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Sruti web site managed by	V V Raman



**SRUTI DAY**

**December 2008**

**S R U T I**

**The India Music & Dance Society**

**Philadelphia, PA**

## Editor's Note

Welcome to our year end event, Sruti Day. This issue of Sruti Ranjani carries articles by some of our youngsters, who have achieved certain significant milestones in their journeys as performing artists of classical music and dance. Apart from this, our adult members have contributed interesting articles that you are certain to enjoy along with some puzzles and a couple of reviews of past Sruti concerts. Again, many thanks to all for taking the time to write for this issue.

Thanks,

Vijaya Viswanathan

610-640-5375

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## Solution to Jumble

C O P

V E R S E

H A P P Y

O D O R

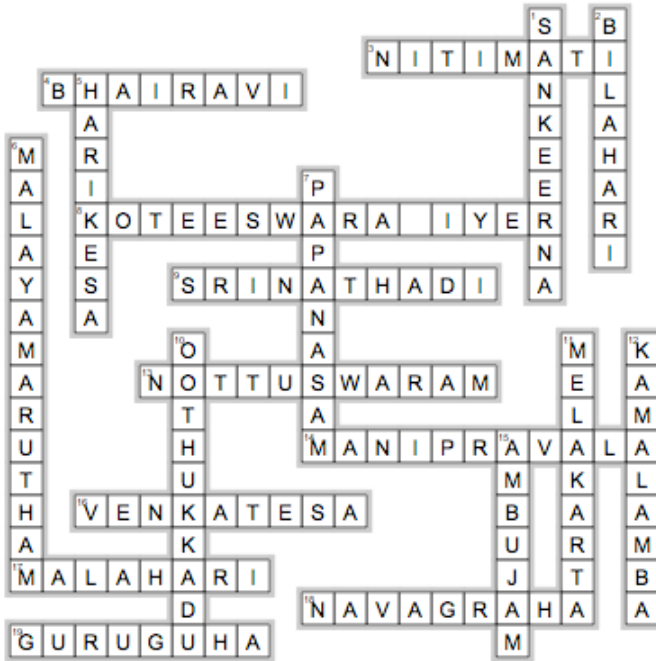
D E M O N S

COMPOSER'S

DAY

**CDay-2008**

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**Across**

3. NITIMATI — Melakarta #60
4. BHAIRAVI — Amba Kamakshi Swarajati and Virboni Varnam is in this Ragam
8. KOTEESWARAIYER — Published Tamil compositions in all 72 melakarths in Kandha Gaanamritham
9. SRINATHADI — Mudduswami Dikshitar's first composition
13. NOTTUSWARARAM — Dikshitar composed many short these in Sankarabaranam
14. MANIPRAVALA — Language that intersperses Tamil and Sanskrit words
16. VENKATESA — Patnam Subramania Iyer's signature
17. MALAHARI — Ragam for Sri Gananatha
18. NAVAGRAHA — Nine planets
19. GURUGUHA — Mudduswamy Dikshitar's signature

**Down**

1. SANKEERNA — This Jathi of Talam has nine aksharas
2. BILAHARI — Ragam of the Swarajathi - Raravenu Gopa Bala
5. HARIKESA — Muthiah Bhagavathar's signature
6. MALAYAMRUTHAM — Chakravakam without Madhyama
7. PAPANASAM — 20th century composer \_\_\_\_\_ Sivan
10. OOTHUKKADU — Composer of many dance-oriented songs on Krishna
11. MELAKARTA — There are 72 \_\_\_\_\_ Ragams.
12. KAMALAMBA — \_\_\_\_\_ Navavama Kritis composed by Dikshitar
15. AMBUJAM — 20th century composer \_\_\_\_\_ Krishna

**PROGRAM**

- 2:00 PM General Body Meeting and Elections to 2009-2010 Board (open to Sruti members only)
- 3:30 PM Snack Break
- 4:00 PM Carnatic Flute Concert by Shri V. K. Raman and Party (Open to all)

**About the Artistes of the Evening**

Raman is one of the world's leading flautists in the Carnatic style of music. Raman has captivated audiences in a number of India's major music festivals and toured widely in USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, and Japan. On several occasions, he has had the privilege of performing duets along with his Guru, the great flute maestro Dr. N. Ramani.

Raman has also been very successful as a music composer, scoring music for over 50 albums. His most recent release "Music for Deep Relaxation" reached the #2 spot on the Apple iTunes World Music Charts, remaining in the top 50 albums for nearly six months. In addition to Carnatic music concerts, Raman also performs Jugalbandhi with North Indian classical musicians and East-West Fusion Concerts.

**Review of Prasanna concert @ Painted Bride Art Center**  
**Co-Presented by Sruti 9/28/08** by Lenny Seidman (Lenny Seidman is a tabla player, teacher and composer. His tabla teachers include Zakir Hussain, Ishwarlal Misra and Chotelal Misra. He is the World Music and Jazz curator at Painted Bride. [lenny@paintedbride.org](mailto:lenny@paintedbride.org))

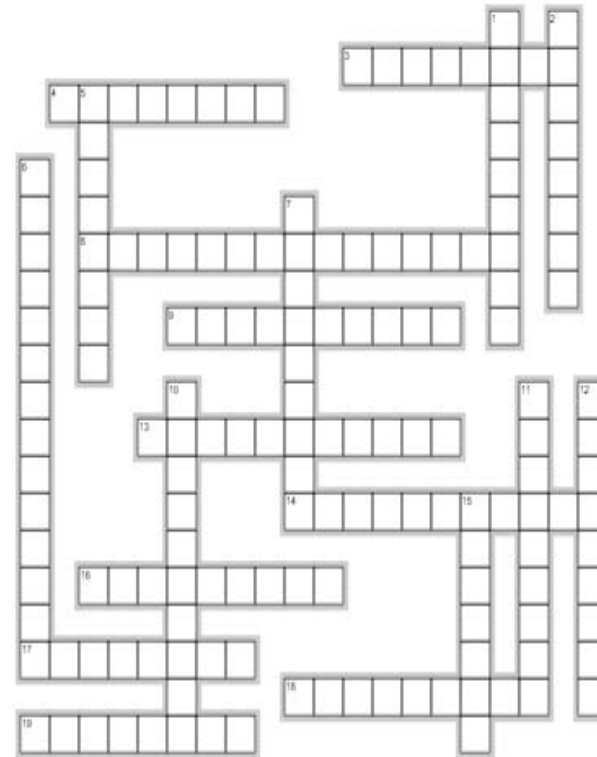
First, a little backdrop: Indian music had its premiere at the Painted Bride in 1986 when I brought in the masterful sarod player, Ali Akbar Khan. This is the same year that Sruti was officially born. So in a sense, the Painted Bride and Sruti are twins: both organizations began presenting artists from the Indian subcontinent the same year. Twenty-two years later we finally partnered for the first time (and hopefully not the last) to co-present Prasanna and his ensemble at the Bride.

A little more backdrop: During the 80's, I was studying the carnatic rhythmic system with South Indian violinist Adrian L'Armand and eventually became his accompanist. So when Sruti began presenting carnatic music, I attended many concerts. I recall being warmly welcomed by Sruti's first president, Mani Subramaniam, and was enthralled with my introduction to the amazing South Indian musical artists and the instrumentation: vina, nagaswaram, tavil, mrdangam, kanjira, ghatam, morsing, electric mandolin, saxophone, etc. A whole new world had suddenly opened up for me. To this day, my own tabla playing, composing, and teaching are significantly informed and influenced by carnatic music. I mention all this to convey my personal connection with Sruti over the years and the importance it has had on my music education. But back to the review.

From my perspective, this concert was a feast for the ears. Prasanna is one of those rare artists who is thoroughly immersed in a rich music tradition and also knows how to embrace innovation. He aptly demonstrated this through his technical mastery of the electric guitar in the context of the deeply emotive South Indian classical music. Sounding similar to the vina, his unmodified guitar playing also utilizes techniques absorbed from his contemporary studies at Boston's Berklee College of Music. Funky bass lines, jazz like phrasings, dry plucking and chords wove through certain pieces while maintaining a keen sense of nuance and sensitivity to the carnatic music tradition. It is no wonder that he lists some of his major guitar influences to include jazz icon Wes Montgomery and rock innovator Jimi Hendrix. His principal carnatic gurus were vocalist Tiruvarur Balasubramaniam and violinist A. Kanyakumari.

## CDay-2008

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### Down

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5. Muthiah Bhagavathar's signature
6. Chakravakam without Madhyama
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Answer on page 50

and cousins. Bhairavi is obviously the matriarch in this family, closely followed by Mukhari. The lesser cousins are Manji and Useni, which nowadays shine through only in the form of compositions and seldom through Alapana, Neraval and Kalpanaswaras. Darbar and Nayaki are fraternal twins. It takes a great deal of musical ability on the part of both musician and listener to keep the boundaries between the two distinct. Ghanta is a close cousin of Dhanyasi and Punnagavarali, while Narayanagowla and Balahamsa are allied to Kedaragowla and Surati. Just about five or six years ago, many young musicians took it as a challenge to render Narayanagowla extensively in concerts, but that fad has subsided pretty quickly!

Audience familiarity and appreciation of some of these complex Ragas are important factors in keeping them alive. It seems obvious that the major Ragas that lie at the core of Carnatic music, such as Todi, Bhairavi, Kambhoji or Sankarabharanam, will survive the test of time. Usually, musicians offer an explanation for the rarity or gradual disappearance of some Ragas in terms of the scope they afford for elaboration. I am not convinced that this holds true in all cases. For example, Tyagaraja saw sufficient scope in Ghanta to compose nine Kritis in it, while Dikshitar took it up for a major Avarana composition. Yet, just slightly more than a hundred years after their time, it has lost its prominence. Are Carnatic musicians and audiences increasingly tuning their musical sensibilities towards simple scale-based Ragas and lighter imports from Hindustani music at the expense of older and complex Carnatic Ragas?

### Jumble

○ \_ \_ ○ - Policeman  
 \_ \_ ○ \_ \_ ○ - Poem  
 \_ \_ ○ \_ \_ \_ ○ - Glad  
 ○ ○ \_ \_ ○ - Smell  
 ○ \_ \_ ○ \_ \_ \_ \_ ○ - Asuras

\_ \_ \_ \_ \_ ' \_ \_

\_ \_ \_

By Dinakar Subramaanian (Answer on page 51)

I particularly enjoyed his utilization of the three outstanding percussionists: Poongulam Subramanyam, *mridangam*; S. Karthick, *ghatam*; and Bangalore Amrit, *kanjira* were all featured in several pieces. Their solos were well crafted and their high energy group playing rocked the Painted Bride. They displayed extraordinary musicality regarding clarity of phrasing, wide range of dynamics, subtlety, and awareness of the multiple melodies created by the interaction of the three drums. At the same time, they provided sensitive accompaniment to Prasanna's guitar, layering in their complimentary playing. This rotational strategy provided tonal variety, and consistent forward movement within the compositions. I felt myself anticipating the entrance of the individual drums. They also knew when to lay back and allow for pacing in the development of the pieces. The three drummers could have carried an entire concert on their own, which is to say that the audience got the equivalent of two concerts!

The Ragam Tanam Pallavi piece was my particular favorite. The ensemble very gradually slow burned their respective solo and unison sections leading up to the combustible climax. It even included a crowd pleasing interactive section with the audience without sacrificing momentum. We were fortunate to have caught Prasanna and his ensemble for the final concert on their U.S. tour. It felt like a celebration! The program consisted of:

Composition	Raga	Tala	Composer
1) Mahaganapathe	Natanarayani	Adi	Muthuswami Dikshitar
2) Sobhillu Saptaswara	Jaganmohini	Rupakam	Tyagaraja
3) Raghunatha	Swararanjani	Adi	R.S. Iyenagr
4) Marivera	Latanga	KandaChapu	P.S. Iyer
5) Amba Kamakshi	Bhairavi	Misra Chapu	Syama Sastri
6) Vijayambike	Vijayanagari	Adi	Muthiah Bhagavathar
7) Sri Jimi	(from Electric Ganesha Land)		Prasanna
8) Ragam Tanam Pallavi	Madhyamavathi	Adi	Prasanna
9) Pot Belly Blues	(from Electric Ganesha Land)		Prasanna

Finally, all of us at Painted Bride wish to acknowledge the high level of professionalism and generosity of spirit on the part of Sruti's

Ramaa Nathan and Dr. C. “Nat” Nataraj in making this collaboration a reality. Last but not least, the South Indian food afterwards was awesome.

