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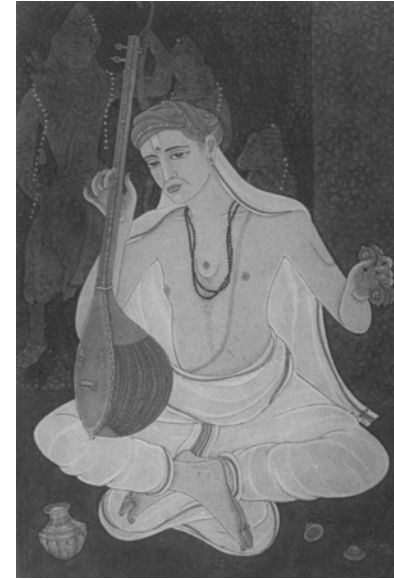
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Sruti

The India Music and Dance Society



Thyagaraja Aradhana

March 21, 2009

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ram Brothers (F), Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer (G), Pallavi Seshayyar (H), Patnam Subramanya Aiyar (I), Tillaisthanam Rama Iyengar (J), Mysore Vasudevachar Tachur Singaracharlu Brothers (K), Manambuchavadi Venkatasubba Iyer (L).

Tyagaraja's Kriti Sets By Sriranjani Srinivasan

I S S U A E Y M Z I S I G Q S V O I X N Y F N B J A Y R H L
P G Y J Y H W K A N N E N C H P I V A E P E S E R Z L Q M E
D G A R A I N T X Y O G O B U Y T Z I Y Y K E D M A B O Z F
N G W X D Q P H Q Q A G K B H P Q S X D K W M W R L B D E S
W Z Z O A W S F X V A J I T A P U R I T U U Y S U P T H I D
Z B T W R A O R B B A B I Z H M F I A Q F G Z D V J D C J H
R X X A P R L B S S M S P V Q C A R K G I G L K O M B W E N
K B H G M Y G O I P B D V M I J I A U D X H O A K B P D R G
R E U H A U S A L G R H G W T T K N D T T U J L L C V E H U
L M C J S V H D G L U B L F O M K G E H Z M O B N A W M P Z
M C J Z A O R I G U G G V I I K N A Y N A S E O K G A O P C
T I R U V O T T R I Y U R O C Z G M H R H G V M Y Z P R E H
Y Z L G A B Z T J U B Z Q F B G H F T B H N T F G Z U D S L
T B O D S K B M W R X A C Y N F V I G A A P K H T H R T A Z
K I E B T H L M D G C Y N Z T V R M N G M D G V T Z I F A W
O F R K U B L F I M N X S D I A S A C B V R A A A D Q Z B I
H K O U P E W K T A P J Q H H R X F E E C P L I B U O O E
D A E P V E A A P X Y F P C L A S X Y N O K L B H X N P H O
C S T X V A M B U J R F A F G R I W P N V K E L M A K M S I
J M P C N M I G P I R K C A Y Q S H S P P W P J W G R Z S X
J E Z S I K E Y Q C W S U Q W F Y Q B R W B D G S Z G P N J
A P R S T G D B Y O O L H Y F P K Y J E C Y O I P P E B V Z
F O A R I Q K V N A M V J Q G F L C Z V G Y W H U U F P V S
H F Y V Z J F H C P R R N V S W O C U K Z S K H Q M J U W L
N K E R T E Q C J C B U Q P B C P P R U J I T B E Z N Y L P
S P Z T G W Q V A V J F R X D V C B O C W B I Z A S E G Z U
C B Z K P Y N R L P A T N N A T Z J H U O W L Q H X R I M V
S C R A F Q C T E N K G T X K A E M J M F Q H P L C O H H I
X J T S M N X T H V H I T W R Q U I D Z Q F I C O Y X L I F
K D E P D P T V P D W U V Z V R I J K C Y F A V F N E N V Q

GHANA RAGA
KOVUR
LALGUDI
NOWKA CHARITRAM
PRAHLADA BHAKTI VIJAYAM
SRIRANGAM
TIRUPATI
TIRUVAIYYARU
TIRUVOTTRIYUR
UTSAVA SAMPRADAYA

(Sriranjani Srinivasan is a 6th Grader from Great Valley Middle School and learns Carnatic music from Mrs. Kiranavali Vidyasankar.)

mukhananda Sangeetha Sabha, was celebrated for four days from 27 February to 2 March. Nadopasana Music Dais in Mumbai celebrated a two day event Jan 31-Feb 1. On March 1 Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha organized a one-day event at Mylapore Fine Arts Club. Thyagaraja Aradhana was even celebrated for the very first time in the remote area of Tezu Arunachal Pradesh on Jan 25.

