spring other than with melody and rhythm!

I would like to first congratulate the outgoing board headed by Revathi Subramony for conceiving and executing stellar programs in 2022, when we started seeing a return to in-person programming. I am pleased to introduce my energetic and enthusiastic team that is poised to continue delivering on our mission of bringing top class programs for 2023.

President Elect - Lata Suresh brings a wealth of experience as a musician and a valued member of the board in the last two years.

Secretary - Geetha Shankar, who has always been active as a volunteer at many Sruti events in the past, comes in as our secretary.

Treasurer - The finances are in the able hands of our "Sruti Money Man" Venkat Kilambi who has been instrumental in keeping us in the best of fiscal health over the years.

Director of Resources - Balaji Ragothaman, who has served on previous boards in different capacities and has contributed to several grants in the past will continue to keep us in the quest for funding.

Director of Publications - Rajee Padmanabhan, a talented musician and respected member of the board will head up the Publications portfolio – the beautifully compiled, immensely educative and entertaining souvenir that you hold in your hand is a clear indicator of her incredible talent.

Director of Marketing - The fact that Sruti continues to grow in its member base and attracts audiences from far and wide is all due to our "Marketing Guru", Nari Narayanan who will continue in this role.

Directors 1 and 2 - Lavanya Sambasivan, who also coordinates our Sruti Youth group continues as Director 1, while we have a new face in Ravi Iyer, also a trained musician and art enthusiast, who comes in as Director 2.

Warm welcome to the first timers and newcomers on the Sruti board! The board will be assisted by able committees in the execution of our portfolio, and I want to express my appreciation and thanks to all members of the committees for their valuable contributions.

A full Thyagaraja Aradhana returns as a season opener on March 25 - we are delighted to bring back all of our usual TA features including Utsava Sampradaya kritis, Pancharatna and individual singing. The prime concert for our TA will be performed by renowned and leading vocalist Dr. Suryaprakash (a senior disciple of Sangeetha Kalanidhi T. V. Sankaranarayanan) from India.

The Spring season will feature several top rung artists including Abhishek Raghuram, Malladi Brothers and "Padma Bhushan & Sangeetha Kalanidhi" Sudha Raghunathan. In addition, we will feature a Bharatanatyam recital by leading dance duo Shijith Nambiar and Parvathy Menon – last of three programs supported by a multiyear grant from PNC Arts Alive Connect. For the first time, we will also present the "Carnatic Quartet" – a unique ensemble of Nadaswaram and Violin along with Mridangam and Taval. Sruti considers it a privilege and honor to feature the Nadaswaram – the most divine, auspicious and ancient wind instrument that holds a coveted place in our musical heritage.

This Spring, we are also delighted to present a Music Workshop by “Sangeetha Kalanidhi” Neyveli Santhanagopalan as part of our Spring programs. This will be an excellent opportunity for our community youth, teachers and musicians to learn from the Maestro. Details on participation will be shared very soon on our website and through email blasts. Fall 2023 also promises to be equally exciting and entertaining. We will have another dance recital in the Kuchipudi style by the reputed duo of Jaikishore and Padmavani Mosalikanti, made possible in part by a first ever matching grant from the National Endowment of Arts. We will also have concerts by Sriranjani Santhanagopalan and the prodigious Veena talent, Ramana Balachandhran. We are also delighted to feature Kruthi Bhat, a North American raised vocalist who is fast emerging as a top rung musician in the Carnatic circle. Additional events are also under discussion. Please make sure to check out our website, www.sruti.org, for up-to-date event information.

The Sruti Youth Group (SYG) will continue to play a key role in the seamless execution of our events. They have already done an incredible job with their help in ushering, artist interviews, event/audio set up and take down as well as emceeing for our events. The SYG is a great opportunity for our youth to stay connected to our ethnic roots, experience our rich musical heritage and listen to/interact with front ranking musicians. I strongly encourage youngsters in Grade 6 and above to become a part of SYG.

I wish to express my thanks to all our concert patrons, sponsors, and members for the continued support that has enabled us to deliver successful programs year after year. As a token of appreciation for our sponsors, Sruti provided two months of free access to the Shaale platform from January to March 2023. We hope you were able to enjoy the many different concerts, lecture demonstrations, workshops, interactive sessions and more on this platform. We encourage you to sign up or renew your sponsorships if you have not yet done so – Sponsorships give you free admission to all season concerts, premium seating, access to recordings (when permitted by artists) and other benefits such as priority for community event participation.

We are also indebted to our funders and donors for their generous support of our mission. We are particularly thankful to Pennsylvania Council for the Arts (PCA), PNC Arts Alive Connect, and National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for program related funding as well as Paul Angell Foundation and Presser Foundation for operational and capital support. We have an exciting year ahead of us and I eagerly look forward to welcoming you all at our upcoming events starting with our Aradhana on March 25.

Musically Yours
Pitchumani Sivakumar (Siva)
President, Sruti

Board of Directors



Pitchumani Sivakumar
President



Lata Suresh
President-Elect



Venkat Kilambi
Treasurer



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Secretary



Balaji Ragothaman
Resources and Development



Rajee Padmanabhan
Publications and Outreach



Nari Narayanan
Marketing and Publicity



Lavanya Sambasivan
Director 1



Ravi Iyer
Director 2

Board Position	Board Member	Committee Members
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Treasurer	Mr. Venkat Kilambi	
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From the Publications and Outreach Committee

*sanglta shAstra malODya krti klrtana kariNE
kalau vAlmiki rUpAya tyAgarAjAya mangaLam*

Dear Rasikas,

As we gather to pay obeisance to Sadguru Tyagaraja who bequeathed us the treasure trove of his music, I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to you all to the Hindu Temple of Delaware! As is the norm, our annual Thyagaraja Aradhana heralds the Spring Season of SRUTI!

On behalf of the Publications and Outreach committee, we are pleased to present you with this Aradhana Souvenir. The beautifully illustrated cover for the souvenir has been designed by Vidushi Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath who is equally adept with the paintbrush!

The last year saw the passing of T. Sarada, who was an ardent supporter of SRUTI and helmed the Publications committee in times past. She contributed several well researched and thoughtful articles to SRUTI publications over the years. We reprint her article from the 2017 Aradhana souvenir as a tribute to her memory.

From the dialogue on Sri Balamuralikrishna's unique rendition of vachamagocharame in Simharavam to a perspective on cittai swarams in Thyagaraja krithis to the impact of a trip to Thiruvvaiyaru Thyagaraja Aradhana, our contributors have authored interesting and informative articles.

We want to express our sincere gratitude to all the authors who graciously agreed to contribute their thought-provoking perspectives. I want to especially thank the SRUTI Youth Group members who contributed the crossword and word scramble puzzles in addition to writing articles.

We continue to work on SRUTI Mobile Experience in 2023. SRUTI is thankful to The Presser Foundation for the capital grant that is funding this initiative.

This souvenir would not be possible without the excellent support and dedication of the committee members - Aparna S Iyer, Jayram Sataluri and Manikandan Rajappa. I also wish to thank my husband Ram for his unflinching support. A copy of this Aradhana Souvenir and the SRUTI Ranjani Publication for 2022 can be found on SRUTI's website.

We look forward to receiving your articles and other contributions towards SRUTI Ranjani, which will be published towards the end of the year.

Please visit <https://www.sruti.org/publications/> for more information. Feel free to reach us at publications@sruti.org for any question or suggestion that you may have about SRUTI publications or outreach efforts.

On behalf of the SRUTI Publications and Outreach Committee
Rajee Padmanabhan

About the cover

Aishwarya Vidhya Raghunath

bhAmA maruvampu molaka bhaktiyanu panjarapu ciluka

“Rama, the One who speaks softly and sweetly is the jewel in Thyagaraja's heart. When His wife Sita, tender as the shoot of the marjoram sings His praises like a parrot in the cage of devotion and His brothers speak honey-dewed words, how can anyone be equal to Him?” Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath’s artistic take on Thyagaraja’s Kharaharapriya Raga krithi rAma nI samAnam(e)varu adorns this Aradhana souvenir’s cover page.



Aishwarya Vidhya Raghunath is an accomplished Carnatic music vocalist. She is among the foremost and popular young performing classical musicians in India. Hailing from a family of music connoisseurs, Aishwarya was initiated into the world of music at the age of three. She is an "A" grade artiste of All India Radio and Doordarshan.

Aishwarya’s other great passion is for painting; she is proficient in oil painting, acrylic painting, water colours and charcoal drawings. Sruti profusely thanks Aishwarya for graciously consenting to paint the cover page for the 2023 Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir.



Please Note: Some articles contain links to websites / YouTube and/or QR Codes. While the links are active on the virtual version of the souvenir in sruti.org website, the QR Codes could help you navigate directly by using your smartphone camera.

Many moods of Sri Thyagaraja

Late T. Sarada

This article, from the 2017 Aradhana Souvenir, has been republished as a tribute to T. Sarada whose passing last year left a deep void for the Sruti community. We are grateful to Sruti cofounder Sri.M.M.Subramanian for his advice in choosing this article to reprint.

Sri Thyagaraja* As we all know is not only a great devotee of Sri Rama, but a highly proficient musician and had a remarkable expertise in using languages.

More often he chose to use simple words, mostly what was prevalent in the place he lived. He often used Telugu spoken where he was born and lived, “Vadukka” Telugu rather than “Kavya” Telugu. This made his songs appealing and easily accessible to many listeners. But he was well versed in his mother tongue, Telugu, Sanskrit and also Tamil, we understand; and he did write many scholarly pieces. These enabled him to write songs and set them to music based on the capabilities and levels of his numerous students. His knowledge helped him to present his feelings, thoughts, moods and emotions in songs succinctly. He liked to use simple analogies to make the songs lively and interesting.