### **Concert Review: Radha Kalyan (Vocal) Accompanied by Siva Kalyan (Whistle), Naveen Basavanahally**

**(Mridangam)** *By Ram K. Ramaprasad (Dr. Ram Ramaprasad is a physical chemist, with a life long interest in both Indian and Western classical music. He makes occasional forays into non-chemical areas by way of writing about music, books, etc.)*

1-Tatvam Ariya Tarama – Ritigowla\_Adi. P. Sivan

2-Kanjadalayatakshi – Kamalamanohari\_Adi. Dikshitar

3-Sama Gana Lole – Hindolam\_Rupaka. GNB [R,S]

4- Kamala Charane – Amritabehag\_Adi. GNB

5-Mamava Karunaya – Shanmukhapriya\_M/Chapu. Swathi Thirunal [R,N,S and Thani]

6-Harismarane Mado – Yamunkalyani\_Adi. Purandaradasa

[Tuned by Tanjore S. Kalyanaraman]

7-Maruthi Varuvan Mangalam Tharuvan – Shudh Sarang\_Adi. [Composition of Krishnaswamy Iyengar. Tuned by TSK]

8-Thillana – Kapi\_Chathushruta Jhampa. TSK

9-Mangalam

The words of Thomas Gray came to my mind as I sat through this concert – “Full many a gem of purest ray serene, the dark unfathom’d caves of the ocean bear”. We all agreed, I hope, that there are many small concerts in small halls, houses and temples that occur all over the world where good music is patronized that we don’t hear about, which, in quality, is no less than what is heard in renowned sabhas in the great music centers. One such was Radha Kalyan’s concert under the auspices of Sruti of PA, as a concluding part of its day long Composer’s day Celebrations on November 1, 2008. Hence, these few comments.

Radha Kalyan had her initial training under Mrs. Radhakrishna

simple and linear. Even Ragas that have zig-zag scales, including *vakra* combinations of notes, can be quite straightforward in practice. The scale of Bindumalini looks quite complicated at first glance, with many non-linear phrases, but in practice, the Raga is not very complex. Its characteristic *prayogas* and *gamakas* are completely bounded by its prescribed scale. On the other hand, take the example of Todi. Although its scale is quite linear, the nature of its *prayogas* and *gamakas* impart a high degree of complexity to it in practice. Similarly with Ragas like Kambhoji, Bhairavi, Saveri, etc, which have seemingly simple scales, but are quite complex in their rendition, because of their *prayogas* and *gamaka* structures. In the case of Saveri, the complexity of the Raga has changed with time, even within the last century. Today, we consider Saveri as belonging to the Mayamalavagowla family, but Subbarama Dikshitar, the descendant of Muthuswami Dikshitar and author of the classic *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini*, classifies it under Todi!

A complex Raga can be, somewhat paradoxically, light in its melodic structure, Kapi and Sindhubhairavi, for example. The forms in which these two Ragas are sung today tend to be imports from Hindustani music. Thus, we have imported them along with their complexity and perhaps added our own layers of complexity to them, but still haven’t invested them with that uniquely Carnatic flavor that seems to be necessary in a heavyweight Raga. And then there are Begada, Athana, Anandabhairavi, Ahiri, Ghanta and many other ancient Ragas, which are quite difficult to capture with unique *Arohana-Avarohana* scales, although many musicians and musicologists have attempted to do so. These Ragas can really only be described as a set of characteristic *prayogas*. Among these, Ghanta has become virtually unknown today. A similar fate of almost oblivion is being faced by Ragas like Balahamsa and Narayanagowla.

These Ragas are not only intrinsically complex, but are also closely related to other complex Ragas. In fact, melodic proximity to other Ragas is itself a factor that contributes to the overall complexity of a Raga, at least from the listener’s perspective. For example, Sankarabharanam, Kambhoji and Begada constitute a family of complex heavyweights. The closeness of one Raga to another within this family itself adds to the complexity of each Raga. Relatively speaking, Harikambhoji and Khamas are lighter and less complex. They are also closer to each other than to their muscle-flexing and heavier cousins. Useni, Mukhari, Bhairavi and Manji form a set of highly complex siblings

## Complex Ragas in Carnatic Music

by *Vidyasankar Sundresan* (Vidyasankar is a chemical engineer by profession and an avid music enthusiast and musicologist. Since moving to the Philadelphia area, he has been involved with Sruti in different capacities.)

Carnatic music can legitimately boast of a large variety and number of Ragas. Typically, a Raga is defined by an ascending scale (*Arohana*) and a descending scale (*Avarohana*). Historically, the need to codify the almost bewildering array of Ragas resulted in various classification schemes. The concept of a Mela (parent scale) was born five-six centuries ago and got refined through the works of Ramamatya, Venkatamakhi and Govinda, ending in the 72 Melakarta system that we accept today. Accordingly, we talk of the Mela as the Janaka Raga (parent) and all other Ragas as Janya Ragas (child). More often than not, Janya Ragas are historically older and musically more important than their parents. For example, Bhairavi is an ancient Raga with a history that can be traced back to more than a millennium in the texts of Indian musicology. There are literally hundreds of compositions in this Raga, spanning a wide range of genres. Its parent, Nathabhairavi, made its appearance on the Carnatic music horizon only about two hundred years ago, in the mature 72 Melakarta classification scheme. There are only a handful of compositions in Nathabhairavi. Other similar examples include Nattai – Chalanata and Varali - Jhalavarali. The world of Carnatic music has come to accept that each Raga needs to be classified under a unique Melakarta. However, many Janya Ragas are quite complex and cannot be easily fitted thus.

What makes a Raga complex? It is easier to describe this in a negative sense! A Raga is not complex, if most of its characteristic musical phraseology (*prayogas*) fit neatly within a more or less straightforward scale. Another criterion would be the nature and range of the *gamakas* that give the Raga its shape and color. And a third criterion would be age. An easy example of a Raga that is not at all complex is Revati. It is quite young in usage, has a very linear pentatonic scale and admits only of phrases that are completely bounded by this scale. Other pentatonic Ragas like Mohana, Suddha Saveri, Suddha Dhanyasi, Abhogi etc. have simple scales too, but their older age in Carnatic music usage imparts them with a higher degree of complexity than Revati. These Ragas have had more time, so to speak, to be handled, explored and rendered by very accomplished and creative composers and musicians.

However, one need not limit a “straightforward” scale to being

(New Delhi), and later under Tanjore S. Kalyanaraman, from 1996 until his demise in 1994. That she has amply inherited the richness of this musical lineage was clearly evident this evening. TSK was a kind, but a demanding teacher and her concert demonstrated that she was a good student. Her chaste approach to the kriti, her delivery (great diction) and her bhava laden attention to nuances made it a gem of a musical evening. The choice of the kriti by this modest vidushi also bears witness to her homage to this GNB/TSK lineage.

After settling down with the Ritigowla piece, the Dikshitar kriti was rendered with great fidelity, satisfying any ardent Dikshitar fan. Though it was sung as the third piece, I almost feel that Hindolam was the center piece. I have heard a recording of Samaja Vara Gamana of Thyagaraja, rendered by TSK, in his inimitable style. I could not believe that such interpretations were possible for this raga and kriti (of course, my ignorance). Keeping in mind that this was supposed to be a brief concert, I must say the Hindolam alapana was sketched admirably within the time constraints. Further, when she sang the GNB kriti, it was truly moving. It would certainly have brought back memories of yesteryears in the minds of some of the more senior members in the audience (the undersigned included in this category). Kamala Charane, a staple among GNB disciples, was very melodiously sung. Another highlight was the Maruthi Varuvan piece. It was sung in Shudh Sarang (a Hindustani Raga), tunesmith being TSK. It was a first for me and an immensely enjoyable performance, both in the raga and the lyrical sahitya rendering.

This concert is also to be noted for the novel feature of a whistle accompaniment (TSK fans are aware of his whistle concerts). Young Siva Kalyan, Radha’s son and currently a student at Princeton University, has inherited his mother’s musical talent. His whistle support was faithful to the vocalist, very enjoyable in the solo alapana and swara kalpana sections. Many rasikas might be aware of his whistle concerts both in U.S. and India.

The equally young Naveen Basavanahally, is a familiar name in the Tri-state area here. He is currently a student at Rutgers University. In addition to his training here in US, he has also taken advanced lessons under Kalaimamani Sri Guruvayur Dorai in Chennai. His performance at this concert, to use the language of the young, was very “cool”, his thani being very enjoyable. Unlike Gray’s flower, this concert was seen, heard and enjoyed.

## Review of Radha Kalyan's concert for Composer's Day

By Dinkar Subrmanian (Dinakar is a rasika of carnatic music and contributes to Sruti publications frequently)

It was a sparse crowd that waited to listen to the featured artist of the evening for Composer's Day at the Bharatiya temple in Montgomeryville, PA on November 1, 2008. The artist was Smt. Radha Kalyan (a renowned teacher from New Jersey and a disciple of the renowned Tanjavur S. Kalyanaraman) accompanied by her son Shiva Kalyan and Naveen Basavanahally on the mridangam.

Shiva Kalyan was going to display his unique talent by accompanying his mother on the Whistle instead of on the traditional violin. I was eagerly waiting to hear some good music after the variations we had heard earlier in the day.

Keeping in line with the theme of the Composer's day of rendering songs of composers other than Saint Thyagaraja, Smt. Kalyan started the concert with Papanasam Sivan's Tatvamariya TharamA in RItigowlai. Next was Mudduswami Dikshitar's KanchadaLAyadAkshi in KamalAmanOhari. Her mellifluous voice had a very calming influence on the audience.

Next she sang a very melodious AlapanA in Hindolam and sang the G.N.Balasubramaniam composition – SamagAnaloIE with kalpanaswarams rounding off this song. She then embarked on a very brisk 'KamalacharanE' in AmruthaBehAg composed by GNB also (which Sruti listeners may remember performed by T.M.Krishna years ago). Smt. Kalyan then offered an elaborate Shanmukhapriya ably supported by Shiva though I would have preferred his volume to have been enhanced. She then proceeded to sing the Swati Tirunal composition – MAmava KarunAya which was the main piece of the concert. Naveen offered a very crisp ThaniAvarthanam to round out this main piece.

Next were the TukkadAs – starting with the HarismaranE mAdO in YamunAkalyani – a composition of PurandaradAsA. Then Smt. Kalyan sang MArutl VaruvAn MangaLam TharuvAn in Shuddha SARang composed by Dr. Krishnaswami Iyengar. She then sang a ThilAnA in KAPi composed by Shri S. Kalyanaraman and then finished with the MangaLam.

Overall, it was a very calming concert in which Smt. Kalyan focused on a well varied set including songs from either from her guru's school or her guru itself. Shiva did a terrific job – (made a difficult skill look easy). Naveen did a wonderful job on the mridangam and we wish to hear more from these wonderful artists.