The following is a partial list of Aradhana celebrations in the U.S:

At Siva Vishnu Temple of MD the Aradhana was held on January 17 and 18.

At Jacksonville, Florida the Aradhana was held on March 7.

The 17th Annual Thyagaraja Aradhana in Austin Texas was held on March 14.

Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival commences on Thursday April 9 and ends on Sunday April 19. Please visit www.aradhana.org for the complete schedule.

At Sri Venkateswara Temple, Pittsburgh the Aradhana will be held on April 25.

The 33rd Chicago Thyagaraja Utsavam will be held during the 3-day Memorial weekend, May 25– 27.

Natyanjali

The festival of Shivaratri is marked by a number of dance festivals in the various temple towns of South India. In a way, these festivals are bringing back dance to where it once was prevalent. The practice was revived in a very small and symbolic manner at the famed Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram, a little over 25 years ago, the brainchild of a few who were passionate about Indian music and dance. The trend inspired other significant dance festivals. Today, dance performances are held in the temples at Thiruvavur and Thirunallar, Nagapattinam and Kumbakonam, Thanjavur and Pondicherry, besides Chidambaram. In addition, festivals are held in the temples of Chennai, like Sri Kapaleeswarar Temple, Mylapore.

Book Release

In 1999, 'The Oxford Illustrated Companion to South Indian Classical Music' authored by Ludwig Pesch was published by Oxford University Press. The second edition of 'The Oxford Illustrated Companion to South Indian Classical Music' by Ludwig Pesch is now out on the stands. This edition has received an excellent review in the "Hindu"

Answers to Quiz: Umayalpuram (A), Tillaisthanam (B), Walajapet (C), Walajapet (D), Venkataramana Bhagavatar (E), Umayalpu-

From the Publications Committee....

The day long celebration of Saint Thyagaraja's music by Sruti is one of many in India and the diaspora which follows the Aradhana in Thiruvaiyaru. Every year Sruti publishes a booklet to mark the event. Sri Mallikarjuna Rao's article "Thyagaraja's quest for Supreme Wisdom" explores the Vedanta content in the compositions in the composer's pursuit of Moksha. P. Swaminathan was at the 162nd Thyagaraja Aradhana celebrations held on Bahula Panchami day on January 15th at Thiruvaiyaru and provides us with an eyewitness report. In the article "Thyagaraja Then and Now" Prabhakar Chitrapu continues the quest to understand the musical personality and human persona of the composer.

The practice sessions for the group rendering of the Pancharatna Kritis and the Utsava Sampradaya Kritis encourages the coming together of the musical community. This period of preparation inculcates an enthusiasm and discipline in the participants. The day long celebration provides an opportunity to a large number of students of music to pay homage to the Saint/Composer. In addition Sruti's Aradhana day marks the beginning of the cultural season of the year. This year's featured artist is the vocalist Nisha Rajagopal, accompanied by Mysore K. Srikanth on the violin and Trivandrum V. Balaji on the mridangam.

Sincerely,

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Endaro Mahanubhavulu Andariki Vandanamulu...

By P. Swaminathan

Endaro Mahanubhavulu Andariki Vandanamulu.. - There are many great men; salutations to all of them... so goes the final composition of Thyagaraja's pancharatna krithi sung in a chorus by the assembled musicians. The music was reverberating through the air into Door Darshan for the benefit of people all over the world. It was the 162nd aradhana celebration in honor of Saint Thyagaraja. The place was Thiruvaiyaru, a small village in the district of Thanjavur in south India, where saint Thyagaraja lived and attained Samadhi in 19th century. In this final pancharatna, Thyagaraja pays his obeisance to the learned and virtuous souls at large. The song, noted for its rich mixed diction of Telugu and Sanskrit, contains beautiful swaraksharas which are adorned by numerous chitta-swaras. Even though Thyagaraja had composed several pancharatnas, the "Thyagaraja Pancharatna" rendered in Thiruvaiyaru before Thyagaraja's Samadhi stands out the best. Its uniqueness lies in the structure of the krithis, swarakshars, chitta-swaras and the scope for chorus rendering etc.