Just like a superior artist that he was, both in music and writing, he left a wealth of extraordinary songs and music. It is interesting to note that when he pleaded helplessly, when he felt totally worthless and pleaded with his Ishta Devata for help or offered his prayers to Rama, his lyrics reflected his feelings perfectly. He would also complain and even accuse Rama just like Badrachalam Ramadas. On the other side of the spectrum, he expressed his self-confidence very boldly, even with fancy and wrote songs that will make the listener smile. He set his songs to music to match his moods.

This article presents examples of some of the feelings and moods he went through and how he expressed them.

1. **Pahi Rama Ramana.** Ragam: Varali. Talam: Adi. (*Pleading and complaining*)

O Rama, God of Sat Gunas, protect me. Know that your grace will not be there if one forgets you even for a short time.
How much more suffering should I be having?
How long should I tolerate this agony? (Here he gets theatrical in the analogies he uses to make his point clear)
Is it fair to attack a poor parrot with Brahmastram?
A cucumber (dosa pandu) cannot be tied with an iron belt.
Jadi Jasmine should not be crushed with a stone pestle.
And my lord, should butter be hit with a knife?
You are father and mother to me and if parents do not protect the child where can I go?
O Rama, you are the only refuge to Thyagaraja

2. **Na Moralanu Vini.** Ragam: Arabi. Talam: Desadi. (*Pleading, complaining and accusing*)

O Rama, even after listening to my appeals you are slighting me. Do my words sound like Tomara (a weapon) and arrows to your ears?
What big bribe did Gajendra give you to help him?
When Draupadi was put to shame in the court, what bribe did she give you to help her?
(They say that) you are the protector of Bhagawatas, Bhaktas and Rasikas. You are always alert to protect them.
Is that only in name?
Don't you protect Nadhupasana devotees like Thyagaraja?

3. **Atu Kaaraadani.** Ragam: Manoranjani. Talam: Adi. (*Here he goes into admonition and slowly starts proclaiming how good, versatile, learned is Thyagaraja*)

Have you no grace to show me? You know I am very pious, and am well versed in Vedas, Sastras, Upanishads and so on. I tread a path of righteousness. When I am accused without deserving it, should you not find which Devata is responsible for making that happen and tell him to stop the injustice to Thyagaraja?

4. Dasarati Ni Runamu. Ragam: Todi; Talam: Adi. (*Now he clearly expresses his self-confidence and says how great he is, of course with the grace of Rama*)

Dasarati, how can I repay the debt I owe you? To my heart's content, you have made my name shine in far off places too. Knowing that many so-called pundits do not understand the inner meanings of (real spiritual writings), you have appeared in my dream and taught Thyagaraja to write songs and music that will give those who use them fulfillment in "Iha and Para", this and after lives.

5. Cintistunade. Ragam: Mukhari; Talam: Adi. (*The ultimate confidence written with a fanciful creation*)

Seeing that good people are doing Nama Sankeerthanas and Bhajans, Yama is getting worried and anxious. He is immersed in sad thoughts.

He looks at his servants who are ready with nooses and tridents and tells them that the time has come for them not to be so exuberant since people are reciting Taraka mantras. That saves them from the worst hell just as sage Agastya could drain the ocean when he was angry.

Yama is further very worried since he falsely thought that people are wandering without knowing the right path and he thought that they will be easy targets. But he noticed that they are all singing Sri Thyagaraja's songs and so are also really unapproachable!

*Being born and spending his childhood in Valmika Kshetram which is "Thiruvavur", Thyagaraja felt his bond with Valmiki reinforced and adopted the name of the presiding deity, Thyagaraja as his Mudra

References.

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- A. Dr. V. Raghavan, Sanskrit scholar, Music Academy president. Thesis on Sri Thyagaraja published in Vedanta Kesari in 1946-47 and revised for introduction to C. Ramanujachari's book, The Spiritual Heritage of Thyagaraja. Sri Ramakrishna Math Mylapore 1966.
- B. T S Partha Sarathi. Sri Thyagaraja Swami's Kirtanas. Higginbotham Chennai 1967
- C. Thyagaraja by P Sambhamurthi. National Book Trust. New Delhi 1967

Sarada and her brother Parasaran were ardent supporters of Sruti over multiple decades. Sarada worked in the library/publication committee for a few years. Parasaran actively participated in everything Sarada undertook. They both enjoyed Music, Indian and western classical including operas. They both were devoted volunteers of the Bharatiya Temple for many years. Sarada also organized seminars once a year as part of the Temple University LifeLong learning programs.

Tyagaraja on Music and Nada

Akshara Samskriti

My first few months of ballet lessons entailed focusing fully on the basics and my teacher would simply not move on to the next bit until my legs were turned out at the right angle or my hands were as they should have been. Similarly, in my western voice lessons, my teacher started by making me learn the names of the parts of the voice I used; where my palate, tongue, hands, and jaw should be; my posture, and how to pronounce each word, no matter what language. We continue to review the basics in every class, and she nudges me to do more, based on my improvement.

You might be wondering what the connection is between all this and Carnatic music, much less Sri. Tyagaraja! However, I am beginning to realize that it is the thoroughness and the rigor that is given to every aspect of the subject, and the immersive life-long journey that ties all these classical art forms. My mother and guru, Smt. Kiranavali, constantly emphasizes the fact that while most of us take the instructions given in the western art forms without question, we often tend to substitute quantity for quality in Carnatic music.

This brings me to the thought – where can we find material that discusses all the aspects of being a musician, or even better, inspires us to be a music *sādhaka*? How many years should we learn, practice, and study? It takes a while to get just a basic grasp of the different aspects of music, a lot longer to put it into practice, and even longer to attain some level of ease and mastery over it. Does the journey of transcending technical mastery begin here or should we have already been on the path of *nāḍopāśana* much earlier?

Many of our answers can be found in Tyagaraja's kritis, and there is a considerable wealth of them that talk about *sangīta* (music), *nāda* (pure sound), and *bhakti* (devotion), and how together they can put us on a path to *mokṣa* (liberation). It is very apt that Tyagaraja's works are called *drākṣāpākam* (easy to consume, like grapes!) as he makes profound concepts very accessible to even a layman.

Let us take the example of the well-known composition *shōbhillu saptaswara*, where he talks about how we should worship the radiant and beautiful seven swaras, produced from the navel, heart, throat, tongue, and nose. Imagine my excitement when I realized that my western voice teacher pretty much taught me the same voice technique that Tyagaraja describes here! I wonder if Tyagaraja knew all this through his own practice and experience, or was it a matter of common knowledge in his times?

There are many kritis in which he speaks about *nāda* and yoga as a journey using his creative imagination in each context. While in *nāḍatanum aniṣam*, he speaks of Shiva as the embodiment of *nāda* itself, and goes on to describe the various qualities of both, in *nāda lōluḍai*, he says that pure sound is worshipped by the great Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma, and other deities and sages. He encourages the mind to attain supreme bliss by becoming enraptured in *nāda*. In the kriti *nāḍopāśana*, he says that even Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva get their radiance by meditating on Nada.

In *nāḍasudhārasam bilanu*, he equates the different parts of Rama's *kōdanḍa* (bow) to the various aspects of music - the swaras are the six little bells at the tip, raga the bow itself, and gati (tempo) the arrows. In *gītārthamu*, he says that Anjaneya who is well acquainted with the bliss and satisfaction attained through music himself, bestows the blessing of music upon Tyagaraja.

In *sangīta śāstra*, he holds that knowledge of music along with the essence of nine *rasas* provides the same comfort that attaining a divine form would, while also conferring self-control, resolution, fame, and talent/skill. Tyagaraja speaks about *bhakti* in the context of music in his Dhanyasi composition, *sangītagānāmu*, where he says that mere knowledge of music without devotion will not lead to the path of realizing the divine. On the other hand, in *vara rāga laya*, he criticizes those who brag about how they've mastered *rāga* and *laya* (rhythm), without actually understanding or internalizing them.

And tying all the above together is the monumental *mokṣamu galadā* where he asks whether those who do not have an understanding of music cannot attain liberation. He describes the *saptaswaras* (seven notes) and the sound of *ōmkāra* as a combination of a vital breath with fire (metaphorized as energy) in the line “*prāṇānala saṁyōgamu valla praṇava nādamu saptaswaramulai paraga.*”

Tyagaraja has interestingly used music-specific terminology and jargon across many kritis revealing that he clearly understands voice production and all the technicalities of music. He also goes on to elucidate how it has to conjoin with *bhāva* and *bhakti*; how knowledge of the *purāṇās* is needed; how all these “secrets” are known to those who have more wisdom and experience. Tyagaraja beautifully connects culture with literature and practice, poetry with rhythm and music, and insights with information and perspective on the society of his times. No matter what the theme may have been, Tyagaraja put it into writing, into *music*, 200 years ago.

Discovering Bhakti: A Roadtrip to Thiruvaiyaru

Sruthi Ramesh

It was 3:30 AM when my mother woke me up to get ready, well before the sounds of the rice cooker whistles, MS Amma's Suprabhatam, and the infamous garbage truck music that had become my alarm. I had been in Chennai for the December Season and had finished my 7th concert the night before. I was quite exhausted, but also very excited – I was about to fulfill one of my dreams. We got into the car and were on the way down the empty highways of Tamil Nadu. We drove through the first chirps of the cuckoo birds, the sun rising above the horizon, and in true Chennai fashion, the first sign of traffic. I am not new to road trips in India, we often used to take them when I visited India, but this one had a different type of excitement for me, something that brought me closer to my religious identity.

