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The India Music  
& Dance Society,  
Philadelphia

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**Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir**

**March 28, 2026**

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# Sruti Youth Group



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## From the President's Desk

Dear Rasikas,

Welcome to **Sruti-40!** This year marks a special milestone for Sruti as we proudly celebrate our 40<sup>th</sup> year anniversary – what a crowning achievement! I would like to begin by expressing my thanks to the outgoing board of directors led by Rajee Padmanabhan, for executing a fantastic 2025.

We recently unveiled our “**Sruti-40 Logo**” that embodies our theme “**Sruti-40, Legacy & Beyond**” designed with an aim to celebrate our longstanding excellence, while also looking ahead and empowering our community and the next generation of artists. Consistent with this theme, this year's Thyagaraja Aradhana features increased opportunities for community students and teachers – a **Kuchipudi dance performance by the incredibly talented youngsters Anjali Talluru and Meera Ratnagiri**, and a **thematic presentation on “The Emotional Tapestry of Sri Thyagaraja” by Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar and students, together with a talk by Sri Prabhakar Chitrapu.**

Here is a quick intro of this year's board that is working tirelessly to bring you a vibrant mélange of exciting events that are sure to sate your appetite for Indian classical music and dance:

**President-elect Ravi Iyer** is a passionate musician and avid arts enthusiast. Having served on the Sruti board in various capacities over the past years, he is well prepared to carry forward our rich legacy in 2027.

**Secretary Murthy Ravinuthala** has etched himself commendably into the Sruti fabric in the last two years and will continue to provide his valuable service.

**Treasurer Venkat Kilambi**, with his excellent financial acumen, will continue to manage our books during this milestone year as he has always done so efficiently for several years.

**Director of Publications & Outreach, Aparna Iyer** is a new name on the Sruti board, but the thoughtfully crafted TA souvenir that you hold in your hands is enough evidence that she is well poised to excel in this role and beyond.

**Director of Marketing, Nari Narayanan**, is no stranger to the board and the organization, and will ensure we continue to build our brand and effectively engage our community.

**Director of Resources and Development, Rangarajan Suresh** may be new to the board, but not many know that he has been a silent force at Sruti events over the years quietly working long hours and helping with event execution.

**Director 1, Vidhya Sethuraman** joins Sruti this year and will guide the Sruti Youth Group while also assisting with event logistics.

**Director 2, Srivalli Pillutla** is a familiar face in the Sruti community and is sure to seamlessly integrate into our operations with her deep understanding of our processes.

I am pleased to provide a snapshot of the diverse mix of music, dance, instrumental concerts and immersive educational activities planned for the year.

## Spring Highlights

- Grand concert with two Sangita Kalanidhis Dr. Sowmya accompanied by Sri R.K. Shriramkumar.
- Lecture-demonstration and workshop by musicologist Sri Malladi Suri Babu.
- Unique vocal-flute duet by Sri.Abhishek Raghuram and Sri.Shashank Subramanyam.
- Concerts by Sri. Ramakrishnan Murthy and Smt. Gayathri Venkataraghavan.
- Fire Museum partnership featuring violinist Smt.Charumathi Raghuraman.
- Bharatanatyam by Medha Hari, student of Anita Guha.

## Fall Plans

- Mandolin concert by U P Raju, Nagamani & team
- **"Sruti-40 Fest," September 26 & 27:** Two days of music featuring violinists **R.K. Shriramkumar and V.V.S. Murari, Kruthi Bhat, Sandeep Narayan, the GAJANA ensemble led by Patri Satish Kumar, and Sriranjani Santhanagopalan.** Includes a special **"Sruti-40" legacy play, Panel discussion and much more.**
- Possible partnership with Phila Arts Museum and The Annenberg Center.
- "T.Sarada Memorial Youth Fest" organized by the **Sruti Youth Group.**

This year, we are grateful for generous grants from the **National Endowment for the Arts, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Paul Angell Foundation, and The Presser Foundation.** Thank you to our **Sruti-40 Platinum, Gold, and Silver Patrons,** Sponsors, members, and volunteers for their valued support and contributions. We appreciate your ongoing commitment and look forward to seeing you at future events.

Thank You!

Uma Nagarajan (Sivakumar)

President

## From the Publications and Outreach Committee

**Dear Friends and Rasikas,**

We are delighted to present to you the **Thyagaraja Aradhana Souvenir – 2026**, a publication that carries special significance as **Sruti celebrates its 40th anniversary**. Founded in 1986, Sruti has, for four decades, been a cherished platform for presenting and nurturing Indian classical music and dance in the Greater Philadelphia region, sustained entirely by the passion of volunteers, artists, and rasikas who believe deeply in this art form.

This year's souvenir reflects both **continuity and celebration**. Within these pages, you will find thoughtful contributions from serious music lovers and students, insights into the exciting lineup of events planned for the Spring season, and a carefully curated selection of photographs that capture Sruti's **rich artistic legacy**—from community-centered festivals like the Thyagaraja Aradhana to performances by some of the world's most renowned musicians and dancers.

The **cover artwork** for this year's souvenir has been specially conceptualized and created for Sruti by **Srishti Rajendran**; a young student of music whose artistic sensibility beautifully mirrors her passion for the art form. We are grateful for her creativity and for the fresh perspective she brings to this milestone edition.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the **Publications Committee - Jayram Sataluri, Rajee Padmanabhan, Prabhakar Chitrapu, and Dhiya Ravinuthala** - for their tireless efforts, attention to detail, and love for Sruti that shine through every page.

As Sruti enters its fifth decade, we do so with gratitude for the past and enthusiasm for the future. We thank our readers, members, artists, and well-wishers for being an integral part of this journey and wish you an inspiring and fulfilling **Sruti music and dance season ahead**.

With warm regards,

Aparna Iyer

for Sruti Publications & Outreach Committee Members

### About the Cover

*The cover art for this issue was created by one of our talented young artists from our community, Srishti Hariprasad Rajendran. Shristi is an 8th grader and has been learning Carnatic music from Uma Sivakumar since 2018. In addition to music and arts, she also loves baking, painting, and learning martial arts.*

# *Sruti's Bala Bhavam Concert: Conquering the Chill for Carnatic Warmth*

**By Sri PN Narayanan**

The bone-chilling cold had descended, painting the landscape with the stark silhouette of bare winter trees. No errand could have lured me out. Yet, for the pure, unadulterated joy of Sruti's Bala Bhavam concert, made me take the trip to the Swami Chinmayananda Sudarshan in West Chester.

The stage was graced by the rising talent of Rishi Swaminathan (Vocal), accompanied by the artistry of Swetha Narasimhan (Violin) and the rhythmic prowess of Navaneeth Gopinath (Mridangam). Majestically presiding over the venue, an image of Swami Chinmayananda stood at the stage's edge, alongside the benevolent presence of Guruvayurappan and Swami Ayyappan, bestowing their silent blessings.

## **The Ascent**

The concert commenced with Tyagaraja's exquisite kriti, "Paluku Kanda," set in the poignant Navarasa Kaanada raga. The momentum truly surged with the charanam, "Surula Kaamini Manula Gaanamu" (the sublime music of the celestial women), a phrase that seemed to immediately lift the performance to an elevated plane.

Next, the selection of "Sri Kaalahastisha" in Huseni raga resonated deeply. This kriti celebrates the sacred Vayu Kshetram (Air element shrine) where Lord Shiva manifests his grace. Coming from Jambukeswaram (the Appu Kshetram or Water element shrine), I felt an immediate connection, as if the song itself had transported me to the presence of Vayu Lingam. The composition's mastery was evident in the final, single line that beautifully encapsulated the entire legend of Kannappa Nayanar.

The third offering featured the expansive Harikambhoji alapana, leading into Thanjavur Sankara Iyer's devotional piece, "Muruga, Thirumaal Maruga." The connection to the guru parampara added a layer of reverence, as Sankara Iyer was the principal guru of the renowned Chitra Veena Maestro, Sri Ravikiran, who is, in turn, the brother of Rishi's own guru, Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar. The subsequent brief alapana by violinist Swetha Narasimhan was a testament to sixteen years of rigorous training. Though the song was succinct, the magnificent scope of Harikambhoji made it magnificent.

## **The Kriti Climax and Rhythmic Flair**

The main song of the performance was Dikshitar's kriti, "Maamava Meenakshi" in Varaali raga. The neraval (improvisation) of the line "Shyaame Shankari Digvijaya Prathaapini" created a moment of complete, hushed reverence. The hall was absolutely silent, everyone utterly captivated by the artist's intensive voice. While one might have wished for a slightly longer swara (musical notes) exposition, the overall duration was perfectly appropriate for a focused one-hour program.

The subsequent Mridangam solo by Navaneeth was simply superb—a display of technical clarity and inherent rhythm that points to a bright future.

### **A Note on Execution and Gratitude**

Unfortunately, the performance was occasionally marred by technical glitches. The sound system, seemingly operated mostly by devoted volunteers, proved uncooperative at several junctures, affecting both Rishi's and Swetha's output.

The concert concluded with the lively Kavadi Chindu song, "Bhoomi Mechidum." During this Tamil composition, Rishi's pronunciation showed a brief echo of the legendary Higgins Bhagavathar, a charming resemblance that will undoubtedly disappear with more practice.

The hour flew by unnoticed, a credit to the concerted effort of all involved: Rishi, his guru Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar, Navaneeth, his guru Kalaimamani Thiru Thiruvarur Vaidyanathan, Mrs. Swetha Narasimhan, and her guru Srimathi Vijayalakshmi.

### **A Plea and a Commendation**

To Rishi, Navaneeth, and all the talented children of the Sruti family: You, your gurus, and your parents have invested tremendous effort and sacrifice to reach this level of artistry. As you venture into college and beyond, my request to you: Please do not abandon this divine art. Continue to nurture and practice the gift you have cultivated.

Under the outstanding leadership of Mrs. Rajee Padmanabhan, the achievements of Sruti Sabha in 2025 have been nothing short of astounding. The torch was fittingly passed to the 2026 president, Mrs. Uma Nagarajan, who honored several children after the concert, recognizing their dedication. Sruti's continuous service in nurturing the next generation of artists is truly commendable.

*P.S. The musical experience began not with a kriti, but with an utterly delicious feast served before the concert! One must ask: can music truly be appreciated on an empty stomach? A special salute goes to the delightful curd rice, and heartfelt thanks to Mrs. Rajee Padmanabhan, whose exemplary hospitality set the perfect tone for the event.*

*Originally from Trichy and shaped by a deep tradition of classical music, Padmanabhan Narayanan (PN Narayanan) developed an early and enduring appreciation for the Indian classical arts. In his personal time, Narayanan remains an active supporter of the arts and frequently writes short stories and commentary on classical music concerts in both Tamil and English.*

# Tyagaraja Aradhana schedule and detail

## **Tyagaraja Aradhana schedule on March 28, 2026:**

- 7:45 AM Unchavritti – Thyagaraja Procession
- 8:10 AM Puja
- 8:30 AM Utsava Sampradaya Kritis led by Sri. Dinakar Subramanian\*
- 9:20 AM Chetulara Flute led by Sri. Balachandar Krishnaraj, accompanied by Swetha Narasimhan on Violin and Madhav Manikandan on Mridangam
- 10:00 AM Pancharatna Krithis led by Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar\*
- 11:15 AM – 12:30 PM Individual/Group Singing
- 12:30 PM Lunch (for purchase)
- 1:15 PM – 2:15 PM Individual/Group Singing
- 2:15 PM Board Intro
- 2:30 PM – 3:00 PM Kuchipudi performance by Meera Ratnagiri & Anjali Talluru\*\*
- 3:15 PM – 4:35 PM “The Emotional Tapestry of Sri Thyagaraja” – A Musical Presentation by Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar’s disciples with Sri. Prabhakar Chitrapu\*\*\*
- 4:45 PM – 6:45 PM Individual/Group Singing continues
- 7:00 PM Mangalam & Arathi

\* **Violin:** Swetha Narasimhan

\* **Mridangam:** P Sivakumar, Sriram Satagopan, Ashwin Balaji, Madhav Manikandan, Rakshith Sivakumar, Mukund Manikandan, Saketh Praba

\* **Ghatam:** Ravi Iyer

## **\*\* A Kuchipudi Tribute to Sri Thyagaraja by Meera Ratnagiri & Anjali Talluru**

**Nada Tanumanisham** is a devotional composition by the revered composer Tyagaraja, set in the raga Chittaranjani and Adi talam. In this kriti, Thyagaraja reflects on the divine nature of *nāda* (the primordial sound), describing Lord Shiva as the embodiment of sacred sound itself. Tyagaraja expresses that true realization of the divine comes from an understanding of music as the spiritual path.

