



Sruti

The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia



Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir

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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 Rasikas,

As we gather this year, to celebrate the esteemed tradition of Thyagaraja Aradhana, I am filled with immense joy and gratitude. This sacred occasion not only honors the legacy of the legendary saint-composer Thyagaraja but also fosters a deep sense of unity and devotion among us.

Thyagaraja's compositions transcend time and space, touching the very essence of our souls with their profound melodies and spiritual depth. His creations embody the beauty of bhakti, the power of faith, and the essence of divine love.

In today's world, where distractions abound and uncertainties prevail, the melodies of Thyagaraja's kritis serve as a guiding light, leading us back to our inner sanctum, reminding us of what truly matters in life – our connection with the divine.

After taking a deep breath at the beginning of 2024, we, at the SRUTI Board, are ready to serve up yet another year of soul-satisfying programming. While providing a colorful experience, our goal is also to be of value to you as a learning canvas and a stepping-stone for the upcoming artists.

We want to thank the outgoing team, headed by Sivakumar Pitchumani (Siva), for an inspiring 2023. For 2024, the musically talented President-Elect Rajee Padmanabhan, brings her exquisite communication skills to the table. Our treasurer Venkat Kilambi has been and will be our solid pillar to lean on, for keeping us within financial guardrails as a non-profit organization. Sriram Satagopan, our Director for Resources and Geetha Shankar will continue to be our key connective tissue through our planning and meetings thereof. Ravi Iyer, one of our local percussion talents and teachers, has rolled up his sleeves and smoothly stepped into the cadence of Publications and Outreach. Our Marketing Guru, Nari Narayanan, as all of us know, comes in with his ubiquitous presence and has a mission to make SRUTI omnipresent. The calm and organized Lavanya Sambasivan takes up the Director 1 role and V S Narayan, with a rich financial background, wears the hat of Director 2. I appreciate the efforts of all the members of the committees, chaired by the respective Directors. A big shout out to the spouses of the Board members and the volunteers for their unwavering support and selfless dedication. Last but not least, we also welcome the SYG (SRUTI Youth Group) headed and guided by Lavanya Sambasivan. This talented group of youngsters have fueled the organization with fresh blood. They continue to energize our SRUTI events with their diligent volunteering and pure enthusiasm.

Welcome aBoard! 😊

Our Thyagaraja Day's main concert features J.A. Jayant (Flute) - an artiste, collaborator, teacher and composer performing across the globe and popularizing the art of flute playing. The mellifluous L Ramakrishnan (Violin) and the young star artist NC Bharadwaj (Mridangam) will ably support him on stage.

Our Spring Season continues with Bharat Sundar's and Vishnudev's vocal concerts in April, followed by Lalgudi siblings (GJR Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi) on the violin and N. J. Nandini's vocal concert in May. Please stay tuned for more exciting Fall 2024 events, including a weekend of Music and Dance Festival.

We want to thank you for your continued support and encouragement. Wishing you all a blessed Thyagaraja Aradhana!

With warm regards,

Lata Suresh

President, SRUTI

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From the Publications and Outreach Committee

Welcome to the 38th annual Thyagaraja Aradhana Celebrations. The much awaited Thyagaraja Aradhana is the first major event for the year and heralds the stellar musical and dance events planned for the year. It is also the time when we release the first publication for Sruti, the TA souvenir. On behalf of the publications and outreach committee, it gives me immense pleasure to bring to you the 2024 edition of the Aradhana Souvenir.

This year's cover page of the souvenir is a beautiful drawing conceptualized, designed, and executed with paint brush by Sri. Jayakrishnan Unni. He is a senior disciple of Sangita Kalanidhi Sri. Neyveli R. Santhanagopalan.

Next, I will provide a preview of what you can expect to take away from reading the articles that follow the cover page description. We first start with a reprint of an article from the 1992 edition of the souvenir contributed by our long-standing member Sri. Akkaraju Sarma. It is a translation of the five gems "Pancharathnas" of Thyagaraja by his late father Sri. Akkaraju Subramanya Sarma. It can be considered as a pioneering work as at that time (around 30 years ago) this was perhaps only one of the two English translations as noted in the acknowledgement section of the article.

Next, the articles by both Dr. Sharma and Sri. R. Venkatasubramanian shed light on the profound influence of Saint Thyagaraja, a luminary in Carnatic music and a beacon of devotion. Dr. Sharma delves into Thyagaraja's vedic vision of life, emphasizing his adherence to timeless principles and his integration of Bhakti, Karma, and Jnana Yoga in his musical legacy. Similarly, R. Venkatasubramanian focuses on Thyagaraja's role as a proponent of the Bhakti path, highlighting his intense devotion to Lord Rama and his ability to transport listeners into a realm of spiritual connection through his compositions. Both authors underscore the enduring impact of Thyagaraja's life and works, which continue to inspire seekers on the path of self-realization and spiritual fulfillment.

This is followed by a tribute article to Sri. D. Seshachari of the famed Hyderabad brothers. Jayram Sataluri's heartfelt tribute to the rendition of "lAvaNya rAma" by the late Sri Daruri Seshachari and his brother Raghavachari encapsulates the profound impact of Thyagaraja's composition and the unique interpretation by the Hyderabad Brothers. He delves into the technical aspects of the rendition, discussing the raga, the intricate swara patterns, and the embellishments employed by the brothers. Overall, Sataluri's article is a heartfelt tribute to the artistry and devotion of the Hyderabad Brothers, celebrating their contribution to the rich tapestry of Carnatic music and honoring their legacy for generations to come.

Next the readers will be indulged in a thought-provoking article by Prabhakar Chitrapu where he explores the composition of Thyagaraja titled "Edi nii bAhubala parAkramamu," exploring its unique themes and rendering of this composition in two different ragas by different artists. It questions the expression of aggression and violence within the lyrics, contrasting it with Thyagaraja's usual positive sentiments in his compositions. He also discusses the ambiguity of the raga in which the composition is set, proposing interpretations based on emotional appeal.

Deepak Varma Maliakal and Jayram Sataluri in a conversation format analyze Dr. Mangalampalli Balamuralikrishna's rendition of "sudhA mAdhurya bhAshaNa." The conversation explores various aspects of the performance, including the unique characteristics of the rAgam sindhu rAmakriyA, BMK's interpretation, and the accompanying artists' contributions. In conclusion, Deepak and Jayram describe BMK's rendition as a delightful musical experience, akin to enjoying a delectable meal, inviting listeners to savor the sweetness and richness of Carnatic music!!

I want to especially thank the youngsters from the SRUTI Youth Group where Vivek Arvind contributed to the crossword puzzle, and an article by Bhavya Guru that celebrates the tradition of Aradhana in Carnatic music, honoring Saint Thyagaraja's compositions annually. It highlights gatherings worldwide, from Thiruvaiyaru, Tamil Nadu, to Cleveland, Ohio and showcases Thyagaraja's global influence, uniting people in their appreciation for his music across cultures. In keeping with a similar theme, the second article by Aadhya Kurthakoti reflects Thyagaraja's life and musical legacy, and discusses his devotion to lord Rama, the popularity of his compositions, and ongoing Aradhana celebrations, inspiring aspiring singers globally. Something unique in this edition is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and an interview with ChatGPT from the perspective of Sadguru Thyagaraja by Krithi Iyer.

Last but not the least, Balaji Raghothaman recounts his profound experience visiting the samadhi of Sri Thyagaraja Swami at Thiruvaiyaru in December 2023. In closing Balaji reflects on the serene beauty of the Kaveri riverbanks, imagining Thyagaraja traversing the same landscapes with his tambura, his divine music echoing through time. The description along with beautiful photographs transports the reader to a virtual tour to this holy shrine in the state of Tamil Nadu.

One major change you will notice in this year's TA souvenir is the medium through which we are disseminating the publication. Based on the feedback from Sruti members, keeping in mind the environmental sustainability, and to balance cost, the 2024 publication will be in a digital only format.

Throughout the year, the publications and outreach committee will be looking to identify opportunities to conduct outreach events. Outreach events include for example activities such as presentation of lec-dem by local music teachers at venues, collaborating with school and university music departments, presenting Carnatic music at senior living homes. This committee requests Sruti sponsors and members to channel any ideas to this committee via publications@sruti.org. We plan to select and act on at least one outreach event for the year 2024.

On behalf of SRUTI Publications and outreach committee

Ravi Iyer, Prabhakar Chitrapu, Jayram Sataluri, Raman Visweswaran



About the Cover

Jayakrishnan Unni

The painting (acrylic on canvas) combines the underlying concepts of two compositions of Saint Tyagaraja and attempts to portray the bliss that comes from meditating on Rama. Tyagaraja in his composition, Inta saukhya (Kapi, adi), asks, whoever knows about the bliss given by Rama nama. Later in the kriti, he declares that only Sankara, Lord Siva, knows the sweetness of Rama Nama - as sweet as refined sugar, combined with the nectar of Swara, Raga and Laya. In the kriti, Gitarthamu (suruti), the saint extols Anjaneya as the one who truly knows the essence and bliss of music.



He says,
"sItApati charaNAbjamullIDu konna
vAtAtmajuniki bAga telusura"

The son of Vayu, Vatatmaja or Anjaneya, who holds on his hands, the lotus feet of Rama - the consort of Sita, only he knows the true essence of music.