Upon his death, Thyagaraja's disciple Thillaisthanam Rama Iyengar took the responsibility of celebrating the aradhana at Subbharama Bhagavathar's residence. Rama Iyengar continued the daily pujas at the Samadhi. Thanks to the Umayalpuram brothers (Sundara Bhagavathar and Krishna Bhagavathar) a granite structure was erected replacing the old brick construction. Upon the demise of Rama Iyengar his disciples Narasimha Bhagavathar and Panchu Bhagavathar continued the celebration. For the first time in 1908, Narasimha Bhagavathar held a five-day aradhana celebration that included harikatha and music concerts. This celebration took place in Pachaiappa's

Brief history behind the aradhana celebration:*

Thyagaraja aradhana has two aspects to its celebration viz. religious activities and the more popular and interesting musical rendering. In the beginning, there were no music concerts but only the pujas for Thyagaraja's idol were performed by his grandson at the Samadhi. Upon his death, Thyagaraja's disciple Thillaisthanam Rama Iyengar took the responsibility of celebrating the aradhana at Subbharama Bhagavathar's residence. Rama Iyengar continued the daily pujas at the Samadhi. Thanks to the Umayalpuram brothers (Sundara Bhagavathar and Krishna Bhagavathar) a granite structure was erected replacing the old brick construction. Upon the demise of Rama Iyengar his disciples Narasimha Bhagavathar and Panchu Bhagavathar continued the celebration. For the first time in 1908, Narasimha Bhagavathar held a five-day aradhana celebration that included harikatha and music concerts. This celebration took place in Pachaiappa's

val in Thyagaraja's honor.

I. _____

Which third-generation disciple of Thyagaraja's was proficient in both Carnatic and Hindustani music?

J. _____

Which duo was known for their devoted knowledge of music theory and history?

K. _____

Which disciple of Thyagaraja was also his first cousin?

L. _____

WORD BANK

Tillaisthanam	Pallavi Seshayyar	Walajapet	Manambuchavadi Venkatasubba Iyer
Tachur Singaracharu Brothers	Mysore Vasudeva-char	Venkataramana Bhagavatar	Umayalpuram Brothers
Tillaisthanam Rama Iyengar	Umayalpuram	Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer	Patnam Subramanya Iyer

(See page 20 for answers)

(Veena Kanumalla is a 14 year old eighth grader at Wissahickon Middle School. She is learning vocal Carnatic music from Kiranavali Vidyasankar.)

IN THE NEWS....

Thyagaraja Aradhana in India and the Diaspora

The Thyagaraja Aradhana is celebrated in India and elsewhere. Some locations celebrate the Aradhana immediately after the Bahula Panchami day Aradhana in Thiruvaiyaru. Timing at other locations have evolved- for example, the Aradhana in Cleveland commences with the music competition on Good Friday with the Pancharatna Kriti rendering on the Saturday.

This year the aradhana in Thiruvaiyaru was celebrated on January 15. New Delhi's annual Thyagaraja Festival organized by the Sree Shan-

the way to bring out the bhava of the ragams. The practice sessions were long and strenuous, but they were worth it because there were always some sort of snacks to eat after! But along with the fun came some very hard work. We had to stay committed, meaning that we had to come to the practices regularly. The practices taught us to work together and helped us correct our mistakes. We had to make sure that we were all singing in sruti, because it was a really big group of people. I'm sure it was a big challenge for all of us. Some things I learned during the practices were: How to work as a team, how to manage my time wisely, and practicing regularly.

(Madhav Nandan is a 13 year old eighth grader at The Wyndcroft School. He is learning vocal Carnatic music from Dr. Dinakar Subramanian. He also plays piano and tabla.)

Quiz: Disciples of Tyagaraja (Sishya parampara)

By Veena Kanumalla

What are the 3 branches of Tyagaraja's disciples?