Ragam: Chittaranjani

Talam: Adi

Music Composition: Tyagaraja

Choreography: Anjali Talluru and Meera Ratnagiri

**Ksheera Sagara Sayana:** This famous keertanam describes Thyagaraja, an ardent devotee, pleading to Lord Rama to answer his prayers. He questions why, after rescuing and blessing so many devotees, the Lord seems to leave him in sorrow. This choreographic masterpiece depicts the story of Gajendra Moksham, Draupadi Vastraharam, and the slaying of Ravana.

Ragam: Devagandhaari

Talam: Adi

Music Composition: Tyagaraja

Choreography: Padmabhushan Dr. Vempati Chinna Satyam

**\*\*The Emotional Tapestry of Sri Tyagaraja:**

Is Carnatic music all about bhakti or do other sentiments have a place too? Undoubtedly! If music is the expression of emotions through raga, tala and bhava, Carnatic music is no exception. There is a wide gamut of moods and themes found in our music, and one of the composers whose output reflects this amply is Sri Tyagaraja. Be it ecstasy or frustration, despondency or sarcasm, Sri Tyagaraja gives free expression to them, making him not only very human but also relatable to us nearly 2 centuries after his time. This group presentation by the disciples of Smt Kiranavali along with Sri Prabhakar Chitrapu's commentary, showcases a variety of rasas used by Sri Tyagaraja.

**Participants:** Disciples of Guru Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar

*Aakarsh Ananthkrishnan*

*Gayatri Bharath*

*Rishi Swaminathan*

*Sanjana Kanvar*

*Shritika Sriram*

*Varadamurthy Srinivasan*

*Varsha Lakshmanan*

**Accompanied** by Swetha Narasimhan on the Violin and Ashwin Balaji on the Mridangam.

**Commentary** by: Sri Prabhakar Chitrapu

# Emotional Tapestry of *tyaagaraaja*

By Prabhakar Chitrapu

On a cool, star-studded evening after an open-air concert by the well-known musician Sandeep Subramanian, a lingering *bilahari kriti*—*intakanna aanandameemi*—sparked a reflection on the emotional depth of Saint *tyaagaraaja*'s compositions. The breeze was gentle, the night tranquil. Yet, what lingered most powerfully was not the environment, but the emotional resonance of the music.

The *bilahari kriti* posed a striking question in its *pallavi*: “*What happiness is greater than this?*” In that simple rhetorical inquiry, *tyaagaraaja* appears to stand at the summit of experiential joy. *bilahari raaga*, with its inherently bright and buoyant character, perfectly complements this emotional state.

The first *charaNam* elaborates on the nature of that joy: dancing, singing, and merging with the Divine. Such a state, he suggests, is itself complete—what greater happiness could there be?

The second *charaNam* deepens the experience. Singing the Lord's name leads to a trance-like absorption in which bodily awareness fades. The culmination appears in the final *charaNam*, where meditation transforms perception itself: all worlds shine as manifestations of Him.

This progression reflects not merely emotional delight but an *advaitik* culmination—the dissolution of duality into oneness. The escalation from happiness to transcendental realization forms a creative arc within a single composition.

This reflection naturally raises a broader question: how did *tyaagaraaja* capture various human emotions in his compositions—lyrics and music? Though any comprehensive study would require extensive scholarship, this article is an attempt at a provisional classification based on core emotional states and their intensities.

## Emotion & Artistry

At the very outset, let us think about how emotions and musical compositions interplay and interdepend with each other. Firstly, one generally associates artistic creations with emotions - for example the well-known British poet William Wordsworth said, “Poetry is emotion recollected in tranquility”.

But there are also musical compositions (& other artistic creations) that are not driven by emotions but simply commissioned or even part of the artist's profession. For example, JS Bach dished out great musical works simply as part of his paid duty as the appointed music director of two churches in Leipzig.

So, let us leave this category alone and only focus on those artistic creations that are fundamentally motivated by a deep emotional stir in the artist's heart.

Broadly speaking, *tyaagaraaja*'s musical compositions that are primarily driven by human emotions seem to cluster around Happiness, Sadness, Devotional Love & Longings, and several other distinctive emotional categories such as humility, gratitude, playfulness and even aggressiveness.

May it be said in passing that there are also compositions that are criticisms on local social practices, praises for other devotees & musicians etc. These are ‘primarily’ driven by ‘social values’ (such as dishonesty, hypocrisy, respect & reverence etc), although they lead to emotions, finally culminating in the musical compositions. For this reason, these are not included in this study, which focuses on compositions that are ‘primarily’ driven by *tyaagaraaja*’s emotions.

### **Happiness and Joy**

Surprisingly, explicit expressions of happiness are relatively scarce. Besides *intakanna aanandameemi* in *bilahari raaga*, one finds the majestic *jagadaanandakaaraka* in *naaTa raaga*, where the very name of the Lord as “bestower of joy to the world” conveys expansive delight.

An even more exalted form of joy is expressed in *kanugonTini*, again in *bilahari raaga*. This composition is traditionally associated with the episode when *tyaagaraaja* recovered his stolen idols of *raama* and *siita*. The emotional state here is ecstatic—gratitude overflowing into radiant joy.

Incidentally, the repeated use of *bilahari raaga* in moments of intense happiness makes one wonder whether it may have been his chosen vehicle for expressing happiness and joy.

### **Sadness and Emotional Weakness**

Unlike compositions on happiness, those expressing sadness appear with greater frequency and expressive breadth. In compositions such as *nagumoomu ganaleeni (aabheeri)*, *eTula brootuvoo teliya (chakravaakam)*, and *enta paapinaiti (gouliipantu)*, one senses emotional vulnerability and spiritual fatigue. The phrase “*jagameelee paramaatma, evaritoo moraliDudu?*” (“O Lord who rules the universe, to whom else shall I appeal?”) captures a profound helplessness. The devotee stands before the all-knowing Lord yet feels unheard.

The grief deepens in the period following the theft of his idols. In *endu daaginaaDoo (tooDi)* and *neenendu vedakuduraa (karnaaTaka behaag)*, the anguish is palpable. In *endu daaginaaDoo*, *tyaagaraaja* recalls episodes from religious & spiritual lore: *prahlaada* suffering while the Lord remained hidden in the pillar; *sugriiva* beaten by *vaali* while *raama* waited behind the trees. These recollections are not mere storytelling—they mirror his own emotional state. The Lord’s seeming delay becomes the source of piercing sorrow.

### **Devotional vaatsalya**

Devotion (*bhakti*) forms the foundational and permanent undercurrent of *tyaagaraaja*’s creativity. While countless *kritis* express prayer and surrender, a particularly tender dimension emerges in compositions reflecting *vaatsalya*—affection toward the Divine as a child.

In lullabies such as *joo joo joo raama (riitigouLa)*, *uyyaalaluugavayya (niilaambari)*, and *laali yuugavee (niilaambari)*, one perceives a maternal softness both in the lyrics and melody. The devotee becomes a mother, soothing the Lord to sleep. The *raagas* chosen reinforce intimacy and gentleness.

Equally moving is *shrii raama raghuraama (yadukula kaambhooji)*, where *tyaagaraaja* wonders what penances were performed by *raama*’s mother *kausalya*, father *dasharatha*, brother *lakshmaNa*, wife *siita*,

father-in-law *janaka*, musical guru *naarada*, teacher *vishvaamitra*, blessed *ahalya*, and even *shiva*'s bow to have been associated with Lord *raama*. The melody expressed in *yadukula kambhooji raaga* enhances the tenderness of contemplation.

In *aaragimpavee (tooDi)*, he lovingly offers food prepared with all six tastes—sweet, sour, salty, pungent, bitter, and astringent—urging the Lord to relish. Here grandeur of the *tooDi raaga* coexists with affection. Similarly, in *baDalika tiira (riitigouLa)* and *bhavanuta (moohana)*, he invites *raama* to rest in his heart. In the former, he imagines the Lord weary from forest exile and battle; in the latter, weary from enduring the devotee himself. The intimacy is striking—God is not distant but lovingly attended.

### **Devotional Longings**

A distinctive emotional arc appears in compositions structured as direct monologues to Lord *raama* expressing his longings. These appear in progressive stages of devotional tension: longing, pleading, complaining, accusing, and finally even challenging.

Longing is expressed poignantly in *ennaDu chuutunoo (kaLaavati)*, where he wonders when he will behold the Lord and His family. The *raaga* intensifies yearning, hovering near resignation.

Pleading can be seen in works such as *aparaadhamula noorva (rasaaLi)*, where he begs forgiveness for his sins and pleads for mercy. Interestingly, he refers to having composed a hundred songs on the Lord—perhaps suggesting a conscious devotional project he undertook. In *chelimini jalaaakshu (yadukula kaambhooji)* from *prahlaada bhakti vijayam*, he implores devotees to inform him if they see *Hari*, giving them visual clues about the Lord! For example, He has a shining bow in his hand -His eyes are filled with piety - He speaks only when appropriate - your heart melts when you see Him. He also describes how he has withered while longing for Him, how his longing is unspeakable etc.

When pleas seem unanswered, complaint surfaces. In *aTlaa palkuduvu (aThaana)*, he accuses the Lord of inconsistency—rocking a child one moment, pinching the next. In *broova bhaarama (bahudaari)*, he humorously asks whether he is too heavy to uplift, even though He once lifted the entire mountain of *goovardhana!*

*tyaagaraajaa*'s longings sharpen into accusations in *aDigi sukhamu (madhyamaavati)*, where he questions whether anyone at all has gained happiness by seeking the Lord. He cites *siita*'s exile and *shuurphaNaka*'s mutilation, concluding bitterly that no one truly prospered by desiring Him.

The final stage is challenge. In *nijamaitee (bhairavi)*, he dares the Lord to appear if the stories of Divine grace are indeed true. In *ennaLLu uurakee (shubhapantuvaraaLi)*, he questions how long the Lord will ignore him and whether no one will hold Him accountable. The boldness is startling yet rooted in intense intimacy.

### **Other Emotional Shades**

*tyaagaraaja* also expresses humility in the celebrated *endaroo mahaanubhaavulu (shri)*, acknowledging countless great souls. Gratitude flows in *daasharathi nii RuNamu (tooDi)*, where he acknowledges the fame bestowed upon him.

Playfulness surfaces in works from *nauka charitram*, such as *allakalloomlamu (sauraaShTram)*, depicting *goopiis* caught in a storm on the river *yamuna*. The lively tempo conveys feelings of agitation and drama very effectively.

Even aggressiveness appears in *eedi nii baahubala (darbar)*, where he questions the Lord's valor and urges Him to act against injustice. The tone is fierce, far removed from placid devotion. He asks if His arrows haven't drunk blood for a long time since killing the demon *mura* and whether they are not thirsty for blood of the evil now!

### **When Lyrics and Melody Don't Seem Aligned**

Intriguingly, there are instances where lyrical sentiment and *raaga* mood seem at odds. Admitting that such statements are subjective, the *kana kana ruchira (varaaLi)* celebrates *raama's* spectacular beauty, yet *varaaLi's* somber expression may evoke melancholy in some listeners. *ennaallu uurakee (shubhapantuvaraaLi)*, though challenging Lord *raama* in the lyrics, unfolds in a *raaga* often associated with pathos. Conversely, *toli janmamuna*—a self-critical reflection—appears in the bright *raaga bilahari*. Likewise, *rama niivaaDukonduvoo* in *kalyaaNi* describes doubt expressed within a *raaga* that usually conveys serene contentment.