As I was growing up, *bhakti* was a concept that didn't make much sense; it was inconceivable to me that someone could feel such devotion towards God, and I started to wonder what *bhakti* meant and what many of these great vaggeyakaras were discussing in their compositions pertaining to it. However, as I grew older and more mature, *bhakti* was a concept that became actualized to me. Through researching Hinduism, understanding the meanings of many compositions, and asking knowledgeable members of my community, I have started to understand what *bhakti* has meant for musicians and composers of the past. More importantly, I have started to discover what it can mean to me in my modern life.

I had grown up knowing of Thiruvaiyaru as the town that Sri Thyagaraja lived in and attained *samadhi* in, and I had an interest in visiting there one day. I vaguely remember traveling to Thiruvaiyaru during the summer after visiting a nearby town Vayyacheri, and had the opportunity to sing at the sannidhi. Since then, every year on *bahula panchami*, it was tradition for me to watch the live stream of the Aradhana and recognize all my favorite artists and music legends singing Thyagaraja's *bhakti*-laden Ghana raga Pancharathana Krithis. I, then,

started to appreciate the great opportunity it would be to sing at Thiruvaiyaru, and it became a dream of mine to visit during the Aradhana time. During my past visits to Chennai during December Season, I had to rush my time in India to get back in time for school, but this past trip to Chennai allowed me to spend more time in Chennai and travel to Thiruvaiyaru for the Aradhana.

Although *bhakti* is the cornerstone of the Karnataka Sangeetham tradition, many have started losing its value while practicing music. Going to Thiruvaiyaru made me wonder if this is the type of fandom and fame that Sri Thyagaraja, the rest of the trinity, and other vaggeyakaras would have wanted surrounding music.

In our modern world, music is an investment – whether it be investment of time or monetary resources, and although the monetary investment wasn't authentic to the 18th century, it is a reality of our world today. In Sri Thyagaraja's time, he was clear that he was singing for only Rama and his *bhakti* for Rama, and not in praise of any human being, *narastuthi*. In his *krithi* Nidhi Chāla Sukhamā, Thyagaraja writes of his belief that money and fame don't bring happiness and comfort, rather that his *bhakti* to Lord Rama has provided that comfort.

We finally reached Thiruvaiyaru at 10 AM after the long drive, and I was scheduled to sing around noon. As we arrived, I noticed that there was music playing all around the town from speakers placed at each street corner. The town of Thiruvaiyaru had this enthusiastic aura to it, with all people, regardless of musical training and level of religious belief, immersed in the music and the *bhakti* it conveyed. Once we got to the temple, we saw a large tent adjacent to the temple alongside the banks of the Kaveri River. I was surrounded by eminent and young musicians likewise – almost as though participating in the Aradhana is a great equalizer in music. It wasn't just the performing of music that felt like the equalizer, it was the *rasikas*, people who were agricultural workers to retired businessmen, all spending their time, enjoying the hundreds of beautiful compositions being presented.

When it was my turn to sing, I got onto stage and presented two of my favorite Thyagaraja compositions, Nada Loludai in raga Kalyanavasantham and Marubalka in raga Sri Ranjani. While singing, I felt a level of devotion that I hadn't felt previously, and I now believe that was me expressing *bhakti* in my own way. I am very fortunate to have had this experience, and I felt that being in Thiruvaiyaru gave me insight into the *bhakti* Sri Thyagaraja felt throughout his life of sangeetha seva.

As someone who was born and brought up in the US, music has been the primary way I connect back to my cultural and religious identity. Music has always been a source of bliss to me, by helping me alleviate stress especially as a college student, but discovery into what great composers like Thyagaraja have expressed through *bhakti* has opened my eyes to a new perspective on music. Although the world we live in today differs so vastly from Thyagaraja's, my own experience in Thiruvaiyaru this year has proved to me we can all experience *bhakti* in our own ways.

Sruthi Ramesh is a top talent of her generation of Carnatic Music performers, getting advanced training from Kiranavali Vidyasankar. Sruthi is a junior pursuing pre-med at the University of Maryland at Baltimore.

vAchAmagOcharamE - A conversation on Dr. Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna's version

Deepak Varma Maliakal and Jayram Sataluri

We are all aware of tyAgarAja's vibrant krithi, vAchAmagOcharamE which has been rendered in kaikavaSi rAgam and dESAdi tALam. But what if we told you that there is another version of this krithi as rendered by the legend Dr. M Balamuralikrishna aka BMK? And that the rAgam is simhAravam not kaikavaSi?

You might be wondering to yourselves, "What is this simhAravam version of vAchAmagOcharamE? I have never heard of this. Is it available?" The answer is Yes.

Here is a conversation between two admirers of Dr. BMK's music which is otherwise known as muraLi gANam. They will be known as D and J. The conversation is based on his rendition of this kriti at the Bangalore Gayana Samaja on 29th October 1977 with M Chandrasekaran (violin) and Umayalpuram K Sivaraman (mridangam).

We kindly request that you please listen to the simhAravam version of vAchAmagOcharamE by Dr. Balamuralikrishna. <https://youtu.be/ieCsFbjYTTk> . We hope our conversation enlightens the rasikA community, especially those reading this souvenir.

J: Did you know that Dr. Balamuralikrishna aka BMK has said the rAgam of vAchAmagOcharamE is simhAravam?

D: Oh! I did not know that.

J: I remember listening to one of his concerts and after the AlApana he announced the name of the rAgam and that this is the original tune of tyAgarAja.

D: It would make a great deal of difference if anyone can shed light on why BMK said simhAravam is the raga in which this kriti is composed.

J: You know, I had asked BMK's disciple Shyam Ravishankar this question. He couldn't give a straight answer on simhAravam because he didn't learn it from BMK. Yet he did tell me that BMK's other disciple Ragavan Manian would ask his guruji about the authenticity of other tyAgaraja kritis as how the latter rendered them. BMK's answer would be "that is how it is", without going into more detail. There are two possibilities: 1) Parupalli taught him this version and/or 2) BMK may have old books/documents where he found the simhAravam version and verified it as the original tune. But we don't know for sure.

Recently, I spoke to another disciple of BMK named Rao R Sharath of Mysore about simhAravam. I was confused whether it is a janya rAgam of nItimati or dharmAvati and if it's an equivalent of kaikavaSi. He told me that simhAravam is totally separate from kaikavaSi and that it is actually a janya of hEmAvati.

D: Yes, but according to the Muthuswami Dikshitar school, simhAravam or dESisimhAravam is the same as hEmAvati. However in the Non-Dikshitar style, the scale of the rAga is interesting. The Arohana has M2 instead of M1, when you compare this to madhyamAvati/Sri. The Avarohana too has a lot of similarities with Sri. If you omit the D2 from Avarohana of Sri and substitute the M1 with M2, we get the simhAravam scale.

J: Correct. So the scale is this:

A: S R2 M2 P N2 S

Av: S N2 P M2 R2 G2 R2 S

J: He starts the AlApana with R2 madhyasthAyi and does a R2SN2P mandrasthAyi. Then he does a N2 S N2 S N2 where the first 2 N2s are flat but the last one has a gamaka. Then after a pause, he does a SR2G2.

D: The AlApana is a crisp one which does not go to the madhyasthAyi itself. He just gives the outline in a few seconds and takes off.

J: He begins the krithi with a G2R2R2SSR2R2. With this, we get a sense of wonder and understanding of tyAgarAja's overwhelming sharaNagati towards his Lord Sri rAma. He repeats it a couple of times. When he sings taramE at "varNimpa taramE rAma mahima", it is a M2PN2. This shows the brilliance of the ragam especially the prayOga at N2. But he goes a step further and does a M2 P N2SR2. As a result, I notice a flat N2 for rAma. To me, this enhances the rendition and fills us with the same wonder tyAgarAja has when he tries to depict the past times of rAma. Note that I write "tries" because tyAgarAja himself asks his mind "is it even possible to describe Sri rAma's prowess?"

D: Interestingly the Arohana is S R2 M2 P, this R2M2P combination is very rare to find in this Kriti.

One of the sangatis used in the kriti, N2SR2, has got the Madhyamavathi touch because of the fast N2SR2 prayOgas. For example, it comes up in the latter "TaramE" in Pallavi.

The overall feel that the listeners may get about this rendition/rAga is:

- shaNmukhapriya when we hear M2 in PM2G2 then followed by a R2 yogas.
- madhyamAvati in P N2 S, PN2SR2, SN2P prayOgas depending on the gamaka.
- brindAvana sAranga depending on the gamaka of N2 and the subtleness of G2 along with N2. One of the major differences between madhyamAvati and brindAvana sAranga is the way N2 is sung. N2 has to be a bit closer to the S in order to take out the madhyamAvati bhAvam. In order to hear brindAvana sAranga, the N2 should sound like "S N2 "or "S N2 S N2".

J: Very interesting! Do you find any elements of hEmAvati in the pallavi line?

D: You can hear it in the M P N2 sangati.

In the Anupallavi, the flinging away of mArIcha is handled and it's more apt to be sung in the upper madhyasthAyi and thArasthayi notes. The Anupallavi starts with "N2,, S,,R2" in the thArasthayi, with N2 starting from R2. Like I mentioned before, the AlApana in Anupallavi has a Brindavana Saranga flavor. When he brings M2 in the descending sanchAras SN2 P M2, it gives a more emotional color to the rendition. The voice modulations in this rendition on G2 N2 and M2 really stand out because those are the notes bringing out the real bhAva of the raga.

J: The second half of the anupallavi "reNDO vAni Sikhik(o)sagenE " is also sung in thArasthAyi and upper madhyasthAyi as it reminds us of the killing of subAhu by rAma. In the first sangati, he has sung, "P G2 R2 S N2 N2 S R2 G2 R2 S " with a gamaka on the last R2. He repeats it once more. But for the last 2 sangatis, he does "P G2 R2 S N2 N2 S R2 G2 R2 N2 S R2 S G2 G2 R2 S N2 (2 quick gamakas) P." For me, the way he sings these sangatis displays tyAgarAja's love and awe at rAma's feats.