*phant! One praised by Brahma, Vishnu and Siva! Oh Shankari! Do very quickly rid me of my worries! Now, Oh Kamakshi!*

*Oh the Vine that grants wishes of devotees! Abode of Compassion! Oh the Merciful One! Daughter of the Himalaya Mountain! Please save me, am I not seeker of Your protection? Without languor, grant me boons! Oh Kamakshi!*

*Absolving of sins, forever grant me devotion of Your Feet! Isn't She the Purifier? Won't She listen to my pleadings? Why this disregarding? Please hear me! Oh Kamakshi!*

*Oh the Remover of impurities! Hearing the Vedas plead that You are the Royalty on this earth, with the title as the One who gives the fruits to those who incessantly worship You! Oh Kamakshi!*

*Oh the One dwelling in the Nipa forest! One surrounded by the Gods! One gently holding a lotus in the hand! One who restrains pride-swollen-demons! One served by the Lion! One who scorches away impurities! You with limitless grandeur! To people who hold You in their hearts, You give manifold prosperities! Do give us protection from fear! Oh Kamakshi!*

*Sister of dark-hued Krishma! Siva's Shankari! Transcendent Lordess! Can even Vishnu and others reckon Your effulgences? Your child am I! Isn't there affection for me? Oh Devi! Why this disregarding? Please give me refuge, now! Oh Bhairavi! Oh Kamakshi!*

With eyes moist as he uttered the words Maayamma Kamakshi, Vighna sang it once and sang it again. He sang it many more times. It seemed as if he did not stammer anymore.

\*\*\*\*\*

*Acknowledgements: The author is grateful for the help of Sri Vidya-shankar Sundaesan and Sri Sumati Sena in providing the meanings of some Sanskrit words in the Amba Kamakshi kriti. The explanations regarding the various aavaranas of the Sri Chakra of the Navaavarana kritis are taken from a book of T.S. Parthasarathy and B. Narasimharao, "Sri Muthuswami Dikshithula Kirthanalu" published by Triveni Press, Machilipatnam in 1984. The two slokas from Mooka Pancha Sati and their meanings are taken from D. Viswanatha Sarma's Telugu translation of Mooka Maha Kavi's "Mooka Pancha Sati – Mandasmitha Satakam" published by Sadhana Grantha Mandali, Tenali in 1996.*



You try to show your musical scholarship in it and you ruined it. The musician should lay below the surface of the kriti and be almost invisible. Such was his commentary.

Kamakshi, Amba! Anudinamu Maravakane, Ni padamulu dikkanuchu nammithini, Sri Kanchi Kamakshi!

Kundaradanaa! Kuvalaya nayanaa! Thalli! Rakshimchu, Kamakshi!

Kambugala! Nirada chikura! Vidu vadana! Maayamma, Kamakshi!

Kumbha kucha! Mada mattha gaja gama! Padmabhava, Hari, Sambhutha! Shankari! Nivu naa chinthala, ve vega, dirchamma, ipudu, Kamakshi!

Bhaktha jana kalpa latika! Karunaalaya! Sadayaa! Girithanaya! Kaavave, sharanaagathuda gada! Thaamasamu seyaka, varamosagu! Kamakshi!

Paatakamula dirchi, ni padabhakti santata-miyave! Paavani gada! Mora vinadaa! Paraakelanamma! Vinamma! Kamakshi!

Kalusha haarini! Sadaa Nata Phaladayaki-yani birudu bhuvilo galigina dora-yanuchu ne kari moralidaga, vini, Kamakshi!

Nipa vana nilaya! Sura samudaya! Kara vidhrutha kuvalaya! Mada danuja vaarana! Mrigendra-archita! Kalusha dahana-ghana! Aparimita vaibhavamu gala Ni smarana madilo-dalachina janaadulaku bahu sampadala-nichevu+ipudu maaku+abhayamiyave, Kamakshi!

Shyama Krishna sahodari! Shiva Shankari! Parameshwari! Hariharaadulaku Ni mahimalu ganimpa tharama? Sutudamma! abhimaanamu leda, naa-pai? Devi! Paraakelane? Brovave, ipudu! Bhairavi, Kamakshi!

*Kamakshi! Oh Mother! Every single day, never forgetting, I believed that Your feet were the solace! Oh Kamakshi of Kanchi!*

*Oh, the One with jasmine-like teeth! Oh, the One with lotus-like eyes! Oh Mother! Protect me! Oh Kamakshi!*

*Oh, the One with conch-like neck! One with dark hair! One with moon-like countenance! Oh, our Mother, Kamakshi!*

*Oh, the full bosomed One! Oh, the One with gait like that of an ele-*

## **An approach to identifying different possible Srutibheda ragas from a parent raga in Carnatic Music©**

By Ram Nath. *The author may be contacted via Email at sulo-ram@msn.com. Ram Nath is a music lover and a life member of Sruti. He has taught Carnatic flute and singing for several years. By profession, he is a registered patent practitioner with master's degrees in Electrical Engineering and Intellectual Property.*

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**Scope** This paper presents an approach to identify derivable Srutibheda ragas from parent ragas in Carnatic music. The paper is directed to readers who have studied, or who are conversant with the note-system in Carnatic music, and readers who appreciate an analytical approach to aspects of musicology relating to Carnatic music. Illustrated herein is an analytical approach to ascertain how certain Srutibheda ragas can be derived from certain donor ragas or parent ragas by temporarily/momentarily changing the Shadjam (or Sa or the pitch) in the donor raga. It is noted that Srutibheda ragas can be derived theoretically from any donor/parent ragas including Melakartha (Janaka ragas) and even from certain derived ragas (Janya ragas). However, for purposes of analysis in the present approach, more Melakartha ragas will be considered for use as donor/parent ragas, since the Melakartha ragas by virtue of their having all the eight notes in their ascending and descending scales, offer more scope and possibility for identifying a multiplicity of derived Srutibheda ragas than otherwise possible.

**Terminology:** Familiarity with the following vocabulary/terms will be conducive to an easy understanding of the contents of this paper:

Arohan, Avarohan, Aalaapana (Alap), Grahbheda, Janaka, Janya, Komal, Madhyamam, Melakartha, Parent/donor raga, Sampoorana, Shadja (Shadjam), Sruti, Swara-Kalpna, Tanpura (Tambura), Teevra and Srutibheda.

**Disclaimer:** This paper illustrates an approach generally for identifying different possible Srutibheda ragas (also known sometimes as Grahbheda ragas) from a generic or parent raga, and more particularly, during an Aalaapana (exposition of a raga) stage of a musical performance. This approach was originally conceived by the author several years ago, but was never published nor discussed in any appropriate

forum. The present approach is not copied from any other prior source, and is the author's own perception of an analytical identification-method of Srutibheda ragas. There is no representation however that another musicologist or anyone has not earlier presented a similar approach to identifying Srutibheda ragas. It is acknowledged that in the vast oceanic field of musicology, very eminent musicologists and analysts have addressed the question of Srutibheda ragas (and the Grahabheda rendition as it is sometimes known,) in various forms. If the reader is aware that indeed one or more musicologists or any individuals have presented a similar earlier analysis and approach to the concept of identifying Srutibheda ragas, the author extends his salutations to such musicologists or individuals. The author further humbly presents his apologies to the extent that the present approach to Srutibheda ragas may be erroneous or imperfect in the view of expert readers from the musicology angle.

How are Srutibheda ragas expected to sound?

Consider a situation when a Carnatic singer is rendering an exposition of a first raga (with a known pitch as can be identified by the singer's musical support-drone or the Tanpura (known also as the Tambura). For ease of identification, we will call the first raga as the parent raga (not necessarily Janaka raga, but might be, as we will see later). The singer, for creating and demonstrating a Srutibheda raga within the parent raga, temporarily changes the Sa (or Sruti or the pitch) from the known pitch Sa (otherwise known as the Shadja) to be coincident with a chosen note from the first raga. One method of changing the pitch temporarily is by taking assistance from a supporting instrumental artist, e.g., violin or keyboard (harmonium) or Sarangi, by a prior understanding with the supporting instrumental artist.

A Srutibheda raga is created from certain combinations of permitted notes from the first raga (parent raga) and can be made to sound like a second raga or a third raga, and so on. These second or

singular principle, which is simply denoted as a bindu (or dot).

Amma! Kamakshi! What are you? What is this Chakram? What are these shapes? Are You in them? Are You not outside of them? Amma! Kamakshi! They say You are everywhere. If I took a piece of paper, then You must be all of it. I draw Your image and people would look at it with respect. What happened to the You that was outside the image? Surely, it must be illusion to think that You have collapsed into my drawing. What then about Your idol?

Amma! Kamakshi! The real You cannot be confined to a statue or a geometric pattern, can it? Look at the sky and the stars and the space between the stars. Surely that which You are, must pervade all this space? What is Your form then? No, these lines and these forms cannot be Your confinements. They can only be symbols that are useful for people to focus and set a goal. A form to discover the formless. Perhaps.

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The night sank deeper into the darkness and tiredness swept through Vighna's body. Slowly he swooned and fell asleep on the ground. Hours later, he awoke to the squealing sounds of the young Bhairava, the recently born temple elephant. He looked up at the Kamakshi idol and felt like a baby himself. He felt the motherly affection in Her eyes and he felt snugly secure in the soft glow of Her caring looks.

Suddenly the raga Bhairavi danced to his lips and he began to sing the beloved swarajathi of the 'Great' grandfather Shyama Sastry. His father always spoke highly of this song. The language was simple and pristine Telugu, flowing like the waters of the Godavari gently touching and making gold its path. He pointed out how the charanams started with the low note 'sa' and ascended one note for each following charanam. So much so, at the last eighth charanam, the music shone almost unreachably as the heavens in the upper octave. He said the tapestry that Shyama Sastry wove with the words, the musical notes and the bhava was like the green pasture and that the music lifted the words and the feelings gently up and down. He said the song had such tender beauty as one would find in a morning flower or in a new baby. He cautioned that one must handle it with similar care. The care should only go to exposing what is naturally already in it. Just as any additional ornamentation to the flower or the baby would deceptively render them ugly in the pretence of humans, so is it with the Amba Kamakshi kriti.

morning darkness to spread. The sparkle of a new jewel is visible only after much workmanship. But, the immaculate glow of the ray of Kamakshi's smile shines on its own intrinsic nature!

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With thoughts of the divine Kamakshi, Her form and aspects swirling through his mind, Vighna's eyes wandered towards the Sri Chakram. The Sri Chakram - what a thing! What a concept! What a mystery! What an intrigue! How many people were not insanely obsessed with it! How many books they wrote! How many poems and songs they composed! How they meditated on it and spent their lives on it. What was this Sri Chakram? What is the power it holds? What are the answers it reveals?

He edged slowly towards the gigantic copper plate at the feet of Kamakshi ammavaru. He bent forward and carefully looked at it. Yes, there were the lines and the patterns. The outermost was the broken square, which is supposed to be the Bhoopuram. It is where a human starts his journey for the eternal. Inside it was the second aavarana, the large circle with sixteen small petals. They call it a lotus, but somehow it did not look like one to him. Spiritually though, they called the Sarvaasa Paripuraka Chakram – the stage upon reaching which all desires are completely fulfilled. Then the seeker ascends to the third chakra, which is a smaller circle with eight petals. The seeker there is said to be in the sushuptha state, the wakeful version of the state of deep sleep. The fourth was a diamond like geometric figure with serrated edges containing fourteen small triangles. These were supposed to represent the fourteen lokas and ascension to this stage was supposed to bequeath every conceivable good fortune (sarva soubhaagya daayaka chakram). The next two aavaranas had similar shapes, namely another serrated diamond shaped figure with ten triangles. The outer of these was called the sarva-atha-saadhaka-chakram and the inner sarva-raksha-karachakram. Then the seeker goes onto the next stage which was symbolized as an overlap of three larger triangles resulting in eight smaller triangular edges, which are supposed to be the five physical boothas, the manas, the buddhi and the ahamkaram. This avarana was called the sarva-roga-hara-chakram, surpassing which leads to the penultimate stage which is symbolized as a simple triangle. This stage has the nature of naadam and is controlled by three extremely subtle yoginis called Kameswari, Vajreswari and Bhagamalini. The ninth and the final stage of ascension for the seeker is the cognition of the identity with the

third ragas are Srutibheda ragas which (while continuing to be part of the parent raga) sound completely different from the parent raga. Typically, for each changed Sa, it may be possible to have at least one different Srutibheda raga. The approach herein explores such possibilities in an analytical way whereby visualizing the derived Srutibheda ragas and appreciating them is rendered easier than without this analysis.

Does Srutibheda performance lend itself to be included in Indian instrumental music?