The painting depicts in a series of triangular compositions, a Siva linga, inside of which is seated Lord Anjaneya, inside of whom resides Rama (with the feet of Rama, literally touching Anjaneya's hands), inside of whom is seated Sita (in the form of Lakshmi).

This year's cover page of the souvenir is a beautiful painting conceptualized, designed, and executed with paint brush by Sri. Jayakrishnan Unni. We are thankful to Sri. Jayakrishnan for agreeing to lend his support and design this cover page for us. Jayakrishnan Unni is a popular upcoming carnatic musician. He is a disciple of Sangita Kalanidhi Sri. Neyveli R. Santhanagopalan and is an "A" graded artist of All India Radio, Chennai. He completed his Ph.D from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras, and is currently an Assistant Professor in communication, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham. He is also adept at painting, designing, and playing the veena.



Five Gems of Tyagaraja

Akkaraju Sarma

This is a reprint of an article from the 1992 edition of Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir. Reprinted per request by and permission from Sri. Akkaraju Sarma.

In the earlier issue of Sruti Ranjani (Vol2, No.2), I had the privilege of presenting Saint Tyagaraja's contributions to Hindu Devotional Music. In the large corpus of Tyagaraja's contributions, one could perhaps pick up the best, and such a list exists -- commonly called the Five Gems. Each song depicts the incarnation of God, like Rama or Krishna in human and divine aspects in such perfection that ancient and hoary lore may be said to be completely reflected in those great kritis. Rama is as good an ideal as Krishna, protecting everything else.

Adoration of Rama is the theme of all music of Thyagaraja who has rendered the five gems particularly in the extraordinarily potent ragas. The happiness derived by the singing of any one of these five gems is piously comparable to that of an infant breast-feeding or the longed union of devoted lovers or better still, is the communion of "atma" with "paramatma".

The five gems are 1) Jagadananda, 2) Dhudukugala, 3) Sadhinchene, 4) Kanakanaruchira, and 5) Endaro.

The first one, Jagadananda is a devotional song to Rama. In English rendering, the contents in Iambic Pentameter provides something like this.

O Lord of Sita, the king of kings from sun;
The thief of milk and curd, sweet long'd O Lord
Of Lakshmi, seat'd on Sesha or Garuda!
Brahma is the son to Thee whom Siva praises!
The sea God and Vali fell before Thee !
Thou art the pow'r and joy of universe !
And lesser gods as Moon holds sway ov'r stars !
With Sun and Moon as eyes, of azure hue,
Ador'd by Vanaras and Hanuman
Thy life is in the hearts of Poets of truth !
Ambrosia from lotuses of vedas is Thine !
Thou art the parrot in the cage of OM,
The birth of epic lore, the seat of love,
The hero of Valmiki, the sages and saints,
And conqueror of sin and rakshasas !
The trinity is Thine and Thy law hast :
"Create, protect, destroy, thus cosmos turns !".

The second one, Dhudukugala addresses to helping a person from sinning. Again an English translation is given below.

Who will reform this sinning man but Thee ?
Beyond poor human comprehension Thou
Art shining in Thy Lakshmi's hear and Thou
Art omnipresent and protecting all !
The thought of God left me while young and I

Have preach'd the joy on earth like singers and
Immoral lovers by enticing girls
And earning gold, and with heart, hard and proud,
Forgetting music sweet in praise of Thee !
My eyes do feast on wife and house and son
And wealth but have lost sight of Thy feet, Lord !
The birth as man is rare and forgetting this
A champion of villains cold, I am
With lust and pride and wealth, on earth !
My worship goes now to Thy lotus feet !
Come, come and save me like parent fond !.

The third gem, Sadhinchene in translation follows.

O mind ! the lord appears to miss path right
He acts in his own way and speaks to suit,
Event and time ! As Krishna Thou has pain'd
Thy parents seeking liberation prompt !
The targets of fun were Gopikas
Whose love evol'd as the devotion chaste !
Thou smil'd when mother Yashoda kiss'd Thee !
And soon reveal'd to her the universe !
Thou, home of traits good; art cure for sin!
Ram, fountain of love; Thou art in souls great;
A king of kings; and babe dear to devotees !
Thou took my worship and ordain'd the path
Devotees take but spake to suit the time !
Thy words to me "Be calm : join not with wrong;
Forget all pain, "are sweet but Thou art far !
The more I feast my eyes on Thee with glee ;
The more Thy charming face entrances my soul,
Thy dress of gold shines like morn sun !
I love to see Thy face as Sita looks
At Thee with eyes stealthy, and with stance shy
As Thou stand'th deck'd with crown on head and rows
On neck, of chains with scintillating gems.
Did not young Dhruva pray and get Thy boon ?
Did not Jatayu seek Thee for last rites ?
Thy queen found solace from description Thine
By pious Hanuman who flew over seas !
The home of joy, the foe of evil dark,
Residing in souls great with traits supreme,
Responding on Garud, and armed with wheel
That shall destroy the mightiest with ease,
Thou art adorn'd by Siva, Parvati,
Sita, Narada, Parasara, Sunaka,
Purandara, Suka, as spring of bliss !.

Finally, the last gem, if not the best for many is “Endaro mahanubhavulu...”, and in translation is as follows.

My salutations to Godly souls,
like Siva, Prahlada, Brahma,
Sun, Moon, Narada, Tumburu, and saints !
Those who enjoy at heart the bliss of God !
Those who win ov’r the mind, and see the light !
Those who love dedication to the Lord !
Those who sing and walk to the path of truth !
Those who imbibe beautitude divine !
Those who are lost in the depths of ecstasy !
Those who are heavenly in head and heart;
Those who know Thee erase faiths false and mean,
As Gita, Ramayana, Bhagvat,
Upanishads, and vedic lore are roads
Of Ram who plays in them with joy supreme !
Those who view in religions and faiths, one God !
Those who exist, devot’d thus, shall live long !
My salutations to those mighty souls
Whose love Ram exists in triple strength !

Acknowledgement: This brief piece on Thyagaraja owes to the writings of my late father, Akkaraju Subrahmanya Sarma. In early 50’s he embarked on his enduring passion of translating Potana’s works (published by Tirupati Devasthanam and Tyagaraja’s songs into English. I acknowledge my indebtedness to him. As far as my researching into this goes, there have been only two English translations of Tyagaraja’s works, both done by physicians, Dr. C.Narayana Rao (1932) and Dr.A. Sarma(1954). Finally, nothing of academic nature could have come to fruition without the help and understanding of my wife, Mrs. Akkaraju Kameswari.

Reference

1. C. Narayana Rao, 1932, Songs of Tyagaraja.
2. A. V. S. Sarma, 1954, Lines of Devotion, Antiseptic Press, Madras, pp. 1-34.
3. Akkaraju Sarma, Saint Tyagaraja and Indian Devotional Music, Sruti, Vol 1, No: 2, pp 8 – 10

Sri. Akkaraju Sarma MD, Ph.D, a Philadelphia resident since 1970 is an ardent supporter of Sruti.



Saint Thyagaraja – Proponent of Bhakthi Path

R Venkatasubramanian

Once a disciple asked Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, 'Is it possible to realise Brahman through arts like music'? Bhagavan asked, 'Why do you ask this?'. He said, 'Composers like Thyagaraja attained, is it not?'. Bhagavan replied, 'They did not sing and attain, but sang what they have already attained.'

We have the famous trinity of Carnatic music and each of them was distinct in his own way, bequeathing to us in the process not only profusion of priceless treasure of aural treat but an inexhaustible source for salvation through the easiest path, viz., 'Bhakti margam'.

The forte of our Saint Thyagaraja was bhakti alone. He did not simply compose songs, but conversed with Sri Rama in a completely different exalted ethereal troposphere, treating Him as his closest companion. In fact, though apparently he lived the life of a householder, in his mental plane, he was totally detached from the vicissitudes of life analogous to a realised sage.

Born in an orthodox Telugu family in 1767, brought up in a salubrious, supernal spiritual atmosphere, Thyagaraja instinctively imbibed from infancy all the attributes that enabled him to blossom into a saintly figure. There are some evidences to show indirectly that he is the incarnation of Valmiki himself. He was blessed with a rare treasure on music called, 'Swararnavam', a book by sage Narada, author of Bhakti Sutra.

He started his musical journey when he was merely 13 years old under his guru, Sonti Venkata Ramanayya. His first composition was "Namo Namo Raghavaya" in Sindhu Bhairavi. He composed thousands of songs in all ragas and each one of them is brimming with intense passion of different emotions expressing all the navarasas that he experienced in his intimate exchanges with Sri Rama as a result of which, our present day Carnatic artistes, when presenting them now in their concerts, feel the same vibes and warmth, which again is transported to the discerning listeners.

The paramount purpose of human life is to strive to break the chain of births and deaths through self-knowledge [Atma Vidya]. It is said that, for realising that Mocham, the path prescribed are in Krita yugam-Tapas [penance], Threta yugam-Yajnam [sacrifices in Agni], DwApara yugam-Puja [formal prescriptive prayer]: but in Kali yugam, bhakti-[emotionally focussing the mind with a deity and in due course realising oneness with that deity itself] alone will suffice. With the blessing of Saint Thyagaraja, we have inherited an immense storehouse of materials and methods on Bhakti mArgam to attain salvation by the simplest path [Raja mArgam]. It is for us to make fullest use of them so that our lives are made meaningful.