D: The first few lines of the Charanam have the shaNmukhapriya feel wherever the PM2G2 prayOga is used. Also, the prayOgas SPM2P (S descends down from R2). I hear a P P P P for “mAnavati” where the first P is used as a meend gamaka from S. A meend gamaka is a smooth glide from one note to another where all notes are being touched.

J: He focuses on the madhyasthAyi while keeping the wondrous mood intact in the first charanam line. I notice a certain joy in his voice when he sings the line “cAmaram(au)Tak(a)stramu nEyagani” as if he himself is witnessing the incident tyAgarAja is describing. Now, we don’t know if this happened in vAlmiki rAmAyanam, as I can’t find any reference to it. That said, this is an apt example of the Lord’s magnanimity to all.

He does SPPP for mAnambukai, but afterwards does a PN2SN2PM2P for “meDa dAchaga”. This shows the uniqueness of this ragam and it does bring a bit of shaNmukhapriya. For the latter half of the second part, he does the same sangati with the same alacrity as “cAmaram(au)Tak(a)stramu nEyagani”.

D: BMK always stresses on splitting the lyrics in the right way. Here in the first line of the caraNam, the ‘cA’ falls at the end of the tAlam but he is careful to sing cAmaramau as one word. In the other kaikavaSi based renditions that I have heard, some people tend to miss this word split.

J: Agreed on that front. And notice that he does the same sangati for the dIn(A)rati portion like he did for the mAnambukai with some microtones sprinkled throughout. I observe that he alternates between doing a flat N2 and N2 with gamakas. As always it adds to the rendition.

“bANambu aTu chedarasEyalEdA” in thArasthAyi is mostly the same as the anupallavi. Here, the same joyous mood is still intact but there is a stronger feel of sharaNagati. It is as if tyAgarAja through BMK is inviting rAma to listen to his musical praise.

D: There is a wonderful AlApana that follows the bANambu line. There I actually was tempted to add a D1 imagining Shanmukhapriya but the D1 is so skillfully omitted which brings out a similar, but different bhAva altogether.

J: He does a “R2 N2 (meend gamaka) S R2 G2 R2 G2 R2 R2 S R2 R2 S’ for “bANambu aTu chedarasEyalEdA” and does a “G2 G2 R2 S N2 N2 S R2 G2 R2 N2 S R2 S G2 G2 R2 S N2 (2 quick gamakas) P” for “gAnalOla tyAgarAjanutu mahima’ and goes straight to the pallavi line. But he’s not finished. He sings “gAnalOla” a second time and it sounds different from the first; he is doing some voice modulation and some gamakas at different notes. And then he does it a third time and it’s different from the second one; he sings “gAnalOla” loudly, but immediately softens his voice for “tyAgarAjanutu mahima”. This is without a doubt a display of his spontaneity.

D: I really am impressed with the voice modulation in the thArasthAyi portions, especially Anupallavi and Charanam. One of the most attractive aspects of his rendition is voice modulation. Moreover, if the rAga has notes like G2, N2 where the karunA and bhakti bhAvas can be elaborated more, those rAgas sound more beautiful when BMK sings them. For instance, there is this additional beauty in the “gAnalOla” that starts with the swarAkshara note “G2” because of the flatter way it is rendered, with a very slight vibrato at the end enhancing the bhakti bhAva.

J: And he sings “vAchAmagOcharamE manasA” 4 times; like “gAnalOla tyAgarAjanutu mahima” he gives a different feel each time and does a brief AlApana towards mandrasthAyi to finish it off in style. You can hear M Chandrasekaran enjoying himself throughout and UKS maintaining the kAlapramANa as he always does. In conclusion, this vAchAmagOcharamE is a purely delectable meal we can enjoy together.

(D)- Deepak Varma Maliakal is a passionate rasika and musician who spends time on focusing on the nuances of swaras, swara patterns, subtleties in gamakas and popularizing Carnatic music by focusing on the voice modulation, bhAva and sAhitya aspects.

(J) -Jayram Sataluri is an ardent rasika of music and supporter of Sruti.

Both Deepak and Jayram are passionate admirers of Dr. Balamuralikrishna's music, otherwise known as muraLi gANam. To listen to vAchAmagOcharamE by Dr. Balamuralikrishna, please scan the QR code given below, with the camera on your phone.



Meera Ratnagiri – Bala Bhavam

Sunanda Akula

After watching a mesmerizing performance by Meera during her ranga pravesam last Fall, I was excited to find out that she was invited by Sruti to present on Sruti Day as part of the “Bala Bhavam” series. She surpassed my expectations yet again in delivering an enthralling performance.

Meera started with an invocatory piece by Oothukkadu Venkata Subba Iyer praising the dancing form of Lord Ganesha in rhythmic and aptly fast-paced beats composed in *Nata* ragam and set to *Aadi* talam. The song was beautifully composed with swaras melting into the sahityam and Meera executed the entire piece with utmost precision.

The next piece called “*Srungarinchukoni*”, a keertana composed in *Surati* ragam and set to *Adi* talam, from *Thyagaraja's Nauka charitram*, illustrates “*madhura bhakti*” of the gopikas for Lord Krishna through the various acts done by them in their love for Krishna. Meera's depiction of each gopika's emotions, vying for the attention of Krishna, with smiles exhibiting love, decorating herself with flowers, combing her hair or making fun of Krishna, was lively and graceful.

The last piece by Meera called “*Aalokaye*” is a tarangam from Narayana Teertha's Krishna Leela Tarangini composed in ragamalika and set to *Aadi* talam.

Meera began the item with very fluid yet crisp movements depicting the pallavi through the character of a maiden telling her companions to look at the beautiful form of the dancing Krishna. In the charanams “*govatsa brinda*” and “*navaneeta chora*”, Meera enacted the childhood acts of Krishna such as “*Kaliya mardhanam*” and the time when he shows his mother Yashoda, a myriad of universes in his mouth. The final charanam, “*charana nikvanita*” highlighted Meera's mastery of nritha through clear and crisp execution of intricate jathis interspersed with lyrics. The entire piece was a superb example of Meera's extremely competent execution of nimble footwork, complemented with authentic abhinaya.

All three pieces were beautifully choreographed by one of the internationally famous Kuchipudi exponents, Guru JaiKishore Mosalikanti.

Overall, the entire performance was a visual treat and it was no surprise that Meera kept the audience captive for a whole hour with utmost grace, poise, energy and authenticity and left them asking for more.

Sunanda Akula is a Kuchipudi artist and teacher. Sunanda is a past President of Sruti.

Growing Up with the Sruti Aradhana

Sanjana Narayanan

Whenever I hear the first charanaswaram of Endaro Mahanubhavulu, I feel like I'm back in the Delaware Temple, enjoying Sruti's most beloved tradition: the annual Thyagaraja Aradhana.

I have attended the Aradhana almost every year since the age of seven. Like most kids, I complained about donning an uncomfortable pattu-pavadai, sitting through the long, sleep-deprived drive to Hockessin, and performing a song under what I considered innumerable critical eyes. But even then, it was obvious what makes the Aradhana special: it's the one day every year when the entire Sruti community comes together.

The Aradhana begins early on a Saturday. (Invariably, I end up arriving late to the Utsava Sampradaya group singing.) As you enter the Delaware Temple, you're greeted by an explosion of color: you can bet that everyone is wearing their grandest sarees for the occasion.

Almost every student of music joins in for the Pancharatna rendition. It's easy to become blasé about this ritual: it's an hour of continuous singing, and there are undeniably some parts in Dudukugala that move like molasses. But the brilliant patterns of the charanaswaras never cease to uplift me, especially when they reach a climax. It's inspiring to think that every kalpanaswaram in Nattai or Arabhi has its roots in these archetypal krithis. During the Pancharatnas, I can only hear the group as a whole, never my own voice, but I prefer it that way. It's a humbling way to begin the day, a reminder that we're here to honor these enduring compositions.

For most people, individual participation is the hallmark of the Aradhana experience. I think that's because the Sruti population is the perfect size: large enough to qualify as a community, but small enough that we all know each other. As a result, everyone takes their five-minutes-long performance seriously, because we value our audience's opinions. Music teachers spend months preparing their students, their corrections becoming more urgent and less tactful as the weeks tick by; parents wake up early on registration day to snag a coveted morning slot; and kids practice their songs so many times that they drive their siblings crazy. But no pressure!

It's definitely made me nervous, especially when I was younger, and I can say the same for many of my friends. At the same time, it forces all of us to put in the extra effort to thoroughly internalize a krithi. It's not fun to painstakingly write out two pages' worth of corrections from your teacher the day before the Aradhana. (I can speak from experience.) But it is fun to listen to the final product: little kids singing their first-ever krithi with aplomb, or intermediate students mastering intricate gamakams in Thodi. We're all secretly hoping that the most fastidious rasikas in the audience will approve of our singing, and a simple "great job, kanna" from one of them can make our day!

When I was little, I would learn about new Thyagaraja krithis by listening to the older kids. And I'd pester my music teacher with requests to learn first Rama Nannu Brovara, then Pakkala Nilabadi a few years later. Now that I am one of the older kids (technically an adult, I suppose), I love hearing younger students sing the classics: Vara Leela Gana Lola (the kindergarten cult favorite), Isha Pahimam (everyone's first Kalyani), Nagumomu (perfect for any level of student), etc.

Hopefully your individual song isn't slated for noon, because by that time, everyone is secretly waiting for lunch. Clutching Styrofoam containers of thayir sadam, kids chatter to their friends at full volume after hours of whispering, and adults combine musical debate with good-natured gossip.