Perhaps not easily. As will be seen in the analysis herein, Srutibheda performance inherently requires temporarily changing the singer's pitch just long enough to cover the Srutibheda presentation performance. While playing Indian instrumental music, as known to musicians, there is usually no provision nor need to change the instrumental pitch (except for tunes which are sung in Madhyamam in Carnatic music), and, this fact makes it difficult for introducing Srutibheda performance during rendition of Indian instrumental music. Consequently, the present paper would have more meaningful application in the context of a vocal or voice performance as opposed to instrumental music. Notwithstanding, the present analysis should be interesting to instrumentalists also.

### **Background for the present analytical approach**

It is known that Indian musicians use notes known to the readers as S, R, G, M, P, D, N, and S\* constituting an octave. As in western music which comprises a 12- note group constituted by C, C\*, D, D\*, E, F, F\*, G, G\*, A, A\*, and B, Carnatic (classical south Indian) Music (as also Hindustani Music) also can be approximated to have (at least) 12 notes comprising S, R<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>2</sub>, G<sub>1</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>, M<sub>1</sub>, M<sub>2</sub>, P, D<sub>1</sub>, D<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>1</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, followed by high S, where S is Shadjam or the reference or key note. Essentially, the 12 notes might be understood as notes corresponding to the western keyboard. For those who are familiar with the Hindustani music notes, R1 and R2 correspond to Komal and Teevra notes re-

spectively and so forth, with the remaining notes G, M, D and N also having the 1 and 2 subscripts corresponding to Komal and Teevra notes. As long known by those in the field of Carnatic music, there are 72 parent ragas (Janaka ragas or Melakartha ragas) recognized in Carnatic music, and each Melakartha raga may be viewed as being obtained from choosing 8 notes out of the 12 notes S, R<sub>1</sub>, R<sub>2</sub>, G<sub>1</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>, M<sub>1</sub>, M<sub>2</sub>, P, D<sub>1</sub>, D<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>1</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>, followed by high S.

In Carnatic music, as every musician knows, the Komal and Teevra notes of R, G, M, D and N have theoretical known names (which may be of esoteric interest), which are not dwelt on here. It is noted in this context that the 12 notes in their frequencies/pitches form a geometric progression (- the reader does not necessarily have to understand the geometric progression-) wherein each note in the 12-note group is obtained by multiplying the pitch of the immediate previous note by a common multiplier which in fact is the twelfth root of 2. Thereby, whichever pitch one starts with for low Sa or S, after multiplication twelve times, or in other words, after jumping 12 steps, one would end up with a high Sa (S\*) which is 2 times the pitch of the low Sa, which singers understand. Looked at from a mathematical angle, the twelfth root of 2 multiplied by itself 12 times is 2, which means that the basic pitch of a given low Sa if multiplied by the twelfth root of 2 twelve times, would result in twice the low-Sa pitch, which is the high Sa (S\*).

For purposes of this paper, for the sake of simplicity, no consideration is given to third notes of R<sub>3</sub>, G<sub>3</sub>, D<sub>3</sub> or N<sub>3</sub> even where they exist and fit into the Gamaka of a particular Carnatic raga. It is also known that using a simplistic approach, as aforesaid, Carnatic Melakartha ragas can be derived as an approximation by a selected combination of 8 notes from the 12 notes. As known to those who are familiar with musical notes in Indian Carnatic music, certain notes chosen from

bared one of the ego and let one be – in total equilibrium in Her gaze and without a ripple of conflict. She knew all and understood all. In this universal drama that She choreographs and conducts, you did your part. Even Ahambhavam is skillfully woven into Her scripts!

Following Her sharply chiseled nose, his gaze rested on Her lips. Arched like a bow and infinitesimally subtly stretched, it was the most mysterious smile. It was a smile at its origin, and one can only imagine how it would blossom. It had the poignancy of the potential power one felt when one stares at a small seed of the mighty banyan tree or the hidden capacity in a small mountain lake that melted and flowed and became the thundering waters of a mighty river. It was like the power of an undifferentiated embryonic cell, that had the power to become a full person (yes, he picked this up from one of his father's friends, who was a biologist at the Kanchi Science College and who came often to discuss philosophy).

No wonder, he thought, that Mooka Mahakavi wrote a hundred poems on Her looks, another hundred on Her smile and yet another hundred on Her feet. Spontaneously, his own lips began reciting the slokas he recently learnt from the Mandasmitha Sathakam:

bhUsha vakthra sarOruhasya sahaJA vAchAm sakhl SASwathl  
NiVi vibhrama santhathe: paSupathE-ssoudhl DdhruSAM pArANA  
jlvAthu-rmadhana-Sriya-SSaSi-ruchE-ruchchAtanl dhEvathA  
Srl kAmAkshi girA-mabhUmi-mayathE hAsa-prabhA-manjarl

Oh Kamakshi! The bouquet of the light of Your smile is a natural adornment to Your lotus-like countenance. It is a constant colleague of Your words. It is the center of the collection of Your beautitudes. It is the feast for the looks of Lord Shiva. It is the life force of Goddess of Love. It is the denial of the light of the moon. Oh Kamakshi! The bouquet of the light of Your smile escapes all words!

Vaimalyam kumudhaSriyAm himarucha: kAnthyaiva sanDhukshyathE  
JyOthsnA-rOchirapi pradhosha samayam prApyaiva sampadhyathE  
svachchathvam nava-moukthikasya paramam samskArathO  
dhruSyathE  
kAmAkshyA smitha-dhiDhithE-rviSadhimA naisargikO bhAsathE

The pure light of white lotuses is brought out by the help of the radiance of the moon. Even the radiance of the moon needs the early

compositions, set on the essentiality of Kamakshi devi – the Sri Chakram. His father taught him about the enormous sanctity and significance of the Chakram, with its nine avaranas. Each avarana was bounded by a specific regular geometric pattern, the lotus, the triangle, the point and so on. Each kriti dwelt on one avarana and elaborated its meaning and significance. Dikshitar seems to have delighted himself in playing with the Sanskrit grammar as well – his father told him, as he composed each kriti exclusively in a single distinct vibhakti. So, the first kriti was in Prathama vibhakti, the second kriti in Dvithiya vibhakti and so on, until the ninth kriti had all the eight vibhaktis.

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Vignam stood face to face in front of the Kamakshi am-mavaru's imposing idol, and felt a chill at Her heavy solid presence. He felt something loving and yet awesome and forbidding. He instinctively turned around and quickly walked away. Away from Her aura, he took several deep breaths and composed himself. Avoiding the sanctum, he softly walked away and around.

He was all alone in this thousand year old place of worship, a massive black stone structure, with each imposing pillar seeming as if rooted to the earth. Dark with dim lights from vanishing oil lamps, the place shone with oil and grease. As he walked slowly around, he thought of all those people that must have walked the very same steps for hundreds of years – low and high, kings and peasants: some walking with gratitude for their good days; some impatiently seeking divine solutions to their bad days; some with curiosity and some with pomp.

He walked past the statue of Sage Durvasa, sculpted into the stone wall. All along he thought of Durvasa as the angry hermit, who only cursed on others in fits of temper. It was only after his father explained to him that he came to regard Durvasa with admiration. Apparently, he composed some two thousand splendid Sanskrit poems on Kamakshi ammavaru and set the pattern of daily pooja for Her, which is followed till today. Little man, fixed in stone – how he still rules!

He came a full circle around and re-entered the silent gaze of Kamakshi devi. Now his heart was not thumping, he calmly looked back at the idol. He looked blankly back into Her black eyes and they looked beautiful. Without wavering, he slowly traced Her face and form, and wondered at the beauty of Sri Kamakshi and the skill of the unknown sculptor. In Her eyes, seeming open and closed alternatively, there seemed an expansive compassion and unfathomable caring. They

$R_1, R_2, G_1, G_2, M_1, M_2, D_1, D_2, N_1,$  and  $N_2$  can be used to serve as additional notes to form parent Melakarta ragas.

Special notes played by using Gamaka in Carnatic music:

It is to be noted that this paper presents a simplified approach to the visualization of merely the 12 notes, not counting additional notes which have nuances. Sophisticated musicians or experts may not endorse ignoring the additional notes for any analysis of Carnatic musical notes. However, the author wishes to mention humbly that he learnt Carnatic music and plays Carnatic flute, and fully realizes that recognizing only 12 notes, is an approximation and may be unsatisfactory for some purposes, and may not do justice to the bigger picture. There are examples of such additional notes (in addition to the 12 notes) which are not considered in this paper. It is acknowledged that the use of merely 12 notes for the analysis in this paper may not give room for recognition of modified notes like the special Ga in Carnatic ragas like Thodi or Aarabhi, for example. (It is for this reason that it is very difficult to correctly play ragas like the Carnatic Thodi or Aarabhi on the western keyboard which has the 12 note structure). There are examples of other notes in Carnatic as well as Hindustani ragas that do not easily and precisely fit into the 12 note set. However, these special notes do not easily lend themselves to be included in the scope of this paper.

### Representation of ragas as strings of numbers

The main tool used in present approach is to represent each known raga by a unique string of numbers to cover either one octave, or perhaps two octaves if necessary, as will be described below. For instance, using the 12 note structure, in Mayamalavagowla, which is  $S, R_1, G_2, M_1, P, D_1, N_2, S^*$ , the second note namely  $R_1$  can be obtained from the immediate previous note (which is Sa, also represented as S herein) by jumping only one (1) step from the previous note in the 12 note group or series. The third note which is  $G_2$  is obtained from the immediate previous note  $R_1$  by jumping two (3) steps. Likewise the next

note which is  $M_1$  is obtained by jumping only one (1) step from the immediate previous note  $G_1$ . The number of steps jumped in the ascent of the raga (the ascent might be an octave with 8 notes if the parent raga is a Melakartha raga) for each next note from the immediate previous note is noted down in a row of seven numbers. This is continued till the high Sa (or  $S^{\flat}$ ) is reached. After the high Sa is reached, the given parent raga will look like a unique string of numbers. In the present analysis and approach, each parent raga is represented by a unique string of numbers comprising numerals. The result is that Mayamalavagowla in the 12 note structure can be represented as the regular string 1 3 1 2 1 3 1, which uniquely represents the seven internote spaces or steps for the eight notes of Mayamalavagowla. Let us call this the Mayamalavagowla string.

A convenient check for the accuracy of the raga string for each raga including Janya ragas and Melakartha ragas:

Noting that the Melakartha ragas are full-house ragas, it may be possible to check for the accuracy of the raga string by obtaining the sum of the seven numbers in a raga string of a Melakartha raga. The sum of the seven numbers should always be 12, and this makes logical sense since we appreciated supra the fact that we jump 12 steps to reach the high Sa from the low Sa in any given raga. Even for non-Melakartha ragas (Janya ragas), it should be appreciated that the sum of numbers in the raga string while traversing from low Sa to high Sa will be 12.

Uniqueness of a raga string: The Mayamalavagowla string, as also any raga string, will retain its uniqueness in any pitch, using the 12 note structure. Also, the uniqueness is not lost even when we add half octave on the lower side (below the low Sa) and half octave on the higher side (above the high Sa).

For example, to reach high Pa beyond the first octave in a raga, we can add 1 3 1 2 to the right of the Mayamalavagowla string beyond the high Sa in the Ascent (Arohanam) making a modified string 1 3 1 2

senior priests locked and left the temple. He looked around and saw that he was all alone with Kamakshi Ammavaru in that deep silent night.

He was a young man, not yet twenty years of age. His father was a scholar-musician and spent most of his long life as the head-priest of Kamakshi temple. He is now old and has been bed-ridden for several years. As his health and mobility gradually faded, he sought the favor of the temple secretary to get his son employed, as an apprentice priest.

He was dark, tall, slender and awkward. The darkness of his skin was deep and shiny, which made his bright white eyes arresting as you looked at them. His tall slender frame bent and swayed as he walked, which was not the only reason for his awkwardness. He stammered and seemed to lack common sense. He spoke exactly when he should be silent and vice versa. His father named him Vighneswara Sastry, which became another matter of fun and ridicule to friends and even to the senior priests. Mostly, they addressed him as Vighnam, although sometimes it was elevated to Sri Vighnam, when they felt affectionate towards him.