A. _____ B. _____ C. _____

Which renowned disciple of Tyagaraja documented many of his guru's kritis immediately after learning them?

D. _____

Which duo (also disciples of Tyagaraja) performed in a lecture-recital format?

E. _____

Which second-generation disciple of Tyagaraja's earned the title "Maha" or great at the age of 12?

F. _____

Which second-generation Tyagaraja's follower earned the title "Pallavi" due to his ability to render complicated Pallavis?

G. _____

Which second-generation disciple used the mudra "Venkatesa" or "Venkateswara"?

H. _____

Pupils of this Tyagaraja follower originally organized the 5-day festi-

choultry, 2 *Thirumanjana vedhi*. As is often the case in India, when the two brothers fell out, two factions were formed, known as Periya katchi (supporters of Narasimha Bhagavathar) and Chinna katchi (supporters of Panchu Bhagavathar). Upon split with his brother, Narasimha Bhagavathar celebrated the aradhana in Kumbakonam but when he died Periya katchi too resumed the celebration in Thiruvaiyaru. Chinna katchi under the leadership of Panchu Bhagavathar formed "*Thyagabrahma Vaibhava Prakasa Sabha*" and elected Pandit Lakshmanachar as the president and Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar as the vice-president. With the formation of the sabha, many widwans and widwamsinis became its members with an annual fee of Rs10. The committee members of this sabha assumed the responsibility of conducting the aradhana between 1914 through 1940. With the demise of Lakshmanachar in 1919, Chinna katchi went through some rough times with infighting among the new leaders of the Sabha involving Mayavaram Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Thanjavur Govinda Bhagavathar, Sabesa Iyer and Soolamangalam Vaidyanatha Iyer etc. However the leaders managed to patch up their petty differences and the activities of Chinna katchi continued as one group until 1925 when Bangalore Nagaratnamma appeared in the scene.



In 1925, Nagaratnamma erected the current temple for Saint Thyagaraja around the Samadhi and performed the kumbabhishhekam. She handed over the keys to the temple to Ramudu Bhagavathar, great-grandson of Thyagaraja's brother. After getting a court order from the Thiruvaiyaru Sub-Magistrate executive committee of Chinna katchi was able to perform the aradhana celebration

on the bahula-panchami day at the newly erected temple in 1925. On that day evening Palladam Sanjiva Rao gave the first concert for the aradhana. Starting in 1926, Chinna katchi's rights to perform the aradhana at the current venue were upheld by the court. In the same year, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar was elected president of Chinna katchi.

When Nagaratnamma wanted to perform during the aradhana celebration her request was turned down by both the factions, since during those days women were not allowed to perform during the aradhana.

This heralded a new party, that of Nagaratnamma in the scene. Thus there were three factions celebrating Thyagaraja's celebration in parallel until 1940. Persuaded by common sense, the music lovers of the three parties gave up their differences and united as one group to honor Saint Thyagaraja in 1940. This was also the year when common sense prevailed and women were allowed to perform during the aradhana and take part in the religious activities. In 1984, Chellam Iyer (grandson of Gopalakrishna Iyer founder member of the first Thyagabrahma Mahotsava Sabha with Chinna katchi), S. Parthasarathy and few others of the Thillaisthanam tradition, formed a Trust called "Sadguru Thyagabrahma Aradhana Kainkarya Trust Madras" that even today continues the religious part of the aradhana celebration. The musical celebration is continued by the group formed in 1940.

Thyagaraja Aradhana 2009:

THE 162nd Aradhana celebration in honor of Saint Thyagaraja was performed at the Samadhi of the saint in Thiruvaiyaru, Thanjavur district on Jan 15, 2009 with the traditional rendering of the "pancharatna krithis" by a group of musicians assembled under one roof. Even the celestial angels greeted this occasion with a heavy down pour just during the pancharatna krithi rendition. Earlier in the morning the traditional "unchavri" was performed after special pujas to the saint's bronze idol in his ancestral home. The idol was carried in a procession to the Samadhi led by the secretary A.K. Palanivel where special abhishekam was performed simultaneously while the chorus rendering of the pancharatna krithis was being performed, followed by mangala aarthi.