R Venkatasubramanian is a retired Senior Manager from the Bank of Baroda and student of Atma Vidya whose interests include Samskritam, Vedic Literature and Sanatana Dharmam.



Sadguru Tyagaraja's Vedic Vision of Life

Ramaswamy Sharma

Sadguru Tyagaraja's saintly life was steered by the vedic vision, coupled with his austere devotional pursuits. These were the practices that he adopted in his day-to-day activities, throughout his life. It was this vedic living, that was responsible for the immense influence he wields over his followers, not decades but centuries later.

This is manifest through his kritis, in the musical and religious life of many ardent devotees in the southern part of India. His life, work and vision harmonize the time-tested methods of selfless action (Karma), devotion (Bhakti) and wisdom (Jnana). Let us look at these aspects of Tyagabrahmam, through the prism of his compositions.

All that we know about his life are gathered from what was handed down in tradition through disciplic succession in addition to few details revealed in the lyrics of his music compositions.

The fact that he stands tall among the saints from the south, whose annual festival is celebrated in every part of India and abroad, proves his popularity as the greatest musician of the recent past. One can study his songs as a practical Bhakti, Karma and Vedanta (Jnana) text as they contain the gist of the entire ancient vedic literature and practices.

His Ishta or chosen God for the practice of devotion was Sri Rama whom he sought fervently through the practice of *Rama nama taraka mantra japa*, which is the regular chanting of the holy name of Rama. He reveals his allegiance to Rama as his only chosen deity, in the well-known kriti *ishtadeivamu neeve* composed in dhanyasi.

He brings out his indebtedness to the ancient rishis who walked in the path of devotion, in the famous kriti *endaro mahanubhavulu* in sriraagam precisely in the following lines.

Bhagavatha Ramayana Geethadi Sruthi Shastra Puranapu marmamulan Shivadi Shanmatamula erugi tyagaraja aapthulaina varendaro mahanubhavulu andariki vandanamu.

He says here that 'having thoroughly read and familiarized himself (*erugi*) with Mahabharata, Ramayana, Gita, four Vedas, six Shastras, six Darshanas and eighteen Puranas, I salute those great seers who know the (*marma*) innermost secret of scriptures.'

The ingenuity of Tyagaraja comprises in applying the wisdom he imbibed from the Vedas in a unique way, resulting in the masterpieces of creativity in his kritis. A skilled sculptor reshapes a simple rock into an exquisitely carved statue. A literary genius creates masterpieces of literature, out of seemingly commonplace words. Tyagaraja composed his exquisite kritis from the resources drawn from the aforementioned scriptures in his mother tongue Telugu, in such simple lyrics that can easily be understood by everyone.

He sings in rasali the concept of Karma yoga as, *aparaadhamula norva samayamu krpajudumu*. He pleads to Rama 'forgive me for this serious sin of not knowing your steadfast mind, with my fickle intellect and show mercy unto me. You protect and provide for all the beings of the Universe, unasked, knowing fully their worth and drawbacks, still I composed hundreds of songs begging you to save me over others'. Here the phrase *sakala lokula phalamu* brings out the concept of Karma yoga. Sri Krishna famously points out in the Gita, *karmanyeva adhikarah* your right relates with action, *ma phaleshu* never with its results. The same

sentiment is pointed out in this kriti, which is, whether we beg or not, God's will is final in all matters of Karma, sometimes your will prevails, in which case there is no need to beg.

So then in either instance, it is *aparadha*, a serious offence to beg for special favors, therefore he asks forgiveness from Rama for seeking boons earlier. The idea is to teach us not to make a beeline at God's doorstep for seeking benefits and become upset. But to trust in his grace and do what is right. This indeed is Karma yoga.

Tyagaraja was a great votary of Bhakti yoga in the form of Bhajana sampradaya. Infused with devotion to Rama, right from his childhood, he could think about nothing but Rama, talk about no one else than Rama, and do no other acts but those that were pleasing to Rama. Some are motivated to compose songs in praise, by the patronage of the rich, while others are moved by the feeling of divine service. The source of inspiration for Thyagaraja's kirtanas was purely the devotion to Rama alone. It is in tune with the spirit of this ideal, that he refused to sing in praise of royal patrons, however great they were, even at the risk of suffering contempt and abject poverty. In *nidhi chala* in kalyani he asks his mind to be honest, '(nijamuga) O my mind (*manasa*) tell me (*palku*), whether wealth (*nidhi*) is very (*chala*) comforting (*sukhama*) or the service (*seva*) in the divine presence (*sannidhi*) of Lord Sri Rama, more comforting (*sukhama*)?'

In dhanyasi he extols the contemplation on Sri Rama as the greater *prayaschitta karma* or atonement in comparison to *ganga snana*, the holy dip in river ganges. He is convinced that *Sri Ramuni Dhyaname varamaina ganga snaname manasa*. Dhyana the meditation on Sri Rama is the veritable Ganga snana.

In *paripalaya raghunatha* in reetigaula, he presents the procedure of *manasopacharapuja* or mental worship, following the vedic dictate that the human body is the temple (*deho devalayah*). He sings, 'that the physical body itself (*tanuvey*) is the house (*sadanamu*) suitable (*anuvaina*) for you (*neeku*). My steady (*sthira*) memory (*cittamu*) is the sacred (*vara*) golden (*chameekara*) seat (*peethamu*) for you. O guardian (*palaka*) of Gajendra, the elephant! My fondness (*abhimanam*) towards you is the tidy (*subha*) clothes (*chelamu*) to cover you with. Seeing within (*joochutey*) of you (*ninnu*) is (*aura*) indeed the light (*ghanadeepa*) offering (*Aradhanamu*). The method (*vidhi*) of mental worship (*maanasa puja*) is as such performed (*kritamu*) by me (*naija*). Lord Rama (*raghu natha*) protect me (*paripalaya mam*).'

Sadguru Tyagaraja followed the precepts of his swashakha, Krishna Yajurveda, which mandates swadhyaya-pravachana, ie. a strict adherence to lifelong teaching and learning. The path of commitment to knowledge, Jnana Yoga, is described in the kriti *sogasuga* in sriranjani. He says that one should delve deep into the words of Upanishads and actualize them into intimate experience, *nigama shirottama galgina nija vakkulato*. Such words that form the lyrics of a kriti or song, must be marked with, *raga*-musical notes, *yati*-alliterations, *vishrama*-successive rise and fall of notes, *sadbhakti*-true devotion, *virakti*-detachment, *draksha rasa*-sweetness in tone and *nava rasayuta*-endowed with the nine emotions. The nava rasas are *Shringara* (charm), *Hasya* (humor), *Karuna* (sorrow), *Raudra* (anger), *Veera* (courage), *Bhayanaka* (fear), *Bibhatsa* (disgust), *Adbutha* (wonder) and *Shantha* (peace).

As he realized that his days on this earth were numbered, he decided to renounce worldly life and accept Sannyasa, a life of recluse for gaining moksha, the final freedom. In his last kriti '*paritapamu kani*' in manohari, he reminds Lord Rama about his promise of giving him darshan and gains it. Shortly, the eventful mortal life of this great saint comes to an end on January 6, 1847.

After his departure to the divine abode of Rama, his disciples started celebrating the annual music festival at his sacred memorial Tyagaraja *Samadhi* in Tiruvaiyaru. Here regular religious worship is performed as laid in the vaidika agamas, reflecting his devotional legacy of Bhakti yoga. Over the years, every great Carnatic musician worth their mettle, considers it a great honor to take part in these festivities and perpetuate the sangita jnana, the musical genius of Tyagaraja Swami through his profoundly intricate kritis. The Tyagaraja

Aradhana is the world's largest carnatic music festival, where selfless karma yogis and practitioners of carnatic music congregate on their own. Thus we can see that Tyagabrahmam through his divine musical life, work and legacy, harmonizes selfless action (Karma), devotion (Bhakti) and wisdom (Jnana) through his immortal presence at Tiruvaiyaru.

Dr. Ramaswamy Sharma, a resident of Cleveland, Ohio, follows Vaidika Sanatana Dharma, the timeless teaching tradition passed down from teacher to students as enshrined in the Vedic scriptures. He learnt the Tarka Vedanta shastras at the feet of Brahma Shri Goda Subramanya Shastrigaru of Kanchi Kamakoti Shankara Matam. As mandated by his tradition, he lives a life committed to swadhyaya-pravachana. He was bestowed with the title Vedanta Tallaja (Ocean of Philosophy) by Rajah's College, Thiruvaiyaru. He gives weekly discourses on Vedic Philosophy that are followed by many through live zoom sessions and Youtube Channel Vedic Satsang. He can be contacted via www.Vedicsatsang.org

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lAvaNya rAma -Tribute to Sri Seshachari

Jayram Sataluri

This article is dedicated to the memory of the recently departed Sri Daruri Seshachari of the Hyderabad Brothers.

lAvaNya rAma is one of my mother's most favorite ThyAgarAja krithis. There is something about this krithi that makes her speak glowingly about it, even prompting her to sing along; after all she did learn vocal music. Is it that the sahitya is basically a simple ode dedicated to Sri Rama which appeals to her as a Rama Bhaktha? Is it the manner the rAgam is used throughout the krithi? pUrNashadjam is a rAgam that we don't hear much, yet ThyAgarAja has used it again in Srl mAnini. Is it that the charaNam line is so appealing that one wouldn't mind hearing a neraval or swarams from it?