Such apparent non-alignments makes one wonder whether *tyaagaraaja* composed the music and lyrics simultaneously or at different times!

### **Conclusion**

Even this somewhat extended exploration barely scratches the surface of *tyaagaraaja's* vast emotional universe. His compositions move from ecstasy to despair, tenderness to accusation, humility to challenge. The lyrical poetry and melodic architecture together create a rich emotional tapestry.

To study *tyaagaraaja* is to witness the full spectrum of human feeling expressed through music. His art affirms that spiritual life is not monotone serenity, but a living dialogue and conflict between the finite and the infinite—sometimes joyful, sometimes anguished, always deeply human.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author would like to thank Mrs. Kiranavali Vidyasankar for suggesting the topic, and her other friends & family for helpful feedback, some of which has been incorporated in this article.

*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](http://www.Thyagaraja.org)*

# Tyagaraja's Prayers to Rama - An Interactive Article

By Shritika Sriram

Would you choose devotion over wealth?

Well, Tyagaraja would.

*Even after getting invited to sing at the royal court in Thanjavur.*

Being one of the most respected and celebrated composers in the history of Carnatic music, Tyagaraja is remembered as a poet, a saint, and an ardent devotee of Rama.

I cannot stress the 'ardent' enough. Talking about Tyagaraja's entire life would take more than just one tiny article, which is why I will focus on what he communicated to Lord Rama through many of his famous compositions.

*To make this more of an interactive article, you will have to guess which 'set of songs' it belongs to.*

First off, I looked at a few compositions from his collection of **devotional songs mostly remembered for rhythmic and repetitive tunes**. Before you read on, take a quick guess at which set of songs I'm talking about here.

- **Tulasi Dalamulache** (Mayamalavagowla) - *I shall ever be worshipping the Prince of Ayodhya.*
- **Vara Leela Gana Lola** (Shankarabharanam) - *O Protector of all celestials! O most merciful! Protect me quickly.*
- **Vandanamu Raghunandana** (Sahana) - *O Raghunandana who built a bridge across the ocean! Salutations to you.*
- **Pahi Kalyanarama** (Kapi) - *O Auspicious rAma! O Lord Sri Rama of holy virtues! Please protect me.*

You can see how devoted Tyagaraja was to Lord Rama, his prayers coming in the forms of praising, pleading, or surrendering... sometimes all at once!

And then, of course, came the five most famous radiant jewels, each one crafted carefully by Tyagaraja himself and filled with praise. Any guesses as to what these gems may be? Again, refer to the bolded phrases to help you.

- **Jagadhananda Karaka** (Naattai) - *O Rama, the Lord of Janaki, you are the bestower of universal happiness.*
- **Duduku Gala Nanne** (Gowla) - *I implore you, O Rama, to forgive me and steer me towards righteousness.*
- **Sadhinchene** (Arabhi) - *O Krishna, why did you go back on your word when I followed the path prescribed by you?*
- **Kana Kana Ruchira** (Varali) - *Every time I see you, O Lord with a flawless face, my 'ruchi' increases.*
- **Endaro Mahanubhavulu** (Shree) - *There are many great souls who have attained greatness in this world; I offer my salutations.*

**Performed every year as a group, they celebrate Tyagaraja's spiritual connection with Rama.**

The final set of famous kritis that we'll be looking at is a bunch of **simple, devotional compositions designed for daily or festive worship (seva) towards Lord Rama**. What is Tyagaraja trying to express in a few of these popular kritis?

- **Jo Jo Rama** (Reeti Gowla) - *O Darling of Dasharatha! Personification of unalloyed bliss! Sleep soundly.*
- **Sita Kalyana Vaibhogame** (Shankarabharanam) - *What a sight the wedding of Sita is! O Rama, you are the mainstay of your devotees.*
- **Meluko Dayanidhi** (Sowrashtram) - *O Rama of Dasharata, wake up! Arise from bed the merciful, as the sun rises.*

These are such short yet sweet songs to sing, reflecting Tyagaraja's tender love for Rama that he displays as part of his daily acts of worship.

Beyond just music, Tyagaraja's compositions show a life lived entirely for a connection with Rama. This way of praying has inspired generations and still continues its tradition today. Tyagaraja's entire life and musical compositions were acts of prayers. His devotion towards Rama is always celebrated, along with his artistry.

Since this interactive article is coming to an end, I will provide the correct answers for the sets of kritis and their tones. Hope all of you learned something, and had fun along the way!

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*Shritika Sriram is a student of Smt. Kiranavali Vidyasankar. She has been learning Carnatic music for the past five and a half years. She is an 8th grade student at Arcola Intermediate School.*

The answer key can be found on page 48.

# When Titans Collaborate: BMK, LGJ, and the Mystery of kOkilavarALi



By Deepak Varma Maliakal and Jayram Sataluri

This deepdive analysis is based on the June 26th 1962 AIR National Programme of Music broadcast of *samukhAna nilva* by Dr. M Balamuralikrishna (BMK), Lalgudi G Jayaraman (LGJ), Dr. TK Murthy (TKM) and Alangudi Ramachandran which the listeners can access in the above QR code.

**JS:** BMK and LGJ are such legends, they hardly need an introduction. We wanted to look at a recording where they come together on the krti “*samukhAna nilva*” in rAgam *kOkilavarALi*. (I’m almost tempted to say that Deepak and I are collaborating here to enlighten the readers, just as they collaborated to entertain the audience!) This article is our attempt to break down how these two stalwarts approached this particular performance.

**DM:** We chose this krti for a very specific reason. We could have picked a popular rAgam like *tODi* or *kharaharapriya*, but tackling a rare rAgam feels like a much better challenge. With the big rAgams, you can almost guess how BMK or LGJ will handle them. But with a rare “eka-krti” rAgam (a rAgam with only one known song), we weren't sure what to expect. That uncertainty is what drew us in - we wanted to see how the rAgam itself influenced their playing styles.

**JS:** It really is a rare rAgam. I don’t think I’ve heard any other composition in it, not even a devotional piece or a film song. That may be because its scale sits so close to *naTabhairavi* and *sAramati*, making it difficult to prevent the music from slipping into those more familiar soundscapes. I also keep running into conflicting descriptions of *kOkilavarALi*. From what I understand, the rAgam employs the scale **S R G R M P D N D S – S D N D P M R G R S**, using R2, G2, M1, D1, and N2, which would make it a *janya* of *naTabhairavi*. This is also how it is rendered in practice, at least in every recording I’ve encountered online.

**DM:** The rAgam itself is quite distinctive. The phrases “SRGR,” “PDND,” “SDND,” and “MRGR” define its character, with M in the *ArOhaNa* and P in the *avarOhaNa* acting as bridges between these zig-zag movements. Beyond these, smaller phrases like PDS, PMR, RMP are so beautiful too though they don’t appear on the scale.

**JS:** Yes, and because of its *naTabhairavi* lineage, one can sense mild shades of *amRtavAhini* (RMPD) and *sAramati*. There’s even an occasional Sree-like touch, especially in the PMRGR prayOga, if *kOkilavarALi* is heard immediately after Sree.

**DM:** BMK’s rendition followed closely by LGJ is particularly striking, with strong *nyAsa* on R and a deliberately shortened *gAndhAram* in the PMRGR phrase. That handling highlights BMK’s interpretation of the rAgam-subtle!

**JS:** When people talk about LGJ’s style, the first thing they mention is his “*gAyaki*” or vocal approach to the violin. For LGJ, the violin was never just an instrument- it was a substitute for the human voice. His entire

life's mission was to make the violin articulate the sAhitya. In Carnatic music, sAhitya is as important as swara, and LGJ had a rare ability to bring out the essence of the krti purely through bowing and phrasing.

**DM:** 100%. And his bowing often feels almost invisible. You don't really hear the joins. His bow transitions are so seamless that it feels like one continuous breath, much like a vocalist singing a long phrase without breaking. That's why people call his bowing "legendary", not because it's flashy, but because you don't notice it at all.

**JS:** Coming to BMK's *kOkilavarALi*, what stands out most in his approach?

**DM:** Restraint, especially in his handling of gamakAs. BMK consciously avoids excessive oscillation. Too much "waving" can clutter a phrase and dilute its beauty, and BMK clearly understands that.

But as you know, Jayram, that's his signature style and bAni. He also adds a slight hindustAni touch here and there which you will find more in some other recordings of the same krti in YouTube. For example, in this recording, movements like PDND and SRGR are handled very cleanly. Even the D1 avoids a heavy, tODi-like oscillation.

**JS:** And of course, rendering of the sAhitya!

**DM:** Absolutely. BMK's word splits and joins are clearly driven by meaning and clarity, not by sangatIs. He shapes and controls the melody so that the emotion and intent of the words come through clearly.

**JS:** In that sense, BMK and LGJ feel philosophically aligned. What BMK is to vocals, LGJ is to the violin. Both masters' aesthetics prioritize crispness, clarity, and lyrical meaning over excessive oscillations and misplaced sangatIs.

So, when BMK sings and LGJ plays alongside him, what kind of musical exchange is really taking place?

**DM:** It's a true conversation, just like ours. BMK sets the emotional and lyrical direction, and LGJ responds instantly- sometimes reinforcing a phrase, sometimes gently nudging it forward. Neither overwhelms the other. Instead, they feed off each other, creating music that feels organic, thoughtful, and deeply human.

**JS:** Let's start with the AlApana. BMK opens with SR(meend) PS in the madhya-mandra sthAyl. He then moves into GRRSSS... R, with the R carrying a gentle oscillation that briefly touches G2. LGJ complements this beautifully by adding more weight and feel to that oscillated R. From there, they organically build the AlApana.

I do believe BMK goes off the ArOhaNa-avarOhaNa many times, yet still does not derail the rAgam. Phrases like MPD and DMR may look off-track on paper, but to my ears, they function as subtle extensions- almost new ornaments carved from within the rAgam's grammar.

**DM:** If you think about it, we really have no definitive idea of how Tyagaraja himself interpreted this rAgam. BMK also sings phrases like RNDD, DMP, MRS, and RMPDMP, even though one might conventionally expect P after D in avarOhaNa prayOgas. Phrases such as PMRS and DMP don't strictly exist in the so-called "rulebook."

I also listened to renditions of this krti by other musicians, and they do sing the M-RMP prayOga in the *nilva* sangatI as well.

**JS:** Without further “derailing” from the topic, let us move on to the highlights of the *AlApana*.

**DM:** The recording clearly demonstrates BMK's characteristic soft vocal delivery and excellent control, which LGJ consistently complements. While he exhibited a clear G.N. Balasubramaniam (GNB) influence during that period, as we have previously noted, BMK's tendency to use flatter notes and fewer gamakAs is also quite evident in this specific recording.

**JS:** True. Young BMK, as evidenced in recordings from the late 1950s/early 1960s, clearly exhibits the influence of GNB. This resemblance is notable in his vocal speed, the use of brigAs, and even the sound of his voice. Consequently, during that period, he was often referred to as the "Andhra GNB."

**DM:** Did you notice the *tODi/shaNmukhapriya*-ish “P, DN.. NDD” around 1:25? That really took me by surprise- not because of the prayOga itself, but because of the *extra oscillation* that BMK applies there.

**JS:** Yes, Deepak! And BMK frequently employs a favorite set of sangatls. One prominent phrase- often heard in the upper mandra or lower madhya sthAyi- features RGS (reminiscent of *sAramati*) and DNP (evoking shades of *jOnpuri* and *darbAri kAnaDa*).

**DM:** Yes, and LGJ does not alter what BMK lays out. Instead, he enhances the rendition by adding beautifully shaped melodic complements. There are moments around 1:35, for instance—where I briefly hear shades of *sAramati*.

**JS:** When BMK elaborates around *tAra rishabha* (LGJ switches to mandra), he does a jump from *tAra G* to *madhya D* then to *madhya N* to *madhya R*, before climbing up back to *tAra R*. A trademark speciality of *muraLi gAnam*.

