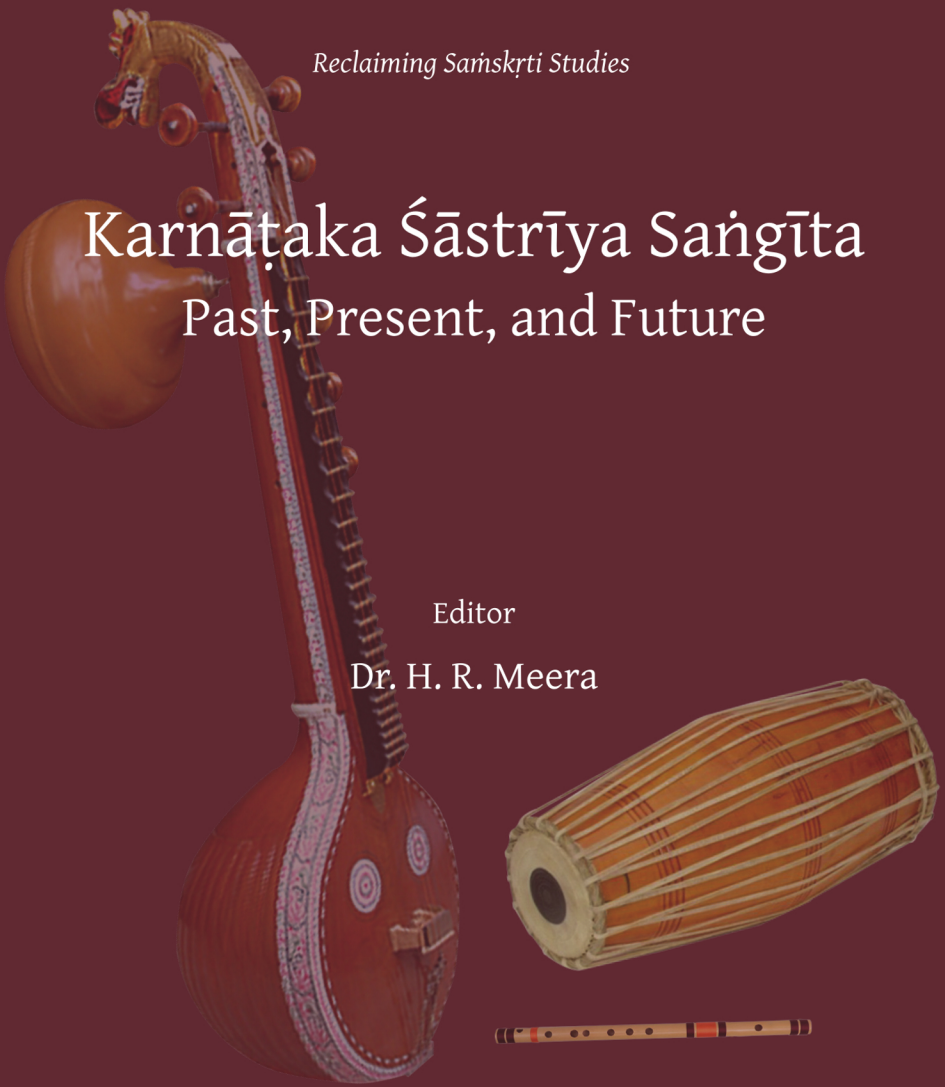
Reclaiming Saṁskṛti Studies

Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta

Past, Present, and Future



Editor

Dr. H. R. Meera

Infinity Foundation India

The Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta - with its complex and rich *rāga* and *tāla* systems, a very bountiful array of compositions, and an ample and innovative framework to exercise creativity (*manodharma*) - is indubitably an exquisite art form. With all its artistic elements, it can be tagged as a genre of 'art music', but at the same time, it is also 'sacred music' where each element in the system is reflective of its Vedic roots, and of the Hindu culture in all its glory and splendour.

However, like all other elements relating to the Hindu culture, this music system too is facing assaults in various ways – be it the 'art has no religion' trap, or the accusations of oppression against the musical *paramparā* (tradition), or the attempts to delink it from the foundational Hindu metaphysics and sacrality.

This volume brings together two approaches to addressing the issue – (1) the constructive one shedding light on the richness of the tradition and (2) the analytical and critical one, rebuffing assaults and rebutting allegations.

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2021

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Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta - Past, Present, and Future
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International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST)

a	अ	**ā**	आ	i	इ	**ī**	ई
u	उ	**ū**	ऊ	**ṛ**	ऋ	**ṝ**	ॠ
lṛ	ऌ						
e	ए	ai	ऐ	o	ओ	au	औ
ṁ	ं	**ḥ**	ः				

k	क्	kh	ख्	g	ग्	gh	घ्	**ṅ**	ङ्
c	च्	**ch**	छ्	j	ज्	jh	झ्	**ñ**	ञ्
ṭ	ट्	**ṭh**	ठ्	**ḍ**	ड्	**ḍh**	ढ्	**ṇ**	ण्
t	त्	th	थ्	d	द्	dh	ध्	n	न्
p	प्	ph	फ्	b	ब्	bh	भ्	m	म्

y	य्	r	र्	l	ल्	v	व्
ś	श्	**ṣ**	ष्	s	स्	**h**	ह्
kṣa	क्ष	jña	ज्ञ				

ê	ஏ	◌	l̲	ழ̲	r̲	ற̲
ô	ஓ	ஃ	n̲	ன்	n	ந்
Ḷ	ள்	்				

Shown in **bold** in this chart are letters that require diacritics, and the few that are confusibles (owing to popular spelling).

About Infinity Foundation India

॥ इच्छन्ति देवाः सुन्वन्तं
न स्वप्नाय स्पृहयन्ति ॥

"The *deva*-s love the performer of *yajña*,
not the one who slumbers" — ***Ṛgveda*** 8.2.18

Infinity Foundation (IF), USA, has a 25-year track record of mapping the Kurukshetra in the field of Indology, and producing game-changing original research *using the Indian lens* to study India and the world.

One of the goals of **Infinity Foundation India (IFI)**, an offspring of IF, in organising Swadeshi Indology Conference Series is — to develop, fund, and groom scholars who can methodically respond to the Western worldview of Indology.

We are proud to say that we have so far conducted six conferences of the Swadeshi Indology Conference Series we started, with quality output for publications, which will be published and distributed in academia worldwide. They will be used in platforms for academic debate by our scholars.

We have begun to build a team of young scholars with *swadeshi drishti*. Our mission is to build a home team of 108 scholars who will form the basis for developing a civilizational grand narrative of India.

Our Key Partners

The organisers of the conference are indebted to the various institutions and individuals for the invaluable help rendered by them, without which this work would just not have been possible. It is a pleasure to thank them heartily for the same.

We are indebted to our individual and institutional sponsors: Sri Mohandas Pai and Foundation for Indian Civilization Studies, Sri J K Jhaver. We are also grateful to Dr. Mahesh Krishnamurthy and some others for their significant donations to us. Without all their financial support and help we would not have been able to attract the high level of scholarship that has contributed to this volume.

We are grateful to Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (Bengaluru), IGNCA (Bengaluru), and The Mythic Society (Bengaluru), for helping us organizing the Swadeshi Indology Conference - 5. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan allowed us to conduct the conference in its premises and ensured the highest level of professionalism in providing us the facilities. IGNCA, Bengaluru, took charge of the inauguration and the catering expenses for the event, and this was extremely timely and helpful for us to focus our attention to other things required for the conduct of this conference. In particular, we are thankful to Shri. H. N. Suresh of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan who was available to us at any time both before and during the conference to ensure that nothing was amiss in the premises. His assurance and support were invaluable for us that helped us make a success of the event. Special thanks are due also to Dr. Deepthi Navaratna of IGNCA for the coordination she made possible with the IGNCA team to help us with the logistics and catering for the event. Sri V. Nagaraj of The Mythic Society has kindly agreed to take charge of the publication of the proceedings. The teams at these institutions put in enormous efforts to make the conference a success and we owe them a huge debt of gratitude for the same.

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Our conferences could not have happened without the active support and participation of our well-wishers and volunteers.

We extend our thanks to Smt. Vrinda Acharya for her enormous efforts in making SI-5 a success. We are extremely thankful to Dr. T. S. Sathyavathi for all her inspirational and invaluable guidance and inputs in all aspects relating to the conference.

We also wish to thank Skandaprasad, Megha Bhat, Sucheta Tejaswi and Rakshita for their help in making full arrangements and volunteering for various activities during the conference. We absolutely could not have succeeded without their spontaneous and active support on the ground at the event.

We are grateful to all the paper-presenters and the keen audience for maintaining a high academic standard and decorum at the conference. There of course are many more who have helped us and guided us behind the scenes and deserve our hearty thanks.

IFI Team

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Volume Editorial

Swadeshi Indology (SI) Conferences were started to consider the various attacks that are being made on Sanātana Dharma in the name of "Indology" by various scholars who are trained in the dual streams of modern fields of scholarship as well as traditional Indian *śāstra*-s. The Fifth Swadeshi Indology Conference titled **"Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta: *Its Past, Present, and Future*"** shares some commonalities with the earlier SI Conferences in that it was conceived of in order to shield the *sanātana dhārmic* aspects of the Classical music tradition of India from the attack by some modern scholars and musicians of skewed thinking; and differs from them in that it the Conference focussed not just on intervention but also on presenting the traditional point of view with regard to the various aspects of the musical tradition - such as the philosophy embedded in the literature, the contributions of some of the great *vāggeyakāra*-s (composers of music especially of South India) of the tradition; and alongside, discussing what constitutes legitimate creativity while still honouring the tradition.

The present volume contains eight papers which were presented in the Conference. Of these some deal with the constructive part and others with the critical part. The following paragraphs give a brief overview of what is to be expected in the compilation of the papers presented.

* * *

The paper by **Gayathri Girish (Ch.1)** is on the topic of the contribution of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, entitled "The Music of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita – a Window into His Personality". The author brings out some of the aspects of the contributions of the great *vāggeyakāra* as well as his personality.

After giving a brief biographical sketch of Śrī Dīkṣita, the author points out briefly, how Śrī Dīkṣita is different from his two contemporaries –

Śrī Tyāgarāja and Śrī Śyāma Śāstri – in that he brings in, apart from his scholarship in Saṁskṛta language, his expertise of various *śāstra*-s to inform his devotional and musically scholarly compositions. This makes each *kṛti* a treasure trove of information on culture and philosophy as well.

The next part of the paper discusses five aspects of the compositions: music, language, other śāstraic expertise, philosophical base, and broadness of vision.

Musically, Śrī Dīkṣita's *kṛti*-s brought many unique contributions, be it the changed structure of *kṛti*-s with the *pallavi-caraṇa* format or usage of *rāga-mudrā* in several *kṛti*-s. His creations included sets of *kṛti*-s on a specific theme such as the Navāvaraṇa *kṛti*-s and Navagraha *kṛti*-s. The author has given a good number of examples for each and has highlighted the scholarly language that has been used in many of the *kṛti*-s. Linguistic analysis of the *sāhitya* brings out the nuances of word-compounding, usage of similes and metaphors, alliteration and so on. The expertise that Śrī Dīkṣita had in other *śāstra*-s such as *jyotiṣa, mantra-śāstra* and *tantra-śāstra* have been well highlighted.

Giving an overview of the experimentation that Śrī Dīkṣita did with what had been, until that point, predominantly Hindustāni *rāga*-s, and of course, the much-discussed Noṭṭusvara-s which were influenced by Western music. The author makes a nuanced argument to counter the one being put up for giving Noṭṭusvara-s as a justification for the evangelists plagiarizing Karnatic *kṛti*-s. The final section of the paper outlines how Śrī Dīkṣita was a very generous *guru* who taught interested and deserving pupils from a cross-section of the society, which included Tambiappan, Kamalam and the Tanjavur Quartet.

The paper **(Ch.2)** by **Vrinda Acharya** is titled "The Non-translatables of (South) Indian Music". Every language has a number of words that cannot be translated because of the culture that the language is inextricably linked to; hence, attempting to use an "equivalent" involves many problems. The paper introduces the concept of non-translatables in the context of Saṁskṛta terms which deal with the core concepts of the different aspects of our culture, be it the knowledge systems or the arts.

Rajiv Malhotra's *Being Different* (2013)[1] discusses the concept to point out how the knowledge that is embodied in the Saṁskṛta language is compromised or even eliminated when we replace with an equivalent from a language with a different cultural root (for instance, translation from Saṁskṛta to Kannada would be fine whereas from Saṁskṛta to English would dilute or misrepresent the concept). Whether it is done due to genuine ignorance (or superficial understanding) or with an ulterior motive of diluting the concepts, it can finally result in digestion (which is essentially stripping off the core inconvertible idea – another idea that has been discussed in Malhotra 2013). This will lead to the coloniser culture gradually imposing its own concepts on the colonised through language – for instance, '*dharma*' being translated as 'religion'.

Going on the terms which are non-translatables in Karnatic music, the author discusses how the music culture has developed from deep roots in *sanātana dharma*. Apart from the names of the *rāga*-s and *tāla*-s, the technical terms which are commonly used in music are non-translatables. The present author has selected twelve such words and has discussed the common translations that are used for those technical words.

Some of the common translations are: *nāda* as 'sound', *śruti* as 'semitone', *svara* as 'note', *laya* as 'rhythm' and so on. For instance, the word '*rāga*' has often been translated as 'melody'. Melody has been defined, amongst other things, as a coherent succession of pitches and as successive tones (not simultaneous ones) while, *rāga* is a concept which is much wider and deeper than this. Not only is it a combination and a specific arrangement of *svara*-s with a definite relationship with the *ādhāra ṣaḍja* ("fundamental note" approximately), but a *rāga* goes much beyond the *svara*-s that provide the framework. There are several distinctive phrases for each *rāga* which give it personality and individuality, and this is the result of an evolution over a long period of time. Both Hindustani and Karnatic classical music systems have at their core the elaborate system of *rāga*-s. The author cites from ancient texts to define *rāga,* and from other authorities in musicology to bring out the nuances of the topic.

Sometimes the original term in Saṁskṛta does not have an equivalent at all in the modern, Western parlance. Some of the terms which have been considered in this article are *mela*, *saṅgati* and *gamaka*. *Gamaka*,

for instance, is very central to Karnatic music. It is what makes a *rāga* come alive – a movement, turn, or stress given to *svara*(-s) to give it its personality. However, the effects that are used in Western music like *vibrato* and *staccato* not only have very limited usage (due to the very nature of the system of music where it is used) but they cannot be compared to the intricacy that is found in the *gamaka* system.

The author has also provided several more non-translatables in the appendix. The entire import of the article is bringing out the importance of recognising and retaining the original nomenclature in order to prevent distortion and digestion of the original concepts.

In this paper **(Ch.3)** entitled "Tyāgarāja's Philosophy and Rebuttal of Allegations", **Korada Subrahmanyam** writes about the deep, Vedic roots of the philosophy that we see in the *kṛti*-s of Śrī Tyāgarāja as well as discusses and rebuts certain allegations that have been made by T. M. Krishna against the saint.

Karnatic music, as a rule, abounds in compositions that are steeped in *bhakti*. The compositions of Śrī Tyāgarāja are no exception. Hence, in a paper that is clearly demarcated into two parts, the author first goes into the roots of the important concept of *bhakti*. Starting from the universal appeal of the concept, which transcends all barriers as we can see in the variety of origins of the greatest of *bhakta*-s through times immemorial, the author details about the influence sages such as Nārada have had on Śrī Tyāgarāja. Touching upon several interesting and key concepts in the śāstraic tradition such as *saguṇopāsanā*, *kutsita-sevā-nindana* and *dhyāna*, it is shown clearly how these are reflected through and through in the various *kṛti*-s of Śrī Tyāgarāja. The author discourses in greater detail on the concept of *nādotpatti* or the "creation of *nāda*". The śāstraic concepts are amply substantiated with quotes from very many traditional texts such as the *Bhagavadgīta*, the Upaniṣad-s and the *Vākyapadīya*.

The latter part of the article takes up the various allegations that have been made against Śrī Tyāgarāja. To name but one of them: T. M. Krishna accuses the saint of misogyny citing some of the *kṛti*-s like *duḍukugala* and *ênta muddo*. The author of this paper addresses the issue by considering in detail the full text of each of the *kṛti* cited in support of the accusation and places it in its appropriate context – cultural and otherwise. He provides evidence to the contrary (for the allegation) citing the *sāhitya* of other *kṛti*-s of Śrī Tyāgarāja.

The author cleverly exposes the contradiction in the argument of Krishna regarding the *sāhitya* being mere pegs for music, and his claim elsewhere that the *sāhitya* composed by Śrī Tyāgarāja is violent. Finally, the term 'brahminisation' is tackled briefly, with the author juxtaposing the essential meaning of '*brāhmaṇa*' and the perversion that is brought in by the comparatively newly coined term of 'brahminisation'.

In sum, the author has brought out the spirituality that is the source of the *kṛti*-s composed by Śrī Tyāgarāja, reiterating their inextricable link to *sanātana dharma* even as he has countered the arguments against the saint point-by-point.

The paper **(Ch.4)** entitled "Experimentation in Karnatic Music – How Far is Too Far?" has been presented by **Radha Bhaskar**. In the article, the author considers the tradition of Karnatic musical concerts from the aspects of the structure of the concert along with the structures of the composition. The art form which has creativity and *manodharma* at its core, also has a deep and long tradition of *bhakti*-laden ideology which is reflected in the *kṛti*-s of the highly respected *vāggeyakāra*-s. This said, the author voices the concern that for taking the art form to the masses, many musicians of late have been diluting the *kṛti*-s and have begun using them as mere pegs for their *manodharma*.

In the first part of the article, the concert format in Karnatic music has been taken up and analysed, with focus on the role played by the compositions of *vāggeyakāra*-s there. It might be mentioned here that the current format of the concert owes its structure to Ariyakuḍi Rāmānuja Ayyaṅgār and is only about a century old. It has clearly withstood the test of time since it has not really undergone drastic changes in popular circles. The author then compares this to the popularity of the concerts which have experiments with regard to structure (like RTP concerts or those where *mṛdaṅga* takes the centre stage) or the composition (such as taking *varṇa* as the main piece or singing *ālāpana* of a *rāga* followed by a *kṛti* of a different *rāga*). The failure of such experiments to gain popular approval or consumption underscores that experiment for the sake of experimentation is *inutilis*.

In the next part of the article, the author considers experimentation in creation – of *rāga*-s, of approaching different *rāga*-s, of compositions etc. She addresses certain questions raised by some musicians with regard to the creation of *rāga*-s, discussing what kind of experimenta-

tion will really bear fruits that will be relished by generations to come. Moving on to the matter of *sāhitya*, given the very nature of Karnatic music, it is expectable that the artform abounds in various kinds of traditional *kṛti*-s by the great *vāggeyakāra*-s, predominantly addressing divinities. The author very rightly points out that the *bhakti*-centric *sāhitya* such as *Divya-prabandham, Tevāram, Tiruppugaḷ, Taraṅgam,* and *Aṣṭapadī* which used to be the primary compositions in the pre-Trinity era, have paved way to the rich and lofty content during the Trinity period and the post-Trinity period as well. It is to be recognised that *sāhitya* and *saṅgīta* are the two wheels on which the chariot of the concert cruises and they are to complement each other well, and no compromises should be done with either, if one has to deliver a high-quality musical concert.

In the final part of the article, she considers other kinds of experimentations such as Jugalbandi, disconnecting the Hindu nature of Karnatic music by composing and presenting on Christ, 'Carnatic Rock Bands' and the like. She also briefly addresses adapting non-traditional/modern instruments for this genre of music, concluding on the note that the balance between exploring new avenues and being faithful to the tradition is a must in order to get the best out of this art form.

The paper by **Jataayu (Ch.5)** is entitled "Christian Attempts to Appropriate Karnatic Music: A Historical Overview". The paper introduces the topic of organised missionary activity in South India from the 16th century and the various methods that are employed to achieve their objectives – of conversion and deculturation. This includes appropriation of language, customs, religious symbols and - here comes the crux – of art forms which obviously includes Karnatic classical music. After giving a brief introduction to the essential "Hinduness" of the traditional art form (which overturns the false claims of art being "beyond religion"), he introduces the concept of "Christian Keerthanam" which started in the 18th century Tamilnadu. When showing open contempt for Hindu practices did not work, the missionaries came up with the cunning plan of appropriation - in order to pull the crowds which were naturally drawn to the Hindu customs, symbols, and art-forms. Starting from composers such as Ziegenbalg (1682-1719), a Lutheran missionary who pioneered this attempt, and prolific composers like Beschi (1680-1742), a Jesuit missionary who reinvented himself as "Veeramunivarar", to the really very influential Bishop Caldwell (1814-1891) (the father of the "Dravidian race"

hypothesis), and influential converts like H. A. Krishna Pillai (1827-1900) – we find here several samples of compositions. The common trait amongst these is the natural employment of *sanātana dhārmic* concepts, terminologies, and symbolisms - such as *veda, bodha, sat, niṣkala,* and *ānanda* – to name but a few.

A complete section of the paper is devoted to considering the work of Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār (1774-1864) whose enormous output (100+ poetic works) continues to fuel the missionary stoves. The notable point about this composer is that he had royal patronage by Serfoji Maharaj, the Maratha ruler of Tanjore. The evangelical machinations are manifest in the very name of the said composer who is called "Vedanāyaka" (but who has a visceral hatred for Hindus), and who is (ironically) given the title of "Śāstri" (which is generally a title given to learned scholars). Samples of his open mockery of Hindu customs have been given in this section. His masterstroke, as it can be called, was the appropriation of the "Kuravañji" concept which is a dance-drama which can be located between a Bhāgavata Mela Nāṭaka and a folk dance-drama, with its underlying devotional aspect (See Sambamoorthy 1960: 93-94[2]). The famous story of a gypsy girl and her devotion towards Lord Śiva in Tiru Kuṟāla Kuravañji is appropriated - in order to present the story of Jesus in (Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār's) *Bethlehem Kuravañji*. The author then goes on to discuss whether this is "collaboration", appropriation or plain plagiarism, and makes critical comments on various contemporary scholars - who, either through their ignorance or complacence or malicious intent, call for "artistic freedom", and are only keenly aware of the socio-cultural impact of subverting the indigenous theological framework.

Another section of the paper focuses on the work of Abraham Panditar, whose 1400-page musical treatise, *Karuṇāmirta Sāgaram*, received commendations from stalwarts like Muttaiah Bhagavatar, and great Tamil scholars like U. Ve. Swaminatha Iyer and R. Raghavaiyangar, who did not realise that it was in fact a suspect stew of Biblical stories, discredited theories (such as Aryan-Dravidian divide, Lemuria, and Kumari Kandam), Tamil supremacist arguments and a mishmash of ideas on "South Indian Music".

The paper also draws our attention to the blatant plagiarism of the much-loved and much-recognised Karnatic music compositions like the Piḷḷāri *gīta*-s of Śrī Purandaradāsa, and *varṇa*-s like Ninnukori

and Jalajākṣa into their "Christian" versions, published in a book, a so-called Christian Tamil Music Primer (*Kristava Tamiḻ Isai Bodini*). The paper concludes by discussing how simple or straightforward, or rather not, it is, to just claim artistic freedom to sing Christian Keertanams, and by arguing for seeing these issues, not in isolation, but in the civilizational context.

The next paper **(Ch.6)**, which is by **V. Ramanathan**, takes up the critique of the book *A Southern Music: The Karnatik story*, authored by T. M. Krishna. Right off the bat, the author points out that, in this book, Krishna is not objectively talking about Karnatic music but bringing in his own takes and opinions on its various aspects, presenting them as "narration of the story" of Karnatic music. The whole exercise is one of "deconstruction" of the framework of the art-form. The author of the paper deals with this by posing certain questions and the discussion on those topics bring out the fallacies in the book.

The first question the author poses is with regard to *bhakti* – whether it is indeed the be-all and end-all of the art-form. Krishna claims in his book that 'god' and 'religion' have nothing to do with music, with a long-winded argument bringing in etymology; and our author shrewdly catches the fallacies of false equivalence (of dhārmic and Abrahamic) and oversimplification of concepts. Krishna's claims – that the meaning of *sāhitya* of a *kṛti* is not the focus, that the composers' genius lay in the musical aspect of the composition rather than the *sāhitya*, that the *utsava-sampradāyakṛti*-s have no place in Karnatic music genre etc. – have been well taken apart, and the counter-arguments have been adequately provided. The author rightly points out the issues with separating the art-form from the *bhakti* aspect, and argues against such a dissection - by citing from an original source like *Nāṭya-śāstra* (which differentiates *gāndharva* and *gāna*), culled from the writings of a *vīṇā-vidvān*, Rangaramanuja Iyengar (who writes about the link with *bhakti* of Karnatic music), and from the writings of Western scholars like Barrel (who talks of the link of philosophies with Indian music).

Krishna questions the need for placing *sāhitya*-oriented musical experience within the Karnatic music itself. The present author tack -les the issue in a multi-disciplinary manner, bringing in evidence from acoustic studies, which substantiate that the lyrical and melodic are mutually supportive in enhancing the experience –

well-juxtaposed with the famous verse of Kālidāsa (*vāgarthāviva sampṛktau...*), together with the *bīja mantra*-s that form the essence of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita's Navāvaraṇa *kṛti*-s. He also brings out the inherent contradictions in the points made by Krishna – such as the importance of lyrics being absent for a *kṛti* like Kāmākṣi, and their becoming all important for *jāvaḷi*-s.

The further section deals with the usual rant typically seen in leftist literature about brahmins – that brahmins dominated the Karnatic music arena. While Krishna liberally makes use of the subaltern theories of the contemporary ethnomusicologists, the author points out, the conclusions he draws are totally erroneous. In a detailed discussion, the author delves into those areas which are wilfully omitted by Krishna while looking at the history – such as, the role played by the Anglo-Indian laws, the impact of the "Social Purity Movement" in India, and of course, the ubiquitous missionary influence on the Tamil society. Citing extensively from a paper by Kunal Parker (1998), the author brings out the judicial activism that led to *devadāsī*-s being branded as 'prostitutes' while they were actually nothing of the sort. As *devadāsī*-s were dedicated to music and dance, their getting convicted as criminal was nothing short of a bolt from the blue for the art-forms. The author argues that the brahmin men and women who stepped in at this crucial juncture proved to be the emancipators of the art-forms.

The paper concludes by summing up how the works of Krishna and the like, which evidently are agenda-driven, present a veneer of intellectualism while catalysing the evangelisation of our traditional art-forms.

This paper **(Ch.7)** by **Arathi V. B.** is entitled "Is Karnatic Music a Bastion of Brahminical Patriarchy?". Expectably, the paper concerns itself with the allegations that have been made by T. M. Krishna specifically regarding the field.

The author argues that the meaning of word '*brāhmaṇa*' itself has been twisted - as have been the case with many other words, through the stranglehold on the narrative the leftists have exercised - and discusses the meaning of the word within the framework of *sanātana dharma*. Hence, when artists like T. M. Krishna accuse the art space of being 'brahmanical', it comes from the skewed narrative that has dominated all these years. The author argues for the knowledge of

Saṁskṛta, an understanding of lyrics and an understanding that the *rasa* experience is at the core. She contests the claim - that there have been attempts to 'brahminise' Karnatic music - by the counter that the general conventions that are followed in a *sabhā* have been **labelled** brahminical. She attacks Krishna's claims regarding 'brahminisation' by pointing out that unique *sampradāya*-s abound in each group of people, whether brahmins or otherwise; and that the line of argument which treats non-brahmins as inherently uncivilised or amateurish even while they form the majority in their representation in many key fields, is essentially a leftist (and a faulty) take on the issue. She brings out the struggles that the brahmins underwent to preserve this heritage, while detailing about how *devadāsī*-s were hounded in this colonised country because of which those struggles had become necessary.

To counter Krishna's argument about the 'domination' of the domain by brahmins, the author lists the various non-brahmin students taught by great musicians through the times, as well as the very many non-brahmin musicians who have made a great name for themselves in the field. This includes many contemporary musicians as well as those legends of yore. We might also note that non-brahmins have constituted a large percentage of musicians from Kerala for a long time(in addition to the many names listed by the author who are from Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Andhra/Telangana regions).

Towards the end of the article, the author takes up the allegations regarding the compositions of *devadāsī*-s getting a low representation as well as those against Śrī Tyāgarāja about his "brahminical prejudice". In conclusion, while not gainsaying that some prejudice does colour all societies, the author warns against outside interventions which can be inimical to the very existence of the society, and suggests some practical steps to counter this.

The final article **(Ch.8)** is by **Arvind Brahmakal**, entitled "Role of Patronage in Karnatic Music – Past, Present and the Future". This is an exception in this set of articles, in that, it is not (and is not meant to be) an "academic" paper. This one encapsulates the views from a patron regarding the role patronage plays in the way an art form flourishes in society.

Ananda Coomaraswamy (1956: 65)[3] argues "...but we are either indifferent to its *raison d'etre* and final cause, or find this ultimate reason and justification for the very existence of the work in the

pleasure to be derived from its beauty by the patron." In other words, it is the patron that dictates and holds the artist responsible for the quality of the art. Any fall in the quality in the sensibilities, and we find the quality of the art form degenerating. Hence the responsibility of a patron is rather huge. A good example of what it means to be a discerning patron can be understood through an anecdote of the Mysore king, Nālvaḍi Krishnaraja Wodeyar (1884-1940). He had commissioned the "translation" into Kannada of some popular *kṛti*-s of Karnatic music that were in Telugu. Even while some scholars engaged themselves in what was asked of them, the king himself thought this over and then decided, it is said, that this project of translation will take away significantly from the uniqueness of *bhāva* and the flavour of the *kṛti*-s, and asked the project to be suspended.

This paper puts forth an overview of patronage *vis-à-vis* Karnatic classical music, in three parts – (1) how it was during the times of royal patronage, (2) how the scene is in the modern times, *sans* royal courts, and (3) what can be done in order to make things better for young artists to take this up as a profession.

The view into the past considers the contribution made by various royalty in the Southern Indian kingdoms such as the Tanjavur Maratha rulers and the Mysore Wodeyars, and the strides Karnatic classical music took during that period.

An analysis of the present-day scenario delineates the various sources of support for professional classical musicians, such as governmental organisations and *sabhā*-s run by *rasika*-s who offer patronage in lieu of the royal patronage of earlier times. It also considers the challenges of patronage in the current world. The author presents the views of organisers and artists regarding the issue.

The final part of the write-up is with regard to who can contribute in what way to ensure that the artists receive adequate patronage – initiative of the artists themselves, the *rasika*-s, the *sabhā*-s, the government and the corporates.

* * *

Note on spellings and bibliography:

It needs to be clarified here that a scheme for an accurate representation of Indian languages in Roman script has been used

throughout this volume (and the SI Series) and the transliteration scheme (which is mainly IAST but incorporates elements of ISO 15919 for ease of reading) has been provided. There are some exceptions since some terms are used with their popular spelling rather than with the more accurate standard diacritics. In all the papers, contemporary locations have been used with their popular spellings. Names of people who have published only in Indian languages (and hence we do not have a record of the spelling of their names in Roman) have been given with diacritics, and not others.

We have introduced a dual reference system in the Bibliography. Primary texts are noted both under their own names (nominally), and under the names of their editors (in detail). This collapses the usual double lists into one - the primary sources and the secondary sources.

Needless to say, the authors take the responsibility for the arguments and facts they place on record.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī
Śārvarī Saṁvatsara
Date: 11-Aug-2020

Dr. H. R. Meera
Editor

Notes

[1]Malhotra, Rajiv. (2013). *Being Different*. Noida: HarperCollins Publishers India.

[2]Sambamoorthy, P. (1960). *History of Indian Music*. Madras: The Indian Music Publishing House.

[3]Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. (1956). *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art*. New York: Dover Publications Inc.

Chapter 1

The Music of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita – a Window into His Personality

– *Gayathri Girish*[*]

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Abstract

It is undeniable that Karnatic Music is what it is, due to its great composers, particularly the Trinity. This paper proposes to examine the pioneering contributions of one of the Trinity composers of Karnatic Music, Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita which in many ways, are universal and eternal. Considering the time when he lived, some of his broad-minded thoughts inspire current musicians and music lovers alike. Through the medium of music, Dīkṣita has conveyed various aspects of our religion, philosophy and culture, for posterity.

Keeping in mind the current propensities of demeaning the great composers of the past, this paper will highlight some of the special features of Dīkṣita's music and his personality, which firmly establish that he was a divine saint composer. He was indeed a true *'Nādopāsaka'*. Like all other great composers, *bhakti* and glorification of God form the foundation of his compositions too. In addition to this, his deep knowledge in other subjects like Vedānta, temple architecture, temple

[*]pp. 21-47. In: Meera, H. R. (Ed.) (2021). *Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta - Past, Present, and Future.* Chennai: Infinity Foundation India.

iconography, *mantra-śāstra*, astrology etc. is ample proof that he was a true genius.

Some aspects that will be examined in this paper are:

Contribution To Music

Dīkṣita's music has stood the test of time; it is not just relevant but enchanting and awe-inspiring even today. His contribution to the *rāga* system, use of *Madhyamakāla sāhitya, rāga mudrā, prāsa, yati, rāgamālikā, samudāya kṛti*-s, *vibhakti kṛti*-s, etc will be analyzed, which ultimately establish that his music will always be one of the indispensable aspects of Karnatic Music.

Basic Tenets of Hinduism

Dīkṣita has composed *kṛti*-s on several deities and several forms of each deity to indicate *Saguṇa* worship. During the initial stages of one's spiritual journey, one requires personal Gods based on varied interests of seekers. At the same time in almost all *kṛti*-s he introduces the concepts of Advaita Vedānta to clearly establish the path towards realization of the non-dual *Nirguṇa Brahman*. This speaks volumes about the personality of the composer and gives a very clear response to the Western criticism of *mūrti-pūjā* and multiple Gods.

Composing In Hindustani *Rāga*-s

Hindustani music came to be a separate genre of music only after Muslim invasion into our country. Before that, it was all one – *Bhāratīya Saṅgīta*, with only *Mārga* and *Deśī* variations. Dīkṣita established the oneness of Indian music by composing in Hindustani *rāga*-s. He also undertook extensive pilgrimages and composed on *kṣetra*-s like Varanasi, Badrinath and Nepal in the North and many *kṣetra*-s in the states of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, thereby promoting national integration.

Disciples

Dīkṣita taught music without considering the caste, creed and gender of his disciples. The Tanjore Quartet were not Brahmins and Kamalam was his lady disciple. In this context, some of the misconceptions of

today relating to alleged casteism in music will also be discussed in the paper.

Noṭṭusvara-s

Though he composed Noṭṭusvara-s, inspired by Western notes, it only shows he was open to recognize the good from other cultures and religions, and this in no way amounts to any appropriation. Also, the Noṭṭusvara-s are only a small aspect of his compositions. He was a musical genius par excellence which is evident in his masterly compositions. For the kind of divine composer he was, he didn't have any need to "copy" a Western tune.

Thus, this paper hopes to prove that the music of Dīkṣita reveals to us his divine personality and he was by no means an ordinary composer.

1. Introduction

It is undeniable that Karnatic Music is what it is, due to its great composers, particularly the Trinity. The period of the Trinity can be considered as the golden age of Karnatic Music. Śrī Tyāgarāja, Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita and Śrī Śyāma Śāstrī, the Karnatic Music Trinity composers, were the trend setters in transforming Karnatic Music to what we see it today. Appropriately the period when they lived, could be called the "Golden Period of Karnatic Music".

This paper proposes to examine the pioneering contributions of Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita which are universal and eternal. Considering the time when he lived, some of his broad-minded thoughts inspire current musicians and music lovers alike. Through the medium of music, Dīkṣita has conveyed various aspects of our religion, philosophy and culture, for posterity.

Origin of music can be traced from Vedic and Purāṇic periods. Our music tradition cherishes its origin in *Sāma-veda*. Our music treatises declare *sāmavedād idam gītaṁ sañjagrāha pitāmahaḥ.*

Śrī Tyāgarāja says in his *kṛti Sāmaja-vara-gamana* in *rāga* Hindoḷa:

sāma-nigamaja-sudhāmaya-gāna

There were exponents of music and dance during the Purāṇic period like Nandi, Arjuna, Hanuman etc and works attributed to them

have been referred to in the *kṛti, Hāṭakeśvara saṁrakṣatu mām* of Śri Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita in *rāga* Bilahari:

māruti-nandy-arjunādi-bharatācāryair avedita-nartana-sphūrte

Music was considered as *mokṣa-sādhana* and the art of music was referred to as Gāndharva-veda and was considered as Upaveda. *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* (3.4.115) says

vīṇāvādanatattvajñaḥ śrutijātiviśāradaḥ ।
tālajñaścāprayāsena mokṣamārgaṁ niyacchati ॥

"When one knows the science (*tattva*) of playing (*vādana*) the *vīṇā* and is an expert in the classification of quarter tones (*śruti*) and when he also knows rhythm (*tāla*), he controls (*niyacchati*) the path of liberation (*mokṣa*) without any other effort (*aprayāsa*)".

> Since music indirectly helps the ātman, it is respectfully called Upaveda. Except Arthaśāstra all the other three - Āyurveda, Dhanurveda and Gāndharva-veda have the term "veda" in their names.
>
> (Ganapathi 1976: 435) *(translation my own)*

There are several references to music in Tamil Sangam literature, *Silappadikāram* etc. Later, between 5th century CE and 10th century CE, during the *Bhakti* movement in Tamilnadu, saints like Tirunāvukkarasar, Sundarar, Sambandar and Māṇikkavāsakar used music as an effective vehicle to spread *bhakti* by composing several *Tevāram* hymns – the focus was on *bhakti* and not the art form of music.

Only during the 17th century during the period of Karnatic Music Trinity, well-structured art-form was effectively combined with intense *bhakti* to transform music into *nādopāsanā* which guides us till date. Divine compositions of the Trinity soaked in *bhakti* help the singers and listeners to understand basic tenets of *Sanātana Dharma* and guide them towards the path of spiritual growth. Also, innovations that they have brought into the art form of music are path-breaking and help us to continue the improvements in our music which will make our music eternal.

In the backdrop of the current propensities of demeaning the great composers of the past, this paper will highlight some of the special features of Dīkṣita's music and his personality, which establish beyond

doubt that he was a divine saint composer. 'Composer' as a term would be inadequate to describe him; he was a true *'Nādopāsaka'*. While *bhakti* and glorification of God is the foundation of his compositions like those of other great composers, his deep knowledge in other subjects like Vedānta, temple architecture, temple iconography, *mantra-śāstra*, astrology etc. makes him an unbelievable genius.

2.1. Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita – A Brief Profile

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita was born in Tiruvarur (a town near Tanjavur, Tamilnadu). His father was Rāmasvāmi Dīkṣita, a composer, musician and musicologist himself. Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita had undergone intense education of Sanskrit language and all Vedic scriptures at an early age and learnt music from his father. He also became well-versed in playing the *vīṇā*.

At a very young age, Dīkṣita attained proficiency in the Veda-s, *āgama, kāvya, nāṭaka, alaṅkāra, jyotiṣa* and *śāstra*-s. Under the tutelage of his father, he mastered Veṅkaṭamakhin's treatise, the *Caturdaṇḍi-prakāśikā*. He thus acquired knowledge, wisdom and great piousness.

His family had traditionally followed the teachings of Advaita Vedānta. At a very young age he came under the tutelage of Cidambaranātha Yogin and later under Śrī Upaniṣad Brahmendra Yogin, a great Advaita Āchārya, who gave him a strong foundation in Advaita philosophy. He started composing in the Tiruttani Murugan temple by Divine grace and used "Guruguha" as his signature. He then undertook pilgrimages to several shrines in Tamilnadu, Andhra and Kerala and composed wonderful *kṛti*-s on all deities. He reached the Lotus Feet of the Lord in the year 1835 in Ettayapuram in Tamilnadu, leaving behind several gems of *kṛti*-s in Sanskrit. Around 472 of these are available to us today.

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, stands very different from the other two, Śrī Tyāgarāja and Śrī Śyāma Śāstri, in his approach. In addition to devotion to the Lord and excellence in musical structure, he brings in several new dimensions - scholarship in Sanskrit language, expertise in several *śāstra*-s like *mantra-śāstra*, astrology, astronomy, scriptures, temple architecture, iconography etc. His compositions, hence, provide a rich treasure of information on various aspects of our culture and provide valuable seeds for continuing research on several subjects. A very distinct message of Advaita Philosophy is embedded in most of his *kṛti*-s.

2.2. Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita – Contributions and Versatility

This paper will discuss Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita's contributions and versatility with specific reference to the following:

- Music
- Language
- Expertise in other sciences
- Basic Tenets of Hinduism – Religion and Philosophy
- Universal Approach and Broad Outlook

2.2.1. Music

The splendour of the music of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita's compositions can be analyzed under the following heads.

2.2.1.1. *Rāga Mudrā*

In addition to his *mudrā* "Guruguha", Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, in his compositions, introduced *rāga mudrā* very intelligently and seamlessly integrated it with the *sāhitya*. For example:

- *Śrī-**kurañji**ta-kāma* in "*Śrī-Veṇugopāla*" in the *rāga* Kurañjī (*Śrī* = Lakṣmī, *ku* = Mother Earth).
- *samā**na-varauj**ase mahase*) in "*Hastivadanāyanamas tubhyam*" in the *rāga* Navroj (*samāna-vara-ojase* means "Gaṇapati's lustre is like Guruguha, the son of Lord Śiva, husband of Umā).
- *cintayāmy a**tanu-kīrti**m* in "*Cidambara-naṭarājamūrtim*" in the *rāga* Tanukīrti (*atanu* = great, *atanu-kīrtim* refers to Lord Śiva whose glory is great and unmatched).
- *Vīṇā**bherī** veṇu* in "*Vīṇābherī*" in the *rāga* Ābherī.
- *cid-bim**bau lī**lā-vigrahau* in the *kṛti* "*Srī-pārvati-parameśvarau*" (meaning that Pārvati and Parameśvara are reflections of consciousness and have assumed forms) in the *rāga* Bauḷī.
- *sadgati-dāya**kāmbhoja**-caraṇena* in the *kṛti* "*Kailasanāthena*" in the *rāga* Kāmbhojī, Dīkṣita describes the Lord's feet (*-ambhoja-caraṇena*) as capable of bestowing salvation (*sadgati-dāyaka-*).

- *pātāla**bila-hari**hayādy-amara-nuta)* in the *kṛti* "*Hāṭakeśvara*", one of the *pañcaliṅga-kṛti-s* of Tiruvarur, Dīkṣita incorporates both the local mythology of this *liṅga* (namely, the description of the Lord as existing in the cave of Pātāla (*pātāla-bila-*), the nether-world and being worshipped by celestials (*-amara-nuta*) Hari and others (*-hari-hara-ādi-*)) and the name of the *rāga* Bilahari in the phrases.
- *sadyojātādi-pañca**mukhāri-**ṣaḍ-varga-rahita-hṛt-sañcāra* in the *caraṇa* of the Mukhārī *rāgakṛti "Pāhimām-Ratnācala"*. Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa and Īśāna are the five faces of Lord Śiva. This phrase explains that the five-faced Lord (*pañca-mukha*) resides in the hearts of (*hṛt-sañcāra*) of people who have won over the six evils (*ari-ṣaḍ-varga*), viz., *kāma, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, mātsarya*. The name of the *rāga* is found beautifully embedded in this phrase.
- *ati-samī**parju**-mārga-darśitam* in the *kṛti* in *rāga* Paras, "*Cintaye-mahāliṅgamūrtim"*. Dīkṣita refers to Lord Śiva directing his devotees to the straightforward path (*-ṛju-mārga-*) to liberation. The *rāga-mudrā* has been very cleverly incorporated in this passage.

2.2.1.2. Structure of *Kṛti*-s

His *kṛti-s* are well-structured, close-knit and written in graceful Sanskrit. Dīkṣita's *kṛti-s* do not usually have more than one *caraṇa*; and as many as 157 of his creations are compositions carrying no *anupallavi* or the *anupallavi* acting as *caraṇa*.

Dīkṣita's *kṛti-s* with the *pallavi-caraṇa* format have enriched the variety of musical forms in Karnatic Music. *kṛti-s* composed in *madhyama-kāla* are highly popular, for example, "*Śrī-Sarasvati*" (Ārabhī); "*Pārvatī-patim"* (Haṁsadhvani); "*Sarasvatī Vidhi-yuvatī*" (Hindoḷa); "*Śrī-Raṅganāthāya"* (Dhanyāsī).

Since he did not compose multiple *caraṇa-s*, his single *caraṇa-s* tend to be quite lengthy as compared to the *kṛti-s* composed in *Pallavi-anupallavi-caraṇa* format. Such long *caraṇa-s*, however, helped Dīkṣita to provide detailed information about various deities, shrines, *Śrīvidyā* etc. The *madhyama-kāla-sāhitya* that he employed for such *kṛti-s* helped in introducing variation in such long *caraṇa-s*. Perhaps his only

multiple-*caraṇa* creations are his *kṛti-s* '*Māye tvaṁ*' (Taraṅgiṇī) and his four *rāgamālikā-s*.

Most compositions of Dīkṣita are set in *viḷamba-kāla* (slow tempo). This gives an opportunity to listeners to understand the meaning of *sāhitya* and enjoy the music and mental peace that music can give.

Dr. V. Raghavan observes in his *Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitacaritam*, Pariśiṣṭam:

> *yāvaddakṣiṇa-deśyaṁ gāndharvaṁ bhuvi tiṣṭhet* ।
> *tāvaddīkṣitanāma stheyam syād dṛṣado'pi* ॥
> *saṅgītasya guṇoyaṁ nādāsvāda-rasena* ।
> *lokāveśalayād yad dhatte citta-samādhim* ॥
>
> - As long as Karnatic Music exists, Dīkṣita's name will remain as a firm stone. Music through its enchanting, enjoyable, rhythmic sounds engulfs the listeners' minds and keeps them in an absorbed state.
>
> (Raghavan 1980: 195) *(Translation my own)*

2.2.1.3. *Svarākṣara*

Svarākṣara is the concept in which the *svara* coincides with the *sāhitya-akṣara-s*. Dīkṣita has used these in plenty in his compositions. A few examples are the Bhūpāla *kṛti* "*Sadācaleśvaraṁ bhāvaye'ham*", the Śaṅkarābharaṇa *kṛti* "*Sadāśivam upāsmahe*" and the Māhurī *kṛti* "*Māmava raghuvīra*", the Sarasvatī Manoharī *kṛti* "*Sarasvati Manohari*".

2.2.1.4. Group *Kṛti*-s

Dīkṣita had developed a fascination for composing a series of *kṛti-s* on common themes like the same deity, *kṣetra* etc, perhaps wanting to explore the various dimensions of the subject. In some of these, he employed all the eight *vibhakti-s*, the various cases that delineate a noun. He also composed a series of *kṛti-s* in a set of *rāga-s*, all ending with the same suffix (for example, "-gauḷa"). No other composer has attempted so many group *kṛti-s* in such a planned and orderly manner.

The following are some of the important *kṛti* collections:

- *Guruguha-vibhakti-kṛti-s*
- *Kamalāmbā-Navāvaraṇa-kṛti-s*

- *Navagraha-kṛti-s*
- *Nīlotpalāmbā-vibhakti-kṛti-s*
- *Pañcabhūta-kṣetra-kṛti-s*
- *Rāma-vibhakti-kṛti-s*
- Tiruvarur-*pañcaliṅga-kṛti-s*
- *Tyāgarāja-vibhakti-kṛti-s*
- *Abhayāmbā-vibhakti-kṛti-s*
- *Madhurāmbā-vibhakti-kṛti-s*

2.2.2. Language and Choice of Words

He had a good command over Sanskrit; and learnt to use it to express his aspirations in his compositions. He had a fascination for *śabdālaṅkāra*, beautiful phrases and wordplay. Dīkṣita's *kṛti-s* are therefore adorned with poetic imagery and majesty steeped in devotion.

Except for one *varṇa* in Toḍi and a *kṛti (daru)* in Telugu and three *maṇipravāḷa- kṛti-s* (Sanskrit+Telugu+Tamil), all his other compositions are in Sanskrit. The choice of right words for his *kṛti-s* is admirable. Some examples are:

- In the *kṛti* " *Śrī Mātṛbhūtam*", in Kannaḍa *rāga,* the *anupallavi* has "*somamśirodhṛtasūrya gaṅgam*" where *somam* is *"sa + umam"* meaning "with Umā", *śirodhṛtagaṅgam* refers to "Gaṅgā adorned on his head". The word *sūrya* in this line does not refer to the Sun, since Lord Śiva does not have the Sun on his head. *Sūrya* here refers to *arka* (*erukkam*) plant. Lord Śiva bears this plant on his head.

- Kāmākṣī – *kā* refers to Sarasvatī, *mā* to Lakṣmī and Kāmākṣī refers to the one who has Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī as her eyes. Dīkṣita has composed a lot of *kṛti-s* on Kāmākṣī and has also brought out this meaning. For example, he uses "*śāradā-ramā-nayane*" in the Hindoḷa *rāga kṛti* **"***nīrajākṣi kāmākṣī***".**

- He calls Kṛṣṇa "*Rauhiṇeyānuja*" in the *kṛti* "*Siddhivināyakam*" – this refers to the one who is worshipped by Kṛṣṇa, who is the

younger brother (*anuja*) of Balarāma (Rauhiṇeya- son of Rohiṇī). He has used the term Rohiṇī to refer to Balarāma, to indicate the context of Kṛṣṇa worshipping Gaṇeśa. Rohiṇī brings to our mind Candra (husband of another Rohiṇī) and the *Mahābhārata* incident on Śyamantakamaṇi when Kṛṣṇa worships Gaṇeśa.

2.2.2.1. Usage of Compound Words

Examples:

- In the Maṇiraṅgu *kṛti* "*Māmava paṭṭābhirāma*", he says "*paṅkaja-mitra-vamśa-sudhāmbudhi-candra medinīpāla rāmacandra*". *Paṅkaja-mitra-vamśa* refers to *sūryavaṁśa*, *ambudhi* refers to the ocean/sea and *candra* refers to the moon. Dīkṣita says that Rāma, to the *sūryavaṁśa* is like the moon to the ocean.
- In the Maṅgaḷakaiśikī *kṛti* "*Śrībhārgavībhadram*", he says "*pada-nayanānana-kara-naliṇī paramapuruṣa-hari-praṇayinī vadana-kamala-guruguha-dharaṇīvara-nuta-raṅganātha-ramaṇī*" which refers to Devī (Mahālakṣmī) as the wife of Lord Raṅganātha praised by the lotus-faced Guruguha and kings.