I believe it is all the above and more. And especially when it has been rendered by the Hyderabad Brothers, Seshachari gAru and his older brother Raghavachari gAru. Their rendition of this glorious krithi has been in both our (my mom and my) minds ever since the first time we heard it back in the 1990s. My mom has said the combination of robust voiced Seshachari and the softer timbre of Raghavachari makes it memorable and meaningful. And I have observed that they never sing this krithi the same way each time. They try to bring something new and different, like singing different sangathis and sometimes even singing swarams at the Pallavi line in their inimitable way!

The version I will be analyzing is from their 1991 ThyAgarAja Krithis album released by Sangeetha with Peri Sriramamurthy gAru (violin), centenarian Dr. TK Murthy sir (mridangam) and EM Subramaniam sir (ghatam).

The first note is tara sthAyi shadja where we can audibly hear Seshachari whereas Raghavachari is more subdued. "lAvaNya" is rendered as S S N2 P M1 and "rAma" is M1R2G2M1G2R2SR2. Peri Sriramamurthy joins in at "rAma" and TKM's kappi mridangam one aksharam after 'ma' of "rAma". Here, the Brothers render the full pallavi line with Seshachari leading the way with gusto. Usually most vocalists split it as "lAvaNya rAmakanu lAra jUDarE", not knowing that "kanulAra" is an expression: a very expressive one. Due to the immense respect they have for the sahitya especially coming from the ThyAgarAja sishya Parampara through Thachur Singaracharyulu and being Telugu vAru, the Brothers resonantly sing the line "kanulAra jUDarE" as G2R2 R2SN2N2S R2G2M1G2M1 with gamakAs on the N2 and last G2 which attract the listeners. The apt "ati" before the "lAvaNya rAma" is a quick M1N2N2 which makes the Pallavi line flow beautifully. It is as if the Brothers are speaking for all Rama Bhakthas especially those who have come to see Him in His Lalla form in Ayodhya, His saguna form completely bewitching them, "kanulAra jUDarE!"

The second time around is like the first, but the third and fourth go like SPSR2G2R2 SN2PM1 N2PM1G2R2 SN2PM1G2R2 R2SN2N2S R2G2M1G2M1 M1M1G2R2 M1M1 N2N2 with gamakAs adorned in the right proportion full of zeal towards the Lord. For the fifth round, Seshachari does a SN2S followed by a rapid thAra sthAyi R2G2R2 in "lAvaNya" before going down the madhyA sthAyi towards "rAma". He does the usual akAra, G2R2SN2S with Peri matching him while TKM's theermAnam containing a 'dhin Na ki dhim' transitions smoothly to the anupallavi.

"Srl vanithA chittha kumuda" captures the listeners' attention. I have noticed a meend gamakA for the first R2 at Sri from P as in R2R2R2R2 with gamakAs for the R2s. Like the Pallavi, the first anupallavi line is rendered four times with EM Subramaniam joining in at "chittha kumuda" and Seshachari providing R2G2R2 flourishes at the end of each turn at the tara sthAyi. Peri switches to the lower shruthi which complements the rendition while TKM combines tabla like sollus with lightning quick theermAnams in sync with Seshachari's Hindustani like flourishes where he adds a S before the R2G2R2. When the fifth and sixth turns

arrive, the second line “Slta kara Sat(A)nanyaja” maintains the same mood describing Rama as the Moon who delights the mind of Sita and is as charming as a hundred cupids. This is done by going down to Madhya R2 and going back to a M1M1 N2N2 to flow back into the Pallavi line.

The charaNam commences with the gamakA-like N2 swarAksha for the first nl in the line “nl manasu nl sogasu nl dinusu vErE rAma”. For the phrase “manasu nl” it is SN2PM1 with a gamakA on N2, for “sogasu nl” it is R2G2R2 SR2G2, for “dinusu vErE rAma” it is SN2N2S R2G2M1 M1G2M1 M1G2M1. I appreciate how the Brothers add “rAma” to the end of the line, their thoughts aligned to ThyAgarAja’s sense of ecstasy. TKM sollu by sollu is making the mridangam sing along while Peri is like a third Hyderabad Brother; neither subdued nor overpowering, just right. The Brothers sing new sangathis during the third and fourth rounds. While the first nl has the same N2 gamakA-ed swarAksha, “manasu nl” has a meend gamakA from N2 to G2 followed by SN2PM1R2M1N2, whereas “sogasu nl” goes like N2N2PM1G2R2 SR2G2 while “dinusu vErE rAma” is rendered the same. With these embellishments, another rasa is added to the ecstasy: wonder!

I would like to point out the voice modulation done by Seshachari during the third and fourth rounds. He softens his voice at “nl manasu nl sogasu nl” to get the precise bhAvam when he renders those sangathis but returns to his robustness at “dinusu vErE rAma”.

“thAmasa matha daivam(E)la” is rendered similarly to “Sri vanithA chittha kumuda” twice. Whether it is a reminder for ThyAgarAja to worship only Sri Rama or an admonition for us not to go down the Thamasic path, it is up to the listeners. It is worth noting Seshachari’s flourishes have the same sheen as his earlier ones. When the last two turns follow, “ThyAgarAja nuta divya” is rendered with care and love by the Brothers. They conclude the rendering the way they started with the co-artistes adding the final touches.

lAvaNya rAma was a staple of the Brothers’ concerts for many decades. Although many artists past and present have rendered it, my mother and I firmly believe theirs is the golden standard. Even though Seshachari will not be around to read this analysis, I am certain he and Raghavachari did their best to ensure that this krithi was given a divine treatment which did justice to ThyAgarAja’s devotional fervor towards Sri Rama. And I would not be surprised if he is singing this exact version for the Almighty. Or he is listening to the saint himself rendering the way he composed it!

Jayram Sataluri is a rasika and ardent supporter of SRUTI.



“Edi nii bAhubala parAkramamu?”

An intriguing composition of tyAgarAja

Prabhakar Chitrapu

There is this kriti (composition) of tyAgarAja, “Edi nii bAhubala parAkramamu...”, which I find intriguing because it seems to contain an unusual idea in an ambiguous rAga! Let me elaborate.

Generally the ideas expressed in bulk of tyAgarAja’s compositions fall into a few categories, such as bhakti (devotion), music, social-criticism, self-reflection (often addressed to his own manas/mind-heart), and AdhyAtmic (philosophical) musings. In all of these categories, the sentiments expressed are generally positive in nature, such as celebration, worship, righteousness, peace, happiness and joy. One rarely comes across expressions of anger, aggression, violence etc. This subject-composition of this article seems to be an exception - at least in my view. Here is the kriti (composition) from tyAgarAja vaibhavam ([Link](#)):

(pallavi) Edi ni bAhu bala parAkramamennALLakennALLu
(anupallavi) Adi dEva nija dAsulaku kananAsayuNDaga kari varada (Edi)

(caraNam-1) karamuna merayu Sara cApamu Akali kona lEdA
mura hara SONita pAnamu bahu dinamulu kA lEdA vAdA (Edi)

(caraNam-2) sarasa bhUsurula bAdhalu vini rOsamu rA lEdA
moralidagA yOGa niddura nilipi mOmu jUpa rAdA vAdA (Edi)

(caraNam-3) varusa tappu buddhulu nlculaku vaccinadi teliyadA
verapu lEka tirigEru cAlanucu vEgamE Srl tyAgarAja sannuta (Edi)

ప. ఏది నీ బాహు బల పరాక్రమమెన్నాళ్ళకెన్నాళ్ళు
అ. ఆది దేవ నిజ దాసులకు కననాసయుండగ కరి వరద (ఏ)

చ1. కరమున మెరయు శర చాపము ఆకలి కొన లేదా
ముర హర శోణిత పానము బహు దినములు కా లేదా వాదా (ఏ)

చ2. సరస భూసురుల బాధలు విని రోసము రా లేదా
మొరలిడగా యోగ నిద్దుర నిలిపి మోము జూప రాదా వాదా (ఏ)

చ3. వరుస తప్పు బుద్ధులు నీచులకు వచ్చినది తెలియదా
వెరపు లేక తిరిగేరు చాలనుచు వేగమే శ్రీ త్యాగరాజ సన్నుత (ఏ)

Translating in a freestyle, tyAgarAja is essentially asking Lord rAma: “why don’t you show your strength and valour? It has been so long! This situation in the world has deteriorated so much, shouldn’t you hasten to show your power and fix it?”

As is unfortunately common, many artists sing the pallavi (opening-stanza), anupallavi (leading-stanza) and only the last mudra-caraNam (elaborating-signature-stanza) skipping the other caraNms. They have the following meaning:

pallavi: Why don’t you show your strength and valour? It has been so long!

anupallavi: Oh the First God! Even as your true devotees are longing for it, why don’t you show your strength and valour?

mudra caraNam: The lowly (people) are developing deviant minds and roaming around without fear. Saying “that is enough, why don’t you show your strength and valour, Oh Srii rAma?”

All these ideas sound fairly standard, as far as their nature, style and expression. It is, in my opinion, the not so commonly sung first caraNam that is special and interesting to look into.

Meaning of the first caraNam:

- Aren’t the shining bow & arrow in your hands hungry?
- Hasn’t it been a long time since they drank blood (of the evil ones)?
- Why don’t you show your strength & valour? Hasn’t it been so long?