The chorus was rendered remarkably well by the assembled artists and the audience was kept in rapt attention. Just to mention a few prominent vocalists who participated in the chorus singing were T.V. Gopalakrishnan, Sudha Raghunathan, O.S. Arun, Neyveli Santhanagopalan, Anuradha Krishnamoorthy, Gayathri Girish and others. Prominent among the flautists were N. Ramani, Prapanjam Sitharama Rao, Prapanjam Balachandran and others. Leading violinists were V.V. Ravi, Neyveli Krishnan, Narmada and others. The singers were accompanied on the mridangam by Umayalpuram Sivaraman, Srimushnam Raja Rao and Thiruvavur Vaidyanathan. Earlier there was nadaswaram recital by Thiruppamburam Brothers, Sheik Subhani and Khalish Beevi, Chinnamanur Kasim and others.

This year's celebration was inaugurated on January 11 by the violin maestro Chandrasekaran by lighting the sacred lamp. Every day cele-

In Conclusion:

Of course, one can go on asking many more curiosity questions. How long did he take to compose a kriti typically? Did he have intermediate versions that he improved upon? Were they documented?

Indeed, we know that the famous kritis Jagadanandakaraka and Endaro Mahanubhavulu both contain multiple mudra charanams. It is reasonable to think that Thyagaraja himself added these extra charanams and made sure that there was no doubt in it, by adding his signature again!

How about the chronology of his compositions? Are the dates known when he composed each kriti? Did not his students, who took such pains to write down the lyrics and the music, write down a few numbers to capture the date?

We know that the house in which Thyagaraja lived most of his life and produced for us the ocean of musical bliss has been around – alas, up until a year or so ago, when it was demolished for a modern memorial to be built in its place! What a sad development for the admirers of Thyagaraja and his history! Are any of his personal belongings preserved? His Tambura? His Veena?

This is the end of this article, but the beginning of a search for many answers. Over the years, I have tried to collect as much authentic information as is available about Thyagaraja, and more recently, I have begun to disseminate it via the website www.thyagaraja.org. I would be grateful if you would look at it and join me in my search for more answers.

(Prabhakar Chitrapu is a frequent contributor to Sruti publications and a past-President of Sruti. His interests include music, language and philosophy.)

Practicing for the Aradhana

By Madhav Nandan

The Pancharatna Kritis are five of Sri Thyagaraja's finest compositions. They range from very upbeat natai to a relaxing varali. The varying ragams are natai, gowla, arabhi, varali, and sri. Our group of students has had the privilege of learning these wonderful kritis from Kiranavali Akka. She showed us the proper way to sing the kritis and

Thus, a careful comparison of various existent informations available about Thyagaraja is a good start to identify commonalities and contradictions. To this can be added findings of carefully conducted new research. But where is the source material for such research? To me, Thyagaraja's own songs are a rich and possibly underutilized source of information. While the lyrics carry the music and tell about Thyagaraja's devotion, interestingly, one also comes across occasional sparks of information about his way of life, personal habits, etc. And clearly such information would be authentic, as it would really be an auto-biographical account, unaltered in time! I give below a well known song whose lyrics appear to give a glimpse of how Thyagaraja working style.

Kaddanuvoriki in Raga Thodi

Pallavi

Kaddanuvoriki Kaddu Kaddani MoralaNidu

Peddala Maatalu Nedabadda Mouno ?

Anupallavi

Addampu Chekillache Muddugaaru Momu Chuda

Budhi Galginatti Ma vadda Ravademi ra

Charanam:

Niddura Niraakarinchu Mudduga Thamboora Bhatti

Shuddha maina manasuche suswaramu tho

Paddu Thappaka Bhajiyinchu Bhakta Paalanamu Seyu

Taddayashalivi Nive Thyagaraaja Sannutha!

Meaning:

For those who say "there is", will the words of the elders who plead "yes, there is", "yes, there is", become false today?

How is it that you do not come near us, who have an intention to see the sweet face with mirror-smooth cheeks?

Spurning sleep and lovingly holding the tambura,

With a clean mind and with pure notes,

Oh the One praised by Thyagaraja! You are the compassionate One

That takes care of devotees, who worship you without breaking the vow!