2.2.2.2. *Upamā*

Upamā is the art of creative or comparative imagery. Several examples of these are found in Dīkṣita's *kṛti-s*.

- The purity of the full moon is compared with the heart of a pious person – "*candram bhaja mānasa sādhu-hṛdaya-sadṛśam*" (in "*Candram-bhaja*")
- The radiance of Lord Śiva is compared with crores of suns – "*bhānu-koṭi-koṭi-saṅkāśam*" (in "*Ānanda-naṭana-prakāśam*")
- The heart of Lord Śiva is compared with melting butter – "*navanīta-hṛdaya*" (in "*Akṣayaliṅga-vibho*")

(Srivatsa 2000: 8)

2.2.2.3. *Prāsa*

2.2.2.3.1. *Prathamākṣara-prāsa*

In his first composition "*Śrī-Nāthādi-Guruguho*" in Māyāmāḷavagauḷa, the *caraṇakṛti* of the *kṛti* has sixteen passages, all starting with the *akṣara* "*ma*".

2.2.2.3.2. *Dvitīyākṣara-prāsa* and *Anuprāsa*

There are numerous instances of this type of *prāsa* seen in Dīkṣita's compositions. A few examples are cited below:

The *akṣara* "*kṣa*" in the *kṛti* "*Akṣayaliṅga-vibho*":

dakṣaśikṣaṇa-
dakṣatara sura-
lakṣaṇavidhivi-
lakṣaṇa lakṣya-
lakṣaṇa-bahuvi-
cakṣaṇa sudhā-
bhakṣaṇa guruka-
ṭākṣa vīkṣaṇa

2.2.2.3.3. *Antya-anuprāsa*

The *akṣara* "*ṅgam*" in the *kṛti* "*Aruṇācalanātham*":

aprākṛta-tejomaya-liṅgam atyadbhuta-karadhṛta-sāraṅgam
aprameyam aparṇābja-bhṛṅgam ārūḍhottuṅga- vṛṣaturaṅgam
viprottama-viśeṣāntaraṅgaṁ vīraguruguha-tāra-prasaṅgam
svapradīpa-mauli-vidhṛta-gaṅgaṁ svaprakāśa-jita-somāgni-pataṅgam

2.2.2.4. *Yati*

Dīkṣita often structured his lyrics in geometric patterns. He has often employed *yati-s* such as *gopuccha* (tapering like the tail of a cow) and the *srotovahā* (broadening like the flow of a river) for structuring his lyrics. For instance, in the following examples of *kṛti-s*, he has used the tapering pattern of *gopuccha*.

In the *kṛti* "*Śrī-varalakṣmi*" (*rāga* Śrī):

sārasapade
rasapade
sapade
pade

In the *kṛti* "*Māye tvaṁ yāhi*" (*rāga* Taraṅgiṇī):

sarasakāye
rasakāye
sakāye
āye

In his *kṛti* "*Tyāgarāja-yoga-vaibhavam*", *rāga* Ānandabhairavī, Dīkṣita uses both the *yati-s*: *gopuccha-yati* and *srotovahā -yati.*

The phrases are: (*gopuccha-yati* - like a cow's tail)

Tyāgarāja-yoga-vaibhavam
aga-rāja-yoga-vaibhavam
rāja-yoga-vaibhavam
yoga-vaibhavam
vaibhavam
bhavam
avam

and (*srotovahā-yati* - flowing or expanding like a river)

śam
prakāśam
svarūpaprakāśam
tattvasvarūpaprakāśam
sakala-tattva-svarūpaprakāśam
śiva-śaktyādi-sakala-tattva-svarūpaprakāśam

2.2.2.5. *Rāga*-s used by Dīkṣita

Dīkṣita followed the *meḷa-paddhati* (a method or system of classifying *rāga-s*) founded by Veṅkaṭamakhin. Since Dīkṣita belonged to this school, while handling *vivādi meḷa-s*,, Dīkṣita followed Veṅkaṭamakhin and avoided certain *prayoga-s*. Kharaharapriyā did not belong to Veṅkaṭamakhin's scheme, perhaps that is the reason why there is no known composition of Dīkṣita in that *rāga*. The twenty-second *meḷa* in that scheme was Śrīrāga. Veṅkaṭamakhin's tradition treated Bhairavī and Ānandabhairavī as *upāṅga-rāga-s* and Dīkṣita did the same.

Scholars opine that Dīkṣita's major service to Karnatic music is that he gave expression to nearly 200 *rāga-s* of Veṅkaṭamakhin. He also revived many of ancient *rāga-s* that were fading away. Several ancient *rāga-s* found a new lease of life through Dīkṣita's *kṛti-s*. Examples are *rāga-s* like Maṅgaḷakaiśikī, Ghaṇṭā, Gopikāvasanta, Nārāyaṇagauḷa, Śūlinī, Sāmanta, Mārgadeśīand Mohananāṭa. Even today their *lakṣaṇa-s* are illustrated mainly through Dīkṣita's creations.

2.2.3. Expertise in Other *śāstra*

Dīkṣita had acquired great knowledge of *jyotiṣa, mantra-śāstra*, iconography and of temple architecture. He was a pilgrim all his life. He visited many shrines and sang about them and the deities enshrined there. About 74 of such temples are featured in his *kṛti-s*. Maximum number of his *kṛti-s* (176) are in praise of Devī, the Divine Mother, followed by (132) *kṛti-s* on Śiva. Dīkṣita was the only major composer who sang in praise of Brahmā. He was intensely devotional and composed songs in praise of many Gods and Goddesses.

Astronomy and *Jyotiṣa*

One of the major contributions of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita is the *Navagraha-kṛti-s*, the compositions on the nine planets that he composed. Dīkṣita has made the texts of these *kṛti-s* rich in symbolism, using a wide range of terminology drawn from Indian Philosophy, *mantra-śāstra*, astronomy/astrology, mythological and Puranic allusions and iconographical descriptions of the planetary deities.

Navagraha worship has been indicated in an enormous amount of literature like *smṛti-s*, Dharma-śāstra-s, Upaniṣad-s, Purāṇa-s, *jyotiṣa*, *āgama-s* etc. The varied texts inform us of the planets directly influencing our earth and the remote constellations, their interactions, their nature and function described symbolically through the character of the presiding deities. The *Smṛti-s* and Purāṇa-s deal with the *śānti* rites for the nine *graha*-s. Yājñavalkya (I.294) says:

> "One desirous of prosperity, of removing evil or calamities, of rainfall (for crops), long life, bodily health and one desirous of performing magic rites against enemies and others should perform a sacrifice to planets".
>
> (Janaki 2012: 180)

The *Sūryatāpinyupaniṣad* contains many *mantra*-s related to Sun. In its third *paṭala* (p.57) it gives the eight-syllabled *mantra* "*om ghṛṇiḥ sūryam āditya*" and says:

> *atra sauramanūni pravakṣyāmi nigamoditāni । ghṛṇiriti dve akṣare । sūryam iti trīṇi । āditya iti trīṇi । etadvai sāvitrasyāṣṭākṣaraṁ padaṁ śriyābhishiktam ।*
>
> (*Sūryatāpinyupaniṣad* 1933: 57)
>
> (Janaki 2012: 189)

The nine *kṛti-s* are very special in terms of their content. Not only do they reveal several astronomical details about the planets, but also

glorify the planets and presiding deities. These have been composed in a variety of *tāḷa-s*. Information on *mantra-s* related to *graha-s* have been referred to. It is believed that these compositions are as effective as chanting *mantra-s*. According to tradition, the songs were composed by Dīkṣita to relieve the acute stomach-pain of one of his disciples, Tambiappan, who used to play on the Śuddha Maddaḷam in the Tyāgarāja temple.

Dr. V. Raghavan, observes in his *Śri Muttusvāmi-Dīkṣita-Caritam Mahā-kāvyam*:

> *mantrairupāsanamanuṣya navagrahāṇām*
> *no śakyamityayamupāyamavaikṣataivam ।*
> *śāstrārthameduranavagrahakīrtanāni*
> *gānena tasya sukhasiddhikarāṇi cakre ॥*
>
> (Raghavan 1980: 141)

After composing these songs that richly glorify the nine planetary deities, Dīkṣita prayed to them that they confer their blessings on Tambiappan. The teacher also asked his pupil to sing the songs with sincere devotion and prayerful attitude, completely surrendering himself to Lord Tyāgarāja.

Mantra-śāstra and *Tantra-śāstra*

Dīkṣita was an ardent *Śrīvidyā-upāsaka* and an intense devotee of Devī. He was a master of *tantra* and of *yantra-pūjā.* There are built in *mantra-s* in many of his *kṛti-s*.

The magnificent *Kamalāmbā-Navāvaraṇa-kṛti-s* are jewels of Karnatic music. These compositions, intellectually sublime and steeped in deep devotion, are a testimony to Dīkṣita's musical genius, his mastery over the Sanskrit language and his thorough knowledge of and intense dedication to *Śrīvidyā*, *Śrīcakra* and the worship of its *āvaraṇa-s*. Through its graceful lyrics, majestic sweep of *rāga*-s and descriptive details rich in mystical symbolism of *tantra*, *mantra*, *yoga*, *Śrīvidyā* and Advaita, Dīkṣita has virtually thrown open the doors to the secret world of *Śrīvidyā*, to all those eager to approach the Divine Mother through devotion and music. It is amazing how he builds into each of his crisp and well-knit structure of lyrics, the references to the name of the *cakra,* the names of its presiding deity, *yoginī-s*, *mudrā-s*, *siddhi-s* and the Guru-s of the *Kādi* tradition of *Śrīvidyā,* and to the seed(*bīja*) *mantra-s*.

2.2.3.1. Dīkṣita and Temples

Dīkṣita's compositions serve as a guide with respect to temples – the aspects to see in a *kṣetra*, the significance of the *kṣetra* etc. They also describe temple festivals in detail. An example is the Śrīrāga *kṛti* "*Tyāgarāja-mahadhvajāroha*" which describes in detail, the *vasantotsava* in the Tiruvarur Tyāgarāja temple.

2.2.3.2. References to temple architecture

In the *kṛti* "*Bhaktavatsalam*" in the *rāga* Vaṁśavatī, Dīkṣita directly and indirectly alludes to the seven attributes of a *saptāṁṛta* or *sapta-puṇya-kṣetra* which are:

- The *vimāna* or the canopy above the *sanctum sanctorum*
- The *maṇṭapa* in the temple complex
- The forest(*vana*) found here
- The river that flows through the *kṣetra*
- The location of the temple
- The city or *nagarī*
- The *puṣkariṇī* or tank

It may be interesting to add that unique features of temples have been captured like ĀsīnaBhairava (*Bhairava* in seated posture) in Śrīvāñcyam and Navanandi in Tyāgarāja Svāmi temple (Nandi in standing posture). Reference to Purāṇic anecdotes associated with the *kṣetra-s* make these very interesting.

2.2.3.3. *Dhyāna-Śloka*-s

In Hindu meditation, in *japa* and *dhyāna*, the form of personal God is evoked in the mind with a preliminary verse describing that form. This is called the *dhyāna-śloka*. The *mantra-śāstra*-s prescribe the forms of the deities to be contemplated, the posture(*āsana*), the expression on the face, *mudrā* (like the gesture of assurance-*abhaya*) and the various kinds of weapons (*astra*) held in the hands, the accompanying Goddess(es), attendants etc.

Dīkṣita was adept in *mantra-śāstra*-s and the *sāhitya* in many of his *kṛti-s* describe the exact details of the deity as seen in the

corresponding *dhyāna-śloka*. The iconography set forth in his *kṛti-s* is remarkable for its accuracy and conformity to *mantra-śāstra* and *śilpa-śāstra.*

- For example, the Malahari song "*Pañcamātaṅga-mukha-gaṇapatinā*" is a small song on Gaṇeśa who has five faces and eight hands and is found in the Tyāgarāja shrine at Tiruvarur. In the *madhyamakāla-sāhitya* here, the various things that are held in the eight hands are mentioned – "*varadābhaya-pāśa-śṛṇi-kapāla-danta-modaka-mudgara-akṣamālā-kareṇa".* That is, one of the eight hands grant freedom from fear (*abhaya*). The others carry a rope(*-pāśa-*), goad(*-sṛṇi-*), skull(*-kapāla-*), broken tusk (*-danta-*), sweetmeat(*-modaka-*), hammer(*-mudgara-*) and bead-garland (*-akṣamālā-*). These iconographical details are the same as those in *dhyāna-śloka* of Heramba Gaṇapati with five faces.

2.2.4. Basic Tenets of Hinduism – Religion and Philosophy

Sanātana Dharma is the *Bhāratīya* way of life of which the following are the foundations:

- Steadfast faith that the Veda-s are primary *pramāṇa* and enlighten us on issues which cannot be obtained from any other sources of knowledge.
- Faith in the concept of four goals of life (*puruṣārtha-s*) and faith that *mokṣa* or liberation is the goal to be sought after.
- Faith in Rebirth and law of *karman.*
- Simple life with contentment.
- Strive to achieve purity of one's mind, which is devoid of six internal enemies, namely, *kāma*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada* and *mātsarya.*
- Live in harmony with nature, fellow human beings and other entities of creation (animals, plants etc).

The above are seamlessly woven into one's life-style according to *Sanātana Dharma*.

Śri Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita has woven Vedic ideas, especially, concepts of Upaniṣad-s into almost all his *kṛti-s*. Purity of mind is stressed

as a qualification for Divine grace, in compositions like "*Pāhi māṁ ratnācala-nāyaka*" (*kāmāri-ṣaḍvarga-rahita*) etc.

Noble men in our tradition have shunned materialistic wealth. Śri Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita was one such divine soul who refused *rājāśraya*, as he didn't want to do any kind of *narastuti*. This has been stressed in *kṛti-s* like "*Hiraṇmayīṁ lakṣmīm*" (phrases like *hīna-mānavāśrayaṁ tyajāmi* and *cira-tara-sampat-pradām)*. Hence Dīkṣita's compositions clearly establish the superiority of the way of life propounded in *Sanātana Dharma,* which holds that inner spiritual experience is much greater than material wealth.

> "Idol worship has been extensively criticized by people from diverse background. The rationalists and modern-day liberals dismiss it as superstition.... Max Muller considered idol worship as a sign that Hindus are still in the state of savagery and has proposed that Hindus should be civilized through European and Christian influence. Dr Ambedkar had questioned the rationale of the practice of *Prāṇa-pratiṣṭhāpana*.....Kancha Ilaiah, Dalit activist and writer, has linked idol worship with rigid caste system and has claimed that caste system will become irrelevant only when idol worship becomes irrelevant. But, the staunchest criticism of idol worship has come from within the tradition. Swami Dayananda of Arya Samaj who had given the clarion call for returning to Vedas, has also criticised idol worship in the very severest of words."
>
> (Sridhar 2015)

In Hinduism, religion and philosophy are complementary.

It is commonly said that religion without philosophy is incomplete (since the purpose of religion is to help in spiritual growth) and philosophy without religion is impossible.

Religious way of life gives a seeker, the basic qualifications required to understand and internalize the philosophical truth. Our tradition recognizes that God is only one, common to all living beings in this universe. It believes in a single formless Lord of the universe, Absolute Reality (*Brahman*):

sadeva saumya idamagra āsīt ekameva advitīyam । (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.1)

> - "In the beginning, dear boy, there was *sat* (existence) alone, one only". *(Translation by Svami Paramarthananda)*

satyamjñānamanantam brahma । (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.1)

- "*Brahman* is Real (existence) (*sat*), Consciousness (*cit*), Infinite". *(Translation by Svami Paramarthananda)*

ānando brahmeti vyajānāt । (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 3.6)

- "Pure Bliss(*ānanda*) is *Brahman*". *(Translation by Svami Paramarthananda)*

yattadadreśyam agrāhyam agotram avarṇam
acakṣuḥśrotraṁ tadapāṇi-pādam ।
nityaṁ vibhuṁ sarvagataṁ susūkṣmaṁ
tadavyayaṁ yadbhūtayoniṁ paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ ॥

(*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.6)

- "That which is invisible, inconceivable, without lineage, without *varṇa*, without eyes and ears, without hands and feet, and that which is eternal, all-pervasive, omnipresent, extremely subtle and non-decaying – that is what the wise behold as the source of all beings."

(Translation by Svami Paramarthananda)

However, we have a plethora of godheads being worshipped all the time. Since the attribute-less God cannot be accessed by us even in thought, it is necessary to consider a tangible form for God.

Human life is a continuous mixture of pleasures and pains driven by *karman-s* done in several births. Everyone requires a permanent hold to share experiences- both positive and negative and to get the confidence to face the uncertain future. It is very easy for human beings to relate to another human being for sharing emotions. Since all relations with fellow human beings are short-lived due to temporary or permanent separation, we need an imperishable entity to relate to, all the time.

God in a tangible form, becomes the natural choice for the entity to relate to. To be effective, the relationship should be very strong. Since human nature and aptitudes are widely varied, a single form of God will not be adequate to provide for the psychological needs of varied human beings. Thus, the concept of multiple forms of God evolved, so that a form chosen in line with the aptitude of an individual will help him or her to establish a strong, lasting relationship.

Most of the compositions of the Trinity are on various forms of deities to help worship by devotees to choose their *iṣṭa-devatā*. Śrī

Tyāgarāja has composed most of his *kṛti-s* on his *iṣṭa-devatā* Śrī Rāma and composed a few *kṛti-s* on Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, Devī etc. Śyāma Śāstri's compositions are on Devī Kāmākṣi of Kancipuram and Tanjavur and a few *kṛti-s* on Devī in Madurai etc.

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita has composed on various forms of God as given below:

Gaṇeśa	27
Subrahmaṇya	36
Śiva	132
Devī	175
Mahāviṣṇu	75 (includes Rāma and Kṛṣṇa)
Lakṣmī	9
Sarasvatī	11
Brahmā	1

It is seen that Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita has provided a wide canvas of *kṛti-s* on a variety of forms of God to cater to a variety of devotees to select their chosen form of God to worship.

As Saxena observes, there is a distinct difference in the way Hinduism and other religions visualize God. While other religions consider God as isolated from Nature, created nature and ordains all those created, to worship the isolated God, Hinduism believes in a single, formless God who manifests in the entire creation. God manifests into several *deva-s* for different roles and to provide an easy method to relate to one's own personal God. Treating the entire creation as a manifestation of God helps a seeker to love everything in creation and reduce *ahaṁkāra* and *mamakāra.* This difference in opinion has resulted in confused criticism of Hinduism as a polytheistic religion or religion with multiplicity of Gods.

Our scriptures clearly establish one formless *Brahman* as the Absolute truth and *saguṇa upāsanā* of various deities is only a stepping-stone to realize the Absolute reality. It is necessary in the beginning stages of spiritual growth. Once a seeker gets the required focusing capability and strong devotion, he should move to *nirguṇa upāsanā*. Our scriptures prescribe an intermediate step of *Viśvarūpa upāsanā* when the seeker sees the entire creation as the Lord. Hinduism not

only tells us our destination but also outlines the means to reach the same. In line with this approach, *kṛti-s* of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita which primarily glorify the *saguṇa* deities also have references to concepts of *nirguṇa Brahman*, to lead the seeker in the right direction.

A few examples have been listed below:

PHRASE	***KṚTI***
akhaṇḍa-saccidānandam	*cintaya mākanda-mūla-kandam*
saccidānanda-mūrte	*namaste para-devate*
svayam-prakāśakam	*śrī-valmīka-liṅgam*
akhaṇḍaika-rasa-pūrṇo saccidānanda-rūpiṇo	*akhilāndeśvaro rakṣatu*
śiva-saccidānanda-rūpeṇa	*ānandeśvareṇa*
nitya-śuddha-satva-guṇam	*kāyārohaṇeśam*
nitya-śuddha-buddha-muktāya	*kumbheśvarāya namaste*
abheda-nitya-śuddha-buddha-mukta saccidānandamaya-paramādvaita sphūrteḥ	*śrī kamalāmbikāyāḥ param*

The above references indicate that Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita was truly an Advaitin. His family background also indicates a strong foundation in Advaita Vedānta. The time he spent with Upaniṣad Brahmendra Yogin in Kancipuram also strengthened the foundation of his knowledge in Advaita. Additionally, he received *Śrīvidyā-dīkśā* from his Guru Cidambaranātha Yogin in Varanasi and appears to have practised *Śrīvidyā-upāsanā*.

Thus, we see that through his divine compositions, Dīkṣita has seamlessly integrated a religious way of life through *saguṇopāsanā* based on Advaitic philosophy. He has thus addressed the criticism on idol worship as well as multiplicity of Godheads in Hinduism very effectively.

2.2.5. Universal Approach and Broad Outlook

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita belonged to an orthodox *Smārta* Brahmin family. He had his formal training in Veda-s and *śāstra-s* at an early age. He

was brought up in accordance with traditional disciplines and rigors. Also, he spent seven years with his Guru in Varanasi where he received additional teachings on our scriptures and was initiated into *Śrīvidyā-upāsanā* which has its own disciplines and procedures. Someone with this background was expected to be conservative, restricted to the concepts and thoughts he was accustomed to. Interestingly, however, Dīkṣita was very different in his outlook. He believed in

ā no bhadrāḥkratavo yantu visvataḥ (Ṛg Veda 1.89.1)

"Let noble thoughts come to me from all directions".

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita was way ahead of his time in thinking out-of-the-box and accepting good ideas from wherever they came from.

This could be illustrated as following:

2.2.5.1. Pilgrimage

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita lived in Tiruvarur for several years worshipping Somāskanda Tyāgarāja and Kamalāmbā. Unlike other composers, he chose to travel widely on pilgrimage to many places and compose on deities in those temples. His pilgrimage was very extensive in Tamilnadu and included Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. His stay in Varanasi made a deep impression on him and inspired by deities in Varanasi, he composed songs on Kālabhairava, Ḍhunḍhi Ganeśa, Viśvanātha and Viśālākṣī in temples in South India, built in accordance with temples in Varanasi on these deities. He has also composed songs on the deities at Badrinath (the *kṛti Śrī Satyanārāyaṇam)* and at Nepal (the *kṛti Paśupatīśvaram*).

This gives an opportunity for people in one location to learn about the greatness of other places and temples, which in turn generates desire to undertake pilgrimages to such places. This was made possible since his compositions not only glorified the deities but also described the specialties of temples and incorporated references to *purāṇic* episodes related to the temples.

2.2.5.2. Hindustani *Rāga*-s

Dīkṣita spent seven years at Varanasi, in the prime of his youth. He was captivated by the grandeur, the spaciousness and the purity of the ancient Dhrupad School of Hindustani Music. He learnt Dhrupad diligently; and that left a lasting impression on his works.

The Dhrupad way of elaboration appears to have captured his imagination while handling compositions in Karnatic *rāga-s* too, by way of elaborate beginning of the composition, the *tempo* of his songs being mostly in *viḷamba-kāla* (slow, measured and majestic), rich in *gamaka,* just as the sliding *mīṇḍ-s* in Hindustani music, as is seen, for instance, in the grandeur and slow paced majesty of *Akṣayaliṅga Vibho* (in *rāga* Śaṅkarābharaṇa)in contemplation of Lord Śiva, or in *Bālagopāla* (in *rāga* Bhairavī)**,** portraying the delight and beauty of the divine child Kṛṣṇa, the *kṛti Nīrajākṣi Kāmākṣi* (in *rāga* Hindoḷa) and so on.

Kṛti-s in Hindustani *rāga-s*, like *Jambūpate* in *rāga* Yamunā, *CetaŚri* in *rāga* Dvijāvanti, *Saundararājam* and *Raṅgapura Vihāra* in Bṛndāvana Sāraṅga, *Parimaḷa Raṅganātham* in Hamīrkalyāṇi are classic examples that bear testimony to his virtuosity.

In fact, it is well-known that Hindustani music came to be a separate genre of music only after Persian and Muslim invasion into our country. Before that it was all one – *Bhāratīya Saṅgīta*, with only *Mārga* and *Deśī* variations. Dīkṣita established the oneness of Indian music by composing in Hindustani *rāga-s.* He thus adopted and assimilated the Hindustani *rāga-s* to the Southern style thus making them sound very indigenous and not alien.

2.2.5.3. Noṭṭusvara-s

It is said that when Dīkṣita kṛti was in Madras, he had the opportunity to listen to the Western band in Fort St. George and impressed by the simplicity of the notes, Dīkṣita composed the *Noṭṭusvara-sāhitya-s*. Dīkṣita's remarkable versatility is exhibited in these *Noṭṭu-svara-sāhitya-s*, which are a completely different genre from the rest of his work. The *Noṭṭusvara-sāhitya-s* are thirty-nine in number. They are simple, short compositions sung at one stretch without the *pallavi*, *anupallavi, caraṇa* divisions. Dīkṣita composed Sanskrit *sāhitya* on various deities set to Western tunes, some of whichare said to closely resemble English band music. These simple pieces are based on the scale of the *rāga* Dhīraśaṅkarābharaṇa and set to different *tāḷa-s* such as *tiśra-eka*, *catuśra-eka, rūpaka* etc. Some famous *Noṭṭusvara-sāhitya-s* are "*Śakti-sahita-gaṇapatim*", "*Śyāmaḷe-Mīnākṣī*". Even in these short compositions, Dīkṣita's impeccable command over Sanskrit and his adherence to the rules of prosody shines through. These compositions provide an ideal method of introducing Karnatic music

to children and at the same time introduce to them as prayer to our deities.

It is hence observed that, Dīkṣita, an ardent Hindu devotee composer has appreciated other forms of music and adapted them in his *kṛti-s*. This only shows that he practiced acceptance and not rigid conservatism.

Though it is commonly believed that the *noṭṭusvara-sāhitya-s* are largely of Irish, Scottish origin and are entirely Western in terms of melodic content and approach, it is noteworthy that the concept of pure notes was no alien to Indian Music, considering that the ancient Indians had made significant advancement in development of scales through modal shift of tonic called '*Grahabheda*'. Also, the evolution of the most refined and sophisticated system of *gamaka*-s that is the essence of Karnatic Music could not have been possible without knowledge and employment of pure or flat notes. Also, devotional literature in the form of *Stotra sāhitya* set to simple melodies based on pure notes have always existed in our musical tradition.

As a justification of the recent attempts of plagiarizing *kṛti*-s of our composers with lyrics in praise of Jesus, Dīkṣita's *noṭṭusvara-sāhitya*-s are being given as a counter example[1]. However, his composition of *noṭṭusvara*-s only shows he was open to recognize the good from other cultures and religions, and his intention was neither to appropriate or digest the Western tunes, nor to convert anybody. Adaptation is different from deliberate agenda-driven appropriation. Also, the *noṭṭusvara*-s are only a small aspect of his compositions. He was a musical genius par excellence which is evident in his masterly compositions. He obviously didn't have any need to 'copy' a Western tune. Also, it is not clear as to what were the circumstances or constraints under which he composed the *noṭṭusvara*-s.

2.3. Disciples

The main line of Dīkṣita's *śiṣya-s* was represented by his own family. After Bālusvāmi, there was Subbarāma Dīkṣita, Bālusvāmi's daughter's son whom he adopted as his son. Subbarāma Dīkṣita's son was Ambi Dīkṣita who succeeded him as a court musician at Eṭṭayapuram.

There were many enthusiasts desirous of undergoing tutelage in music under Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita at Tiruvarur. The musicians and dancers

attached to the Tyāgarāja temple were naturally attracted by his music. It was thus that slowly, a few *nādasvara-vidvān*-s and *devadāsī*-s, people belonging to the *Paraśaiva* community and the *nāṭyācārya-s* belonging to Tiruvarur and adjoining villages decided to sit at Dīkṣita's feet and imbibe his art.

One of the earlier disciples was Śuddha Maddaḷam Tambiappan who belonged to the *Paraśaiva* community and whose severe stomach ailment Dīkṣita cured miraculously by composing the *Navagraha kṛti 'Bṛhaspate'* in praise of Jupiter. Nādasvara Vidvān Kūraināḍu Rāmasvāmi Piḷḷai, another eminent *nādasvara-vidvān* of those times, Terazundūr Bilvavanam, Tiruvārūr Ayyāsāmi Naṭṭuvanār who was a *Nāṭyācārya* were some of the early disciples. Ammaṇi of Valḷalar Koil and Kamalam of Tiruvarur, both of whom belonged to the *devadāsī* community were the two prominent lady disciples. Tevur Subramaṇia Iyer, Tirukkaḍayur Bhārati, a Tamil scholar and the then eminent *vīṇā-vidvān* Avuḍayarkoil Veṅkaṭarāmayyar were a few of his disciples who were well-known musicians. Tambiappan had many disciples, some of whom became prominent musicians and composers. Many of these, in turn, taught Dīkṣita *kṛti-s* to many people.

It was for the *arangeṭram* of his lady disciple Kamalam that Dīkṣita wrote the Telugu *varṇa* in Toḍi, "*Rūpamu jūci*" in praise of Lord Tyāgarāja and the *daru* in Śrīrañjanī, "*Nī sarisāṭi*".

Fascinated by these two exquisite pieces, one Gaṅgamuthu Oduvār requested Dīkṣita to come and live in Tanjavur for a few years. Thus, the four sons of Subbarāya Naṭṭuvanār (son of Gaṅgamuthu Oduvār and a veteran *Nāṭyācārya*) namely Ponnayyā, Cinnayyā, Śivānandam and Vaḍivelu (popularly known as the Tañjāvūr Quartet) were fortunate enough to come under the tutelage of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita.

There was another great revolution that was brewing as a result of Dīkṣita's tutelage of the four brothers. The great composer's music inspired the brothers to formulate the *mārgam* of *Bharatanāṭyam*. Today's *Bharatanāṭya-mārgam* consisting of *puṣpāñjali*, *alārippu*, *jatisvara*, *śabdam*, *varṇa*, *pada*, *jāvaḷi* and *tillānā* was constructed by the Tanjavur Quartet. They also composed many pieces in all the above genres. It will be no exaggeration to declare that today's *Bharatanāṭyam* owes its high status to the seed sown by Dīkṣita.

Thus, it is significant to note that Dīkṣita's disciples not only came from all communities and belonged to both genders, but also that they comprised not only vocalists but instrumentalists too. Thus, all this proves beyond doubt that caste or gender was never an issue. Indeed, our tradition has always valued only merit and intrinsic worth in a person and not his caste, creed, gender or linguistic background. *Bhāratīya saṁskṛti* believed in only *varṇa* system. Even in the history of Indian music, there were many composers from different castes among the Nāyanmār-s, Āḻvār-s, Haridāsa-s, Vacanakāra-s and so on. Dīkṣita also belonged to this glorious tradition which never considered caste or creed as a criterion for accepting students. He was totally universal in outlook and with a mind open both in receiving and giving. This should be adequate to demolish some of the misconceptions and false narratives of today relating to casteism in music.

3. Conclusion

Thus, it is evident that Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita was an enlightened master, a divine saint composer with mystic qualities, a versatile genius and a true *nādopāsaka* – a realized soul who had the visualization of the Almighty through his music. His spontaneous outpourings of *kṛti*-s which are timeless masterpieces are a result of *tapas*.; each one of them brimming with devotion and lyrical excellence stand testimony to the fact that he was no ordinary composer.

In line with the way of life of *Sanātana Dharma*, he ingeniously and seamlessly integrated *bhakti* with disciplines and thoughts related to Vedānta in his compositions, which are indeed universal and eternal. His 'vision' and contributions to Karnatic music have made a deep impact on musicians as well as *rasika*-s even today and there is no doubt that they will remain eternal. Notable too is the influence he wielded on later composers like Mysore Vāsudevācārya and Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar.

This paper, thus, has highlighted not only the greatness of the music of this divine composer, but has also shed light on the divine personality that he was. It is impossible to imagine Karnatic music without compositions of saint seer composers like him. We have to be ever grateful for this long rich legacy that we have inherited from the past which is the essential foundation for our present and future.

śrīpuro vijayatām tyāgarāṭ vijayatām ।
dīkṣito vijayatām tatkṛtir vijayatām ॥

"Victorious be Tiruvarur; victorious be Lord Tyāgarāja; victorious be Dīkṣita; and victorious be his *kṛti*-s." (Raghavan *Śrī Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitacaritam – granthasamarpaṇam, śloka* 11)

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Yājñavalkyasmṛti. See Pansikar (1926).

Notes

[1] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FeD6iUOOgds

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Chapter 2

The Non-translatables of (South) Indian Music

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Abstract

The core concepts related to Indian knowledge systems and art forms, most of which are terms in Saṁskṛta, have very profound meanings and often deeply embedded in their cultural frameworks. They not only encode specific and unique cultural experiences and traits, like all languages, but the very form, sound and manifestation of the language carry effects that cannot be separated from their conceptual meanings.

However, there has been a tendency of translating and mapping such concepts and perspectives onto Westerns frameworks. Dharmic traditions and wisdom embodied in Saṁskṛta language get compromised, shrunk or even demolished once they are substituted with the alleged Western equivalents which are in no way adequate to precisely represent the original ideas. Concepts like *dharma, yoga, ātman, guru* and so on often get loosely/badly/wrongly translated, which leads to serious loss of meaning and ultimately aids the undesirable digestion and appropriation. Thus, the non-translatability of Saṁskṛta concepts and

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terms is most imperative for the non-digestibility of Hindu traditions, cultural practices, knowledge systems and art forms into the Abrahamic framework.

Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta or South Indian Music is not just an art form, but a complex music culture that is fundamentally integrated with its Vedic/*Sanātana Dhārmic* roots and with Hindu culture and ethos. In fact, no classical art form with a long history anywhere in the world can be viewed as separate from the cultural, historical context in which it is born, grown and sustained; and Karnatic music is no exception to this. It has always been an inseparable aspect of Hindu civilization, right from its origin in *Sāmaveda*, through Śārṅgadeva, to its evolution during the Trimūrti era and all the way to the current times. The various *rāga* and *tāla* names, technical terms like *nāda, śruti, rāga, mela, laya*, etc., which have philosophical/spiritual/metaphysical significance, are all essentially non-translatables since they are invariably tied to *Sanātana DharmaDharma* at various levels and cannot be translated to any other language.

This paper aims to identify and elaborate upon twelve such major technical terms associated with (South) Indian Music[1], to examine their roots, to understand what they mainly convey and signify, and to elucidate their strong connect with the quintessence of our musical culture over the centuries. How some of the terminologies even transcend strict linear definitions, but can only be comprehended by deep experience is highlighted. Also, the commonly used English translations of these terms are taken up to analyse if at all they are any close to the originals, let alone denote them precisely.

Key words

Karnatic Music, South Indian Music, Hindu Art forms, Non-translatables, Sanskrit, Indian Art, Samaveda, Nada, Shruti, Raga, Tala, Gamaka, Mela, Sangati, Vaggeyakara, Sanatana Dharma, Swadeshi Indology, Vrinda Acharya

Introduction

The core concepts related to our knowledge systems and art forms, most of which are Saṁskṛta terms, have very profound meanings and often deeply embedded in their cultural frameworks. These terms have deep spiritual, metaphysical, scientific, historical and/or cultural

significance which makes it almost impossible to find corresponding terms in any other language, particularly a foreign one like English. In fact, the so-called equivalent terms are not only highly incapable of representing the originals, but also lead to dilution, distortion and even demolition of the intensity and profundity of the concepts. Malhotra (2013: 9) observes that the dharmic traditions and wisdom embodied in Saṁskṛta language get compromised or even obliterated once they are substituted with Western equivalents which are not capable of accurately representing the original ideas.

Unfortunately, there has been a tendency of translating and mapping such concepts and perspectives onto Westerns frameworks. Western scholars, sometimes due to their genuine lack of deeper understanding of all dimensions of our culture; sometimes with a deliberate intent to overlook, ignore, deny or not acknowledge its greatness, richness, complexity and depth; but mostly with an ulterior motive and organised scheme to dilute our recondite concepts (and to ultimately appropriate and digest the same), often come up with the 'well-known' argument of 'Sameness'! Furthermore, many Indians who are either naive or take great pride in being 'Westernised' in their thought and conduct, easily subscribe to this 'Sameness' principle and go on to claim that "all religions are same", "all Gods are same", "all scriptures say the same things, "everything is the same.. what difference does it make?" and so on. As a matter of fact, it has been drilled into our heads that attributing universality to everything is noble! In this way, the dominant/colonial culture gradually and subtly imposes its own superficial translations of weighty concepts, which the natives of the colonised culture also conveniently adopt.

For instance, let us take the term '*dharma*'. *Dharma*, the vital concept of Indian philosophy, is a very broad idea which has no single definition. It is derived from the root '*dhṛ dhāraṇe*' which means 'that which holds, supports, sustains, maintains' –"*dhāraṇād dharma ity āhuḥ*"(*Mahābhārata* 8.69.58). So, essentially it means the eternal unvarying cosmic law, inherent in the very nature of things. In short, it means the all-pervading cosmic order that sustains the entire creation. However, *dharma* is often mistranslated as 'Religion' which is a purely Abrahamic concept. Religion is worship of divine that is separate from human, and is governed by a religious institution/authority. It consists of formal members and follows a standard set of rituals.

Similarly, as per the dharmic tradition, *ātman* is one's true Self, the nature of which is *sat-cit-ānanda* and which can be realised through *adhyātma sādhanā*. It is a reflection of the Supreme Self or *Brahman* that is present in humans, plants, animals and all creatures – "*ayam ātmā brahma*" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.5) Hinduism believes in the theory of *karman* and reincarnation of *ātman*. This is totally opposed to the Judeo-Christian notion of 'Soul' or 'Spirit' according to which all humans are born as sinners due to the initial sin by Adam and Eve. Hence the very nature of soul is sinful and only God can save it. Soul is present only in humans and there is neither *karman* nor rebirth. Thus, it is clear that soul is not a synonym for *ātman*.

Likewise, *guru* is not teacher, *kāla* is not time, *pūjā* is not prayer/worship and so on. Many such pure Indic terms like *prāṇa, saṁskāra, varṇa*, etc., do not have any equivalents whatsoever in the Western vocabulary.

In this way, dharmic aspects often get loosely/badly/wrongly translated, which leads to serious loss of meaning and eventually aids the undesirable cultural digestion and appropriation. Thus, it is extremely important that the Saṁskṛta terms are retained in their original forms to ensure that they are associated with their origins and to help in preserving their authenticity. The non-translatability of Saṁskṛta terms[2] is important for the non-digestibility of Hindu traditions, cultural practices, knowledge systems and art forms into the Abrahamic framework.

> "Many Sanskrit words are simply not translatable. This non-translatability of key Sanskrit words attests to the non-digestibility of many Indian traditions. Holding on to the Sanskrit terms and thereby preserving the complete range of their meanings becomes a way of resisting colonization and safeguarding dharmic knowledge."
>
> (Malhotra 2013: 220)

> "A translation of foundational Indian works from Indic to European languages is not as simple and transparent as Indic-to-Indic (e.g. Sanskrit to Tamizh). This is due to the presence of a large number of important non-translatables within Sanskrit and Indian languages that are not part of the western vocabulary, tradition, or psyche. These non-translatables end up getting mangled in the attempted translation, resulting in distorted output text filled with misleading interpretations that are biased in favour of the dominant cultural (western) perspective....Equivalent Tamizh words for crucial Sanskrit

> terms existed since ancient times; if not Sanskrit terms were retained 'as is' along with their full range of meanings....This non-translatable ecosystem is also a beautiful shield that helped protect Sanskriti for thousands of years. It is also protecting Tamizh Kalacharam and preserving the distinctiveness of India's diverse regional cultures..."
>
> (Tamizh Cultural Portal 2016)

Saṁskṛta Language

No doubt all cultures have their distinct and exclusive ideas, attributes and experiences which are only best expressed in their native languages; and any translations into other languages and direct importations into other religious or cultural frameworks will not sufficiently convey the original idea. However, this aspect is all the more predominant with respect to Indian civilization owing to the inimitable nature of Saṁskṛta language. Saṁskṛta is indeed the bed rock of our *saṁskṛti* as proclaimed by the popular saying "*saṁskṛtiḥ saṁskṛtāśritā*". All branches of knowledge, philosophy, cultural practices, art forms, literature, rituals, temple traditions, festivals and so on are manifestations of this *saṁskṛti* and the related Saṁskṛta terms not only encode specific and unique cultural experiences and traits (like that of any other language), but the very form, sound and manifestation of the language carry effects that cannot be separated from their conceptual meanings. Moreover, Saṁskṛta is a language based on sacred sounds and vibrations that were realised by *ṛṣi*-s from deeper and higher states of realisation.

> "The sacred sounds that comprise the Sanskrit language were discovered by India's rishis of the distant past through their inner sciences. These sounds are not arbitrary conventions but were realized through spiritual practice that brought direct experiences of the realities to which they correspond. Numerous meditation systems were developed by experimenting with these sounds, and thus evolved the inner sciences that enable a practitioner to return to a primordial state of unity consciousness. Sanskrit provides an experiential path back to its source. It is not just a communications tool but also the vehicle for embodied learning. Employed by the spiritual leaders of India, South-east Asia and East Asia for many centuries as language, Sanskrit became the medium of expressing a distinct set of cultural systems and experiences."
>
> (Malhotra 2013: 9)

Saṁskṛta is a language that is quite unique, special and different when compared to other languages in many respects. Saṁskṛta vocabulary is amenable to etymological explanasions, and most words used are well-defined. Words and their meanings are derived from roots called '*dhātu*-s' and there is a very logical and methodical grammatical process that follows before the words are finally formed. Thus, the meanings of words are very 'meaningful' and not just random, customary sounds. This makes it all the more a reason for original Saṁskṛta words to be retained, as one will be bound to think what the words mean actually. For, instance, since *mantra* is not the same as hymn, it compels one to know and understand what exactly a *mantra* is[3], where and why it differs, and why the difference matters a lot.

Non-translatables of (South) Indian Music

Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta or South Indian Music (Karnatic or Carnatic Music as it is popularly called) is the present evolved form of the ancient music system of India. It is known for its sublimity and uniqueness, and stands apart when compared to other forms of music across the globe. It is not some kind of an art born in a void, but a complex music culture that is fundamentally integrated with its Vedic/ *Sanātana* Dhārmic roots and with Hindu culture and ethos. In fact, music in India has always been positioned as a spiritual practice having a sacred dimension, that provides an 'experience' and 'elevates' both the practitioner (*sādhaka*) as well as the listener (*rasika*), rather than being perceived as a mere means of 'entertainment'. It is rather impossible to think of it divorced from this essential background. Also,

> "Today, the peninsular South of India is the only region in the whole world where music is inseparable from life and literature. The evolution of Raga and Kriti, of rhythm and dance, is a fascinating story that has to be pieced together from the profuse literature of the ages..."
>
> (Ayyangar 1972: vii)

The various *rāga* and *tāla* names, nomenclatures and technical terms like *nāda, śruti, rāga, mela, laya, gamaka, saṅgati, kāla, kālapramāṇa, manodharma, anuloma, pratiloma, avadhāna*, etc., which have significance philosophically/spiritually/metaphysically, are all essentially non-translatables since they are invariably tied to *Sanātana Dharma* at various levels and cannot be represented by one-word translations of any other language.

Sambamoorthy (2006: 1,2) points out that Indian music is noted for its extensive and rich nomenclature, which is a proof of the sound and comprehensive development of art in all its diverse branches. The names and terms of classification of *rāga*-s, *tāla*-s, musical forms, musical instruments, and the technical terms used to denote the *svara*-s, *śruti*-s, *gamaka*-s and techniques of playing instruments testify to the scientific and analytical genius of Indian musicologists.

> "Sanskrit is the mother of all languages in the world, barring one or two. In the same manner, the notes of the octave are the contribution of Indian genius to world music. In fact, the place of Indian music in comparative musicology is the same as that of Sanskrit in comparative philology. Both Sanskrit and Indian music offer material of world-wide importance for their scientific as well as aesthetic values."
>
> (Ayyangar 1972: 69)

It is however not a good thing that the entire gamut of Indian musical terminology is being denoted by simplistically, shallowly, casually, freely and loosely translated (supposedly equivalent) English terms even in books written by Indian authors/musicologists as well as commonly used by Indian musicians. This may be due to want of better terms, nevertheless these translated words are totally incapable of representing the complete essence, dimension and depth of the original terms.

The purpose of this paper is to identify such concepts and technical terms associated with Karnatic Music, to examine their roots, to understand what they essentially convey and signify, and to show how they are intertwined with the quintessence of our musical culture over the centuries. The focus will be to understand how some of the terminologies even transcend strict linear definitions, and can only be comprehended by deep experience. The paper also intends to throw light on the commonly used English translations of these terms and to analyse if at all they are any close to the originals, let alone denote them precisely.

Here I elaborate upon twelve major technical terms related to Indian music in general and Karnatic Music in particular. Definitions are taken from Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Mataṅga's *Bṛhaddeśī*, Cālukya Someśvara's *Mānasollāsa*, Śārṅgadeva's *Saṅgītaratnākara* (hereafter SR) and Pārśvadeva's *Saṅgītasamayasāra* (hereafter SSS) which are considered as the most authoritative treatises on Indian music. *The*

Harvard Dictionary of Music (hereafter HDM) and *Music: An Appreciation* (hereafter Kamien (1980)) have been referred to for the definitions of the Western counterparts of these chosen terms.

1. *Nāda* ≠ Sound

The very first *pāribhāṣika pada* that any student of Indian music learns is '*Nāda*'.

> *na-kāraṁ prāṇa-nāmānāṁ da-kāram analaṁ viduḥ ।*
> *jātaḥ prāṇāgni-saṁyogāt tena nādo'bhidhīyate ॥*
>
> (*SR* 1.3.6)

> "The letter '*na*' represents *Prāṇa* or life force and the letter '*da*' denotes *Agni* or fire. Having born out of the union of *Prāṇa* and *Agni*, it is thus named as '*nāda*'."
>
> (*Translation my own*)

Indeed, this *nāda*, originating from the primordial '*om*' or '*praṇava*', is the all-pervading eternal musical sound of the universe, from which originates all beings and all speech. It is the minutest, atom-like sound[4]. It is identified with the *bindu*[5] (*yato bindus tato nādaḥ*) which is the root or the centre point of the entire creation. It is undying (*nitya*)[6] and inexplicable (*anirvacanīya*). Empirically, it can be described as a continuous, sustained, melodious, musical sound (*avicchinna, dīrgha* and *madhura*). It is *nāda* that gives rise to *śruti*-s, and these give rise to *svara*-s and these again to *rāga*-s.

Nāda is of two types, namely *āhata* and *anāhata*. (*āhato'nāhataś ceti dvidhā nādo nigadyate – SR* 1.2.3) Sampatkumaracharya and Ramaratnam (2000: 29) explain that, a *nāda* that is produced by the conscious effort of man and is heard externally is *āhata*. *Anāhata*, on the other hand is internal, unstruck, non-vibratory and mystical; and is audible only to great *sādhaka*-s with transcendental and experiential yogic insights.

In India, the Supreme Being has throughout been regarded as the personification, creator and lover of beauty and therefore, the aim of all forms of art (and more so music) is to experience 'Him'. Lord Kṛṣṇa's proclamation in the *Bhagavadgīta* (10.22)- "*vedānāṁ sāmavedo'smi*" and

the *Viṣṇusahasranāman* (106) calling him "*sāmagāyanaḥ*" substantiate this beyond question. This fundamental notion gives rise to one of the conceptions of God i.e. as '*Nāda-brahman*', which is India's contribution to world thought. Sambamoorthy (2005: 14) aptly observes that God is conceived of as *Nādabrahman* – the embodiment of *nāda*; and through *Nādopāsanā* or musical meditation (*saṅgītopāsanā*), one can attain celestial bliss.

caitanyaṁ sarva-bhūtānāṁ vivṛttaṁ jagadātmanā ।
nādabrahma tadānandam advitīyam upāsmahe ॥

(*SR* 1.3.1)

nādopasanayā devā brahma-viṣṇu-maheśvarāḥ ।
bhavanty upāsitā nūnaṁ yasmād ete tadātmakāḥ ॥

(*SR* 1.3.2)

"I worship that blissful and matchless *Nādabrahman*, which is the very consciousness in all beings and which manifests itself as the cosmos. The Gods Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva are indeed embodiments of *Nāda* as they are worshipped through the worship of *nāda*."

(*Translation my own*)

Sadguru Tyāgarāja, in an unprecedented manner draws our attention to the transcendental effects of *nādopasanā*. In scores of his compositions in words such as – '*Nādaloluḍai brahmānanda môndave*', '*Praṇava-nādasudhā rasambilanu narākṛtiyāye*', '*Divyagānamūrte*', '*Nādopāsanace śaṅkara-nārāyaṇa-vidhulu vêlasiri*', '*Nādātmaka tyāgarāja*', '*Nādatanum aniśaṁ śaṅkaraṁ namāmi*', etc., he highlights the greatness of worshipping the absolute music or *Praṇavanāda*.

Nāda is often plainly translated as 'Sound'. Sound represents only *śabda* (not in the sense of a word) and not *nāda*. No doubt *nāda* is also sound basically, but any sound cannot be considered *nāda*. Only a pure musical sound which can be perceived in the aforesaid philosophical background is *nāda*. It is also noteworthy that no such (or similar) concept is found in any of the books related to Western musicology.

2. *Śruti* ≠ Semitone

Śruti literally means that which is heard. "*śrūyante iti śrutayaḥ*". While Dattila says '*śravaṇāt śruti-saṁjñitā*', Mataṅga elucidates thus

śru śravaṇe cāsya dhātoḥ ktin-pratyaya-samudbhavaḥ ।
śravaṇendriya-grāhyatvāt dhvanir eva śrutir bhavet ॥

(*Bṛhaddeśī* 1.3.1,2)

"Being derived from the dhātu 'śru śravaṇe' and with ktin-pratyaya, the word śruti is thus originated. Any tone or sound that can be perceived through the organ or sense of hearing becomes 'śruti'."