My favorite part of the day is the post-lunch concert. Although it's on the shorter side, I've discovered some of my favorite artists at the Aradhana: Abhishek Raghuram, Ramakrishnan Murthy, and Amrutha Venkatesh.

I have countless cherished Aradhana memories. The time when my friends and I (around ten years old) watched the pre-concert sound check from the balcony seats. (We were amused by the main artist's incomprehensible instructions to "lower the bass," and we couldn't believe that all the performers were wearing jeans!) Or the time when the audio malfunctioned during my song, and the audience winced with each boom or shriek from the speakers. Or simply the hours spent enjoying the concert with friends and hoping that we'd hear our favorite ragas.

I think part of the charm of the Aradhana lies in its predictability: the group singing, the individual participation, the chatty lunch hour, the concert. When you join in these same traditions year after year, they come to belong to you, and you truly feel at home in this community of Indian music enthusiasts. As a second-generation Indian-American, I can attest that this is a rare and treasured feeling.

Sanjana Narayanan is an avid student of Carnatic vocal music and a software engineer in Mountain View, California.

Thyagaraja Word Scramble

Aashi Suresh and Parvathy Oruganti

Kovur Pancharathna in Sanskrit

Raga with 4-note arohana created by Thyagaraja

Last composition of Thyagaraja

Age at which Thyagaraja started his musical journey

Ragam of Namo Namo Raghavaya

Thyagaraja's father's name

Deity praised in Purnalalitha krithi, Kaluguna

Ragam of Vara Shikhi Vahana on Lord Muruga

Short musical play written by Thyagaraja

Planet that has a crater named after Thyagaraja

Master Clue : According to Thyagaraja, what without devotion cannot be the right path?

Aashi Suresh (7th grade) and Parvathy Oruganti (5th grade) are students of music, learning from Smt. Uma Sivakumar

In tyAgarAja's own words: nAda and sangiita

Prabhakar Chitrapu

Notations:

- Non-English words (mostly Telugu & Sanskrit) are italicized, though proper nouns (i.e., names) are not.
- Spellings of non-English words (mostly Telugu & Sanskrit) are based on Modified Harvard-Kyoto-Scheme: a A i l/ii u U/uu e E/ee ai o O/oo au M (H or :) k kh g gh n/G c ch j jh n/J T Th D Dh N t th d dh n p ph b bh m y r l L v S sh s h

The word '*nAda*' appears in several of tyAgarAja's compositions. And in all these instances, he refers to *nAda* with utmost reverence, exalted importance and as the ultimate goal in life! So, the word, its meaning and significance have intrigued me and continue to do so. My understanding is still evolving and has gaps & inconsistencies in it. Yet, I am daring to write this article, less to provide a full answer to the question of *nAda*, but more to share my intrigue, possibly stimulate your interest in the topic and hopefully learn from your feedback.

The effort to write it was, I must admit, triggered by a recent Sruti Lec-Dem by Sriram Parasuram on this very topic (reminded by my good friend Balaji Raghothaman). I listened to it carefully, but was left more questions, mainly around completeness and consistency of the answers. Hence, this article came to be written, which I hope you will not find a waste of time, in spite of the premature nature of it.

According to my current understanding, *nAda* is not an audible sound, but something a lot more subtle. It is the most primal/original stimulus/movement in the human body, that initiates a process of sequential transformations of this initial energy, as it becomes more and more gross (as opposed to subtle) and ultimately manifests as audible sound, such as speech, music etc. There seems to be another meaning, which is a subtle vibration in the entire universe, that is in fact the origin and source of the universe.

In a number of his compositions, tyAgarAja sheds light on this mysterious *nAda* – sometimes explicitly referring to *nAda* and sometimes broadly within the context of *sangiita* as a whole. This article is a small attempt in collecting and organizing these scattered pieces of information about *nAda* in tyAgarAja's own words into a cohesive exposition, while also leaving open several questions that are not yet clear (to me).

What is *nAda*?

In the *pallavi* of the *kriti* "*nAda-tanum aniSam*" in *rAga cittaranjani* [1], tyAgarAja refers to Lord Siva as one whose body is *nAda*. So, we could infer that *nAda* is indeed Lord Siva's body!

Subsequently, in the *anupallavi* of the same *kriti*, he uses phrases such as *sAma-vEda-sAram* (essence of *sAma-vEda*), *nigamOttama* (the superior among the *nigama*-s), but it is not clear whether these are references to *nAda* (as Govindan suggests in his tyAgarAja-vaibhavam [website](#)) or Lord Siva.

Next, there is a similar characterization of *nAda* in the *kriti* "*E pApamu cEsitinO*" in *rAga aThANa* [2], where, in the first *caraNam*, tyAgarAja refers to "*nAda-rUpuDu*" (one whose form is *nAda*), who resides in the "*nAda-puram*" (city of *nAda*). Interestingly, in contrast to the "*nAda-tanum*" *kriti*, the reference here is to Lord rAma.

Then, there is the beautifully picturesque *kriti* "*nAda sudhA rasam*" in *rAga Arabhi* [3], where tyAgarAja refers to "*praNava nAda*", saying further that such *praNava-nAda* has taken a human form (of Lord Srii rAma).

While the above characterizations of *nAda* are in the context of the universe and outer world, tyAgarAja also talks about *nAda* in the context of the human body. For example, he uses the expression *mUIAdhAra-ja nAdamu* in the *kriti* “*svara rAga sudha*” in *rAga sankarAbharaNam* [4]. Literally, it means “*nAda*” which originates at the *mUIAdhAra-cakra* in the human body, which is said to be located at the base of the spine.

In the *kriti* “*vara-rAga-layajnulu*” in *rAga cencu-kAmbhOji* [5], tyAgarAja says that *nAda*, which originates in the physical body, is indeed the same as the divine *praNava* (*Om* sound): *dEhOdbhavambagu nAdamul divyamau praNavAkAram(u)* = the *nAda* which is born in the body is the divine cosmic *praNava*!

How does *nAda* transform to *svara-s* etc?

As mentioned in the beginning, the primal, unmanifest *nAda* goes through a process of steps at the end of which it manifests itself as sound – *svara-s* etc. What is this process? Does tyAgarAja talk about this?

I actually do not think so, even though it is often said (erroneously, in my opinion) in print, lec-dems and informal discussions that tyAgarAja does describe this in the *kriti* “*Sobhillu sapta svara*” in *rAga jaganmOhini* [6].

Taking the lyrics of the *kriti* literally and making no interpretations and extrapolations, the *kriti* only says that 7 notes (*sapta-svara-s*) shine in various places in the human body – namely, *nAbhi* (navel), *hrit* (heart), *kanTha* (throat), *rasana* (tongue), *nAsa* (nose) etc. No doubt, they are ordered in the way in which sound travels within the human body, but tyAgarAja does not explicitly say that the 7-*svara-s* are produced in this sequence of steps. Perhaps, it is only a minute distinction and I am making much ado about it.

However, in the *kriti* “*mOkshamu galada*” in *rAga sAramati* [7], does explicitly suggest how the 7-notes are produced in the human body by the manifestation of the universal *nAda* (*praNava-nAda*) by the mixing of the *prANa* & *anala* (life-air & fire/energy): *prANAnala sam-yOgamu valla praNava nAdamu sapta svaramulai paraga*.

svara-s (musical notes)

svara-s are the atoms of music, which, put together, forms music (*sangiita*). So, it is no surprise that tyAgarAja, respectfully referred to as *sangiita-brahma* (original creator of music) dwells on this concept heavily in his compositions. (It may be noted here that William Jackson in his book [8] observes that it is not common for artists, in general, to talk about the medium of their art within their artistic works themselves – and that tyAgarAja is unique in it).

As explained earlier in the *kriti* “*Sobhillu sapta svara*” [6], tyAgarAja describes the places in the human body where the 7-notes reside and shine (navel, heart, throat, tongue, nose). In the same *kriti*, he goes on to say that the 7-*svara-s* also shine in the *vEda-s*, in the heart of *gAyatri mantra*, and in the *manas* (hearts) of Gods and good people.

In the previously mentioned *kriti* “*nAda-tanum*” [1], tyAgarAja goes on to say that the 7-*svara-s* originate from the 5-faces of Lord Siva!

There are numerous other compositions wherein tyAgarAja uses the word *svara* to denote their beauty, extol their value etc. and I shall avoid trying to enumerate them.

Constituents of *sangiita*

In several of his compositions, tyAgarAja points out various aspects of *sangiita* (good music). A presumably incomplete list is:

- *svara* (musical notes)
- *rAga* (melodic structure)
- *laya* (although not very clear to me, it seems to be an umbrella term covering *svara*, *rAga*, *tAla*)

- *sangati* (musical variations of a lyrical phrase of a kriti within its rAga structure)
- *jati*
- *mUrchana* (characteristic musical phrases of a rAga)
- *gati* (tempo)
- *bhAva* (emotional feel/aesthetic appeal)

Unfortunately, I am not entirely satisfied with my understanding of some of the above terms and would appreciate clarifications from my readers!

