



# SRUTI RANJANI

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Thyagaraja Aradhana



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# THYAGARAJA ARADHANA SOUVENIR

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With Compliments Of

**SRUTI**

The India Music & Dance Society  
Of The Delaware Valley

### From the editors :

The annual Thyagaraja Aradhana is an evolving tradition in the Greater Delaware Valley. It is an integral part of the music activities in the community and sets off the music season that follows during the year.

Following the formation of the Sruti Library Committee, it is our pleasant duty to undertake the publication of the Aradhana Souvenir. You would have noticed from the cover page that it is the first issue of the newly titled publication: SRUTI RANJANI. We received several excellent suggestions for the title and the choice was by no means an easy one. We thank Mrs. S. Nandakumar for submitting the chosen title.

In keeping with the tradition and by popular demand, we have retained the text of the Pancharatna Kritis. These are the gems among the treasures that were left to posterity by the great saint/composer. Singing these kritis by all enthusiasts with devotion and understanding is, in small measure, our homage to Thyagaraja. The articles that follow cover a range of subjects from the translations of Pancharatna Kritis to the life and music of Thyagaraja.

We thank our contributors for the stimulating and informative articles in this issue. Sruti Ranjani depends on your active participation through contribution of articles for its success. Your comments and suggestions are welcomed by your committee.

ENDARO MAHANUBHAVULU, ANDARIKI VANDANAMULU!

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Sri Thyagaraja

## GHANA RÀGA PANCHARATHNA KIRTANAS

### 1. Nàta Ràga - Àdi Thàla

- Jagada+ananda-kàraka Jaya Jànaki Pràna-nàyaka
1. Gagana+adhipa Satkulaja Ràja Ràjeswara  
Sugunàkara Sura-sèvyà Bhavya-dàyaka Sada Sakala
  2. Amara-thàraka Nichaya-kumuda-hitha Pari-pùrna+anagha  
Sura Sura-bhùja Dadhi-payòdhi-vàsa Harana  
Sundara-thara Vadana Sudhà-maya Vachò-brunda Gòvinda  
Sànanda Màvara+ajaràpta Subhakara+anèka
  3. Nigama Niraja+amruta Poshaka+animisha-vairi  
Vàrida Samìrana Khaga-thuranga Satkavi Hrudàlaya Aganitha  
Vànara+adhipa Nathàmghri Yuga
  4. Indra-nìla-mani Sannibhàpa-ghana Chandra  
Sùrya-nayana+apramèya Vàgìndra Janaka Sakalèsa Subhra  
Nàgèndra-sayana Samana-vairi Sannuta
  5. Pàda Vijitha Mauni-sàpa Sava Paripàla Vara-mantra Grahana  
Lòla Parama Sànthachittha Janakaja+adhipa Saròja-bhava  
Varada+akhila
  6. Srushti-sthityanta-kàraka Amita-kàmita Phalada Asamàna  
Gàthra Sachìpathi Suthàbdhi (Sudhàkara Kusuma Vimàna  
Surasàripu Karàbja
  7. Làlitacharana Avaguna Suragana Mada-harana  
Sanàtanà-janutha
  8. Om-kàra Panjara-kìra Purahara Saròjabhava Kèsava+adi Rùpa

- Vàsava-ripu Janakànthaka Kalà-dharàpta Ghrunàkara  
 Saranàgatha Janapàlana Sumanò-ramana Nirvikàra  
 Nigama-sàra-thara
9. Kara-dhrutha Sarajàla+asura Mada+apaharanà Vanisura  
 Suràvana Kavina Bilaja Mauni Kruta-charitra Sannuta Sri  
 Thyàgaràja Sannutha
  10. Puràna-purusha Nruvara+athmaja+asritha Para+adhina  
 Khara-viràdha-ràvana Viràvana Anagha Paràsara Mandhara  
 Avikruta Thyàgaràja Sannutha
  11. Aganitha-guna Kanaka-chèla Sàlavidalana Arunàbha  
 Samàna-charana Apàra Mahima+adbhutha Sukavijana  
 Hrut-sadana Sura-muni-gana Vihita Kalasa Nìranidhijà-ramana  
 Pàpa Gaja Nrusimha Thyàgaràja+adi-nutha

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## 2. Gowla Ràga - Àdi Thàla