(*Translation my own*)

The nature of this *śruti* is thus explained in a *kārikā* to *Nāradīyaśikṣa* -

prathamaśravaṇācchabdaḥ śrūyate hrasvamātrakaḥ ।
sā śrutiḥ saṁparijñeyā svarāvayavalakṣaṇā ॥

(Ref p31 of *Nāradīyaśikṣā*)

"When the sound is heard at first, only short vowel is heard. That should be known as *śruti*, the one which has *svara* as its part."

(*Translation my own*)

Rajarao (1963: 5) explains that the most subtle and minute *nāda* that is audible to the ear is termed as *śruti*; and broadly, it can be defined as the least difference between two consecutive *svara*-s. He further says that, though in principle it can be said that *śruti*-s are infinite, most ancient musicologists have accepted *śruti*-s to be twenty-two in number and that they are distributed over a *sthāyi* or *svara-saptaka* (called an octave). *SR* says "*tasya dvāvimśatir bhedāḥ śravaṇācchrutayo matāḥ*" (1.3.8) These twenty-two *śruti*-s are discretely named and their exact frequencies are also ascertainable; only the names given in different texts written over different periods of time in the history of Indian music differ.

***Śruti* number**	***Nāṭyaśāstra/SR* nomenclature**	**Names used in recent times**
1	*Tīvrā*	*Ṣaḍja*
2	*Kumudvatī*	*Ekaśruti Ṛṣabha*
3	*Mandā*	*Dviśruti Ṛṣabha*
4	*Chandovatī*	*Triśruti Ṛṣabha*

5	*Dayāvatī*	*Catuśruti Ṛṣabha*
6	*Rañjanī*	*Komala Gāndhāra*
7	*Raktikā/Ratikā*	*Sādhāraṇa Gāndhāra*
8	*Raudrī*	*Antara Gāndhāra*
9	*Krodhā*	*Tīvra Antara Gāndhāra*
10	*Vajrikā*	*Śuddha Madhyama*
11	*Prasāriṇī*	*Tīvra Śuddha Madhyama*
12	*Prīti*	*Prati Madhyama*
13	*Mārjanī*	*Tīvra Prati Madhyama/ Cyuta Pañcama*
14	*Kṣiti*	*Pañcama*
15	*Raktā*	*Ekaśruti Dhaivata*
16	*Sandīpanī*	*Dviśruti Dhaivata*
17	*Ālāpinī*	*Triśruti Dhaivata*
18	*Madantī*	*Catuśruti Dhaivata*
19	*Rohinī*	*Komala Kaiśikī Niṣāda*
20	*Ramyā*	*Kaiśikī Niṣāda*
21	*Ugrā*	*Kākali Niṣāda*
22	*Kṣobhiṇī*	*Tīvra Kākali Niṣāda/ Cyuta Ṣaḍja*

(Sampatkumaracharya and Ramaratnam 2000: 34)

Though this is the actual technical meaning of the term *śruti*, it is also used in another sense in common parlance. It is used to mean the pitch or base key that is chosen by a musician to render his/her music. Vasanthamadhavi (2005: 2) points out that the range in which a person's voice is easily negotiable in three octaves is also called the *śruti* of that voice.

Parallelly, Kamien (1980: 62) says "No matter how often a piece changes key, there usually is one main key, called the tonic or home key. The tonic key is the central key around which the whole piece is organized". Thus, the word 'pitch' or 'tonic' used as an equivalent for *śruti* makes sense only in the context of this common usage and not in the context of the deeper original concept.

There is another term called 'Semitone' used in Western music, which is defined by the HDM (2003: 768) thus "The smallest interval in use in the Western musical tradition. There are twelve such intervals to the octave i.e., between two pitches with the same pitch name. The semitone is represented on the piano keyboard by the distance between any two immediately adjacent keys, whether white or black." So, it is the interval between two consecutive notes in a twelve-tone scale. For example, the interval between C and C#. But, this idea of twelve Semitones (which can only be equated to the twelve *svara-sthāna*-s or the *prakṛti-vikṛti svaraprabheda*-s in an octave) is far from the concept of twenty-two *śruti*-s which is unique to Indian music. Western music theoretically recognizes microtones or quartertones, which are defined by the same dictionary (2003: 509, 697) as "an interval smaller than a semitone" and "an interval equal to half of a semitone" respectively. Yet, as cited earlier, the smallest interval in practical use in Western Music is only a Semitone; and microtones or quartertones are not so precisely defined and demonstrable and thus not as clear and comprehensible as our concept of twenty-two *śruti*-s. On the other hand, it is remarkable that twenty-two *śruti*-s is not just a theoretical recognition, but Indian music indeed uses these twenty-two *śruti*-s.

3. *Svara* ≠ Note

A *Nāda* having a definite single frequency is termed as *svara*. "*svato rañjayati śroṭṛ-cittaṁ sa svara ucyate*" (SR 1.3.25) meaning "that which pleases the mind of the listener on its own, is called a *svara*."

> *śrutibhyaḥ syuḥ svarāḥ ṣaḍjarṣabha-gāndhāra-madhyamāḥ ।*
> *pañcamo dhaivataś cātha niṣāda iti sapta te ॥*
> *teṣāṁ saṁjñāḥ sa-ri-ga-ma-pa-dha-nīty aparā matāḥ ।*
>
> (*SR* 1.3.23,24)

> "*Śruti*-s give rise to the seven *svara*-s namely *ṣaḍja, ṛṣabha, gāndhāra, madhyama, pañcama, dhaivata* and *niṣāda.* And they are respectively denoted by *sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha* and *ni*."
>
> (*Translation my own*)

A *svara* is by default called a 'note'. However, it is interesting to observe that both *svara* and note do not mean exactly the same. The HDM (2003: 571) defines a note as "a symbol used in musical notation to represent the duration of a sound and, when placed upon a staff, to indicate its pitch; more generally (especially in British usage), the

pitch itself. Types of notes are classed and named according to the relationship of their durations to one another and are sometimes termed note values". As per Kamien (1980: 42) "Pitches are notated by the placement of notes on a staff. A note is a black or white oval to which a stem and flags can be added...the higher a note is placed on the staff, the higher its pitch". From these definitions it is clear that, a note generally means the pitches in an octave and specifically a symbolic representation of the pitch and duration in a musical notation.

A *svara* is much more than a note in many ways. Firstly, though technically each of the *svara*-s have discrete *śruti*-s (pitches), conceptually they are those that are derived from the *śruti*-s and subsequently lead to creation of the *rāga*-s. *Śruti*-s are twenty-two but *svara*-s are seven. Secondly, as the definition by Śārṅgadeva makes it clear, *svara*-s have the ability to delight the human mind on their own and this is what makes them different from *śruti*-s or *rāga*-s.

4. *Rāga* ≠ Melody

Rāga is a Saṁskṛta word meaning affection, colour, feelings, etc. In the context of music, it is anything that rejoices the mind – *rañjayatīti rāgaḥ* or *rajyate'neneti rāgaḥ*. (*rañj dhātu+bhāve karaṇe vā ghañ pratyaya*)

> *yo'sau dhvani-viśeṣas tu svara-varṇa-vibhūṣitaḥ* ।
> *rañjako jana-cittānāṁ sa ca rāga udāhṛtaḥ* ॥
>
> (*Bṛhaddeśī* 3.1.5)

> "A kind of *dhvani* (sound) that is decorated with specific *svara*-s (intervals) and *varṇa*-s (intervallic transitions) and that which delights the minds of the people, is called a *rāga*."
>
> (*Translation my own*)

It is rather difficult to define a *rāga* in precise terms. Grossly, we can say that it is the combination and arrangement of a series of *svara*-s in a particular sequence with a definite relationship to its fundamental svara or *ādhāra ṣaḍja* that forms the basis for *rāga*-s. The *ārohaṇa* and *avarohaṇa* (translated as a scale) is a mere entry point to understand the outline or contour of a *rāga*. Though theoretically it is said that *śruti*-s give rise to *svara*-s, which in turn lead to formation of *rāga*-s, empirically *rāga*-s go beyond the *svara*-s they are made up of and expand through fine, delicate *Śruti*-s. This has been pertinently advocated by Someśvara when he says

rāgaḥ pravardhate śrutyā rajyate mānasaṁ sadā

(*Mānasollāsa* 4.16.123)

"*Rāga* thrives or grows perpetually through *Śruti*-s and thus attracts/ pleases/touches the mind."

(*Translation my own*)

Well does the HDM (2003: 758) say -

"The pitches of any music in which pitch is definable can be reduced to a scale. The concept and its pedagogical use have been especially prominent in the history of western art music. The importance of the concept in non-western systems varies considerably and is often associated with concepts of melody construction and internal pitch relationships that go well beyond any simple ordering of pitches from lowest to highest."

Hence, the crux of *rāga* is its melodic personality and individuality (beyond its *ārohaṇa* and *avarohaṇa*) that is derived from what we call as characteristic phrases or signature *saṅgati*-s, which have been refined and defined over centuries of evolution. This well-established character of each *rāga* as well as a wide variety of phrases within the *rāga* bring out distinct moods and emotive aspects, thereby leading to *rasānubhava*, which indeed has to be deeply felt and experienced, rather than explained. This the reason why *rāga*-s in Indian music have long been personified and considered as almost living entities.

Also, *rāga*-s are aesthetic entities and can be perceived by trained ears. A *rāga*'s communicative efficacy is thus attributed to the receptivity of the listener, as much as the competence of the performer. The ability on the part of a person to recognise, distinguish and sing or play *rāga*-s indicates a high degree of musical culture.

India is the home of the *Rāga* system. *Rāga* is the pivotal concept of Indian music. The usage of *gamaka*-s to beautify, decorate and embellish the *svara*-s and the exquisite workmanship in the creation of music has been possible in Indian music only because of this *rāga* system. It is certainly the *rāga* system that paved the way for the development of *manodharma saṅgīta* or creative music along systematic lines.

"Indian music may be styled the *Raga sangita* and European music the *Samvada sangita*. They may also be syled as the *Ekadhvani* and *Bahudhvani* systems of music respectively. Each system has its own beauties".

(Sambamoorthy 2005: 18)

> "The builders of the Indian system of music knew the principles of harmony.... The extensive raga system and tala system which are unique features of Indian music could not have been evolved, if they had also chosen to develop their music along the lines of harmony. The ideal of absolute music has been reached here in the very concept of the raga. The concept of raga is India's contribution to world's musicology."
>
> (Sambamoorthy 2005: 16)

In the ancient times, *rāga*-s were initially referred to as *mūrcchana*-s, *jāti*-s, and it is believed that it was Mataṅga who was the first to introduce the term '*rāga*'. Different *rāga*-s have been in vogue at different points of time in history, some went out of usage and some newly created. Nonetheless, on the same lines as *nāda*, *rāga* has always been perceived with a spiritual outlook. This can be understood from the *kṛti*-s of many *santa vāggeyakāra*-s like Aruṇagirināthar, who in his *Tiruppugaḻ 'Kādimōdi'* has described God as dwelling in *rāga*–*'Rāgatturaivone'* and Tyāgarāja, who in his *kṛti 'Elarā Kṛṣṇa'* refers to the Lord as '*Rāgarasika*' i.e., one who delights in *rāga*.

Moreover, *rāga* has ever been perceived as a means of transcendence and the connect or harmony with nature was always aimed at. Different *rāga*-s relating to different times of the day and different seasons of the year have been identified to stimulate specific *rasa*-s and cause desirable positive effects on the human body and mind.[7]

'Melody' is defined by the HDM (2003: 499,500) simply as "a coherent succession of pitches". It further says "Melody is opposed to harmony in referring to successive rather than simultaneous sounds; it is opposed to rhythm in referring to pitch rather than duration or stress". Kamien (1980: 48) describes melody as a series of single tones that add up to a recognizable whole. This sounds a bit too primitive and definitely does not come anywhere close to the '*rāga*' of Indian music. Calling it a tune, scale or mode is also highly superficial and does no justice to the highly abstract and rich concept of *rāga*. *Rāga* is unique only to Indian music; if one has to comprehend and feel a *rāga*, it has to be as a '*rāga*' only and thus it is a non-translatable.

> "All musical cultures have melody and melodies, and within bounds of larger stylistic consistencies, a culture's melodies resemble and differ from one another in ways easily perceivable, if not always so easily describable; yet the consideration of melodies in relatable groups is the quickest path to grasping their individual modes of coherence....

> In some musics, melody types are named and are describable entities manipulated by musicians; the Indian *rāga* is the outstanding modern instance."
>
> (HDM 2003: 500)

Though, it is notable that the West at least recognizes this unparalleled entity of the Indian *rāga*, it is somehow not clear as to why it calls it 'modern' given that the *rāga* system in India has a history of almost two millennia.

Likewise, all the technical idioms and guidelines relating to *rāga* like *bhāṣāṅga rāga, rakti rāga, ghana rāga, graha-svara, aṁśa-svara, nyāsa-svara, alpatva, bahutva, gamaka, saṅgati, viśeṣa-prayoga*, etc. are also obviously untranslatable.

5. *Meḷa* has no =

'*Mila saṅgame*' (plus *ghañ pratyaya*) is the root of the word *Mela* or *Meḷa*, which means coming together or combination. *Meḷa* is the system of scales formulated in Karnatic Music to organise *rāga*-s. It facilitates systematic grouping and categorization of *rāga*-s based on permutations and combinations of *svara*-s. The *meḷa paddhati* is the proud innovation of South Indian musicologists like Vidyāraṇya, Rāmāmātya, Veṅkaṭamakhin and Govindācārya who (chronologically) were responsible for its origin and development until it evolved into a full-fledged scheme of seventy-two *meḷa*-s. The *meḷa*-s are scales with all seven *svara*-s in both *arohaṇa* and *avarohaṇa*, which translate into the *Meḷakarta rāga*-s or *Janaka rāga*-s (Parent *rāga*-s) under each of which can be identified many *Janya rāga*-s (Derived *rāga*-s).

Being inspired by the *meḷa* of Karnatic Music, Hindustani music devised the *Thāṭ* system. This is only a miniature scheme with ten *thāṭ*-s or parent scales. However, this is practically alien to the European musical tradition which apparently does not have any recognized system for classification of musical scales. Thus, the term '*meḷa*' does not have a corresponding single term in any other vernacular or musical jargon, and hence has to be appreciated as *meḷa* only.

6. *Laya* ≠ Rhythm

Laya, like *rāga*, is a formless form. It is often considered to be synonymous with *tāla*, which is not right. *Laya* is not rhythm either. From the Western standpoint,

> "...the word rhythm appears on two semantic levels. In the widest sense, it is set beside the terms melody and harmony and in a very general sense, rhythm covers all aspects of musical movement as ordered in time, as opposed to aspects of musical sound conceived as pitch (whether singly or in simultaneous combination) and timbre (tone color). In the narrower and more specific sense, rhythm shares a lexical field with meter and tempo. Rhythm in that specific sense – where it can be preceded by an indefinite article – ("a rhythm") denotes a patterned configuration of attacks that may or may not be constrained overall by a meter or associated with a particular tempo..."
>
> (HDM 2003: 723)

The above description confirms that rhythm is the most gross and is simply keeping to a beat for which there may or may not be any logical explanation. Kamien (1980: 36) also mentions that rhythm can be defined as a particular arrangement of note lengths in a piece of music, sometimes matching the beat, sometimes not.

The *tāla* of Indian music is also basically rhythm, but it is well-defined and represented in the form of cycles called *āvarta*-s comprising specific number of beats or *akṣara*-s. Like any other musical aspect, the *tāla* is also traced to a divine origin.

> *ta-kāraḥ śaṅkaraḥ prokto la-kāraś śaktir ucyate* ।
> *śiva-śakti-samāyogāt tāla ity abhidhīyate* ॥

> "The letter '*ta*' signifies Lord *Śaṅkara* or *Śiva* and the letter '*la*', Goddess *Śakti* or *Pārvatī*. Having born out of the coming together of *Śiva* and *Śakti*, it is thus named as *Tāla*."
>
> (*Translation my own*)

Unlike Western music, there exists in Indian music a great number and variety of *tāla*-s. According to Sambamoorthy (1998: 18):

> "The tāla system is perhaps the most difficult and complicated branch of South Indian music. There is no comparison to it in the other musical systems of the world. The time measures used by all the nations put together will form but a small fraction of the innumerable varieties of rhythm used in South Indian music".

Coming to '*laya*', the simple musical definition of the term '*laya*' is *kāla-pramāṇa*. Apparently, it can be considered as 'tempo'. Etymologically, the word *laya* is derived from the Saṁskṛta root '*līṅ śleṣaṇe*' (plus *ac pratyaya*), which means 'to merge with' or 'to be absorbed in'. Thus, *laya* is a highly subtle concept, which is beyond *tāla* or rhythm, and

encompasses both. *Laya* can exist without *tāla* or rhythm, but not vice versa. For instance, a form of musical expression like the *rāgālāpanā* which is principally *anibaddha* or unbound, though devoid of any *tāla*, essentially has a *laya*, which can be better experienced than intellectually explained, since it is highly intangible. It can only be perceived with a high level of aesthetic sense. In fact, any practitioner or serious connoisseur of Karnatic music will agree to the fact that each *rāga* has its own inherent *laya*, without the proper understanding of which, rendering Karnatic music does not result in creating the required impact on the listeners.

7. *Kāla* ≠ Speed

Like *laya*, *kāla* is also one of the *Tāla-daśa-prāṇa*-s. It is formed from the root '*kala saṅkhyāne*' (plus *ac* and *aṇ pratyaya*-s) and means counting, calculation or measurement. It is defined as the time taken to utter one *akṣara* or syllable. It is the degree of movement of music. It is the rate at which a musical unit called *akṣara* is placed or fit in each beat of the *tāla*. Depending upon the number of *akṣara*-s for each beat, *kāla*-s are determined. For example, if it is at the rate of one *akṣara* per beat it is said to be first *kāla*, rate of two *akṣara*-s per beat is said to be second *kāla*, rate of four *akṣara*-s per beat is said to be third *kāla* and so on, with the units or *akṣara*-s doubling with every succeeding higher *kāla*, however maintaining the tempo or *kālapramāṇa* of the *tāla* constant throughout.

I am not sure if the word 'speed' does any justice to this notion of *kāla*. Speed is a very generic term which only indicates fastness and slowness and not necessarily the rate of geometric progression (Eg. 1,2,4,8,16 or 1.5,3,6,12,24 or 2.5,5,10,20,40) that *kāla* stands for. Speed may only be accepted as the best possible approximately equivalent term for *kāla* for lack of a better term.

Likewise, most of the other *daśa-prāṇa*-s of *tāla* like *kriyā, jāti, aṅga, yati, prastāra, etc*., cannot be captured in words of other languages.

8. *Gamaka* has no =

Gamaka is undoubtedly the heart and soul of Indian music, particularly Karnatic Music. Being the most important feature of our music and the core of the *rāga* system, it lends to our music its distinctive character and personality. In other words, Karnatic music is what it is, due to

its *gamaka*-s. Grammatically, it is derived from the *dhātu 'gamḷ gatau'* (with *ṇic* and *ṇvul pratyaya*-s) and can be used in the sense of *gamayati, prāpayati, bodhayati* generally and *ya ātmānamiti* with reference to music.

sva-śruti-sthāna-saṁbhūtāṁ chāyāṁ śrutyantarāśrayām ।
svaro yad gamayed gīte gamako'sau nirūpitaḥ ॥

(*SSS* 1.47)

"When a *svara* assumes and moves into the shade of another *śruti* which is emanating from its own *śruti-sthāna*, it is termed as *gamaka*."

(*Translation my own*)

Rajarao (1963:12) observes that any usage or experiment or handling of *svara*-s which is aimed at beautifying the *rāga* and rendering aural pleasure to the listener, thereby bringing out the artistic skill of the musician is *gamaka*. In other words, it is the graceful turn or curve or stress or shake or corner touch given to a *svara* or to a group of *svara*-s that emphasizes the melodic individuality of the *rāga*.

In ancient musical texts like *Nāradīya Śikṣā, Dattilam* and *Nātyaśāstra*, the term *alaṅkāra* (and its many types) is mentioned which in later centuries came to be known as *gamaka* (believed to be introduced by Mataṅga in his *Bṛhaddeśī* for the first time). Since then, different musicologists have come up with different varieties of *gamaka*-s with clear-cut definitions ranging from seven to fifteen in number, but at some point, it got crystallized into a scheme of ten *gamaka*-s, which is more or less accepted even today as *daśa-vidha-gamaka*.

No doubt Western music also uses musical effects like *legato, staccato, vibrato*, etc. But, the usage is limited as the system of music is basically harmonic; and thus they do not very well correspond to the intricate *gamaka*-s of our musical system.

9. *Saṅgati* has no =

Saṅgati is a very commonly used term in Karnatic music. The word *Saṅgati* is also derived from '*gamḷ gatau*' *dhātu* (with *sam upasarga* and *ktin pratyaya*). In the context of a *rāgālāpanā, saṅgati*-s refer to musical phrases that portray the multiple shades and nuances of the *rāga*. A bunch of *saṅgati*-s in a meaningful sequence woven aesthetically, some of which are customary and some products of the artist's imagination and creative genius, form a complete and wholesome *rāgālāpanā*. In

the context of a *kṛti, saṅgati*-s can be understood as successive step-by-step musical variations of a certain chosen lyrical line, with the degree of embellishment and complication gradually increasing. So, these will be considered as first *saṅgati*, second *saṅgati* and so on. These are mostly the creation of the *vāggeyakāra*, which is *kalpita* or pre-composed from the point of view of the performer, but can also be attempted by the performer based on his own creative ability. Though *saṅgati*-s can be found in Hindustani music to a small extent (but may not be called as such), such an idea is unimaginable in any non-Indian musical culture. Therefore, *saṅgati* adds to the list of non-translatables.

10. *Manodharma* ≠ Improvisation

'*Manodharma*' is the hallmark of Indian Classical Music. In fact, it is *manodharma* which makes our music absolute, dynamic and special. In India, every musician is a creative artist. His creation is based upon his *manodharma* (*manasaḥ dharmaḥ*). He delights his listeners not only with his scholarly and polished renderings of musical compositions already composed, but also with his own improvised music. Thus, in an Indian concert, one listens not only to the music but also to the musician.

Manodharma may be roughly translated as improvisation. The HDM (2003: 406) gives the definition of 'Improvisation' as "the creation of music in the course of performance" and then goes on to explain the role, significance and degree of improvisation in music cultures across the globe. It argues that it seems most appropriate to reserve the term improvisation for cultures and repertories in which a distinction from non-improvised or precomposed forms can be recognized. It further observes that the world's cultures differ in the value placed on improvisation; in Western culture which is heavily dependent on notation, it has usually been regarded as a kind of craft, sub-ordinate to the more 'prestigious' art of composition.

The dictionary (2003: 407) finally recognizes that the most developed improvisatory systems are those of India and the Middle East and also that the knowledge of non-Western music helped in shaping improvisation in Western art music around 20th century.

Also, 'Improvisation' (which is fairly a very recent concept in Non-Indian musical genres and not a much explored one at that) only means any added improvised extension of the main

composition which can also be rehearsed, whereas *manodharma* is totally spontaneous. Moreover, *manodharma* also represents the unique traits of a musician which evolves and matures over a period of time. It is significant to note that in an Indian music concert (both Hindustani and Karnatic) about 60-70% of the concert duration is reserved for *Manodharma* whereas improvisation in other genres is very minimal. Thus, though 'Improvisation' is not a really bad translation, it is still unable to capture the complete essence of the idea of *manodharma* of Indian music.

In Karnatic Music, the various aspects of *manodharma* like *rāgālāpanā, tāna, nêraval* (*deśī* word), *svarakalpanā, viruttam* (*tadbhava* of *vṛttam*), *śloka, ugābhoga* (Kannada word), *laya-vinyāsa, tani-āvartana* are all non-translatables as they just cannot be expressed in any other language.

11. *Rasa* ≠ Emotion or Sentiment

The crux of Indian art forms is *Rasa*. It is the ultimate goal of any art; any artistic attempt that has all the necessary ingredients, but is devoid of *rasa*, is not considered any worthwhile (*na hi rasādṛte kaścid arthaḥ pravartate - Nāṭyaśāstra* 6.32+). The intensity, depth and comprehensiveness that have gone into the study of the theory of *rasa* in the Indian tradition fails to find a parallel anywhere in the world.

Rasa generally means '*rasyate āsvādyate iti rasaḥ*'- that which is relished or enjoyed, the technical definition of which is given by Bharata (*Nāṭyaśāstra* 6.32+) as "*vibhāva-anubhāva-vyabhicāri-saṁyogād rasa-niṣpattiḥ*" which means that the basic feelings in a person termed as *sthāyibhāva*-s get evoked and themselves result as *rasa*-s due to the combination and interplay between the attendant emotional conditions called *vibhāva*-s, *anubhāva*-s and *vyabhicāribhāva*-s and also due to their contact with the *sthāyibhāva*-s.

Rasa is translated as 'emotion' or 'sentiment', both of which may only be taken as corresponding words for *bhāva* which is the basic requirement for *rasānubhava*, and not as words for *rasa*. *Bhāva*-s always exist in the minds of cultured connoisseurs called '*sahṛdaya*-s' (also untranslatable) and transform into *rasa*-s upon involvement in beautiful music, dance, drama or literature. Thus, it might be almost impossible to express the spirit of *rasa* in a single non-Saṁskṛta word.

12. *Vāggeyakāra* ≠ Composer

The concept of a *Vāggeyakāra* (*dhātu-mātu-kāra*) is probably special to Indian music. A *Vāggeyakāra* can be defined as "*vāk ca geyaṁ ca – ete karoti iti*". He is one who aesthetically blends both *vāk* and *geyam* (also called as *Mātu* and *Dhātu*) and thereby creates a beautiful *kṛti* or *racanā*. His *kṛti*, in which both the *saṅgīta* and the *sāhitya* are simultaneously conceived and are thus of equal importance, is the result of an *intuitional* flash, which happens spontaneously and not of a pre-planned and systematic intellectual exercise.

The word 'composer' is normally used to refer to a *vāggeyakāra*. However, all composers need not be *vāggeyakāra*-s. In the Western context where *sahitya* is almost of no significance, a composer is one who composes only the music or just a tune. The same term being used in the context of Indian music, can mean someone who either conceives of the *dhātu* first and then thinks of an appropriate *sāhitya* to it or only composes music or sets tune to a *sāhitya* already authored by somebody else. Also, in the West, a composer often engages in the task of composing pieces for specific music shows and may thus derive substantial sums for his compositions. His composition is often well-thought-out and a product of conscious effort. He takes a paper and pencil in his hand and writes the music, whereas for a *vāggeyakāra*, his *kṛti* is a mostly a product of *tapas* and (divine) inspiration, the very first emergence of which is consummate. Not just that, he sings as he composes and composes as he sings. This becomes possible for him due to the extraordinary gift of genius or *pratibhā* that he possesses and also develops over a period of time (a combination of *śakti-vyutpatti-abhyāsa*). Thus, a *vāggeyakāra* is much more than a 'composer' and perhaps there is no single term in the English lexicon that can mean a *vāggeyakāra*. All ancient texts like SR clearly lay down the qualifications for *vāggeyakāra*-s and classify them as *uttama, madhyama* and *adhama*.

The *Mānasollāsa* effectively brings out the grandeur and sublimity of the idea of *Vāggeyakartṛtva* in our tradition when it says "*dhātu-mātu-kriyā-kārī pravaraḥ parikīrtitaḥ*" (4.16.15), that is one who does not only *dhātu* and *mātu*, but also cogently illustrates or demonstrates his composition, is considered the best (*Translation my own*). And all our great saint seer composers not only demonstrated what they composed, but they lived what they preached through their *racanā*-s!

That is the kind of contribution of our immortal *vāggeyakāra*-s to the immortality of *Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta*.

The HDM (2003:194) defines a composition only as "the activity of creating a musical work; the work thus created". It also acknowledges that "Non-western cultures vary considerably in the extent to which the concepts implied by the term composition are applicable". It is well-known that South Indian music in the course of its long history has evolved many musical forms belonging to both Pure music and Applied music, both Technical and Melodic. Examples are *alaṅkāra, gīta, jatisvara, svarajati, varṇa, kṛti, kīrtana, jāvaḷi, padaṁ, tillāna, devaranāma, tiruppugaḻ*, and so on; and for all of these, there is possibly only term – a 'musical composition'[8]. This can be compared to usage of just one word 'uncle' to address varied relations like father's elder brother, father's younger brother, mother's elder brother, mother's younger brother, aunt's husband, father-in-law, neighbour, male teacher as well as an unrelated elderly male friend; whereas there are specific and distinct words for each of these in all the Indian languages. This shows the dearth of vocabulary in English when it comes to representing the ideas of various facets of Indian culture.

Other Non-translatables

Apart from these, there are several other aspects which are exclusive to Karnatic music that cannot be simply translated to any other language. An attempt has been made to furnish a comprehensive list of these in the appendix.

Conclusion

Thus, it is evident that a poor translation is not just of the word but of a whole lot of wisdom that it embodies. Just like in other Indic domains, there is an acute need to retain and preserve these non-translatables of Indian music in their most authentic and indigenous forms, to ensure that the undesirable loss of meaning does not sooner or later lead to loss of wisdom and the obvious appropriation and digestion that follows.

Malhotra and Neelakandan (2011: 88-124) have vividly demonstrated the series of processes that are being carried out to assimilate Hinduism and various elements of its culture like Karnatic Music and *Bharatanāṭyam* into Christian history and dogma. The non-

translatable campaign is an important step towards counter-attacking this conspiracy and protecting our dhārmic wealth in the long run.

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Notes

[1]The paper could as well be titled 'Non-translatables of Karnatic Music', but most of the terms I take up here are applicable to Indian music at large (both Hindustani and Karnatic) but only analysed from the point of view of South Indian/Karnatic Music.

[2]It is important to note that the word 'Saṁskṛta' (meaning *samyak kṛtam* or well made) itself is a non-translatable, as the word 'Sanskrit' is inadequate to represent what 'Saṁskṛta' actually stands for.

[3]*mananāt trāyate iti mantraḥ* - Being *apauruṣeya* in origin, a *Mantra* is a sound, phrase or a verse capable of producing enormous spiritual effects upon repeated chanting and contemplation. It cannot be altered or mispronounced, as it has an element of great

sanctity attached to it. There is also something secretive about it, since it cannot be taught to everybody so that misuse and abuse can be avoided.

[4]Though I am set to prove that *Nāda* is not equal to sound, I have no choice but to use the same English word for explaining *Nāda*, since English language is the medium of this paper. This unavoidability of using the very same English non-equivalents applies to other terms as well.

[5] References to this *Nādabindu* can be found abundantly in many compositions. For instance, a Tiruppugaḻ by Aruṇagirināthar '*nādavindukalādi namo namo*' and a *kṛti* by Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar '*Jambūpate māṁ pāhi*' (where he says *anirvacanīya nādabindo*).

[6]*yo nādas sarva-bhūtānāṁ sarva-varṇasya cāṅkuraḥ ।*
yo bījaṁ mantra-koṭīnāṁ taṁ nityaṁ praṇamāmy aham ॥

[7]Though this is more or less strictly followed in Hindustani music even today, the present practice of Karnatic music believes in creating an imagery of a certain season or time of the day by performing a certain *rāga*.

[8]Even the parts of a composition like *Pallavi, Anupallavi, Caraṇa, Cittesvara*, etc (even though some of which are arbitrary or customary terms) do not seem to find equivalents in other languages.

Appendix

Many more non-translatables (some of which are Saṁskṛta, while some others are the regional vernaculars) like *varase, alaṅkāra, gīta, jatisvara, svarajati, varṇa, kṛti, kīrtana, jāvaḷi, padaṁ, tillāna, devaranāma, tiruppugaḻ, graha, sama, viṣama, atīta, anāgata, anuloma, pratiloma, avadhāna, naḍêbheda, kriya, aṅga, jāti, naḍê, gati, prastāra, laghu, druta, anudruta, guru, pluta, kākapāda, yati, ālāpanā, tāna, nêraval, svarakalpanā, viruttam, ugābhoga, suḷādi, janaka rāga, janya rāga, bhāṣāṅga rāga, upāṅga rāga, ghana rāga, rakti rāga, niṣādyanta rāga, vakra rāga, grahasvara, aṁśasvara, nyāsasvara, alpatva, bahutva, viśeṣa-prayoga, anyasvara, mudrā, pallavi, anupallavi, carana, cittesvara, rāgamālika, jati, śôllukaṭṭu, kônnakkol, madhyama śruti, samudāya kṛti*-s, *svarākṣara, padagarbha, vīṇā, mṛdaṅga*, etc.

Chapter 3

Tyāgarāja's Philosophy and Rebuttal of Allegations

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Abstract

Indian culture stands on four pillars called *puruṣārtha*-s (the purposes of human life), viz. *dharma, artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. *Mokṣa* is arresting the cycle of births and deaths and merging the *jīvātman* with *paramātman/parabrahman*. There are three ways of achieving *mokṣa* – *bhakti*, *karman* and *jñāna*. While *karman* and *jñāna* are not within the reach of common people, *bhakti* is. *Bhakti* can be traced to Vedic literature, and in India there are devotional musical compositions in almost all regional languages apart from Sanskrit. In fact, Gāndharva-veda (*saṅgīta*/Indian Music) is one of the 18 *vidyā-sthāna*-s enumerated in *smṛti*-s. It is an *upaveda* of *Sāmaveda*. In Karnatic *saṅgīta* there were three great composers of *kṛti*-s: Tyāgarāja, Śyāma Śāstri and Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita. This trio is called by the name - *Trimūrti* or *Vāggeyakāra-traya*. Among them Tyāgarāja had Nārada as his *mārgadarśin* and his *kṛti*-s reflect the essence of *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra*-s. Tyāgarāja was a scholar in Veda, Vedāṅga, *darśana*, *purāṇa* and *itihāsa*. He composed his *kṛti*-s in Sanskrit and Telugu, which run into

*pp. 75–101. In: Meera, H. R. (Ed.) (2021). *Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta - Past, Present, and Future.* Chennai: Infinity Foundation India.

hundreds. Tyāgarāja composed in a language that is lucid - called *drākṣā-pāka*.

According to *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra*-s, there is no bar on gender, caste etc., for *bhakti*. *Nāda-brahman* (*Śabda-brahman*) is worshipped through *Śāstrīya-saṅgīta* and that is an indirect path to *mokṣa*.

Recently some musicians have initiated a vicious campaign against Karnatic Music in general and Tyāgarāja in particular, without even a minimum knowledge of the philosophy of *saṅgīta* and the nuances thereof. "Tyagaraja was a social commentator...compositions in which misogyny is obvious" (Krishna 2017) "I hold the view that lyrics in Carnatic music are abstract entities of sound" (Krishna 2018) " ...Tyagaraja that I find disturbing on social and ethical terms" (Krishna 2018) - are just some of the venomous comments that are made on Social Media and the Fourth Estate. Such expressions are highly objectionable, offending and provoking. This is simply to tarnish the image of a great *vāggeyakāra*, who, without any desire for money/fame/mundane comforts, tried his best to cleanse the minds of common people expecting nothing in return. Very few people do we come across, who led such a simple and ascetic life.

This paper has two parts – the first part looks into the essential philosophy of Tyāgarāja that is embedded in his *kṛti*-s whereas the second part deals with the rebuttal of allegations against the sage. All translations are my own.

Introduction

Indian culture stands on four pillars, viz. *dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa*. *Dharma* is a phenomenon by which the universe is upheld. The term is pregnant with meaning and does not tolerate translation into any language. It is to be adapted and explained. *Dharma* is the base of Indian culture or *sanātana dharma* (an immutable *dharma*).

For the pursuit of *mokṣa*, while educated and intellectuals embrace the path of *karman* and *jñāna*, common people prefer *bhakti*. Between *saguṇopāsanā* and *nirguṇopāsanā* advocated by the *Veda*-s, it is the former that is connected with the path of *bhakti* which is via worshipping *brahman* in a form like Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śiva, Lakṣmī etc..

Saṅgīta has a special place in Indian culture. It has always been given the exalted status of Gāndharva-veda (an offshoot of *Sāmaveda*) and is considered as one of the four *upaveda*-s. *Ṛgveda* combined with *saṅgīta*

became *Sāmaveda* and even during *yāga* it is the only Veda that is to be recited with *sāmagāna* (rest of the Veda-s are to be recited with *ekaśruti*[1]).

An old saying goes - even a child, an animal and a cobra enjoy *saṅgīta*. Compared with poetry, *saṅgīta* is much more appealing and the resonance of the sound would certainly have a soothing effect. And there is a philosophical side which is more important - the *bhakti-saṅgīta* combination is employed to achieve *mokṣa*. *Nāda-brahman* (*śabda-brahman*) is worshipped through *śāstrīya-saṅgīta* that is considered as an indirect path to *mokṣa*. Hence, since time immemorial, *bhakti* and *saṅgīta* are intertwined.

In the Indian musical tradition, all composers propagated *bhakti* and Karnatic musicis no exception to this. The three great composers of *kṛti-s* in Karnatic music popular as Trimūrti-s or *Vāggeyakāra-traya*, are Tyāgarāja, Śyāma Śāstri and Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita and all the three hail from Tanjavūr district of Tamilnāḍu.

This paper discusses the personality of Tyāgarāja and the philosophy behind his *kṛti*-s as well as the criticisms of the saint and his *kṛti*-s by some present day 'liberal' musicians. Also intended is strong refutation of the allegations against the saint with proof/authority.

Tyāgarāja was a scholar in Veda, Vedāṅga, *darśana*, *purāṇa* and *itihāsa*. He composed *kṛti*-s in Sanskrit and Telugu in a lucid style called *drākṣā-pāka*. He had Nārada as his *guru*/*mārgadarśī* and his *kṛti*-s reflect the essence of *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra*-s.

Bhakti

What is *bhakti*? - this question is addressed by several *ācārya*-s -

"*athāto bhaktiṁ vyākhyāsyāmaḥ*" (*Nārada-bhakti-sūtra 1*).

Śaṅkarācārya (*Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* 32 & 33) explained *bhakti* thus -

> "*mokṣa-sādhana-sāmagryāṁ*
> *bhaktir eva garīyasī* ।
> *sva-svarūpānusandhānaṁ*
> *bhaktirityapare jaguḥ* ।"

Among different things that are instrumental in achieving *mokṣa*, *bhakti* is the best. Uninterrupted meditation of *parabrahman* is called *bhakti*. Others said that identifying oneself with *brahman* (*aham brahmāsmi, brahmaivāham*) is called *bhakti.*

Here in this context *bhakti* is the one supported by *śama* (control on mind), *dama* (control on sense-organs) etc.

Nārada-bhakti-sūtra (16)cites the opinion of Vedavyāsa that love in worship etc. is *Bhakti* -

"*pūjādiṣvanurāga iti pārāśaryaḥ*".

No Bar:

Nārada-bhakti-sūtra (72) clearly says that for embracing the path of *bhakti*, there is no restriction in terms of *jāti* (*strījāti / puruṣajāti*), *vidyā* (educated and uneducated), *rūpa* (beautiful or ugly), *kula* (*brāhmaṇa/kṣatriya/vaiśya/śūdra*), *dhana* (wealthy or poor), *kriyā* (one who performed *yāga* etc. and the one who did nothing) etc. -

"*nāsti teṣu jāti-vidyā-rūpa-kula-dhana-kriyādi-bhedaḥ*"

Here is a list of *bhakta*-s collected from *Purāṇa*-s -

1.	Bhṛgu etc.	- *brāhmaṇa*-s
2.	Viśvāmitra etc.	- *kṣatriya*-s
3.	Tulādhāra etc.	- *vaiśya*-s
4.	Sūta, Uddhava, Vidura etc.	- *śūdra*-s
5.	Vālmīki etc.	- *kirāta*-s
6.	Maitreyī, Caṇḍālā, Kātyāyanī, Sulabhā, Madālasā, Śabarī, Gārgī etc.	- Ladies

Bhagavadgītā (9.32) correlates the above concept of no-bar in *bhakti* -

"*māṁ hi pārtha vyapāśritya*
ye'pi syuḥ papa-yonayaḥ ।
striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrāḥ
te'pi yānti parāṁ gatim ॥"

"Arjuna! those, who find me as a resort, the sinners, ladies, *vaiśya*-s, *śūdra*-s etc. also, will get *mokṣa*."

Influence of Nārada and others on Tyāgarāja:

As has already been stated, *saṅgīta* is the best device to reach out to people, more so common people, whose knowledge of language and literature is very limited. Sadguru Tyāgarāja, therefore, chose to club *bhakti* with *saṅgīta* and drive the people towards the path of *mokṣa*. While doing so he also put in a lot of effort in cleansing the

minds of people in the society, i.e. tried that everyone in the society would get rid of the mental blemishes like lust, anger, hatred, jealousy, selfishness, lust for money, wealth, name and fame etc.

If we take a close look at Tyāgarāja's life, we certainly come to a conclusion that he was not only a great philosopher but also a proven social reformer, who could influence huge masses and has had great following even after hundreds of years. His journey was peaceful, inspiring, dedicated for a cause and his conduct was impeccable. Tyāgarāja did not exhibit any dislike against the fair sex or other castes and saw *brahman* in every 'thing' as per the Upaniṣadic saying - "*sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma*" (certainly every 'thing' that is visible is *brahman*).

In order to understand the real personality of the great saint Tyāgarāja, let us take some of his *kṛti*-s and discuss the tenor and spirit of the same with authority.

The available literature regarding the birth and life of Tyāgarāja tells us that the Saint, when advised by his eldest brother, Pañcanadabrahmam, to approach the King, exhibit his talent in *saṅgīta*, just like other scholars, receive his patronage and enjoy a luxury life, had rejected it outright – records say that it is at this point that Tyāgarāja composed the popular Kalyāṇi *kṛti* –

> *"nidhi cāla sukhamā rāmuni san-*
> *-nidhi sevā sukhamā nijamuga balku manasā"*

Is it the treasure of wealth that is comfortable or is it the service in the *sannidhi* of Lord Rāma?

Tyāgarāja used to live through *bhikṣā* (begging) by going from house to house to feed his family. He thought that through *bhikṣāṭana* one can kill his ego easily. Tyāgarāja composed a number of *kṛti*-s, sang and became a *kulapati*[2] of a large group of disciples, who lived in his *gurukula* free of cost. Such an uninterrupted *guru-śiṣya-paramparā* continues even today.

Let us take up some *kṛti*-s of Tyāgarāja and fathom the cryptic message and the deep meaning:

Tyāgarāja was a *jīvan-mukta* and as such did not possess any vices. However, in order to inculcate a kind of introspection in the minds of people he authored a beautiful *kṛti*. It is believed that Tyāgarāja, while on a pilgrimage, visited many holy places. When he visited

Tirumala Tirupati for the *darśana* of Śrīveṅkaṭeśvara and entered the *garbhālaya*, it was curtained. Then this particular *kṛti* had emanated from his mouth spontaneously (*āśu-kavitā*) -

Veṅkaṭaramaṇa! why do you not draw (remove) the curtain called *mātsarya* (jealousy) as it (in fact the *ari-ṣaḍ-varga*) is driving away the four *puruṣārtha*-s called *dharma, artha, kāma* and *mokṣa* - it is disturbing like a fly at the time of having food happily - it is like the mind going to an unholy place at the time of *hari-dhyāna* - like a hungry fish getting entangled in a hook; blocking a splendid light of a lamp; a herd of deer getting entangled in a net due to ignorance - my *mada* and *mātsarya* are, like curtains, blocking your *darśana* -

Têra tīyagarādā (Gauḷipantu - Ādi)

"têra tīyagarādā loni
tirupati veṅkaṭaramaṇa maccaramanu
parama-puruṣa dharmādi mokṣamula
pāradolucunnadi nāloni

vāguramani têliyaga mṛgagaṇamula
vaccitagulu rīti nunnadi
vegamê nīmatamunanusariñcina
tyāgarājanuta madamatsaramanu

Just ten days before Tyāgarāja's death, Lord Rāma appeared before him and assured 'I will save you' (give you *kaivalya - mokṣa*). He unmistakably visualised Rāma installed on the hill as members of his retinue were vying with each other in serving him with flowers and fans in their hands. Tyāgarāja was thrilled by this divine vision, he struggled for words to express his feelings and there were tears in his eyes due to joy. That is the intensity of *bhakti* that Tyāgarāja had in Śrīrāma.

The following *kṛti* proves in no uncertain terms Tyāgarāja's divinity. He rendered this *kṛti*, which emanated spontaneously, with Karuṇa *rasa* in Śahāna *rāga* -

Giripai nêlakonna rāmuni (Śahāna - Ādi)

"giripai nêlakônna rāmuni guritappaka kaṇṭi
parivārulu viri suraṭulace nilabaḍi visarucu gôsarucu sevimpaga
pulakāṅkituḍai yānandāśruvula nimpucu māṭalāḍavalenani
kaluvarinca gani padipūṭalapai gācedananu tyāgarāja vinutuni"

Brahmajijñasā:-

'*Athāto brahmajijñāsā*' (*Brahmasūtra* 1.1.1) is the first *sūtra* of Vedānta-darśana - one should do *brahma-jijñāsā* after being qualified - there are four qualifications (*Śāṅkara-bhāṣya* on *Brahmasūtra* 1.1.1) -

1. *Nityānitya-vastu-viveka* - having the wisdom of the things that are eternal and perishable;
2. *Ihāmutrārtha-phala-bhoga-virāga* - detachment in the comforts of this and the other worlds;
3. *Śama-damādi-sādhana-sampat* - '*śānto dānta uparatas titikṣuḥ samāhito bhūtvātmanye-vātmānaṁ paśyati*' (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.23) - control upon mind and upon sense organs, keeping the mind away from mundane matters, sustaining difficulties, being firm on *ātma-tattva* and confidence in *guru, śāstra* etc. - one should possess all these instrumental characteristics;
4. *Mumukṣutva* - utmost desire in attaining *mokṣa.*

The above four qualifications are prescribed by Śaṅkarācārya for one who wants to start *brahma-jijñāsā* (a desire to know *brahman*).

Let us take up some *kṛti*-s of Tyāgarāja and discuss as to how he tried to deliver the deep Vedāntic message to common people -

Jñānamôsagarādā (Pūrvikalyāṇi - Rūpaka) –

jñānamôsagarādā garuḍagamana vādā
nī nāmamuce nāmadi nirmalamainadi
paramātmuḍu jīvātmuḍu padunālugu lokamulu
nara-kinnara-kimpuruṣulu nāradādi-munulu
paripūrṇa niṣkaḷaṅka niravadhi-sukha-dāyaka
vara tyāgarājārcita vāramu tānane

In this *kṛti,* Tyāgarāja expresses his desire for *mokṣa* (*mumukṣutva*) – "O! Viṣṇu! my mind is free of any blemishes by meditating your name– why do you not provide me with *jñāna*?"

Śrī Kṛṣṇa in *Bhagavadgītā* (9.22) clearly says that he would take care of those people, who without any other avocation, keep on meditating him –

"*ananyāś cintayanto māṁ*
ye janāḥ paryupāsate ।
teṣāṁ nityābhiyuktānāṁ
yoga-kṣemaṁ vahāmy aham ॥"

"*tasyāḥ jñānam eva sādhanam ity eke*" – is the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* (28). Then Tyāgarāja says (in the aforementioned *kṛti*) "do not argue with me and why do you not provide me with *jñāna*?" A *yogin* should not get involved in argument with regard to *Bhagavān* or his *bhakta*-s as such a *vāda* is likely to escalate and also as there is no limit to such a *vāda* -

"vādo nāvalambyaḥ"
"bāhulyāvakāśatvāt aniyatatvācca"

(*Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* 74, 75)

The above attitude falls under "*śama-damādi-sampat*" as well as "*mumukṣutva*".

Since he declares that he has a mind that is cleansed we can believe that Tyāgarāja became a *yogin* as per *Yogānuśāsana* of Patañjali (1.1) -

"*yogaḥ citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*"

Paramātmuḍu jīvātmuḍu ... vāramu tānane etc. is nothing but the essence of Upaniṣad-s -

"*sadeva somya idam agra āsīd ekamevādvitīyaṁ brahma*"

(*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.1)

ātmā vā idameka evāgra āsīt, nānyat kiñcana miṣat, sa aikṣata lokānnu sṛjā iti, sa imān lokān asṛjata (*Aitareya Upaniṣad* 1.1.1)
idam sarvam yad ayam ātmā (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.6)
aitadātmyam idaṁ sarvaṁ, sa ātmā (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.14.3)
jīvenātmanānupraviśya nāma-rūpe vyākaravāṇi (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.3.2)
ātmata evedam sarvam (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 7.26.1)

Mahāvākyārtha:-

Tyāgarāja, in another *kṛti*, directly refers to the famous *mahāvākya*, i.e. "*tattvamasi*", and says that the *vākyārtha* of "*tattvamasi* is Rāma", which is the essence of all *Veda*-s and *Śāstra*-s, is very difficult to understand - it is possible if and only if one gets the *sattva-guṇa* by killing *rajo-guṇa* and *tamo-guṇa*, which keep on generating problems -

"*Tattva mêruga taramā* (Garuḍadhvani – Rūpāka)

"*tattvamêruga taramā para*
tattvamasi yanu vākyārthamu
rāmā nīvanu para
tāmasa-rājasa-guṇamula tannukôḷḷa bodayā
rāmabhaktuḍaina tyāgarājavinuta vedaśāstra"

In sixth *adhyāya* of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.14.3) the following sentence is found -

"*aitadātmyam idam sarvam sa ātmā tattvam asi śvetaketo*"

"Whatever is perceived is *brahman* only, O! Śvetaketu! You are *brahman* only."

"*Tattvamasi*" is repeated in that chapter and it is called a *mahāvākya*, as it renders the purport of that chapter.

This *mahāvākya* proposed the concept of Advaita - non-duality of *jīvātman* and *paramātman*.

Tyāgarāja, in the above *kṛti* asserts that - in fact, *tattvamasi*, the *mahāvākya* or the term *para-tattva*, both mean Rāma only. If one wants to know that, he should kill both *tāmasa* and *rājasa guṇa*-s which cause perennial worries to a person and should fill his mind with *sattva-guṇa* - "*sattvāt saṁjāyate jñānam*" (*Bhagavadgītā* 14.17).