To my sensitivities, these expressions are pretty rough and violent. I have not come across such strong sentiments expressed in other compositions of tyAgarAja.

I would like to hasten to point out that I am not trying to show dark spots on the white wall of tyAgarAja. Rather, I recognize that inspite of being only a human, he transcended human boundaries and reached dizzying heights of excellence. And helped numerous generations to try to do the same.

Ambiguous rAga of this kriti:

I suppose it is reasonable to expect that a kriti and the rAga it is set to have a sense of harmony in terms of creating the mutually enhanced (third dimension of Carnatic music) emotive feel (bhAva). I find it interesting that, at least in my opinion, there are more than a handful of tyAgarAja kritis where the sAhitya and rAga are not in complete harmony. Of course, I recognize that it is my own subjective opinion and can easily be challenged.

Coming now to the current kriti, the lyrics, as I described above convey a fairly strong sentiment, expressed in a forceful way. Even if you discount the first caraNam that I commented on, the rest of the kriti also has a fairly questioning and demanding tone: why don’t you show your strength? Why are you delaying so much? Can’t you get out of your yoga-nidra and show your face (second caraNam)? Etc etc.

Given the strong sentiment and the nature of the expression of the sentiment in this kriti, I would have expected the rAga to reflect such emotive appeals - for example, some rAGas known for the viira rasa...like mOhana, aThANa, Arabhi etc.

So, what rAga is this set to? The answer seems ambiguous, because it is documented and rendered in two rAgAs, quite different (IMO) in their emotive appeal. They are kApi and darbAr. For example, AS Murali ([Link](#)) and CR Vaidyanathan ([Link](#)), T. Gangadevi ([Link](#)), Sangeeta Swaminathan ([Link](#)) rendered it in kApi and Ramnad Krishnan rendered it in darbAr ([Link](#)). In terms of written documentation, it is darbAr in tyAgarAja vaibhavam ([Link](#)) and in karnATik website ([Link](#)).

To me, all the kritis in kApi rAga, including this one, produce a pleading, submissive emotion/bhAvam. In that vein, I feel that there is a mismatch between this kriti and kApi rAga. The renditions of this kriti in darbAr arouse more dynamic moods in me and would say it matches the meaning better.

I leave it up to you to determine which your preference would be! And, of course, an important historical question would be “which rAga did tyAgarAja actually compose it in?”. I would welcome any feedback from our readers.

In conclusion, I find there several intriguing open questions about the full corpus of the compositions of tyAgaraja - in terms of the harmony between the meaning, language, rAga and bhAva.

Another question that often teases my mind is regarding the continuity and smoothness of the flow of meaning in the kriti - from the pallavi, to anupallavi to various caraNams. Sometimes I find a jump or a deviation in the flow, triggering a related question of “did he compose the entire kriti in one sitting or did he come back to it again and again to add/edit/improve the composition?”

Questions and more questions! Of course, my own limited knowledge is a factor, but I also feel that history hasn't done justice to the life and works of this great man, who lived but only about a century and a half ago.

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.



sudhA mAdhurya bhAshaNa - D & J's conversation on Dr. Mangalampalli

Balamuralikrishna's version

Deepak Varma Maliakal and Jayram Sataluri

One day during our lengthy conversation about muraLi gANam, the topic switched to the treatment of rAgams especially this rare rAgam not heard on the stage nowadays: sindhu rAmakriyA. We discussed about its beauty and uniqueness so much that we decided sudhA mAdhurya bhAshaNa should receive the same analytical dissection for this year's tyAgarAja ArAdhana souvenir like the simhAravam version of vAchAmagOcharamE from last year's.

The version we will analyze is from an AIR National Programme of Music recital held at Delhi on July 5th, 1976, featuring Dr. BMK's classmate and fellow Parupalli Ramakrishnayya Pantulu sishya, Annavarapu Ramaswamy on violin and the legendary Dr. Umayalpuram K Sivaraman aka UKS on mridangam.

We hope our conversation enlightens the rasika community.

J: I've always found sindhu rAmakriyA to be a very unique rAgam. I've seen that it is labeled as a janya of mAyamALava gowLa. But BMK doesn't do that. At least not in this rendition.

D: Yes, interestingly University of Google tells me it's a janya of mAyamALava gowLa and that there are two ArOhana-avarOhana scales:

1. Aa:S G3 M1 P D1 N3 S Av: S N3 P M1 G3 R1 G3 S
2. Aa:S G3 M1 P D1 N3 S Av: Ś N3 P D1 P M1 G3 R1 S

I have heard 4 kritis in this rAga. Apart from *sudhA mAdhurya*, I have heard "dEvAdi dEva sadASiva" (tyAgarAja), Chinthaya Sada (Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar) and KailAsa vAsam (Muthiah Bhagavathar). And you know what, I didn't hear R1 in any of these kritis. So I am forced to conclude that this rAga does not have R1. I would go with Aa: S G3 M1 P D1 N3 S Av: S N3 P D1 P M1 G3 S as the closest scale, though I have to admit that I heard S N3 D1 P on a few occasions from different musicians including BMK. Having said that, the scale is not its most important aspect of the rAga because we just use it for reference only. Hence I am prepared to give allowances in these variations like SN3D1P.

Also, you make a valid point when you said that this rAga is "labeled" as a janya of the 15th Mela. After I concluded that there is no R1 at all, like many other rAgas, this rAga also has two possible janaka rAgas i.e. 15th (mAyamALava gowLa) and 27th (sarasAngi). It is also a debatable topic as to why we really need to worry about Janaka rAgas, but let me not divert our discussion.

J: Within BMK's sindhu rAmakriyA, I have observed some overlap with jaganmOhini, nAgaswarAvaLi and gambhIranATTai. Since we have established that the rAgam doesn't have R1, I would consider it as a janya of sarasAngi. As a result, it sounds joyous.

He always said that a rAgam is not merely ArOhana and avarOhana and one should not rely on the books/notations of all the rAgams. According to him, each rAgam is a living breathing soul and it is the main artist's responsibility to make it happen with appropriate gamakAs. You can use flat notes to make it sound more sonorous.

D: Well, it could be a janya of mAyamALava goWLa too. But let's leave it there. Since all the three rAgas you mentioned have SG3M1P, the similarity is understandable. But personally I feel that sindhu rAmakriyA should be written like an equation like this:

sindhu rAmakriyA = (jaganmOhini+gambhIranATTai mix)- R1 + D1 + (own bhava of sindhu rAmakriyA).

J: Since it's the beginning of the recital, he does a brief warmup by only revealing P D1 N3 S in mandra sthAyi.

First time: he sings a S G3, G3M1 P M1 G3M1PM1G3 S.

Second time: S G3, G3M1 P M1 G3 PM1G3 S.

D: Even before the P D N S, he sings S N P slowly. In fact his warm up gave me a hint that maybe the rendition is going to be slower than the usual versions of this kriti.

J: The Pallavi line is sung very pleasantly as it goes well with tyAgarAja's description of Rama as the Moon Faced One who speaks like sweet nectar. Like vAchAmagOcharamE, each subsequent sangatI is a buildup from the previous.

D: I have listened to this kriti (I have learnt this as well) many times by other stalwarts but all of those versions except the one by the great flautist TR Mahalingam are fastly rendered/madhyama kAlam. But the BMK version is towards the slower side, bringing out more "nectar" of the rAga bhAva. In fact, many kritis that are sung very fast by other musicians, are sung a bit slower by BMK, which, according to me, brings out more bhAva and meaning of the lyrics.

J: Exactly. And the sangatIs BMK has brought out are nectarous. Especially the soft G3PG3 at 1:22 at the dhA for sudhA and G3M1G3M1 PD1PD1PM1 at 1:28 for mAdhurya. But the last couple of sangatIs are spellbinding and even unpredictable; the latter being one of those iconic characteristics that define murali gANam. If one doesn't pay attention, one will miss an extra G3 in S M1G3G3M1PD1N3S in sudhA at 2:33. And immediately in mAdhurya bhAshaNa, he sings SN3PN3PM1G3M1, PD1PD1PM1G3M1, G3M1P1M1G3M1G3S. One will also notice the G3M1PD1N3S from madhya to tAra which can mystify the listeners to be the G3M1PN3S Arohana of jaganmOhini and gambhIranATTai during the first part of nA for Anana. Which leads me to ask this question- did Parupalli teach him these sangatIs or do they come spontaneously to him?

D: I cannot tell you how much I am impressed with the subtle "feel" that is brought at 1:22 in the end of the phrase "SudhA". But it is typical of BMK to bring out a lot of these subtle bhAva moments without losing the grammar of the rAga. And we know that BMK's gamakAs and bhrugAs are not always "hard hitting". His sangatIs especially with oscillations are towards the softer side. I always wonder why Carnatic musicians have oscillated and stressed the sangatIs/gamakAs way more than what is needed. For instance, let's take the sangatI at 1:27 (su"DhA" - S, PMMGG.). Many singers sing the same sangatI but the stress given to the swarAs and gamakAs is way too much I think. Also, did you notice the "PDPD PM" .., with the D1 in "dhu..rya" sung very subtly as well? My thoughts on the sangatI at 2:33 is that the "SNPNPMGM" is conspicuously missing D1, reminding me of gambhIrAnAttai. When I compare with other musicians, some of them have sung SNPNPM eschewing D1 there but some have sung SNPDPM. Probably the one with D is more suitable for the scale, but personally I don't feel that the bhAva is lost either ways.