- Dudukù-gala Nannè Dora-koduku Bròchurà Enthò
1. Kadu Durvishaya-krushtudai Gadiya Gadiyaku Nindàru
  2. Sri Vanitha Hruthkumudabja Avàng-mànasa Gòchara
  3. Sakala Bhùthamula-yandu Nivai-yundagà Madi-lèka-bòyina
  4. Chiruta-pràyamula-nàdè Bhajanàmruta Rasavihina  
 Kutarkudaina
  5. Paradhanamula-koraku Norula Madi-karaga-balki Kadupu-  
 nimpa Thirigi-natti
  6. Thana-madini Bhuvini Saukhyapu Jivanamè Yanuchu Sadà

- Dinamulu Gadipè
7. Thèliyani Nata-vita-kshudrulu Vanitalu Svavasamauta  
 Kupadisinchi Santasilli Swara-layambu Lerungakanu  
 Silàthmulai Subhakthulaku Samànamanu
  8. Dhrushtiki Sàrambagu Lalanà Sadanàrbhaka Sènàmitha  
 Dhanàdulanu, Dèvadi-Dèva Nera Nammithi-gàkanu, Ni  
 Padàbja-Bhajanambu Marachina
  9. Chakkani Mukha Kamalambunu Sadà Nà Madilò Smarana  
 Lèkanè|Durmadandha Janula Kòri Pari-thàpamulachè Dagili  
 Nogili Durvishaya Duràsalanu Ròyalèka Sathathama  
 Paràdhilai Chapalachitthudanaina
  10. Mānavathanu Durlabha-manuchu Nenchi Paramānanda-  
 monda-lèka; Mada Matsara Kāma Lōbha Mōhulaku Dāsudai  
 Mōsabōthi Gāka; Modati-kulajudaguchu Bhuvini Sudrula  
 Panulu Salpuchu Nuntini Gāka; Narādhamulanu Rōya Rasa  
 Vihīnamayinanu Sādhippa Thārumāru
  11. Sathulaku Konnallasthikai Suthulaku Konnāllu  
 Dhanathathulakai Thirigithinayya Thyàgaràjaptha Ituvanti

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### 3. Àrabhi Ràga - Àdi Thàla

- Sàdhinchanè O Manasà
1. Bòdhinchina Sanmàrga-Vachanamula Bònku-chèsi  
Thà-pattinattu
  2. Samayàniki Thagu Matalàdenè
  3. Dèvaki Vasudèvula Nèginchinatu
  4. Rangèsudu Sadgangà Janakudu Sangìtha Sampradàyakudu
  5. Gòpì-Manòradha Mosanga-lèkanè Gèliyu Chèsè-vàdu
  6. Vanithala Sadà Sokka Jèyuchunu Mrokka Chèsè  
Paramàtmu-dadhiyu-gàka Yasòdha Thanayundanchu  
Mudhambunanu Muddhu-betta Navvuchundu Hari
  7. Parama Bhaktha Vatsaludu Suguna Pàràvàrundu  
Àjanmam-anghudì Kali Bādhalà Thìrchu  
Vàdanuchunè-hrudayambujamuna Jùchuchundaga
  8. Harè Ràmachandra Raghukulèsa Mrudubhàsha Sèshasayana  
Paranàri Sòdharà Javiràja Thuranga Ràjaràja Vinutha  
Niràmayàpaghana Sarasìruha Dhalàksha Yanuchu  
Vèdukonnanu Thà Bròvakanu
  9. Sri Venkatèsa Suprakàsa Sarvònnatha Sajjanamànasa  
Nikèthana Kankàmbaradhara Lasanmakuta Kundala Viràjitha  
Harè! Yanuchu Nè Pogadagà Thyàgaràja-gèyudu  
Mànaveindrudaina Ràmachandrudu
  10. Samayàniki Thagu Matalàdene; Sadhbhakthula Nadatha  
Litlanenè Amarikagà Nà; Pùja-konenè Alugavaddhanenè;  
Vimukhulathò Jèrabòku-manenè; Vetha Galgina  
Thàlukommanenè; Damasamàdi Sukhadàyakudagu Sri  
Thyàgaràjanuthudu Chentha Ràkanè