**DM:** So, the *rAgam* analysis really shows off BMK's skill. He starts with these gorgeous high-register phrases that immediately bring to mind *jOnpuri*, *amRtavAhini*, and *sAramati*. Even though the *AlApana* is short (it was an AIR recording, after all), it feels complete. He covers the entire range of the *rAgam*, wrapping up with incredibly fast sangatls that span its full compass. BMK also smoothly adds in delicate phrases like PDM and RGS that they feel perfectly natural, even in the middle of his astonishingly fast and extended musical lines.

**JS:** Deepak, I'm thinking BMK's take on the *rAgam* is to start with the main zigzag phrases, and also toss in a few nuances that might make one think of other *rAgams* without ever losing the *rAga swarUpa*.

**DM:** Your analysis is spot-on, Jayram. BMK's rendition, as always, really stands apart from the other performances I've listened to. Most other renditions tend to do one or both of the following:

- a) Lean far too heavily on gamakAs (oscillations), or
- b) Largely stick to phrases drawn from the *ArOhaNa* and *avarOhaNa*, while occasionally throwing in overly complex, oscillation-heavy ideas that don't strictly respect the scale.

LGJ gently elevates the music through his understated, precise bowing, allowing BMK's ideas to shine even more brightly.

**JS:** LGJ kicks off his response right after BMK's *AlApana*, hitting SRGRM P MPD before cruising into MPD PMR. The sangatl at 4:26 is electrifying. That PDNDS bit (with some nice little *gamakAs* on N and D) leading into DNDP has this beautifully smooth, contoured feel, especially on the DND part.

Moments later, he mirrors BMK's approach, including the use of flatter notes. A distinctive feature is found in his faster passages, where his movement between *madhya dhaivata* and *tAra gAndhAra* is refreshing to hear.

**DM:** That's right! You're talking about the part around 4:40 to 4:50. Absolutely!

**JS:** All right, let's move onto the krti now. BMK starts off in a madhyamakAla speed (not slow at all) .The first and second sangatIs are SRG, R(GRR with gamakAm) M,P [Nilva] DPDP [Gal] DPMR,GRS [Guna].

**DM:** Hmm, I noticed that too. The “gal” in particular intrigues me. To my ears, this clearly reflects the GNB influence. In later recordings available on YouTube, once that influence had receded, BMK completely changed this sangatI to a flatter, softer, more hindustAni-leaning version. The relatively faster tempo here can also be attributed to the GNB effect.

There's another detail I noticed in “Nil” of *Nilva*. Some performers add an extra sangatI—“Nil..il”—sung as M, RMP. BMK avoids this altogether, and I actually feel that skipping it works better; otherwise, the clarity of the sAhitya tends to get disturbed.

**JS:** In the third *sangatI*, he introduces "*kamalAnana*." BMK's take on this is strikingly distinct from everyone else's. While most artists sing S R (Kama) PR RGRR (lAnana), BMK throws in S S DND S (mantra) instead. Even more striking, while others typically end the line with akAram - PDPD S .., he sings a fast-swarapacked (RMRMPDPNDPMRGRS..) using just the sound 'a' (*akAram*). That said, in later performances, BMK revises this fast sangatI, softening its impact by changing the akAram to “nl,” which beautifully emphasizes the line “*nl samukhAna...*”

**DM:** Yes, I noticed clear differences between this 1962 version and the later ones, especially in the latter portions of the krti. We'll come back to that shortly.

Before ending the Pallavi, he sings S R GRR (*khA*), RGRSR (*Na*), where the “*Na*” is particularly demanding and very typical of BMK style. He concludes the Pallavi on the word “*GalgunA*,” whereas many other performers choose to end it instead on “*KamalAnana*.”

**JS:** I'm at the anupallavi now. He sings the first line *kshama galgu bhUtanaya lakshmanA* twice seamlessly merging it with the second line of the Anupallavi. Throughout, he is very careful to split each sAhitya phrase correctly.

**DM:** Yes, and that's a key point, Jayram. Unlike some musicians who pause after “*bhU*” when singing in dEsAdi tALam to preserve the rhythmic structure, BMK consistently renders it as “*bhUtanaya*.” While some argue that maintaining the dEsAdi rhythmic pattern requires compromising on sAhitya splits, I disagree and BMK proves my point.

While still on this first line, I also noticed that his handling of the *bhUtanaya lakshmanA* segment is quite different from most other renditions. In particular, he uses SRMR for *lakshmanA*, which sounds strikingly unique.

**JS:** Absolutely spot on, Deepak. When BMK merges *lakshmanA* and *Adi* into *lakshmanAdi*, the remaining sAhitya unfolds as: *Adi mahAtmulakE kAni(y)anyulaku* as RDG,R SDNDDS PDNDP PMRGGRS.

**DM:** In BMK's later recordings, he makes two notable changes here. First, he always sings these two lines together, which is the correct and complete approach. Second, the RDG, R S portion for "Adi mahA" is simplified to a plain G... R S, making the phrase sound calmer and more grounded.

**JS:** In the charaNam, BMK also slightly tweaks the first line and sings "dik-kRtulu" instead of the commonly heard "dik-patulu." What really stands out to me is how carefully he treats "kamalAsanAd(y)amara" as one continuous phrase. That's important, because many singers end up splitting it as "kamalAsanA + dyamara," which actually alters the meaning.

**DM:** That's interesting, Jayram. BMK does this kind of thing often- small but deliberate sAhitya tweaks. We already spoke about how he adds "nI" after "kamalAnana" in the Pallavi. I'm personally fine with it, because he's a vAggEyakAra and someone who knows Telugu and Sanskrit inside out. I'm sure every change is intentional.

**JS:** Great observation, Deepak. When BMK sings the full line: "kamal(A)san(A)d(y)amara dik-krtulu kAlaSa vAridhilO jUDa nEraka", his absolute command over his voice is on full display. Take "kamalAsanA," for example. The "nA" has three sangatIs, but what really makes the difference is how he subtly modulates his voice in each one. He does a 'dha' swarAksharam at "dya" which is ravishing. Then in "kAlasavAridhilO," you immediately hear that trademark BMK-style RGS R phrase on "lO." The "nE" phrase briefly takes on a shaNmukhapriya feel because of how he handles the nishAda gamakA. At "nEraka", he teases the listener, making it sound as though he might hit tAra Sa in every sangatI.

**DM:** And in the "gumi kUDi" line too, I love how he keeps "moralida" together as a single phrase. LGJ responds beautifully there, adding a fast yet elegant DNDD S phrase that fits in so naturally, especially while BMK holds on to Sa for eight seconds.

**JS:** During the second rendition of "gumi kUDi moralida kAryamulu," you can hear T. K. Murthy's kUchi chApu ring clearly in the middle.

**DM:** And in the final line, "kona-sAgenaTa tyAgarAja vinuta," BMK renders it as "kona-sAgenaTa tyAgarAju niki." To me, that feels like a poetic shift, almost as if Tyagaraja himself is explaining everything from his own point of view.

LGJ's violin accompaniment throughout the krti is fantastic. He stays perfectly in sync with BMK and never steps on the sAhitya. That's no small thing, because BMK's delivery, while technically precise, can be challenging for accompanists to follow.

**JS:** Given that both BMK and LGJ belong to the Tyagaraja Sishya Paramapara albeit from different schools, it's no wonder they're so well aligned musically. This synergy extends to the percussionists as well. TKM's mridangam sollukkattus and thlrumAnams blend in effortlessly and Alangudi Ramachandran on ghatam keeps it simple and sweet.

*We encourage the readers to listen to this version of samukhAna nilva and then explore BMK's later renditions as well. This version is a good launchpad to listen to his 1960s-form and how he rendered kOkilavarALi with LGJ. As he progressed into the 1970s and beyond, the GNB influence in his style faded away and his thrlsthAyi improved immensely. As a result, he could clearly display different shades of kOkilavarALi which incorporated more hindustAni like elements and sing the sAhitya as a whole to highlight*

*the poetic genius of Tyagaraja. In other words, his rAgabhAvam and sAhityabhAvam enhanced later versions of samukhAna nilva which we are fortunate to listen to today.*

Dr. Balamuralikrishna's later versions of samukhAna nilva for your listening pleasure

*1978 Sastri Hall with VV Subrahmanyam and Umayalpuram K Sivaraman:*



*1981 Bangalore Ravindra Kalakshetra with Mysore Nagaraj and Guruvayur Dorai:*



*1989 Tyagaraja Aradhana with Vellore Ramabhadran:*



*1998 Tyagaraja Vidwath Samajam with MA Krishnaswamy and TV Gopalakrishnan:*



*(DM) - Deepak Varma Maliakal is a passionate rasikA and musician who spends time 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.*

*(JS) - Jayram Sataluri is an ardent rasikA of music and supporter of Sruti.*

*Both Deepak and Jayram are enthusiastic admirers of Dr. M Balamuralikrishna's music, otherwise known as muraLi gAnam.*

# Tyāgarāja and Sound

By Aditya Kurre

Like many Carnatic music students who grew up in America, I learned Sangeetam while also learning Western music. Initially, I remember finding many overlaps between these traditions, such as their shared use of the seven notes and even common instruments. However, in my middle school's choir and in my piano classes at home, I noticed certain topics being discussed that were rarely touched upon during my Paatu classes. My piano teacher, for example, loved talking about the nature of the sound, teaching me how to vary volume and pitch to create an "emotional language." Meanwhile, my choir teacher would teach us the correct ways to use our voices – how to maintain good posture to project our voices, how to breathe, and what muscles to use. In other words, I learned very explicitly what sound was, and how to produce it. These experiences not only gave me practical musical skills but also deepened my appreciation for the beauty and complexity of sound, and my appreciation for the traditions that had explored it so deeply.

Compared to these lessons, however, I found that similar topics in Carnatic music were left for us to learn independently using our own intuition and creativity. While this certainly allows for greater diversity, giving each student space to develop their own understanding of musical practice and philosophy, I believe it is still valuable for students to have a framework for thinking about something as fundamental as sound from a "Carnatic" perspective. Such a framework would help them appreciate not only the deeper meanings and subtleties of sound itself, but also the musical system they have inherited as a whole.

Indeed, one of the few pre-modern sources containing opinions on the nature and practice of music is attributed to Tyāgarāja, who made his opinions on music clear through a number of compositions. Here, I draw on compositions of Saint Tyāgarāja to propose one potential Carnatic framework to answer (1) what is sound? and (2) how should we create it?

## What is sound?

Today, we know that sound is frequency. However, even before this modern understanding, classical musicians in the West had experimented with variables like volume through fortes and pianos and pitch frequencies to create harmonies. Since Carnatic music had historically avoided large ensemble-style orchestration, it makes sense that these concepts were never standardized in the Carnatic tradition. Instead, Carnatic musicians approached sound from a much more metaphysical lens.

When discussing the nature of "sound" or nAdam, Tyāgarāja seems to echo this perspective greatly. Looking at kritis like "NAda SudhA Rasambilanu" and "ShObhillu Saptaswara", we begin to understand that Tyāgarāja saw "sound" as the principal force and basis of the Vedas, epics, and sacred wisdom in general. In the anupallavi of NAda SudhA, Tyāgarāja states,

“vEda purANAgama SAstrAdula kAdhAramou...”

“O My Mind! The nectarine juice called nAda which is the prop (AdhAramau) of vEdas, epics (purANa), Agamas and SAstras etc. (Adulaku) (SastrAdulakAdhAramau), has assumed a human form...”

Furthermore, in Shobhillu, he writes,

“Dhara Rg Saamaadulalo Vara Gaayathri Hrudayamuna...”

“That [Sound] which is enshrined in the four Vedas (“Dhara Rg Samaadulalo”) and in the sublime Gayathri Mantra as its essence (“Hrudayamuna”)...”

Looking further at kritis like “NAda Tanumanisham” and “Nammi Vacchina Nannu,” we see that Tyāgarāja also believes strongly in that “NAdam” and the “Saptaswara” are the embodiment of none other than Shiva himself. In the charanam of Nada Tanumanisham, he states,

“SadyOjAtAdi Pancha Vaktraja SARlgAmApAdhAnI Vara Saptaswara...”