He was a bright kid, and his learned father quickly taught him many Sanskrit granthas, starting from Amarakosham and ending recently with Mooka Panchasathi. He paid much emphasis on the Panchasathi and shared the awe he felt towards that elaborate work of poetry. He spoke of Mooka Mahakavi, who could not speak and was a dim-wit, until he received the boon of Kamakshi. It was then that he burst forth into uncontrollable creativity and wrote these five hundred Sanskrit poems. Such was the expansiveness of the triggered scholarship that he wrote one hundred on Ammavaru's looks, one hundred more on her smile and so on. And the tautness and crafting of the language made the words jingle like bells made of bronze, sounding and resounding.

Unfortunately, his stammer made it impossible for his father to teach him vocal music, so he settled for the Veena. He taught him all of Shyama Sastry's moving compositions on Kamakshi ammavaru. He told him that they were blessed to be born into such a family. He told him that Shyama Sastry bathed in the deep sub layers of nectar that was the love and devotion to Ammavaru. Whenever his father sang the words "Maayamma Kamakshi", he had tears in his eyes and often had to stop the lesson as the voice choked.

Such were not the issues, however, when his father taught the Navaavarana kritis of Dikshitar. These were scholarly, almost academic

speed, but also had to have a range of languages and composers. We also had to choose songs in not too similar ragams, as that would sound too dissonant. For example *Abhogi* ragam following *Sree* ragam would not sound nice, therefore, we had to move some things around. My sub-main item was in raga *Pantuvarali*, with an elaborate alapana, swarakalpana, and niraval and my main item was in raga *Sankarabharanam*. It seems so easy now to rattle off a list of songs, but when you actually have to give that concert, each one becomes a game changer for the next song.

Though it doesn't sound like much, believe me, sitting cross-legged and still for two and a half hours straight and singing is no easy task! I practiced sitting down in squatting position for long stretches of time, but it still was quite painful as you reach the end of the main item. Additionally, you sometimes lose your breath in a long stream of words, and have to rely on the violinist who will back you up while you get a drink of water. At times, I felt very tired, but I knew that I had to push on and keep singing and above all I had to have faith in myself. After all, even though your family and friends are a great source of encouragement (which is most helpful), it is of utmost importance to believe in you and be confident.

### Finally....

The one advice I would like to give to other youngsters who aspire to have an arangetram is that you should enjoy every minute of the experience. Although practicing is very important, it is equally important to take your mind off the event some times, and just enjoy the buzz in the house. An arangetram is not only an important once-in-a-lifetime event, but it also a chance for a family to come together and shine. Enjoy the concert as well as the people!

### **Maayamma Kamakshi** by *Prabhakar Chitrapu*

(Prabhakar is a communications engineer and has been both a frequent contributor to Sruti publications and the past President of Sruti.)

It was late in the night, well past midnight following the special poojas on this auspicious day. He finished putting away the pooja materials in the inner vault and returned to the Kamakshi sanctum. As was his habit, he bowed and did a saasthaanga namaskaram to Ammavaru as he prepared to leave the temple. With prayers on his lips, he turned around, and was startled to find the doors closed and locked. Clearly, he took too long to finish his temple chores and during that time, the

1 3 1 1 3 1 2. It is also conceivable to add say three numbers 1, 3, 1 to the string on the Avarohana side below low Sa (i.e., to the left), making the final string 1 3 1 1 3 1 2 1 3 1 1 3 1 2. The final string (we will call this the expanded string) 1 3 1 1 3 1 2 1 3 1 1 3 1 2 for Mayamalavagowla represents a total of two octaves (from low Pa to high Pa), including a half octave 1 3 1 on the side lower than Sa, retaining the regular string 1 3 1 2 1 3 1 and including a half octave string 1 3 1 2 on the side above S\*.

Most commonly, songs in Carnatic music are written to encompass not more than two octaves in a raga, with the exception of those ragas in which Pa does not exist, in which case the next note such as the applicable Da (D<sub>1</sub> or D<sub>2</sub> as applicable) might be included. A typical example where Pa does not exist is Hindolam, (known as Maal kauns in Hindustani music) in which case, D<sub>1</sub> can be included in the raga string. It is noted that instances where a musician decides to cover a range beyond the two octaves, such as during Aalap or during Swara Kalpana (extempore creation of swaras or notes, done for improvisations) are beyond the scope of the present discussion.

By a similar approach as above, Pantuvaraali, which is S1, R1, G2, M2, P, D1, N2, S\*, can be represented as 1 3 2 1 1 3 1. The expanded string for Pantuvarali according to the above approach is 1 3 1 1 3 2 1 1 3 1 1 3 2 1 including a half lower octave, one regular octave and a half higher octave beyond high Sa.

By a similar approach, the regular string for Kalyani (Mechha Kalyani in the Melakarta table) is (S R2, G2, M2 P, D2, N2, S\*) can be represented as 2 2 2 1 2 2 1. The expanded string for two octaves of Kalyani is 2 2 1 2 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 2 1.

The expanded string for Shakarabharanam (DheeraShankarabharanam in the Melakarta chart) (major scale in western music) by using the above approach is 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 to represent two octaves.

The expanded string for Kharaharapriya by using the above approach is 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2.

The expanded string for Lathangi by using the above approach is 1 3 1 2 2 2 1 1 3 1 2 2 2 1.

The expanded string for Keeravani (minor scale in western music) by using the above approach is 1 3 1 2 1 2 2 1 3 1 2 1 2 2.

The expanded string for Shanmugha Priya by using the above approach is 1 2 2 2 1 3 1 1 2 2 2 1 3 1.

As the readers know, Simhendra Madhyamam differs from Shanmugha Priya only in the Ni. Accordingly, by using the above approach, the expanded string for Simhendra Madhyamam can be represented as 1 3 1 2 1 3 1 1 3 1 2 1 3 1.

Non full house ragas, or Janya ragas, as the readers know, are derived- ragas which have less than 8 notes in the ascent or descent or both.

Each Janya raga, as known is derived from a known Janaka (Melakartha) raga by dropping or adding notes to create a raga which will offer a special listening-effect.

The Melakartha ragas referred to above are obviously Sampoorana (full house) ragas having all the 8 notes in an octave. Let us take a few examples of derived or non-Sampoorana ragas (those with less than eight notes) and investigate whether they can be perceived and presented as Srutibheda ragas from known Melakartha ragas. For simplicity, examples of a few symmetrical derived (Janya) ragas are considered hereinafter. Using the same approach as above, the raga Mohanam (S R2 G2 P D2 S\*) can be expressed in a number string form as 2 2 3 2 3. The raga Hindolam (S G1 M1 D1 N1 S\*) for instance can be expressed in a number-string form as 3 2 3 2 2. The raga Madhyamavathi (S R1 M1 P N1 S\*) can be expressed in a number string form as 2 3 2 3 2. Again, it is noted that the numbers in each number string add up to 12. The nonsymmetrical derived ragas obviously will be represented by two dissimilar number strings in the ascent (Arohan) and

for my sister to introduce the accompanists and me. When she did, I shakily walked onto stage, bowed to the Trinity, and my gurus. I then walked back to the stage and seated myself. After a brief introductory speech from my sister, I began my concert, my voice quivering at first as over 200 people were watching and listening to me. However shortly thereafter my voice became more stable and stronger as I realized that I love what I do. I began to enjoy the concert, and got very much into it. I finally finished the concert with the *mangalam*, to a rousing applause from the audience. My concert was finally over!

### **The Music**

I had been learning kritis individually over several years. However the arangetram preparations exposed me to many more aspects one of which was that I now had to learn major kritis, along with *alapana*, *swarakalpana*, and *neraval*. The *swarakalpanas* are really supposed to be impromptu. Of course, my teacher first taught me some pre composed swara kalpana phrases, but he also encouraged me to compose some myself too. For example, he asked me to try to formulate some swarakalpanas for *Smaranee Onde Saalade* kriti in *Malayamaarutham* raga. It was fun and I came up with a number of them, but most of them turned out to be flops, and my teacher replaced them with ones that would fit better with the song, or that had more beauty spots in them. The *neraval* and the *alapana* added a new depth and larger area to the carnatic music than I was used to.

During the final rehearsals, my guru sat in front of the accompanists, and me listening intently. Singing the *swarakalpanas* and *neravals* with the accompanists can be quite confusing at times. If the violinist played a slightly different *sangati*, I'd end up messing up, and the entire practice would come to a screeching halt. I had to concentrate hard, or else I would lose track of what was actually going on. The practice sessions taught me to focus only on the *thaalam*, because if you do, all the other pieces of the song will come together on its own. The *thaniaavarthanam*, when the mridangist plays a small solo, is yet another aspect of the performance that can be quite challenging. My guru trained me to overcome this challenge by reciting the mridungam beats and help me start on the correct beat. I was eventually able to safely restart the song after the *thani*, and that made me feel very accomplished.

Picking out the songs for the concert was another challenge we had. The repertoire not only had to vary in *thaalam*, ragam, and





own for two hours and then I went to my guru's house to practice again in his presence. As the practice sessions progressed, I started to become more confident. He taught me some new songs, and constantly helped to boost my confidence, as well. His family was also very supportive of me, and I became their "next son." By the time I left India, I was much more confident than when I first went there. However, on the ride back to the US, fears rushed back and replaced feelings of assurance!

I got back, and before I knew it, it was one week before my concert. The days were ticking by, and I was practicing, but still was very nervous. I wanted to do as well as I possibly could, and I kept thinking about messing up and the like. A lot of hopes were riding on my concert from my local guru, my parents and family members, and I didn't want to let anybody down.

My parents were busy with arangetram-related activities, and I was busy practicing. Constant streams of visitors came to our house, some to visit and some to stay for the event. It was really like a wedding! My guru also flew in from Hyderabad to be with me and prepare me for the concert. He stayed in our house, and it gave us all a taste of a singer's life; waking up, singing in the morning, lunch, practice in the evening, dinner, sleep – only to wake up and sing again. While I was thoroughly enjoying myself, I was also getting more and more stressed about the concert as every day passed.

At last, the concert day arrived - my day to be in the spotlight was finally here! On that day, I didn't talk very much, as my guru advised me to conserve my voice. I had my South Indian lunch, rested for a while, and then went to the auditorium for the sound check. I came back home, changed into my *veshti* and *kurta* for the concert, prayed to God, took the blessing of my elders, and drove back to the concert hall.

Minutes before the concert, I stood behind the curtain, waiting

descent (Avarohan). Notwithstanding, the numbers in each number string still add up to 12. For example, the raga Bilahari has its ascent taken from Mohanam, i.e., 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, (adding up to 12), and the descent taken from Shankarabharanam (Bilaval in Hindustani music, and major scale in western music) i.e., 1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, where the numerals again add up to 12.

Raga strings of derived ragas and expanded raga strings of Melakartha ragas can be used in conjunction with each other to perceive Srutibheda as will be explained hereunder:

The following is an exemplary summary of a few chosen derived symmetrical ragas {chosen Janya ragas which by definition are nonfull house ragas, which are symmetrical in the ascent and decent (Arohan and Avarohan)}.

Mohanam	2 2 3 2 3	Shivranjani	2 1 4 2 3
Hindolam	3 2 3 2 2	Chandra Kauns	3 2 3 3 1
Madyamavathi	2 3 2 3 2	Gambhira Natai	4 1 2 4 1
Hamsadhwani	2 2 3 4 1	Revathi	1 4 2 3 2
Shuddha Dhanyasi	3 2 2 3 2		

Listings of expanded number strings of some Melakartha ragas for easy reference:

Mayamalavagowla	1 3 1 1 3 1 2 1 3 1 1 3 1 2.
Pantuvaraali	1 3 1 1 3 2 1 1 3 1 1 3 2 1
Kalyani	2 2 1 2 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 2 1
Kharaharapriya	2 1 2 2 1 2 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2
Shakarabharanam	2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 2 1 2 2 1 2
Lathangi	1 3 1 2 2 2 1 1 3 1 2 2 2 1
Keeravani	1 3 1 2 1 2 2 1 3 1 2 1 2 2
Shanmugha Priya	1 2 2 2 1 3 1 1 2 2 2 1 3 1

Thodi (Hanuma thodi) with some approximation has the expanded number string 2, 2, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 2, 2

### The Srutibheda recognition process:

Step 1. Take a parent raga such as Kalyani. Temporarily switch the key note or Sa to the N2 of Kalyani, i.e., temporarily select a Sa which

is the N2 in the parent raga.