### 4. Varàli Ràga - Àdi Thàla

- Kana Kana Ruchirà Kanakavasana Ninnu
1. Dina Dinamunu Manasuna Chanavuna Ninnu
  2. Pàlugàru Mòmuna Sri Yapàra Mahima Danaru Ninnu
  3. Kala Kala-manu Mukha-kala Galigina Sìtha Kulukuchu  
Ora-kannulachè Ninnu
  4. Bālarkàbhasu Chèla Manimaya Mālalamkrutha Kamdhara  
Sarasijàksha Varaka Pòla Suruchira Kiritadhara Sathathambu  
Manasàraga
  5. Sàpathnìmathayow Suruchichè-karna Sùlamaina-màta Vinula  
Chuirukkana Thàlaka Sri Harini Dhyànimchi Sukhimpaga-lèda  
Yatu
  6. Mrugamadalalàma Subhanitala Varajatàyu Mòkshaphalada  
Pavanamànasutudu Nìdhu Mahima Delpa Sìta Thelisi Valachi  
Sokkalèdharìthi Ninnu
  7. Sukhàspada Vimukhambudhara Pavana Vidèhamànasa  
Vihàrèptha Surabhùja Mànitha Gunàmka Chidànanda Khaga  
Thuranga Dhutaradhànga Parama Dayàkara Karunàrasa  
Varunàlaya Bhayàpahàrà Sri Raghupathè
  8. Kàminchi Prèmamìra Karamula Nìdu Pàdakamalamula  
Battukonuvàdu Sàkshi Ràmanàma Rasikudu Kailàsa  
Sadhanudu Sàkshi Mariyu Nàrada Paràsara Suka Saunaka  
Purandara Nagajà Dharaja Mukhyulu Sàkshigàda Sundarèsa  
Sukha Kalàmbudhi Vàsàsrithulakè
  9. Sathathamu Prèma Pùrithudagu Thyàgaràja nuta mukhajitha  
Kumudahitha Varada Ninnu

## 5. Sri Ràga - Àdi Thàla

- Endarò Mahànubhàvulu+Andariki Vandanamul+endarò
1. Chanduru Varnuni Anda-chandamunu Hrudaya+aravindamunu Jùchi Brahma+ananda+manubhavinchu Vâr+endarò
  2. Sàma-gàna-lòla Manasija-làvanya Dhanya-mùrdhanyul+endarò
  3. Månasa Vana-chara Vara Sanchàramu Nilipi Mùrthi Båguga Podaganè Vâr+endarò
  4. Saraguna Pàdamulaku Svàntamanu Saròjamunu Samarpanamu Sèyuvâr+endarò
  5. Pathitha Pàvanudanè Paràthparuni Gurinchi Paramàrdhamagu Nija-màrgamuthonu Pàdunchunu Sallàpamuthò Swara-laya+adi Ràgamula Teliyu Vâr+endarò
  6. Hari-guna Manulagu Saramulu Galamuna Sòbhillu Bhaktha-kotul+ilalò Thelivito Chelimitò Karuna+kalgi Jagamellanu Sudhà-drushtichè Bròchu Vâr+endarò
  7. Hoyalu-mìra Nadalu+kalgu Sarasuni Sadà Kanula Jùchuchunu Pulaka-sarìrulai Ananda Payòdhi Nimagnulai Mudambunanu Yasamu Gala Vâr+endarò
  8. Parama Bhàgavatha Mauni-vara Sasivibhakara Sanaka-sanandana Digisa Sura Kimpurusha Kanakasipu-suta Nàrada Thumburu Pavana-sùnu Bàlachandra-dhara Suka-saròja-bhava Bhù-sura-varulu Parama-pàvanulu

Ghanulu Sàsvathulu Kamala-bhava-sukhamu  
Sada+anubhavulu Gàka Endarò

9. Nì Mènu Nàma Vaibhavammulanu Nì Paràkrama Dhairyamula Sànta Månasamu Nivulanu Vachana Satyamunu Raghuvara! Nì Yeda Sadbhakthiyu Janinchakanu Durmathamulanu Kalla Chèsinatti Nì Madi Neringi Samthathambunanu Guna-bhajana+ananda Kirtanamu Sèyu Vâr+endarò
10. Bhàgavatha Ràmàyana Gita+adi Sruthi Sàsthra Purànapu Marmamulan Siva+adi Shan-mathamula Gùdhamula Muppadi Mukkòti Sura+antharangamula Bhàvamula Neringi Bhàva-ràga Laya+adi Saukhyamulache Chira+ayuvul+kaligi Nirapadhi Sukha+atmulai Thyàgaràja+aptulaina Vâr+endarò
11. Prema Muppiri-gonu-vèla Nàmamunu Dalachè-vàru Ràma-bhakthudaina Thyàgaràja-nuthuniki Nija-dàsul+endarò

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### A word about the Script:

As you know, the alphabets of Telugu and Sanskrit contain letters, that do not have a counterpart in the Roman alphabet. Thus we have used the following scheme to denote the extra letters in Telugu. 1) s as in sura, 2) s' as in s'iva, 3) n as in nara, 4) n̄ as in Gaṇapati, 5) r as in rama, 6) r' as in r'ushi, 7) l as in kalyani, 8) l' as in varaal'i, 9) t as in nàta, 10) th as in Thyàgaràja.