Dvaita and Advaita:-

In a similar vein Tyāgarāja rakes up a question as to which, i.e. Dvaita or Advaita, is comfortable -

Dvaitamu sukhamā (Rītigauḷa - Ādi)

"*dvaitamu sukhamā, advaitamu sukhamā*
caitanyamā vinu sarvasākṣī, vi-
stāramugānu dêlpumu nāto
gagana-pavana-tapana-bhuvanādyavanilo
nagadharāja-śivendrādi-surulalo
bhagavadbhakta-varāgresarulalo bāga
ramince tyāgarājārcita"

Dichotomy or mutual difference (*bheda*) between two *jīva*-s or between *jīva* and *īśvara* is called Dvaita. Advaita is non-dualism or non-difference between *jīvātman* and *paramātman*.

In the first line, having put the question as to whether it is Dvaita or Advaita that is comfortable, Tyāgarāja says '*caitanyamā vinu sarvasākśī*' – Dvaita and Advaita denote *bheda* and *abheda* in the form of *śuddha-caitanya* - *ātman* is in the form of *śuddha-caitanya*. It is also called *sarva-sākṣin*. Here is *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.11) -

"*eko devaḥ sarvabhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ sarvavyāpī*
sarvabhūtāntarātmā karmādhyakṣaḥ sarva-
bhūtādhivāsaḥ sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca"

Saguṇopāsanā:-

The *Pāṇini-sūtra* "*devāttal*" (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 5.4.27) - "*tal-pratyaya*" - rules it as "*svārthika*" (in the sense of *prakṛti only*) - so *deva* is *devatā* - whether it is masculine, i.e. Śiva, Rāma etc. or feminine, i.e. Sītā, Pārvatī etc. the term *devatā* can be used.

Ṛgvedasaṁhitā (1.164.46) says that it is a single "*sat*" (*brahman*) that is described differently by different scholars -

"*indram mitram varuṇam agnim āhuḥ*
atho divyaḥ sa suparṇo garutmān ।
ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti
agnim yamam mātariśvānamāhuḥ ॥"

Tyāgarāja, while keeping *saguṇopāsanā* in mind asks Rāma – "which is your place of abode? Where all are you manifest? You are not seen even when searched carefully - are you there in *strīdevatā*-s like Sītā, Gaurī, Sarasvatī etc. or in the five elements namely earth, water, fire, air and ether, or in the different worlds? O Rāma, who is worshipped by Tyāgarāja, are you manifest in Śiva, Mādhava and Brahmā?" - this also refers to "*sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma*" (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1) -

Etāvunarā (Kalyāṇi- Ādi)

etāvunarā nilakaḍa nīku
ênci jūḍa nagapaḍavu
sītāgaurivāgīśvari yanu strīrūpamulandā govinda
bhūkamalārkānila nabhamulanda lokakoṭulanda
śrīkaruḍagu tyāgarājakarārcita
śivamādhavabrahmādula yandā

This concept is borrowed from *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (4.3) -

tvaṁ strītvaṁ pumān asi tvaṁ kumāra uta vā kumārī ।
tvaṁ jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi tvaṁ jāto bhavasi viśvatomukhaḥ ॥

Kutsitasevā:-

Tyāgarāja, just like Potana (the Telugu poet of 15th century, who translated *Bhāgavata*), refused to flatter the wicked people, who were full of ego due to wealth, because, Tyāgarāja says "it is you (Rāma/*daiva*), who provides wealth, grains etc. and you are *dharma* personified. O Rāma, praised by Tyāgarāja, the poets who dedicate their literary attainments to the wicked and unworthy in a *sabhā* are mean, and I shall not admire them".

Durmārgacarādhamulanu (Rañjanī - Rūpaka)

"durmārgacarādhamulanu dôra nīvanajālarā
dharmātmaka dhana-dhānyamu daivamu nīvai yuṇḍaga
palukuboṭini sabhalona patitamānavulakôsage
khalulanêccaṭa bôgaḍani śrīkara tyāgarājavinuta"

This *kṛti* explains the purport of the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* (43) - "*dussaṅgaḥ sarvathaiva tyājyaḥ".*

Śānti and *Dānti*:-

If one has control over the mind, he does not require *mantra* and *tantra*; if one thinks that body is not *ātman,* he need not perform *tapas*; if one thinks that everything is Rāma, he does not have the difference of *āśrama*-s such as *brahmacarya*, *gārhasthya* etc. If one considers the entire world as nothing but *māyā*, he is unaffected by the charm of women and if one, throughout his life, is not involved in any vices, there is no fear of the cycle of birth and death - says Tyāgarāja in this *kṛti*:

Manasu svādhīnamaina (Śaṅkarābharaṇa- Miśra chāpu)

"manasu svādhīnamaina yā ghanuniki
mari mantratantramulela
tanuvu tānugādani yêncuvāniki
tapasu ceyanêla daśarathabāla
anni nīvanucu yêncinavāniki yāśramabhedamulela
kannugaṭṭu māyalani yêncuvāniki kāntala bhramalela daśarathabāla
ājanmamu durviṣayarahituniki gatāgatamika yela
rājarājeśa niranjana nirupama rājavadana tyāgarājavinuta "

It is a great art that Tyāgarāja does possess: however profound be the philosophy, he encodes it in common man's language. The above *kṛti* is one such example.

In *Bhagavadgītā* (2.55, 56) Śrīkṛṣṇa calls such a person a *sthitaprajña* -

"*prajahāti yadā kāmān sarvān pārtha manogatān* ।
ātmany evātmanā tuṣṭas sthita-prajñas tadocyate ॥

"*duḥkheṣv anudvigna-manāḥ sukheṣu vigata-spṛhaḥ* ।
vītarāga-bhaya-krodhas sthitā-dhīr munir ucyate" ॥

"*yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*" (*Yogānuśāsana* 1.1) is also very much applicable here. In the *anupallavi*, Tyāgarāja says - "*tanuvu tānu gādani*

yencuvāniki tapasu ceyanêla" - this line gives the essence of the *mantra* of *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (2.5.6-7) -

"*hanta ta imaṁ pravakṣyāmi*
guhyaṁ brahma sanātanam ।
yathā ca maraṇaṁ prāpya
ātmā bhavati gautama ॥
yonim anye prapadyante
śarīratvāya dehinaḥ ।
sthāṇumanye'nusaṁyanti
yathākarma yathāśrutam ॥"

The above message is given in *Bhagavadgītā* (2.22) also -

"vāsāmsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya
navāni gṛhṇāti naro'parāṇi ।
tathā śarīrāṇi vihāya jīrṇāny-
anyāni saṁyāti navāni dehī ॥"

Then the *caraṇa* "*anni nīvanucu êncinavāniki yāśramabhedamulela*" reflects the same idea as that of several Upaniṣadic messages (here *nīvu* means *brahman* in the form of Rāma) -

"*sarvam khalv idam brahma*" (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1)
"*yatra tvasya sarvamātmaivābhūt kena kam paśyet*"
(*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.5.15)
"*omkāra evedam sarvam*" (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 2.23.3)
"*idam sarvam yadayamātmā*" (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.6)

Dhyāna:-

Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (2.4.5) prescribes the following -

"*ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ nididhyāsitavyaḥ*"

Ātman should be perceived, to be heard, to be pondered over and to be meditated upon.

Nididhyāsana of Vedānta is *dhyāna* in Yoga.

Yoga consists of eight *aṅga*-s (limbs) -

"*yama-niyamāsana-prāṇāyāma-pratyāhāra-dhāraṇā-dhyāna-samādhayo'ṣṭāv aṅgāni*"
(*Yogānuśāsana* 2.29)

Among them *dhyāna* is the penultimate device -

"*tatra pratyayaikatānatā dhyānam*" (*Yogānuśāsana* 3.2)

While having *dhāraṇā* on a point, if one, while arresting other things, concentrates on the same with the stream of similar cognitions it is called *dhyāna*.

The earlier six *aṅga*-s help in attaining *dhyāna*, whereas the latter is the cause of the last *aṅga*, i.e. *samādhi* -

"*tad-rūpa-pratyayaikāgrya-santatiś cānya-nispṛhā ।*
taddhyānam prathamair aṅgaiḥ ṣaḍbhir niṣpadyate nṛpa ॥"

(*Viṣṇupurāṇa* 6.7.89)

Bhagavadgītā (6.11, 12) clearly explains the concept of *dhyāna* -

"*śucau deśe pratiṣṭhāpya*
sthiram āsanam ātmanaḥ ।
nātyucchritam nātinīcam
cailājina-kuśottaram ॥

tatraikāgram manaḥ kṛtvā
yata-cittendriya-kriyaḥ ।
upaviśyā same yuñjyāt
yogam ātma-viśuddhaye ॥"

Dhyāna is the most difficult of all the *aṅga*-s as is explained by Arjuna (*Bhagavadgītā* 6.34) - *vāyu* (air) cannot be controlled and mind is just the same - it is worrisome, strong, hard and fickle -

"*cañcalam hi manaḥ kṛṣṇa*
pramāthi balavad dṛḍham ।
tasyāham nigrahaṁ manye
vāyor iva suduṣkaram ॥

Tyāgarāja, who is a *yogin*, asserts that *dhyāna* itself is *Gaṅgāsnāna* –

Dhyāname varamaina (Dhanyāsi - Ādi)

"*dhyāname varamaina gaṅgā-*
snāname manasā vānanīṭa munuga munuga loni
vañcana drohamanu kara bonā
paradhana-nārīmaṇulanu dūri
paranindala parahiṁsala mīri
dharanu vêlayu śrīrāmuni gori
tyāgarāja dêlusukônna rāma"

Meditating on Rāma (*Rāma-dhyāna*) is itself *Gaṅgā-snāna*. By bathing, time and again, in the rainy water, one cannot get rid of vices such as deceit and treachery.

Tyāgarāja also preaches that one should stop desiring others' wealth as well as other women and desist from blaming and harming others; instead one should long for the grace of Rāma and do *Rāma-dhyāna*.

Nādotpatti:-

Further, Śikṣā, Vyākarana, Pūrva-mīmāṁsā and Gāndharva-veda, in line with the philosophy expounded above, clearly explain the process of speech generation that is undoubtedly laced with philosophy: it is *brahman* itself which emanates in the form of acoustic sounds; it is the *Nādabrahman*. *Saṅgītaratnākara* (1.3.3 and 1.3.4) has expounded the concept -

"ātmā vivakṣamāno'yam
manaḥ prerayate manaḥ ।
dehastham vahnim āhanti
sa prerayati mārutam ॥
brahma-granthi-sthitaḥ so'tha
kramād ūrdhva-pathe caran ।
nābhi-hṛt-kaṇṭha-mūrdhāsye-
ṣvāvirbhāvayati dhvanim ॥"

In fact, according to Vyākaraṇadarśana (*Vākyapadīya* 1.44) there are two kinds of *śabda*-s accepted as the cause of understanding - *vaikharī* and *madhyamā*. The latter is popular as *sphoṭa*. The former is the acoustic sound that emanates from the mouth and it is the cause of *sphoṭa-śabda*, which is in mind and helps in understanding. Both are identical.

"*dvāv upādāna-śabdeṣu*
śabdau śabda-vido viduḥ ।
eko nimittam śabdānām
aparo'rthe prayujyate ॥"

Śabda is of four types: *parā* (that is there on *Mūlacakra*), *paśyantī* (at the navel), *madhyamā* or *sphoṭa* (in the mind) and *vaikharī* (that is the acoustic sound emanating from the body) -

"*parā vāṅ-mūla-cakra-sthā*
paśyantī nābhi-saṁsthitā ।
hṛdi-sthā madhyamā jñeyā
vaikharī kaṇṭha-deśagā ॥"

Parā and *paśyantī* are available to *yogin*-s only. *Sphoṭa* and *vaikharī* are for ordinary humans. The production of *śabda* is clearly stated in *Pāṇinīyaśikṣā* (6, 7, 9) -

"*ātmā buddhyā sametyārthān mano yuṅkte vivakṣayā ।*
manaḥ kāyāgnim āhanti sa prerayati mārutam ॥
mārutastūrasi caran mandraṁ janayati svaram ।
so'dīrṇo mūrdhnyabhihato vaktram āpadya mārutaḥ ।
janayate... ॥"

The *antaraṅga* gets the things associated with *buddhi* and puts *manas* on the job of a desire to speak. The mind in turn would hit the *jaṭharāgni* (digestive fire) and the latter pushes the air. The air, while moving in the chest generates a feeble sound which goes up, hits the palate and touches the speech organs to produce *varṇa*-s/*akṣara*-s.

Pāṇini (*Pāṇinīyaśikṣā* 11, 12; also *Nāradīyaśikṣā* 8) explains the birth of *Niṣāda* etc. -

"*udāttaś cānudāttaś ca svaritaś ca svarās trayaḥ ।*
udātte niṣāda-gāndhārāv anudātta ṛṣabha-dhaivatau ।
svaritaprabhavā hyete ṣaḍja-madhyama-pañcamāḥ ॥

There are three main *svara*-s (accents) called *udātta*, *anudātta* and *svarita*. *Niṣāda* and *gāndhāra* are born out of *udātta*. *Ṛṣabha* and *dhaivata* are from *anudātta* while *svarita* is the base of *ṣaḍja*, *madhyama* and *pañcama*.

In Indian tradition *akṣara* is considered as *brahman*. *Brahman* itself emanates from the body in the form of an *akṣara*:

"*akṣaram na kṣaram vidyāt*"
"*varṇam vāhuḥ pūrvasūtre*"
"*varṇa-jñānam vāg-viṣayo yatra ca brahma vartate*"

(*Vārtika*-s, *Pratyāhārāhnika, Mahābhāṣya*)

"*na kṣīyate na kṣaratīti vā akṣaram... so'yamakṣarasamāmnāyaḥ vāksamāmnāyaḥ puṣpitaḥ phalitaḥ candratārakavat pratimaṇḍitaḥ veditavyo brahmarāśiḥ sarvaveda- puṇyaphalāvāptiśca asya jñāne bhavati mātāpitarau cāsya svarge loke mahīyete*"

(*Pratyāhārāhnika, Mahābhāṣya*)

The purport is that *vāk/śabda* is *brahman,* and one who worships *vāk* would attain the *puṇya* of the study of all the *Veda*-s.

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad says that the universe emerges from *akṣara* (1.1.7) -

"*akṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam*"

Bhartṛhari at the outset of *Brahmakāṇḍa* of *Vākyapadīya* (1.1) declares that the universe is emerged from *śabda-brahman* -

> "*anādi-nidhanam brahma śabda-tattvam yad-akṣaram ।*
> *vivartate'rtha-bhāvena prakriyā jagato yataḥ "*॥

Bhartṛhari also clarifies (*Vākyapadīya, Brahmakāṇḍa*, 1.119) that the seven popular *svara*-s, viz. *niṣāda, ṛṣabha, gāndhāra, ṣaḍja, madhyama, dhaivata* and *pañcama* are to be identified through *śabda* only -

> "*ṣaḍjādi-bhedaḥ śabdena vyākhyāto rūpyate yataḥ ।*
> *tasmād artha-vidhāḥ sarvāḥ śabda-mātrāsu niśritāḥ"* ॥

According to the *Veda*-s the universe is the transformation of *śabda* and in the beginning it is from the *Veda*-s only that this world got the transition - explains Bhartṛhari (*Vākyapadīya, Brahmakāṇḍa*, 1.120) -

> "*śabdasya pariṇāmo'yam ity āmnāya-vido viduḥ ।*
> *chandobhya eva prathamam etad viśvaṁ vyavartata"* ॥

Keeping all the above concepts in mind Tyāgarāja composed the following *kṛti* -

Mokṣamu galadā bhuvilo (Sāramati - Ādi)

> *mokṣamu galadā bhuvilo jīvanmuktulu gāni vāralaku*
> *sākṣātkāra nī sadbhakti sangīta jñāna-vihīnulaku*
> *prāṇānala-saṁyogamuvalla praṇava-nādamu sapta-svaramulai baraga*
> *vīṇā-vādana-loluḍau śiva-manovidhamêrugaru tyāgarāja-vinuta*"

"Oh Lord praised by Tyāgarāja! In this world, is *mokṣa* attainable for those who have not become *jīvanmukta*-s and who are bereft of knowledge of music combined with true devotion towards you? The *Praṇava-nāda* is produced through the combination of *prāṇa-vāyu* (air) and *anala* (fire) and the same manifests as *sapta-svara*-s (Cf. *śobhillu sapta svara*). People do not understand the blissful state of Lord Śiva, who is a great connoisseur of *vīṇā-vādana*."

Criticism of Tyāgarāja and its Refutation:

A reputed musician Sri T. M. Krishna (2017) accuses on many accounts the great saint Tyāgarāja, who was leading nothing but a purely ascetic life - "... there are compositions in which misogyny is quite obvious.... In compositions like '*Menu joochi Mosa Bokave*', '*Dudukugala*', '*Enta muddo*' and '*Entha nerchina*' he follows the classical norm of objectifying women, implying the sexual vulnerability of men. She is always the vice, the seductress who will enslave the man, therefore he needs to be ever watchful. Women and their own self-worth, rarely of any conse-

quence... Tyagaraja's position on women and caste was undoubtedly shaped by his times....".

This reputed musician, it seems, has not digested the *āśrama-vyavasthā* nor has he tried to understand the nuances of language (*dhvani*). In order to attain *mokṣa*, one can directly take *saṁnyāsa* after *brahmacarya* or one may embrace *gārhasthya*, then onto *vānaprastha* and finally *saṁnyāsa*. Tyāgarāja followed the latter, i.e. got married, had a female child and got her married. Actually, the saint lost his first wife and got married for the second time.

Taittirīyasaṁhitā (6.1.8.5) says -

"*ardho vā eṣa ātmano yatpatnī*"

Patnī (wife) is half of the husband, i.e. '*ardhāṅgī*'.

Śatapathabrāhmaṇa (5.2.1.10; 8.7.2.3) also rules the same -

"*ardho vā eṣa ātmano yajjāyā*"

The scholar saint, Tyāgarāja did not only follow the Vedic dictum *in toto* besides treating his mother as *devatā,* as can be seen in his *kṛti*-s like '*Sītamma māyamma*' (*mātṛdevo bhava - Taittirīya Upaniṣad - Śikṣā*). This is not possible had the saint's mind was full of misogyny.

Tyāgarāja indeed had great respect for women – so much so that, in one *kṛti,* he tells Rāma that it is due to 'our' Jānakī that he attained name, fame etc.: "Rāma! You became an emperor after Sītā became your wife; you achieved the fame as the killer of Rāvaṇa. Having gone to forest along with you, while following your orders, (when Rāvaṇa kidnapped her), she kept her *māyārūpa* with him while keeping her *nijarūpa* with Agni. Having gone to Laṅkā with Rāvaṇa and staying there, under Aśoka tree, she became angry due to Rāvaṇa's words. Although she had the capacity to kill Rāvaṇa with a single look she desisted in order to see that you should get the fame" -

Mā jānaki cêṭṭa baṭṭaga maharājavaitivi (Kambhoji - Deśādi)

"mā jānaki cêṭṭa baṭṭaga maharāja vaitivi
rāja rājavara! rājīvākṣa vinu rāvaṇāriyani rājillu kīrtiyu
kānakegiyājña mīraka māyākāramunici śikhi cêntane yunḍi
dānavuni vêṇṭane cani yaśokatarumūlanuṇḍi
vāni māṭalaku kopagiñci kaṇṭa vadhiyiṇcakane yuṇḍi
śrīnāyaka yaśamu nīke kalga jeyaledā tyāgarāja paripāla

The expression '*mā jānaki*' / 'our Sīta' is enough to show the reverence and the sentiments of the saint for women. In the above *kṛti,* Tyāgarāja worshipped Sītādevī whereas in other *kṛti*-s he is allegedly misogynistic!

The jibe that 'he follows the classical norm of objectifying women' is highly objectionable. No sane person who has gone through Tyāgarāja's literature would pass such a sweeping remark.

Another example which have seen earlier is – "*etāvunarā nilakaḍa nīku ..... sītāgaurīvāgīśvari yanu strīrūpamulamdā* " – if Tyāgarāja was against women or wanted to objectify women, he would have not used this kind of respectful words.

Organized prostitution had been there in that society and some youth used to frequent to prostitutes' houses. In order to see that they pay attention to their *dharma*, i.e. be content with wife, Tyāgarāja composed '*menu jūci mosabokave*', '*ênta muddo*', '*ênta nercina*' etc. These *kṛti*-s should be seen through the prism of *sanātana dharma* and social reform, rather than through cheap mundane classical binoculars. Of course, 'sexual vulnerability of men' (which even a great sage like Viśvāmitra faced) has been there since time immemorial. It is very difficult to control the sense organs, and more specially the mind (*jahi śatruṁ mahābāho kāmarūpam durāsadam, Bhagavadgītā,* 3.43).

Even Śaṅkarācārya, Bhartṛhari and others preached the same: not to get seduced. What one should understand here is that Tyāgarāja is addressing the weakness of mind of youth and not propagating any hatred against women.

Let us understand the real purport of the *kṛti*-s that Krishna quotes in support of his allegations.

1. *Menu jūci mosabokave manasā* (Sarasāṅgi - Deśādi)

   (strīla) "menu jūci mosabokave manasā
   lonijāḍa līlāgu gādā
   hīnamaina mala-mūtra-raktamula
   kiravaṁcu māyāmayamaina cāna"

   Tyāgarāja, through this *kṛti,* wants to impress upon the youth not to get attracted towards the young ladies by their physical appearance because just like any other 'body', theirs too is filled with disposable wastage. This message is simply to maintain the essential moral values and conjugal relations in the society, not

to preach hatred against women. Verses with similar import are plenty in other books, such as *Vairāgyaśataka* of Bhartṛhari. Such an *upadeśa* is aimed at generating detachment in the minds of people that would culminate in attaining *jñāna* and *mokṣa* through that. Also, this aspect is an *upalakṣaṇa* (example) of the other so-called mundane comforts. Krishna, it seems, did not take the purport (*tātparya*) and went by the primary meaning (*vācyārtha*).

I fail to understand as to how a great Vedāntīn like Tyāgarāja can preach hatred against women while being well aware of the *Upaniṣadvākya* (*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.6) – *idaṁ sarvaṁ yadayam ātmā* - all this is *brahman* only.

Aṭu kārādani balka (Manorañjanī - Ādi)

> *"aṭu kārādani balka nā abhimānamu lekapoyênā*
> *êṭulortunu o! daya jūḍavayya e vêlpu seyu calamo têlisi*
> *vedaśāstropaniṣad viḍuḍainanijadārini*
> *baṭṭi dāsuḍaina nādupai nêpamêñcite tyāgarājanuta."*

This is a preemptive strike by Tyāgarāja – "I am a scholar of Veda, Śāstra, Upaniṣad etc and on my own I became a *dāsa* (of Rāma) and if someone throws an allegation at me, how can I tolerate?" We have discussed *śama-damādi-sampat* and how Tyāgarāja proved through his life how he possessed that treasure. From that one can easily see that the allegations are absolutely unjustified.

2. In a mood of introspection, Tyāgarāja enumerates a number of things that should not be done as well as those that encumber one from praying to God. Though he does not possess any one of the vices listed, it is for people who may possess the same, so that they would desist from getting involved in such things any longer -

Duḍukugala nanne dôrakôḍuku (Gauḷa - Ādi)

> *"...têliyani naṭa-viṭa-śūdrulu vanitalu svavaśamauṭa kupadeśiṁci*
> *santasilli svaralayambu lêruṅgakanu śilātmulai subhaktulaku samāna-*
> *manu.."*

"Śrīrāma! Which God would save a wicked person like me? ..... I was just like a stone, ignorant of *svara* and *laya*, equalling myself to great *bhakta*-s, preaching *naṭa*-s, *viṭa*-s and other uneducated people as well as ladies simply to enslave them." Here Tyāgarāja

wants to convey the strong message that many people in the society are cheating the less educated/uneducated people by posing as great musicians.

In the same *kṛti*, he says "*...môdaṭikulajuḍagucu bhuvini śūdrula panulu salpucunu yuṇṭini gāka..*" "On this earth, though I have been born in the highest Brahmin class, I have been performing functions, which are very unbecoming of my class."

Here he is targeting those *brāhmaṇa*-s who are not practicing the duties prescribed for them and getting involved in vices, and this in no way amounts to demeaning of other castes. The terms *môdaṭikulajuḍu* and *śūdra* denote the secondary meaning (*lakṣyārtha*) rather than the primary meaning (*vācyārtha*). The term "*gaṅgāyām*" in the sentence "*gaṅgāyām ghoṣah*" (the cowshed is in Ganges) means "on the bank of river Ganges" (*lakṣaṇā*). This aspect is discussed in all major systems of Indian philosophy and is universal – "London is on the Thames" means "London is on the banks of the Thames".

This *kṛti* clearly explains Tyāgarāja's *tapasyā*. Although he did not commit anything wrong, he imposes upon himself those vices, only to give a message to the people. Also, by this *kṛti* Tyāgarāja expects everyone to be more spiritual, nurture virtues and give up the vices that are commonly found in people.

3. "Who can adequately describe the beauty and charm of Lord Śrīrāma? Men (being blind to this), however great they may be, are constantly engaged in the thought of women. They put on the garb of real *Bhāgavata*-s (devotees), but become slaves to the charm of women. This is just like the milk container that cannot enjoy the delicious taste of its own content" -

Ênta muddo! ênta sôgaso! (Bindumālini - Ādi)

> "*ênta muddo! ênta sôgaso! êvarivalla varṇimpa tagune*
> *ênta vāralainagāni kāntacintākrāntulainārū*
> *attamīda kanulāsaku dāsulai sattabhāgavatavesulairi*
> *duttapālaruci têliyu sāmyame dhurīṇuḍau tyāgarājanutuḍu*"

This *kṛti* is a perfect example to exhibit the clean mind and flawless behavior of Tyāgarāja - one should emulate him.

4. *Êntanercina ênta jūcina* (Udayaravicandrika - Deśādi)

> "*êntanercina êntajūcina êntavāralaina kāntadāsule*
> *santatambu śrīkāntasvānta siddhāntamaina mārgacintalenivā(ru)*

para-hiṁsa parabhāmānyadhana paramānavāpavāda
parajīvanādulakanṛtame bhāṣiñcêrayya tyāgarājanuta"

> "One may agree or disagree, but the essence of human behavior is this: however great be the amount of knowledge one has acquired, however great be the amount of experience one has gained or however great might one be, all are slaves to women. Those who do not ponder over (*nididhyāsana /dhyāna*) the right path that leads to the philosophy of life, those who do not contemplate on the Almighty, those who hurt others, those who speak untruth only desiring for wealth and women belonging to others and those who slander others for personal gains [are all slaves to women despite their knowledge or experience or greatness]."
>
> This *kṛti* reflects Tyāgarāja's pure and perfect personality. It only brings out the natural human tendency to slip into vices, which the saint is warning us against. Where is the question of any gender bias or casteism here?

"She is always the vice" is a statement that is nebulous and ambiguous. The term 'she' refers to a *jāti* (class) which means all *vyakti*-s (individuals) irrespective of age, color, form etc. Some 'scholars' commit such blunders due to lack of deep Indian linguistic knowledge. The term 'cow' in 'do not kill a cow' means *jāti* (all cows) whereas the same in 'fetch a cow' means *vyakti* (a single cow) and both are inseparable (*nāntarīyaka*).

If one wants to decide the meaning of a word or sentence (*padārtha* or *vākyārtha*) he should proceed to a *gurukula* and learn at least Vyākaraṇa, Nyāya and Mīmāmsā, which deal with the nuances of language.

A similar mistake again – "(she is) ... the seductress" (Krishna 2017). Seductress is a woman who seduces someone. How can the whole gamut of women (*strījāti*) irrespective of age, color etc. seduce men and what for?

Tyāgarāja's position on women and caste was not at all shaped by his times. Actually if you take a serious look at his *kṛti*-s, it is clear that he focused on *bhakti* throughout. One has to take into account the *tātparya* (import) of his gamut of literature rather than pick up a couple of words or sentences. This aspect is discussed in Mīmāṁsā-darśana (*ekavākyatā*).

Moreover, for over two centuries not a single layman or scholar raised a finger against Tyāgarāja, much less, women or people belonging to other castes. Rather Tyāgarāja's *kṛti*-s are learnt with devotion, recited (they are on par with the *Veda*-s, so recited – otherwise rendered) and propagated by thousands and this also helped in maintaining harmony in the society. So Tyāgarāja is vindicated and his critics are outflanked.

One should bear in mind that ours is called *sanātana dharma*, i.e. a *dharma* that is immutable/eternal, and it does not undergo any change even centuries later. So, one cannot apply phrases like 'social commentator', '*smārta network*' etc. to Tyāgarāja, who rejected all kinds of worldly comforts (Ref. *nidhi cāla sukhamā*), contacts etc. - he was a *Yogin* who mentally renounced the world. Such concepts can be digested by only those who are trained in Vedānta.

Vidvān Krishna (2018) says the following -

> "...however considering that his words are even today sacrosanct – unquestionable pearls of wisdom that no one within the Carnatic universe would dare challenge - I am forced to debate his opinions".

How sarcastic is Krishna! He rather thinks that scholars as well as the common people are so blind that they are not able to understand the mind of Tyāgarāja through his words and challenge. People do react or get provoked if there is something that hurts their feelings or offends the tenets of social wellbeing. Tyāgarāja did not intend to cause any pain to anyone. He was a real *yogin* and has his mind cleansed through the *adhyayana* of Veda-s, Vedāṅga-s, *darśana*-s etc. Moreover, it is simply incredible that so many people, both educated and uneducated, for so many years did not understand Tyāgarāja's words and all of them were suffering from inferiority complex. The *yogin* was just following the guidelines of *sanātana dharma;* and is that a crime? In fact, it is Krishna who is provoking people against a great composer of lyrics which has earned him bread, name and fame. A critic must think beyond *rāga* and *dveṣa*. Such writings insinuate that the person in question is neither honest nor speaks the truth.

There is another aspect. Krishna writes about the *kṛti*-s of Tyāgarāja that they are "even today sacrosanct". What does it mean? Does Krishna think that Tyāgarāja's *kṛti*-s are just like a novel, which is thrown after a single reading? They are the gist of Veda, Vedānta etc. Since, as per the tradition, Veda is *nitya (*eternal); so also are the *kṛti*-s. Otherwise they would have not been alive for hundreds of years.

Here is another jibe by Krishna (2018) -

> "I hold the view that lyrics in Carnatic music are abstract entities of sound, language itself is a creative sonic body. In other words, the meaning of the lyrics does not matter as much as the sound of every syllable, accent, enunciation, extension and aspiration.... I realised that my own music - Carnatic music - could be violent to others".

What does Krishna mean by this? Is this not self-contradictory? If meanings of lyrics do not matter as he holds, that what is his problem if the lyrics are violent? Moreover, he is living on a music that is violent to others. What kind of *dharma* is this? Why is he even singing?

Patañjali (*Mahābhāṣya,* '*bhāve*', 3.3.18, '*tasyāpatyam*', 4.1.92) says that there are people who strictly follow a theory or behavior but denounce the same -

"*tatkārī ca bhavān taddveṣī ca*"

A perfect example for the above norm is unequivocally the behavior of Krishna, who lives on Gāndharva-veda, propagates and eulogizes the same but at the same time denounces the *kṛti*-s and blames their composers.

Saṅgītaratnākara (1.1.30) asserts that *saṅgīta* is an important instrument in achieving all the four *puruṣārtha*-s, viz. *dharma, artha, kāma* and *mokṣa*.

"*tasya gītasya māhātmyaṁ ke praśaṁsitum īśate ।*
dharmārtha-kāma-mokṣāṇām idam evaika-sādhanam ॥"

Elsewhere in Vyākaraṇa*, Mahābhārata* (Śāntiparvan) etc. *nāda-brahman* is considered as *para-brahman*, which is the very cause of the universe. *Saṅgītaratnākara, (*1.2.2; 1.2.167) declares that speech in different forms had emerged from *nāda* and *āhatanāda*, in the form of *śruti* etc. turns into *geya* and the same is useful in not only entertaining people but also in achieving *mokṣa* -

"*nādena vyajyate varṇaḥ padaṁ varṇāt padāt vacaḥ ।*
vacaso vyavahāro'yaṁ nādādhīnam ato jagat ॥ (1.2.2)
tasmād āhata-nādasya śrutyādidvārato'khilam ।
geyaṁ vitanvato loka-rañjanaṁ bhava-bhañjanam ॥ (1.2.167)"

Now let a scholar, nay, a layman compare this with the statement of Krishna (2018 cited above) and draw his own conclusion.

Krishna (2015) had also made the following remarks -

> "We brush aside the obvious brahminisation they had to undergo for acceptance". "... It is only from these investigations that we will realise that at the core of it Carnatic music is very upper caste".

In the first place, I do not understand as to what Krishna means by the term 'brahminisation'. Since time immemorial different groups of people in the society embraced different arts to eke out their livelihood, so also *brāhmaṇa*-s. The fact is that a *brāhmaṇa* should not strive for riches. He has to serve the society by disseminating knowledge, act as a *purohita,* as a *jyautiṣika,* should keep himself away from vices, try to generate spiritual outlook in the minds of people and so on. There is not a single tenet which restricts one, on the grounds of caste, gender, birth etc., from learning *saṅgīta* including Karnatic music. Smt. M. S. Subbulakshmi is a good example. Anyone is welcome to follow the tenets prescribed for *brāhmaṇa*-s. *Satya, ahiṁsā, bhūtadayā, kṣamā* etc. are the virtues to be followed by one and all.

Strictly speaking, the term "brahminisation" is quite unheard of. It seems that the term is coined by Krishna simply to provoke people against a particular section of the society without any basis. As far as the scriptures are concerned, there is not any ceremony or procedure to that effect.

In the same interview, he says "Music and specifically Carnatic music has given me a gift and that is a window to experiencing life beyond myself" (Krishna 2015). At the same time, however, he wishes to tarnish the image of the same that is centuries old. If he is indeed right, how come nobody had raised a finger against either Tyāgarāja or the music he propagated with all his zeal for a period of centuries but today someone finds something amiss?

The comments are uncalled for. His remarks show that he is not only dishonest but also did not bother to digest the sublime philosophy of Tyāgarāja's *kṛti*-s.

It is upto the general public to decide as to whether Tyāgarāja did hurt anyone at all by his *kṛti*-s on the basis of caste and gender or simply dedicated his life to disseminate Karnatic music and the great Indian culture laced with philosophy to common people.

Therefore, in conclusion, it can be reiterated that Tyāgarāja's *kṛti*-s are universal, useful in maintaining harmony in the society through spiritual and moral education, which is essential especially in the

modern times, and of course, they lead one to the final goal of *sanātana dharma*, viz *mokṣa*.

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Notes

[1]Pāṇini rules (*yajñakarmaṇyajapanyūṅkhasāmasu*, *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 1.2.34) – except in the case of *japa*, *nyūṅkha*, and *Sāmaveda*, all the *mantra*-s in a *yajñākarma* have to be recited in *ekaśruti* (not *traisvaryam – udāttānudāttasvaritāḥ*).

[2]The term is currently used as a rough translation for a Chancellor or a Vice-Chancellor but used to be the term used for the head of a *gurukula*.

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Chapter 4

Experimentation in Karnatic Music – How Far is Too Far?

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Abstract

The Karnatic concert format as existent presently, stands on the edifice laid by our great *vāggeyakāra*-s, especially Tyāgarāja, Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar and Śyāma Śāstri. Also, the structure of the *Kacheri* as devised by Sri Ariyakuḍi Rāmānuja Ayyaṅgār about 100 years back, has stood the test of time because it caters to both the connoisseur and the layman and is enriching and uplifting devotionally, spiritually and intellectually. The *sāhitya* of great *vāggeyakāra*-s are *bhakti* laden and convey lofty ideologies. Even the *rāga*-s used for each composition have a sense of divinity and appropriateness.

But of late, with the view of trying to reach Karnatic music to the masses, we see how the compositions of *vāggeyakāra*-s have been diluted and are used as tools of experimentation and as some kind of a peg to fasten *manodharma* aspects. Thus, the devotional content has been overlooked in an attempt to make it look novel and trendy.

This paper will analyse the content of the compositions of great *vāggeyakāra*-s from various perspectives to validate how these *kṛti*-s

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are not mere songs but a devotional and spiritual outpour, much beyond human comprehension. The *sāhitya* and *saṅgīta* of *kṛti*-s will be examined to show how both complement each other in a seamless manner to create a divine experience both for the artiste and the *rasika*-s.

The content of traditional concerts will also be analysed to see how it is effective in conveying the spiritual and devotional elements of our tradition in the most comprehensive manner.

The paper will also take up case studies of how our concert tradition is being tampered with over the past few years and the serious impact it has had in the course taken by Karnatic music. It will also elucidate some effective ways in which novelty can be introduced in Karnatic music without losing out on its core values.

Introduction

Karnatic music as we see today is a system of music that has evolved over the past several years to its present style, form and content. While it is regarded as a traditional system, it has also offered space for several experimentations and changes over the years and thus been a dynamic form all through.

In any sphere, experimentation is important for progression and it is all the more vital in the art field to keep it alive and moving. If the intention is only to carry forward what has been handed down to us, development will cease to happen and the art will stagnate in the process. But this experimentation has two sides to it –

1. That which leads to the progression of the art
2. That which disturbs its fundamental ethos and is thus detrimental to the traditional values of the art.

Karnatic music as we see today is a highly sophisticated system with a unique blend of science and aesthetics. But the experimentations and changes in form and content have been happening constantly over several centuries to evolve to its present contour as a cumulative product. New compositions have emerged with respect to their form and content, new *rāga*-s have been created, new *tāla*-s have been explored, new instruments have been devised, new method of presenting music have emerged. Now, with the music itself becoming a formal presentation through *sabhā*-s and cultural organizations,

concerts have become a variety package where artists try to experiment and discover new avenues to present the form and content of the music with a view to sustain audience interest and to make it interesting.

Earlier, *lakṣaṇa* or grammar of music was strictly adhered to and the quantum of treatises available on this aspect is testimony to how music was codified with strict discipline. While it is an accepted fact that *lakṣya* derived from listening and learning is of great importance, it is only *lakṣaṇa* that codifies it and gives it a concrete shape.

Karnatic music refers to the classical music system as originating and prevalent in South India – mainly in the present-day states of Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra, and Telangana. Though there are different ways of arranging the musical material in a concert, there are also some conventional methods of presentation, which have come down to us through the *guru-śiṣya paramparā*. The format of concert presentation that we see today does not specifically find a place in any theoretical work but it is followed as a matter of tradition. Again, though there is a model in which Karnatic music is prevalently presented today, there has also been a lot of experimentation in presenting its form and content with a view to give it a new and different dimension.

The Concert Format

This is only a model representation of a typical Karnatic concert as seen today – (2-3 hours duration). -

Varṇam

Kṛti on Lord *Vināyaka*

A brief *ālāpanā* followed by a composition and *kalpanā svara*

One or two more compositions and *kalpanā svara* (optional)

The main piece for which detailed *ālāpanā, neraval* and *svara* are performed followed by *Tani āvartanam*

Tukkaḍa items

The *Rāgam tānam pallavi* which was earlier an integral part of all concerts is not so now, due to the duration of the concerts becoming shorter.

In an article in *The Hindu*, March 21, 2013, music critic K. Ganapathi outlines the salient features of a traditional concert –

> "As per the conventional pattern, the concert begins with a varnam, followed by one rendered in quick succession, without an alapana – for example a song on Ganesha, Saraswathi or Subrahmanya and so on. These kritis are in familiar ragas such as Natta, Gowla, Hamsadhwani, Mayamaalavagowla, Sriranjani and so on. Kalpana swaras, if rendered, is brief. This healthy practice also served as a warm-up up exercise for the artiste. Some musicians used to render a pancharatnakriti of Tyagaraja at this stage. The artiste then presents an alapana, preferably in a "prathimadhyama" raga, followed by the kriti in the same raga (the alapana in a particular raga is automatically followed by a kriti in the same raga), appended with neraval and kalpanaswaras; sometimes only swaras without neraval. Thereafter, the singer presents the other items selected for the concert – one or two vilamba kaala kritis, sometimes preceded by a brief alapana and a couple of duritakaala (*sic*) kritis, with or without swaraprastharas. Then he takes up the main raga for detailed delineation, followed by the kriti, with comprehensive neraval and swaraprastharas. At this point, the percussionists present the tani avarthanam. After that, one or two fast-paced kritis are rendered, before embarking on Ragam, thaanam and pallavi (RTP). RTP was an important part of the concert and it would take 45 minutes to an hour to do full justice to it. In those days, musicians enthralled the audience with an elaborate RTP, normally in a major raga. The duration of the concert used to be three to three-and-a-half hours.
>
> In the post-pallavi session, (called "thukkada"phase) light pieces such as thillanas, jaavalis, padams, bhajans, slokas or verses rich in aesthetics in ragamalika format are rendered, before concluding the concert."
>
> (Ganapathi 2013) (*spellings as in the original*)

A concert of Semmanguḍi Srīnivāsa Ayyar performed at The Music Academy (1986) would serve as a practical model example for this –

Intaparāka – Māyāmāḷavagouḷa – Rūpaka
Śrī Mātṛbhūtam – Kannaḍa – Cāpu
Paṭṭividuvarādu – Mañjari – Ādi
Paṅkajalochana – Kalyāṇī – Cāpu
Karuṇāsamudra – Devagāndhārī – Ādi
Rāgam tānam pallavi – Bhairavī – Saṅkīrṇa Jhampa
Śaravaṇabhava – Ṣaṇmukhapriyā – Ādi
Viruttam & Tillāna – Paras – Ādi
Maṅgalam

Thus, the following points may be made with regard to a general Karnatic concert –

- It is usually a presentation of several items arranged in a specific order, based on the artiste's own experience, taste and conventional methods. The method of musical progression is such that a number of compositions are sung before settling on the main item, which is generally a *rāgam tānam pallavi* or a *viḷamba* (two *kaḷai*) *kṛti*.
- Another striking feature is the presentation of a number of compositional forms in a concert – *varṇam, kṛti, rāgam tānam pallavi, viruttam, jāvaḷi, padam, tillāna, aṣṭapadi, bhajan, tiruppugaḻ* etc. Many composers are also featured to lend variety in terms of the content of *sāhitya* and the melody.
- Telugu, Tamil, Sanskrit and Kannada are the main languages in which compositions are sung
- Theoretically, there are many *tāla*-s in Karnatic music but only four main *tāla*-s are used – *ādi, rūpaka, miśra cāpu* and *khaṇḍa cāpu tāla*-s.
- The concert encompasses songs on various deities as each composer has given vent to his/her devotion through an outpour of songs on various deities. Some composers like Śyāma Śāstri and Gopālakṛṣṇa Bhārati have concentrated on only one deity.

This traditional format which has survived over the years, as devised by Sri Ariyakuḍi Rāmānuja Ayyaṅgār in the early 20th century, was a great experimentation against the background of earlier concerts which did not offer such a variety fare.

Compositions – Their Role in Concerts

While in any system of music, be it Karnatic, Hindustani or Western, the composition has a specific role to play as part of the performing genre, it has a very special place in Karnatic music. Prior to *pallavi*-s and *kṛti*-s forming the core of Karnatic concerts, it was the *Praban dha*-s which formed a part of the performance genre. Since the *Prabandha*-s were technical and lengthy, they gave way to *kṛti*-s which became the core material of Karnatic *kacheri*-s.

According to musician Sandhyāvandanam Srinivasa Rao, earlier, the musical setting consisted of an elaboration of a *prasiddha rāga* in *mandra, madhya, tāra sthāyi* in *vilamba, madhya* and *druta kāla*, then a line on God or a *rāja* would be rendered or a starting phrase of a *Prabandha* or *kṛti* and after an elaborate *nêraval*, a few *svara*-s would be rendered with full *rāga bhāva*. Then, two or three devotional songs or *padam*-s of Kṣetrajña or Purandara Dāsa would be sung. It was in toto comparable to concerts of Hindustani music.

Noted music critic N. M. Narayan has also mentioned in an article in *The Hindu* (3 May, 1998)-

> "The crux of the Carnatic music concert is the great composition. Before the great kirtana appeared in the scene, the pallavi was the king–pin of Carnatic music and spread itself all over the concert. As a concession to the novel form of music that it represented when kirtana first appeared, it is said that the maha vidvans of the past who were all pallavi exponents condescended to **render what we recognize as the major compositions of the trinity as "tukkadas" to enliven the end part of a cutcheri**.....actually, the great compositions then filled the bill as the devotional like the bhajan in the concert of Hindusthani classical..... the musicians of those times really did not reckon with the destiny of the great kritis and kirtanas.....The exclusive quality of the pallavi became a thing of the past when the tradition of technical decoration of a theme line chosen from the song itself in extension of its rendition was discovered and later got firmly settled. The elaborate neraval and svaram mounted on the chosen theme line and their excellence made even the formal pallavi look redundant when it actually appeared in the concert. In the present day, the formal pallavi has become a rarity with numerous "pallavis" figuring in the course of a performance in the form of theme lines from the song movements on which neraval and svaras are liberally mounted."
>
> *(emphasis ours)*

In a personal interview with the writer, musician K. S. Krishnamurthy observed that while it was the *pallavi* which was earlier elaborated expansively, it is the composition which is predominantly used in present day concerts.

Ariyakuḍi's Experimentation with Concert Format

This shift in the focus of Karnatic concerts in terms of content is attributed to Ariyakuḍi Rāmānuja Ayyaṅgār, whose experimentation

with regard to the set-up of a concert has been path-breaking. The rationale behind the format devised by him seemed logical and practical in terms of catering the music to a larger audience. We must understand that this change was necessitated by the fact that Karnatic music had to cater to a wider spectrum of audience and thus had to offer a variety fare. This format was found to be ideal, and came to be followed by most musicians after his time.

Ariyakuḍi created a concert style for himself that involved beginning with a *varṇam*, singing many songs, short *rāga ālāpanā*-s preceding some of them, *neraval* and *svara*-s again within limits for many pieces, followed by the *rāgam tānam pallavi* which again did not last more than half an hour at most. He followed the RTP with many small pieces from the *Tiruppugaḻ* and other Tamil works. He also invariably sang *tillāna*-s composed by his *guru* at the end of the concert. This pattern soon became the rage and it was soon demanded from all other musicians as well and is followed religiously till date.

This format was of course necessitated due to the shift in nature of audience and coming in of more *sabhā*-s which catered to a larger and varied sections of people. This concert format never failed to impress the audience as there was never a dull moment or feeling of boredom throughout the concert. It caters to both the connoisseur and the layman and is enriching and uplifting spiritually and intellectually.

In this sense, the experimentation Ariyakuḍi did with regard to restructuring the content of concerts was a success and it has stood the test of time. This is evident from the fact that this format or concert formula is followed by most musicians till date. So, this also brings to the fore the point that any experimentation in order to be successful has to stand the test of time.

Later, Semmanguḍi Srīnivāsa Ayyar is regarded to have taken this art of concert presentation to greater heights through the way he experimented with a variety of compositions in different *rāga*-s, *tāla*-s, tempo and by various composers.

In an article in *The Hindu* by V. Subrahmaniam (17 December, 2012), we see an account of this -

> "…. The art of singing an effective *kutcheri* with excellent audience rapport was perfected by Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. Blessed with longevity, he lived 93 years (1908-2003) and had a long musical career

spread over 75 years. He could mesmerise audiences even close to the end of his life. His last *kutcheri* — an unforgettable one — was given when he was 90-plus. Although he struggled with a recalcitrant voice, he worked untiringly during his younger days to tame it to obey his musical commands. He was, however, endowed with a very deep musical insight.

His ascendency to the acme on the concert scene was swift and he remained there till the end. His *kutcheris* were full of energy and had large audiences glued to their seats. The verve with which he performed permeated the audience and kept them alert and attentive. There was not a dull moment in his concerts. Sharp enough to perceive the slightest dip in the energy level during his concert, he would immediately give it a boost by singing a fast-paced piece or sparkling *kalpana swaras*. Adept at the *kutcheri* craft, Semmangudi was a meticulous planner and ensured that all pieces were accommodated without compromising on the liveliness. As mridangam maestro Palghat Mani Iyer once remarked to this scribe, "Srinivasa Iyer's *kutcheris* have always been successful; never do they fail." His renditions were packed with tonal continuity, each variation smoothly dove-tailing into the next, and were, importantly, served in the right measure.

A class apart

His *kutcheris* boasted an excellent sense of proportion with the raga prefixes, *neraval* and *kalpana swaras* in consonance with the position of the piece in the concert. The first raga essay would be a short one and progressively lengthen as the performance built up to the main piece. The complexity of improvisation in his essays, however short, were a class apart. His slow and fast tempo *kalpana swara*-s were soaked in *raga bhava*....."

(spelling as in the original)

Compositions – The Core Material of Concerts

While cosmetic experimentations and changes have been made constantly, the core material over the past 100 years has all along been the same – the compositions of our great composers. The Karnatic concert content as existent presently, stands on the edifice laid by our great *vāggeyakāra*-s, especially Tyāgarāja, Muttusvāmi Dīkśitar and Śyāma Śāstri. The *sāhitya* of great *vāggeyakāra*-s are *bhakti*-laden and convey lofty ideologies. Even the *rāga*-s used for each composition has a sense of divinity and appropriateness.

If we look at the history of music, we see that many composers have adorned the devotional scenario and poured out their *bhakti* through

the medium of songs. Āṇḍāḷ, Appar, Sundarar, Māṇikkavācagar, Jayadeva, Annamācārya, Purandaradāsa, Ūttukkāḍu Venkaṭa Kavi, Tyāgarāja, Muttusvāmi Dīkśitar, Śyāma Śāstri, Gopālakṛṣṇa Bhārati, Pāpanāsam Sivan are some of the great *vāggeyakāra*-s who have given us a treasure of compositions and all these form the core material of concerts.

Inclusion of Several Forms in Karnatic Concerts

It should be noted here that unlike Hindustani concerts which encompass only a limited genre as part of their performance, Karnatic music has been more open in approach, in the sense that many semi-classical forms have also been absorbed into the system and made a part of it.