Step 2. Look for an acceptable phrase in the parent raga Kalyani, which phrase starts with N2 and ends in High N2, for example, N2, R2, G2, M2, D2, N2, which can generate the number string 3, 2, 2, 3, 2 which is indeed Hindolam, if the N2 of Kalyani is perceived as Sa for the Srutibheda raga.

Step 3. Look for acceptable phrases in the parent raga Kalyani, which phrase starts with R2, for example R2, G2, M2, D2, N2, R2, which can generate the number string 2, 2, 3, 2, 3 which is indeed Mohanam.

From the above examples, we have seen that by selecting N2 as the Shadjam in Kalyani, it was possible to generate Hindolam from the note phrase N2, R2, G2, M2, D2, and N2. Likewise, by selecting R2 as Shadjam in Kalyani, it was possible to generate Mohanam from the phrase R2, G2, M2, D2, N2, and R2 of Kalyani.

Further examples:

1. If in Shakarabharanam, the R2 is temporarily made as the pitch Sa, and the singer covers an octave from R2 to high R2, it can result in a tune which has the number string 2, 1, 2, 2, 1, 2 which is found to be the raga Kharaharapriya.
2. If in Shankarabharanam, the low N2 is temporarily made as the pitch Sa, and if the singer were to cover a phrase G2, M1, D2, N2, R2, high G2 it will result in a tune which has the number string 1, 4, 2, 3, 2, which is found to be the tune Revathi
3. If in Thodi, R1 is temporarily made as the pitch Sa, and the singer covers the notes R1, G1, M1, D1, N1, R1, (which is an acceptable phrase in Thodi,) it will result in a tune which has the number string 2, 2, 3, 2, 3, which is the same as Mohanam.
4. If in Thodi, N1 is temporarily made as the pitch Sa, and the singer covers the notes N1, R1, G1, M1, D1, N1, ( which is an acceptable phrase in Thodi,) it will result in a tune which has the number string 3, 2,

cisms, the transformation within me made me realize that there will be feedback, some of which will be encouraging but also critical.

In general, the experience of our son's arangetram has made me more conscious of what to expect from such performances and how to react and provide feedback. This resolve helped me to be at peace with myself and I so looked forward to Anil's concert on August 30<sup>th</sup> 2008. It was such a proud moment for our family to hear our Anil give a 2-hour solo concert. Anil gave his best at the performance, and Sandhya and Srinath were excellent support on the violin and mridangam, respectively. After all, an arangetram is only the beginning of a long journey and sincere feedback can only strengthen and channel the talent in the best possible way to ensure the emergence of a successful musician.

### **My Arangetram**

*By Anil Chitrapu Anil Chitrapu is 15 years old. He is a tenth grader studying in the Wissahickon High School. His interests include, music, drama and computers.*

Last year, around this time, upon the advice of my guru, Sri D. Seshachary, my parents and I decided that I would be doing an arangetram during the fall of 2008. I was overjoyed! That decision marked a plunge into one of the most rigorous, stressful, and yet, extremely satisfying challenges I have ever had to face.

### **The Event**

Even though I had already given two smaller concerts in India and performed several times at various local events, I felt overjoyed that I'd be able to give a full-fledged concert in America! It seemed so much more exciting to sing for an audience where I knew everyone personally! I had always wished I could give an arangetram like the other children did in our area, and now it was actually becoming a reality!

However, schoolwork and other extracurricular activities were beginning to take over my life, and I found myself not being able to give the upcoming arangetram the time and energy it needed! Before I knew it, school was almost over. My summer trip to India had been booked, and I was scheduled to go for the final arangetram preparations. I was becoming extremely nervous as the magnitude of the arangetram actually hit me. I packed my bags and was on the flight to India.

When I arrived in Hyderabad, my aunt and uncle greeted me warmly. My tensions eased a bit, as I got reacquainted and talked to my guru. Soon, the hardcore lessons began. Every day I practiced on my

tine classes, long drives, and sacrifices you have made, transform into loving thoughts of how your kid has been devoting so much time and effort to this art in a foreign land, how sincerely he has been learning the art form, and his dedication and interest in this pursuit.

Strangely and sadly, the ecstatic feeling is short lived! It is so quickly replaced by the fear of actually conducting the event and more so by thoughts of how the community will react to the program; is our child really ready for an arangetram? We have several talented musicians and teachers in our community and you wonder if your child can stand up to their expectations and criticisms. 'What if my child goes out of tune during the concert; what if his voice cracks while singing; what if he doesn't pick up the song at the right mukthaiyas during the taniavartanam,' what if the program is mediocre, and so on.

I always expected an arangetram to be performed when the student had achieved perfection in the art form, whether it is music or dance. I associated this event with the presentation of the 'artist' and therefore it had to be perfect in all aspects. Of course all these thoughts contribute to the feeling of fear and associated tensions. I began wondering about the choice of songs for the concert but could do little about it as it was all guruji's choice and we had little input into the selections. Would the audience enjoy the selections? We wondered!

We took Anil to his voice lessons at the Bryn Mawr music conservatory and told his western classical music teacher about the debut concert. The first thing he said on hearing the news was, 'It is so beautiful, Anil, that you are doing this! Enjoy the preparations and know that when you hear your performance five years from now it will sound quite amateurish, but for now, at your age, it will sound just like what a 15 year old should sound like'!! I thought that was a strange remark, but having heard it was also reassuring and encouraging.

This remark lingered in my mind quietly and indelibly as Anil began his training for the arangetram. Listening to him learn songs, practice them with his guruji over the phone and then go to India for the final leg of the training, I felt a slow transformation occurring within me. Yes, the arangetram would be Anil's first solo performance. Just as he learnt to stand on his own as a baby and take his first steps - a major development milestone, his arangetram was just the first step toward his musical and personal growth. Anil had come far along to appreciate the songs he sings and the perfection expected by his guru. He is still a fledgling who will continue to need his guru's support and attention for many more years to come, before he can go out there and call himself a musician! From being a nervous parent, who was afraid to face criti-

2, 3, 2, which is Shuddha Dhanyasi.

The above analysis will lead the reader and anyone interested into an area of endless possibilities for creating short renditions of different ragas from a given first raga, by changing the pitch and singing an acceptable note phrase in the first raga. The above are only examples of several derivations of Srutibheda ragas which are possible.

Ragas are relatively easy to recognize only in the framework of the reference note Sa, and sometimes, even with the temporarily chosen new Sa being defined, some derived ragas might be difficult to recognize instantaneously. In such cases, the present analysis provides a good analytical approach for recognition or creation of Srutibheda ragas.

#### **Reverse Matching, starting from derived ragas to find a suitable parent raga:**

It is conceivable and possible to start with a derived raga, e.g., Mohanam, and explore if there are expanded note strings of any possible parent raga where there might be a match. The match can be investigated manually, but will be labor intensive. However, alternatively this exercise can be facilitated by using suitable software to obtain the match in a parent raga. The caveat when a match is indeed found in a suitable parent raga is that the matched note phrase in the parent raga should be an acceptable as a note phrase in the parent raga for presentation. It is noted that in some situations, even if a match (i.e., a suitable note-phrase in a chosen parent raga) can be obtained theoretically, the resulting note-phrase might not be appropriate for singing in the parent raga in question.

#### **What is the practical application of the recognition of the present analysis of Srutibheda ragas?**

Recognition of a second or third raga in a given parent raga by changing the pitch (Sa) temporarily will be a fun-driven exercise for the singer. It will also enhance the quality of audience participation

if the audience contains listeners who appreciate nuances of ragas. As aforesaid, the present analysis will be meaningful to readers who will appreciate an analytical approach to note combinations and ragas in Carnatic music.

### **Profiles in Music - Thanjavur S. Kalyanaraman (June 2, 1930 – January 7, 1994)**

*By Ram K. Ramaprasad (Dr. Ram Ramaprasad is a physical chemist, with a life long interest in both Indian and Western classical music. He makes occasional forays into non-chemical areas by way of writing about music, books, etc.)*

History is replete with lives of men and women, who were brilliant but were just brushed aside by it. Their voices were either dimmed by the cacophony of a society they were far ahead of in talent, or they were, as it sometimes happens, stars in a galaxy of other stars, and thus could be missed. Kalyanaraman fits the latter category. He was a musician during a period in South India which could one day be called a golden age in Carnatic music. It would be too ambitious, if not impossible, to write about his life work in a few pages of an article. This following is to be considered more a sketch than a portrait [1]

Thanjavur S. Kalyanaraman (TSK) was born in Thiruvengadu, his mother's village. This place is known for musically talented men. His father, N. Srinivasa Iyer, was the grandson of Komal Muthu Bhagavathar. Srinivasa Iyer was a foreman in a factory at Aruvenkadu, Ooty. TSK also had three sisters and a brother. The father, being himself very much interested in music, recognized early on his son's talents. TSK's first tutor was his father, followed later by one Namasivayam. It was Ms. Muthu Meenakshi who introduced the talented TSK to G. N. Balasubramanyam (GNB). It was a confluence of a legendary musician and an equally brilliant sisya.

Hailing from a relatively affluent family, TSK does not represent the proverbial impoverished, but gifted, sisya in search of a guru. In fact, he might be one of the few in the annals of Carnatic music of the past era who rode a motorcycle or drove a car to his guru's house for a music lesson [2]. In looking at the musical life of this man, one can't help but ponder on the circumstances of his early life of comfort that was topped by a regular formal education, factors influencing his handling of this professional life. This factor, coupled with his confidence in his music, did not result in subservient behavior of the typical music

the exciting news.

I am forever grateful to my parents for my upbringing and their combined effort to make this experience memorable, and to my Guru, Smt. Ramaa Ramesh for her guidance and for providing me with the necessary knowledge and experience I need to become a better dancer.

Visiting and performing in Madurai and Chennai this past December helped me recognize the depth of dance and music, two art forms I am just beginning to make my journey through. In pursuit of starting my own dance school in the future, I continue to absorb visually, mentally, and physically how this ancient art form shines in the hearts of rasikas throughout the world.

### **Preparing for an Arangetram – A Parent's Perspective**

*By - Uma Prabhakar (Uma is a research scientist working at the Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceuticals and is an active supporter of Sruti.)*

Let me at the very outset say that this article is not about preparing for an arangetram from the logistics point of view. Albeit, the physical aspect involved in the preparations is not to be undermined by any means, as it is a long, complex, and involved process. Good advance planning, organization, delegation, and finally implementation of the plans with help from good friends and family eventually lead to the successful execution of the event. But again, I said I would not talk about this anymore!

My focus here is to highlight the preparations as it applies to the mental and philosophical state of the mind while anticipating the event. The emotions one experiences when the guru announces his plans to present his student for the first time in a debut concert are overwhelming! After years and years of taking the child to music lessons, driving long distances every weekend, goading the child to practice regularly, squirming during practice sessions when the notes do not sound the way they should, and getting frustrated so many times (this applies to the parent, the child and the teacher as well!!), finally the day has arrived when all this effort will eventually translate to a full program.

What a proud and indescribable moment it was when guruji announced, "Next year (2008) on Ganesh Chathruthi, we will perform Anil Chitrapu's vocal music arangetram!" Wow! Our son is ready for his first solo recital – it is such an ecstatic feeling, words cannot do justice to describe it. You just want to hold your child close to you, kiss and hug him and cry!! Suddenly the feelings of frustration, tiredness of rou-

formance took place at Music Academy on January 12, 2008. The evening's program was presided over by Chief Guests, Padmashri Smt. Chitra Visweswaran and Cleveland Sri V. V. Sundaram. As a family, we chose to dedicate this performance to my late grandfather, Sri R. Tyagarajan, a great supporter of every passion I pursued. A highly accomplished man himself in drama, with Director K. Balachandar, he always encouraged me to be the best in my endeavors.