Coming to your question on how BMK came up with the sangatIs, it's anyone's guess. But I would like to believe that he would have learnt maybe 2 sangatIs from Parupalli but the rest of them came spontaneously to him; we will never know.

J: The reason I ask is because BMK had total guru bhakti for Parupalli. And he often spoke about his guru's magnanimity. Yet, as you recall in the vAchAmagOcharamE article, I have mentioned that he may have obtained old documents/manuscripts of tyAgarAja kritis. Perhaps in one of them, he discovered the original tune and sAhitya of sudhA mAdhurya bhAshaNa and polished it up. Sadly, we'll never know how these

documents were inherited; could be from ThillaistAnam or Walajapet or even Susarla Dakshinamurthy Sastri (BMK's parama guru). That is another topic for another day.

D: Coming to "SudhAkarAnana", my observation about the ending nA is like this: he sings GMPDNS MGSNPMGMGS...The ending phrase MGSNPMGMGS brings out the gambhIranATTai prayOga there, like in the first line of the Pallavi.

J: Yes, I was about to mention that particular phrase which reveals the gambhIranATTai prayOga. I feel it is a spontaneous sangatl which only he can do.

D: Like any other kriti that BMK sings, the way he has sung the lyrics with the correct word split never ceases to amaze me because while it would be commonsensical not to butcher the lyrics / word splits, apparently common sense is uncommon. A classic example in this pallavi, while others sing "sudhA aa mA Dhu rya", "sudhA - karA-" to showcase sangatls, BMK sings sudhA mAdhurya and sudhAkarA. I will need another discussion with you to talk about how lyrics should be sung.

J: He alternates between "sudhAkarAnana" or "sudhAkara-anana" depending on the sangatl he is singing, which are both correct. When he does the latter, I am reminded of his rendering of the line "tArak(A)dhipa-anana rAma" from tanavAri tanamu lEdA. In fact both "sudhAkarAnana" and "tArakAdhipAnana" mean the same: O Moon-Faced one!

Another aspect to note is that the swarAksharAs are intelligently interwoven. Like a gamakAed-Ma akshara for mAdhurya, nishAda for nl kath(A)mRtamu cE and both panchama and nishAda for nl parAyaNula. Sometimes he combines a bunch of notes to bring out the beauty of the swarAkshara like G3M1 for Ma.

D: You are right. "Anana" means face, so both are correct. And, the 'gamakA'ed Ma for mAdhurya is so "sweet" (madhuram) to listen to. Varieties like "MGM", "GM" etc. are gamakAs on Ma, just for my reference.

J: The anupallavi also follows the same mood, especially with alluring sangatls. Some of them meander like a river and some have staccato-like phrasing. And the nishAda swarAkshara is perfect for nl kath(A)mRtamu cE, although in later sangatls he does a SN3SN3 and SN3P D1PM1. Bahu kAlamu is a quick PD1N3S S S where the D1 is so subtle, one won't notice it. And Akali tIri(y)unnAnu is rendered with a splendid sangatl at unnAnu: PD1PM1 G3M1PD1N3S M1G3SN3PM1G3M1G3S.

D: The first line of the anupallavi i.e. in the "nl kath(A)mRtamu cE" is where I had heard the SN3D1P that I had alluded to in the beginning of this discussion. Though BMK has not sung any chittaswaram, I have heard some versions of the anupallavi with a chittaswaram. I wonder if the chittaswaram was added by some other composer/singer just to add punch to the song. And we really don't know if tyAgarAja has composed the kriti with or without a chittaswaram. From what I heard, whoever composed the Chittaswaram has used S N3 P D1 P M1 G3 S as the avarOhana of sindhu rAmakriyA.

Coming back to our version, BMK ends the anupallavi by singing pallavi again ending with the beautiful sangatl GMPDG, GMGS.

J: I love the sangatls for "dur-Atmulagu bhU-kirAtakula cEra rAdu-anucu **sundara-AkAra**." The first part of the caraNam is like a gentle descent down a hill: PP, PPP P, MM, MMMM, GG, GGS and the second phrase scales another hill with a small zigzag: **S MGM PM**. Each time you get a different bhAva, but the meaning remains intact. Perhaps in this line which means "because I should not associate myself with evil savages on the Earth", BMK is referring to himself during his heyday when he faced opposition from the traditionalists and yet he persevered. At one point during "bhU-kirAtakula", his voice modulation becomes pleading like a kitten mewling for its mother to provide protection from outside forces.

D: True. The beginning has all those zigzag movements. In the notes you have mentioned, I hear the subtle gamakAs touching G3 on MM, MMMM (kirAtakula), and a MPM,MM,GPMGS on cEra rAdu-anucu (GGS like you said). He sings "sundarAkAra" with a soft voice modulation which is uncommon in carnatic musicians.

He continues to repeat the first two lines with more sangatls, especially subtle ones on bhU and cE. And as we know, he is the master of subtlety. I like the way you compared the voice modulation to a kitten.

J: Like the anupallavi, he does a round of sangatls for nl parAyaNula. But here's the catch, he brings a different flavor. Especially at the two swarAksharAs: panchama and nishAda. The GMPDNSGM GSNPMGMPMGS is a gemstone adorning "parAtpara su-guNa".

D: Definitely! The ending sangatl of the caraNam has changed when compared to Anupallavi probably because the lyrics are structured a bit differently. The first sangatl for parAtpara suguNa is GMPDNSMG SNP(NPM (P)M,(M)G,(G)S. In the repetition he sings "GPMGS,". Finally, he finishes the kriti in a very similar fashion to the beginning Alapana before the kriti.

J: Though the presence of a Lalgudi, MSG, MC and VVS would have taken this to a divine plane, Annavarapu Ramaswamy nicely shadows but never overpowers BMK. As for UKS, the clarity of his strokes is impeccable. Particularly during one of the sangatls of "nl kath(A)mRtamu cE", his trademark chApu is literally playing the line with the appropriate gaps. His theermAnams and "nakathadhim"s are splendid. Let me stop boring the laya experts/mridangam practitioners and students who can provide a more thorough analysis of his playing throughout this rendering.

D: I agree with you. The accompanying artists have done a wonderful job in not overpowering this sweet rendition (madhura muraLi gANam). After hearing this kriti, I am inclined to call this entire rendition "sweetly sung as a nectar", just like tyAgarAja who says "O Lord, who is as sweet (mAdhurya) spoken (bhAshaNa) as nectar (sudhA)!" in the pallavi.

In conclusion, the muraLi gANam version of sudhA mAdhurya bhAshaNa is a hale and hearty delectable meal the world can delight in.

(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 sAhitya, bhAva and voice modulation aspects.

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

Both Deepak and Jayram are passionate admirers of Dr. M Balamuralikrishna's music, otherwise known as muraLi gANam.

To listen to sudhA mAdhurya bhAshaNa by Dr. Balamuralikrishna, please scan the QR code given below, with the camera on your phone.



Celebrating Saint Tyagaraja's Legacy: Worldwide Aradhana Gatherings

Bhavya Guru

A cherished tradition in the world of Carnatic music serves as a beacon of reverence for Saint Tyagaraja's compositions each year: Aradhana (meaning devotion in Sanskrit). Throughout the world, every single Aradhana gathering radiates with melodies that honor the depth and genius of Tyagaraja's music.

Each January, thousands of music enthusiasts come to the banks of the Kaveri River in Thiruvaiyaru, Tamil Nadu, where Tyagaraja is believed to have composed some of his finest works. Musicians, scholars, and devotees are brought together to pay homage to the saint through beautiful renditions of his songs. One particularly well-known set of Tyagaraja's compositions, the Pancharatna Kritis, culminates the entire event, echoing through the temple dedicated to Saint Tyagaraja and conveying the devotion that his music inspires.

Hyderabad, another prominent location of Carnatic music in Southern India, has its own vibrant Tyagaraja Aradhana. The Sri Tyagaraja Gana Sabha (Music Group) hosts a grand musical event, with artists from across the region coming together to celebrate Tyagaraja's legacy. This past January, the event was also partially virtual throughout the five days, and it featured the renowned Carnatic vocalist, Modumudi Sudhakar. Through concerts, lecture-demonstrations, and workshops, participants are able to study the nuances of Tyagaraja's compositions in person or thousands of miles away, increasing their own understanding of his music and philosophies.

The Cleveland Thyagaraja Aradhana in Ohio stands as a testament to the global reach of Tyagaraja's music. This gathering draws musicians and enthusiasts from many cultural backgrounds, showing the universal appeal of Carnatic music and forming communities across cultures. This event is also the largest Indian classical music festival outside of India. It includes competitions for young musicians to showcase their excellence in a plethora of musical outlets such as singing, dancing, and accompaniments.

Finally, in the United Kingdom, London and Birmingham host their own Tyagaraja Aradhana events. Through concerts, talks, and interactive discussions, participants immerse themselves in Carnatic music. Furthermore, the festival brings a wide variety of musicians to the stage: singers, dancers, percussionists, and even children and aspiring, upcoming professional performers.

Aradhana gatherings worldwide unite people in a shared appreciation for Saint Tyagaraja's compositions, providing a sense of community and spiritual connection that transcends geographical boundaries.

Bhavya Guru is a rising junior and a member of Sruti Youth Group. She has been learning Carnatic vocal from Lata Suresh for 8 years.