Furthermore, it is important to clearly distinguish long and short vowels. We have consistently used an accent above the letter to indicate long sounds.

Finally, in Telugu, elementary words are often combined to form composite words, through a process called "Sandhi". During this process, a transformation occurs at the junction of the two words, sometimes making it difficult to understand or even pronounce the long composite words. In such cases, we have separated the words by a plus (+) sign. For example, gaganaadhipa is written as gagana+adhipa.

## Five Gems of Tyagaraja

*Akharaju Sarma*

In an earlier issue of Sruti Ranjani (Vol 1, 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 as 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 Tyagaraja 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 tong'd, O Lord  
Of Lakshmi, seat'd on Sessa 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 Yasoda 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 mahanu bhavulu...", 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 Tyagaraja 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.

References

- 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.

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## Kanugontini: A gem in Bilahari

*Pratima Adipudi*

This is one of Tyagaraja's compositions which I like very much. I like it because it is simple and sweet, the words are easy to pronounce, and it describes a beautiful scene. When my mother explained its meaning to me, it instantly became one of my favorite kritis.

In this composition, Tyagaraja is saying "Oh Lord Rama, I witnessed a great scene with you, (born in "Inakula"), husband of Sita, sitting on your throne while Anjaneya is respectfully massaging your feet. Seeing Bharata, Lakshmana, and Satrugna attending court with you and Sugreeva and other warriors singing songs in praise of you brings great pleasure to my eyes. "

This kriti is in Bilahari raga, which is a rakti raga. It is a Janyaraga of Sankarabharanam, the 29th melakarta raga. Its arohana is S R G P D S with R2, G3, and D2. Its avarohana is S N D P M G R S with N3 and D2. When DNDP is sung, the N is N2, Kaisiki Nishadam. In the avarohana it is Kakali Nishadam.

Of the musical trinity, Tyagaraja's compositions are known to be in "DRAKSHARASA" which means easy to understand. One of the reasons I like this composition as I said before, is because it is simple in its language. You don't need to be a scholar to feel the bhavam, to be a part of, and to enjoy Tyagarajaswami's compositions. Tyagaraja had the great ability to create a living picture with his music - one can almost visualize Rama Pattabhishekam while singing or listening to this piece.

Tyagaraja composed this song when he recovered his lost panchayatana vigrahas (thrown into the river by his brother, Panchapakesan). In response to his prayers, Sri Rama appeared in his dream, revealing that the vigrahas were in the Kaveri River. Tyagaraja immediately rushed to the river and found the vigrahas. In this state of happiness, he composed this kriti and "Raaraamaayintidaaka" in Asaveri.

So far, I have learnt a few of "Tyagabrahma", Sri Tyagarajaswami's compositions. His compositions are written with such bhakti, are full of bhavam and emotion, and are simple to understand with beautiful sangatis. He devoted his lifetime to music and Rama. While I hope to continue learning, singing and enjoying more and more of Sri Tyagaraja's compositions, "Kanugontini" will always be a special kriti for me.

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## Thyagaraja in a Nutshell

*Uma Roy*

Carnatic Music lovers all over the world commemorate annually the occasion of the passing away of Sri Saint Thyagaraja (Jan. 6, 1847) on Pushya Bahula Panchami Day or around that day, sometime in January by singing his compositions and in particular his Ghana-Raga Pancharathna Kritis in Nata, Gowla, Aarabhi, Varali and Sri Ragas. In Thiruvayyar (Tanjore District in Tamil Nadu), where Thyagaraja lived for most of his life, an association called the **THYAGABRAHMA ARADHANA MAHOTSAVA SABHA** celebrates the festival annually when musicians of all caliber come to offer their songs and listen to the offerings of the other musicians.