The kriti seems to suggest that Thyagaraja spent late hours in the night, singing and perhaps composing new songs also. He would sit with a clear mind and sing in clean notes to the strumming of his Tambura. Is that how he created the gems that we now enjoy again and again?



bration started at 8:00AM in the morning and concluded at midnight. The evening programs and primetime features were telecast by AIR and door dharshan. Large number of junior artists and children learning music participated in

the program and paid their respect to Saint Thyagaraja. Everyday two or three senior artists were featured during the primetime. Though this year's aradhana coincided with the Pongal holidays, people in large numbers attended the function from far off places including foreign countries like US, England, Middle east, Australia, Sri Lanka etc. to pay homage to the saint and receive his grace. Saint Thyagaraja commands the respect due to an emperor of the musical empire even though he led the life of a mendicant in his life time. Approximately 10000 people attended this year's function according to the estimate provided by the executive committee of the aradhana celebration.

The house where the Thyagaraja lived in *Thirumanjana veedhi* is being renovated and will be ready for public view some time next year. The venue will be used as *dhyana mandapam* where the visitors can meditate and experience the divine music of Thyagaraja. This project is undertaken with support from all musicians as Thyagaraja has touched or influenced each and every disciple of classical music.

On a personal note:

My journey to Thiruvaiyaru from Chennai was anything but fun. I had been planning to attend this year's celebration since October 2008. In spite of my planning, the train reservation for me and my wife between Chennai and Thanjavur were on waiting list and never got confirmed since that night was the day before the great Pongal festival in Tamil Nadu and all the trains were overbooked and sold out. Finally we managed to get on to a bus on the afternoon of Jan 14th and reached Thanjavur at 1:30AM on Jan 15th. Checked into a dingy hotel and got two hours of sleep before we got up at 5:00AM to get ready for the aradhana celebration. We reached the Samadhi at 7:00AM since we did not want to miss the pancharatna krithi. From the time I

entered the premises of the temple a surreal feeling came over me. I was excited to see so many musicians assembled under one roof to pay homage to the greatest musical genius. I met quite a few of my musician friends Kadri Gopalnath, Raja Rao, Sudha Raghunathan, Umayalpuram Sivaraman, N. Ramani, Neyveli Santhanagopalan just to name a few. Kadri Gopalnath and Raja Rao had kindly given us a pass to sit alongside the musicians with a requirement that I had to be dressed up in *veshti* and a towel to cover the body (no shirt). I was fortunate to get some time to converse with Umayalpuram Sivaraman who briefly described the history behind the aradhana celebration. Later I got a chance to talk to A.K. Palanivel the secretary for the aradhana celebration. Palanivel is a recognized thavil vidwan. It was remarkable to see free food served to all the attendees both in the morning as well as in the evening. I had good conversation with Decan Murthy, the treasurer of the aradhana committee who is responsible for food arrangements. He mentioned that free food (all you can eat) was served two times a day during all the five days of celebration. The dining hall where the food was served can seat about 300 people at one time. On the average about 2000 people were served food every day.

I also visited the great temple housing *Lord Panchanadhiswara* and *Goddess Dharmasamvardhini*. The temple is a spectacular building but very poorly maintained as is often the case in India. It was heart-rending to see beautiful Thanjavur style paintings on the walls inside the temple being painted over by artless crew showing marks of graffiti. The Thiruvaiyaru I had seen as a young boy with my father has not changed much. It has become more crowded with more buses and lot more dirt all over. It is very unfortunate that there are no hotels for the visitors to stay during the aradhana celebration. In spite of all this I would love to visit Thiruvaiyaru whenever I get a chance. If you ask my wife she may beg to differ with me.

* The historical account presented here is based on the reports from the Hindu news paper, other local dailies and private conversations the author had during the visit. These are for informational purpose only.

(Dr. P Swaminathan is a former president of SRUTI; he has served in the SRUTI committees in various capacities during the past 21 years since the foundation of SRUTI. He loves carnatic music and is a frequent contributor to SRUTI publications.)

happened the previous day and vented his anger thus: "You Imps! To attend a marriage uninvited and without my permission is itself a fault; to see there a dancing girl is an offense; to hear her sing a lascivious Javali is a sin; but to make bold to repeat it inside my roof and to my hearing What shall I say?". Forthwith, the imps were driven out and had to forgo their morning meal."