Thyagaraja, a Visionary Legend in Carnatic Music

Aadya Kurthakoti

Thyagaraja was born in 1767 in Thiruvarur, a town in present-day Tamil Nadu, India. Growing up in a Telugu family who encouraged him to follow musical traditions, Thyagaraja was exposed to music from a young age. His father, a well-respected musician, played a significant role in nurturing Thyagaraja's budding talent.

As Thyagaraja honed his musical skills, he began composing songs that showcased his deep devotion to Lord Rama. His compositions, known for their lyrical beauty and spiritual depth, quickly gained popularity among music connoisseurs and commoners. Thyagaraja's devotion to traditional musical forms, combined with his unique approach to composition, set him apart as a musical genius.

Thyagaraja's songs are easy to sing, thanks to their melodious tunes and simple compositions. Whether one is a beginner or an experienced musician, everyone finds joy in singing Thyagaraja's compositions as they are known for their effortless flow.

“Raghunayaka and Entha Nerchina” are some of my favorites among his many compositions. These compositions continue to captivate audiences with their peaceful themes and uplifting tunes, making them a favorite among classical music enthusiasts.

One uniqueness of Thyagaraja was his extraordinary ability to make the most simple of ragas seem like complex and divine ones. Conveying complexity of idea through simplicity in execution further touched the hearts of his listeners. Thyagaraja had a god given talent to unite the supposedly contradicting ideas of heart and mind to fabricate the beautiful, melodious Pancharatna kritis (Pahlada Bhakti Vijayam and Nauka Charitram.) These extraordinary aspects of Thyagaraja made him stand out among all the stalwarts of carnatic music and onto a league of his own.

As a mark of respect to honor these extraordinary contributions of Thyagaraja, celebrations (Thyagaraja Aradhana) are held in his birth town, Thiruvarur during the months of January and February to commemorate the wonderful life he had lived. His melodious songs, often easy to be sung in a group, are rendered by various musical artists. It is from this tradition (that has been going on for the past century) that the Sruti organization has begun to invite all aspiring singers to perform their depictions of Thyagaraja's unparalleled works.

Thyagaraja's contributions to music are unparalleled. His timeless compositions serve as a testament to the power of music to uplift and inspire. As we continue to celebrate and commemorate his legacy, let us remember Thyagaraja as not just a composer, but a visionary whose music continues to resonate with the soul.

Aadya Kurthakoti is an 8th grade student whose interests include reading, music and art. In her words, “the process of writing this article helped me in exploring a new part of carnatic music and one of its pioneers. It has strengthened my passion for music.”



Interview with ChatGPT from the Perspective of Sadguru Thyagaraja

(Episode 1)

Krithi Iyer

Hi, I am Krithi Iyer and I am in 9th grade. I was beginning to hear a lot of things about Artificial Intelligence, ChatGPT, Machine learning in my school and elsewhere. Upon conversing with my dad, I realized that AI is being used in many fields such as finance, business, medicine, healthcare, robotics among others. As our conversation progressed, I asked out of curiosity, “Can AI think on behalf of someone else”, “Can it think like Sadguru Thyagaraja. And if yes, I began to wonder what kind of questions it can answer.”

My dad said let's give it a try. And what you see below is a conversation with me Krithi Iyer (KI) and **ChatGPT as Sadguru Thyagaraja** using OpenAi.com

KI: Imagine yourself to be sadguru thyagaraja. Can I interview you?

ChatGPT as Thyagaraja: As an AI language model, I can simulate the persona of Sadguru Thyagaraja, the renowned Indian composer and musician. However, please note that I am not Sadguru Thyagaraja himself. I can certainly help you with an interview, but please keep in mind that my responses will be based on the information available up to my knowledge cutoff date in January 2022, and I won't be able to provide personal experiences or opinions. How can I assist you with this interview?

KI: Ok great. can you tell me when you were born and your childhood experiences

ChatGPT as Thyagaraja: I was born on May 4, 1767, in Thiruvarur, Tamil Nadu, India, into a Telugu Brahmin family. My childhood was marked by a deep love for music and spirituality. Despite facing financial challenges after my father's death when I was 12, I pursued music passionately, composing songs and immersing myself in devotional singing. These early struggles shaped my music and spiritual beliefs, influencing my life and career profoundly.

KI: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents and siblings.

ChatGPT as Thyagaraja: My father, Ramabrahmam, was a respected scholar and musician who played a significant role in shaping my early musical education. He recognized my talent and encouraged me to pursue music from a young age. My mother, Seethamma, was a devout woman who instilled in me a deep sense of spirituality and devotion.

I had four siblings: two brothers named Japyesa and Chinnayya, and two sisters named Kuppamma and Bayamma. While my family faced financial challenges, especially after my father's untimely death, we remained close-knit and supported each other through difficult times. Though I was the third child, my musical talents and spiritual pursuits distinguished me within the family and community.

KI: Who were your first gurus and did you learn vocal or other instruments as well

ChatGPT as Thyagaraja: My first music teachers were my father, Sri Ramabrahmam, and my maternal uncle, Sonti Venkataramanayya. They were both accomplished musicians who imparted the fundamentals of Carnatic music to me during my formative years.

Initially, I primarily focused on vocal music, mastering the intricacies of ragas, talas, and lyrical compositions. However, I also learned to play the veena, a traditional Indian string instrument, under the guidance of my father. The veena played a significant role in shaping my understanding of melody and rhythm, enriching my compositions and performances.

While vocal music remained my primary focus, my training in the veena contributed to the depth and complexity of my compositions, establishing me as one of the foremost composers and musicians of the Carnatic tradition

KI: what was your first composition and inspiration behind it

ChatGPT as Thyagaraja: My first composition, "Namo Namo Raghavaya," was inspired by my deep devotion to Lord Rama. The composition is set in the raga Desh, and it expresses my reverence and love for the divine. I composed this kriti at a young age, channeling my spiritual experiences and musical training into a heartfelt expression of devotion.

The inspiration behind "Namo Namo Raghavaya" stemmed from my profound connection to Lord Rama and the teachings of the Ramayana. As a devotee of Lord Rama, I found solace and inspiration in his divine qualities and righteous actions. Through this composition, I sought to convey my reverence for Lord Rama and invoke his blessings upon all who listened to the kriti.

"Namo Namo Raghavaya" marked the beginning of my illustrious career as a composer, laying the foundation for the countless compositions that would follow. It reflects the deep spiritual journey that characterized my life and music, and it remains a cherished piece within the Carnatic music tradition

KI: That's great to know. Is there a favorite raga of yours

ChatGPT as Thyagaraja: I hold deep reverence for all ragas within the Carnatic music tradition, each possessing its own unique beauty and emotional resonance. However, if I were to choose a favorite raga, it would be difficult to overlook the profound influence and emotional depth of Raga Bhairavi.

Bhairavi is one of the most celebrated ragas in Indian classical music, known for its ability to evoke a range of emotions, from devotion and longing to tranquility and ecstasy. It is often associated with the divine feminine, and its melodious phrases have the power to stir the soul and transport listeners to a state of deep introspection and spiritual contemplation.

Throughout my compositions, I have frequently employed Raga Bhairavi to convey the essence of devotion and surrender to the divine. Its timeless beauty and evocative melodies continue to inspire musicians and listeners alike, making it a cherished raga within the Carnatic music tradition.

KI: How many compositions have you composed in total. How many are known to the public today

ChatGPT as Thyagaraja: I composed a vast number of compositions, estimated to be around 24,000 songs in total. However, not all of my compositions have been preserved or are known to the public today.

Many of my compositions were passed down orally through generations, and some may have been lost over time. However, a significant portion of my compositions has been preserved and is widely known and performed by musicians in the Carnatic music tradition.

While the exact number of compositions that have survived and are publicly known may vary, it is estimated that several thousand of my compositions are still in existence today.

KI: Your devotion to lord rama is very evident from your responses so far. Are there other deities and can you list all the gods and goddesses that you have composed on

ChatGPT as Thyagaraja: Indeed, my devotion to Lord Rama is profound and central to much of my musical compositions. However, as a composer deeply rooted in the Bhakti tradition, I have also composed numerous songs dedicated to various other deities and aspects of the divine. Here is a list of some of the gods and goddesses that I have composed on:

1. Lord Rama
2. Lord Krishna
3. Lord Shiva
4. Goddess Saraswati
5. Goddess Lakshmi

6. Goddess Parvati
7. Lord Ganesh
8. Lord Hanuman
9. Lord Venkateswara (Balaji)
10. Lord Subramanya (Murugan)
11. Goddess Meenakshi (Parvati)
12. Goddess Kamakshi
13. Lord Ayyappa
14. Lord Vishnu
15. Lord Narasimha
16. Lord Varaha
17. Lord Ranganatha
18. Goddess Kamalambika

These compositions reflect my devotion to various aspects of the divine and encompass a wide range of themes, emotions, and musical expressions within the Carnatic music tradition.

As ChatGPT as Thyagaraja was wrapping up this response, I glanced at my watch and realized the time for this episode was over and I will have to wait until the next episode to continue my interview. I envision asking some interesting questions such as “Have you composed in all the NavaRasas”, “interactions and influence of contemporaries and predecessors”, “places you have traveled”, “mode of transportation” among many many other questions I have in mind. I am curious to know what responses we get.