Who was Thyagaraja? Was he a God? Was he a legend? No, to both the questions. He became one with God when he passed away (i.e. attained Siddhi, possible only for Saints). Because of this and his innumerable Kritis, we revere him like God. He was a real man, and not a legend, born in 1767 (or in 1759 according to some) and became famous due to his musical compositions. In India, in olden days, no biographies were written of great people; so legends grew around their lives. The same was true for Thyagaraja; many legends have grown around him also. In this article, only a historical description will be given.

How come we honor him more than any other composer? We do so because, he was not only a composer, but also a poet, a teacher, preacher, a musician, a vainika (a veena player), a saint, a great devotee of God Rama, a philosopher all rolled into one. There are not many composers who can match him in all these qualifications.

How about his family? He came from a very high class literary and musical Andhra Brahmin family; one of his grand-fathers was a famous poet-composer called **GIRI RAJA KAVI** who was an artist in Tanjore King Shahaji's court (1684-1710) (Samsthana Vidwan); his other grand-father was also a samsthana vidwan known as **Veena KALAHASTI AYYAR**. Thyagaraja's father **RAMA BRAHMAM** was a scholar, a devotee; read and explained Ramayana (which Thyagaraja listened to as a young boy) in King

Tuljaji's court (1765-1787). Thyagaraja's mother **SEETHAMMA** was a singer herself; she knew and taught her son many kirtanas of Purandara Dasa, which impressed him very much. Is it any wonder then that with such parents and grand-parents Thyagaraja took to composing songs on Rama since his childhood?

How was his early life and family life? He was born in Thiruvarur on May 4, 1767. He had two older brothers one of whom died young and the other was Jalpesan; They lived in the same house together for a long time, though perhaps not in a friendly fashion. His father was given a house in Thiruvayyar by the king and they moved there in 1774. The other details of his life which are known are that he had his Upanayanam at the age of 8 and marriage at the age of 18 and that he was fairly tall (5'7") and slim. He had only one daughter, who bore a son. This grandson was married, but had no children, died young and thus Thyagaraja's direct line became extinct.

How about Thyagaraja's education, career and life-style? He was a child prodigy, a genius, who showed intense interest in Ramayana from his childhood and composed simple songs, but of high quality even as a boy, "Namo Namo Raghava" and "Tavadasoham", both in Punnagavarali raga, are said to be such early attempts. His Guru was **SONTI VENKATARAMANAYYA** who taught all he knew to Thyagaraja within one year! How much formal education he had no one is sure; his father taught him Telugu and Sanskrit. He also must have studied Jyothishya (astrology), Ganitha (mathematics) and must have had access to some texts on musicology (which are unfortunately not available now) since he displays a thorough knowledge of all these in his compositions. He was a born composer and an avid one at that. Prof. Sambamoorthy describes the historic period in which Thyagaraja lived as a "period of intense musical activity and the brightest in the history of South Indian music and therefore most conducive to the development of his musical genius". His contemporaries were none other than the other two members of the **TRIMURTHI**s, i.e. Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Shastri; while he barely knew the former, he was a great personal friend of the latter.

Thyagaraja sought God through the medium of music; he extolled in his songs the virtues of both Rama and the knowledge of music combined with devotion as the path to Moksha (Salvation, i.e.

freedom from pain, pleasures, desires, rebirth, etc.). He did not seek wealth and did not cash in his fame to get better positions, property or more jewelry; in fact, he refused offers of such wealth even when Sarabhoji, the king of Tanjore made them. He composed his famous Krithi in Kalyani 'Nidhi Chala Sukhama' on this occasion saying that pursuit of God brings greater joy than pursuit of wealth. His brother was a man of the world, so he was aggravated by this unworldly behavior and threw away the idol of Rama that Thyagaraja used to worship into the Kaveri River. This caused an unimaginable amount of sorrow to Thyagaraja as though his God Rama forsook him. The songs composed during this period reflect his distress, as in kritis "Nenendu Vedakudura". He found the idol at a later date in the river bed to his great joy. This idol that he so treasured has been preserved till today.

Thyagaraja led a life of meditation and prayers in the true Unchavritti style of going about the neighborhood singing his songs in praise of Rama and accepting whatever people offered him gladly. Such giving was an honorable deed to do and Thyagaraja fed his family, disciples and guests on whatever he got through such Unchavritti. This type of living meant a great deal of discipline and sacrifice on his part and it is for such reasons that Thyagaraja is referred to as a Saint. He was perhaps criticized and made fun of by his relatives for leading such a life when he could have lived comfortably by having accepted the king's offers. He was also perhaps bothered to some extent by the comments of some lesser musicians who might have been jealous of his spreading fame; in many kritis he begs Rama, to save him from such misery.