Hindustani music has the *Khyāl* and *Dhrupad* as the two genres presented mainly in concerts. Thus, a *Khyāl* concert will include several *Khyāl*-s and it may be winded up with a *Bhajan*. A *Dhrupad* concert will again include only this genre. But, Karnatic concert has been acquiring a different colour over the years with addition of various musical forms to it. For example, the *Tukkaḍa* section of a Karnatic concert has come to include so many different musical forms as a part of it – *Taraṅgam, Aṣṭapadī, Dāsara pada*, Annamācārya *saṅkīrtana*, Patriotic songs, *Tillāna, Utsava Sampradāya* and *Divyanāma Kīrtana*-s of Tyāgarāja, *Bhajan*-s, *Abhang*-s, *Tevāram, Tiruppugaḷ*, folk melodies and *Kāvaḍicindu*, light songs like *Rabīndra Saṅgīt, Śloka* and so on. In fact, these pieces have become so attractive that sometimes, the common audience looks forward to these pieces more than the hardcore classical material presented in concerts.

Interestingly, many *Tukkaḍa* pieces have been modified to give them the status of a classical piece and this experimentation with the forms has resulted in their distortion by way of truncation of *sāhitya* etc, some aspects of which are discussed later.

A closer analysis would reveal that the composition of Karnatic music is most often not presented in its original form as intended by the composer. It is ideally crafted and used as a tool to exhibit the technical skill of the artiste and this is a significant change we see over the years now. In fact, this trend of decoupling the musical aspect from the devotional aspect and tagging it as “art music” is getting more

intense, as seen through the case study of many concerts by various artists.

Though *manodharma saṅgīta* is a separate domain of creativity for the artiste, it is interesting to note that many artists exercise their creativity even within the composition by adding their own *saṅgati*-s and other workmanship. Thus, this process of experimentation with music is not just limited to *manodharma* but also to the *kalpita* elements in Karnatic music. This can be further explained through how there are several ways of singing the same composition by different artistes though its core content may be the same. In this context, experimentation with the composition is not about changing its structure, but making cosmetic changes according to one's individual virtuosity and creativity.

Experimental Concerts in Karnatic Music

Many experiments have been attempted over the past thirty years to put the material of Karnatic music in a new garb. Some have been meaningful experiments while some have diminished the values of the music.

Examples of some thematic concerts conducted by various *sabhā*-s-

- Concert based on compositions of a particular composer like Tyāgarāja, Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar, Śyāma Śāstri, Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha, Annamācārya, etc. This is the most significant experimentation that has happened over the past 30 years where a composer's day is celebrated through a series of thematic concerts of only his/her compositions.
- Concert on a particular deity encompassing songs by various composers. This has become a very popular concept with a number of religious festivals having concerts as part of the celebrations. Thus, a festival like Navarātri will have compositions on Devī by various composers; Śrī Kṛṣṇa Jayantī will feature various compositions on Kṛṣṇa and so on.
- Concert based on a particular *rāga* like Toḍi, Kalyāṇī, Bhairavī, etc
- *Rāgam tānam pallavi* concert
- Concert based on highlighting *tāla aspects*

But what is important in such concerts is that though they may have a different dimension, the approach and build-up of the concert is very much as per the model of a general concert. Hence, they have stood the test of time and continue to be in practice. In fact, thematic concerts have grown to a large extent in recent years.

On the other hand, there have also been artists who have deliberately tried to move against tradition and do something different on an experimental basis.

One example of a senior artiste who did such an experimentation is *Mṛdaṅgam* maestro Guru Kāraikkuḍi Maṇi who, in order to give primary status to the *Mṛdaṅgam* artiste as against the main artiste, altered the sitting position of the *Mṛdaṅgam* artiste. Thus, in a few such concerts, he sat centre stage. Also, to give prime focus to the rhythmic aspects of music, he started the concert with a *Tani āvartanam*. This concert was performed at Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai in 1991.

Prof. T. R. Subramaniam had performed a concert in Chennai, where he started in an unconventional manner with the *tillāna* and ended the concert with a *varṇam*.

Other examples are the concerts by artiste T. M. Krishna. Examples of some such concerts performed by him are – singing the *varṇam* as a main piece in a concert, singing the *ālāpanā* in a *rāga* unconnected to the song that is to follow, singing *kalpanā svarā*-s in a *rāga* different than that of the composition to which it is sung, singing *tānam* to *kṛti* and also in *rāga*-s independent of the *kṛti*, bringing in non-devotional themes and non-religious themes into the main content of the concert and so on. While such experiments may display novelty, they cannot be regarded as successful experiments as they have not gained acceptance in the art community. Also, when such experiments are not taken up as a model to be followed by any other artiste, these experiments are not regarded to be worthy at all. Thus, any experiment, in order to be successful, must have followers and takers and also be able to survive the test of time.

Truncation of Forms

We also see how other devotional forms like *Aṣṭapadī, Taraṅgam* have been trimmed or cut short to fit into a concert structure. This experimentation has caused serious damage to the compositional

form as such and distorted the original form of many works so as to make them ideal for concert presentation.

Example of an *Aṣṭapadī* -

candana-carcita-nīla-kalevara-pīta-vasana-vana-mālī ।
keli-calan-maṇi-kuṇḍala-maṇḍita-gaṇḍa-yuga-smita-śālī ।।1 ।।

haririha mugdha-vadhū-nikare vilāsini vilāsati kelī-pare ।। dhruvapadam ।।

pīna-payodhara-bhāra-bhareṇa hariṁ parirabhya sarāgam ।
gopa-vadhūr anugāyati kācid udañcita-pañcama-rāgam ।। 2 ।।

kāpi vilāsa-vilola-vilocana-khelana-janita-manojam ।
dhyāyati mugdha-vadhūr adhikaṁ madhusūdana-vadana-sarojam ।। 3 ।।

kāpi kapola-tale militā lapituṁ kim api śruti-mūle ।
cāru cucumba nitambavatī dayitaṁ pulakair anukūle ।। 4 ।।

keli-kalā-kutukena ca kācid amuṁ yamunā-jala-kūle ।
mañjula-vañjula-kuñja-gataṁ vicakarṣa kareṇa dukūle ।। 5 ।।

kara-tala-tāla-tarala-valayāvali-kalita-kalasvana-vaṁśe ।
rāsa-rase saha nṛtya-parā hariṇā yuvatiḥ praśaśaṁse ।। 6 ।।

śliṣyati kām api cumbati kām api kām api ramayati rāmām ।
paśyati sa-smita-cāru-tarām aparām anugacchati vāmām ।। 7 ।।

śrī-jayadeva-bhaṇitam idam adbhuta-keśava-keli-rahasyam ।
vṛdāvana-vipine lalitaṁ vitanotu śubhāni yaśasyam ।। 8 ।।

Meaning

"He, whose sapphirine-bluish body is bedaubed with sandal paste, clad in ochry silks, and garlanded with a garland of basil leaves and flowers, and whose both cheeks are embellished by the sways of his gem-studded knobby ear-hangings, while he is romping, he that gleeful Krishna is now amidst a coterie of ravishing and coyly damsels, in a rapturous ronde...

Someone, a milkmaid, eager to ease the weightiness of her bosomy bust is cleaving to Krishna in a overarching manner, and then in a heightened octave she is singing melodiously, in tune with his fluting, hence, he that gleeful Krishna is now amidst a coterie of ravishing and coyly damsels, in a rapturous ronde...

Even someone, a meekish damsel, for being an inexpert in romancing she is helpless, but caused is the passion in her mind, by the romantic gesticulations of Krishna and even by his slanting and sliding glances of his verily flustered wide eyes, thus she at once started gazing at the beautiful lotus like face of the eliminator of demon Madhu, namely

Krishna, and fixatedly contemplating on that face, thus, that gleeful Krishna is now amidst a coterie of ravishing and coyly damsels, in a rapturous ronde...

Even someone neared him as though to say something in his ear, and on reaching her lover Krishna, his tickly face conveniently turned sideways in all ears for her, thus she kissed his cheek conveniently and amusingly, thus that gleeful Krishna is now amidst a coterie of ravishing and coyly damsels, in a rapturous ronde...

Someone, another milkmaid, enthusiastic in the artistry of plays of passion, and passionate to play in the waters of river Yamuna with Krishna, found him frolicking in a beautiful bower at that Ashoka tree, and she is gleefully lugging him along by his dress with her hand, thus that gleeful Krishna is now amidst a coterie of ravishing and coyly damsels, in a rapturous ronde, thus, that gleeful Krishna is now amidst a coterie of ravishing and coyly damsels, in a rapturous ronde...

While a maiden is engrossed in ronde dancing, along with zealously dancing Krishna, she is clapping her palms in rhythm to his fluting, while doing so the sets of her heavy wrist metal roundlets are clanking in undefinable dulcet clanks, and those rhythmic clanks are intermingling with that fluting, and that flautist of mohana vamshi, the Divine Flute, namely Krishna, is singing the praises unto her, thus, that gleeful Krishna is now amidst a coterie of ravishing and coyly damsels, in a rapturous ronde..

Such frolicsome Krishna is even cleaving to someone, and even kissing someone, and even delighting someone, a delightful damsel, and paying his attention to another beaming and most beautiful damsel, and he is going in tow after one with her slanting glances, thus, that gleeful Krishna is now amidst a coterie of ravishing and coyly damsels, in a rapturous ronde...

This song, which endows gloriousness to the devotees of Krishna, if sung or danced to its tunes, and which contains the arcaneness about the exquisite plays of passion of Krishna in equally arcanus Vrindavan, is articulated by Jayadeva, thus let it radiate prosperities to one and all..."

(Rao 2008)

Though this is the text of the original work, it has been truncated with the first and last *caraṇa* as part of the text of the song thus –

candana-carcita-nīla-kalevara-pīta-vasana-vana-mālī ।
keli-calan-maṇi-kuṇḍala-maṇḍita-gaṇḍa-yuga-smita-śālī ॥ 1 ॥
haririha mugdha-vadhū-nikare vilāsini vilāsati kelī-pare

śrī-jayadeva-bhaṇitam idam adbhuta-keśava-keli-rahasyam ।
vṛndāvana-vipine lalitaṁ vitanotu śubhāni yaśasyam ॥ 8 ॥

Thus, this experimentation of tailoring all the devotional songs of our Hindu pantheon to make them appear in a *kṛti* format has been a very significant one. This concept also applies to some compositions of Tyāgarāja and Śyāma Śāstri which have multiple *caraṇa*-s but they are done away with when presented as part of the concert genre.

The Edifice of Karnatic Music

Coming to the edifice of Karnatic music, it stands on three basic components – *rāga, tāla* and *sāhitya*. A lot of experimentations have been done in these three areas and this has resulted in each of these branches developing into highly sophisticated areas.

Prof. P. Sambamoorthy defines *rāga* as – "A raga might be defined as a melody mould or melody type. It consists of a series of notes, which bear a definite relationship to *adhara shadja* and which occur in a particular sequence." (Vol 2: 3)

Rāga-s have evolved in different ways over the years and the concept of *janaka-janya rāga*-s that we use as the norm for classification of *rāga*-s today is a much later concept. The Kanakāṅgi scheme that we follow today is the treasure expounded by Govindācārya in the *Saṅgraha Cūḍāmaṇi*. Also, the fact that a particular *rāga* is reckoned as a *janaka rāga* for certain reasons and another *rāga* as a *janya rāga* for certain other reasons has no bearing on the practical merit of the *rāga* concerned. Thus, a *janaka rāga* need not necessarily have more merit than a *janya rāga* in terms of its melodic content and individuality. Rather, it could be said that many scales which have come to exist as a result of the *janaka rāga* classification survive only through permutation and combination of notes and thus, do not have an entity of their own.

Experimentation with Notes to Create New *Rāga*-s

This concept of experimentation with permutation and combination of notes was given full form by Tyāgarāja who created so many *rāga*-s in the process. These are called *vinta rāga*-s.

Some examples of *kṛti*-s and their *rāga*-s are given below -

1. *Nāda-tanum aniśam* – Cittarañjanī – Ādi
2. *Vara-nārada nārāyaṇa* – Vijayaśrī – Ādi
3. *Jānakī-ramaṇa* – Śuddhasīmantinī – Ādi
4. *Ênta muddo* – Bindumālinī – Ādi
5. *Mākelara vicāramu* – Ravicandrika – Ādi
6. *Durmārgacarādhamulanu* – Rañjanī – Rūpakam
7. *Śobhillu Saptasvara* – Jaganmohinī – Rūpakam
8. *Ānanda-sāgara* – Garuḍadhvani – Ādi
9. *Banṭurīti* – Haṁsanādam – Ādi

While this experimentation with permutation and combination of notes has opened up endless new vistas for the formation of *rāga*-s, not everyone may accept these scales as *rāga*-s because they do not possess a distinct identity of their own, unlike *rāga*-s like Sahana, Rītigouḷa, Ānandabhairavi, Dhanyāsi, etc which have characteristic features.

In an article in *The Hindu*, musician T. M. Krishna has raised this point –

> "This is not about whether we find these artificial ragas appealing, this is an aesthetic question about its ideation, structuring and interpretation and subsequent impact on musical thought. On that score they fail and have over the years caused a downward spiral in the raga-ness of Carnatic music. And it is important for us to be unemotional and recognise that Muthuswami Dikshitar had an early role in triggering such a thought flow. But I will say with great trepidation and absolutely no disrespect that Tyagaraja's impact has been deleterious. This is much to do with the larger than life presence Tyagaraja has had over the Carnatic psyche."
>
> (Krishna 2017)

In response to this, P. K. Doraiswamy (2017) writes subsequently in the same paper –

> "If I have understood TMK correctly, the burden of his article is that, while most of the traditional ragas have evolved organically and holistically over long periods, most of the post-Venkatamakhi rāgas are the result of scale manipulation and have downgraded the very concept and spirit of a rāga, and by composing in such ragas, Tyagaraja has

> unwittingly become a party to it. Musicians have started treating ragas as mere swara skeletons.
>
> There is no agreed list of organic ragas. To make matters simple, should we say that all pre-Venkatamakhi ragas are organic? Do we go further and say that only these are to be recognised as ragas and sung? (Semmangudi said famously, "Why sing Chandrajyoti when Sahana is available?")
>
> Why should experimentation with scales be considered mutilation or inferior to existing ragas? I personally believe that it is no longer possible to create new ragas of the stature and impact of a Kalyani or a Todi and that experimentation can only produce ragas with a marginal aesthetic impact. However, on principle, experimentation should continue. It is continuing even now and its products, if sufficiently attractive, are being sung along with major ragas."

In this context, my personal observation is that though these *vinta rāga*-s conceived by Tyāgarāja may seem as permutation- combination of just notes, his experimentation opened up new vistas in music. Also, while people were aware that the 72 *melakarta*-s could generate many scales, it was Tyāgarāja who froze these scales as *rāga*-s for posterity through his immortal compositions.

While Sahana, Rītigouḷa, Ānandabhairavī, Begaḍa do hold an exalted status, the *rāga*-s created by Tyāgarāja as a product of experimentation is an important milestone in the evolution of the *Rāga* system of Karnatic music and has shown a new path to later composers. But, it is important to acknowledge that this experimentation has stood the test of time and also many later composers have taken cue from it. Also, every scale conceived by him has been concretized and also given the requisite *rāga*-ness through his own compositions.

Thus, in this path-breaking experimentation, a study of the method of creating new *rāga*-s by Tyāgarāja reveals how only certain *janaka rāga*-s have been taken to conceive *janya*-s. This is very important from the aesthetic point of view. For example, while he has experimented in using *mela*-s like Kharaharapriya, Śaṅkarābharaṇa, Harikāmbodhi and Māyāmāḷavagauḷa for generating a number of *janya rāga*-s, he has used some *mela*-s for creating just one *rāga* out of it, like Kāntāmaṇi (*Janya* – Śruti-rañjanī).

Another example of a beautiful experimentation is the way Tyāgarāja has handled the *rāga* Kīravāṇī and two of its *janya*-s - Kiraṇāvaḷī

and Kalyāṇavasanta. Kīravāṇī through the composition *Kaligiyuṇṭe* and its *janya*-s Kiraṇāvaḷī through '*Eṭiyocanalu*' and Kalyāṇavasanta through '*Nādaloluḍai*' are classic examples of a set of *rāga*-s which have resulted by an experimentation of permutation-combination. This experimentation has actually paved a new path in Karnatic music.

Similarly, three *rāga*-s Varāḷi, Śubhapantuvarāḷi, Pantuvarāḷi which are all *mela rāga*-s and differ only in the *gāndhāra* are brilliantly focused to give the distinct colour of each. The *kṛti*-s '*Eṭi janmamidi*', '*Ennāḷḷu ūrake*' and '*Śiva Śiva Śiva enarāda*' in the respective *rāga*-s show how Tyāgarāja focuses on the *gāndhāra* of each to show the distinct colour.

Also, with regard to the *melakarta rāga*-s, the choice of certain *melakarta*-s to compose multiple compositions and some with only a single composition is an eye opener. This has a deep musical purpose as seen in his composing many *kṛti*-s in *mela*-s like Kharaharapriya, Kalyāṇī, Śankarābharaṇa, Toḍi etc. but just one *kṛti* in *mela*-s like Kāntāmaṇi, Vanaspati, Vāgadhīśvarī, etc.

We see that time tested *rāga*-s like Toḍi, Bhairavī, Kāmbhoji, Kalyāṇī, Śaṅkarābharaṇa find new dimensions in Tyāgarāja's compositions. The concept of "art music" came to be conceived after the time of Trinity where the *manodharma* elements have gained a predominant position in concerts. Thus, a great divine composer as Tyāgarāja who actually enriched the *Rāga* system through his contribution does not in any way deserve the allegation that he diluted the same.

Experimentation of Different Approaches to Same Rāga

Kalyāṇī by Tyāgarāja through various *kṛti*-s and also comparison of the same *rāga Kalyāṇī* as handled by Tyāgarāja and Dīkṣitar offer interesting study.

Śubhapantuvarāḷi by Tyāgarāja and Dīkṣitar can also be taken for a comparative study of how both composers have experimented with different *gamaka*-s, namely *kampita* and *jāru* respectively to give two colours to the same scale.

Again, the experimentation that Dīkṣitar has done with Śankarābharaṇa is remarkable. He has used the *rāga* to compose classic pieces like *'Akṣayaliṅga vibho', 'Dakṣināmūrte', 'Śrī kamalāmbikayā'* as well as *noṭṭu svara*-s like *'Śyāmale mīnākṣi', 'Śakti -sahita-Gaṇapatim', 'Rāmajanārdana'*

and so on. That a *rāga* can have different musical expressions is an idea conveyed by Dīkṣitar in a novel way through these compositions.

Similarly, Tyāgarāja was a master in experimenting with the colour of *rāga*-s. While most of his compositions in Panthuvarāḷi start on the *tāra ṣaḍja*, he has also experimented with the same *rāga* without touching the *tāra ṣaḍja* at all throughout, in the composition '*Śobhāne*' whose range is from *mandra dhaivata* to *madhya sthāyi dhaivata*.

In the domain of *tāla*-s also, Tyāgarāja was a new trend-setter. Unlike his contemporaries, he experimented with the *deśādi tāla* as a rhythmic expression for many of his compositions. While some may say that the set of songs in this *tāla* as devised by Tyāgarāja has been instrumental in diluting the quality of music (as against the *cauka kāla kṛti*-s which unfold the *rāga*-s in a grand way), a positive point in this is the simplicity in structure which has resulted in a larger reach of the music itself. His *deśādi tāla kṛti*-s have become the basic material for many learners of Karnatic music as it is very easy to comprehend.

Examples of such *kṛti*-s – *'Marugelara', 'Brova bhārama', 'Mākelarā', 'Banṭurīti', 'Êntanercina', 'Gānamūrte', 'Calamelarā', 'Śrī Raghukula', 'Têliyaleru Rāma'*.

Experimentations with Respect to Compositions

The next aspect of Karnatic music, which has been subject to constant experimentation is the composition. Composition is the pivotal material around which Karnatic music has evolved. The compositions of great *vāggeyakāra*-s have been the main material of presentation and all *manodharma* aspects have been extensions of it.

While this is true of both Hindustani and Karnatic music, the concept, import and purpose of a composition is quite different in the two systems. According to noted music scholar Dr. Prem Latha Sharma (1980),

> "Composition is a repository of the nuances and contours of a rāga and sets the model of the blending of text, melody and rhythm. Improvisation without composition could be accepted as the highest form of art – music, but it should not be forgotten that composition not only serves as the basis of gaining entry into the intricate portals of a rāga but also an interesting and enlivening corollary of independent alapti. It is a very strong component of the oral tradition that sustains rāga, tāla

> and text. Hence the loss of its due importance is fraught with dangers like over abstraction, complete annihilation of poetic content, lack of a frame etc."

But in Karnatic music, compositions mean much more than that as the *sāhitya* is as profound as the music itself. Compositions of Dīkṣitar or Tyāgarāja for example, offer a treasure trove of information on spiritual and devotional aspects.

The *sāhitya* in Karnatic music predominantly addresses or describes God in various forms. The theme is, of course, varied – some are in praise of God, some describe deities and temples, some highlight teachings and doctrines of Hinduism. The Trinity and many other composers have composed innumerable compositions to highlight various such aspects. Especially, the compositions of Trinity are a mark of their musical genius, deep sense of spirituality and intense devotion to God. *Bhakti* was the nucleus of their lives and this was expressed through an outpour of musical compositions.

On the importance and sacredness of the *sāhitya* of compositions in Karnatic music, some points made in a panel discussion chaired by the author at the conference of The Music Academy on 21st December 2018, is pertinent to quote here -

- If we look at the history of Karnatic music, it can be classified into: pre-Trinity, Trinity and post-Trinity period. This is not just a matter of dividing the composers according to the era that they belong to. Rather, it is because of the turns and twists that music has taken over these three periods. In the pre-Trinity period, the lyrics have been the most important element of compositions. This is evidently seen in forms like *Tevāram, Tiruppugaḻ, Divyaprabandham, Taraṅgam, Aṣṭapadī* etc. The *sāhitya* is the predominant element and hence melody has been kept very simple in all these forms. We also see that the melody is repetitive in its nature so as to give more focus on the *sāhitya*. It is only in the time of the Trinity that music took a different course where we see that in these compositions, apart from the *sāhitya* being rich and lofty in its content, we also see that music has evolved at a very high level, which continued through to the post-Trinity period.
- *Sāhitya* in Karnatic music is not just a cluster of words. They convey high ideologies and musicians who understand its

deeper import will agree that *sāhitya* and *saṅgīta* are interwoven so beautifully and it is important to understand the deeper layers of both to make the music holistic.

- A prolific *sāhitya* with profound *bhāva* warrants that the *saṅgīta* should match the *sāhitya*. The rich *sāhitya* instills a sense of responsibility to give good music and to understand that no compromises are to be made both in the *sāhitya* and *saṅgīta* quotient of the composition.

In this context, let us take this common *śloka* for example –

śuklāmbara-dharam viṣṇuṁ śaśi-varṇaṁ caturbhujam ।
prasanna-vadanaṁ dhyāyet sarva-vighnopaśāntaye ।।

This can be just recited and still have its meaning conveyed but the impact will be multifold when sung with *bhāva*. Likewise, a passage like the *Arutpa* requires a deeper musical interpretation to unfold its meaning –

பெற்ற தாய் தனை மக மறந்தாலும்
பிள்ளையைப் பெரும் தாய் மறந்தாலும்
உற்ற தேகத்தை உயிர் மறந்தாலும்
உயிரை மேவிய உடல் மறந்தாலும்
கற்ற நெஞ்சகம் கலை மறந்தாலும்
கண்கள் நின்றிமைப்பது மறந்தாலும்
நற்றவத்தவர் உள்ளிருந்தோங்கும்
நமச்சிவாயத்தை நான் மறவேனே

peṟṟa tāy taṉai maga maṟantālum
piḷḷaiyaip pêrum tāy maṟantālum
uṟṟa degattai uyir maṟandālum
uyirai meviya uḍal maṟandālum
kaṟṟa nêñjagam kalai maṟandālum
kaṇgaḷ niṉṟimaippatu maṟandālum
naṟṟavattavar uḷḷiruntoṅgum
namaccivāyttai nāṉ maṟavene

This verse also can be just recited but when it is sung with the *bhāva* of the lyrics, one gets transformed as Vaḷḷalār himself.

Some points which can be observed are -

- *Sāhitya* gives *saṅgīta* the exalted status and the combination of words and syllables is what makes the music sublime. The varied

rasa-s can be felt and the highest level of aesthetic experience can be attained with this combination.

- The Indian culture is one of sound tradition. Music without words has never been seen in our culture. Sadāśiva Brahmendra, Purandaradāsa, Annamācārya, Tyāgarāja, Dīkṣitar – all sang and gave the *sāhitya* a unique status.
- The idea of poetry as divorced from the idea of singing has never been there. It is actually a problem to imagine music without words. The most beautiful *sāhitya* that Tyāgarāja has created is the word Rāma itself. The way *rā* and *ma* in the context of songs are used, embellishes the beauty of the song. To pronounce the word Rāma in the context of the music is an ecstatic thing.
- The element of sound or *dhvani* is important in music. That is why we relish songs even in languages unknown to us. Telugu or Kannada as a language may be unknown but still enjoyed by a Tamil listener and vice versa. Language evolves not just by meaning but by the beauty of sound also.
- In Karnatic music, sound is married to music. For example, in the *Śrī rāga pañcaratna* of Tyāgarāja, we see a perfect beauty in the way the *sāhityā* and *saṅgīta* complement each other in each of the *caraṇa*-s.
- The *sāhitya* of our great *vāggeyakāra*-s is a treasure of information about our spirituality, culture and deities of the Hindu pantheon. It instills *bhakti* in the minds of the singer and listener and takes them to the highest realms of divinity.

Sāhitya, is thus the carrier of a rich tradition also. There are some anti-*sāhitya* brigades who say that music can exist by itself as an abstract form but the reality is that you cannot separate *sāhitya* and music. Dismissing *sāhitya* as redundant or as an impediment to music is nothing short of doing harm to the great tradition of Karnatic music.

Here, it is pertinent to mention how Dīkṣitar has experimented with the western scale of Śaṅkarābharaṇa and created tiny compositions on various Hindu deities. This innovative experimentation serves two purposes –

1. To introduce music in a simple and innovative way.
2. But beyond this, it is interesting how he has composed these songs on all the important Hindu Gods and Goddesses, thus

giving a simple means for children to be aware of our own culture in a novel way.

Some examples of songs and the respective God/ Goddess -

Śakti-sahita-gaṇapatim – Gaṇeśa
Śyāmale mīnākṣi – Devī
Vara-śiva-bālam vallī-lolam - Muruga
Rāma janārdana rāvaṇa-mardana – Rāma
Pārvatīpate sadā pālayāśu – Śiva
Pāhi durge bhaktaṁ te padmakare – Durgā
Varada-rāja pāhi vibho – Viṣṇu
Āñjaneyaṁ sadā bhāvayāmi - Hanumān

The composition which was held in great sanctity is, of late, subject to a lot of experimentation. It is a matter of concern that compositions are being used more as a peg to hang the *manodharma* of the artiste rather than being presented for what it conveys about the thought process of the composer.

Experimentations with regard to taking liberty in presenting the composition according to one's own wish, incorporating cosmetic changes may appear trivial but in the long run, it will totally distort the original composition and its true form will become obscure. In order to preserve the sanctity of the compositions, it is important for artists to exercise restraint and be faithful to the composer. The artiste does have the domain of *manodharma* where he can show his virtuosity.

In this context, some experimentations are proving to be alarming and detrimental to the core values of Karnatic music.

For example, some instrumentalists without cognizance of the *sāhitya* of compositions, just try to use it as a tool to display instrumental techniques and virtuosity. Such experimentations spoil the ethos of the music system. In such cases, it would do well for artists to create their own compositions to prove their skill in whatever instrument they are playing.

Other Trends

Jugalbandi is another latest trend where with the zeal to project two systems of music on the same dais, both get mingled and lose their identity. Here, apart from the entertainment quotient, no great musical purpose is served. Most often, we also see that in *Jugalbandi*, it is always the Karnatic music which struggles to maintain its identity.

Whether it is the choice of songs, *rāga*, *gamaka*-s or accents, it is seen that Karnatic musicians lean towards the Hindustani system and finally, the whole concert gets a flavor of the Hindustani style.

Some very alarming trends have crept up recently where Christians have even distorted the original words of compositions like *gīta*-s of Purandaradāsa and various *svarajati*-s, and replaced them with words pertaining to their own religion. In the name of teaching Karnatic music, a religion–brainwash is being done much to the agony of Hindus. One such example is the book *Christuva Tamilisai Bodhini* authored by E. K. Lakshmi Bai and Renuka Suresh. They justify the alteration by calling the original *Gīta*-s as *Tamizh Isai*, (which actually does not make any sense) and say that in their pursuit to reach the music to Christians, this change has been incorporated. But such tampering of the compositions in the name of experimentation and using it for cultural appropriation and conversion is to be totally condemned. It is detrimental to the very foundation of Karnatic music. Similary, ventures like the 'Carnatic Rock band' are highly undesirable as they amount to vandalizing the very identity of Karnatic music.

In the instrumental front, also, we see a lot of experimentations taking place. Instruments belonging to western music like violin, mandolin, saxophone, clarinet, keyboard, guitar, drums have been used as mediums to perform Karnatic music.

Here we see that instrumental musicians hold two theories –

1. That instrumental music should reflect the Vocal Bāni and hence portrayal of *sāhitya* through the instrument is also important. The Lalgudi school is one example of the expounder of this theory.
2. Artists like Ganesh Kumaresh and Rajesh Vaidhya are of the contention that it is more important to bring out the versatility of the instrument in terms of its range, technique etc. and hence, these musicians also resort to playing their own compositions which focus on exploring the full range of the instrument.

Artistes have been constantly researching and experimenting on how to make these instruments adaptable to Karnatic music. These experiments with various instruments have met with varied levels of

success so far as adapting them best to the core values of the musical form goes.

Conclusion

Experimentations are indeed very essential for the growth and flourishment of an art like Karnatic music. An artist's creativity takes concrete shape only when he tries to experiment with whatever material he has acquired through training, listening, intense introspection and analysis. The outcome of the experimentation is what makes the art take different courses over different periods of time. But, the most important thing in making an experiment meaningful is in being faithful to the musical tradition in terms of preserving its core values.

While the intelligence quotient in artistes has had a great impact in recent years in making the music more thrilling and entertaining, it is important to remember that the primary purpose of Karnatic music is to enrich and elevate the listener. In this context, experimentations should be done with a sense of responsibility and integrity towards the rich tradition that has been nurtured by great *vāggeyakāra*-s and *vidvān*-s over so many years.

Note: *Since this is a practical subject, referential material in terms of books is minimal. My Ph.D work has been on a related topic – "Karnataka music concerts – an analytical study." I have been in the field as a musician, musicologist, journalist and cultural organizer for 30 years and many things in this research paper are quoted from first-hand knowledge of the subject through practical observations. Also, I have made many path breaking experimentations in the music field through my own organization Mudhra for the past 25 years and also been witness to several such experimental concepts by other organizations and all these provide the core material for this research paper.*

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Chapter 5

Christian Attempts to Appropriate Karnatic Music: A Historical Overview

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Abstract

From the very start, Christian missionary activity in South India employed various devious methods of influencing the native Hindus towards conversion to Christianity, which included attempts to appropriate their language, literature and idioms, religious symbols, cultural practices and art forms. This practice, institutionalized as inculturation or indigenization in Christian theology is an issue of bitter controversy in societies and cultures on which it is unleashed. South Indian classical music also known as Karnatic music, an Indic art form totally integrated with Hindu religious tradition also did not escape these appropriation attempts which were centered in the Thanjavur region that played a key role in the growth and evolution of this music in the last three centuries. This paper aims to give a historical overview of such attempts, starting from the 17th century till the present times. The real character, aesthetics

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and themes of Tamil Christian Keerthanams[1] by composers like Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār will be evaluated based on established Tamil literary standards and generally accepted norms within the domain of Karnatic music compositions, corroborated in the backdrop of their life and mission. The questionable religious and historical narratives regarding Indian classical music in the renowned musical treatise *Karunamirtha Sāgaram* of Abraham Pandithar will be analyzed in detail based on the primary source material in Tamil. The impact and consequences of such appropriation attempts by Christian institutions as well as individuals will be discussed, considering the overall religious, cultural and socio-political factors in the larger context of Indian civilization.

Introduction

Christian missionary activity in South India started with the arrival of Portuguese colonizers in the 16th century and got consolidated in a major way in many pockets with the establishment of British rule. During the initial phase, the Christian propaganda proclaimed that Hindu culture, like the Hindu religion was a creation of the devil. It had to be scrapped and the stage swept clean for the culture of Christianity to take over. But over time, with failures and very slow progress in gaining converts, the missionaries came up with the Theology of Inculturation or Indigenization.

> "..In the new language, Hindu culture was credited with great creations in philosophy, literature, art, architecture, music, painting and the rest. There was reservation only at one point. This culture, it was said, had stopped short of reaching the crest because its spiritual perceptions were deficient, even defective. It could surge forward on its aborted journey only by becoming a willing vehicle for 'Christian truths'. That was the Theology of Inculturation or Indigenization. It created another lot of literature. The missions did not stop at the theoretical proposition. They demonstrated practically how Hindu culture should serve Jesus Christ. A number of Christian missionaries started masquerading as Hindu sannyasins, wearing the ochre robe, eating vegetarian food, sleeping on the floor and worshipping with the accoutrements of Hindu puja.."
>
> (Goel 1986: Ch.18)

It is well documented as to how Christian missionaries in South India, from 17th century onwards, attempted to appropriate language, literature and idioms, religious symbols, cultural practices and art

forms of the local native Hindus in so many ways and this process is still ongoing. Karnatic music also did not escape these appropriation attempts. The aim of this paper is to give a historical overview of such attempts, while also analyzing the merit of the arguments that justify such attempts in the name of artistic freedom.

The Essential Hindu Character of Karnatic Music

The South Indian classical music known by the name Karnatic Music has a long and rich history and is a vibrant and living art tradition, both in its traditional, classical form, and as a base, inspiration and major influence in many semi-classical and popular musical forms like film music, folk music, devotional songs etc. It is an unambiguous fact that from its very roots, Karnatic music has been an integral part of Hindu religion and culture in an inseparable way and the same continues till today, even after its modern renaissance in the 20th century. The argument of Indian classical music, and specifically Karnatic music being a 'pure art' not associated with any religion or culture or social context is a mere notion without substance. It does not hold true under scrutiny, given the fact that the very birth, growth and evolution of the art form are intertwined with these factors. In fact, this is true with every classical art form that has a long history.

The fact that the current performers include people of non-Hindu religions and atheists, or the lyrics part of some compositions revolves around seemingly non-religious, "secular" themes - such things do not take away the essential Hindu character of Karnatic music. It is beyond doubt that this essential Hinduness is derived because the compositions are addressed to the Hindu deities and the performances take place in Hindu temples and religious centers. In addition, it also equally or rather more significant that the fundamental ideas that give uniqueness and separate identity to this music - viz. *śruti*, *laya*, *bhāva*, *rasa*, *nāda* etc. are tightly coupled to the Hindu philosophical truths and have been developed along with the Hindu spiritual tenets. This is how it was viewed all along, as Tyāgarāja crisply elucidates in his composition *śobhillu saptasvara*.

> "Worship the beautiful goddesses presiding over the seven svaras, which shine through navel, heart, throat, tongue, nose etc., and in and through Rik and Sāma Vedas, the heart of the Gāyatri Mantra and the minds of

gods and holy men and Tyāgarāja"

(Ramanujachari 1958: 596) (*spellings as in the original*)

Not just the *Bhakti* or philosophical hymns, but even the musical compositions with strong erotic themes are very much inside the Hindu aesthetic tradition under the *Śṛṅgāra Rasa*, as seen in the texts like the *Gīta Govinda* or *Rādhikā Sāntvanamu*. But, to put such a divine art form at the "service of Jesus" with a clear devious motive and a cunning and criminal strategy to undermine and eradicate the very spiritual fountain that gave birth to it and sustains it - is nothing but a rank perversion of the very art form.

The Origin and Growth of "Christian Keerthanam"

It is well known that the Kaveri delta region, comprising the towns of Thanjavur, Kumbhakonam and Mayiladuthurai (formerly called Mayavaram) and the numerous villages nestled around them was the cradle of Karnatic music from 16th century till very recent times until Chennai became its unofficial capital. This is the region that produced the Karnatic Trinity and numerous great composers and illustrious Vidwans. Ironically, this region was also the center of hectic Christian missionary activity during the very same period.

During the period from 1732 to 1859, Christian missionary stations were setup in many towns of this region viz. Thanjavur, Thiruchirappalli, Nagappattinam, Mayavaram, Mannargudi, Thiruvarur. The missions involved were British sponsored Royal Danish Mission (RDM), Society for Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), Society for Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), London Missionary Society (LMS), Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Methodists. So, much so that, "By the beginning of the ninth decade of the nineteenth century, the whole region had become honeycombed with mission stations" (Goel 1986: Ch. 12).

The initial Christian propaganda mostly centered around abusing Hindu practices openly and expressing contempt against them in public.

"... According to a missionary report of 1821, "an immense population lies enslaved in the grossest darkness." Hindu temple worship was "calculated to corrupt the heart, to sensualize the mind and to lead

> to every description of vice." James Mowat, a Methodist missionary wrote in a letter to his headquarters at London, "I never had so plain a demonstration of depravity heathenism binds upon its votaries in the shape of religion. The principal pagoda abounds with the most obscene and polluting representations, and decidedly proves, if proof be necessary, how greatly this people need the hallowing light of Christianity."
>
> (Manickam 1981: 82)

But over time, this gave way to singing and music, shamelessly copying the "obscene and polluting representations of the Hindu pagodas" as that proved to be the major attraction to pull the crowds, as the report records further.

> ".. They visited Choultries, market places and bathing tanks, preached in the city streets, under the shadow of idol cars, under the canopy of country-trees, in the open square of the villages and other places where they could meet a good number of people... The singing of Christian lyricsand hymns accompanied by musical instruments soon attracted a congregation."
>
> (Manickam 1981: 83)

So, this is how the "Christian Keerthanam" came into existence, as an aid and tool in the missionary propaganda exercise. It was not motivated by artistic or musical inclinations of any kind. Till today, it retains this character.

A comprehensive Tamil work *kiṟistava kīrttaṉai kaviñarkaḷ* (poets of Christian Keerthanai) compiled by Y. Gnana Chandra Johnson chronicles about 70 such composers over the ages (Johnson 2012). The compiler is a professor in Madras Christian College, Tambaram, Chennai.

It starts right from the pioneer Lutheran missionary Ziegenbalg (1682-1719), who translated Christian hymns from German to colloquial Tamil and set them to Western music. The next major composer was Jesuit missionary Constantine Joseph Beschi (1680-1742) who rechristened himself as Veeramamunivar (brave, great Muni) and dressed in ochre robes to deceive native Hindus. A Tamil literary work *Tēmpāvaṇi* written in the typical *kāvya* style narrating the life of St. Joseph is generally attributed to him, though there is broad scholarly opinion that the Tamil verses were written by his teacher Supradeepa Kavirayar, who was an accomplished poet. The literary

work is filled with so many Hindu similes and metaphors all hanging along with Christian dogma couched in Tamil words. Here is a part of a Keerthanam composed by Veeramamunivar set in Dhanyāsi *Rāga*:

jagaṉṉātā gurupara nātā - tiru
aruḷ nātā yesu pirasāda nātā

tigaḻuṟum tātā pugaḻuṟum pādā
tītaṟum veda bodā

ஜகன்னாதா குருபர நாதா - திரு
அருள் நாதா ஏசு பிரசாத நாதா
திகழரும் தாதா புகழரும் பாதா
தீதறும் வேத போதா

As even those not familiar with Tamil can discern, the lyrics are replete with Hindu phrases like *jagannātha*, *gurupara*, *veda*, *bodha*, *nātha* etc.

Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814-1891) was the British missionary who played a major role in inventing 'Dravidian Race' by transforming Linguistics into ethnology and spinning nasty conspiracy theories involving Aryans (Malhotra and Neelakandan 2011: 64-67). He also penned some Keerthanams. A sample line:

ecaiyā piḷanta āti malaiye
mocanāḷil uṉṉil ôḷippeṉe

ஏசையாபிளந்தஆதிமலையே
மோசநாளில்உன்னில்ஒளிப்பேனே

Oh, primeval mountain pierced by Jesus
I will hide behind you on the day of distress

John Balmer (1812-1883), the author of *Christhayanam* is another important composer. A very popular Keerthanam by him goes like this:

têṉ iṉimaiyilum ecuvin nāmam divya maduram āme - atai
teḍ iyê nāḍi oḍiye varuvāy diṉamum nī maname

தேன் இனிமையிலும் ஏசுவின் நாமம் திவ்ய மதுரம்-
ஆமே அதை
தேடியே நாடி ஓடியே வருவாய் தினமும் நீ மனமே

The name (*nāmam*) of Jesus is of divine sweetness (*divya madhuram*) - this phrase is nothing but an echo of thousands of such hymns extolling the divine names of Rama and Krishna and ordering the mind (*maname*) to go after the divine name is also an established convention in Hindu *Bhakti* poetry.

H. A. Krishna Pillai (1827-1900) a Christian convert from an orthodox Vaishnava family was an important poet and composer. A famous Keerthanam by him set in śaṅkarābharaṇa goes like this:

sattāy niṣkaḷamāy - ôru
sāmiyamum ilatāy
cittāy āṉaṉdamāy
tikaḻkiṉṟa tirittuvame
êttāy nāyaṭiyeṉ
kaṭaitteṟuvaṉ bavam tīṟṟu
attāy uṉṉai allāl - êṉakku
ār tuṇai ār uṟave.

சத்தாய் நிஷ்களமாய் - ஒரு
சாமியமும் இலதாய்
சித்தாய் ஆனந்தமாய்
திகழ்கின்ற திரித்துவமே
எத்தாய் நாயடியேன்
கடைத்தேறுவன் பவம் தீர்ந்து
அத்தா உன்னை அல்லால் - எனக்கு
ஆர் துணை ஆர் உறவே.

Oh Trinity (*tirittuvam*), you are *Sat* (Existence), *Niṣkala* (without blemish), unparalleled, *Cit* (conscious) and *Ānanda* (Bliss). This is the meaning of the first four lines (*translation mine*). The Vedantic attributes of the Absolute (*Brahman*) have nothing to do with Christian ideas of God or Trinity. But, still the composer has just flicked them from the Hindu hymns where they are commonly used. The fifth, sixth and the eighth line in this verse are taken from different places in *Tiruvāsagam*, the famed śaivite scripture and the seventh line is straight from the very popular *Tevāram* hymn of Sundarar (*pittā piṟaicūṭi*).

According to Johnson, there must have been about thousand Christian Keerthanams written by more than hundred composers till date, out of which about two hundred are in vogue and are sung popularly across Churches in Tamil Nadu. The compilation *Jñāna Kīrtanaikaḷ* (2003) published by Kanyakumari Diocese is a standard reference for these compositions (Johnson 2014).

The next section deals with Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār, the pioneer and perhaps the most prolific of Tamil Christian poets and Keerthanam composers.

Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār

Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār (1774-1864) was hailed as "Suviseda Kavirāyar" (King among Evangelical Poets) and is credited with 120 poetic works big and small, that include musical compositions. Unless otherwise specified, all the biographical details and the translations of verses given in this section are from the book, Appasamy (1995).

He was a second-generation Christian convert who came under the influence of Rev. Christian Frederick Schwartz of Lutheran mission station at Thanjavur at a very young age of 12 years and eventually became his godson.

It is well documented that Rev. Schwartz had extreme hatred towards Hindus, their religion and culture. This is what he wrote when war broke out in the Tanjore region and there was all around devastation everywhere.

> ".. Let us observe even in this affair the footsteps of Providence; how things will end, and what will be the effects of them. For nothing, God could never have permitted it. Idolatry in the Tanjore country is very deeply rooted; and to overthrow it gradually, who knows but God may use the present affliction? We pray, and will pray, 'Thy kingdom come,' to us, to all, to Tanjore. Amen."
>
> (Schwartz 1835: 274)

When the entire Thanjavur region was under attack during the Karnatic wars due to the plunder and pillage by the armies of Hyder Ali, Schwartz termed it as the retribution of God on "Idol worshipping Hindoos" for not accepting Christianity.

> "It is true Coromandel has been visited by the Lord; the inhabitants of it have had time, and places to be instructed; the book of God, and other useful treatises, have been freely offered to them; nay, they have been pressed to accept of these spiritual treasures; but they have neglected, not to say despised, the gracious counsel of God, preferring the friendship and things of the world before the blessings of God. Now the Lord God begins to visit them in a different manner. Their idols, on which they leaned, are taken away; their houses burnt, their cattle driven away, and, what afflicts many thousand parents unspeakably more, is, that Hyder sends their best children away."
>
> (Schwartz 1835:381)

Given this, it is not surprising that Vedanāyagam imbibed similar mindsets, even when he was well versed in classical Tamil and its literature and was knowledgeable in Sanskrit and Telugu. This is how he sang the glory of his godfather Rev. Schwartz later (*emphasis as in the original*):

"**How did the light down on the darkness of India**
And Christian society be formed.
The Christians from Europe arrived
Rev. Schwartz gathered the Disciples of Christ in Thanjavur
The Siva baktan from Tirunelveli became the disciple of Jesus Christ..."

(Jebamalai I: 26 verse II)

Tulajāji Mahārāja, the then Maratha ruler of Thanjavur had entrusted his son Serfoji's education also to Rev. Schwartz. So, the bond of friendship that formed between the two continued well over time, earning Vedanāyagam a prestigious place in the court of ruler Serfoji, and the appellation 'Sāstriyār', generally adopted by highly learned Brahmins or scholars of arts and sciences. Even while enjoying the royal patronage and the friendship of the Hindu king who treated him with affection and respect and using it to the hilt in his Christian evangelism activities, Vedanāyagam openly expressed his venomous hatred for Hindu religion and culture. He authored a work *Sastra Kummi* in 1814 wherein he mocks and ridicules Hindu customs and traditions in abusive terms, in the guise of admonishing Christian coverts who are still stuck with their old ways. This book is now out of print, after the protests when it was published in 1990 by Thanjavur Saraswathi Mahal Library (Sivasubramanian 2011). Here is a verse from this work quoted in the same article.

māṭṭu mūttirattai kuḍitte - anda māṭṭu cāṇiyai pūcik kôṇḍu
māṭṭai tāṉe kumbiṭṭu niṉṟa uṉ - māṭṭu buddiyo ñāṉappêṇṇe

மாட்டு மூத்திரத்தை குடித்தே - அந்த மாட்டு சாணியை பூசிக் கொண்டு
மாட்டை தானே கும்பிட்டு நின்ற உன் - மாட்டு புத்தியோ ஞானப் பெண்ணே

Drinking cow urine, and smearing yourself with cow dung,
Worshipping cow; Isn't that your bovine brain, O wise women?

(Sivasubramanian 2011) (*translation ours*)

Such exhortations are to be considered as pure hate speech and cannot be bracketed under 'condemning the superstitions and social evils' category, because the author was not a rationalist or reformer of any sort, but a sworn Christian fundamentalist. As per the above article, he was not free from caste prejudices and vehemently opposed attempts to allow "lower caste" people into Church worship. This verse is exactly the same as some of the anti-Hindu statements by Pakistani government leaders supporting Islamic terrorism in the aftermath of IAF air strikes in February 2019, for which they had to apologize (Swati and Madhur 2019). But Vedanāyagam had enshrined it for posterity in a supposedly "musical composition". It is an irony of the highest order when the "progressive and egalitarian" vocalist T. M. Krishna chose to sing a Christian Keerthanam by such an obscurantist hate-monger in his Karnatic music concert to "rebuff" his critics (Ramanujam 2018).

Bethlehem Kuravañji[2] is often claimed as a "masterpiece" of Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār. According to the author, it was written based on the inspiration from *Tiru Kuṟṟāla Kuravañji* of Thirikooda Rasappa Kavirayar, a folk opera dedicated to Lord Shiva dwelling in the famed ancient shrine in the Kutralam hills, which is hailed as a great piece of literature by many Tamil scholars. The *Kuravañji* opera, as a literary form centers around the life and pride of mountain dwelling communities and the devotional love of the maiden (Nāyikā) towards her Lord, themes that are well established in the Hindu poetic tradition. But in *Bethlehem Kuravañji*, the maiden is a character that represents the Church according to the author, which is the Bride of Lord Jesus. And, in place of the lovely Malaya mountain (Western Ghats), it sings the glory of the mountains of Canaan, a Semitic-speaking desert region in the ancient Near East mentioned in the Biblical narratives. Discerning readers of Tamil literature would immediately recognize that the work by Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār comes out not just as a cheap imitation of the original work devoid of any beauty and originality, but the one that has totally perverted the very aesthetics of the literary form by associating it with alien cultural and geographic domains, just to fit it into the Christian framework. *Tiru Kuṟṟāla Kuravañji* remains much loved and much staged piece in *Bharatanāṭyam* dance performances till today whereas *Bethlehem Kuravañji* due to its poor artistic value, is performed by comparatively lesser number of artists, be it *Bharatanāṭyam* or Karnatic Music[3].

Analyzing the Keerthanams of Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār undoubtedly establishes his overt and excessive usage of words and phrases replete with Hindu spiritual connotation. This is not just because of "linguistic" and "literary" reasons, Tamil being a language endowed with Indic (Hindu, Buddhist, Jain) classical literature. This is done deliberately to obfuscate the boundary between Christianity and the popular Hindu Bhakti traditions, even while actively engaging in the insult and condemnation of those very same Hindu Bhakti traditions as false and vulgar. A few examples from some of his popular Keerthanams are given.

aṉanta ñāṉa svarūpā - nama om
aṉanta ñāṉa svarūpā

gaṇamkôḷ mahimaiyiṉ karttāve - gāttira nettira barttāve
kāṇka vantāre - nama om kāṇka vantāre
karuṇākara devā (aṉanta)

அனந்த ஞான ஸ்வரூபா - நம ஓம்
அனந்த ஞான ஸ்வரூபா

கனம் கொள் மகிமையின் கர்த்தாவே - காத்திர நேத்திர பர்த்தாவே
காண்க வந்தாரே நம ஓம் - காண்க வந்தாரே
கருணாகர தேவா (அனந்த)

Apart from the usage of the Tamil forms of the Sanskrit words *ananta*, *jñāna*, *svarūpa*, *mahima*, *kartā*, *gātra*, *netra*, *bhartā*, *deva* etc. the Hindu chant '*nama om*' has been used unabashedly in this song.

devā irakkam illaiyo - ecu devā irakkam illaiyo

jīva parabrahma yehovā tirittuvattiṉ
mūvāḷ ôṉṟāka vanta tāvītiṉ maintaṉ ôre (devā)

தேவா இரக்கம் இல்லையோ - ஏசு தேவா இரக்கம் இல்லையோ

ஜீவ பரப்ரஹ்ம யேஹோவா திரித்துவத்தின்
மூவாள் ஒன்றாக வந்த தாவீதின் மைந்தன் ஒரே (தேவா)

Here, the composer takes the established Vedantic philosophical terms *Jīva* and *Parabrahman* and just mixes them with Jehovah and calls this threesome as Trinity (*tirittuvam*) which came as David's Son. This, apart from being very comical, also smacks of clear intent at appropriation.