I had the privilege of working with a senior live music team which included Sri Vijay Madhavan, (nattuvangam), Smt. Bama Visweswaran and my mother, Smt. Lata Suresh (vocal), Sri Mayuram J. Shankar (mridangam), Sri Venkata Ramana (flute), and Sri Mudikondan S.N. Ramesh (veena). All the accompanying artists rendered every composition beautifully, making each performance more professional. I developed a better rapport with each of them seeing them at their best, especially during the Music Season. With their support, I thoroughly enjoyed improvising on stage and instinctively reacting to the music. One could feel the synergy of the ensemble.

I visualized myself on that stage for years; I even remember passing the Academy, as it is called in Chennai, on the roadside and smiling just at the possibility of someday having this opportunity. It pleased me to see the audience packed with family, friends, and prominent artistes in music and dance.

That evening truly gave me a great experience upon which I could reflect and improve in the future. I came back home with a vision of doing more such programs. Furthermore, the week after reaching home came a phone call from family in India. As I answered, my uncle started to read, without any introduction, what seemed like a critique. Soon enough, I realized he was reading out of the Friday Review article in The Hindu, for which I had received my very first review of the Music Academy performance! Overwhelmed with awe, I made as many simultaneous phone calls to both my mother, who was still in India at the time, and to Ramaa Auntie to share



*Ratipriya Suresh*

apprentice of the day – whether it was with regard to sabha secretaries or other movers and shakers of the Chennai music world. He also was not the typical sisya either, since he engaged his guru in musical debates when it involved a point in music. Guru bhakthi is not a supplication at all cost, but a profound respect coupled with a freedom to engage in a healthy dialogue, to question and to arrive at the true jnana. Within the framework of his guru GNB's teachings, TSK developed his own bani.

That is the quintessential TSK – a gifted musician, but a constant seeker, a scientist ever experimenting with new ideas within the traditions of music laid down by the musical greats of the past. He was truly an all round musician. His forays into Hindustani music and the setting to tune of Jayadeva's Ashtapadi in Hindustani ragas speaks volume about his grasp of music. Though he fully recognized the contributions of musicians like M. Balamuralikrishna who began introducing the ashtapadis into the Carnatic music concert, they were usually sung in traditional Carnatic ragas. He felt that since Jayadeva hailed from Orissa, his works should be sung in Hindustani ragas (For example, Madhuvanathi, Kapi, Jokkouns). The most often heard appraisal of this music is his absolute swara jnana. Just like his guru, he was an intellectual and brought his considerable analytical skills to this interpretation of ragas. Being endowed with a great imagination, people who knew him remarked about his raga elaboration that could go on for a long time, whether it was a major or a not so major raga. And during this long exercise of raga elaboration, one hardly heard any repetitive sancharas.

Having an in-born sense of the spirit of scientific inquiry, his researches into the laya aspect of music cannot go unmentioned. He used to study the precision of the kala pramanas using a metronome [3]. He also believed in voice culturing and followed his belief, this interest being shared with his good friend Voleti Venkateswarlu. What is not recognized is that his music rose to extraordinary heights in spite of the congenital heart problem that he was living with. Early on, he had learnt to use his stomach muscles for voice production, producing unwavering shruthi [4]. There was no sign of him being held back by physical problems. One of his goals might have been to attain the speed with which his guru delivered his brigas and it is not an exaggeration to say that the disciple met this goal.

TSK's musical genius, like a river during the monsoon, gushed into heights of creativity that has given us many rare ragas (Haricharan,

Shudhsarang), including some dvi-madhyama ragas (Deepali, Suryasri, Haricharan, etc). Though there are other such ragas where each madhyama occurred, respectively, either in the arohana or the avarohana, what is unique about Kalyanaraman's creations are the sequential appearance of both the sudhamadhyama and pratimadhyama in the arohana and avarohana. That would be a real challenge to the musician.

His compositions include kritis and tillanas. His guru, it is recalled, has composed a varnam in Gawathi, as a tribute to his admiration for Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. This sisya of GNB has composed a tillana in this raga, as if to complete a circle in the same raga. In addition to his own original compositions, TSK has also set to music the works of others. These include, for example, Purandaradasa, N. S. Chidambaram, Calcutta K. S. Krishnamurthy, etc. His technical mastery of music was without parallel. This is evident in his experiments in shruthi bedham, his masterful rendering of vivadi ragas, and his facile rendering of ragas from the Hindustani system. The Hindustani ragas were given the "Ustad touch" [5]. He could whistle too. He might be one of the earliest, if not the first one, to give a full length whistle concert. It is likely that many of his contemporary musicians recognized his superiority over them and, being only human, this might not have led to easy acceptance by all of them.

His love of music was matched only by his disdain of commercialism. He did not market himself. He had no hesitation in recognizing good talent in others. He is known also for not charging his students any money for teaching music to them. There were hardly any commercial recordings available till recently. Mostly what is heard or talked about are from private collections that are circulated among his fans. Bhushany Kalyanaraman, his student and wife, and a vocalist in her own right, has established the S. Kalyanaraman Trust to keep his music alive. This trust, with Swathi Soft Solutions, has produced a video and some audio CD's that are now available commercially. TSK lived for music and there won't be one like him on our horizon for a long time.

[1] I am indebted to many individuals for giving me their time and talking to me and educating me. I have to mention the names of two individuals, especially, with whom I had the most interesting conversations. Mr. N. Nagaraja and Mr. T. S. Krishnamurthy (a coincidental TSK initials) knew Kalyanaraman at different periods in his life and I am indebted to them for their guided tour of the world of TSK's music. But the errors

the worst case scenario of having to cancel the program. After intense appeals for divine intervention and all kinds of herbal concoctions, I recovered my voice to a reasonable degree, and we launched into the final practice sessions.

Juggling the demands of Indian music, western music, and schoolwork along with satisfying the need for socializing or simply unwinding has been very difficult. But, looking back, other than finding better logistical arrangements in Chennai and perhaps cutting back a bit on extracurriculars at school, I wouldn't change a thing. The arangetram performance has sealed my experiences thus far. As I move into my college years, I have no doubt that the priorities and values I have acquired will help me along in my continued study of not just music but of life itself.

### **India Trip Experience** *By Ratipriya Suresh*

*(Ratipriya has danced in several prestigious performances under the tutelage of Smt. Ramaa Ramesh. She is the senior staff member of Nardhana Academy of Dance. Her other passions include Western Classical Violin and Carnatic Music. Ratipriya is currently pursuing her undergraduate degree in Graphic Design.)*

Prior to leaving for Chennai, I was quite anxious to perform abroad for the first time. By making this decision, I had involuntarily taken the responsibility of appeasing a seasoned audience. Thus far, most of the audiences I have performed for were discovering Bharathanatyam as a South Indian Classical art form, so their interest laid more in observation than analysis. In Chennai however, rasikas look beyond the rudimentary skills. Nritta and Abhinaya take a higher priority in their analysis. I see Bharathanatyam as a form of visual communication, where the observer, regardless of his or her knowledge of the art, is fully capable of relishing every nuance through the medium of dance.

The sheer excitement of plunging right into the life of Chennai during the December Music Season completely swallowed any hint of jetlag when we arrived. I remember perusing numerous Friday Reviews and schedules from The Hindu newspaper in the local flight just to plan on attending as many performances as possible! I had the privilege of viewing performances and lecture demonstrations of stalwarts of music and dance including those of my Grandguru, Padmashri Smt. Chitra Visweswaran. The quality and precision of each artist's rendition heightened my sensitivity to the intricacies in my own dancing. Even though I performed at several venues, the most memorable per-

took, pleased with the song selections, and amused with my improvisations. Whatever their impression of my handle on the material, I hoped that at least my passion for singing was evident not only to them but the audience at large. I really felt immersed in the beautiful compositions my guru had chosen: *Vathapi Ganapathim*, *Darini Thelusukonti*, *Shambho Mahadeva*, and *Sarojaldalanetri* to name a few. The selections for the program were changing on an hourly basis right up to concert time! My guru was trying hard to include something for all the important influences in my life: one piece composed by Swami Dayananda Saraswathi, one piece taught to me by Bala Mama, something beloved by my mother or father, and she had to balance the representation of composers and languages and ragams and talams. So by the end of it all, I was going to be singing for almost four hours without a break! I ended the concert with *Maithrim Bhajata*, my grandmother's request and something I too wanted to include for its universal appeal for world peace and harmony.

My arangetram on April 1st 2007 is an event I will continue to replay in my mind. There were a lot of obstacles I had to surpass in order to reach this juncture. It has been a long and arduous journey, requiring me to sacrifice everything, from sleep to friends to even my academic ambition to some extent. After learning music here in Philadelphia for a few years, I really felt a longing to get that experience in Chennai, the heart of Carnatic music. Serendipitously, we found a guru of the highest caliber and fortunately she agreed to take me on as her disciple. In the summers during high school, I spent extended periods of time in Chennai. I worked long hours learning the music in the sweltering heat of my teacher's apartment, living in guest houses and hotels, fighting the incessant mosquitoes, and resisting the urge to go home to my clean, air-conditioned life.

Upon returning to Philadelphia, the onus was on me to practice all the material and keep it in shape. Sometimes, I had phone classes and the time difference certainly didn't help as we sometimes held classes at 11 PM on weeknights, after which I would take care of schoolwork and have to be up early for chorus practice at school!

Even the decision to have the arangetram performance in the middle of my junior year in high school was crazy, given that it is the crucial time for college admissions planning and managing the demanding work load at school. When Suguna Mami, as I affectionately call my guru, reached Philadelphia, one week before the concert, I had lost my voice and was nursing a severe bout of flu! We were all prepared for

and omissions in this article are entirely mine.

[2] N. Pattabhi Raman, *Sruti Magazine*, #119, August, 1994.

[3] S. I. Krishnamachari, as quoted in the rasikas forum <http://rasikas.org/topic/49/tanjavur-s-kalyanaraman/>

[4] As narrated to Srini Pichumani, <http://www.carnaticcorner.com/articles/kalyanaraman.txt>

[5] Lakshmi Devnath in *The Hindu*, May 30, 2008

## Arangetram – Just Another Day of Practice

*by Shoba Narayanan – (Shoba Narayanan is the daughter of Vasantha and Narayanan. She recently graduated from Radnor High School and is now pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at The Boston Conservatory. She will be performing at Brahma Gana Sabha and Mylapore Fine Arts Club during the December 2008 Season in Chennai.)*

I had my bharatanatyam arangetram on May 17, 2008 in Radnor, Pennsylvania. It was conducted by my Guru Shoba Sharma, who is a senior disciple of the renowned Naatyacharyas, the Dhananjayans. Even though it was not my first solo performances, this milestone event held special significance because I was formally presented as a dancer by my Guru. Shoba Akka conducted the orchestra with her nattuvan-gam and I got to perform a full margam. For most students an arangetram is fairly predictable in the flow from the training to the event. In my case, there were many obstacles, too numerous to mention here, that appeared at times to be insurmountable. Overcoming the long odds made me cherish the experience all the more.