How about Thyagaraja's disciples? Even if his bloodline did not continue, his works have come down to us today through a series of disciples and their disciples. His immediate students were Tanjore Rama Rao, Umayalapuram Sundara and Krishna Bhaghavathars, Tillaisthana Rama Iyengar and Walajapet Venkataramana Bhaghavathar, who have been most responsible for propagation and preservation of Thyagaraja's krithis. No one is even sure of how many were composed, since they were for the most part transmitted orally and not through books and cassettes like in the modern times. Some of even those which were written down might have been destroyed. Thyagaraja's other disciples were persons of fame such as Veena Kuppayyar, Subbaraya Shastri, etc. who were, or soon became great composers themselves. Thyagaraja was supposed to

have grouped his disciples according to their voices, talents, and abilities and taught each group a different set of 200 krithis or so. Many dignitaries, philosophers and musicians of fame also sought him and visited him to pay their respect.

Did Thyagaraja ever travel? As his fame spread as far and wide as was possible in those days of slow communication, he was invited by many dignitaries: he accepted one such invitation and went to visit Upanishad Brahmam of Kancheepuram, who was then 100 years old. From Kancheepuram Thyagaraja continued his pilgrimage to Walajapet, Thirupathi, Puttur, Sholinghur, Madras, Thiruvottiyur and Kovur, all the places being within a couple of hundred miles North of Thiruvayyar. He visited the local temples of these towns and composed kritis on the deities of those temples; thus, we have Thyagaraja's kritis on Lord Varadharaa, Venkateswara, Narasimha, Anjaneya, Vishnu, Parthasarathy, Tripurasundari and Sundareswara. His two other sets of Pancharathna kritis are on Tripurasundari and Sundareswara of Kovur. These probably were the few Kritis he ever composed on the deities other than his beloved Rama.

Greatness of Thyagaraja : Authorities have written volumes on this topic, analyzing his kritis for meaning, mood, poetic beauty, philosophic thought, etc.

Thyagaraja's greatness was in many directions. He himself had a beautiful high pitched voice (Gandharva Sarira i.e. celestial voice) and used to play on the veena too. His compositions are known for their vastness, variety, quality, poetry, philosophic thoughts and sense of devotion they invoke in the singers and listeners. In sheer volume and quantity, he is like Kshetragna and Purandara Dasa; some believe that he composed 24,000 songs to match Valmiki's 24,000 Slokas of Ramayana; however, only less than a thousand are available today and they are in 210 Ragas. He is the first to have introduced the system of a Kriti with Sangathis. No two kritis in the same raga sound the same and no two sangathis are repeated. He composed simple songs to be sung during daily prayers and festive occasions called Divyanama-samkirthanans and Utsava-sampradaya Kirthanans. Also, he composed three musical operas called Prahlada Bhakthi Vijaya, Nauka Charithra and Seetharama Vijaya (which has not been found.). His other Kritis range in complexity from simple ones like 'Sujana Jeevana' in Kamas to complex ones like 'Daree

Nee Telusu Konti' in Suddha Saveri. All his Kritis are said to have a perfect balance of Raga, Laya and Bhava (roughly translated to melody, rhythm and feeling). In addition, his songs are said to be filled with three features, Sangeetha Bhava (music), Sahithya Bhava (lyric and poetic beauty) and Bhakthi Bhava (devotion). Before Thyagaraja's time, musicians and musicologists were concerned with the science of music devoid of devotion. Songs of devotion devoid of high musical quality seemed to be sung by Bhagavathars who were Bhakthas (devotees). Each class of people seemed to look down on the other for what was lacking. Thyagaraja goes down in history of music for having combined both the elements, i.e. the element of Bhakthi and the element of correct musical grammar and higher quality of music. His superb kritis, hence, have appeal to the poet, to the Bhaktha, and of course to the musician. In his story-telling ability of Ramayana, he stands in the same category Valmiki, Kambar and Tulasi Das with the additional excellence of setting the lyrics to classical music. His songs are so composed that even a youngster can sing them while a vidwan can expand them. His compositions can be classified into categories based on their contents: some deal with logic, some with ethics, some are salutations to God, some are in the praise of knowledge of music and some are those that address 'MANAS' i.e. his own mind or human mind in general. Mr. T.V. Subba Rao (founder of the Madras Music Academy in 1928) cannot say enough about Thyagaraja's greatness in his book "Studies in Indian Music"; he says: "The songs of Thyagaraja are like our scriptures in thought and word, impregnated with entrancing charm of melody and rhythm which captivate the mind and soul and the only way to know Thyagaraja is through his songs."