“(The seven svaras are...) born of his five ("pancha") faces ("vaktra") sadyOjAta (i.e. Aghora, Tat Purusha, IshAna and VAmadEva), ...”

And in his kriti on KOvur Sundareshwarar, Nammi Vacchina, Tyāgarāja writes,

“...nAda rUpa srl soundaryanAyaklpate...”

“...he (Sundaeswara), who is the embodiment (rUpa) of sound (nAda)...”

The fact that Tyāgarāja deeply revered music and saw it as a form of worship is nothing new. However, through these kritis, we find a unique lesson on Tyāgarāja’s philosophy of sound itself. For Tyāgarāja, nAdam was not simply an attribute of music – not just pitch arranged in rāga or intensity shaped by bhava – but the very substratum of existence. The audible phenomenon we call “sound” was, in his vision, a doorway into a deeper reality: sound as being itself. When Tyāgarāja invokes nāda as the basis of scripture and as the very form of the divine, he collapses the distinction between medium and truth. Music does not point to reality; it is reality made perceptible.

What makes this especially striking is how rare such a stance is among major musical cultures. Many traditions sacralize music, yet few elevate sound itself, independent of text or doctrine, to the status of ultimate reality. In the Indian intellectual and artistic tradition, however, vibration (shabda/nAda) becomes both epistemology and theology – a means of knowing and the very substance of what is known. Tyāgarāja’s kritis thus invite us to hear differently: not to treat sound as a vehicle carrying meaning, but to recognize that meaning unfolds as sound.

### **How do we create music through sound?**

Understanding sound production involves addressing the questions of how we should go about physically producing music (ie., how do we use our body and voice to sing) as well as how we should engage with the sound emotionally. In terms of Tyāgarāja compositions, there is one in particular that serves as a concise, but powerful guide to sound production. In Shobhillu Saptaswara, Tyāgarāja writes,

“NAbhi hrut kanta rasana nAsAdhulayandu...”

“Which [sound] glows (“yandu”) in the navel (“nAbhi”), heart (“hrut”), neck (“kanta”), tongue (“rasana”) and nose (“nAsaadhula”) of the body.”

Today, we know that sound is frequency, and in order to produce that frequency, we need an empty space. Here, it seems that Tyāgarāja lays out a rudimentary understanding of the importance of this resonance.

Yet the importance of this insight goes beyond its almost anatomical accuracy. By locating sound in the navel, heart, throat, tongue, and nasal passages, he is not merely cataloging resonance points; he is mapping a pathway of attention. The singer is encouraged to experience tone as something that arises from the whole body rather than from the throat alone, transforming vocal production into an embodied practice of mindfulness.

For students, this perspective is profoundly practical. First, it reframes voice culture from a purely mechanical exercise into an integrative discipline: breath support (nAbhi), emotional sincerity (hnut), tonal clarity (kanta), articulation (rasana), and resonance (nAsa) become interconnected rather than isolated skills. Practicing singing in this manner means that the goal shifts from making sound to allowing sound to emerge through coordinated awareness of the body. This serves to remind students that the physical act of singing is not separate from the spiritual or aesthetic aim of music. By treating the body as a living resonant instrument, one that must be aligned, attentive, and receptive, learners can approach practice not just as skill acquisition, but as a process of tuning themselves to the very nāda they seek to express.

As stated, my goal for this article was to provide a potential framework for students on how to think about sound – nAdam – in an authentically Carnatic way. But in the end, lessons from Tyāgarāja do more than provide a clear way to think about both what music is and how we should practice it. By seeing nāda as both the essence of reality and something expressed through the body, Tyāgarāja teaches us to connect our knowledge of what sound is, as well as how we can produce it, to a deeper purpose, bridging the gap between simply learning compositions and understanding why we make music at all. Ultimately, we are reminded that studying music is not just about understanding or producing sound, but listening to ourselves and the world around us more deeply.

*Aditya Kurre is a Carnatic vocal student of Sri T.P. Chakrapani, based in Hyderabad, India. He has been learning music since the age of 8, giving performances regionally and nationally as well as being awarded for the same. Aditya is a first-year student and DMD candidate at The University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine.*

# Blast from the Past: Tyagaraja Aradhana Pictures from 2011 to 2025

2011



2012



2013



2014



2015



2016



2017



2018



2019



2020



2021



2022



2023



2024



2025



## Utsava Sampradaya and Pancharatna Krithis Group Renditions





# Individual Participation





## 2026 Spring Concert Schedule



### Thyagaraja Aradhana

Date: Saturday, March 28, 2026 @ 7:45 AM

Where: Hindu Temple of Delaware

### Grand Vocal Concert by Sangita Kalanidhi S. Sowmya

Date: Saturday, April 11, 2026 @ 4:30 PM

Where: Fugett Middle School Auditorium, 500 Ellis Lane, West Chester, PA 19380



### Lec Dem by Sri Malladi Suri Babu

Dates: Saturday, April 25, 2026 @ 2:00 PM

Where: Temple University Auditorium, 580 Meetinghouse Rd, Ambler, PA 19002

### Vocal and Flute Concert by Vid. Abhishek Raghuram and Vid. Shaskank Subramanyam

Date: Saturday, April 25, 2026 @ 4:30 PM

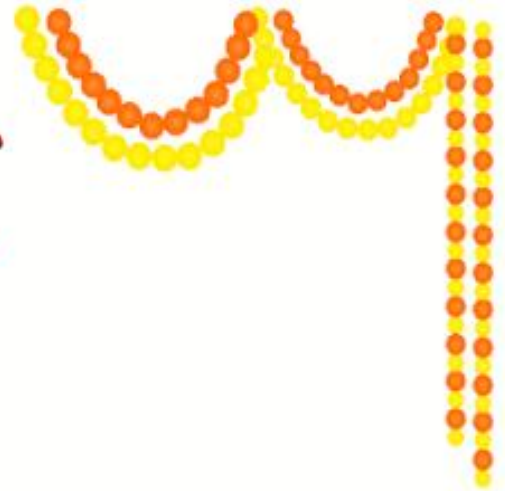
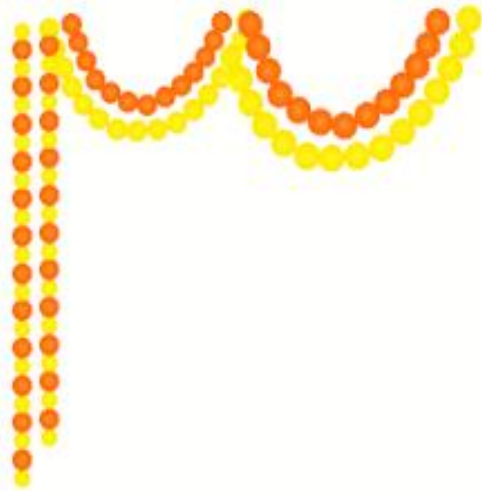
Where: Temple University Auditorium, 580 Meetinghouse Rd, Ambler, PA 19002



### Annamayya Workshop by Sri Malladi Suri Babu

Date: Sunday, April 26 - Tuesday, April 28, 2026

Where: Lower Providence Baptist Church 3430 Ridge Pike, Collegeville, PA 19426



## Grand Vocal Concert by Vid. Ramakrishnan Murthy

**Date: Saturday, May 9, 2026 @ 4:30 PM**

Where: Bharatiya Temple 1612 County Line Rd. Montgomeryville, PA 18936



## Carnatic Concert by Charumathi Raghuraman and Anantha R. Krishnan (Co-presented with Fire Museum)



**Dates: Saturday, May 17, 2026 @ 3:00-5:30 PM**

Where: The Rotunda, 4014 Walnut St, Philadelphia, PA- 19104

## Bharatanatyam Dance Performance by Medha Hari

**Date: Saturday, May 30, 2026 @ 2:00**

Where: The Agnes Irwin School 275 S Ithan Avenue, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010



## Carnatic Vocal Concert by Vid. Gayathri Venkataraghavan



**Dates: Saturday, May 30, 2026 @ 4:30 PM**

Where: The Agnes Irwin School 275 S Ithan Avenue, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010

Visit [sruti.org](http://sruti.org) for more info on concerts and tickets.



**Sruti**  
The India Music  
& Dance Society,  
Philadelphia

# Tyāgarāja Stuti – Musical Panegyrics to the Saint

By Rajee Padmanabhan

In the fleeting yet curiously intimate world of Instagram reels, where art often appears in fragments, inspiration occasionally arrives whole. Around **Bahula Pañcamī** earlier this January, as musicians marked the birth anniversary of **Sadguru Tyāgarāja**, one particular rendering suspended my scrolling. It was not a kṛti composed by Tyāgarāja himself, but music turned toward him — a *stuti*, reverence articulated in melody.

The young artist was singing “**Mānava-kula Bhūṣaṇa**”, and that piqued my curiosity enough to explore other composers’ works on Sadguru Tyāgarāja. There is, indeed, a treasure trove of tributes.

Long before digital homage became de rigueur, **Bengaluru Nāgaratnamma** ensured that Tyāgarāja’s remembrance would have a physical and ritual centre. Her tireless efforts at **Tiruvaiyyāru** transformed personal veneration into collective practice. What began as a fragile observance now blooms annually in hundreds of venues across continents. In that arc — from the banks of the Kāvēri to Cleveland, Ohio — one hears the quiet vindication of her unyielding devotion. Nāgaratnamma also composed a **Tyāgarāja Aṣṭōttara-śata Nāmāvali**, which she recited at Tiruvaiyyāru.

Among Tyāgarāja’s disciples, **Vālājāpeṭ Vēnkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavathar**, a critical custodian who ensured the continuity of his Guru’s legacy, composed several pieces — including kṛtis, a svarajāti, and a maṅgalam in Sanskrit on Tyāgarāja. This morning, one would have heard that maṅgalam beginning with “**Kākarlā Vaṁśa Sambhūta**” at the conclusion of the **Pañcaratna** rendition. The piece traces biographical details of Tyāgarāja. **Vyāso naigama-carcitaḥ** is another well-known mangalam by Bhagavathar where he draws positive similes of Tyāgarāja to the great ṛṣis of yore.

Two prominent kṛtis among Bhāgavathar’s tributes are:

- “**Guru-caraṇam Bhajarē**” – Rāga Śaṅkarābharaṇam
- “**Guruvaru Mahimala**” – Rāga Ānandabhairavi

Another disciple, **Mānambucāvadi Vēnkaṭasubbaiyer**, composed the majestic “**Svāmiki Sari Evarē**” in **Dēvagāndhāri**, a rhetorical query asking: “*Who can equal the Master?*” He observes:

*dharalō gānam abhyasincina narulella viḍa-mārgulayyerani  
karuṇatō vāriki bhakti yandu ruci kalugu natlu kīrtanamulu jēsina*

## Meaning:

*Seeing that many who practised music in this world had strayed from the righteous path,  
out of compassion he composed kīrtanas so they might develop a taste for devotion.*

Vēnkaṭasubbaiyer also composed a maṅgalam titled “**Girirāja Pautrāya**”, though it is rarer in practice today.

**Rāmanāthapuram (Pūcci) Śrīnivāsa Ayyangar** composed and rendered “**Sadguru Svāmiki**” in **Rītigauḷa** at Tiruvaiyyāru. The composer succinctly notes:

*rasamugā gīta-śāstra marmamulanu  
ranjillaga manujulaku bōdhinci*

**Meaning:**

*He, who taught humanity the secrets of Gita, melodiously and splendidly.*

It is also said that **Mysore Sadāśiva Rao**, belonging to Tyāgarāja’s śiṣya-paramparā, composed “**Śrī Tyāgarāja Vēḍalina**” in **Ṭōḍi**, though the composition is unfortunately lost.