Some *kriti*-s referring to such aspects are:

- *sogasuga mrudanga tALamu* [9]: *yati viSramayuta kritiE* = *kriti* filled with *yati* & *visrama*
- *rAga sudhA rasa* [10]: *sadASiva mayamagu nAdOmkAra svara vidulu* = scholars who know the musical notes emanating from the *Om-kAra nAdam*, which is indeed made up of Lord Siva
- *duDuku gala* [11] *caraNam 6: ..svara-layambu lerugaka...* = without knowing *svara* & *laya*
endaro mahAnubhAvulu [12]: *caraNam 4: ..svara-(laya+Adi)-rAgamulu teliyuvAru* = those who know the *svara*, *laya*, *rAga* etc

Components of an ideal *kriti*

tyAgarAja talks about the structure of an ideal musical composition in some of his compositions. In the “*sogasuga mrudanga tALamu*” *kriti* [9], he comes close to almost defining it! According to this *kriti*, an ideal composition should:

- be made up of truthful words containing *vEdic* meanings (*nigama SirOrthamu kalgina nija vAkkulatO*)
- have purity of notes (*svara SuddhamutO*)
- have a good balance of *yati* & *viSrama* (pauses)
- have devotion
- be simple (as *drAkshA rasa*)
- filled with all 9 *rasa*-s (*nava rasa yuta*)

In the *kriti* “*kaddanu vAriki*” in *rAga tODi* [13], tyAgarAja seems to imply that a proper devotional composition should consist of a pure heart/*manas* and good *svara*-s (*Suddhamaina manasucE su-svaramutO*)

Similarly, in the *kriti* “*nAda sudhA rasam*” in *rAga ARabhi* [3], although not directly, tyAgarAja seems to suggest that a good composition should consist of

- 7 *svara*-s
- Beautiful *rAga*
- Words of *dura*, *naya*, *dESyamu* types
- *sangati*-s

Exalted position & value of *bhakti* laden *sangiita*

It is very clear from tyAgarAja’s compositions that he holds *sangiita* laden with *bhakti* in a very high position and attributes them the ultimate life values (as per *vEdism*). To him, *sangiita* is a means for the salvation of the individual and the soul. It is a path to self-realization and a means to see the ultimate God. Here are some examples in support of the above assertion.

- In the *kriti* “*mOkshamu galada*” in *rAga sAramati* [7], tyAgarAja questions whether one can have spiritual liberation (*mOksham*) without devotion to the Lord and knowledge of *sangiita*!
- In the *kriti* “*rAga sudhA rasa*” in *rAga AndOlika* [10], he says that drinking the nectar of *rAga*-s will bestow the fruits of *yAga* (spiritual rituals), *yOga* (union of the Self and brahman) and *tyAga* (renunciation)! Further, he says that those who know *nAda*, *Om-kAra* and *svara*-s are indeed *jiivan-mukta*-s (liberated while living)
- In the *kriti* “*sangiita jnAnamu*” in *rAga dhanyAsi* [14], tyAgarAja asks rhetorically if there is a better way than knowledge of *sangiita* and devotion. He goes on to assert that *sangiita* is meditated upon (*upAsana*) by even divine musicians such as *bhrungi*, *naTESa*, *samiiraNa*, *ghaTaja*, *matanga*, *nArada* etc.
- In the *kriti* “*svara rAga sudha*” in *rAga SankarAbharaNam* [4], tyAgarAja says that devotion coupled with the nectar of the 7 *svara*-s is indeed a step ladder to the heavens (*svarga*). In a subsequent *caraNam*, he says that one with the knowledge of the *rAga*-s, together with intrinsic devotion is the liberated one. And, further that, knowing the *nAda* that emanates from the *mUlAdhAra-cakra* is indeed the blissful state of *mOksha* (spiritual liberation).
- In the popular *kriti* “*sAmaja vara gamana*” in *rAga hindOLam* [15], tyAgarAja says that the supreme Lord (whom, incidentally, tyAgarAja does not mention by name in this *kriti*) is the (brightly shining) lamp atop the mountain of *nAda* of the 7-*svara*-s, which are born of the mother of all *vEda*-s.
- In the *kriti* “*nAda sudhA rasa*” in *rAga Arabhi* [3], tyAgarAja says that the nectar of the *nAda* is indeed the support of *vEda*-s, *Agama*-s, *Sastra*-s and *purANa*-s.
- In the *kriti* “*sangiita SAstra jnAnamu*” in *rAga mukhari* [16], tyAgarAja says that the knowledge of the science of *sangiita* produces manifest (*sArUpya*) happiness. And further that it will bestow loving devotion, kindness to good people, the grace of Lord Srii rAma, discipline, fame and wealth too.
- In the *kriti* “*eTIA dorikitivO*” in *rAga Vasanta* [17], tyAgarAja wonders if his love and devotion for Lord rAma was the fruit of the *nAda* of the 7-*svara*-s (*su-svarapu nAda phalamO*).
- In the *kriti* “*Sriipa-priya*” in *rAga aThANa* [18], tyAgarAja goads his mind to perform *sangiita upAsana* of *Sriipapriya*. And he beautifully refers to him as *sapta-svara-cAri* – one who moves/dwells-in the 7-*svara*-s.
- In the *kriti* “*Srii raghuvara apramEya*” in *rAga kAmbhOji* [19], tyAgarAja refers to Lord rAma as one who revels in *sangiita* (*sangiita IOla*) and *nArada* as the one who delights in *svara*, *laya* and *mUrchana* etc.
- In the *kriti* “*nAma kusumamula*” in *rAga Srii* [20], tyAgarAja says that Lord rAma is seated on a gem studded platform of *nAda svaram*.
- In the *kriti* “*mElu mElu*” in *rAga sourAshTra* [21], tyAgarAja makes a very interesting and rather unusual remark. In *caraNam#4*, tyAgarAja says that the happiness (*sukha*) of the name of rAma is preferable to that of even the knowledge of the essence of song (*gAna rasa*) obtained after possessing the true devotion of Lord rAma! It seems to me that this is a singular instance where tyAgarAja considers something higher than the knowledge of music! (Although not connected to *sangiita*, it is interesting to note in *caraNam#2* that the *rAma-nAma-sukha* (happiness of name of rAma) is preferable to even meditating/thinking (*cintincu*) in one’s mind about Srii rAma.
- Finally, in the *kriti* “*siitaavara*” in *rAga dEva-gandhAri* [22], tyAgarAja says that *sangiita jnAnam* (knowledge of music) (is so special that it) should have been bequeathed by Lord brahma (the creator) himself. And further that Lord rAma is the rejoicer of *su-svara* (good notes)!

Conclusion

In my view, for tyAgarAja, *sangiita* and *bhakti* were life itself. He was, in my opinion, both a scientific explorer of the field of *sangiita*, having explored its depths and expanded its breadths. Simultaneously, he was a true *bhakta*, seeking the highest goals of *vEdism*. I am not sure which of these two was a stronger force – perhaps they were equal.

In this article, I hope that I have presented an account of how tyAgarAja looked at one of these dimensions, namely *sangiita*, as revealed in his own words. I tried to avoid callous extrapolations and tried to be as comprehensive as possible. I recognize that there are gaps and possibly errors and would gratefully receive any constructive feedback.

References

- “nAda-tanum aniSam” in *rAga cittaranjani* [1]
“E pApamu cEsitinO” in *rAga aThANa* [2]
“nAda sudhA rasam” in *rAga Arabhi* [3]
“svara rAga Sudha” in *rAga sankarAbharaNam* [4]
“vara-rAga-layajnulu” in *rAga cencu-kAmbhOji* [5]
“Sobhillu sapta svara” in *rAga ??* [6]
“mOkshamu galada” in *rAga sAramati* [7]
Tyagaraja: Life and Lyrics by William Jackson [8]
sogasuga mrudanga tALamu [9]
rAga sudhA rasa [10]
duDuku gala [11]
endaro mahAnubhAvulu [12]
kaddanu vAriki” in *rAga tODi* [13]
“sangiita jnAnamu” in *rAga dhanyAsi* [14]
“sAmaja vara gamana” in *rAga hindOLam* [15]
“sangiita SAstra jnAnamu” in *rAga mukhari* [16]
“eTIA dorikativO” in *rAga Vasanta* [17]
“Sriipa-priya” in *rAga aThANa* [18]
“Srii raghuvara apramEya” in *rAga kAmbhOji* [19]
“nAma kusumamula” in *rAga Srii* [20]
“mElu” in *rAga sourAshTra* [21]
“siitaavara” in *rAga dEva-gandhAri* [22]

Prabhakar Chitrapu is a lover of music, language and philosophy. He often contributes to Sruti publications and has served the organization in various capacities. He maintains a website www.Thyagaraja.org

Ciṭṭai Svarā-s in Saint Tyāgarājā's Kṛti-s

Srividya Sridhar

Many rasikā-s/students are surprised when they learn that Tyāgarājā himself didn't compose any of the ciṭṭai svarā-s in his kṛti-s. We are so accustomed to singing/listening to some of his popular kṛti-s (e.g., Nenaruncinānu, Telisi rāma, Śōbhillu saptasvara) with the ciṭṭai svarā-s that it is unimaginable to think of the rendition without it. This then begs the question, is the authenticity of Tyāgarājā's compositions in danger due to the addition of ciṭṭai svarā-s? In order to contemplate a response to this question, one must consider another aspect i.e. "What is it in Saint Tyāgarājā's compositions that lures the musical appetites of rasikās and performers alike, generation after generation?" In my opinion, it is the "all-inclusive" nature of his works. There is something in it for everyone. From the linguist, to the philosopher, to the social reformer, to the poet, to a spiritualist, a thespian, a devout bhaktā, to a strict art music/pure music lover, all the way to a lay listener - everyone can find rich content relevant to their area of interest. Yet, he weaves all of this into his compositions with such simplicity and seamlessness that these elements are inseparable in his work. His style of composition is described by scholars as Drāksha pāka (the sweetness or essence or rasā flows the moment it is tasted). This "all inclusive" quality of his compositions is precisely the reason I think that the authenticity of Tyāgarājā's compositions is way beyond destruction due to addition of appendages such as ciṭṭai svarā-s.