ādiyum antamum illāy caraṇam
atumuṉ atumuṉ atumuṉ caraṇam
ālfā ômegāve caraṇam
adiyeṉ naduve mudive caraṇam

ஆதியும் அந்தமும் இல்லாய் சரணம்
அதுமுன் அதுமுன் அதுமுன் சரணம்
ஆல்பா ஒமேகாவே சரணம்
அடியேன் நடுவே முடிவே சரணம்

This song runs to several stanzas, all ending with the popular Hindu chant "*saraṇam*" signifying surrender, combining *ādi* (beginning), *anta* (end), Alpha, Omega all in a heady mix.

As per the official website `http://www.sastriars.org/` of the descendants of Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār, they are still involved in performing '*Kathākālakṣepa*-s' (a generic name for various styles of Hindu musical discourses of *Itihāsa* and *Purāṇa*) based on his works and some of them even included the appellation "Bhāgavatar" to their names.

Plagiarism, Collaboration or Appropriation?

A few examples from Christian Keerthanam were given in the above sections. A complete survey of the corpus of Christian Keerthanam would not change our view of the general style, tone and tenor of these compositions. It is evident that most of the "composers" of these Keerthanams were neither good original musicians, nor good original poets. The only force that propelled them was the religious zeal to "create" Tamil Christian hymns set to Karnatic music tunes. Naturally, one cannot expect much of originality or genius in such a pursuit. They unabashedly plagiarized and pilfered both the music (*saṅgīta*) and much of the lyrics (*sāhitya*) from the prevalent Hindu Keerthanam compositions and tweaked them here and there with Christian names and themes.

It is important to note that this is not just plagiarism of words, phrases or lines in the literary or artistic sense, indulged in by individual poets or composers. That can be pardoned in the spirit of artistic freedom. This is clearly part of the long-term strategy backed by a well-established theological concept, having serious consequences in the socio-cultural developments and conflicts taking place in the Indian society. Even a renowned artist like Chitravina Ravikiran discusses

this in isolation in a very casual manner in his article "Don't crucify the artists" (Ravikiran 2018). He creates totally false and baseless equivalences of Aruṇagirinātar using a word '*salām*' in one place out of thousands of *Tiruppugaḻ* verses (because that Arabic word had sneaked into Tamil colloquial vocabulary by that time) and Dīkṣitar composing songs on Hindu deities in "Western Notes" tunes (this would form not even 0.5% of his otherwise rich and magnificent musical repertoire) to the massive and near-total plagiarism of Christian Keerthanam composers shamelessly stealing everything from Hindu *kīrtana*-s and Hindu religious texts. More importantly, he completely misses the point about the motive of Christian composers, who were not really artists in the true sense of the word but were all evangelists and proselytizers without exception.

The music historian V. Sriram, in his article "A chronicle of colla -boration" (Sriram 2018) goes to the extent of citing a "long standing Carnatic tradition in the Church". He writes -

> "The composer's (Thyagaraja) contemporary, Vedanayagam Sastriar, created songs and operas in the Carnatic style. Some of the tunes are very closely modelled on Tyagaraja's songs. 'Sujana Jivana' (Harikamboji) has a parallel in 'Parama Pavana'. At this point in time it is impossible to state who borrowed whose tune and made it his own".
>
> (*spellings as in the original*)

It would take either extreme sense of ignorance or perversion to even speculate that the sagely Tyāgarāja, the unparalleled musical genius would have "borrowed" an ordinary musical tune from a copycat composer like Vedanāyagam Sāstriyār whose musical prowess is not even remotely comparable. In all the examples that he gives throughout this article, what is common is the fact that the Hindu Karnatic *vidvān*-s, out of their magnanimity and large heart, engaging and entertaining Christians who show interest in Karnatic music, sometimes helping them to compose songs, sometimes even signing one or two Christian hymns, whereas the Christian aspirants are very clear in their sole aim, of putting Karnatic music at the "service" of Christian faith and evangelism. To term this as "collaboration" calls for extreme sense of imagination. What the Hindu Karnatic *vidvān*-s displayed was a behavior described as *sadguṇa vikṛti* (perversion of a noble trait). Such patronizing behavior of accommodation and forgiving, even towards the sworn enemies of their *dharma* and society

has been the bane of Hindus historically, with many examples from the pages of history like the king Prithviraj Chauhan who pardoned the murderous Islamic invader Mohammed of Ghor, despite winning him in war multiple times.

Abraham Pandithar and His Musical Treatise

1. Antecedents of Pandithar

The life story of Abraham Pandithar (1859-1919) is quite interesting and flamboyant. He was born in the village Sambavar Vadakari near Kutralam in a Nadar family that had quasi-religious affiliation to Christianity, in the sense that they continued with many Hindu traditional practices inherited from their ancestors while also indulging in Christian worship and commune. When he was well settled in his career as an English teacher in the Norman English school in Dindigul in his thirties, he was drawn to Karuṇānandar, a *siddha puruṣa* living in the nearby Suruli hills. He became an ardent devotee and disciple of Karuṅānandhar and got transformed into an adept *vaidya* (traditional physician) in the Siddha medicine. Around 1883, he moved to Thanjavur and established a flourishing Siddha medical center that brought him a lot of fame and wealth. The British government awarded him with the title "Rao Bahadur" in 1909 for his services in the medical profession. He had also developed keen interest in Karnatic music and continued learning under competent teachers in Dindigul and Thanjavur and became adept at playing many musical instruments like harmonium, fiddle and *vīṇā*. He established Thanjavur Sangita Vidya Mahajana Sangam that held six music conferences during the years 1912-1916. Being a devout Christian, Pandithar also authored about 100 Christian Keerthanams, all falling under the same genre of the ones discussed above in this paper, apart from his famed treatise *Karunamirtha Sagaram.* (Jeyamohan 2001) (TVU thanjai-1)

2. Musicological Aspects in the Treatise

Karunamirtha Sagaram, the voluminous 1400-page musical treatise in Tamil written by Abraham Pandithar remains a much-celebrated work. The name has dual connotation, one meaning music being the nectar to ears (*karṇa + amṛta*) and the other denoting the name

of his Guru Karuṇānandar. The author claimed it was the fruit of his labor of love and fifteen years of research on the subject. When published in 1917, it received wide range of testimonials and accolades from a variety of savants and experts, which included the pontiffs of śaiva Adhīnams, renowned Tamil scholars like U.Ve. Swaminatha Iyer and R. Raghavaiyangar, doyens of music like Harikeśanallur Muthaiah Bhagavathar and renowned music patrons like Ettayapuram Zamindar (Pandithar 1917: Ch. *paayiram*)

The musicological aspects of this work and the axioms and the theories it proposed have been the topic of much discussion among the experts in the field ever since it appeared. These are dealt in Parts 2,3 and 4 of the treatise. Part 2 titled "On the Shrutis" is dedicated to the detailed analysis of the *śruti* and *rāga* system as propounded by śārṅgadeva, the author of *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*, a seminal text in Karnatic music tradition. Part 3 titled "Tamil musical Shrutis in vogue in South India" elaborately describes the *śruti* and *rāga* system practiced in Tamil music based on Sangam literary works and *Silappatikāram*, the renowned Tamil epic. Book 4 deals with assorted topics like Yāḻ (ancient *vīṇā*-like string instrument), science of *śruti*, survival and sustenance of Tamil music and the author's general opinions about Indian music. It is neither the purpose nor in the scope of this paper to get into these topics.

3. Questionable Religious and Historical Narratives in the Treatise

The purpose of this paper regarding this treatise is to give a glimpse of all the chapters of Part 1 titled "The summary of the history of Indian music" (280 pages). This is to illustrate how the author systematically attempts to build a specific kind of dubious quasi-historical narrative about Indian classical music by combining Biblical legends, Lemurian theory and Dravidian racist theories in a heady mix. At the end of this, he postulates Tamil to be mother of all languages of India and Tamil music to be the mother of all classical music traditions in India.

Chapter 1 titled "Glory of Music and Its Origin" starts with paying obeisance to Kartan (the creator) in an elaborate manner, and then continues with the Bible quote "In the beginning was the Word (*nādam*), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... (John 1:1)". After equating the Word of the Bible with the concept of *nāda* in Indian music tradition, the work continues to explain how all

creation started from *nāda*. There is a brief mention of *Sāma Veda*, śiva, Sarasvatī etc. after which it elucidates how divine and lofty music is. Chapter 2 is titled "The Evidences in the True Scripture (*sathiya vedam*) for the Antiquity of Music and the Musical Instruments of that age" and runs to 20 pages. The author emphatically puts his complete belief in the history as narrated in the True Scripture, which means the *Bible*. "As per the Genesis given by Moses (*mosē munivar*) 3400 years ago...", the text goes quoting several verses from the Bible. The subsequent sub-headings in this chapter go like this - "The song of Moses and dance of Miriam", "The song of Deborah", "The music and devotion of King David and the instruments of his time", "The music of King Solomon and appointment of 288 singers in the temple", "The Golden Statue established by Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon and the instruments played in front of it", "Playing of instruments in Babylon palace morning and evening", "Nimrod building Babylon, Nineveh and other towns", "The glory of Babylon and its destruction", "The glory of Nineveh and its destruction", "The penance of the noble Enoch" and "Noah before the Great Deluge". In these pages, the author goes on and on with narration of these Biblical legends in Tamil, with the reader exasperatedly wondering what has all this got to do with South Indian music, really.

Then starts Chapter 3 titled "The Tamil Nations and the Arts destroyed due to Great Deluge" (40 pp) with the opening paras saying that it is very difficult to assess any history of this period, as all this is told only in "old stories". It goes on to narrate the story of the "Dravidian King Satyavrata" from *śrīmad Bhāgavata* 11.30 *verbatim*, followed by direct quotations of pages and pages from the Manual of the administration of the Madras Presidency (the Manual faithfully documents the Aryan Dravidian racist narratives peddled by the Colonial historians of that period as the authentic history of the region). Then it postulates the thoroughly scientifically discredited Lemurian and 'Kumari Kandam' theories with many citations from colonial writings including those of Robert Caldwell.

Chapter 4 titled "The Antiquity of Tamil language" (60 pp) presents the typical Tamil Supremacist and Dravidianist arguments about how Tamil is older than Sanskrit, resorting to pseudo-linguistic propositions and strawman arguments like making classical Sanskrit based on Pāṇini grammar as an entirely different language discontinuous with Vedic Prakrit language etc.

Chapter 5 titled "Various opinions about Indian music" (35 pp) gives a survey of then prevalent ideas on the topic.

Chapter 6 titled "Some Notes about the Practitioners of South Indian Music" (100 pp) gives historical information on how classical music thrived in Tamil Nadu, right from Sangam age through Chola, Pandya dynasties and all the way to 19th century.

Chapter 7 (45 pp) is about the charter of Thanjavur Sangita Vidya Mahajana Sangham and its deliberations.

4. The Legacy of Abraham Pandithar

When the treatise appeared and got its initial acclaim, all the discussions about it were concerning the debate on *śruti* system and on the unique musical ideas present in ancient Tamil literary works that were not present in any ancient Sanskrit works like *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata. It appears that the historiography filled with Biblical and Aryan-Dravidianist racist narratives and Lemuria theories was totally neglected and overlooked by those who read and praised the book. But, in the later decades, when Abraham Pandithar is presented as an eminent South Indian musicologist of the 20th century and a "Christian icon" of Karnatic music, his dubious historiography also gets credence and validity, along with whatever original scholarly contributions that he might have made regarding some aspects of ancient Tamil music.

For those familiar with the long history of nexus between the colonial racist theories, Dravidian movement and Christian evangelism in Tamil Nadu, it is not difficult to speculate the logical consequences of Pandithar's legacy. His treatise is positioned as a powerful tool in furthering the attempts to appropriate and even digest Karnatic music partly or fully into Christianity.

How a similar nexus operates in the domain of religion is well explained in the two chapters of the book *Breaking India* - viz. Digesting Hinduism into 'Dravidian' Christianity and Propagation of 'Dravidian' Christianity (Malhotra and Neelakandan 2011: 88-153).

"Christian Tamil Music Primer"

A Christian Karnatic music Primer for learners has been published recently (Lakshmi and Renuka 2014), on the lines of the renowned

and repeatedly republished *Gānāmirta Bodhini: Saṅgīta Bāla Pāṭam* by A. S. Panchapakesa Ayyar (first edition 1954).

Nothing so blatantly exemplifies as to how a typical Christian mindset deals with a classical Hindu art like Karnatic music like this book. It is also to be noted that the book is titled as the primer of "Tamil music" mainstreaming the theoretical framework of Abraham Pandithar that was discussed in the previous section. The striking feature of this primer is that it has Christian lyrics in Tamil for all the traditional *gīta* and *varṇa* songs learned by Karnatic music students world over. There are Christian lyrics set to the notes of famous Piḷḷāri *gīta* compositions like *śrī Gaṇanātha*, *Kêraya nīranu* and *Paduma nābha* (attributed to Purandara Dāsa), Sañcāri *gīta* compositions like *Varavīṇā*, *Kamalajādaḷa* etc. and to the notes of well-known *varṇa* compositions like *Ninnukori*, *Jalajākṣa*, *Vanajākṣi*, *Sarasuḍa*, *Erā nāpai* etc.

There have been numerous non-Hindu students and artists of Karnatic music over many decades of the past, including Westerners and people from other foreign countries, not to mention Indian Muslims and Christians. Till today, there is no record of instances where any of them had any aversion to singing these simple yet sublime traditional lyrics. The very fact that they came to learn this divine music meant that they respect the heritage and the tradition of this art form. For a lover and practitioner of this music, these *gīta*-s and *varṇa*-s are not just learning aids or "combinations of musical notes", but they are a tribute in the honor of the divinities that embody the music and the great *guru*-s and masters who grew and nurtured it over centuries. To separate these lofty traditional lyrics from the notes and replacing them with Christian ones is nothing but a grave insult to the very art, its soul and its masters. It is very clear as to what motivated the above-mentioned duo in this deplorable pursuit. They wanted to create a "Christian" version of Karnatic music, right from the very learning stages, by simply copying everything from the existing tradition and shamelessly replacing Christian stuff over it. If this is not a grotesque attempt at appropriation, what else is? Those paragons of harmony who keep trumpeting "music has no boundaries": what is their reaction to such attempts?

Conclusion

It is evident that the attempts outlined in this article are an ongoing process under the expansionist agenda of different Christian denomi-

nations and Churches, though it may not have any centralized authority or coordinated strategy. This is because, once the theological import of it is well understood and assimilated, Christian evangelists or mission groups or even individuals with the religious zeal do not need any further directive or guidance and they go ahead on their own to put it into action. This paper already presented the example of *Christian Tamil Music Primer* regarding which no evidence of "official" Christian connection can be explicitly proved. But it would be *naïve* on part of those Hindus concerned with preserving the civilizational bond of Karnatic music intact to dismiss such developments as one-off events or fancies of fringe elements.

We already have a good parallel case in point regarding Tamil classical literature, where the attempts of systematically "De-Hinduizing" it has gained momentum over the past decades. A threshold point has already been reached wherein making outrageous Christian association claims or denying the very Hindu character of Tamil literary works and idioms are considered very normal and acceptable (Jataayu 2017).

Given this, it is very important that Karnatic music insiders and *rasika*-s are aware of this phenomenon and are sensitive to it. Whenever there are debates or controversies about some seemingly "simple" and "straightforward" questions like the appropriateness of Karnatic music *vidvān*-s singing Christian Keerthanams or someone advocating alienation of Hindu ethos from music performances or an academic presenting unsubstantiated things about the history of Karnatic music, those issues must be approached and analyzed not in isolation, but with the awareness about the overall civilizational context, the Indian socio-cultural realities and the clash of religions and ideologies playing out.

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Notes

[1]Popular spelling retained here.

[2]Spellings retained as in popular circulation.

[3]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhTvCoH_gbI

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Chapter 6

A Critique of 'A Southern Music: The Karnatik story'

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Abstract

Whereas Karnatic music has been extolled to the pinnacle of *nāda yoga* or *nāda yajña* whereby the *sādhaka* experiences the sublime and arrests time for the listeners, through this book and his non-musical egregious engagements, T. M. Krishna dons upon himself the garb of the sole liberator of this very music itself. Liberate from what? Liberate it from the elements of devotion in it, and simultaneously presenting a cocktail of subaltern theories, prejudiced handling of the music by the upper caste artistes and marginalization of certain elements of music, as presented in this book by Krishna. Such arguments are nothing new in the discourse of Karnatic music which witnessed fierce exchanges between the proponents of *Tamil Isai* movement and the then group of Karnatic musicians, their patrons and the Music Academy in the middle of the last century. Creating a public narrative concerning music along the fault lines of caste is another dimension, yet, not at all strange in South India, its music as well as Karnatic music and once again the *Tamil Isai* movement is a glaring testimony in this front

* pp. 151–180. In: Meera, H. R. (Ed.) (2021). *Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta - Past, Present, and Future.* Chennai: Infinity Foundation India.

as well. So, in this book by Krishna we get to see a rehash of all these arguments, exaggerated with contemporary atrocity literature along the fault lines of caste hierarchy and Krishna altogether taking this divide to a new dimension of calling for a Karnatic music bereft of the aspects of devotion. Some of the crucial points presented by Krishna in his book like the purpose of music and whether *bhakti* is the *summum bonum* of Karnatic music; the allegations on Brahmins for their domination and their usurping the professions of certain community of people who were traditionally associated with music; the role of lyrics in Karnatic music and corroborations from the *Tamil Isai* movement will be critiqued in this paper in the light of the conspicuously missing discussion on certain documented history.

sa-ri-ga-ma-pa-dha-ni-ratāṁ tāṁ vīṇā-saṅkrānta-kānta-hastāntām ।
śāntāṁ mṛdula-svāntāṁ kuca-bharatāntāṁ namāmi śiva-kāntām

Kālidāsa in *Devī-Navaratnamālā*

jagrāha pāṭhyam ṛgvedāt sāmabhyo gītam eva ca ।
yajurvedād abhinayān rasān ātharvaṇād api ॥

Nāṭyaśāstra 1.17

nāda-tanum aniśam śaṅkaraṁ namāmi me manasā śirasā
modakara-nigamottama-sāmaveda-sāram vāram vāram
sadyojātādi-pañcavaktraja-sarigamapadhani-vara-sapta-svara-
-vidyā-lolaṁ vidalita-kālaṁ vimala-hṛdaya-tyāgarāja-pālam

Śrī Tyāgarāja (Rao 1999: 260)

Introduction

It is indeed befitting to commence this paper with the invocation by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya who has righty visualized Mother Goddess as the very form of music. Furthermore, in the earliest available literature on music, namely the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, Bharatamuni states that the music has its genesis in the *Sāma Veda*. Finally, when we come to a relatively recent period of Śrī Tyāgarāja he upholds the longstanding concept on the divine nature of music as he, in the song cited above, sees the *sapta svara* emanating from Lord Śiva's face. And now we come to this book by T. M. Krishna (henceforth Krishna) which in some sense is antagonistic to all the sentiments espoused above. He appears to treat the idea of *bhakti* in Karnatic music in a manner different from the convention and the following sentence from the book is merely a sample to buttress this point:

> "Abstract music generates bhava in the most profound sense, without having to refer to any direct associations to god. In thrusting this experience into the box of religiosity, we have only reduced the intensity of the experience that art music can offer."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 304)

It is more than obvious, through the choice of words and style of articulation; Krishna verily showcases his views on Karnatic music's divine connection and thereby taking a stance that is diametrically opposite to the tradition as espoused through samples of lofty thoughts quoted above by eminent personalities at various instances in history.

The title of this book, *A Southern Music: The Karnatik Story* is partly deceiving because it is not an objective, impersonal discussion or collation on the Karnatic music, rather it is an exposition of Krishna's moorings. He has nonchalantly injected his opinion while claiming to narrate the 'story' of Karnatic music. The book is internally arranged in three smaller books. Per design or by default, Krishna's highly opinionated assertions on the socio-political underpinnings as well as repercussions of Karnatic music appears sandwiched between the general description of various aspects of music and its history. Whereas a few sections of the book are verbiage laden with sophistry, a few on the other hand are a rehash of older arguments that have been advanced and analyzed by academics from universities on foreign soil. Krishna deconstructs the entire edifice of Karnatic music through a clever series of winding arguments. He asserts that god has no business in Karnatic music, and that Brahmin musicians in the past as well as in the present are the main culprits for whatever vile exists in Karnatic music today. In the 550+ pages, he has put forth only these two assertions, implicitly in a few places and overtly in others. In this paper I will address the following questions both in light of this book as well as the generally accepted notion and thereby highlight not only the contrarian viewpoint of the book but also show that this contrarian viewpoint is not well grounded:

- Is *bhakti* the *summum bonum* of Karnatic music?
- What is the role of lyrics in Karnatic music? (The question considered from the point of view of the impact that *Tamil Isai* movement had on Karnatic music.)

- Were the Brahmins in Karnatic music in past villains or emancipators? (I take up historically documented events regarding which Krishna maintains silence.)

Let us look at each of these questions in some details now.

Is *Bhakti* the *Summum Bonum* of Karnatic Music?

One of the strong ideas that Krishna has woven through the entire fabric of the book is that God is not and should not be the focus of Karnatic music, that the music transcends the religious realm and dwells in a much superior realm of pure art. Let us begin by considering the way Krishna perceives and introduces 'god', 'divine' and 'religion' in this discourse. In page 295, he writes on 'god',

> "A word that could evoke trust in its most intense form is 'god'. The origin of this word has been widely debated, but one of the hypotheses is that it comes from the German 'guth', and that is about as much as we know. Most dictionaries describe it to mean a superhuman force, an object of worship, the Supreme Being in monotheist faiths, the Creator or even just an idol."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 295)

Then on 'divine', he has the following:

> "Connected to this idea is a closely related one – divine. This is derived from the Latin 'divinus', which is traceable to the 'divus', both meaning godlike."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 295)

Finally, on 'religion' Krishna writes:

> "Derived from the Latin word 'religio', meaning binding or obligation, 'religion' is closely linked with the Latin 'lagire' (the root of ligature), which again means something that binds. In these descriptions of bond and binding, there is an indication of a fastening, a joining, but no suggestion that this is forced nor of any tension in this bond. This nuance is important."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 295)

It is indeed obvious that this 'god', 'divine', and 'religion' has nothing to do with the Indian concepts and everything to do with the Western/Abrahamic 'god', 'divine', and 'religion.' But very quickly Krishna makes a sweeping statement in the very next page when he writes,

> "There is no gainsaying that even within the Indian ethos words like god, divine and religion have very varied meanings and spiritual or philosophical connotations. But in their most universal application within the Indian context, the core emotion and associations around 'god', 'divine' and 'religion' *are not at any fundamental variance from those of other cultures*."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 296) (*italics ours*)

This blatant false equivalence that equates Hinduism to the Abrahamic faiths is illogical and naïve. Over-simplistic treatment of these concepts within Hinduism is not only frivolous but also unwarranted. It does not augur well to impose the Abrahamic religious framework on Indian ethos in order to argue later that such 'binding' or 'tense bond' is forced upon the Karnatic music and hence one must relieve the music from such a religious clutch in the interest of music. It is under such an erroneous premise and by the use of the lens of Abrahamic religious does Krishna critique the Indian concept of *bhakti* and *śaraṇāgati* as espoused through various compositions in Karnatic music. It is left to the reader to discern the veracity of his arguments thence. Notwithstanding this shaky premise it is noteworthy to highlight his obsession with agnostic (bordering atheistic) approach to Karnatic music because he writes:

> "The power of religion is so strong that once we place our experience under its umbrella, everything else becomes submissive to it. If one is able to move into a space without a religious identity, it is quite possible that all the other elements that constitute the experience come to life in a way that never existed before."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 296)

It is indeed highly befitting to contrast these utterances with the lofty and lucid exposition of the saint composer Śrī Tyāgarāja. In his Dhanyāsi *kṛti*, "*saṅgīta jñānamu bhakti vinā sanmārgamu galade manasā*" the saint composer categorically rebukes the very idea of musical knowledge without *bhakti* towards god. If this is the identity and status of the Karnatic music, why should one obsess to shun the 'religious burden' from Karnatic music, as asserted by Krishna?

Well, he is indeed completely entitled to his view (atheistic or agnostic be that as it may) but when he psychoanalyses the saint composers through the lens of reductionism and Abrahamic religion, he oversteps from merely exercising his freedom of expression to belittling the contribution of these saint composers besides attempting to create a negative impression regarding them. For instance, he writes:

> "If his [*Tyāgarāja*] main objective was to convey devotional meaning through the lyrics, he would have probably used repetitive melodic themes for all the compositions in the raga to make the composition more accessible to people"
>
> "All this indicates a detail that can only be oriented towards an art music experience. The interplay he [*Muttuswami Dikshitar*] created using syllabo-melodic identities shows that this was a composer who was doing more than describing the divine."
>
> "This presents us a musician's clear musicological and historical perspective. At the same time, we know that Shyama Shastri created a new raga, chintamani. These are other indicators tell us that these compositions were far more than bhakti creations. They were serious art music pieces."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 282-283) (*italics ours*)

He goes on to say,

> "Any vaggeyakara would necessarily provide sahitya that expressed his impressions, aspirations, disappointments and inclinations. This religiously charged environment of the period and their own households naturally led the trinity to express their religious philosophical and moral opinions. This does not mean that they intended to make any massive religious impact on society through these compositions or initiate new religious trends. If that were the case, they would have created simple compositions in familiar ragas, melodies and talas that everyone could repeat. They were geniuses who created musical masterpieces, which contained their beliefs and used sahitya as a musical idea. The meaning of the sahitya was not the focus of the compositions. It was merely the natural input from the experience of each unique human being. These observations on the trinity have been made after an inter-textual analysis of the older pathantaras (rendering variations) of their compositions."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 284) (*no diacritics in the original*)

All these excerpts are more than enough to give us a glimpse of what Krishna is aiming at. In his world view of Karnatic music sans any *bhakti*, he has imagined the supremacy of the abstract art and the *bhakti* is indeed an (avoidable) accident that has only crippled both the musicians and the listeners from accessing that supreme realm where art dwells. Krishna alleges that the real intent of the Trinity's music stands misinterpreted due to its religious overtones. Thereby, Krishna completely trivializes both the *bhakti* of the Trinity and the *bhakti* elements that they have suffused in their compositions.

In other words, any composition by the Trinity can be looked at as a highly convoluted signal. Upon deconvolution we get a number of principal components (*rāga* phrases, lyrics, rhythmic structure, intent, emotiveness etc.) and the weight of these individual components will vary. For example, if a teacher is teaching a composition to students, components like the correct lyrics, *rāga* phrases etc. will be stressed upon whereas when one is performing on the stage, the emotiveness and other factors may be weighed more (it is not that the other components like the correct lyrics, *rāga* phrases etc. are any less important in a performance on stage. A performer would have internalized all these factors, to the extent of making it automatic). Now, all that Krishna is trying to say is that upon deconvolution, the art component of a composition has a weight that is heads and shoulders above the *bhakti* factor or that the *bhakti* factor is insignificant.

This clearly stems from intellectual arrogance and poor understanding of the composers, musicians and society at large. This is because none of these composers sang in isolation and the fact that their compositions and creations were received extremely well, right from their time and even now, shows a common societal perception and acceptance of these composers' intent. It is not as though the society, the music community or these composers felt or expressed any 'corruption' in music by alleging to *bhakti* to their gods.

Another subtle nuance is the way Krishna creates a binary between *bhakti* towards god and art (page 283). This is his creative genius to pit one against the other and when he claims art to be prominent, obviously *bhakti* towards god gets trivialized and hence gets amenable to be reduced to redundancy or to be considered as an exception – both of which lead to the notion that *bhakti* towards god is an unnecessary burden in the realm of Karnatic music, eventually. He invokes the *gāndharva* and *gāna* classification all the way from *Nāṭyaśāstra* to surreptitiously legitimize his claim. This, however, is erroneous. *Ācārya* Abhinavagupta in his *Abhinavabhārati*, an elaborate commentary on *Nāṭyaśāstra*, categorically states the following

> *"kiṁ ca antarāla-niyamaḥ antaḥ pramāṇa-sthāna-svara-kālāṁśa-vadhānna (śāda)sāratayā gāndharve avaśya-saṁvedyaḥ । na tvevaṁ gāne"*

> *"lopo'pi niyata-gāndharve darśito grāma-dvaya-bhedena ca jātyaṁśa-bhedena darśitaḥ । gāne tu raktyanusareṇa pravente(vṛtte) rasāvaniyataḥ"*

(Kavi and Pade 1964: 394)

> Meaning: The rule regarding *śruti*-intervals has to be strictly observed in *gāndharva* music, not so in *gāna*.
>
> Dropping of notes in the two *grāma*-s and on the basis of *aṁśa* notes in each *jāti* was governed by definite rules in *gāndharva* .....but in *gāna*, any note could be dropped in order to bring about a particular aesthetic effect.
>
> (Singh 1984: 18)

We see that *Nāṭyaśāstra* classifies music into *gāndharva* and *gāna.* Whereas in the *gāndharva* the rules pertaining to *śruti, tāla* and *svara-sthāna* are strictly adhered to, no requirement of such strict adherence exists in the case of the *gāna* music. Given the dynamic nature of our music system, both these forms constantly evolved to newer styles. But, according to Krishna it is only the *gāndharva* that constituted the "art music." Where *Nāṭyaśāstra* is silent about art music and non-art music, delineating only on the applicability of rules, Krishna juxtaposes the modern concept of art music on to *Nāṭyaśāstra* thereby inventing a filter to sieve through the music right from the days of *Nāṭyaśāstra* all the way until now. This invented filter serves handy to Krishna with which he dissects the compositions of the Trinity and concludes that his assertions are correct. This is a fitting illustration for circular reasoning by Krishna.

Krishna is indeed very careful in his choice of words as well as style, while trivializing the *bhakti* aspects of the musical Trinity. On the one hand, Krishna squarely blames them for indoctrinating people through their (unwanted) allegiance to *bhakti* and on the other, he creates another class of divinity where *bhakti* exists albeit not towards any god, but towards Art. With the creation of this new class of divinity and *bhakti*, Krishna praises the Trinity by saying:

> "I would say this: irrespective of the votive divinity being sung to, each of the three musical geniuses have in common another 'divinity' - one that is the essence of art music, which for want of a more effective phrase I will describe as the fulfillment of a quest for the purest musical abstraction."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 283)

The last sentence about "these observations ... have been made" (Krishna 2013: 284) in the excerpt cited above helps in highlighting the error in Krishna's deconstruction of the Trinity's compositions into art and *bhakti* (to god). First, he appears to give logic and legitimacy

to his conclusion by saying that he has arrived at this conclusion only through research. And what is the nature of this research? He states that he has researched the variations in rendering of the composition by the Trinity. Interestingly, this completely falsifies the premise on art superseding *bhakti* (to god) in the Trinity's compositions because of the wrong design of experiment. Merely taking cognizance of variations in rendering neither indicates nor proves what Krishna has concluded and wants his readers to believe. Second, through this sentence, he is covertly highlighting the 'argument from authority' fallacy that exists in the music community today. For instance, when he says that he has arrived at his contrarian conclusion after 'research', he is indirectly urging the readers to infer that the extant approach to these compositions from *bhakti* (to god) point of view is not a product of research and thereby stemming from authority which indeed is a fallacy that is hence rightly quashed by his conclusion!

Right after this creative and skillful deception, Krishna unequivocally announces his intent in page 285-286 when he writes,

> "But having placed them [utsava sampradaya kṛti-s] beside art music compositions, we begin to look for 'meaning' in the bhakti sense in the latter as well. This blurs any critical differentiation between the two. I believe that the *utsava sampradaya compositions do not have a place within Karnatik art music*.....I strongly believe that the art music compositions of the trinity, or indeed any other composer, must be treated as art music *and nothing else*. At the same time, compositions that do not possess the quality to abstract as an art music piece *should not be used within Karnatik music*."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 285-286) (*italics ours*)

Let us now look at how people other than Krishna looked at art and non-art music. It is indeed well documented that from the days of *Nāṭyaśāstra* until now, musicians and musicologists have maintained a clear distinction between art music and non-art music. For instance, let us look at the definition of *gāndharva* music as given in *Nāṭyaśāstra* itself:

> *atyartham iṣṭaṁ devānāṁ tathā prītikaraṁ punaḥ* ।
> *gandharvāṇāṁ ca yasmāddhi tasmād gāndharvam ucyate* ॥
>
> (*Nāṭyaśāstra* 28.9)

> Meaning: Because it is extremely desired by the gods and gives great pleasure to the *gāndharva*-s, therefore, is it called *gāndharva*.
>
> (Singh 1984: 20)

Glossing on this, Abhinavagupta says the following in his *Abhinavabhārati*,

> "*...prītivardhanam iti evam anāditvāt dṛṣṭādṛṣṭaphalatvāt ca pradhānaṁ gāṅdharvaṁ ... gānaṁ hi kevalaṁ prītikārye vartate । tena tādātmyaṁ tāvadayuktam* ।
>
> (Kavi and Pade 1964: 6)
>
> Meaning: "Gandharva has been used from time immemorial. It has both drishta and adrishta phala i.e. it is both pleasant (which is evident) and lays in store merit for the future according to which one earns liberation or is given a place in heaven which is not evident (adrishta). But Gana is used only for its pleasant or aesthetic effect. It is, therefore, unjust to identify the two."
>
> (Singh 1984: 20) (*spellings as in the original*)

As said earlier, the two forms of *Nāṭyaśāstra* namely the *gāndharva* and the *gāna* have evolved to different forms over a period of time. Clear distinctions between them have been passed on even in their evolved forms.

In the more recent past Śrī Rangaramanuja Iyengar, one of the *vīṇā-vidvān*-s, a disciple of *vīṇā* Dhanammāl and a great musicologist, observed the following:

> "Carnatic music was essentially spiritual. It was woven into the texture of religion and yoga sadhana. Its great exponents, composers and grammarians were men and women of saintly character, mystics, siddhas and bhaktas. That is why we find an undercurrent of philosophy and moral teaching even in ordinary simple folk songs like those of the snake charmer, the boat man, and the cart driver. What is the import of all this?
>
> (Iyengar 1958: 12)(*spellings as in the original*)
>
> "Many must have noted with a bleeding heart how popular taste is being corrupted especially by things like the incoherent orchestral preludes to the song-hits of stars and of pitch, range, volume, melody and flexibility of voice. Came the Brindaganam and the variety entertainment, and vandalism reached its limits."
>
> (Iyengar 1958: 36-38) (*spellings as in the original*)

Let us look at how the Westerners have handled this theme when they encountered and described Karnatic music. In the book titled *Music and Musical Thoughts in early India* by Lewis Barrel, the author tries to answer the question, "what was music like in early India?".

Interestingly while responding to this question the author arrives at 'music' only after two chapters in some 50 pages. In these two chapters the author introduces Indian philosophy viz. the six philosophies and only in the third chapter delves into the aspects of music (See Rowell 1992; Tingey 1994).

This form of presentation clearly indicates that the author has made an attempt to familiarize the readers with adequate pre-requisites so as to contextualize the divine nature of music in early India. Interestingly, while Krishna's target audience for his book appears to be largely ill-informed urbanites or westerners (as he uses words like "death day" for "samādhi"; subscribing to Western etymology of Sanskrit words) he absolutely refrains from laying out the broader philosophical ecosystem in which the Indian music actually had its genesis and subsequent evolution.

Explicit call for separation of *bhakti* to god from the art aspects of Karnatic music has never appeared in the works of ethnomusicologists or historians of music even from the West barring a few, one of them being Baltzell, who has the following to say in his book *A Complete History Of Music* in the beginning of the 20th century,

> "The main reason why Hindoo music did not develop in the past centuries doubtless lies in the fact that, as in Egypt, the ruling power was vested in the priesthood, which controlled all the arts and sciences. Music was so interwoven with their religious rites and observances, and so hedged around with irrevocable and sacred laws that the slightest alteration was considered a sacrilege."
>
> (Baltzell 1908: 33)

It must also be mentioned that this author subscribes to the then existing theory of Aryan invasion of India as he writes, "The Hindoos belong to the Aryan race, (from which we also sprang), and had their home originally in Central Asia, probably north of the Hindoo Koosh range" (Baltzell 1908: 31) thereby rendering his diagnosis on the 'lack of development' in the Indian music in the past, infructuous. Interestingly, it appears as though Krishna is informed and influenced by this book as he has taken cues from it (apparently).

In conclusion of this section, it would indeed be apt to draw parallels between Krishna and Prof. Sheldon Pollock. One of the ill-grounded observations of Prof. Pollock was on the non-commonality of *rasa* across different art forms (Gopinath 2018: 90); interestingly somewhat

akin to Krishna's denial of the commonality of *bhakti* to god as the *summum bonum* of Karnatic music. What is *rasa* to Pollock, *bhakti* towards god is to Krishna. If Pollock got it all wrong with respect to *rasa*, as shown by Gopinath through *Citrasūtra,* who elaborates on the relationship between and amongst the different disciplines like sculpture, painting, dance and music (Gopinath 2018: 105), the aforementioned discussion suffices to prove Krishna wrong with regard to *bhakti* towards god. Finally, it is worth reiterating that Krishna is entitled to his opinion on the lines of atheism or agnosticism but it is indeed completely wrong to project his personal indulgence with god, or the lack thereof, on the wider canvas of Karnatic music. Interestingly, Krishna does not refer to or cite Abhinavagupta's work anywhere in this book. So yes, *bhakti* is the *summum bonum* of Karnatic music. In the parlance of Śrī Rajiv Malhotra, *bhakti* is the poison pill of Karnatic music and anyone who wants Karnatic music has to take it with the poison pill. Krishna is attempting to dilute or destroy this poison pill (Malhotra 2014: 269).

The Role of Lyrics in Karnatic Music

While dismissing the *bhakti* to god as the primary motif of Karnatic music, as evidenced from the discussion above, the excerpts also throw light on Krishna's ideas on the role, impact and necessity of lyrics in the domain of what he classifies as the art form of the Karnatic music. In this section we will look at this in greater detail to expose the inconsistencies in Krishna's arguments. The *Tamil Isai* movement will also be discussed in this section and here again we will see how Krishna has misrepresented historical facts through information bias.

Krishna writes,

> ".....and the musician expresses every melodic motif as an extension of an appendage to the lyrical meaning and not as a distinct melodic import. And that is when the music, regretfully, ceases to be art music. The shift in focus from melodic to lyrical meaning deeply affects the compositional experience for the listener. In my world of meaning, 'Kamakshi' is a melodic and not a lyrical concept."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 278)

After having made his world-view clear that the melodic aspect enjoys the top priority and that lyrical aspect has no place, Krishna goes further to add,

> "I am not devaluing the experience that sahitya-oriented music can generate, but I am definitely questioning the necessity for such experience within Karnatik music."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 279)

Relationship between the tonal and linguistic aspects has been a subject of serious studies world across. In one of the recent publications in the Journal of Acoustic Society of America (Wang *et al* 2016:2432), while reviewing the earlier literature, Wang *et al* state that cross domain pitch processing for speech and music pointing to bidirectional influences of pitch-related proficiency between speech and music as a function of experience. Furthermore, it is stated in the paper that such bidirectional influences appear to be associated with enhancement of both lower level acoustic sensitivity and higher-level cognitive resources in speech and music. As a conclusion of their own findings, Wang *et al.* conclude that

> "The bi-directional transfer of tonal categorization supports our theoretical prediction that domain-specific experience with categories may enhance domain-general category learning mechanisms which in turn facilitate cross-domain categorization. These patterns suggest that experience which leads to increased efficiency of sound category learning could benefit the categorization in both music and speech under domain-general processes."
>
> (Wang *et al.* 2016: 2445)

In other words, both the lyrical and the melodic (tonal) aspects of sound have a mutual influence on each other, together enhancing certain desirable attributes in the individual. Although there exists a paucity of such extensive research on the relation between the lyrical and tonal aspects of sound in the Indian musical context, discussions regarding the relationship between word (*vāk*) and meaning (*artha*) has been in vogue from distant past and the verdict has also been given in the past by the master poet Kālidāsa in his verse:

> *vāgarthāviva saṁpṛktau vāgartha-pratipattaye ।*
> *jagataḥ pitarau vande pārvatī-parameśvarau ॥*
>
> (*Raghuvaṁśa* 1.1)

When we revisit the idea of Krishna on the insignificance of lyrical aspect in Karnatic (art) music with the backdrop of the above cited research findings, it is obvious that Krishna merely asserts his opinion without any supporting evidence.

It is indeed a well-known fact that the compositions of Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita, particularly the *Kamalāmbā Navāvaraṇa kṛti*-s, are pregnant with *bīja mantra*-s. If the lyrical aspect is really to be downplayed in (art) music as Krishna asserts it is indeed a matter of great mystery as to why a composer like Dīkṣita should take such great pains to compose the lyrics for his *kṛti*-s. At this juncture we can conclude that Krishna's assertion is not well-grounded although he is entitled to hold on it his opinions.

Further on the lyrical aspect, let us now look at some contradictions in Krishna's arguments. Whereas the lyrical aspect of, say *Kāmākṣī*, is of no significance to Krishna, interestingly when it comes to the *pada*-s or *jāvaḷi*-s, the lyrical aspect finds utmost prominence all of a sudden. Had Krishna exercised similar preference in these compositional forms (*pada*-s and *jāvaḷi*-s) as he did for the *kṛti*-s, the approach could have been called objective, even though he classifies *pada*-s and *jāvaḷi*-s as art objects. He mocks both the listeners as well as the musicians by stating that they show selective obsession with the lyrical aspects of the composition. Whereas they completely ignore it in *pada*-s and *jāvaḷi*-s, they go to extreme details in other compositions, notes Krishna. He further questions the near paucity in serious discussions and lecture demonstrations on the *pada*-s and *jāvaḷi*-s. Having raised the question, he also offers the answer by stating that the overtly sexual content in *pada*-s and *jāvaḷi*-s makes us uncomfortable (Krishna 2013: 287).

While discussing about *pada*-s and *jāvaḷi*-s, Krishna puts them in the same group here but elsewhere he rightly combines *pada*-s with *kīrtana* and separates out *jāvaḷi*-s. For several elements, *pada*-s for instance, Krishna mentions the dates in order to contextualize that feature in a historical perspective. Interestingly, he chooses to remain silent on the date or the historical evolution of *jāvaḷi*-s. It can be gleaned that *jāvaḷi*-s made its appearance in the then music of south India from the latter part of the 18th century (Seetha 1968: 341). Both the date as well as the context surrounding the appearance of *jāvaḷi*-s is an interesting topic needing a distinct treatment which will be taken up in later section while discussing the socio-political ecosystem in late 19th century.

Pada-s are laden with *śṛṅgāra rasa* which may at the best be translated in English as divine romance. But literature is replete, not excluding

Krishna, with the term 'erotic' to refer to the *śṛṅgāra rasa* in *pada*-s. 'Erotic' – much like the term 'gay' of Wordsworth in his *Daffodils* ("A poet could not be but gay, In such a jocund company") – has a different connotation. Erotic dwells only in the realm of pure art. But the intent of the *śṛṅgāra*-laden *pada*-s is also devotion where the '*nāyaka-nāyikā*' relation is extolled to its utmost glory, with God being the *nāyaka* always. A major shift happens in the *jāvaḷi*-s where mortals replace god as the *nāyaka*.

Now we need to go back to our first question and reflect on the established fact that *bhakti* to god is the heart of Karnatic music through different points in time. With the advent of *jāvaḷi*-s, does the aspect of *bhakti* to god get shaky? No. This can easily be established by statistical argument and analogy from Darwinian evolution. *Jāvaḷi*-s are few, though they are in the group of art music. Hence, they cannot be seen to have been 'selected' (in the Darwinian sense). There are other aspects of *jāvaḷi*-s which will be taken up later.

Genesis and Impact of Tamil Isai Movement

It is verily in this lyrical context that the *Tamil Isai* gets discussed by Krishna. It is beyond the scope of this paper to dwell into all the details of this movement. Very briefly, this movement started in 1940s that mandated the use *Tamil* compositions in a performance. But the very genesis of this movement calls forth for a relook at the discussion on the lyrical aspects of music. It had its origin in the early 1940s taking formal shape through the establishment of *Tamil Isai Sangam* in 1943. Raja Annamalai Chettiar was highly instrumental right from its inception and early growth. Needless to say, there were fierce verbal exchanges between the proponents of this movement and its detractors drawn from the members and office bearers of Madras Music Academy. Despite several big-wigs of the day throwing their weights on either side, with the collective maturity and conscience of the society back then, amicability was soon reached and *Tamil* songs started gaining popularity. It is indeed not true to say that there were no Tamil compositions prior to the formation of *Tamil Isai Sangam*. It was indeed the immense popularity and appeal for the Trinity's music that has kept their music continuously in vogue but after the *Tamil Isai Sangam's* formation, newer Tamil compositions gained currency. Papanasam Sivan's popularity went beyond cinema only after the formation of this *Sangam*.

Coming to Krishna's analysis of *Tamil Isai*, he expresses his surprise that people who were not even remotely connected with music were the torch bearers in this movement. In summary, Krishna welcomes the *Tamil Isai* movement as the need of the hour then, due to its political underpinnings rather than from the language point of view. Although *Sangam*'s contention began with the language, it soon got gave way into politics and landed along the caste fault lines of Tamil Nadu. Even though the *Tamil Isai Sangam* originated with troubles, it soon stabilized as most of the leading artistes of the day took an active part in spreading the Tamil music. Many performers made sure that they devoted considerable time of their performance for Tamil songs. Over a period of time, however, people who hated Brahmins saw that the *Tamil Isai Sangam* was taken over by Brahmins. They were frustrated to see that the *Tamil Isai Sangam* was patronizing Brahmins when, according to them, it should have exclusively patronized non-brahmins. This gave rise to splinter groups formation and one such is the *Tandai Periyār Tamil Isai Mandram* (TPTIM), started by Mr. N. Arunachalam in 1993, an industrialist from Chennai. It is a documented fact that Mr. Arunachalam has strong links with LTTE and considers Prabhakaran as his ideal (Terada 2008a: 216). Interestingly, the mandate of this TPTIM was to patronize only non-Brahmin musicians and promote only those Tamil songs that align with the atheistic ideology. So, god has no business in this organization. It is very clear that this group's main intent was to spread Brahmin hatred and atheism through music. This is where we need to check honesty and intent of Krishna. Whereas in the earlier parts of the book, he extensively psychoanalysed the Trinity and trivialized the *bhakti*-to-god aspects of it, Krishna remains completely silent on splinter groups like TPTIM. If his approach was objective and the intent was truly to narrate the story of Karnatic music, he should have mentioned TPTIM, analysed its mandate, analysed its members and their thought processes and finally should have preached to them as he had done to the religious group. Alas, he is silent. Why?

One might surmise that he perhaps is not aware of this splinter group. However, this is not possible as he has cited the works of Terada. Incidentally it is this author and this author alone who has written about TPTIM. It is hence clear that Krishna has indulged in suppressing this information.

In summary, Krishna's has made very clear his stance the on lyrical (in)significance of our traditional musical compositions. By underplaying the lyrics, he has subtly legitimized the act of replacing the words of these compositions with any individual's choice and thereby legitimizing the Christianization of our music. Once he convinces the reader that the lyrics is not that important and that it is only the music and its art appeal that is important, it naturally (and importantly) follows that it does not and should not matter whether the composition is on Jesus or Allah or the song is penned by Perumal Murugan or by a Tamil Sufi (Parakala 2017**;** Rao 2017). Thus, he is acting as an agent for the breaking-India-forces and paving way for their onslaught. It is indeed noteworthy to mention that there have been a few composers like Vedanāyagam Pillai and Abraham Pandithar in the past who have composed many Christian *kṛti*-s which were all in praise of Jesus. There have been few instances in past when top Karnatic musicians have even included a couple of these songs in their performance. Such instances can indeed only be construed as sporadic, as the practice has neither gained wide popularity nor has the community witnessed enormous growth in such compositions until now. It is noteworthy to highlight Krishna's admiration for non-Hindu musicians and thereby glean his intent as well as double standard:

> "You will find their homes adorned with pictures of Hindu deities and their immense respect for Hindu gods and goddesses even when their religious practices are Islamic. This is a credit to their ability to straddle two worlds. But they cannot display apathy for Hinduism and be accepted as musicians by the Karnatic world"
>
> (Krishna 2013: 312)

First, the admiration for these musicians straddling the two worlds is highly misplaced. Krishna has hinted to the Hindus amongst his peers that since they do not straddle the two worlds, they gain no admiration from him. Furthermore, just as these Islamic musicians do not show apathy to Hinduism in order to be accepted in the Karnatic fold, his Hindu peers ought not to show any apathy towards other religions lest they be forced to relinquish their coveted position in the Karnatic world. In all this, silence of Krishna on how these musicians came to Islamic fold is glaringly conspicuous. Let us look at the way Krishna has handled 'Islamic musicians' and 'Brahmin musicians.' Music is common in both the groups. But 'Islam' in the 'Islamic musicians' gets

admiration and 'Brahminism' in the 'Brahmin musicians' gets vitriolic rebuke from Krishna (see below). Hence it gets vivid beyond any doubt that all his deconstruction tactics are to legitimize, aid, and normalize the invasion of the Karnatic system by Breaking-India-forces!

Brahmins in Karnatic Music: Villains or Emancipators?