**Mysore Vāsudēvācārya’s** lilting “**Śrīmadādi Tyāgarāja Guruvaram Namāmyaham**” in **Kalyāṇi** highlights Tyāgarāja’s effortless union of music and sāhitya:

*sakala lōka saṁsēvita saṅgīta-sāhitya sāra-bharitāsu  
lalita-pada sammēlana saṁśōbhita*

**Meaning:**

*(One whose works are) revered by the entire world, richly filled with the very essence of music and poetry, and resplendent with the harmonious blending of graceful words.*

**Harikēśanallūr Muttiah Bhāgavatar’s** “**Tyāgarāja Sadguruvāṇi**” in **Hindōlam** is cited in multiple sources, though recordings are relatively scarce.

A remarkable corpus of thirty compositions by **K. M. Saundaryavalli** is known to be among the largest dedicated collections of Tyāgarāja stuti.

**Kōṭīśvara Ayyar**, in “**Ini Namakkoru Kavalaiyum Illai**” (Rāga **Bilahari**), attributes his eternal joy to Tyāgarāja’s grace received in a dream:

*punita Tyāgarāja Svāmi nam kanavil vandu kāṭṣi tandādāl  
ini namakkoru kavalaiyum illai enrum inbamē manamē*

**Meaning:**

*Since the holy Tyāgarāja Svāmi appeared in our dream  
and granted his vision, now there is no worry — only joy, O mind.*

**Pāpanāśam Śivan**, in “**Iddharaṇiyil Tyāgarāja Sadguru**” (Rāga **Bēgaḍā**), praises Tyāgarāja as:  
*manak-kavalaiyuḍan bhavap-piṇi aghala madhura kavitigaḷ udavum sattamar*

**Meaning:**

*A noble soul whose sweet compositions remove mental anxieties and worldly afflictions.”*

Vidvān **G. N. Bālasubramaniam’s** tribute in **Hindōlam** opens with a line at once simple and all-encompassing:

*Mānava-kula Bhūṣaṇa Śrī Tyāgarāja Asamāna Saṅgīta-Sāhitya Nipuṇāgrēśa*

**Meaning:**

*Tyāgarāja — ornament of humanity, unsurpassed master of music and lyric.*

It is a succinct capture of Carnatic music’s enduring wonder: in Tyāgarāja, **nāda** and **vāk** were never separate pursuits, but twin currents of the same river.

**M. D. Rāmanāthan’s** Sanskrit masterpiece “**Tyāgarāja Gurum Āśrayē**” in **Kēdāram** offers this apt salutation:

*saṅgīta-jñāna-pradāyakam karuṇā-sāgaram sadgurum  
bhava-bhaya-haraṇam bhakta-jana-āśrayam*

**Meaning:**

*Bestower of musical wisdom, ocean of compassion,  
remover of worldly fear, refuge of devotees.*

The inimitable **Dr. M. Bālamuralīkrishna** composed multiple tributes, including:

- “**Gāna Sudhārasa Pāna Niratam**” – Rāga **Nāṭṭai**
- “**Tyāgarāja Gurum Bhajēham**” – Rāga **Ṭōḍi**

In “**Bhāvamē Mahābhāgyamu**” (Rāga **Kāpi**), he traces his **guru-paramparā** from **Tyāgarāja** to **Mānambucāvadi Vēnkaṭasubbaiyer** to **Susarla Dakṣiṇāmūrti Śāstrī** to **Parupalli Rāmakṛṣṇayya Paṇṭulu** :

*guruvula guruvula guruvula guruvē varamaina Tyāgarāju māku  
guruvula guruvula guruvē Vēnkaṭa-vara Subbaiyya māku  
parama guruvu Dakṣiṇāmūrti  
mā guruvē Rāmakṛṣṇa Muralī ravalī rūpamanē*

“**Samagāna Sārvabhauma**” in **Amṛtavarṣiṇī**, with its intriguing backstory, gently critiques self-proclaimed traditionalists while exalting Tyāgarāja:

*ī mahilō nī kṛtulanu mēmantā pāḍi pāḍi  
pēru dhanamu gāna padma-bhūṣaṇamulandēmu*

**Meaning:**

*In this world, we keep singing your compositions again and again...  
...and we earn name, wealth, and even prestigious honors (like ‘Padma Bhūṣaṇa’) through music*

This is but a small subset of the tributes offered to Tyāgarāja across time. No other composer has inspired such a vast constellation of musical homage. Sadguru Tyāgarāja continues to inspire generations of musicians and rasikas alike — to introspect, internalise, reinterpret, and savour his immortal oeuvre.

**References & Listening**

[Raksha Mahalinkam](#)- the artist whose Instagram reel formed the seed idea for this article.

Vālājāpeṭ Vēnkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavathar – “Guru-caraṇam Bhajarē” (Śāṅkarābharaṇam)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlasD5BgZdw>

“Kākarlā Varṁśa Sambhūta” (Sūrati)

<https://youtu.be/68wWvXw5wh8?si=1K6AvIZFGKsZmXhj>

Mānambucāvadi Vēnkaṭasubbaiyer – “Svāmiki Sari Evvarē” (Dēvagāndhāri)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NVelxgR5lpU>

[https://youtu.be/AlhV2VG-n0Y?si=NBbNbn\\_t1q-XLiT](https://youtu.be/AlhV2VG-n0Y?si=NBbNbn_t1q-XLiT)

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcG4B9piGQk>

Kōṭṭīśvara Ayyar – “Ini Namakkoru Kavalaiyum Illai” (Bilahari)

[https://youtu.be/SL082rAmTM0?si=p0v5QW\\_7DPpGQ89E](https://youtu.be/SL082rAmTM0?si=p0v5QW_7DPpGQ89E)

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<https://youtu.be/rh0QmBDlOn8?si=k8xrMO10iwlHOZ6z>

M. D. Rāmanāthan – “Tyāgarāja Gurum Āśrayē” (Kēdāram)

<https://youtu.be/4uWtUh9JYhl?si=upG5ygnSuZC12aVu>

Dr. M. Bālamuraḷikrishna – “Gāna Sudhārasa Pāna Niratam”

<https://youtu.be/KGxfMlEkE-8?si=wxQK42dvPnmBtVcm>

Dr. M. Bālamuraḷikrishna – “Samagāna Sārvabhauma” (Amṛtavaraṣiṇi)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmYB\\_EtOjY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmYB_EtOjY)

Dr. M. Bālamuraḷikrishna – “Bhāvamē Mahābhāgyamu” (Kapi)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtiNZV5UOSg>

### **Scholarly / Archival Sources**

Tyāgarāja Stuti Mālai

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/r2t3ph4b3pl8xpv/BkTm-SadguruSangitaSamajam-Tyagaraja-Stuti-Malai-0201.pdf>

Walājāpeṭ Bhāgavathar Compositions Study

<https://pranavjournals.com/finearts/wp-content/uploads/10-Glory-of-Tyagaraja-as-portrayed-in-the-compositions-of-Walajapet-Venkataramana-Bhagavathar.pdf>

V Sriram - Songs on Tyagaraja

<https://sriramv.com/2021/01/29/singing-in-praise-of-tyagaraja/>

<https://sriramv.com/2021/01/29/more-songs-on-tyagaraja/>

*Rajee Padmanabhan is a music aficionado, long-time supporter and past president of Sruti.*

# Sāmaja-vara-gamana: Translation Behind the Scenes

By Srinaath Perangur

Can *sāhitya-bhāva* exist without speaking the language of the lyrics? For over a century, Carnatic musicians, musicologists, and *rasikas* have wrestled with this question. As R. K. Shanmugham Chettiar put it in 1944: “In order to get a job, you need to study English. If you want to get married, you have to do it in Sanskrit. If you are going to make a name as a patriot, you must use Hindi. If you learn music, it is all Telugu. And if you are just talking ordinarily, you use a strange conglomerate [*maṇipravāḷam*].”<sup>1</sup> I might add, as a native Telugu speaker, that if you are going to be involved in the Carnatic world today, you must use Tamil. Most people involved in Carnatic music in India seem to balance this linguistic complexity well. Multilingualism is ubiquitous, especially in cosmopolitan Chennai.

But this is not the case in the diaspora. Indian American performers (and, increasingly, native Indians, too) are not familiar with Telugu, Sanskrit, Kannada, and Tamil to nearly the same degree as their parents and grandparents. It has taken me, for example, years of serious study to even approach the fluency with Sanskrit, Kannada, and Tamil that seems so natural to my grandmother’s generation. Therefore, I contend that making the lyrics of Carnatic compositions accessible to a new generation of diasporic performers, while simultaneously presenting them as part of a rich poetic tradition, is a worthwhile but underserved project. In this article, using “Sāmaja-vara-gamana” as an example, I aim to demonstrate the step-by-step process by which a translator might translate Sanskrit composition. Untangling and interpreting the song’s complicated compounds and rendering them in an idiom that speaks to modern Anglican poetic sensibilities is more difficult than it might appear. For poetic translations, like the original poem, should go beyond the semantics of words; they should preserve, produce, and transmit *joy*.

1. The first step is to obtain a proper transcription of the lyrics and analyze the overall syntax of the composition. In this case, the grammar is simple: most of the words in the compositions are epithets for Krishna in the vocative case, supplemented by the finite verb and object *mām pālaya* (“protect me”). In the following transcription, hyphens connect two words in a compound (*samāsa*) unless they are further connected by phonetic consolidation (*sandhi*). Spaces separate standalone words.

“Sāmaja-vara-gamana”

(Pallavi)

sāmaja-vara-gamana sādhu-ḥṛt-

sārasābja-pāla kālātīta vikhyāta

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<sup>1</sup> *Tamiḷ Icai Makānāṭu Ceṇṇai Nikaḷcci Mālar*, 1944, p. 40, translated and quoted by Amanda Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern*, p. 151.

(Anupallavi)

sāma-nigama-ja-sudhāmaya-gāna-vicakṣaṇa  
guṇa-śīla dayālavāla mām pālaya

(Caraṇa)

veda-śirō-māṭṛ-ja-sapta-svara-nādācala-dīpa  
svikṛta-yādava-kula muralī-vādana-vinōda  
mōhana-kara tyāgarāja-vandaniya

2. The second step is to gloss each word.

**sāmaja - vara - gamana sādhu - hṛt -**

elephant - excellent - gait sage - heart

**sārasābja - pāla kālātita vikhyāta**

lotus - protector beyond time celebrated

**sāma - nigama - ja - sudhāmaya - gāna - vi-**

Sāma - Vēda - born - nectarous - music -

**-cakṣaṇa guṇa - śīla dayālavāla mām pālaya**

versed-in quality - behavior mercy - sea me protect

**veda - śirō - māṭṛ - ja - sapta - svara -**

Vēda - head - mother - born - seven - notes

**nādācala - dīpa svikṛta -**

sound-mountain - lamp accepted -

**yādava - kula muralī - vādana -**

Yādava - clan flute - playing -

**vinōda mōhana - kara tyāgarāja - vandaniya**

pleasure enchantment - maker Tyāgarāja - greeted

3. Next, we will attempt to make sense of each compound. Note that Sanskrit compounds function rather differently than compounds in Dravidian languages like Telugu, Kannada, and Tamil. Furthermore, Tyāgarāja’s Sanskrit compounds often do not adhere to classical Sanskrit practices, making them more difficult to make sense of. Here are the particularly challenging compounds from this song, with square brackets indicating additions or annotations not in the original.

**veda - śirō - mātṛ - ja - sapta - svara - nādācala - dīpa**

Vēda - head - mother - born - seven - notes - sound-mountain - lamp

**Interpretation:** *He who is the lamp [at the top of] the mountain of sound [consisting of] the seven notes born of the mother [i.e. Sarasvatī] of the best Vēda [i.e. Sāma Vēda]*

**sādhu - hṛt - sārasābja - pāla**

sage - heart - lotus - protector

**Interpretation:** *He who is the protector [i.e. the sun] of the lotuses [literally “born of the water of a pond/lake] [which are] the hearts of good people*

4. Now comes the most challenging part. At this stage, there are countless directions one can go in producing the final translation, so it is important to identify the goals of one’s translation and the poetic and scholarly techniques that might be used to achieve it. In this case, I decided to focus on sculpting a poetic translation that remains fidelitous to Tyāgarāja’s Sanskrit while being meaningful to readers familiar with modern English-language poetry. I also use spacing and line breaks to mimic the sonic structure of the song. If I were instead aiming for a translation purely for scholarly use, I would trade poetic liberty in sentence structure and vocabulary for a syntactically closer (but less evocative) rendition. Such linguistic trade-offs represent the most difficult, but potentially most rewarding, part of the translation process.