Although ciṭṭai svarā-s have been in existence for various compositions like varnam-s, and svarajati-s and even in some kṛti-s during the pre-trinity period, we see them becoming more significant as a compositional tool with the popularity of the use of rhythmic flourishes and kaṇakku as well as interspersed fast paced renditions becoming a highlight in sabhā gāna. The ciṭṭai svarā-s added to Tyāgarājā's kṛti-s have features such as yati-s (Dorakunā- sndpmgr, ndpmgr, dpmgr, pmgr, mgr), svarālankarā-s-jēsinadella (repetitive occurrence of pdn phrase), clear representation of ārōhanā-avarōhanā (Nenaruncinānu), makutam (Vara rāga layajnu), depicting this progressive development towards rhythmic explorations in rāga. Most modern era ciṭṭai svarā-s are in madhyama kāla and impart a pep-factor to the composition that imparts a certain brilliance to the rendition in a concert (for example: several of G.N.Balasubramaniam's compositions such as Unnadiye, Varavallabha and also the popular one he added to Tyāgarājā's vara rāga layajnu). It is a fact that Carnatic music and its audience have dynamically evolved and musicians are always looking for ways to attract a wide range of audience as their patronage and in many cases, livelihoods depend on it. It is possible that this is one of the reasons that ciṭṭai svarā-s became more popular with the evolving Carnatic diaspora.

Another question may arise in this context - if there was any specific reason, Tyāgarājā himself didn't use ciṭṭai svarā-s in his compositions to add musical embellishment, even though it was done by his contemporaries and some composers prior to him. Perhaps he felt content with the way he packed the rāgalakṣhanā as well as the prosodic beauty through his sāhityā itself, maybe his focus was more on delivering the emotional content of his bhakti (Lakshyā over Lakṣhaṇā). But does that mean he was opposed to the addition of ciṭṭai svarā-s? Evidence suggests not. He himself composed ciṭṭai svarā-s and sāhityā for his ghana rāga pañcaratnā-s which give insight into how he might have developed ciṭṭai svarā-s for kṛti-s if he were going to do so. Manuscripts of his disciples-for e.g: Vīnā Kuppaiyyar in 1826 (during his lifetime) and other resources such as Cinnasvāmi Mudaliyār's book (1885) suggest that his direct disciples composed ciṭṭai svarā-s for his kṛti-s even during his lifetime, which he approved and endorsed. Some examples include, Mariyādagādūrā in śankarābharanam (added by Vālājāpeṭ Venkatramana Bhagavatar); Tappi Bratiki-Tōdi (added by Vīnā Kuppaiyyar). Several are added by other disciples later in his śiṣya paramparā as well. The point to note is that many of these scholars stayed true to Tyāgarājā's interpretation of the rāga as seen in the ciṭṭai svarā-s for e.g. cāla kallalādukonna -ārabhi- the original ciṭṭai svarā-s had S,DP prayōga instead of SNDP, matching with Tyāgarājā's ciṭṭai svarā prayōga in the ārabhi pañcaratnam. Similarly, Sari evvarē (śrīrāṅjani) has ciṭṭai svarā-s composed with MRGRS prayōgā-s mirroring that in the kṛti itself.

Creativity is the core of any art form; however Carnatic music is unique in the sense that it affords several layers of creativity for the practitioner and composer alike. Unlike in western classical music, where original pieces are strictly played as per the composer's notations, Carnatic music affords the practitioner manōdharmā around the original (for e.g.: Neraval, Kalpanā svaram). So much so that once composed, the piece is no longer the composer's sole property per se. In fact, in the golden age of Carnatic music (1700-1900), Vidvān-s enjoyed appreciating and even embellishing each other's art. As the Sangīta Sampradāya Pradarśini suggests, the śrīrañjani varnā composed by Rāmasvāmi Dīkshitā was adorned by ciṭṭai svarā-s added on by Śyāmā sāstri, Cinnasvāmi Dīkshitā and Muttusvāmi Dīkshitā. So, it is no wonder that scholars and musicians still continue to do so within the discipline of this art. The ciṭṭai svarā-s for several of Tyāgarājā's kṛti-s themselves have undergone changes over the years. Perhaps, these additions and the changes to the additions themselves might benefit a music historian in understanding the rāgalakshanā-s and how they might have evolved over the years, without affecting the core of the kṛti itself. It is also worthwhile to note that Tyāgarājā's kṛti-s have lent themselves to these additions, highlighting their versatility which itself is one of the trademark features of his work. Although every performer will sing kalpanā svarā-s for Tyāgarājā's kṛti-s, as far as addition of ciṭṭai svarā-s to his kṛti-s is concerned, only those that are composed by qualified musicians who have studied his style carefully have stood the test of time.

Sources:

1. The Music Academy Journal 2017, Vol 88 - Dr. R.S.Jayalakshmi's article
2. The Music Academy Journal 1987, Vol.58 - T.S.Parthasarathy
3. The Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja - Author: Dr. V. Raghavan, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math
4. Sangīta Sampradāya Pradarśini, Subbarāma Dīkshitā, 1904

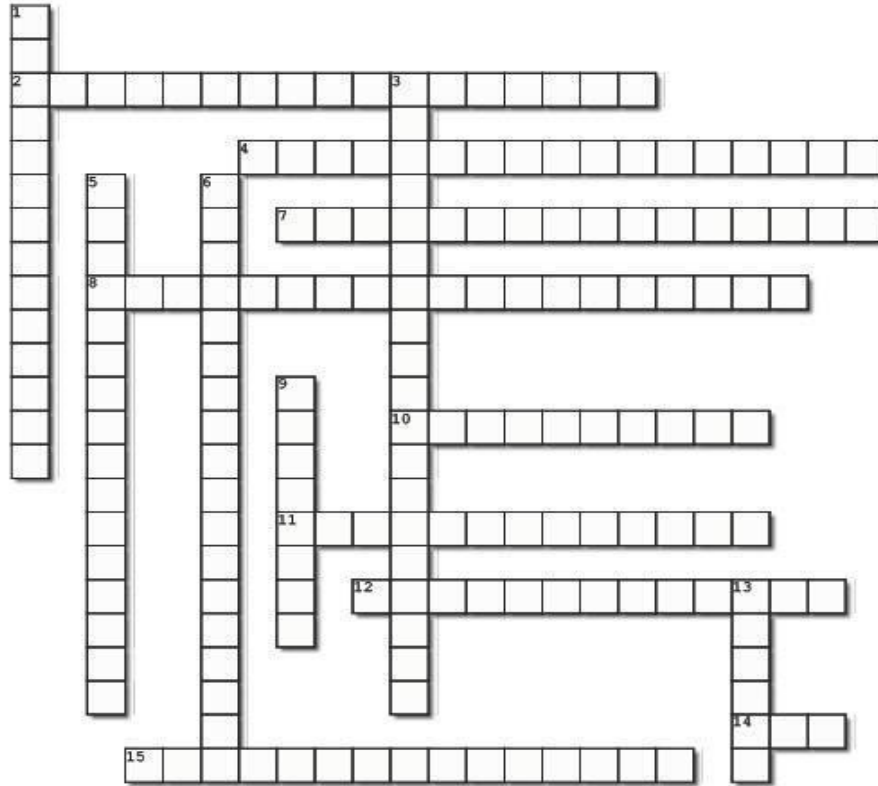
Srividya Sridhar is a Carnatic vocalist and teacher, living in Reading, PA. She and her family are active supporters of SRUTI and ardent music rasikas as well. Srividya is also the programs/scholarships vice-chair as part of the board of trustees of the Reading Musical Foundation, and a scientist by profession.

Thyagaraja Crossword I

Kashyap Tumuluri

Name: _____

* Please spell out the years



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Across

2. Thyagaraja Kriti starts with meaning ' Does wealth bring happiness'
4. Kriti inscribed on the walls of the house of Thyagaraja
7. Last composition of Thyagaraja
8. First Sruti Thyagaraja Aradhana year *
10. Which temple Deity was Thyagaraja named after
11. Actual (given) name of Thyagaraja
12. One of the musical (opera) composed by Thyagaraja in telugu
14. How many brothers did Thyagaraja have?
15. which group performed Thyagaraja Vaibhavam dance drama on November 20, 1999

Down

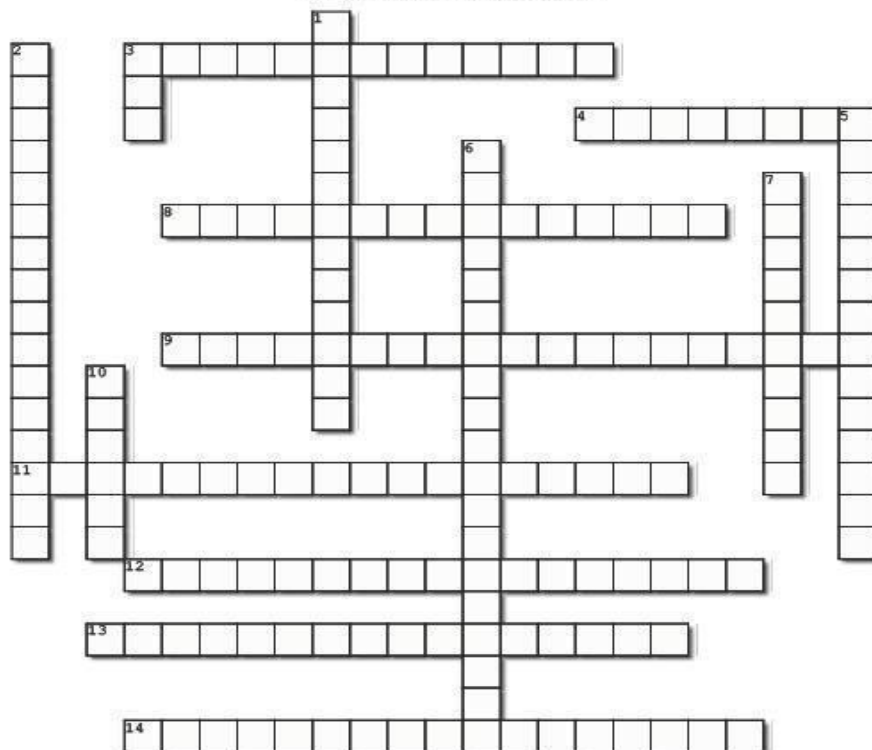
1. In which year Mandolin Srinivas performed first time for Sruti? *
3. Guru of Thyagaraja
5. Raagam of Enduku Peddala
6. First Thyagaraja aradhana Souvenir released in this year *
9. Thyagaraja propagated this to the world through his keertans
13. How many Kritis did Thyagaraja compose in Thodi raga