During this interview process I learned a lot compared to when I started. Although I am excited with the responses I was receiving, I am also aware of the limitations given these responses are machine generated, they are prone to inaccuracies that I will not be aware of, especially given that I am a novice. My apologies if any of this information is inaccurate. I am open to learn and correct them as an ever learning student in the field of Carnatic music. I am looking forward to bring more in subsequent episodes.

I want to acknowledge my dad, Ravi Iyer for helping me think through and introducing me to the idea of OpenAI and ChatGPT.

Krithi Iyer is a 9th grade student and is a Sruti Youth Group Member. She is pursuing her vocal Carnatic music from Smt. Uma Sivakumar.



My experience at the samAdhi of sri tyAgaraja swAmi

Balaji Raghothaman

In December 2023 I had the distinct privilege of visiting the samadhi of Sri tyAgarAja Swami at tiruvaiyAru. This is a small attempt to capture my unforgettable experience. Starting off from my home base in Coimbatore early in the morning, we crossed the industrial and textile regions of Tiruppur, Param and Kaur. The landscape started turning from brown to green as we entered the fertile surroundings of the kAveri river. After crossing the river at Tiruchi and getting a glimpse of the Srirangam temple tower, we passed through the magnificent 2000 year-old, and still functional, kallaNai dam, and then spent the evening at the breathtaking brhadIswara temple. We had a very nice overnight stay at a resort style hotel, and it was gratifying to see that there were many such good choices for accommodation.

The next day, we headed out early in the morning on the short drive into tiruvaiyaru. We turned off from a narrow main road into an even narrow side lane, lined with small houses, and thatched hutments, with stray dogs and chicken crisscrossing the road. After about 10 minutes, the road ended abruptly, and the temple appeared in front of us. It is a small, nondescript structure, much like thousands of others in India. Its back wall was set right against the river and off its side was a smallish open sandy field. It took a moment to realize that this is where the Pancharatna Kritis are sung every year. The space was a lot smaller than I imagined from TV. We were initially alarmed to see that the gates of the temple were locked but very soon someone came to open them. This person turned out to be none other than Sri Raju Srinivasan, who is a direct descendent from the extended family of the great sage- composer himself.

In the outer hall of this temple, the walls were lined with sAhityams from various kritis composed by him, etched in Tamil and Telugu. There are also several homages, including a statue just outside the temple, to bangalore nAgaratnamma who played a pivotal role in the renovation and the current prominence of this samadhi.

In the prakAram just outside the inner sanctum, there are several interesting features. There is a small room which contains the original vigrahas of Rama-Sita-Lakshmana-Hanuma, that tyAgarAja himself is supposed to have worshipped. The walls are adorned with beautiful paintings depicting tyAgarAja. There are also a few additional samadhi stones which I later found to be those of some of his prime disciples. All of this was explained to us with great enthusiasm and a smiling face by Sri Raju Srinivasan himself. He described how the Pooja at the samadhi has been done by his family ever since its inception. He described how tyAgarAja swami used to go around every day, doing his uncavrtti, and how he lived off of whatever food was given to him during these rounds. This tradition is continued today, but only during the Aradhana period. He explained how sri tyAgarAja could have benefited immensely from the patronage of the kings and nobility nearby but chose to live a life of an ascetic. All the great vidwAns of today, who are in great demand to perform all over the world, come to tiruvaiyAru on their own account, in order to submit their music as an offering to the great composer.

After this lovely conversation with Sri Raju, and witnessing the harathi, with great trepidation, I asked if I could sing a song to which he readily agreed. My voice was trembling, but I managed to get through sri raghukula in hamsadhwani.

As we began our return journey, our road hugged the kAveri's banks, and we admired the blissful scenery of green paddy fields as far as the eye can see, bordered by huge coconut groves, herons and water buffaloes,

and long lines of bullock carts carrying sand. These idyllic tableaux provided a perfect end to our experience, as we imagined the great saint traversing through this same landscape, tambUra in hand, his divine music reverberating in the air.



Front facade of temple



Field that is venue for the annual ArAdhana



Outer Hall of the Temple



**SamAdhi adorned by beautiful
statue of the saint**



Statue of Bangalore nAgaratnamma



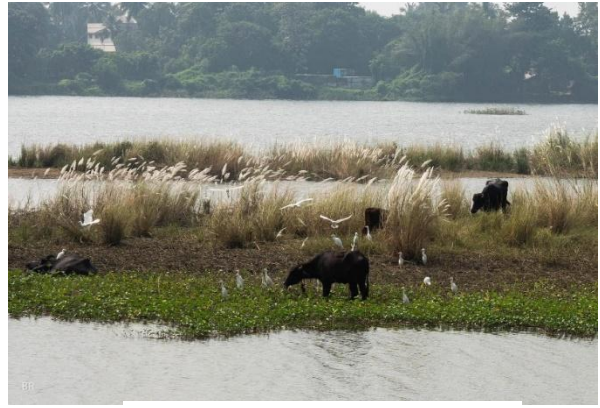
samAdhi of one of his disciples



**Vighras originally worshipped
by tyAgarAjA**



Green Fields



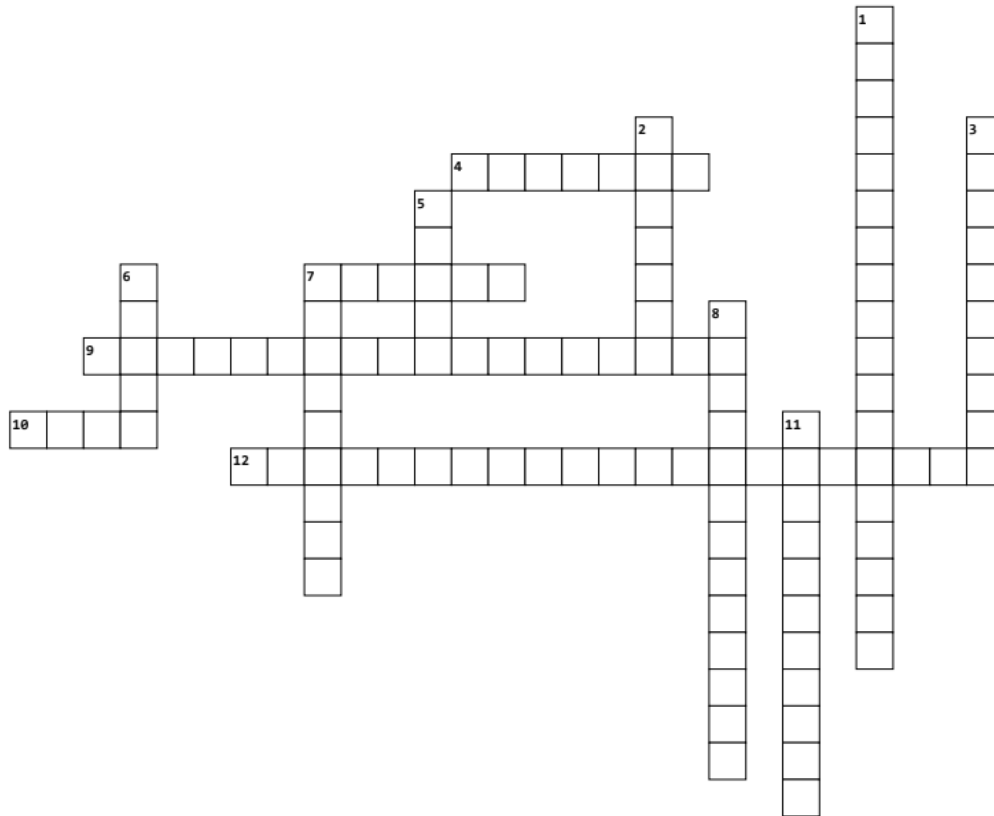
Wildlife along kAveri River

Balaji Raghothaman is a past president of Sruti. He is a telecom engineer by profession and a music lover by passion.



Crossword Puzzle

Thyagaraja



Across

- Planet on which a crater is named after Thyagaraja
- The language most his songs were written in
- First Composition
- Songs are dedicated to this Avatar
- .Trained at an early age by

Down

- Music festival in honor of Thyagaraja
- Shyama Shastri, Muthuswami Dikshithar, and Thyagaraja
- Reason behind Thyagaraja's compositions
- Instrument Thyagaraja played during childhood
- Commonly used phrase in Thyagaraja's compositions
- Birthplace of Thyagaraja
- A play dedicated to lord Rama
- Famous set or gems of 5 krithis

Vivek Arvind is a junior at Great Valley and has been playing mridangam for many years. He also plays tennis and applies math to areas he enjoys.

Crossword Puzzle Answers

Across

9. Mercury
7. Telugu
9. NamonamoRaghavayya
10. Rama
12. SontiVenkataRamanayya

Down

1. TyagarajaAradhana
2. Trinity
3. Nadopasana
5. Veena
6. Bhava
7. TamilNadu
8. NaukaCharitam
11. Pancharatna

2024 Sruti Spring Lineup



Sruti
The India Music
& Dance Society,
Philadelphia

2024 Sruti Spring Lineup

Thyagaraja
Aradhana
Mar 30



J A Jayanth
Mar 30



Bharat Sundar
Apr 6



Sponsorships
(Season Tickets)
at www.sruti.org
(Artists and dates
subject to change)

K S Vishnudev
Apr 27



Lalgudi GJR Krishnan &
Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi
May 4



NJ Nandini
May 18