“Sāmaja Vara Gamana”

You have the gait of a  
lovely elephant. Like the sun  
you bloom the lotus-hearts of sages, o  
one beyond time, o celebrated one!

Master of the nectarous music born

of the Sāma Veda, o  
virtuous one,  
o sea of mercy,  
protect me!

Like a lamp atop a mountain,  
you illuminate the sound  
of the seven notes born  
to the Mother of the  
Sāma Veda. You accepted  
the Yādava clan  
& delight in  
playing the flute  
O enchanter,  
Tyāgarāja praises you!

*Srinaath Kidambi Perangur is a Carnatic violinist and vocalist training under Sangita Kalanidhi Lalgudi GJR Krishnan, Vidwan Vittal Ramamurthy, and Vidwan Vishaal Sapuram. He has been fortunate to perform in India and across the U.S. alongside vidwans such as Smt. Padma Shankar, Sri G. Abilash, Sri C. Sajeev, Sri T.S. Krishnamurthy, and guru Sri Vittal Ramamurthy. Currently a Masters student at the University of Chicago, he will pursue his PhD beginning in Fall 2026, studying Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu literature and music.*

# tyaagaraaja as an Offering

By Prabhakar Chitrapu

He woke with an overwhelming sense of devotion and gratitude. He had seen a dream in which Lord *raama* appeared in all His glory. His body was made of light and the light was blue. It was dazzling and comforting at the same time. He was adorned with a crown also made of light and with soft hues of gemstones. One felt overflowing love and peace. Kindness and parental affection emanated from that divine radiance.

He beckoned *tyaagaraaja* and, with blessing grace, touched his head. Looking into his eyes, He said: “You have tasks to do. Sing My glories and open the hearts and minds of My devotees. Your music will beautifully blend the joy of listening and the insights of learning. It will inspire and uplift generations and help them evolve in their spiritual journeys. It will also provide livelihood for multitudes in various walks of life. Your fame will spread far and wide—across lands and over seas. But it will take time—five decades after you, and forever thereafter.”

As He spoke these words, the divine light slowly faded and the earthly morning light dawned, gently waking *tyaagaraaja*. And he rose with an overwhelming sense of devotion and gratitude. With a heart overflowing with love and reverence, *tyaagaraaja* went about his morning chores and then settled down for *puuja* in his prayer room, which housed his beloved idols of Lord *raama* with His consort *siita*, brother *lakshmaNa*, and the ever devoted *hanumaan*. He performed the traditional *saaShTaanga praNaam*, prostrating fully, touching all parts of his body to the earth. And he thought to himself:

“This body is for You, O *raama*! Please make it Your home.”

Then he sat before the altar in *padmaasana* - upright and steady. He centered his mind on Lord *raama*, firm and unmoving like a rock.

“O Lord, make my mind Your throne—solid and steadfast—and please be seated on it.”

Then he began to meditate upon Lord *raama*. He focused on His holy feet. Waves of meditative energy flowed like the pure and sacred waters of the expansive river *ganga*—slow, deep, and serene. He felt an all-encompassing affection, like clean and immaculate robes draped around the Lord.

When the meditation was complete, he began the ritualistic *puuja*—with sandalwood paste, flowers, incense, and the sacred lamp. He wondered: Were the sweet fragrances of sandalwood not like his innate *vaasanas*, prompting him always to sing His glories? And when he recited His divine names, was not each name like the offering of a beautiful flower? And the rising incense smoke—was it not like the smoke arising out of the burning of his past misdeeds? And his deep devotion—was it not like the steady lamp, shining and filling the entire space with the light of love?

After completing the *puuja*, he offered *naiveedyam* of delicious dishes and a betel-leaf-chew. Was not the delicious food like the fruit of his devoted worship? And was not the pleasure of the betel-leaf-chew like the unbroken joy bestowed by Lord *raama*? With the rituals complete, he picked up his *tambuura*, tuned it, closed his eyes, and sang soulfully of Lord *raama*'s glory. And he thought: “My song is my *puuja*.” That

night, he sat on the banks of the river *kaaveeri*, reflecting. Deep into the early hours of the morning, the essence of his day—his thoughts and feelings—crystallized and took the form of the song “*paripaalaya*” in *raaga riitigouLa*.

*pallavi*

*paripaalaya paripaalaya paripaalaya raghu naatha*

*charaNams*

- 1 *tanuvee niikanuvaina sadanamauraa raghu naatha (pari)*
- 2 *sthira chittamu vara chaamiikara piiThamu raghu naatha (pari)*
- 3 *su-pada dhyaanam gangaa jalamauraa raghu naatha (pari)*
- 4 *ibha paalaka abhimaanamu shubha cheelamu raghu naatha (pari)*
- 5 *ghana kiirtini palku vaasana gandhamu raghu naatha (pari)*
- 6 *hari naama smaraNamulu virulauraa raghu naatha (pari)*
- 7 *toli dushkRta phalamella guggulu dhuupamu raghu naatha (pari)*
- 8 *nii paada bhaktiyee proddu diipambagu raghu naatha (pari)*
- 9 *nee jeeyu su-puujaa phalamu bhoojanamavu raghu naatha (pari)*
- 10 *eDa-baayani naayeDa kalgu sukhamu viDemauraa raghu naatha (pari)*
- 11 *ninnu juuchuTE ghana diipaaraadhanamauraa raghu naatha (pari)*
- 12 *puujaa vidhi naija tyaagaraaja kRtamu raghu naatha (pari)*

Meaning

O Lord *raghunaatha*, O Protector of *gajeendra*, protect me!

1. My body itself is a worthy dwelling for You.
2. My unwavering mind is the sacred golden throne for You.
3. Meditation on Your holy feet is the water of the river Ganga.
4. My loving affection for You is the auspicious garment.
5. The chanting of Your glorious fame is the fragrant sandal paste.
6. Remembrance of Your divine names is the offering of flowers.
7. The results of my past misdeeds rise as incense smoke and are burnt away.
8. Devotion to Your feet is the eternal lamp.
9. The fruit of the auspicious worship I perform is the food offering.
10. The unbroken joy that arises within me is the betel-leaf offering.
11. Beholding You is itself the sacred waving of light.
12. The very procedure of worship is the song composed by this Tyagaraja.

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Notes:

- The lyrics and the meaning were taken from the website “[thyagaraja vaibhavam](http://thyagaraja.vaibhavam.com)” and slightly modified (including some interpretations).
- The transliteration scheme used for non-English words is as per ITRANS.

*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](http://www.Thyagaraja.org).*

# *Sruti Thyagaraja Aradhana Celebrations over the years*

## **From the Publications and Outreach Committee staff**

Sruti has celebrated Thyagaraja Aradhana ever since its inception. It used to be and still is the first function organized by Sruti during the calendar year. The first Thyagaraja Aradhana was held on February 28, 1987, at the Berlin Temple in New Jersey. The venue was picked for more than one reason. It was felt that the temple ambience would be appropriate for such a function, and that it would also serve the NJ patrons of Sruti. Since Thyagaraja's music transcended language, the Sruti management decided to celebrate the event in cooperation with the three South Indian associations of the region. This co-sponsoring was discontinued after a few years.

Berlin temple continued to be the venue for several years except for 1999 when it was held at the Pennfield Middle School in Landsdale, 2004 and 2006 when it was held in Villanova and 2007 when it was held in Bharatiya Temple in Montgomeryville. For the last few years, the venue has been the Mahalakshmi Temple in Delaware servicing that area also.

While any person who wanted to sing or play an instrument was given a chance to perform just one kriti, the Aradhana also included a main concert lasting about 1-2 hours by highly talented musicians residing in the U.S.A. This has now been expanded to invite touring artistes from India for a featured performance on that day. A list of artists featured in the main concert over the years is provided at the end of this article.

From the beginning, encouraging participation by youngsters has been an important aim of the "Managing Committee". Many of them, with encouragement by their parents and teachers, start preparing well in advance of the event. One can discern an appreciable increase in the quality of these performances over the years. In the past, special recognition was also given to promising youngsters by giving them special half-hour to one hour time slots during the celebrations.

The first Thyagaraja Aradhana also saw the publishing of the Thyagaraja Aradhana souvenir in 1989. Since singing the Pancharatna kritis of Thyagaraja is an important event of the day, the souvenir contained the lyrics of these kritis to help those in the audience to follow the main singers. This practice has been followed almost all the years since. Additionally, the souvenir also included articles on Carnatic music in general and Thyagaraja's place and contributions in particular.

Typically, the Thyagaraja Aradhana day starts off with a pooja and concludes with an aarati and mangalam. In 2004, the pooja was followed by a procession led by the late Kanumalla Pattabhirama dressed as Thyagaraja and carrying a portrait of Lord Rama. In many ways, Sruti follows the tradition of Thiruvaiyaru in the conducting of the Aradhana. Following the pooja is the group recital of Utsava Sampradaya kritis followed by the Pancharatna kritis and then individual rendering of Thyagaraja kritis. In the beginning, Prabha Subramaniam and Sumathi Sarangan led the Utsava Sampradaya group. Sumathi then trained some of her students who joined her in the rendering of these kritis. For a number of years after that, a group of youngsters trained by T.N. Bala rendered these kritis. Then from 2006 to 2013, Prabha Subramaniam led the rendering of these kritis. From 2013 onwards, Dinakar Subramaniam has been leading the Utsava Sampradaya kritis. The Pancharatna kritis were initially led by Vasantha and then for several years by Prabha Subramaniam and since 2006 by Kiranavali Vidyasankar. In 2006 a recording of

nine Utsava Sampradaya kirtanas and Pancharatna kritis were made available on Sruti's website, so that people could listen and train without attending classes.

Sruti's Thyagaraja Aradhana continues to be an eagerly awaited event. It is heartening to see the overwhelming participation by youngsters who we hope will continue to nurture the tradition of Carnatic music.

### **Sruti Thyagaraja Aradhana day – Main concert artists**

1987- Vasantha (Vocal); KS Mani (Violin); VN Prakash Rao (Mridangam)

1988- Vijaya Reddy (Vocal); Subhash Vinjamuri (Violin); Ramanathan (Mridangam)

1989- Sitalakshmi Madhavan (Vocal); Subhash Vinjamuri (Violin); Satish Pathakota (Mridangam)

1990- Sakuntala Srinivasan (Veena)

1991- Shashi Nandakumar Balija (Vocal)

1992- Indu Vasudevan (Vocal); Vijaya Voleti (Violin); Venkatesh (Mridangam)

1993- K.S.Mani (Violin); Satish Pathakota (Mridangam)

1994- T.N.Bala (Vocal); N. Shashidhar (Violin); Dr. C.G. Balachandar (Mridangam); Murali (Kanjira)

1995- Bhavani P Rao (Veena); Sri Prakash Rao (Mridangam)

1996- Savithri Ramanand (Vocal)

1997- Padma Srinivasan (Vocal); KS Mani (Violin); CG Balachandran (Mridangam)

1998- N.Shashidhar (Violin); Mahesh Krishnamurthy (Mridangam)

1999- Madurai R Sundar (Vocal); KS Mani (Violin); Balachandran (Mridangam)

2000- Sudarshan Padmanabhan (Vocal); Sandhya Srinath (Violin); Sampath Venkatavaradan (Mridangam)

2001- M.S. Sheela (Vocal); Radhika Mani (Violin); Anoor Dattatreya Sharma (Mridangam); R. Satyakumar (Ghatam), K.V. Kashinath (Kanjira)