Did Thyagaraja realize God through music? and when? He waited all his life for Lord Rama he sung to Rama in various moods such as begging him, complaining to him, threatening him, etc. and one day finally, a few days before his death, he had a dream in which Lord Rama appeared and promised to take him back to his kingdom and release him from the miseries of life at a certain appointed time exactly ten days later. This made Thyagaraja very happy and contented and he composed on this occasion the famous GIRIPAINA in Sahana raga where he speaks of Rama's promise in his dream. One day prior to this awaited day, Thyagaraja became a SANYASI (monk, ascetic) officially, though he had always led the life of an ascetic and is said to have requested his disciples to sing

continuously till 11 a.m. of the following day. On that final day he composed his last two kritis "PARAMATHMUDU" and "PARITHAPAMU" in ragas Vagadheeswari and Manohari respectively. It is said that at this anticipated hour the disciples who had been with him all along, heard an inexplicable sound and saw a beam of light lift up from his head and his mortal body breathed or sang no more. He attained SIDDHI. Though Thyagaraja's mortal and creative life came to an end after eighty years, his creative works will remain immortal for as long as humanity remains and the human mind seeks something more than mere bread and butter. Ten thousand miles away from his homeland and some two hundred years after, we in this country are joyously singing his songs.

The sources for this article have been :

1. "Thyagaraja"- by Prof. P. Sambamoorthy (National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1967)
2. "Studies in Indian Music"- by T.V. Subba Rao (Asia Publishing House, Bombay, -1965)
3. "The Spiritual Heritage of Thyagaraja"- by C. Ramanujachari and Dr. V. Raghavan (Sri Rama Krishna Muth, Madras, 1981).

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## Is Thyagaraja Really Great ?

Rasikan

I remember reading sometime back Leonard Bernstein's book, 'The Joy of Music'. In it, Bernstein discusses why Beethoven is held in such high esteem by Western musicians. He imagines two music lovers going through an argument on the merits of various composers. One of them asserts that for sheer melody in Western classical music no one comes close to Mozart. As for innovations and path breaking compositions Bach reigns supreme. And for rhythm Western music cannot compare to Indian and other Eastern music. So, what is great about Beethoven? To this, the other person counters that it was Beethoven who not only exhibited the best attributes of the composers before him, but who took Western music to heights never before reached. In fact, the romantic style is a major milestone in Western classical music.

Is there an analogy in South Indian classical music vis-a-vis Thyagaraja? Let us follow Bernstein's analysis. The major components of Karnatik music are raga bhavam and talam. Poetry and lyricism are some of the other components. Are Thyagaraja's compositions the best in any of these categories?

For sheer raga bhava, the delineation of all the elements of a major ragam in a single composition, Muthuswamy Dikshitar is peerless. As examples, just rendering *Balagopala* (Bhairavi) or *Dakshinamurthe* (Sankarabharanam) or *Amba Nilayadakshi* (Nilambari) is equivalent to rendering an elaborate alapana in the respective ragas. Only Kshetrappa's padams come close in depth of raga bhavam. With few exceptions like *Endaro* (Sri), Thyagaraja's songs do not bring out all the facets of a ragam. So if you are keeping score, it is 1 other composers, Thyagaraja -? well, not quite zero.

Now to talam. Thyagaraja introduced many innovations. He composed songs in which the eduppu is not a quarter, or half matra from samam but even one and a half matras from the samam - e.g. *Gana Murthe* (Gana Murthy), *Entanerchina* (Suddha Danyasi). But when one thinks of tala, complications interwoven into a composition, Syama Sastry's name stands out. His intricacies in

misra chapu (both 3+4 and 4+3 varieties) are astounding. So, here again Thyagaraja is not the unanimous choice for uno numero.

As for the lyrics -- honestly WHO CARES? That is the question that pops out when we hear words mangled by singers. More seriously, I have heard many Telugu scholars downplay his role in Telugu literature - there have been greater poets. For bhakthi laden music, Bhadrachala Ramdas's heart rending compositions will surely find a place at the top.