## Learning by observing

When I was four, my mother took me to observe Shoba Akka's dance class. That didn't go so well! Instead of watching the class, I sat on my mother's lap and hid my face in her jacket the whole time. Concluding that perhaps I didn't care much for bharatanatyam, my mother signed me up for ballet instead. Two years later, my mother made a second attempt and took me back to Shoba Akka's dance class. This time something clicked and I wanted to sign up. From then on, every Sunday I would go to the studio for my dance lesson. At that age, I would practice everyday, starting from "that adavu", to whatever I was currently learning in class. My mother would have me sit in aramandi and insist that I smile as I practiced. We had a few dance videos at home, such as the production of *Srinivasa Kalyanam* presented by Sri



Vempatti Chinna Sathyam, and the movie *Noopur* featuring Hemamali. Not quite seven, I used to pop the videocassette into the VCR and watch the dancers over and over again. I loved seeing dance performances, be it bharatanatyam or ballet. When I was about 9, the dance production of *Lakshmi Prabhavam* was touring the U.S.; my family hosted some of the dancers for a week when they came to Philadelphia. My eyes were glued to the dancers as they rehearsed. Learning by watching became an important and enjoyable activity for me. What I loved the most was sitting through the senior dancers' class in *Naatya*, to which I would immediately run after my *adavu* class ended. I would sit next to Shoba Akka as she taught the group. Her singing, *sollukattu*, instructions, explanation of *abhinaya* and her keen sense for detail for all aspects of bharatanatyam made me appreciate the subtleties and the effort that the art form demanded from both teacher and pupil.

### The Training

People often ask how long it took for me to get my arangetram training "done," expecting to hear "a few months to a year," but I really can't say that. I didn't like to think of my arangetram training as a couple of years during which I would learn a certain repertoire to perform in front of an audience. Instead, I focused on working towards making my own emotional connections to the pieces to enhance my *abhinaya*, and making sure all *nritta* sequences were neat, clean, and precise. Shoba Akka often used to say that I was not practicing for the sake of an arangetram: I was practicing for the sake of practice itself. To her, an arangetram was just another day of practice; a practice that was a never-ending quest for perfection. Thus, the arangetram did not define my preparation; it was



Shoba Narayanan

now; one more and then it's me. I hum a quick note to make sure I still have my voice. It's getting too warm. Darn it...I still have this sweater on...no wonder...I yank it off just in time to hear, "And now, this evening's main artiste..."

As I hear my name, I felt myself glide on to the stage. I take my place on the platform and already seated on either side of me are the accompanying artistes—Smt. Sandhya Srinath, violinist; Sri. Srinath Bala, mridangist; and Sri. Sriram Balasubramanian, who would play the ghatam. They are all family friends and artists I hold in great regard. It was a genuine pleasure to have them at my side on this critical day and I really felt protected and armored by having them around me.

Dazzling bronze icons of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi framed by a carved arch and tall brass lamps form an altar at the side of the platform. In all their regal splendor, the Gods watch the proceedings. I quietly take their blessings and feel reassured by their attendance.

Just a few feet in front of me were gods of another kind, the expert Karnatic musicians, scholars, critics and aficionados I had seen from backstage. There they sat, in their own splendor, full of musical virtuosity and artistic experience. My guru, Smt. Suguna Purushothaman, is a highly respected vocalist and scholar. Seated next to her is Sri. V. V. Sundaram, one of the founders of the Cleveland St. Thyagaraja Festival. Then there is Sri. T. R. Subramaniam, a legendary senior vocalist, who happened to be visiting at the time. Along with these formidable figures are Sri. A. S. Murali and Smt. Jayamangala, who are visiting artistes from Chennai, and many experienced music teachers and knowledgeable rasikas from the community.

I gulp and peruse the rest of the audience and am relieved to spot my school friends who are waiting to see this other side of me that they have only heard about all the times when I couldn't join them for social events because I had to 'practice' or 'have my Indian music class.' They had heard me sing countless numbers of times for jazz, acapella, or Broadway programs, but this time they would hear me sing in entirely foreign languages. Singing Sanskrit, Tamil, and Telugu compositions from memory, even with intense preparation, is no easy task for us Indian-American youth who have to assimilate all this very deliberately without having the benefit of it being a component of our cultural environment!

In the midst of singing, every once in a while, I would notice the vidwans occasionally nodding their heads, chuckling at the liberties I



has connected me to my roots and faith. It has made me proud of my heritage and who I am. I'm able to find spirituality in it and I believe I can infuse this spirituality in the audience through dancing. The discipline I learned through bharatanatyam and Shoba Akka have been applied to many other things in my life. I am deeply grateful to my guru Shoba Sharma, the Dhananjayans, the Chandrasekars, Divya Akka and every dancer who has inspired me. I want to thank my parents, brothers, and all those in the community who have supported and encouraged me throughout the years.

### **Arangetram Day** *By Shreya Adiraju*

*(Shreya is currently at Drexel University and continues to learn Carnatic Music )*

As I anxiously wait backstage, I feel my throat close up again, as if all the moisture is being sucked out. I desperately sip my ginger-honey concoction. Too late to flag for help now; in a few short minutes, I will have to take those frightening steps on stage. Once I start singing, I'm sure I'll be alright, I tell myself. Then, finally, it will be time to dive into the music, sing to my heart's content, unveil all those gems I have been polishing.

In the auditorium at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, music takes on new dimensions. The perfectly molded wooden panels cocoon the theater so tightly that a microphone is not even necessary for projecting sound. I was really elated at being able to sing at the Kimmel. If I was going to present all that I had learned and worked for so hard, I had no compunctions doing it at the most beautiful musical space in the city! The intimidation came not from the setting but the audience!

Curiously peeking through the curtains from my backstage hideout, I see familiar faces of family friends, school friends, and neighbors but also that dreaded 'maestro row' of expert musicians and critics. Visibly, their expressions reveal a mixture of eager anticipation and amusement. How does this second-generation Indian-American teenager from a Philadelphia suburb dare to take on the heavy feat of presenting a debut vocal Carnatic music recital? Their surprise is understandable. In fact, my vocal 'arangetram' would be the first of its kind, as far as I know, in the Eastern US.

Enough of deciphering expectations, I tell myself, and forcibly shift my focus to the voice of the master of ceremonies who announces, "Now, accompanying Shreya on the mridangam is ...". Getting closer

the other way around. It's taken me 13 years of dedicated learning to get to where I am, and I know there is so much more to learn.

Shoba Akka made sure that her students mastered the adavus before teaching us any dance items or allowing her students to perform anywhere. When it came to abhinaya, she would explain each story, situation or character in great detail. For Shoba Akka, what mattered more was how deeply we understood all aspects of what we learned, not how many dance items we knew. I could appreciate the value of the emphasis Shoba Akka placed on the fundamentals when I could study with ease under many great gurus/teachers who have supplemented my training, such as the Dhananjayans, Prof. C.V. and Jaya Chandrasekhar, the Trio Sisters, Unnikrishnan, Pushkala Gopal, Jayanthi Subramaniam, Mahalakshmi, Narendra and Divya Shivsundar.

I have been a student of classical ballet at The Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet for the past 14 years. My training in classical ballet technique has had an influence on my posture, lines, musicality, and the way I think of my body as a visual instrument. Even though ballet and bharatanatyam are continents apart, they share common principles, and I can use what I've learned in bharatanatyam in ballet, and vice versa. The same can also be said for the way bharatanatyam has enabled me to enrich my acting skills with expression and movement in the roles I portray in Musical Theater.

### **The year leading up to the Arangetram**

When Shoba Akka determined that she would conduct my arangetram, it was a bittersweet moment because she followed it up by saying she was moving to San Diego, California. Thankfully, we soon found that distance was not a barrier to the learning at all. We made good use of Internet technology and I flew across the country at other times for one-on-one training. Shoba Akka is a stickler for detail. She would at times just take one line of abhinaya from a piece and work with me for an hour. I found that in those one-on-one lessons with her, I could really focus on the subtleties of abhinaya. Different emotions, energies, and thoughts would emerge, and she showed me how to use those ideas as building blocks in the interpretation of a line of sahityam. She taught me how to teach myself and how to apply what I learned in one situation to another. Since I no longer had access to her locally, I had to be self-motivated to refine these aspects of abhinaya and nritta on my own.

In the Summer of 2007, I had the unique opportunity to study at

the Dhananjayans' *Bharatha Kalanjali* in Chennai, India. There, I got to take classes with the local students. It felt good to be able to keep up with the students in Chennai and not feel any less because I was a foreign student. While I was there, I also got to see the IDA festival, which gave me a glimpse of different choreographers and the big names in Bharatanatyam. I saw some very innovative choreography such as a Kuchipudi-Bharatanatyam version of *Kanchadalayadakshi*. After coming back from Chennai, I attended the Natya Adhyayana Gurukulam in Yogaville Virginia, which is taught by the Dhananjayans, and Padmarani Rasiyah-Cantu. The camp is run in Gurukulam style. We would dance all day, do yoga, theory class, Carnatic vocal music and bhajans. So while Shoba Akka was busy with the move to California, I appreciated having the opportunity to learn from her Gurus in the idyllic Yogaville environment.

Throughout the year before the arangetram, I continued performing, taking ballet classes, and practicing Bharatanatyam as much as possible. For the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, I performed in the annual production of *The Nutcracker* ballet, for which I was in the corps de ballet in the beautiful Snow variation, and was also the Arabian Princess, accompanied by her two slaves in the *Land of Sweets*. All of this work helped me build stamina and indirectly helped me with the arangetram.

This was also my senior year in high school. So along with arangetram preparation, I had to keep up my grades in school, apply to colleges and manage a hectic audition schedule for college admissions.

As my arangetram day approached and spring came along, the musicians Bama Visweswaran (Vocal), Mayuram Shankar (Mridangam), Venkata Ramana (Flute) and Mudikondon Ramesh (Veena) had arrived from India. While waiting for Shoba Akka to arrive, I made use of the time available with the musicians. Every day that week before the arangetram, I would come home from school, throw on a practice sari and get to work with them. Rehearsing with the musicians one-on-one was a great learning experience for me. Having learned Carnatic music, Bharatanatyam theory, and with Shoba Akka preparing me for how to rehearse with the musicians, I was able to get a lot accomplished. I worked with the mridangist, and went over every jathi, theermanam, and sanchari so that they all fell in place and the right parts would be accentuated. The musicians were wonderful and within only two days of rehearsing, it gelled nicely and I was ready for Shoba Akka to make final adjustments for the rest of the rehearsals.

### The Arangetram Day

The arangetram day, May 17, 2008 arrived. My Periamma, Mama and Mami who came from India took care of all the houseguests. My cousins from California, Seattle, Maryland, New York and New Jersey came all the way to Philadelphia and also helped out in many ways. All was calm when we arrived at the theater and my mother started doing my hair. Aunties who have become like family members to me were chipping in and helping in whichever way they could. Shoba Akka arrived at the theater and we had a casual conversation, as if it were merely a dress rehearsal I was getting ready for! My father did the puja and Shoba Akka handed the salangai to me. This is a moment that I will cherish forever. As I got dressed from the thala saman to the salangai, I recited a prayer. As is typical of all Shoba Akka's performances, the program started punctually at 4:30 PM. The performance began with an invocation by the musicians, during which I calmly closed my eyes and enjoyed the moment I had been waiting for all these years. The melody of Hindolam rang through my ears and I walked on stage making my first appearance. I took a deep breath knowing that the first half of my performance would be extremely demanding physically and emotionally. I danced a Ganesha Stothram choreographed by the Dhananjayans, which was immediately followed by Allaripu. After which was a Shabdham on Devi. For me, the highlight of my arangetram was the Nriyopahaaram in Atana, depicting the many stories of Krishna. It was a particularly demanding piece because I performed it with double jathis and had a lot of scope for abhinaya, lasting about 45 minutes. The applause at the end of this piece hardly registered in me because I had been so emotionally involved that I had tears in my eyes when the varnam ended.

In the second half of the arangetram, I had some time to rest physically, because it was more abhinaya-based. For the second half I began with two padams. The first was Bharathiyar's Chinnan Chiru Kiliye followed by Jayadeva's Ashtapati, Raase in Thodi. Next was Bho Shambo, composition of Swami Dayananda Saraswathi, a piece that is familiar to many. I concluded with a Thillana, which was in Natabhairavi, and paid homage to Rukmini Devi Arundale, the founder of *Kalakshetra*. Shoba Akka then gave a speech, after which my parents, and my two brothers Viraj and Sanjay spoke. The Director and Founder of my ballet school, The Pennsylvania Academy of Ballet John White delivered an inspiring and instructive speech.

Bharatanatyam has been much more than an art form to me. It