Let us now come to the most crucial part of Krishna's narration which is carrying out the hit-job on brahmins – a theme and agenda that underpins his entire book as well as discourses elsewhere. In the guise of discussing Karnatic music from a sociological view point, Krishna has in fact misrepresented facts and merely rehashed the modern and post-modern ethnomusicologist's subaltern theories (Weidman 2003: 194; Weidman 2005: 485; Terada 2008b: 108; Sinha 1996: 477). The starting point for all these researchers, as it is for Krishna, is that Karnatic music was and is dominated by brahmins. With copious atrocity literature generated in the last 120-150 years, brahmins are the usual suspects in any and every evil in the society (Google search with "Brahmins dominated Carnatic music" as key words returns 50k+ results!). In the context of Karnatic music, it is stated by these researchers (and is rehashed by Krishna) in the following words:

> "A mediocre Brahmin Karnatik musician could find his voice in the modern narrative but an average nagasvara vidvan had no place."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 340)

> "When many non-brahmin musicians nurtured brahmin students, there were very few non-brahmins in the next generation of musicians, a further monopolization of the music by the Brahmins."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 344)

> "With Brahmins controlling the violin and the mrdanga, their domination of Karnatik music was complete."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 346)

> "Brahmin driven sanctification has played a largely negative role in the past."
>
> (Krishna 2013: 357)

With these and many more, the view of Krishna (a rehash of the writings of other researchers) on brahmins is quite clear. One is reminded of the story of an experiment by a mad scientist who cuts the legs of a frog in succession, commands it to jump at the end of every

cut and observes that the frog jumps. After cutting all the four legs, the scientist again commands the frog to jump but the frog remains still. The scientist then concludes from this experiment that when all the four legs of the frog are cut, the frog loses the ability to hear. Similar to these are the conclusions by those researchers Krishna has quoted on the role of brahmins in Karnatic music. In other words, the observations are all perfectly correct but the inference drawn is flawed. Whereas such a faulty conclusion in the case of a fictitious scientist is hilarious, the conclusions drawn by Krishna are disgraceful.

Although Krishna has delved into the history of a few aspects in Karnatic music in the book, he remains completely silent on the role of Anglo-Indian law extant in the 19th and early 20th century, the impact of British 'Social Purity Movement' in India, and the role of Christian missionaries in the Tamil society. If one intends to give a socio-political context to Karnatic music, one cannot ignore the dynamics at different layers of the society back then. For a comprehensive history of the '*pāṇar-s*', '*devadāsī*' and '*rājādasī*' the readers are requested to consult literature on these (Varagunapandian 1952: 9; Naidu 1986: 89) and only a brief sketch is presented here. *Pāṇar-s* were a community of people associated with music and the playing of *yāḻ* right from the distant past. Hagiographic accounts of these *pāṇar-s* are contrarian in nature. They have been described as the untouchables in some literature but Sekkiḻār, the chronicler of the 63 Nāyanmār (Śaiva devotees of yore) offers a completely different picture. The episode of Nīlakaṇṭha Yāḻpāṇar's (7th century CE) experience at the Madurai temple where he was offered a golden pedestal by the divine command to sing for the lord is documented history (Ghose 1996: 412; Sivananda 1997: 61). Another instance of social reformation and emancipation is also presented by Sekkiḻār while he describes Nīlakaṇṭha Yāḻpāṇar's visit to another brahmin saint by the name Tirunīlanakka. It is reported (Sivananda 1997: 26) that the brahmin saint was caste conscious and it was only upon the insistence of Sambandar who had accompanied Yāḻpāṇar, did the brahmin saint agree to accommodate Yāḻpāṇar and offered him a place to sleep next to the *homa kuṇḍa* (fire altar). Sekkiḻār records that the *homa* fire grew huge shone brightly, an omen to testify Yāḻpāṇar's devotion.

It calls for deep research to reveal whether the '*melakkārar*' comprising '*devadāsī*, *rājādasī*, *naṭṭuvanār* and *nāgasvara* players' were the *pāṇar*-s of the yesteryears or not. For, in the discourse of brahmins usurping

the music from other communities, it is only these '*melakkārar*' who are often discussed and we find absolutely no mention of *pāṇar*-s in this discourse. By the way, this alleged usurpation supposedly starts in the middle of 19th century, peaks in the 1880-1900s, culminating in the early 20th century, by when the brahmins were branded as having the monopoly over Karnatic music. Given that we still have few contemporary singers suffixing their name with *pāṇar* names is testimony to the fact that *pāṇar*-s did exist during the period of alleged usurping of control over music by brahmins. It is indeed mysterious as to why these *pāṇar*-s do not find their presence in the history of Karnatic music, given the presence of copious atrocity literature created for this period.

Let us look at the '*melakkārar*' discussion. It is absolutely certain, without any shred of doubt, that these groups of people were custodians of music and dance, and yet they ended up at the receiving end of the stick wielded by the colonial masters, Christian missionaries and definitely not by the brahmins (see below), contrary to what Krishna would want his readers to believe (recollect the frog experiment). In the chapter of Unequal Music, Krishna begins thus, "In this essay, I will look at the position of caste within the Karnatic community and use history as a reference towards understanding the present." (Krishna 2013: 335)

On the contrary, there is hardly any real allegiance to history and only the present prejudices are bemoaned in whole of the chapter. Whether his silence on the real history is per chance or by design is left to speculations. So, let us fill that gap by looking at the history, not at those presented by the modern and post-modern ethnomusicologist whom Krishna refers to, but from an apparently distant yet connected domain of Anglo-Indian judiciary and the evolution of legal instruments. This is succinctly captured in the 1998 paper by Kunal Parker (Parker 1998: 559), currently a law professor at Miami Law School, titled, "'A Corporation of Superior Prostitutes' Anglo-Indian Legal Conceptions of Temple Dancing Girls, 1800-1914." In this paper, Parker gives an elaborate account of how the dancing girls (same were referred to as *melakkārar*-s comprising of *devadāsī*, *rājādasī*, *nāgasvara* players, *naṭṭuvanār* -s etc. earlier in this paper) and the whole community got ostracized and driven to penury by the Anglo-Indian legal mechanism. Let us look at the material presented by Parker.

Parker notes in the introduction of his work that in the imagination of the reformist activity related to women in the colonial India, judicial reformist activity gets largely disregarded. To this front, Parker remarks that this is not a new phenomenon and quotes Judge West of Bombay High Court from *Indu Prakash* (14 March 1887) who says, "judicial decisions have silently promoted the cause of female emancipation and progress." Parker further observes that dramatic changes were produced through the incremental efforts of the Anglo-Indian Judiciary and that these efforts from the judiciary enjoyed unfettered discretion in shaping legal conceptions of temple dancing girls. It is significant to highlight the existence of two broad legal frameworks within the same judiciary. One offered the legal solicitude to the individual and this gets firmly located within the British 'public law.' The second focuses on legal recognition of the demands of community firmly located within the Indian Law.

There existed a continuous tussle between the two contrarian legal frameworks in the Anglo-Indian judiciary and that shaped the society in the past. The incremental efforts from this judiciary was in fact not in the direction of bridging this gap between the two laws, rooted in two distinct and different cultures, but rather to increasingly view the Hindu private law through the Imperialist's lens. This had severe repercussions and its consequences are glaringly visible as well as active even in today's judiciary.

Parker notes that conviction of the temple dancing girls and temple servants (*devadāsī*) under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) began in late 1860s under the provisions of articles 372 and 373 in IPC. Judicial activism gets rightly spotted by Parker here as he says that the legislative history of these provisions revealed no intention on the part of the framers of the IPC of targeting the temple dancers. Parker says, "The 'crime' of 'dedicating girls to a life of temple-harlotry' was, therefore, a pure judicial invention." So, it becomes clear that the judiciary, in its silent approach as activist to emancipate women and bring about a reform in the society, had to criminalize this act of dedicating girls to temple as temple dancers (read *devadāsī*-s). This incrimination needed the *devadāsī*-s to be declared as 'prostitutes' and this is when the community starts facing insurmountable troubles. Parker writes that,

> "The legal representation of temple dancing girls as 'prostitutes' rested upon patriarchal Hindu legal norms surrounding the sexual activity of women."
>
> (Parker 1998: 568)

Here we need to note that there existed a clear and informed distinction between extra-marital sexual affairs of sundry women *vis-à-vis* the activities (not restricted to sexual alone) of *devadāsī*. Stemming from poor understanding of the Hindu customs of the then individuals and of the society as a whole, the judiciary did not succeed by merely declaring the *devadāsī*-s as prostitutes. To criminalize, indict or convict these *devadāsī*-s, the 'private law' required these *devadāsī*-s to belong to a particular 'caste' (*jāti*).

Furthermore, Parker alludes to one Bombay Sudder Dewanee Adawlut who described Section 26 of Regulation IV of 1827 as, "requiring 'that cases should be decided according to the custom of the caste, and established usage'" (Parker 1998: 564).

From this instance and few others (mentioned in the paper) it is more than clear that the Imperialists consolidated their power in India through adjudicating the caste cases and now for them to intervene and adjudicate the cases pertaining to *devadāsī*-s, their affiliation to a caste was a legal imperative.

Hitherto we aver that there were prostitutes, distinct from *devadāsī*-s, both were under the ambit of Hindu law and the Hindu law had clear legal pronouncements for prostitutes. The public law wanted to criminalize the *devadāsī*-s but could not do so because from their lens, they could not fit the *devadāsī*-s in one caste bracket to eventually criminalize them. One thing that we need to understand in all this legal nitty gritty is that there were issues on property entitlement and inheritance. As the Hindu society and Hindu law had treated *devadāsī*-s in a completely different manner, the matrilineal succession, inheritance, right to adoption and other rights were naturally bestowed upon them under the Hindu legal framework (which too underwent a lot of changes due to the impact of Victorian morals being imposed). Yet, the Hindu legal framework looked down upon the sexual activity of women outside their marriages (who were either referred to as degraded women or prostitutes) as well as those women who live outside the institution of marriage and had dealt differently on the entitlement, succession and inheritance for these classes of women.

It is in the latter half of the 19th century that the Anglo-Indian judiciary initiates a death blow to the *devadāsī*-s by blurring the distinction between these degraded Hindu women (as looked from the Hindu private law point of view) and the *devadāsī*-s.

Parker proceeds further to give minutest details on how this criminalization happened all the way until 1914 by looking at the appellate opinions, statutes and legislative documents pertaining to the *devadāsī*-s.

Now let us understand the rationale behind all these. It all started with the East India Company trying to consolidate its colony in India. That means it needed to have a complete control on both the wealth production as well as its dissemination. Temples in India back then were the epicenter for not just religion but also for culture as well as economy. It was imperative to curtail people's allegiance to these temples. People's allegiance to temple was multi-dimensional yet coherent and cogent. *Devadāsī*-s were part and parcel of temples and hence subsisted on the indulgence of the kings, feuds and society at large. It must be noted here that these *devadāsī*-s were not living in the sympathy of the society; rather they were accorded highest respects, enjoyed high privileges. For instance, whenever a *devadāsī* died, the temple mourned for her death and as a mark of respect, the temple remained closed for that whole day besides sending cloths from the temple to wrap around the body of the *devadāsī.*

Society at large gave lands, properties and gifts to the temples and these were managed by the *devadāsī*-s. Indirectly the society was patronizing the art and thereby upholding the tradition. This peaceful, productive, creative and practical nexus was the stumbling block that the Imperialists wanted to shatter, which they rightly did through the Anglo-Indian judiciary. Having declared them as "prostitutes" and hence "criminals", *devadāsī*-s were stigmatized and ostracized. Adding to the judicial agony that the *devadāsī*-s faced, India at that time saw the impact of the 'social purity movement' of Britain which came upon very heavily on not just the *devadāsī*-s in south India but also their counterparts elsewhere in the country (Courtney 1998). Under this movement, biblical morality was sought to be thrust upon the society. In India, the judicial framework as well as the Christian missionary worked hand in glove to see to it that the *devadāsī* system got abolished, resources to temples stopped pouring in and

thereby prepared grounds for evangelizing the society *en masse*. Sadly, this process is active to this day. With the onset of the first World War, the baton was passed on to and was well-received by the locals whose influence, affluence, talent and political prowess were put to best use for uprooting the *devadāsī* system, with which their music got exterminated. That is how we have Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, initiating the anti-nautch bill when she became the first woman to enter the Madras Legislative Council in 1927. This bill became The Madras *Devadāsī*-s (Prevention of Dedication) Act (also called the *Tamil* Nadu *Devadāsī*-s (Prevention of Dedication) Act or the Madras *Devadāsī* Act) right after India's independence in 1947.

Significant to note here is yet another nuance from this period that went on to become the new norm in the reformists', activists' and revivalists' narrative on the evolution of *Bharatanāṭyam*. The narrative has invented a binary between *Sadir* and *Bharatham/Baradam* (short for *Bharatanāṭyam*) where the latter, we are told, is a sanitized version of the former. Krishna alludes to this theory in his book, albeit without any accurate historical information. It is at this juncture we need to recall the episodic encounter in the 17th century between the saint Kumāraguruparar, of the Tamil Śaivite tradition and Dara Shikoh, the Mughal prince of Varanasi. History tells that the saint wanted to build a temple in Varanasi for which he needed to meet the Mughal prince. Prior to this meeting, he is said to have prayed to goddess Sarasvatī and in this prayer we come across this following verse:

> *paṇṇum baradamum kalviyum tīncôl punavalum yān,*
> *ênṇum pôḻudu yêlidu edhanalkāy eḻutha maraiyum*
> *viṇṇum puviyum punalum kanalum vengālum anbār*
> *kaṇṇum karuthum nirainthāy sakalakalā valliye*

பண்ணும், பரதமும், கல்வியும் தீஞ்சொல்பனுவலும், யான்
எண்ணும்பொழுதுஎளிதுஎய்தநல்காய்; எழுதாமறையும்,
விண்ணும், புவியும், புனலும், கனலும், வெங்காலும் அன்பர்
கண்ணும் கருத்தும் நிறைந்தாய் சகலகலா வல்லியே!

Attention must be paid to the second word in the very first line. The saint is praising the goddess as the one who is adept in "*Paṇṇum baradamum*" where *Paṇṇum* refers to music and the saint uses the term *Baradam* for dance. Going by the reformist's narrative, there must have not been any word called *Baradam* back in 17th century because

according to these theories, it was only *Sadir* that existed before and it was once again the evil brahmins who imposed their Aryan sense of morality, sanitized *Sadir* by clipping off its sensuous parts and thus was born *Bharatanāṭyam*. Well, *Bharatanāṭyam* is neither the sanitized version of *Sadir* nor is it an 'Aryan' import. It has been in the Tamil soil since ages. Then what about *Sadir*?

It is conjectured that perhaps this term is a derivative of the *Tamil* word '*sadukkam*' which means 'square' as in 'city square.' So, the dance for public entertainment was perhaps referred to as '*sadir*.' But the temple dancers, the *devadāsī*-s, were altogether a different group of people and their dance was different from these 'street dancers.' Even Parker notes that the incremental judicial activism that initially blurred the difference between temple dance girls and prostitutes eventually did not differentiate between 'temple dance girls' and 'dance girls.' This indeed gives an indication that dance girls existed back then who danced not in the temples but elsewhere and this indirectly gives credence to the conjecture stated above on the etymology of *Sadir*.

It is also significant to note that such dynamic social changes brought about by the judiciary were well-captured in the transformation of the word *devaraḍiyā* (for *devadāsī* in Tamil) to a cuss word '*thevidiyā*.' This linguistic transformation institutionalized the stigma on these *devadāsī*-s so much so that this cuss word elicits extreme violent reaction on the utterer when used in public even until this day.

Interestingly the genre of *jāvaḷi* with its overt sexual composition appears during this point of time in the Karnatic history. So, it could be conjectured that this was a subtle, silent activism to distance people from the dancing girls. No wonder, the *jāvaḷi*-s did not gain much currency, as explained above.

With the *devadāsī*-s getting convicted as criminals, the fate of music and dance was in extreme peril. It was during such troubled circumstances that the brahmins (incidentally, while occupying positions of power or otherwise) took upon themselves, acted responsibly and came forward to help them as well as to sustain this art form.

I would like to draw a corollary at this juncture. Provision 377 under the same IPC was in vogue until it got decriminalized in 2016. Hence, between 1864 and 2016 when same-sex relation was seen as a criminal

activity, people obviously exercised utmost caution in not indulging in same-sex act (not to be construed that if this provision was not there, people naturally engaged in such relationships). So, when the Naz foundation fought for its abrogation and succeeded, the foundation got praised for its 'bravery', progressive thinking and liberal approach. Now contrast this with the brahmin girls who took to learning dance and music and those teachers who took to teaching almost a 100 years ago, when (even until recently) Sections 372 and 373 of IPC were in vogue, coupled with the social stigma associated. Were these brahmin women any less emancipators or progressive thinkers? They must be venerated for their courage, determination and dedication due to which we have the art alive till this day. On the contrary, Krishna and the likes of him continue to harp around the *devādāsī* background of M. S. Subbulakshmi and M. L. Vasanthakumari when the society at large has only appreciated them for their music without dwelling into their personal backgrounds. The manner in which Krishna discusses the musical performance journey of MSS and D. K. Pattammal through the lens of *devādāsī* and brahminism is abominable.

This crucial intervention by the bold and progressive brahmins was the turning point in the history of Karnatic music, something that is not recognized at all. On the contrary, Krishna squarely blame the brahmins for every evil without caring to substantiate with accurate historical evidence. How is it justified?

Concluding Remarks

It is indeed pertinent to mention the episode of Vellai in Srirangam. This is an orally transmitted legend which finds its mention in the document pertaining to the temple history namely, "Kovil Olugu" (Parthasarathy 1954: 22 (Note: this document mentions "devout devadasi" without mentioning the name explicitly); The name gets mentioned in this news article by Narasimhan (2012)). Vellai was a *devadāsī* attached to the Srirangam temple. When the temple was attacked by the Muslim commander, Vellai played a key role in helping the temple retain its glory. Vellai danced in front of the commander and thereby distracted him while in the meantime the temple *arcaka*-s transported the *vigraha* to a safe place. After executing her plan successfully, Vellai killed herself from jumping off the *gopuram* for having danced in front of a mortal. She has been immortalized by naming that *gopuram* after her.

Such was the devotion of *devadāsī*-s to the Lord and loyalty to the temple. Alas, clandestine activism by the Anglo-Indian judiciary in the guise of emancipating women decimated these temple dancers. These temple dancers were pivotal in sustaining and enriching the art. This art, along with them was at the brink of peril. Yet their art form survived and has lived until this day much to the agony of the anti-Hindu parties. This is the reason we are witnessing the Christianization of both *Bharatanāṭyam* and Karnatic music. And people like Krishna, per design or otherwise, are catalyzing this process of evangelization. Krishna and his likes are merely peddling the anti-Hindu propaganda of political outfits (*Drāviḍa* parties and their partners), Christian Evangelical organizations and those self-declared progressive writers like Perumal Murugan who all have one thing in common – decimation of Hinduism. So whatever Krishna utters, other than Karnatic classical songs by traditional composers, is merely polemic pandering to anti-Hindu groups for their interest. Throughout the book he has chosen to belittle the Hindu sentiments in the garb of objectively narrating the story of Karnatic music. He has problems if Karnatic music is flourishing in the North America and yet grumbles that Karnatic has no international appeal or acceptance like the Hindustani (he cites Pt. Ravi Shankar as an example, yet does not utter a word on Annapurna Devi or her music; (Surti 2000)). On the lack of international acceptance of Karnatic, once again Krishna puts the blame squarely on the highly ritualistic brahmins and their strong hold of the Karnatic ecosystem that has come in the way of this music form getting international appeal. In Krishna's parlance, those Karnatic musicians who made their niche at the international level, have dabbled in fusion and have strayed away from Karnatic; while he is single-handedly enriching this art form through his innovative projects, '*kaṭṭaikūttu*' for instance. In sum, Krishna has a clear agenda which is working all the way through, under the garb of intellectualism. It is up to us and the society at large to take appropriate and adequate measures. Such a conference through which we can show up the inconsistencies of Krishna's arguments is an apt illustration for a measure. And yes, by all accounts this book is indeed not merely an objective narration of the Karnatic story.

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Chapter 7

Is Karnatic Music a Bastion of Brahminical Patriarchy?

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Introduction

For more than a century, misleading narratives on Indian culture and life, which violently intruded into our academia and intelligentsia during British rule, have continued to silently do the same in post-independence India. The Breaking-India forces have been generously pushing in their colonial agenda, misusing the open structure of the Hindu society, wherein healthy criticism and debate have always been welcome. In the last few decades, they and their Indian delegates, posing as benefactors to modern Indian thought, have injected many a duplicitous theory and have been cheekily grabbing the reins of the Indian cultural narrative at an alarming pace. These unverified and misleading thought lines brazenly attempt to trivialize and demonize the native culture to weaken the pride and cultural identity, thenceforth opening doors for mass conversions.

The agendum has silently but rapidly penetrated India's polity, textbooks and mainstream media while its tentacles are extending palpably into Indian theatre, cinema, fashion and the religious

[*]pp. 181–205. In: Meera, H. R. (Ed.) (2021). *Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta - Past, Present, and Future.* Chennai: Infinity Foundation India.

dialogue in the nation. The unsuspecting and broadminded Hindu, has allowed the agendum to work its way, only to be, of late, awakened to the threats of losing his voice in his own country. The one domain, where these divisive thought seeds have somehow not penetrated much, is the domain of Karnatic classical music.

However, desperate attempts to do so are evident from the recent developments in the art narrative of South India. Misleading statements and writings by leftist voices like T. M. Krishna are some symptoms. Musicians and predisposed critics like him use their popularity and erudition to vent out their Hindu-phobia, in the pretext of introducing 'objective' criticism into Indian classical art. But being heavily biased, subjective and intolerant in tone, their criticisms carry neither new insights nor a holistic comprehension of the classical art tradition of India.

The focus of this paper will be around the latest injections of the caste narratives into Karnatic music domain, by musicians like T. M. Krishna (henceforth, Krishna). As supplementary factors in contesting the camouflaged allegations on Karnatic music heritage, a few points, ostensibly out of the purview of this study, are also taken up in the commencement. A broad observation of the how the 'Breaking India' agendum tries to penetrate the Indian cultural narrative is also done.

Distorting Key Terminologies like *Brāhmaṇa* and *Brāhmaṇya*

Many terminologies like *dharma*, *śraddhā*, *śāstra*, *guru*, *brāhmaṇa*, *ācāra,* etc., are key to the debates on Indian culture, religion and social aspects. It is most important that we understand them in their true sense and context, deriving directly from the sources/texts. Any attempt to hastily translate or substitute these terms, would dilute or shrink their meanings, damaging the life-force they carry.

For millennia, till Saṁskṛta remained the pan-Indian language for debate and documentation, these key words were understood in their true sense and context in the rational dialogue. About a century and half ago, the outsiders' agendum began to intervene right here. Dishonest translations of the key terminologies were done and redefined and re-interpreted to serve the divisive purpose. These tainted words and meanings were then floated across and made very common in the public discourse. The leftist's strong hold

on post-independence India's academia, media, cinema and theatre enabled this agendum to work its way rapidly and effectively into the commoners' minds.

Eventually, the word *Veda* (suggestive of knowledge, awareness, text that documents wisdom, dialogue and insights of many enlightened seers, etc.,) came to be understood as just an 'old Hindu text of chants and rituals'. *Dharma (dhāraṇād dharma ityāhuḥ)*[1] which originally suggested a concept, deed, norm or system that promotes the welfare of *vyakti* (the individual) and *samaṣṭi* (the society/world), came to mean just 'a religious path or religious norm'. The word *śraddhā* which suggested 'a strong conviction subject to correction and verification on experience' now got to mean 'unconditional faith to a theology'. Similar was done with the word *brāhmaṇa* and *brāhmaṇya*.

For millennia, the terms *brāhmaṇa* and *brāhmaṇya* were being used in India in rational debate in public, seldom causing any caste feel. That is because they were understood in their true sense. The word *brāhmaṇa,* except in a subjective reference, never was used as a caste nomenclature, particularly in rational debates. The commonly used terms *brāhmaṇottama* (noble Brahmin)and *brāhmaṇādhama* (fallen Brahmin) clearly suggests that a *brāhmaṇa* was regarded high not merely for his birth, but for the *brāhmaṇya* he implemented in his lifestyle.

But the interventions of the outsiders' narratives infused the terrible caste feel into these words. The words *brāhmaṇa* and *brāhmaṇya* were methodically distanced from their original meaning, context, intent and content. Many subtler imports of the words were chiseled out, making them sound absolutely subjective. Thus, the word '*brāhmaṇa'* was made to mean only 'caste'. This misleading meaning and definition were even successively standardized in the global dictionaries and absolutely insulated from any verification by the original viewpoint.

Further, the word *'brāhmaṇya'* which suggests strict pious adherence to *ācāra* (pious life style) and *vicāra* (profound thought) was cleverly substituted by the word 'brahminism' (Harshananda 2008: 337). The word brahminism carries an extreme caste-tone and is non-suggestive of the *ācāra-vicāra* angle. The word *brāhmaṇya* in the modern Saṁskṛta dictionaries (even after dilutions!) means - pious/ devoted to sacred knowledge/ religious/ piety/ priestly profession,

etc., But, brahminism, even according to the widely accessed Wikipedia is "the domination of Indian society by the priestly class of Brahmins and their Hindu-ideology". Obviously, the words 'brahmin' and 'brahminism' were successfully manipulated to give the images of an 'egotistical personality' and 'authoritarian system of life'. Stray instances of prejudiced brahmin individuals' behavior were compiled and even magnified to serve as 'proofs' for a generalized allegation. Thus, many distorted interpretations were floated against the *brāhmaṇa* and his every pursuit successfully.

Unfortunately, the native narratives remained either ignorant or a helpless onlooker to such semantic inflictions on its own profound terminology in last few decades. In the public space, these words have been so deeply dyed in the caste colour, that uttering the word '*brāhmaṇa'* causes discomfort and even penitence(!) in the brahmin-borns while the non-brahmins get sensitive, unconsciously expecting to be offended in the discourse that follows. This has its powerful implications even on rational dialogue, and tends to generate more subjective impressions than an objective understanding.

A glimpse into the original meanings of the word *brāhmaṇa.* The word *Brahma* has a few contextual meanings-the almighty, vital energy, *Veda, yajña, guru.*

Accordingly, the word *brāhmaṇa* gives these meanings-

brahmajñānād brāhmaṇaḥ / brahmacaryād brāhmaṇaḥ

= one who realizes the *Brahman* (the Almighty), one who has achieved self-mastery, one who studies the *Veda*, one who serves / preserves the knowledge systems, one who performs the *yajña*-s.

(*yajña* means 1. Vedic rituals or vows 2. A duty or task done without desire for personal gain, or wherein the fruits are offered to God or to the society).[2]

In this background, the word *brāhmaṇa* refers to an individual or community that is -

1. Pious, austere, meditative
2. Knowledgeable, resourceful, advisors and benefactors of the society
3. A teacher, trainer, researcher or one who preserves the knowledge traditions.

The *brāhmaṇa* offered his services in teaching, research, advice, policy making, law and spiritual guidance to the society, and all that for free. The society voluntarily supported his material needs out of gratitude. This was the beautiful relationship between a *brāhmaṇa* and the others in the Indian society since ages.

But, the word brahmin was shrunk to mean just a 'caste' and coloured to such an extent that it would give the sense- 'imprudent' priesthood[3]. Our textbooks, newspapers, cinema, theatre and every public space possible was used to float only this distorted sense. In fact, T. M. Krishna in his writings, profusely uses the words brahmin and Brahminism is their most demonic sense.

On the other hand, native scholars and thinkers hardly noticed what was being conspired. Even amongst those who did notice, few dared to fiercely counter the powerful conspiracy. Down the decades, this has created a big disadvantage to the native narrative.

Now, whenever we use these terms, we need to start by first cleansing and clarifying the intended sense quite very elaborately. Such is the brainwashing! Moreover, when someone tries to use the word *brāhmaṇa* in the original sense, the 'liberals' vehemently object that 'standard definitions' are being overruled. The stigma attached to this word is so high that, people preferring to remain 'non-controversial' even substitute the word with words like '*sajjana',* 'religious' or 'righteous', etc., But these people are unknowingly causing further disadvantage to the native narrative by doing so.

We need to bring back into use vociferously, these key terminologies in their original sense and context most assertively, without substituting them. We need to gather supportive interpretations from vedic, epic, classic and folk sources and stridently carry them into world view. Saṁskṛta scholarship and a dedicated executive team must work together to re-establish the true meanings of these terms and reach them out to the last man.

Isolation of Saṁskṛta Rhetoric in Cultural Dialogue and Public Space

Saṁskṛta, being the language of documentation, debate and the source of most of the terminologies used in India's socio-religious and cultural dialogue, deserves a big representation in the Indian narratives. But

the very opposite has been happening. Saṁskṛta rhetoric has been marginalized and trivialized to allow outsiders'[4] narrative to float translations and interpretations detrimental to the native ones. Since most of our art treatises are composed in Saṁskṛta (some in *desi* languages too), we must duly connect back to Saṁskṛta to derive the exact spirit of our art narratives.

Step-motherly treatment to Saṁskṛta studies in the academia and lack of any representation in professional and public life in modern India, has cramped the general ability of people to comprehend the Saṁskṛta words, phrases and texts without translations. As English proceeds to dominate every field, the ability of younger generations to comprehend the translations in regional languages is also decreasing. Not surprising that most of the urban young Indians are becoming completely dependent on 'only English versions' for any and every information. They are the ones who are largely plagued by misconceptions about our native features.

When critics like T. M. Krishna make allegations on our art space as 'brahminical', deep in our hearts we know that it is not so. But the problem is in countering them then and there. We are not equipped enough for defense. The left rhetoric is usually very eloquent, well phrased and is marketed in the garbs of 'humanism and social equality'. The dubious narratives almost convince us that they are indeed talking about 'a larger interest and progress', while they actually work to divide and weaken the native's ethnic identity.

Though command in English and regional languages are primary weapons to contest these voices, Saṁskṛta scholarship is most essential to defeat them in the long run.

Let us introspect. The problem is also the lack of will in our artists. Many musicians have decided that it enough to 'perform well and get appreciated'. They mete out a second-class treatment to *śāstra* and lyrical purity. Although the musical lyrics in regional languages have managed to retain some purity, Saṁskṛta lyrics have been left to decay. Even the finest of musicians sometimes sing corrupt versions of Saṁskṛta lyrics, unmindful of the damage they are doing to the *paramparā*, by passing on the same to their students. Although a good number of Saṁskṛta scholars are available, very few music composers and artists in the classical, folk and cinema fields, care to approach them for verifying the purity of their Saṁskṛta lyrics.

Musicians and Musicologists must begin to introspect the depth of their understanding of the art heritage and musical terminology that they use. After decades of left interventions in every sphere of Indian socio-cultural life, no one can rule out the influence of the dubious narratives on our art perceptions today. They therefore must associate with Saṁskṛta scholarship to cross-verify the purity of their articulation, phraseology and comprehension of the Saṁskṛta terms/ lyrics. Artists need to verify their own interpretation of the art too, whether it is in line with the *paramparā*. It is alarming to see how in the present day, many artists carelessly pick up unverified 'English definitions' to explain important terminology to their audience and students. Musicians must become more careful and responsible in this regard. 'Creativity' must not mean 'overlooking' the very essential form and spirit of the art.

Music syllabi must be enriched with important terminologies taken directly from art treatises like the *Nāṭyaśāstra* and understood in their true sense and scope. This would lessen the gap between the artists' present perception of their art and roots concepts in their art. This would also cleanse the distortions enveloping words like *brāhmaṇa* in the art space. Particularly because Krishna and his likes are using these words in the distorted sense, we can no more afford to overlook the importance of Saṁskṛta scholarship.

Indian Classical Music and the *Rasa* Experience at its Core

In Indian art, the external expressions have been vehicles to the *rasa* factor. Picking themes, inspiration and material support from around, the artist can make many a creative attempt to explore the *rasa* feel. This freedom has encouraged every Indian art tradition to develop its own indigenous form and style, bearing both similarities and differences with other art systems. It is irrelevant to interpret this freedom of the artist and the art, to be 'original, innovative and dynamic' as just a 'social division'.

Artists who intended to explore more of *navarasa*-s and subtle human relationships in their music, branched out to develop the light classical music (*sugama saṅgīta*) model. Those who preferred to focus more on original art technicalities in music continued within the frame of classical music. Karnatic Music too comprises a lot of themes including

all the *navarasa*-s. But *bhakti* however has been the more common theme here. There is no need for a hierarchical comparison of the two. Both have their charm and appeal to music lovers. Any artist is free to pick up ideas from another art form. But that should not be done at the cost of 'compromising the elementary structure' of their art form. This is what *sampradāya-śuddhi* actually means. This *sampradāya-śuddhi* is relevant not only to the art technicalities, but also to the conventions like dress, stage and occasion etc., which are indigenous to the art presentation. When an artist religiously adheres to *sampradāya*, he is actually intending to protect the purity of his art internally and externally. It is ridiculous to see this as a social/brahminical prejudice.

While technical structures and boundaries like *rāga, tāla, bhāva, sāhitya* norms and the standardized compositions intend to protect, document and nourish the systematic evolution of the classical art from within, some religious, regional, cultural and social conventions add embellishment, dignity and an indigenous charm to the external presentation.

But of course, these external features must never suffocate the creative potentials of the artist and must be open to justifiable modifications. But if the modifications threaten to 'displace' an existing form and enforce an alien one, that would naturally trigger unrest. No ardent lover of the art can watch comfortably when the very form of his beloved art is under threat.

The artists' love for art is indeed nothing less than the ardent devotee's *bhakti* for God. For a true musician, music has not been about mere scholarship and entertainment. It has indeed been an *upāsanā*/ '*nadopāsanā*' for self-elevation. From the time of *devadāsī*-s till now, the art with all its internal and external features has always been regarded as divine. An artist is indeed a *kalā tapasvin*, who constantly remains submerged in aesthetic contemplation. The concert presentations are just occasional glimpses into the intense art contemplation and practice sessions that the artist goes through. For him art is divine. He verily visualizes Goddess Sarasvatī in everything connected to his art – the musical sound (*nāda*), his instruments, his *guru*, the *paramparā*, the stage, the audience, the compositions, the *rasa* experience, the dress and social conventions. This is true with almost every form of folk and classical art in India.

It is surprising that, Krishna being a musician himself, displays contempt and insensitivity towards this beautiful sentiment and looks at it with a caste-coloured spectacle.

Generalising Karnatic Music Conventions as 'Attempts to Brahminise'

While targeting the brahmin, Krishna makes a sweeping generalization against the whole of Karnatic music heritage thus-

> "The presentation of a Carnatic concert is a representation of Brahminical culture". "Carnatic concert is not mere exposure to the music; it is a complete Brahmin brainwashing package.
>
> "Every time I rendered kirtanas, expounded ragas or cracked arithmetic patterns, I was holding up my community flag and waving it with gusto."
>
> (Krishna 2018)

What exactly he means by 'brahminising' music? – Krishna is unable to logically explain. He generalizes that all conventions and costumes followed in the *sabhā* are 'brahmin' in appeal. If, according to him, adherence to the conventional costume (saree/ *dāvaṇi*/ *veṣṭi, tilakam,* etc.,), bowing down, *kacheri-dharma*, *sabhā-dharma*, reverence for the *Guru* and the lineage, the invocation song/*śloka*-s, mutual discussions on the great stalwarts and heritage, etc., are exclusively 'brahminical' (Krishna 2018), why then do devout non-brahmins practice the same in their exclusive community events too? Saree, *tilakam, dāvaṇi, veṣṭi* etc., have never been exclusively brahmin costumes, but have rather been regional/ geographical features. If all this is brahminical, what then is the non-brahmin South Indian dress code according to Krishna? He even ridicules women musicians as 'showing lesser skin' to appear 'brahminical'. Does he mean to say that all non-brahmin artists wear revealing dresses?

By generalizing that all conventions are brahminical, Krishna even implicates that all non-brahmin communities are uncouth and lack any sense of social culture of their own and depend wholly on some brahmins' dictates. This is not only *not* true, but also humiliating to the great lineage of non-brahmin artists and accomplishers in history. In a hasty attempt to demonize the brahmin community, Krishna is actually insulting the non-brahmins who comprise the largest part of the Hindu population!

It is a well-known fact that the dress, cultural symbols, food and lifestyles in India are inspired mostly by the regional, geographical, occupational and seasonal factors. A South-Indian non-brahmin can relate better to a South-Indian brahmin in terms of dress, language, festivals, food and social conventions, than he can with a North-Indian non-brahmin and vice versa. So, it is mostly the 'regional' and not 'caste' factors that influence the cultural conventions of people and communities.[5]

Brahmins or non-brahmins, all have had their own *śāstra*-s and *sampradaya*-s at all times. Each community has had its own family priests, *mukhiya*-s (community heads), democratic elections, people's representatives and experienced mentors. Each of them have their own occupational and cultural *paramparā*-s and related codes of conduct, treatises and social conventions. No one depended solely on the brahmins' dictates ever. The countless treatises and living traditions[6] are standing proofs for this.

Every country has its own regional conventions in presenting its classical and folk arts. These are regional customs with cultural, social and aesthetic value. They do not need to pass the 'check posts' of dry logic to prove their worth.

Krishna's desperate attempt to generalize thus, reveals his contempt not just towards the brahmin, but towards Hindu *dharma* and India's ethnic identity at large.

Krishna's thought-line is rooted in the leftist standpoint, that always show non-brahmins as only amateurish, uncivilized, uneducated, unskilled, ignorant and capable of being only domestics and so on in their art and literary pieces.[7] The left view intentionally overlooks the fact that non-brahmins who form a considerable majority of the Indian population till date have produced countless rulers, statesmen, warriors, poets, yogis, artists and entrepreneurs at all times. Considering this, it is indeed the non-brahmin artists who must lead the defense against Krishna's dubious allegations!

If caste was the only consideration, why then would any brahmin worship the non-brahmin Rāma who killed the brahmin Rāvaṇa? How would Sītā, whose parentage remains unknown become the goddess of many brahmin hearts? Why would Hanumān, a hero of the *vānara* tribe, become the chosen deity for numerous brahmins? When a

brahmin sings the verses / *mantra*-s from the Veda, *purāṇa*-s or epics, does he consider the parentage of the seers like Vyāsa, Vālmīki or Viśvāmitra who composed them?

The lion's share of the credit of promoting various *classical* traditions of music and dance in India goes to the talented *devadāsī* community. Although the *saṅgīta-śāstra*-s composed by men (their communities not all ascertained) suggests that people of all communities took deep interest in professional music and dance, countless references in vedic, *purāṇic* and classical lore and living traditions establish that *devadāsī* community dominated the scenario.[8] It is only in the recent centuries that brahmins are getting into full time pursuit of classical arts.

If brahmins were so contemptuous about other communities, how then could they enter the fine arts domain, knowing well that they were the forts of the *devadāsī*-s for millennia? It is obviously only *vidyā-prīti*, the urge to preserve the dying traditions, which encouraged brahmins to open their doors to professional music during the colonial era. Men and women of all communities participated in Music and dance at all times. But for the *devadāsī* families it was a more serious and full-time family profession. The decline of patronage for *devadāsī*-s and their social status simultaneously challenged the very existence of their fine arts traditions too. This probably led other communities to join them in preserving the arts. The big entry of men and women of other communities into music dance domain is suggestive of this.

Centuries of brutal Islamic invasions and the consequent British colonial rule, de-patronized and trampled upon the temple traditions, marginalizing the role of *devadāsī*-s to mere flesh trade. Thus arose the need for the public to volunteer to save these fine arts from extinction. This was when perhaps, people from all communities were encouraged to take up fine arts too as full-time professions. This indeed shows the social responsibility that people of all communities have shown, towards preserving our classical art traditions, during adverse political conditions.

Why did not others enter this domain as much brahmins did during the same time? More objective research could throw light upon this.

But one possible reason was the commercial factor. Most brahmins were already used to a life style of study and piousness, wherein

material benefits were meagre. It was therefore not too difficult for them to involve in fine arts, where too material gain was always uncertain. But, people of more profitable occupations naturally did not risk taking up fine arts as full-time pursuits.[9]

In the beginning years of Post-independence India, countless native arts and occupations suffered extinction or extreme degeneration because of government apathy.[10] Some folk arts however got some revival through government patronization to an extent. But Karnatic classical music was bluntly labelled as brahminical and given much lesser patronage. This is when local patrons and art connoisseurs volunteered to support it. This was when perhaps, the artists and connoisseurs formed their own committees and raised funds to promote their own events. Even now there are few classical musicians who go to government bodies to seek financial help, where not only do the proceedings get delayed, but they even would have to face a step-motherly treatment for pursuing the 'Brahmin art'.

Krishna actually does not mention that there are 'no brahmins' in this domain, but asserts that brahmins and brahminism dominate the scene. But he intentionally avoids mentioning that many brahmin *guru*-s have indeed nurtured their non-brahmin students with love and passion. Similarly, many brahmin musicians have high regard for their non-brahmin *guru*-s.

Muttusvāmi Dīkṣitar, one of the Trimūrti-s, himself had students from all communities – Pillai-s, Mudaliar-s, etc., He even had a *devadāsī* student by the name Kamalam. Isai Veḷḷalār, Piḷḷai and Devadāsī communities have done yeomen service to Music and dance professions. 'Tanjai Nālvar' (Tanjavur Quartet) was hailed as the greatest of Karnatic musicians. Muttu Tāṇḍavar (composed special *padam*-s for dance), Mārimutta Piḷḷai and Aruṇācala Kavi are well known composers who lived around Chidambaram that has a rich history of music and dance. Another prominent composer, Aruṇagirināthar, composed the famous *Tiruppugaḻ*. There were and are some women *Nāgasvaram* artists, including Muslim women. Till date, most of the *Nāgasvaram* musicians are from the barbers' community.

T. Chowdiah, the celebrated violinist of Karnataka, hails from the Gowda community. The violinists Mahadevappa and his two sons, M. Nagaraj and M. Manjunath, the Mridangists M. L. Veerabhadrayya and his son, V. Praveen, and the famed saxophonist Kadari Gopalanath

are also non-brahmins. They have all won the hearts of music lovers the world over!

The great patron of Karnatic Music, K. K. Murthy (a brahmin) initiated the building of the famous Chowdiah Memorial Hall in the heart of Bengaluru city, to honour the great violinist. The architectural design of the building is in the shape of a huge violin and the best of artists across the world perform here. (Even Krishna has rendered his music in this renowned hall) Where is the caste angle here? If caste was the sole criteria in music domain, why would the brahmin K. K. Murthy choose to honour the non-brahmin Chowdiah thus? This proves the art and the artist have always been above caste for true music connoisseurs.

If the likes of Krishna can quote a few stray examples where brahmin musicians denied teaching non-brahmins, we can quote countless other examples wherein brahmin musicians have tutored non-brahmins. Top-ranking brahmin performers like Semmangudi had non-brahmin students like T. M. Thyagarajan and Neyyatinkara Vasudevan. The celebrated Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar tutored the non-Hindu K. J. Yesudas. It is said that D. K. Pattammal was the first brahmin woman to perform in public. This clearly suggests that non-brahmin women were more active in this field till then. M. L. Vasanthakumari's mother and musician Madras Lalithangi was not a brahmin by birth.

In the present-day music scenario, even the few caste considerations that existed here and there, are fast disappearing in the classrooms.[11]

Harikathā is an art based on Karnatic classical music. *Harikathā-dāsa*-s hail from all communities and include harmonium, *tabala* and *naṭṭuvāṅgam* artists. The late Gururajulu Naidu and his daughter Shobha Naidu are extremely popular in this field. Others like Keshava Dasa, Achyuta Dasa and their illustrious disciples command immense admiration across the state, national and international platforms.

The celebrated artist, Bengaluru Nagaratnamma, belonged to the *devadāsī* community. Her offering of her lifetime earnings to build the temple on Sri Tyāgarāja's Samādhi at Tiruvayyaru, has been duly acknowledged by connoisseurs, who have erected her life size statue opposite the Tyāgarāja shrine. Where is the caste consideration here?

The respect and jubilant reception that even Muslim artists like Zakir Hussain get in South Indian temples and *sabhā*-s proves that India's love for artists that transcends all social boundaries.

We can indeed prepare a very long list of non-brahmin musicians from historical and contemporary data. But it pains me to pick up the caste tags of the great artists whom we admire solely for their talent and charisma. With due apologies to them all, I am presenting a random list of well-known non-brahmin artists in the footnote.[12] The names are just samples from a list that can be potentially very long.

Krishna makes a cruel personal allegation on the most respected and celebrated musician Smt. M. S. Subbulakshmi- "To embrace Brahminism she distanced herself from her brother and family in Madurai..." (Krishna 2017). Krishna makes an impudent judgment around the personal life of a great artist. While there could be great many reasons for someone to live away from their kith, no gentleman would unnecessarily drag that into public gossip. Particularly, keeping in mind the great respect that Subbulakshmi Amma commands, not just in the music domain, but the whole nation, Krishna's statements appear as nothing more than stale loose talk.

How exactly has MSS 'become brahminical'- Krishna is unable to specify. So, he perhaps only intends to instigate some cheap speculations about the celebrity.

Pointing out to Chennai's famous 'Annual Music and Dance festival' Krishna alleges- "It is the most restrictive big festival in the world" (Ramanan 2014).

Krishna implicates that the artists use caste credentials to grab opportunities there. But in such big festivals where commercials and popularity matter most, how could the organizers risk huge investments by hosting artists on caste basis? The crowd-pulling factor is undoubtedly the talent of the artist and not his caste. Given a choice, does any sensible singer choose his *pakka-vādya* artists on their caste basis compromising on the musical abilities?

National level music festivals are not easy to penetrate, particularly with mere caste credentials. Because, even if a brahmin artist manages to sneak in thus, he cannot survive the competition and remain there, if he cannot 'deliver' on stage. Without winning the hearts of connoisseurs each time, no artist, not even the big celebrities, can

continue to reign on such platforms for long. And, even if some brahmin individuals did dominate at times, is it not cruel to make a sweeping generalization about all brahmin artists in the domain? Bringing in the subjective caste issue into the general picture of art circle, is not only unnecessary but also offensive on the part of Krishna.

In numerous private religious, cultural and educational trusts and institutions which offer services to general public, the members belonging to a certain community could be more. That should not matter as long as there are no social walls dividing people and work is going on well. If Krishna is indeed so concerned about the democracy of such event executions, he must initiate a dialogue within the committees to make the proceedings more transparent. He always has had the celebrity status to do so!

If more brahmins took to full time music more than others, other factors like the aptitude and commercials have also played a part. Moreover, in most brahmin households, children are encouraged, even insisted upon learning vocal or instrumental Karnatic music. But who is stopping non-brahmins from taking up music full time? Parents too play a big role in influencing the artistic options of their kids.

One more important factor has been the monetary returns. Music has never been a prosperous profession for most musicians. Teaching, research and art pursuits are some fields where monetary benefits are never immediate and even uncertain many a time. That is why only the most passionate ones, continue here as full-time artists.

Art is indeed a 'calling'. No one can be forcefully initiated into art, like they can be into other trades or jobs. A truly passionate artist breaks out of all social and economic barriers to pursue his/her art.

Karnatic music draws lyrics from not only the well-known *vāggeyakāra*-s, but also from the lesser known *vāggeyakāra*-s, local poets and saints. In Karnataka, the compositions of many non-brahmins saints like Kanakadāsa, Nijaguṇa Śivayogi, Śiva *śaraṇa*-s and even the Muslim mystic Śiśunāḷa Śarīfa and others, set to music, have been welcomed with great love and admiration by music connoisseurs at all times. In fact, lines like

> "*mêndaina brāhmaṇuḍu mêṭṭu bhūmiyokkaṭe* ।
> *caṇḍāluḍuṇḍeti saribhūmiyôkkaṭe* ... ॥

(by saint Annamayya in his composition- *Brahmamôkkaṭe), kula kula kulavêndu hôḍedāḍadiri* (by Saint Kanakadāsa) and others have never been opposed by any brahmin, but in fact, appreciated by all.

The music industry is not only about the singers and instrumentalists. It involves the services of instrument manufacturers, carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, engineers and other artists and artisans. Interestingly, from centuries, most of the instrument-manufacturers hail from non-brahmin communities.

Manufacturing instruments is not only about 'carpentry or metallurgy', but demands a sound knowhow of the *śruti* factor, octave ranges, sound amplification, resonance, acoustics and many more musical features. Indeed, many persons involved in manufacturing and repairing musical instruments are usually musicians or have a keen understanding of the art.

Each *saṅgīta-kacheri* is indeed a beautiful team work of artists, technical, financial and marketing support workers. The manpower involved in stage arrangements, auditorium management, sound system, networking, event management, sponsoring and others like transport, packing and shipping of musical instruments etc., (the list can go on) are vitally important parts of the music industry. Professional music is therefore a big employment generation system in itself involving lots of team work and commercials.

It is ridiculous to assume that only a handful of brahmin musicians, without the involvement of any of these, have solely been managing the whole show till date!

Varṇa-paddhati never meant caste (as understood today) in ancient and medieval India. It was only suggestive of the occupation and cultural identity. Beyond that, caste remained irrelevant. People of all communities came together to rejoice in festivals, public events, feasts and cultural programmes.

Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra,* describeshowonce in a fortnight or month, people from all communities assembled in the *Sarasvatī-bhavana* for the *Samājotsava*[13]. Local as well as invited artists, dancers and actors of other regions participated in good numbers. *Vasanta-maṇṭapa*-s, spacious royal and temple precincts and the *devadāsī*-s' affluent mansions hosted music and dance events. The text even describes how the crowds and patrons gave generous gifts and money to the

performers spontaneously, with due admiration. Never anywhere are the castes of the donors, performers or connoisseurs highlighted in these descriptions. The mention to 'huge crowds' clearly suggests that people of all communities came together to rejoice and celebrate.

The left critics are cleverly silent about such historical accounts! They instead cherry pick stray instances from a tale or even fiction, wherein a brahmin is seen displaying prejudice to 'prove' their point!

The worst hit by invasions then and intellectual colonization in post-independence India, is the brahmin community. The invaders brutally massacred Brahmins, intending to root out the knowledge systems (*guru paramparā*-s) that theypreserved. After independence, the academia, media, theatre and cinema in India, influenced directly by left rhetoric, continued to demonize the brahmin, for his very birth, denying him the credit for anything he deserved.