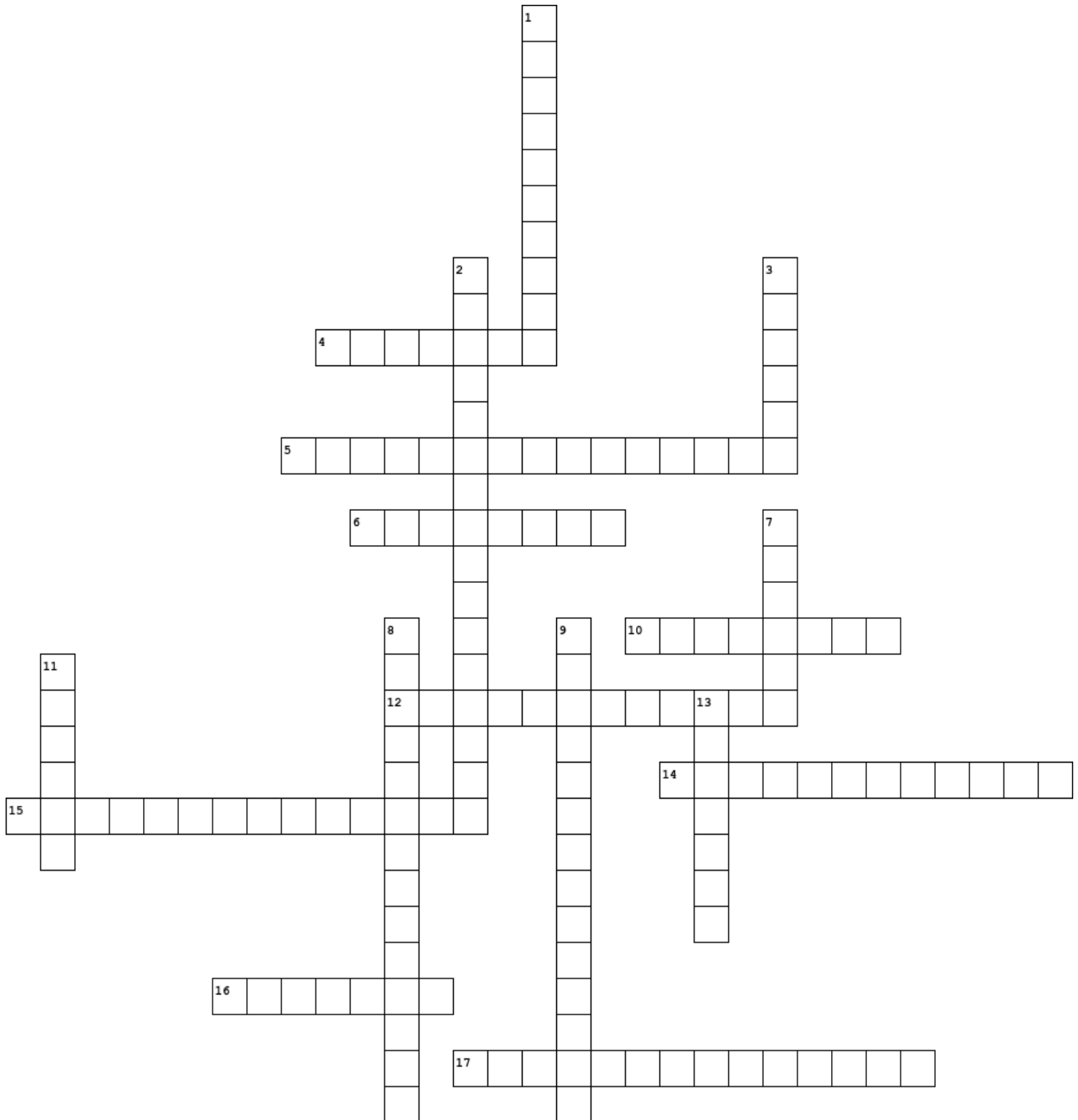
2002- Rajeswari Satish (Vocal); Radhika Mani (Violin); C.G. Balachandar (Mridangam); Murali Balachandar (Ghatam)

2003- Aparna Balaji (Vocal); Radhika Mani (Violin); Vijay Ganesh Gopalakrishnan (Mridangam)

- 2004- Professor Subbulakshmi and Kalyani Ramani (Vocal); Radhika Mani (Violin); Suresh Ramachandran (Mridangam)
- 2005- Savita Rao (Vocal); Sandhya Srinath (Violin); Srinath Bala (Mridangam)
- 2006- Kiranavali Vidyasankar (Vocal)
- 2007- Jayalakshmi Sekhar (Veena); Laxmisha Sridhar (Mridangam); Sriram Balasubramanian (Ghatam)
- 2008- Abhishek Raghuram (Vocal); Mysore Srikanth (Violin); B Ganapathyraman (Mridangam)
- 2009- Nisha Rajagopal (Vocal); Mysore Srikanth (Violin); Trivandrum Balaji (Mridangam)
- 2010- Salem Shriram (Vocal); Sandhya Srinath (Violin); Rajna Swaminathan (Mridangam)
- 2011- Toronto Brothers (Vocal);
- 2012- Ashvin Bhogendra (Vocal); L. Ramakrishnan (Violin); Akshay Ananthapadmanabhan (Mridangam)
- 2013- Ramakrishnan Murthy (Vocal); V.V.S. Murari (Violin); Arun Prakash (Mridangam)
- 2014- Madurai Sundar (Vocal); Sandhya Anand (Violin); Rajna Swaminathan (Mridangam)
- 2015- Deepa & Divya (Vocal); Swetha Narasimhan (Violin); Rajna Swaminathan (Mridangam)
- 2016- Amrutha Venkatesh (Vocal); Rajeev Mukundan (Violin); SJ Arjun Ganesh (Mridangam)
- 2017- Sangeetha Swaminathan (Vocal); Kamalakiran Vinjamuri (Violin); Vijay Ganesh (Mridangam)
- 2018- Aishwarya Vidhya Raghunath (Vocal); KVS Vinay (Violin); Delhi Sairam (Mridangam)
- 2019- Gokul Chandramouli (Vocal); Kamalakiran Vinjamuri (Violin); Vijay Ganesh (Mridangam)
- 2020- Dr. Shertallay K.N. Renganatha Sharma (Vocal); (Virtual Concert)
- 2021- Dr. K. Gayatri (Vocal); Rajeev Mukundan (Violin); Neyveli Narayanan (Mridangam); S.Krishna (Ghatam)
- 2022- Vani Ramamurthi (Vocal); Rajeev Mukundan (Violin); Keerthi Venkataramani (Mridangam)
- 2023- Dr. R. Suryaprakash (Vocal); B V Raghavendra Rao (Violin); K.H. Vineeth (Mridangam)
- 2024- JA Jayanth (Flute); L Ramakrishnan (Violin); NC Bharadwaj (Mridangam)
- 2025 - Heramb-Hemanth (Flute); Thanjavur Murugaboopathi (Mridangam); N Guruprasad (Ghatam)

# Thyagaraja Crossword

By Dhiya Ravinuthala



**Across**

4. Raga of “Ee Vasudha”
5. Goddess of the Thyagaraja Temple at Thiruvottiyur
6. Raga of “Mahitha Pravutha” and “O Rangasayee”
10. Sacred town associated with the Saptharishesar Pancharathnam
12. Reclining Vishnu worshipped in Srirangam Pancharathnam
14. Raga of “Shambo Mahadeva”
15. Literally meaning “five gems,” referring to each group of five compositions SUDDHASAVERI, Raga of “Dharini Thelusukonti”
16. Raga of “Kanna Thalli”
17. Temple town where a Pancharathnam was composed on Goddess Tripurasundari

**Down**

1. Temple island of Ranganathar honored in a Pancharathnam set
2. Raga of “Sundareswaruni”
3. Raga featured in both Lalgudi and Srirangam Pancharathnams
7. Village where Thyagaraja composed five kritis on Lord Sundareswarar
8. Raga of “Kori Sevimpa”
9. Deity of Kovur praised in five kritis
11. Type of ragas featured in the Nattai–Sri Pancharathnam group
13. Raga shared by “Sundari Ninnu” and “Joothamurare”

# Interactive Article Answers and Thyagaraja Crossword

## Answer Key

### 1. *Divya Nama Kritis*

- a. TULASI DALA - *Commitment to worship*
- b. VARA LEELA - *Pleading to protect*
- c. VANDANAMU - *Admiration & reverence*
- d. PAHI - *Emotional surrender (protection)*

### 2. *Ghana Raga Pancharatna Kritis*

- a. JAGADANANDA - *Majestic celebration*
- b. DUDUKUGALA - *Self-reflection (introspection)*
- c. SADHINCHANE - *Touch of frustration, plead for guidance*
- d. KANAKANA - *Awe & love towards God*
- e. ENDARO - *Humility & Gratitude*

### 3. *Utsava Sampradaya Kritis*

- a. JO JO RAMA - *Lullaby, affection*
- b. SITA KALYANA - *Festive, celebratory, devotion*
- c. MELUKO - *Respect, energy, anticipation to 'wake up & worship'*

#### Down

1. SRIRANGAM
2. SANKARABHARANAM
3. THODI
4. KOVUR
5. KARAHARAPRIYA
6. SUNDARESWARAR
7. GHANA
8. ARABHI

#### Across

4. SAHANA
5. TRIPURASUNDARI
6. KAMBOJI
7. LALGUDI
8. RANGANATHAR
9. PANTUVARALI
10. PANCHARATHNAM
11. SAVERI
12. THIRUVOTTIYUR

# Call for Participation

## Sruti Youth Group (SYG)

SRUTI invites youngsters of the community to actively become a part of Sruti Youth Group (SYG) that encourages Indian performing arts and music while developing leadership and volunteer skills. Open to children of Life/Annual members of Sruti from 7th grade through high school, SYG welcomes students with a passion for music and dance. The group is guided by a Youth Committee elected by its members, with mentorship from a Sruti Board representative. Participants can take on impactful leadership roles such as Co-Presidents, Social Media Leads, Event Coordinators, and Content & Publications Lead. Through hands-on involvement, SYG offers a platform to learn, lead, and give back.

Interested students are encouraged to fill out the application form at the link below.

<https://www.sruti.org/youth-group/>

For any questions, please email: [syg@sruti.org](mailto:syg@sruti.org)



## Sruti Fall 2026 Schedule

Visit [Sruti.org](http://Sruti.org) for more info

### Composers' Day: September 12

COMMUNITY EVENTS FOLLOWED BY MADOLIN CONCERT BY  
U.NAGAMANI, U.P.RAJU, U JAYA VIGNESHWAR  
ACCOMPANIED BY PARUPALLI S. PHALGUN & N.RAJARAM



**SRUTI 40 FESTIVAL**  
September 26 & 27  
DETAILS ON THE BACK

**Grand Collaborative Program**  
November 1 & 7  
DETAILS TBD



### T.Sarada Memorial Youth Festival

**November 21**

**Sruti Day**  
**December 6**



**Sruti**  
The India Music  
& Dance Society,  
Philadelphia

[www.sruti.org](http://www.sruti.org)

(Subject to Change)



# Sruti 40 Fest Schedule

Visit [Sruti.org](http://Sruti.org) for more info

September 26

**Violin Duet by**  
**Vid. Sangita Kalanidi R.K. Shriramkumar**  
**& Vid. UVS Murari**  
accompanied by **Vid. Manoj Siva** and  
**Vid. Anirudh Athreya**



**Vocal Concert by Vid. Kruthi Bhat**  
accompanied by **Vid. Vittal Rangan** and  
**Vid. R. Sankaranarayanan**



**Vocal Concert by Vid. Sandeep Narayan**  
accompanied by **Vid. Vittal Rangan**, **Vid.**  
**R. Sankaranarayanan**, and  
**Vid. Anirudh Athreya**



September 27

**GaJaNa: Percussion Ensemble Program**  
conducted by **Dr. Patri Satish Kumar** with  
**Vid. Kamalakiran Vinjamuri** and  
**Vid. Samyuktha Sriram**



**Vocal Concert by Vid. Sriranjani Tapasya**  
**Santhanagopalan** accompanied by  
**Vid. Kamalakiran Vinjamuri**  
and **Dr. Patri Satish Kumar**



**PANEL DISCUSSIONS, SRUTI 40 LEGACY PLAY,**  
**AND MUCH MORE!**

(Subject to Change)