I would suspect many modern biographies may choose to omit such details!

I wonder if there is word similar to hagiography to describe the idolized depictions of how saintly personalities looked. Take for example, the following two pictures.



Contrasting Portraits of Thyagaraja

The one on the left is taken from the early biography by MS Ramaswami Aiyer, mentioned earlier. The picture is apparently in the Jagan Mohan Palace in Mysore. Notice how amazingly realistic the portrait is. One can clearly see the stern but calm look as well as details of several physical features.

The picture on the right hand side is one many people are probably familiar with. It is due to S. Rajam and has become almost universally used in our times. It is a beautiful picture, with ethereal and out-of-this-world transcendence. However, it lacks realism and seems like to simplified caricature of what one wants Thyagaraja to look like, as opposed what he really looked like. This is probably just one example of how society replaces truth with what it wants to see.

formation from the Then to Now. As pointed by William Jackson in his book "Thyagaraja: Life and Lyrics" (published by Oxford University Press, Madras in 1991), biographies get replaced in time by 'hagiographies' (i.e. biographies that idealize or idolize the person - especially a person who is a saint). The idea is that, while the original biographies are probably more descriptive of the real and human Thyagaraja, later works tend to dilute or delete some details and accentuate or exaggerate other aspects. These changes are typically driven by the changing view of the individual over time. The human Thyagaraja simplifies and evolves into a stereotypical vision of a typical bhaktha and saint. Let me illustrate this by quoting a rather amusing paragraph from one of the early biographies, titled "Thiagaraja: A Great Musician Saint" by MS Ramaswami Aiyar and published by Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, originally in 1927 and reprinted in 1986. It reads....

"In appearance, Thyagaraja was a tall, lean man of brown complexion. His shoulders were broad,...face stern...jaws fleshy but a little pointed at the chin...thulasimala around his neck; gopinama on his forehead; his right hand, ornamented with a golden ring in the forefinger and a pavithra in the ring finger; the white silk-lined cloth worn with careful folds between and the red silken turban with a broad unfurled tail flowing behind...."

Our musician inherited impetuosity and irritability of temper, so much so, that, in spite of his being otherwise good, he was highly disagreeable to his disciples and would at times treat them with harshness. For instance, a certain boy was, according to the custom of the day, acting as a servant to Thiagaraja in return for the music he learnt. The guru used to scold him downright for delay in the services, such as getting things ready for pooja, as well as, in repeating the songs taught and would even belabor him soundly. One day. The boy faced the guru and said to him point blank: "For my dullness in learning music, I may be cudged; but for your quickness in losing temper, you certainly deserve thrashing!"

Even his more important disciples, such as Umayalpuram Brothers, Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbaier, Walajapet Venkataramana Bhagavathar etc, had some experience of harsh treatment at the hands of their guru. One evening a few of them intruded upon a marriage party in a village near Thiruvaiyar and eagerly listened to a dancing girl's Javali, for which their guru had the greatest aversion. His pupils however liked it immensely and, on returning home, repeated it among themselves. Next morning, Thiagaraja came to know what had

Thyagaraja's Quest for Supreme Wisdom

By Ch. Mallikarjuna Rao

Aananda and Vedanta Vichara

Aananda or happiness is two fold: *vishayaananda* - the relative and temporary happiness that is based on *baahya vishayas* or external objects and the *aathmananda* or *Purushaartha Moksha* - the absolute and permanent happiness that is based on *aathma jnanam* or self-knowledge. *Vedas* offer these choices and also give the methodologies to achieve them-*Veda Poorva* viz. *samhitas* and *brahmanas* for *vishayaananda* and *Vedantha* viz. *Aaranyakaas* and *Upanishads* for *Aathmaananda* or *Purushaartha Moksha*. *Samhitas* and *brahmanas* prescribe *Karma* and *Upaasana* methods that lead to *Purushaarthas* viz. *Dharma, Artha* and *Kaama*. However, *Karma phalam* and *Upaasana phalam* have three defects- *bandhakatvam* or bondage, *athipthikaratham* or discontentment and *duhkha mishritham* or mixed with pain – pain in acquiring the *vishayas*, more pain in their preservation and most pain in their loss sooner or later. It is *Moksha* that is totally free from these defects. However, there is no short cut to *Moksha* other than *Vedanta Vichara* or engagement in *Vedanta* under a competent and traditional guru. Indeed, Saint *Thyagaraja* proclaims this idea in his *kriti* "*Guru leka yetuvanti guniki theliyagabodu*"- without *Guru-Sathguru* (a traditional *Guru* who is established in *Brahma Nishtta*), it is not possible to know and abide in *atma-jnanam*.