The apathy of the political power that took over the newly independent India, never allowed the expected Indian cultural renaissance to happen in good spirit. On the contrary, more damage was done through relentless brahmin-bashing, Hindu-bashing, caste-divides, minority appeasement and marginalization of Saṁskṛta and *desi* rhetoric.

Aucitya: Its Absence in the Leftist Narratives on Art

Aucitya which played an important role in Indian art narrative for centuries, has totally been discarded in the left narratives. The concept of'*aucitya*' was greatly emphasized by aestheticians as the 'regulatory factor' in any art or literature. Ānandavardhana explains how elaborately in the 3rd Uddyota of his work *Dhvanyāloka*, about how an aesthetic creation must adhere to the norms of*aucitya.*[14] Many *kārikā*-s and *vṛtti*-s discuss the significant role of *aucitya* in generating *rasa* and the role of *anaucitya* (inappropriateness) in causing *rasabhaṅga* (spoiling the *rasa* experience). The aesthetician warns how the poet/artist must never take too much liberty and introduce changes, characters or an inappropriate narrative or even word usages such that they cause *rasabhaṅga*. Trivializing a divine character or noble theme or well accepted and respected social or cultural aspect is one of *anaucitya*-s that an artist must avoid[15]. The poet or artist is advised to never trespass the limits of decency and

offend a social or cultural or religious value in the name of creativity. Ānandavardhana does not spare even the great poet Kālidāsa, when he points out how poets, if not careful enough, may offend the dignity of divine characters.[16] Along with the *aucitya* of the character and wheat he speaks, even the topic/theme directs the content of the composition.[17]

For centuries, artists, poets and connoisseurs have contemplated on this *aucitya* factor throughout their deliberations and presentations. At times, amendments have been made to the *aucitya* norm, but only with due sensitivity and care.

My revered *guru, Saṅgīta Kalāratna* Dr. T. S. Satyavathi encapsulates the *aucitya* concept thus - "In Indian classical art there is always the unbroken frame. But the frame is flexible"[18]. When art is used by perverts to offend, it ceases to remain beautiful and dignified in their hands. That is why *aucitya* has always acted as an important regulatory norm in Indian culture and aesthetics.

When Krishna makes scornful remarks against the social conventions involved in art, he is not only insulting this *aucitya-dharma* that is being duly followed in Indian art traditions, but he himself is transgressing all limits of *aucitya* in his speech.

Compositions of *Devadāsī*-s: Less Represented?

Krishna (2018b) writes: "The erotic compositions sung by the Devadasis and other Carnatic compositions that were not rooted in bhakti have to be brought back to centre stage...". He sounds as if he wants a revival of the forgotten good compositions of the past. If that was the true intent, that is certainly good and deserves to be endorsed. But his words actually implythat there is contempt towards the *devadāsī*-s' compositions either simply because they comprise erotic narrations and also simply because the *devadāsī* composers are non-brahmins and that they are therefore ignored in *kacheris*. It is true that the *Saṅgīta* Trimūrti's *kṛti*-s now dominate the stage and hearts of music lovers in Karnatic music. But what is blasphemous is that Krishna absurdly associates even this fact to the caste indirectly. The Trimūrti's *kṛti*-s are most popular mainly because they opened up newer aesthetic dimensions to classical music through their *kṛti*-s. Introduction of the *saṅgati* system, tremendous scope for *manodharma* and beautiful jugglery with *rasa*-s and the intense

bhakti feel in their lyrics all the main factors that made them win tremendous popularity. The *jāvaḷi*-s, *padam*-s,*tillāna*-s and *varṇa*-s, no doubt carry their own unique charm, but they do not carry as much scope for *manodharma*. However, *jāvaḷi*-s and *tillāna*-s are still parts of most *kacheri*-s, though not as the prime items. These are taught, rendered, and promoted with the genuine concern to preserve them for posterity. Also, most Karnatic music *kacheri*-s commence with a *varṇa*. Many *varṇa*-s, have been compositions of *devadāsī*-s (till recent decades). If artists considered only the caste factor, such beautiful variety of compositional forms would not be available to us at all.

Tyāgarāja Svāmi: Imprisoned in Brahminical Prejudice?

Krishna suggests that even Tyāgarāja Svāmi was imprisoned in brahminical prejudice.[19] Whenever Tyāgarāja Svāmi has mentioned the words *brāhmaṇa*, *vaidika*, etc., he has indeed implied the *ācāra-vicāra* aspects. In fact, he even censures the *brāhmaṇa-adhama*-s (brahmin only by birth but not by practice):

In his composition *bhakti-bhicchamīyave*, he openly points to brahmins who do not live up the *brāhmaṇya* ideals- *prāṇamuleni vāniki baṅgāru bāga cuṭṭi...tyāgarāja-nuta rāma*— (meaning: Those who study *purāṇa* and *āgama* but are deceitful, are indeed like corpses decorated with fine clothes and jewelry). If so prejudiced about caste, why at all would Tyāgarāja care to censure his own people thus? In his composition *êndaro mahānubhāvulu,* Tyāgarāja acknowledges all the 'known and unknown' blessed persons who silently contribute to the *paramparā* and remain modest. This clearly hints that Tyāgarāja Svāmi stood above all social boundaries in appreciating and acknowledging true talent.

Conclusion

That there are brahmin individuals who display prejudice is a fact that cannot be denied, the sweeping generalization made by the likes of Krishna cannot be accepted. Such prejudice is not exclusive to the brahmin community. It is rather a human weakness seen in individuals across the globe. But using this as a 'weapon' to demonize the whole brahmin community is not only deeply flawed but points towards an ulterior motive of aiding the Breaking-India forces.

A thorough introspection needs to be done by every Indian today – particularly, by all artists. We need to stop 'pretending not to see' the dangerous interventions by outsiders' narratives into our thought and social and art structures.

Some practical steps would be –

- Musicians of all communities must unite to uphold and retain the integrity of the music domain and fight out the divisive attempts like that of Krishna.
- Connecting back to Saṁskṛta scholarship related to music, to verify and cleanse our understanding of our art terminologies, interpretations and their underlying spirit.
- Industriously weeding out the outside narratives that have intervened into out thought and art perspectives, to re-establish the native narrative assertively.
- Encouraging ourselves, our students and co-artists to not only perform, but also think and speak more for the cause of the *paramparā.*
- *Swadeshi* conferences like the present one, well organized research, profound discussions and profuse debates rooted in the native narrative, must gain more mass and popularity in the coming years. The prevalent narratives on Indology by the West and the left must be exposed to intense verification and correction in the world view.

The biggest advantage India has is that, despite lack of support and powerful defense rhetoric and despite the discrimination suffered over the years, sincere scholars in both Saṁskṛta and Karnatic classical music domain have continued to work selflessly to maintain the *śāstra-śuddhi* and *sampradāya-śuddhi* all through. We only have to plug in to those sources to restore effectively the Indian spirit in Indian art in a big way.

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Notes

[1]There are many scholarly definitions on *Dharma.* This is just the simplest and most common of them.

[2]Lord Kṛṣṇa explains in many verses, even repeatedly, about how duty/work must be done as a *yajña*, i.e without desperation for fruits thereof. He also explains how Gods are pleased by such work and how the doer must share the fruits of his actions with his fellow beings – *yajñārthāt karmaṇaḥ* (*Bhagavadgītā* 3.9) *tadarthaṁ karma kaunteya mukta-saṅgas samācara* (*Bhagavadgītā* 3.9) *devān bhāvayatānena te devā bhāvayantu vaḥ* (*Bhagavadgītā* 3.11) *karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ | loka-saṅgraham evāpi sampaśyan kartum arhasi* (*Bhagavadgītā* 3.20) *yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṁ tyaktvā dhanañjaya | siddhyasiddhoḥ samo bhūtvā* (*Bhagavadgītā* 2.48).

[3]For instance, in Christianity, "Priesthood is the power and authority of God given to man, including the authority to perform ordinances and to act as a leader in the church."(**Editor's Note**: The above is a quote from Wikipedia. To cite from a standard source, ref. "priesthood is the power and authority of God given to man by an (*sic*) holy ordinance" Matthews, Clinton. (2016). *Priesthood Through Scriptures*. (Softcopy). Xlibris.com.)

[4]The word 'Outsider' here does not refer to the ethnicity, but to the 'stand point' wherein, the native socio-cultural context and perspectives of India are totally ignored and dominated by an alien narrative, which does no justice to facts.

[5]In fact, it is the climate, whether and geography which define the dress style in the Indian ethos. Before Christian culture intruded the schoolings, men and women of all communities including brahmins, in Kerala and some other humid / hot regions of south and coastal belts of India, wore light clothes, covering less of the upper parts of their bodies. People living in colder regions like Himalayas naturally cover their bodies more, with thick long garments. It is only after English dress was imposed upon schools as 'formal and modern', nativity in dress gradually decreased in Indian masses.

[6]Treatises of native medicine, metallurgy, jewelry making, castings, physics, cattle rearing, *kāma-śāstra*, perfume making, weaving, bangle making, basket weaving, pottery, warfare, cooking, polity and many more can be seen in treatises mostly in Saṁskṛta and in *deśa-bhāṣā*-s or in unbroken oral traditions.

[7]In a haste to demonize the brahmin image and everything that he represents, leftist writers and artists have, as a supplementary act, depicted their non-brahmin characters mostly as illiterate, ill-dressed, helpless, incapable, dull, deprived and so on. The

accounts of non-brahmins who held high positions, who were valorous, enterprising, religious, saintly and those who excelled in trade and other endeavor have seldom gained main focus in leftist writings. Similarly, many caste-based Indian movies magnify the caste divide demonize the whole brahmin community and depict all non-brahmin characters are weak/ incompetent. Mocking brahmins, priests and *sanyāsin*-s and showing them as hypocrites, autocrats or cheats is most common in Indian cinema and the small screen to this day. Readers may refer to the countless websites and Indian movies and leftist literature that magnify beyond facts, the 'atrocities by brahmins'. Popular examples where brahmin-bashing rules the screen are Satyajit Ray's *Sadgati* (1981), *Ankur* (1974) (both in Hindi) and *Comana duḍi* (1975), *Hemāvati* (1977), *Ghaṭaśrāddha* (1977) (all three in Kannada) and many others. We also come across countless episodes, conversations, songs and comedy scenes that subtly or loudly ridicule and insult the brahmin class. Leftist playwrights like Girish Karnad, U. R. Ananthamurthy and others strongly influenced the narratives of the brahmin image.

[8]A *devadāsī* had sacred responsibilities in temple traditions and social and political events (unlike a *dāsī* who merely served her master). The word *puṁscalī* refers to a whore, who held a role in ceremonies like *vratya*. *Puṁscalī* is the forerunner of the later *devadāsī* (Chandra 1975: 2). The Buddhist *Jātaka* literature uses many words like *vesī, nāriyo, gamaṇīyo, gaṇikā, nagara-dāsī, vaṇṇa-dāsī, kumbha-dāsī* etc,. The *gaṇikā* was affluent and had an important position in the king's court. She was also called *vaṇṇa-dāsī* and even employed a large number of slaves (Chandra 1975: 23-24). *Puṁscalī*-s and *gaṇikā*-s who carried ritualistic significance were usually learned and talented and some even became queens. Born in the clan of courtesans, Śukavāṇī who was a Śatāvadhāninī and a poetess in six languages, was honoured with *kanakābhiṣeka (*showeredwithgold*)* and conferred the title of Madhuravāṇī by king Raghunāthanāyaka. She composed the *Rāmāyaṇasāratilakam*. (Adkoli 2007: 161-162). It is a well-known historical account that the celebrated King Kṛṣṇadevarāya's queen Cinnammā Devī was originally a *devadāsī.* (Naidu 2012: 101).

[9]Intending to completely gain hold on Indian economy, the British policies gradually weakened even the other occupations in India. Dharampal (1971) observes in the Foreword:

"After the first few years of euphoria since Independence, a period of self-denigration set in during which educated Indians, particularly those educated in the West, took the lead. Whether in the name of modernisation, science or ideology, they ran down most, if not all, things Indian."

We can thus infer how the imperial British rule methodically displaced native arts, occupations and knowledge systems with their impositions. In the pretext of modernization, they trivialized our native arts and sciences as 'outdated and non-progressive'. Through heavy taxation and other cruel sanctions, they discouraged self-employment and weakened the markets forcing masses to shift to the jobs that they created. They imposed English as the official medium in India, displacing Saṁskṛta and *desi* languages and thus marginalizing their role to a very great extent. Saṁskṛta and Vedic studies and classical arts, were depicted as solely brahmin ventures and as non-progressive and castiest and gradually marginalized in mainstream academics and job market. Refer to English Education Act 1835.

(**Editor's Note**: The seeds of the English Education Act can be traced to the now-infamous *Macaulay's Minute*, the full text of which can be seen documented in *Selections*

From Educational Records Part 1 1789-1839. https://archive.org/details/SelectionsFromEducationalRecordsPartI1781-1839)

[10]A living example from contemporary times, is how the extraordinary great literary feat like *avadhāna*, a fascinating classical poetic tradition, has been never given a single representation on the prestigious platforms of Kannada Sahitya Parishat, till the present day. The prejudice that works behind this intentional negligence of a great poetic tradition is obviously the left-generated myth that '*avadhāna* is a brahmin art', while in reality, countless poets and artists and even *devadāsī*-s have excelled in this art down the centuries.

[11]I personally have had more than 3 non-brahmin teachers in classical music and dance. Never once did the caste factor even flash by in the beautiful relationship I have had with my *guru*-s.

[12](Names mostly taken from Tamil Nadu because that is T. M. Krishna's cradle) Bharata Ratna M. S. Subbulakshmi, M. L. Vasanthakumari's mother Lalithangi, Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, Palani Subrahmanya Pillai, Muttaiya Pillai, Panchapakesha Pillai, Kanchipuran Nayana Pillai, Chittoor Subrahmanya Pillai, Mayavaram V. R. Govindaraja Pillai, Pudukottai Dakshinamurthy Pillai, Tangavelu Pillai (Malaya), T. M. Thyagarajan, Neyyatinkara Vasudevan, Veena Dhanammal, T. Brinda, T. Mukta, T. Balasaraswati, T. Shankaran, T. Vishwanathan, Sempanarkoil Brothers, A. K. C. Natarajan, Sheikh. Chinna Moulana, Kasim-Babu Brothers, Thiruvadudurai Rajarathinam Pillai, Thiruveezhimalai Brothers, Namagiripettai Krishnan, Valayappatti Subramanyam, Haridwara Mangalam, Seerkazhi Govindarajan, T. R. Mahalingam, Chidambaram Jeyaraman, P. Unnikrishnan, Madurai Somasundaram, M. M. Dandapani Desikar, M. K. Thiagaraja Bhagavatar, M. K. Govindaraja Bhagavatar, Karukuricchi Arunachalam, Meenakshi Sundaram Pillai, Kuzhikkarai Pitchaiappa, Tiruppamburam Swaminatha Pillai, Kumbakonam Rajamanickam Pillai, T. Chowdiah, Kadari Gopalnath, M. Nagaraj and M. Manjunath of Karnataka. Not just non-Brahmins, but even non-Hindus like John Higgins Bhagavatar and the most popular Dr. K. J. Yesudas command great admiration in music circles.

[13]*Kāmaśāstra* refers to *Sarasvatī-Bhavana*-s where people from all sections of the society gathered periodically to celebrate *vasantotsava* through music, dance feastings and various amusements – *pakṣasya māsasya vā prajñāte'hani sarasvatyā bhavane niyuktānāṁ nityaṁ samājaḥ.* (Shastri 1929: 44).

[14]*virodhi-rasa-sambandhi-vibhāvādi-parigrahaḥ...rasasya syādvirodhāya vṛttyanaucityam eva ca* । (*Dhvanyāloka* 3.18-19)

raso yadā prādhānyena pratipādyas tadā tatpratītau vyavadhāyakā virodhinaś ca sarvātmanaiva parihāryaḥ (*Dhvanyāloka* 3.6+) (Pathak 1997: 349).

[15]*santi siddharasa-prakhyā ye ca rāmāyaṇādayaḥ* ।
kathāśrayā na tair yojyā svecchā rasavirodhinī ॥ (*Dhvanyāloka* 3.14+) (Pathak 1997: 367).

[16]*mahākavīnām apy uttamadevatāviṣaya-prasiddha-sambhoga-śṛṅgāra-nibandhanādyanau cityaṁ śakti-tiraskṛtatvāt grāmyatvena na pratibhāsate | yathā kumārasambhave devīsambhogavarṇanam |* (*Dhvanyāloka* 3.6a+) (Pathak 1997: 346). *Anaucitya-doṣa* occurs in the descriptions done by great poets too, wherein they sometimes offend the dignity of divine characters by showing them in a cheap way, but the power of their talent conceals the flaw nevertheless. For instance - *Kumārasambhava* (of Kālidāsa) wherein the union of Goddess is described.

[17] *vaktṛvācyagataucitye satyapi viṣayāśrayam anyad aucityaṁ saṅghaṭanāṁ niyacchati.* (*Dhvanyāloka* 3.7+) (Pathak 1997: 353).

[18] Private conversation.

[19] Krishna very arrogantly declares- "Tyagaraja was an extraordinary composer, yet amidst the musical genius is his Brahminical import. He was a product of his social boundaries and we need to understand that...This is one of the problems even with the spiritual—it can be casteist and doctrinaire!" (Krishna 2018: 50).

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Chapter 8

Role of Patronage in Karnatic Music – Past, Present and the Future

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Abstract

Karnatic music lives through the artistes. Promotion of artistes leads to a sustainable celebration of the art form over time. As such, ensuring that artistes are able to eke out a good living by pursuing Karnatic music is of paramount importance.

In the documented past, musicians were provided patronage by royalty, big businessmen and by the general public through temple festivals, etc. Teaching Karnatic music also earned a livelihood for artistes. Hamlets used to be the place where people largely lived in and hence, the people to people connect was fairly direct which lent itself to the above patronage model.

With the small villages growing to mega urban landscapes, there arose a need for bringing musicians and listeners together to a common platform. This led to the creation of *sabhā*-s. Typically, not-for-profit organisations, each *sabhā* would become relevant to *rasika*-s in a specific geographical area. The patronage model significantly

*pp. 207–222. In: Meera, H. R. (Ed.) (2021). *Karnāṭaka Śāstrīya Saṅgīta - Past, Present, and Future.* Chennai: Infinity Foundation India.

changed from the past to what it is today. Patrons donate to the *sabhā*-s who, in turn, pay out the artistes. Another significant change has been the establishment of the digital media. Government organisations like Doordarshan, All India Radio and several music production houses have provided patronage to the artistes. With the advent of social media, there are monetization opportunities for artistes though Youtube, Spotify, Gaana, and many other applications. With larger audiences attending performances, corporates are also showing some interest in sponsoring programs. Government has grants that are given out on an annual basis for festivals organised by *sabhā*-s in addition to awards with prize money. Teaching students in person as well as through digital media like Skype, Lync, WhatsApp, etc provides income to the artistes. Workshops organised by *sabhā*-s and the foreign tours have added to the source of income of the artistes. Many artistes have creatively expanded their incomes by having cruise concerts, etc. Overall, if we look at the present, there are many more avenues than the past to monetize the time and expertise of the artistes.

A peek into the future will make us even more optimistic of how the size of this pie can be grown manifold. The fact that the art form on digital media is just about to take off gives enormous hope. "Direct to consumer" of content through digital platforms will define and also eliminate the intermediaries. Monetization opportunities on digital platforms through corporate sponsorships are bound to grow given larger number of audiences. Live performances will progressively move towards paid programs. The model is expected to move towards "user pays" model vs not-for-profit *sabhā*-s. The big growth in terms of patronage for the art form will also be because of the better standard of living for humankind in the years to come. As Karnatic music will be placed alongside yoga, meditation etc., – something that provides peace of mind – this avenue will be patronized like never before as people will have higher disposable incomes and are in need of peace of mind. Government is also expected to invest a lot more on our culture as this is the soft power India can exercise.

The golden period for patronage in Karnatic Music has just begun and will last for a long time into the future.

Introduction

A foundational question that needs to be asked is whether Karnatic music is an art form or is it something beyond? We have heard the commonly used adage: "Music is life and Life is Music". This comes from a very deep sense of linkage one could draw between music and life itself. As with life where there is sound and rhythm, so with music – *nāda* and *laya*. With this kind of bond, how should we look at music distinct of life? An easy answer can be found in that, this kind of relation is at a metaphysical level and hence one needs to attain a particular state of being to realise such a connection.

Let us then move to the understanding of music as an art – a performing art. Practice of music as an art is a necessary step towards the ultimate realisation. Among the very many art forms, Karnatic music is one of the most evolved ones. Over several millennia, this art form has grown in terms of form and substance. A combination of *saṅgīta, sāhitya* and *adhyātma* has contributed to this growth. There has been substantial progress in *saṅgīta* from the *Sāma Veda* period to the formulation of the the most comprehensive 72 *melakarta rāga* system. Additionally, Karnatic music has developed with deeply devotional lyrics over time that has ensured its relevance at any point in time. The icing on the cake is the liberal sprinkling of spirituality – *"adhyātma"*. With all of these elements generously present, this art form has something really substantive. One can trace the reason for its sustenance and growth from millennia to the depth it has acquired. The tradition has grown – with additions.

"Culture eats strategy for breakfast" – says Peter F Drucker, the globally acclaimed marketing genius, (or at least, the quote is attributed to him). A deep appreciation of culture and adequate patronage is a *sine qua non* for promotion of the artistes – thereby, the art.

Role of Patronage – the Past

The patronage model for Karnatic music, in the past, was fairly simple with very few dimensions. Kings used to appoint *āsthāna-vidvān*-s. The needs of the musicians were looked after by royalty, so they could steadfastly devote time to the art form. Wealthy businessman patronized artists and so did temples. Teaching students too would bring in its share of sustenance to the musicians. Overall, the means

of monetization were limited. A comprehensive analysis of the past is presented below of how the patronage worked in the past few centuries.

Indian Classical music has its origins attributed to Vedic times and also celestial beings like Nārada, but the seeds of the form familiar today can be traced back to the period between the 14th and the 17th centuries, thanks to the contributions of Purandaradāsa, the Karnāṭaka Saṅgīta Pitāmaha and also his contemporaries like Annamācārya, Bhadrācala Rāmadāsa, and Kṣetrayya. This music flourished during the reign of the deeply dhārmic Vijayanagar kings who were also connoisseurs of art. Then came the Tanjavur Nāyaka-s and the Marāṭha kings[†] of Tamilnadu who generously patronized all forms of art and literature. The temple, as always, served as the hub for music, dance and literary activities such as festivals and annual competitions that attracted very many scholars, composers and artistes from across the region. We will briefly look at the patronage granted by some of these rulers.

Raghunātha Nāyaka (1600-1634 CE) who was the most prominent of the Nāyaka rulers was not only a discerning patron but himself an artist and a composer. In addition to composing Yakṣagāna-s, he was a good *vaiṇika* and also a poet of merit in Telugu and Sanskrit. His liberal patronage was extended to poets, poetesses, scholars, composers, *yati*-s and temples.

His successor, Vijayarāghava Nāyaka (1634 CE-1673 CE), matched his predecessor in all respects, being a patron and a scholar par excellence himself. Amongst others in his court, were the great Veṅkaṭamakhin (the author of *Caturdaṇḍi Prakāśikā*), his brother Yajñanārāyaṇa Dīkṣita, and Chengalvakala Kavi (the author of *Rājagopālavilāsamu*).

The period of Shahaji Bhonsle (1684 -1712 CE), the Maratha ruler of Tanjavur, can be identified with a remarkable literary and musical output. His successor Saraboji I (1712 – 1728 CE) too followed suit. *Agrahāra*-s of Tiruvenkadu and Tirukkadiyur were exclusively established to provide the necessary ambience for culture to flourish. Amongst those who adorned his court was Girirāja Kavi (who was Śrī Tyāgarāja's grandfather). Following him was Tulajaji I (1728 – 1736 CE) who is also credited with the authorship of *Saṅgīta Sārāmṛta*. He

[†]The spellings of the names of the kings mostly have the popular spelling here, though some of the earlier kings' names are spelt with diacritics. - Editor.

promoted *Sadir* and *Bharatanāṭyam* styles of dance while composing a few Yakṣagāna-s. During his time, the Tanjavur *vīnā* came to be known as Tulaja *vīṇā*.

The reign of the next significant patron king in the lineage, Tulajaji II (1763–1787 CE), was a landmark period in the history of Karnatic music, in that it provided the necessary background for the phenomenon which was to be known as Karnatik Music Trinity. Tyāgarāja's *guru*, Sôṇṭi Veṅkaṭaramaṇayya, and Śyāma Śāstri's *guru*, Paccimiriyam Ādiappayya were *āsthāna-vidvān*-s in his court. Śyāma Śāstri's father deciding to settle in the region was mainly because of the Bangāru Kāmākṣī temple built by this king. While Tyāgarāja's father, Rāmabrahma, was employed by the king to take care of the administration of some *agrahāra*-s, Muttusvāmi Dīkṣita's father, Rāmasvāmi Dīkṣita, was entrusted with composing and formalizing songs for the *devadāsī*-s of the Tiruvarur temple. Apart from these, the father of the Tanjavur Quartet, Subbarāya Oduvar, too served in the court of this king. It was during this time that the Tanjavur Quartet and the Dīkṣitar brothers, Muttusvāmi and Bālusvāmi came into prominence. The Quartet - Cinnayya, Pônnayya, Śivānandam and Vaḍivelu – who fine-tuned the art of *Bharatanāṭyam* and also composed a number of *varṇa*-s and *kṛti*-s, later moved to the court of Mahārāja Svāti Tirunāḷ (who happened to be a great friend of Serfoji, the last Maratha ruler of Tanjavur).

In Mysore kingdom, music in particular and arts in general received much encouragement. The Golden Age for Karnatic music however was for more than 150 years during the reigns of Mummaḍi Krishnaraja Wodeyar (1794–1868), Chamaraja Wodeyar (1862–1894), Nālvaḍi Krishnaraja Wodeyar (1884–1940) and Jayachamaraja Wodeyar (1919–1974). These kings themselves were noted composers and were proficient in playing musical instruments. This was the time when Mysore in modern Karnataka emerged as a prominent centre of Karnatic music, just as Tanjavur did in modern Tamilnadu. The Mysore court not only had native musicians like Vīṇe Śeṣaṇṇa, Vīṇe Subbaṇṇa, Mysore Vāsudevācārya, Biḍāram Kṛṣṇappa and Cikkarāmarāyaru but also artists and composers from other parts of South India like Muttayya Bhāgavatar and Tiger Varadachariar[1].

Over time, human settlements starting getting larger in a particular place. With the end of British rule and India gaining independence,

the erstwhile provinces were re-organised into linguistic states. The era of kings ended and democratic governments started administering the affairs of the people. Technological developments started gaining pace like radio, TV, internet, etc. With these developments, Karnatic music patronage model had to re-invent itself.

Role of Patronage - Current

Governments had to invest lot of resources in building basic infrastructure for the people. As a consequence, the grants for arts and culture were limited and could not be a sufficient stream of earnings for artists. The setting up of All India Radio, and eventually Doordarshan, provided a great opportunity for artists to be employed in their area of expertise. In addition, programs on those platforms also provided good income to free-lance artists. Many government agencies like Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Central Ministry of Culture, Sangeet Natak Akademi, and State Departments of Culture provide great support to the arts through their grants, awards, fellowships and scholarships.

However, for live performances, there arose a need for an intermediary to facilitate music programs. This led to the setting up of *sabhā*-s by various noble connoisseurs. Largely being not-for-profit organisations, the volunteers strived to raise money from philanthropists and would pay out the artists and the surrounding ecosystem. Such noble deeds started spreading across the globe and now, these organisations provide a significant source of earnings for artists. With the internet and global connectivity, artists can monetize content creatively on the net through multiple applications. Thanks to the global outreach digitally, musicians can teach students located anywhere in the world. This development has significantly improved the earnings of musicians.

Despite several such avenues that have opened up, the challenges in today's patronage model are very many. In a recent comparative study conducted by Mckinsey & Co. on philanthropy in the USA and India, the stark differences are disturbing. In a fairly recent civilization as the USA, 10% of philanthropy goes towards art and culture while in India, it is less than a percentage. And, for Karnatic music, it is practically so miniscule. The size of the overall philanthropy purse is much larger in the USA and hence the absolute amount that goes to promotion of arts and culture is significantly high. As a

society, we need to start recognizing the relevance and importance of contributing to our arts and culture.

The ramifications of poor patronage have a direct adverse impact on the quality of art. Youth do not get the confidence to take up this as a full-time profession. Resultantly, as a part time musician, the required investment of time on the art is diminished leading to sub-optimal delivery of a performance. Hence, Karnatic music is still a "laggard profession".

The role of *rasika*-s in supporting the art form has to be looked into. Often, we do not think twice to shell out hard earned money on a pizza, burger or a movie in a multiplex, justifying it as 'weekend relaxation'. However, the same people resist and complain if a Karnatic music performance is ticketed. With many, there is a perceived sense of entitlement that Karnatic music performances should be free of charge.

The average age group of people attending concerts regularly has never come down. It is the aged people who are mostly spotted in Karnatic music concerts – as a meaningful post retirement engagement. However, there is a dire need to get a mix of all age groups – as this enhances the chances of improving the patronage for the art form. How this can be done without diluting the "quality", is a challenge artists need to explore.

In today's context of Karnatic music, the ways of attaining *artha* (monetary gain to satisfy the needs of a decent livelihood) and *kāma* (desire to reach the top and be well acclaimed) becomes very important. Following the *dharma mārga* (righteous way) to claim *artha* and *kāma* should be the only way ideally. However, with a deficit on *artha* and *kāma*, there are shortcuts that artists have started taking. Many artists have been trapped in the allurements by the expansionist faiths like Christianity and Islam. Substantial sums of money being offered to sing a composition hailing Jesus or Allah have been heard from many quarters. In this context, I am citing from an article that I had written for *Sruti Magazine* called "Native and Immigrant Sounds" below:

> "One dimension of the recent debate is whether songs on Jesus and Allah ... should form part of the Carnatic Music idiom. Every faith has some native sounds and the people practicing them are conditioned to listening to them, over several centuries. This is very much like symbols,

> structures, culture, etc. Compositions on Hindu Gods are in Carnatic Music idiom as these sounds are native to this faith. Hence, the audience you find in any Carnatic Music concert is largely ones who practice Hindu faith. Feeding these audiences with songs on other faiths is like thrusting other faiths on Hinduism. The question to then ask is towards what end is this experiment aimed at? ...
>
> Freedom of expression, subject to reasonable restrictions, has to be protected for every artiste. Artistes being creative people will want to explore different dimensions to expand the acceptability of their art. Let the experiment be to promote social harmony in the true sense of the term by not mixing everything up but by respecting and honouring each for what it is. Within these confines, surely there is plenty to be done as music is universal and can provide peace, happiness and relaxation to everyone on this planet. Artistic freedom is good but artistic adventurism can be lead to a more hateful world, which goes exactly opposite to the purpose of practicing the art.
>
> ...Every innovative artistic attempt without a sound rationale and a purpose may be viewed as a back door support for inter-faith conversions. Music collapses..."

There are several organisers and musicians who were interviewed as part of this research. The actual comments are reproduced below:

Views of Organisers

1. Sri Anantaramiah, *BTM Cultural Academy*

   (a) A strong investment of money is necessary to encourage more youngsters and to give sustainable bright future to music. This far, no further - is the sad expression on our musician's face. They are in need of more opportunities and better remuneration.
   (b) Call for a more liberal government funding.
   (c) Many organisations are coming up today out of immense love and reverence towards classical music. They spend their own money to run the organisation. Such organisations have a small shelf life and their future is uncertain post the founder's life term. Organisations that conduct concerts all through the year cannot sustain for a long time due to growing financial demands in the market.
   (d) Karnatic music also needs the volunteering by youth/young *rasika*-s who are proactive and ready to lend their helping

hand to attend and organise concerts in any way that is conveniently possible to them.

(e) The organiser also has a role to play in discerning and directing the show of an authentic Karnatic music concert. It is his/her duty to condemn and shun presentation of diverted music forms for want of instant popularity, if any, so as to keep the traditional authentic music intact.

2. Sri Ravishankar, *Bharatiya Samagana Sabhā.*

(a) Indian classical music has a very limited number of connoisseurs as not everyone can understand the nuances and subtle intricacies of this art form. It amounts to approximately 4-5% of the total number of fans of music in the world music platform. Out of this, Karnatic music *rasika*-s amount to only a third of the whole set. That is 1% fan base/connoisseurs/patrons is what is available to Karnatic music. In such a situation, where the fan and patron count is low, the opportunities for an artist to grow and flourish becomes limited, owing to growing number of people in the music scene.

(b) The need of the hour is to encourage and produce more full time Karnatic music professionals. This should begin with mobilisation and investment of more money and mind into the industry.

(c) A solution would be to adopt musicians by institutions such as banks, railways, businesses or individuals, as it is done in the sports world where sportsmen become brand ambassadors and get paid huge revenues no matter how many number of matches they play or how they play in an year. This model, if followed in Karnatic music scene, is very promising and ensures musicians with a secured life with constant and sustainable financial support, which gives them enough freedom and time to be immersed in the *sādhanā* and thus produce high-quality music over the years.

(d) The corporates have a big role to play in today's music world. Through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), they can very conveniently sponsor big events and cater to a large number of budding musicians and assure them

a secured future. All these efforts result directly in an upsurge of quality and quantity of authentic music that we can offer to the world.

3. Dr. R. Raghavendra, *Ananya*.

   (a) Organisers have a great responsibility in identifying authentic music and encouraging such music, instead of succumbing to external pressures or going with the trend to get instant fame.
   (b) The future of many organisations whose torch-bearers are single handedly working for the cause of music is bleak. What after them? The government can identify such organisations and lend liberal support.
   (c) "Rich *sabhā*-s" in Bengaluru should collaborate with *sabhā*-s in smaller towns.

4. Dr. Deepthi Navaratna, Executive Director, *IGNCA*, MoC, Govt of India.

   While the commitment to fostering arts and culture through central and state cultural agencies is clear music presenters have to think more creatively at diversifying their revenue streams. In today's world it is more than a necessity.

Views of Artistes

1. Sunaad Anoor (Khanjira artist)

   (a) Patronage given to music today is a lot better and promising than previous generation and yet, a lot can still be done. Each artiste needs to grow and evolve with one's music.
   (b) The *sabhā*-s, corporate agencies and individuals are showing generosity and encouraging musicians who are deserving and talented, thus making more young artists confident about pursuing Karnatic music full time.
   (c) Karnatic music can be taken as a profession if one is totally sincere to the art and to oneself and believes in music. It is the responsibility of the artist to be worthy of good patronage.

(d) Another responsibility on the artist's shoulder is to relate to the audience – educated as well as lay – and modify one's music without diluting the core values.

(e) Unity among artists is of utmost importance for Karnatic music to flourish and be in safe hands. We have to work together and support one another. Professional jealousy needs to be kept at bay as much as possible, so as to give opportunities to all musicians according to their capacities.

2. Anjana P. Rao (Vocalist)

(a) The current patronage trend is encouraging and improving every year with a growing population of upcoming artists in the Karnatic music scene.

(b) To take music as a full-time profession, it requires a lot of courage and thinking ahead to have a sustainable career as a musician.

(c) Musicians who have succumbed to various attempts of missionaries to propagate Christianity at the cost of compromising one's identity are not only money-hungry but also ignorant about the consequences of the act. They have to be more responsible and educated about online media and its reach.

(d) Mobilisation of money in the *sabhā-s* by organisers is very important to keep the show running. *Rasika*-s and organisers need to recognize the years of devotion, hard work and perseverance of the artist and financially compensate suitably.

3. Shilpa Shashidhar (Vocalist)

(a) The need of the hour is to have more systematic and organised methods of arranging concerts. It is the knack of the organiser to mobilise funds - which is important. The organiser also has to be well-informed and know where to tap the resources to have a good continuous flow of funds and never to misuse the resources.

(b) Research in Karnatic music needs improvement and a lot of funding. *Sabhā-s* can give incentives to encourage performers who are researchers.

(c) Organistions can plan and organise concerts in a suitable ambience that satisfies acoustic requirements of a Karnatic concert presentation to improve the listening experience. There are some *sabhā-s* that are taking care of this exceptionally well and serve as a model to most others. Construction of acoustically treated halls and state-of-the-art sound systems would require funds to be raised and organisers need to work in this direction.

Role of Patronage - Future

With the right kind of corrective measures taken, there is a bright future for patronage for Karnatic music. It is not that there is a shortfall of money in philanthropy. However, it is about how we are able to get a "share of the wallet". Whether it is the listener, the governments, philanthropists, corporates – there is a need to re-package to ensure continued and enhanced patronage.

- Artists can spearhead this movement by exposing the beauty of Karnatic music to global audiences by tapping the power of internet. Getting as many videos up there of performances and explainers will let the beauty of the music draw more people towards the art form. When there are more people, the chances of getting funding to move in this direction are much brighter.
- There is a dire need to revert to "popular Karnatic music" and keep it distinct from "art music". While the latter is for a limited audience, popular Karnatic music is something that blends into life and thereby attracts more people.
- *Rasika-s* have a responsibility. As they draw personal happiness from this art form, they should be willing to open their purse strings consistently. How about 2% of their annual income to be donated to any credible organization?
- One important aspect to accomplish is to invite youth to take charge of running *sabhā-s.* The kind of energy they can bring in will certainly attract more youth to be present in performances. Such volunteering activity also helps such youth in their academic pursuits for admissions and scholarships.
- It is wonderful to have more and more *sabhā-s.* However, at all points in time, the demand v/s supply will be more

skewed towards excess of supply. Artists need opportunities to exhibit their talents and at regular frequencies. A suggestion is to expand the concept of chamber concerts and celebration concerts. Can each *rasika* host a concert at his/her home at least once a year, and look for opportunities to celebrate and invite artistes to perform? In this context, I am sharing my article "Nurturing talent" published in *Ananya Kalasinchana* magazine:

> "It is wonderful to see any new talent emerge in the field of arts. The freshness this brings energises the entire eco system. This is required to continue the ongoing art tradition. It is an opportunity to witness new feelings, new thoughts, new style, new dimensions, new vistas, etc. The artiste emerging also has so many dreams and expectations of showcasing the talent to as many rasikas in the shortest possible time. This energy is truly infectious.
>
> The number of platforms available for young artistes is limited. All the organised sabhas have their structured programming. Although they find some place for the youth, it is well below what is needed to nurture talent. There are certain sabhas that dedicate themselves to promoting new talent out of sheer passion. Similarly, many temples promote new talent. With all of these avenues available, new talent is still in search of more opportunities, better opportunities.
>
> The concept of nurturing talent is all about how many opportunities does the new talent get during the learning phase and at what frequency. This becomes a big learning ground and a medium through which the art of performance can be fine-tuned. Each of these performances can explore a different aspect, thereby enlarging the repertoire.
>
> How then can the eco system provide so many opportunities for so many new artistes? The existing organisations can barely meet the demands of so many youngsters. Is the answer for these sabhas to scale up the number of events? Even if possible, it may not be practical and sustainable. The answer is certainly not about creating many new organisations. Anything that gets formalised is bound by structures and commercials. This becomes a hindrance for nurturing new talent at free will.
>
> A concept that was in existence from a very long time that seems to have reduced significantly is that of chamber programs. This is not a very formal organisation. Interested rasikas can host a program every month or every other month in their own homes.

> The invitees would be their neighbours, friends and relatives. A personalised environment that also helps satiate the desire of the rasikas without having to travel distances. This is also not a very expensive proposition as the new talent is looking for opportunities to perform and not necessarily to earn a livelihood. These performances could also be to celebrate some occasion in their homes – festivals, birthdays, graduation, anniversaries, etc
>
> Teachers are another big source of encouraging emerging talent. Once a quarter, in their home or wherever they teach the art form, such teachers could host a performance of someone other than their own student. This will inspire their students and also provide a good platform for a promising talent. Imagine the number of performance opportunities this would open up!
>
> Those youngsters who are technologically savvy can create a dynamic portal where a list of such emerging talent can register themselves with their bios and a link to any of their performances. This will provide a ready database for the rasikas and teachers to invite artistes. Constructive feedback possibilities can also be created on this portal which will then go to build the personal brand of the artistes.
>
> While the above-stated may not be a new thought, the newness can be brought about when this is done on a large scale. Teachers and rasikas can step forward in big numbers to enable such a framework. The impact of this becomes visible if we create additional 100x opportunities every month for youngsters through these media. In a very brief period, we can witness a vibrant youth circuit that will take shape .....
>
> This model will reduce the dependence of new talent on organised sabhas, endlessly seeking opportunities. The possibility and frequency are so few and far between that the artistes start losing their edge. Those artistes performing well in the youth circuit will automatically push the organised sabhas to sit up and take note. A constant supply of artistes is only good news for any organiser."

Well, is this practical? It is upto each of us, as *rasika*-s and teachers, to embrace this proposition in its spirit. It is about what kind of value we attach to our art forms and our passion to hand over this legacy to the next generation. Our people living outside India are conscious about this and do enough and more to preserve Bharatīyatā. Living here, can we?

- Government grants and schemes need to be significantly increased to promote arts and culture. In addition to increasing

the size of the pie, there is a dire need to support every genuine organisation with ample grants. The methodology and screening process needs to be tightened and all well-meaning *sabhā-s* need to be supported. There is a need for a complete overhaul in this process.

- As per the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) guidelines, a Company needs to spend 2% of its net profit towards CSR. While this is a very good move, I wish to appeal to the Government to regulate a minimum of 10% of the CSR amount to be spent on Arts and Culture.
- Corporates have a big role to play in sustainable patronage. A huge fillip can be provided to Karnatic music if corporates take on themselves the responsibility of building high quality auditoria in the cities. These auditoria will become the nerve centres of cultural activities. Additionally, they can adopt worthy musicians who show enormous promise.
- What corporates need to do is to shed the veil of "pseudo-secularism". It is a travesty that some corporates refrain from supporting *sabhā-s* as Karnatic music is a "Hindu" art form. Earning profits from the land and not supporting the art and culture of the land is not acceptable. This is a call for all corporates to be truly secular – support every art form for what it is!
- Three areas of funding that can be explored at an individual level would be from the Non-Resident Indian (NRI) diaspora, High Net-worth Individuals (HNI), and crowd-funding.

Conclusion

Role of patronage – past, present and future is a progressing timeline. The opportunities that exist to promote Karnatic music globally are phenomenal. There are challenges, of course. However, these are not insurmountable. With constant focus and dedication, there is a mighty lot that can be done in a relatively short period of time – thanks to digitalization.

In the past few years, Yoga and Āyurveda have become India's contribution to humankind. I can visualize that the next big thing India will take to the globe will be our Classical Music and Classical Dance forms.

Notes

[1]**Editor's Note**: This part of the article was compiled by collecting information from the following sources:

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Our Contributors

(in alphabetical order of last names)

Vrinda Acharya

Smt. Vrinda Acharya is a well-known Karnatic Classical Vocalist from Bangalore. Being a prime disciple of Sangeetha Kalacharya Vidushi Neela Ramgopal, she has carved a niche for herself through her traditional concerts, thematic programs, lecture demonstrations and music workshops. She is a graded artist of AIR, recipient of several awards including Ananya Yuva Puraskara and Aryabhata Award, has performed across India and abroad, given programs on many television channels and has released many albums.

Vrinda is an M.Com. degree holder (Gold Medalist - 1st rank for Bangalore University), an M.A. in Sanskrit and a rank holder in Vidwat in Karnatic Music. A multi-faceted personality, she is also an academic scholar, researcher and writer in her own right. She has presented papers at several national and international conferences on music and Vedic heritage. A recipient of Research Fellowship from Karnataka State Government for her research on 'Pre-trinity Sanskrit Compositions in Karnatic Music', she has given lectures on Indian Music at many universities in the US. She has worked earlier for several years as a commerce faculty in reputed colleges and business schools in Bangalore. She is also well-versed with the Sampradaya Bhajana Paddhati and an amateur Veena artist. She is the Vice-President and Managing trustee of 'Anubhooti' – an organisation co-founded by her for the promotion and propagation of Indian traditional arts and cultural heritage.

V. B. Arathi

Dr. V. B. Arathi is Chairperson, Vibhu Academy, Bengaluru. She has been teaching Sanskrit and Indology to students in India and abroad, from about 18 years, through online courses and workshops. She has been associated with Samskrita Bharati and other NGOs. She is a resource person in the Kannada print and electronic media and has presented her views on many platforms across inside and outside India.

Dr. Arathi integrates the wisdom of India into her Training programmes and youth mentoring. Through Vibhu Academy, she works towards empowering the *desi* linguistics, Social leadership, Spirituality and Art appreciation in youth. Her clientele includes Corporates, Educators, Bankers and miscellaneous groups. She also conducts leadership programmes based on the epics, *purāṇa*-s, Arthaśāstra and Indian history.

Apart from this, she is a Faculty, Academy For Creative Teaching, Bangalore; Trustee, Youth For Seva organization; Former Professor of Sanskrit, VVS College, Bengaluru; Guest Faculty, P G Courses, JU, Bengaluru.

She has published books, albums and articles and has been felicitated by Management, Spiritual, Educational and Cultural institutions in the state.

Her other pursuits include translations, Karnatic classical music, poetry and painting; writing as a columnist for Kannada and English newspapers.

Radha Bhaskar

Dr. Radha Bhaskar is a unique combination of a vocal musician, musicologist, teacher, journalist and cultural organizer. She is a disciple of Padma Bhushan Sri. P. S. Narayanaswamy and has performed many vocal concerts all over India and abroad. In recognition of her yeoman service to music, she has received several titles like Kalaa Seva Bharathi, Yuvakalaa Bharathi, Sangeetha Kalasevak, Sangeetha Kala Bharathy, Acharya Award, Sathya Patrika Sundaram and Outstanding Best Musicologist Award.

Radha holds a doctorate degree in music for her thesis - "Karnatic Music Concerts – an analytical study" and received the Junior Research

Fellowship from UGC. She was also awarded the Junior & Senior Fellowship and a Production Grant from the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India for research projects. She has given many educative lecture- demonstrations and also participated in several prestigious panel discussions all over India. For the past 15 years, Radha is the Editor of the reputed art magazine *Samudhra*. She is Treasurer of the unique 25 year old cultural organization Mudhra, noted for its novel and purposeful programmes.

Dr. Radha has been sharing her music knowledge and experience by conducting special Music Appreciation Programmes to enlighten *rasika*-s about the nuances of Karnatic music. She had the honour of being invited by Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi to conduct a two days workshop on "Appreciating Karnatic Music."

Dr. Radha has served as an Expert Member in the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and also been a Member of the Board of Studies of Indian Music at Madras University and Annamalai University.

Arvind Brahmakal

Sri Arvind Brahmakal is a keen arts enthusiast and believes Indian art forms are an integral part of life. He established Ranjani Fine Arts in 2012, a *sabhā* at Bengaluru, along with other enthusiasts with a framework to enable, educate and provide access to high quality performances in the local community. With over 150 programs, this has truly become a distinct community initiative. To consolidate fine arts celebration in Karnataka, he pioneered the formation of Karnataka Fine Arts Council - a first and only one of its kind which is a registered federation of 10 prominent *sabhā*-s and serves as the Hon. Secretary. Kalavanta, an international level Karnatic Music concert competition for youth has recently completed its 5th edition. "Purandara Darshana", a unique program to highlight the contribution of the "Sangeetha Pitamaha", was conceptualised and successfully executed. With a vision to enrich people's lives through the arts medium, he established ArtsforLife Foundation as a digital platform. He volunteers his time for all the above 3 charities. His articles on contemporary issues and challenges facing Karnatic Music have been published in reputed magazines.

Trained as a Chartered Accountant and a Cost Accountant, he held senior leadership positions in IBM and Britannia prior to co-founding a CFO advisory firm, Goldklix Business Services.

Gayathri Girish

"Kalaimamani" Smt. Gayathri Girish is one of the leading musicians in the field of Karnatic Music. She started her music lessons from Vidwan Sri Vaigal S. Gnanaskandan and later on came under the tutelage of Sangeetha Kalanidhi Sri. Madurai T.N. Seshagopalan. She has given concerts in all major *sabhā*-s in Chennai and has travelled widely throughout India and many other countries. She represented our country and performed in Russia for "The Year of India in Russia-2009" in May 2009. She is the recipient of several prestigious titles like "Kalaimamani", "Isai Peroli", "Sahithyapriya", "Sangeetha Bhaskara", "Gaana Rathna" from the Department of Cultural Affairs, Colombo, "Yuva Kala Bharathi" and many more. She also received the "Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar" instituted by Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi, in August 2014. She is an "A-grade" artiste of All India Radio, Chennai and has performed for Doordarshan and other private television channels. Under the Production Grant Scheme of The Ministry Of Culture, New Delhi, she did a thematic multimedia production in 2013-14 on the topic "Myriad Forms of Lord Shiva". She is now currently doing research under the Senior Fellowship scheme awarded by the Ministry Of Culture for 2018-20. She has also given several lecture-concerts and lecture-demonstrations on various topics in music. Smt Gayathri holds a postgraduate degree in Computer Science.

Jataayu

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(Senior Karnatic Musician and Samskrit Scholar, Bengaluru)

"The unmatched selfless services of Sri Rajiv Malhotra being rendered through the one and only Infinity Foundation have held us all in debt. They are no short of a crusader's unflinching efforts in establishing the truth about us, Indians. Every SI conference opens up new vistas that make us take pride in being who we are. The present conference on Karnatic Music and its purpose is a standing testimony to the uniqueness of our pursuit of fine arts."

Vid. Arjun Kumar

(Mridangam Maestro, Bengaluru)

"The tradition of Karnatic Music, which is steeped in our culture, has come under attack both on intellectual and practical fronts. The wrong portrayal of our composers, the blatant appropriation of our music etc., have made Infinity Foundation take up the challenge to counter the narratives. The SI conference on Karnatic Music was a great success. May Infinity Foundation continue to influence and inspire us to give befitting responses to the skewed representation of Indic thought by forces both within and outside India."

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