Thyagaraja Crossword II

Kashyap Tumuluri

Name: _____

* Please spell out the years



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3. Actual (given) name of Thyagaraja
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10. How many Kritis did Thyagaraja compose in Thodi raga

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Mridangam - Vid K.H.Vineeth

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Dr. R. Suryaprakash

A well acclaimed and widely traveled performing vocalist, musician, scholar, composer, lyricist and guru in the sphere of Carnatic Music today, Kalaimamani Dr. R. Suryaprakash has carved a niche for himself in the hearts of audiences all over the globe, with his temple-bell like ringing voice that traverses three octaves and enthralling music. He had his musical foundation from the age of 7 from his uncle Tirukkodikaval Rajamani, a disciple of Pitamaha Semmangudi. He went on to receive advanced musical training from 'Sangeetha Kalanidhi' T V Sankaranarayanan, nephew and disciple of the legendary 'Ganakaladhara' Madurai Mani Iyer, for more than a decade. Dubbed by the well-known critic MVR as "traditional, yet original", Suryaprakash has built his original musical edifice on the foundation of the great tradition of his Paramaguru Madurai Mani Iyer and the assimilated essence of the best of other traditions. An "A" graded artiste by All India Radio, Chennai, Suryaprakash has performed far and wide and has been recognised with many titles including "Kalaimamani" from the Government of Tamil Nadu, "Gana Kala Vipanchee" from the legendary Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna and the "Best Concert" prize from the Madras Music Academy.

B V Raghavendra Rao (Violin)

Raghavendra Rao hails from a distinguished family of musicians. He was initiated into music at an early age of seven by his father B. Sudarsana Rao. Attracted by the lure of classical music from his childhood, he trained rigorously on the violin for several years and he is the disciple of the late violin “Maestro” Sangeetha Kalanidhi Shri. T. N. Krishnan. Later, he received invaluable guidance and concert experience from Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna, one of the greatest musicians India has produced in this century. As a young artiste, he received the appreciation of the President of India for accompanying the celebrated musical genius, and is recognized today as an accomplished and most popular violinists in the Carnatic music genre today. He has won several prizes and awards from various sabhas in Chennai and has participated in the prestigious Bharat Cultural Integration Committee’s (B.C.I.C) music festivals organized all over India. Raghavendra Rao has performed internationally in numerous music festivals of I.C.C.R., and the prestigious “Festival of India” programs. He has widely traveled all over the world, including the U.S.A, Canada, France, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and the Middle Eastern countries.

K. H. Vineeth (Mridangam)

K. H. Vineeth is an AIR ‘A’ grade artist and a disciple of Vidwan. Palakkad Mahesh Kumar and Vidwan Patri Sathish Kumar. He has had the opportunity to accompany many stalwarts in Carnatic Music. He has also performed in countries like Singapore, Dubai, Bahrain and USA.

Thyagaraja Word Scramble Answer

Aashi Suresh and Parvathy Oruganti

S H A M B O M A H A D E V A
V I V A R D H A N I
G I R I P A I
T H I R T E E N
D E S I Y A T O D I
R A M A B R A H M A M
A N J A N E Y A
S U P R A D E E P A M
N A U K A C H A R I T A M
M E R C U R Y

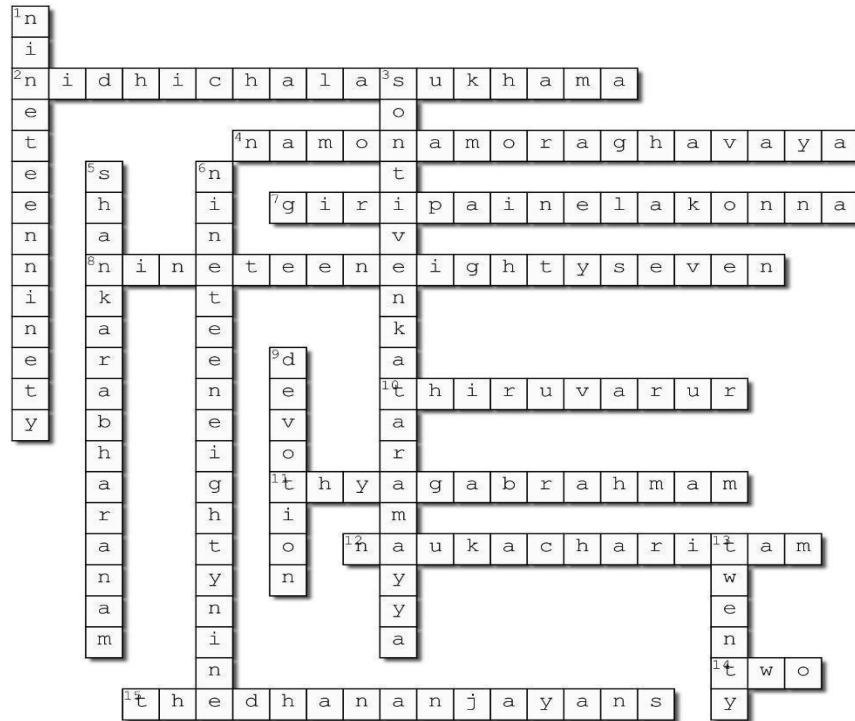
Master Clue Answer: SANGEETHA JNANAMU

Thyagaraja Crossword I and II Answers

Kashyap Tumuluri

Name: _____

* Please spell out the years



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Across

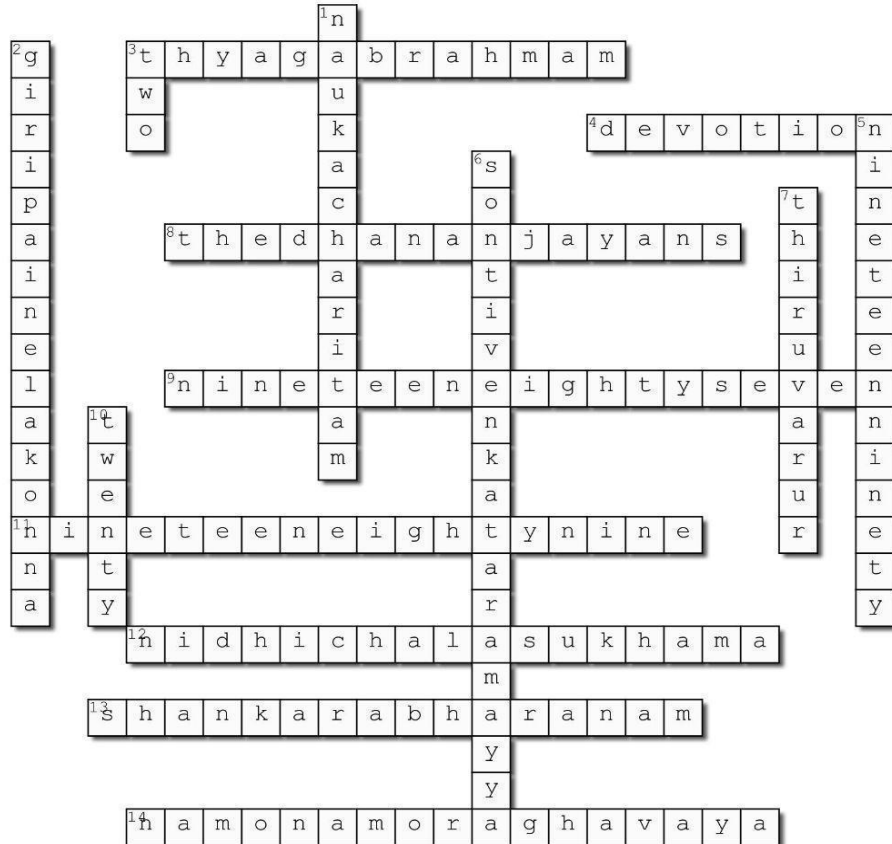
2. Thyagaraja Kriti starts with meaning ' Does wealth bring happiness' (**nidhichalasukhama**)
4. Kriti inscribed on the walls of the house of Thyagaraja (**namonamoraghavaya**)
7. Last composition of Thyagaraja (**giripainelakonna**)
8. First Sruti Thyagaraja Aradhana year * (**nineteeneightyseven**)
10. Which temple Deity was Thyagaraja named after (**thiruvarur**)
11. Actual (given) name of Thyagaraja (**thyagabrahmam**)
12. One of the musical (opera) composed by Thyagaraja in telugu (**naukacharitam**)
14. How many brothers did Thyagaraja have? (**two**)
15. which group performed Thyagaraja Vaibhavam dance drama on November 20, 1999 (**thedhananjayans**)

Down

1. In which year Mandolin Srinivas performed first time for Sruti? * (**nineteenninety**)
3. Guru of Thyagaraja (**sontivenkataramayya**)
5. Raagam of Enduku Peddala (**shankarabharanam**)
6. First Thyagaraja aradhana Souvenir released in this year * (**nineteeneightynine**)
9. Thyagaraja propagated this to the world through his keerrtans (**devotion**)
13. How many Kritis did Thyagaraja compose in Thodi raga (**twenty**)

Name: _____

* Please spell out the years



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

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