So the basic question, why is Thyagaraja considered great, remains unanswered. Or is it? Simply stated, while some may have excelled in one or other aspects of compositions, Thyagaraja was superb in all of them. It is more than that. It was he who introduced the beautiful concept of Sangathi - e.g. *Dharini* (Suddha Saveri), *Ramani Samanam Evaru* (Kharaharapriya). Many of his compositions provide nice springboards for elaborate niravals. *Kantiki Sundara*, *Chakkani Raja* - Kharaharapriya, *Veda Sastra* (*Enduku peddala vala* - Sankarabharanam) and scores of them. He brought out the beauty of a number of ragams which were almost unknown before him; the most outstanding of them being Kharaharapriya. As noted above, he made many innovations in talams.

Thyagaraja perfected the Kriti format of Pallavi, Anupallavi, Charanam with the later part of the charanam having the same dhatu as the anupallavi. He himself strayed away from this mold in his Pancharatna kritis (which, by the way, are in a class by themselves), bhajana/utsava sampradaya kritis and few others, notably *Brochevar evare* (Sri Ranjani) and *Sri Raghuvara* (Kambodhi). But almost all his compositions exhibit the basic 3 anga format. His contemporary, Syama Sastry used this pattern with some embellishments like swara sahitya. And all later composers have faithfully followed it. This alone is a major accomplishment. Clearly the history of South Indian music reached a watershed in his compositions.

I have barely touched on the greatness of Thyagaraja. Indeed, volumes have been written on his compositions and volumes will still be written. One can boldly assert that there never has been a greater composer and it may be centuries before such a one is born. I would like to join all the music lovers of Greater Delaware Valley in paying my humble tribute to this great saint/composer.

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## Thoughts before Dying

*Uma and Chitrapu Prabhakar*

It is said that Thyagaraja was intimated of his coming death in a dream. In that dream, Lord Rama apparently promised to take Thyagaraja to His sannidhi within ten days. Of the songs that Thyagaraja composed during these last days, three are well known. They are "Giri paina" in Sahana raga, "Paritapamu gani" in Manohari raga and "Paramatmudu velige muchchata" in Vagadhiswari raga.

It is interesting to try to interpret the meanings of these songs. For, they were written by a man on the brink of death: From a point of no return; from a point when one could look back and see what life has been to him; from a point where one can look back and see what one has discovered in one's life- what was most valuable and what one would advise others to do or not to.

These writings should be different from a philosopher's musings and speculations about Life and Death in general. For, however fine a thinker one may be, I believe that the inevitability of the falling blade brings clearer insight (!). It will push the inessentials into the background and only the most dear to the heart and mind will stand out. Stand out -crystal clear like a child's vision, and vibrant like a van Gogh's painting. Therefore, I studied the meanings of these songs with some time and thought in hand. The song "Paramatmudu" impressed me most. The song and the meaning go as follows.

1. Paramatmudu velige muchchata baga telusukore !
2. Hariyata, harudata,  
Suralata, narulata,  
Akhilandakotulata,  
Andarilo Paramatmudu velige..

3. Gagana, Anila, Tejo, Jala, Bhu mayamagu  
Mriga, Khaga, Naga, Taru kotulalo,  
Sagunamulalo, Vigunamulalo,  
Satatamu Saadhu Thyagarajarchitudu,  
Ilalo Paramatmudu velige..

### Translation (of the spirit of the song):

1. Won't you see and know  
The marvel of the *being* of God !
2. His *being* in Shiva and Vishnu;  
..... in Gods and Men;  
... in the various life forms;  
Won't you see...?
3. In material things,  
-made up of air, sky, fire, water and the earth-  
such as  
animals and birds;  
serpents and trees;  
  
In inanimate opposites:  
such as  
good and bad;  
  
Won't you, please, always see  
The *being* of God !

### Appreciation:

The main problem in the Life of a person is his relation to people, living and nonliving things, and psychological ideas. It is a *problem*, because we see a multitude of them and they are often in contradiction with others. Therefore, the quest of a thinking individual should be *synthesis*. That is, to be able to understand them all in one *mutually non-inconsistent* way.

In the above song, Thyagaraja asks us to see all the pieces *together*. Good and bad are not different. The believer and the nonbeliever are not different. He urges us to develop and maintain such a *universal/cosmic* attitude. Certainly, it will go a long way to building a peaceful personal life, peaceful relationships and a peaceful world.

"ఎందరో మహనుభావులు" కాదు.

కొందరే మహనుభావులు.

వారితోనే వారు.

కాకర్ల త్యాగరాజు గారు.

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