Vedanta in Thyagaraja Kritis

Saint Singer *Thyagaraja*, the soul of Indian culture and *Parama Bhaagavathaagresara*, followed the above method of *Vedanta Vichara* in his pursuit of *Moksha*. This great Singer-Poet, Maestro of *Bhaava, Rasa* and *Thaala* and Musical Composer nonpareil, graced the world during the period 1759 to 1847 A.D. He underwent rigorous *Vedic* and *Vedantic* study under his father and mentor *Sri Kakarla Raamabrahmam* and also traditional *Guru Swami Ramakrishnaananda*. Later he was blessed by none other than *Vara Naarada Guruswami* with the unique gift of *Svaranavam*. Thus he had *Shaastra vichara* under competent traditional *Gurus*- the basic requirement for *Moksha saadhana*.

Saint *Thyagaraja* as a *Jnana Nishttah* is revealed to us in many of his compositions. But three among them presented for the present study are outstanding in this context. Their deep understanding is invaluable

in our own *Vedanta Vichara* and *Moksha Sadhana*.

The first *Kriti* that is presented for discussion starts with the pallavi “*Jnana mosaga raada-Garuda Gamana Vaada*” in which *Thyagaraja* appeals “Oh *Garuda* Conveyed! Gift me the Supreme Wisdom. Is there any (incompatible) controversy (that is a deterrent for the fulfillment of my appeal)?” There are two aspects that are clear in this song. One, mere *Vedantic* Knowledge is of no avail. It needs to be converted to the Supreme Wisdom. Next, divine grace is a MUST for this Wisdom. Saint *Thyagaraja* condenses the entire *Vedantic* thought into a stunningly simple song.

Saint *Thyagaraja* had the prerequisite knowledge of *Vedas* but appeals to *Garuda Gamana* for *Jnanam*, the Supreme Wisdom. Such an invocation is perfectly justified. Indeed, *Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada* in his *Viveka Choodamani*-verse 3 states:

*Durlabham thrayam yevaitthath Dalvaanugraha hethukam
Manushyathvam Mumukshutham Mahaapurushssamshrayah*

“Self –Knowledge and Liberation cannot be obtained by mere meritorious *Karma* and *Upaasana*. To be born as a human being, to have utmost craving for liberation and to have a recourse in a competent and traditional guru- all these are the effects of Divine grace.

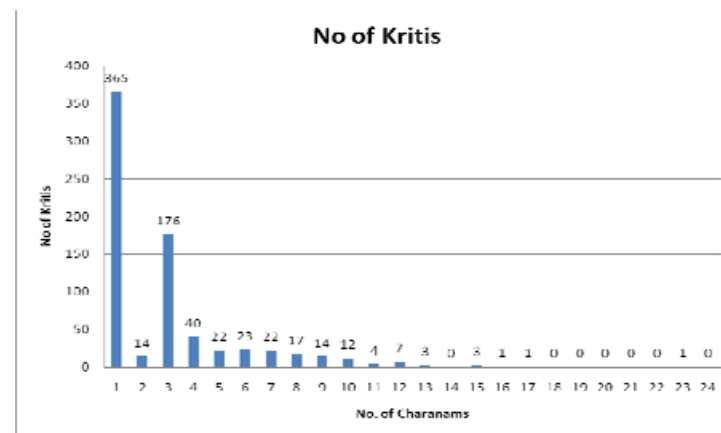
Again, in the *kriti* “*Enduku Peddalavale*”, Saint *Thyagaraja* imploringly appeals to Lord *Raama*: “Why do you not gift me the wisdom of the great realized ones? Mere knowledge of *Vedas*, *Sastras* and *Puraanas*, Music, Drama, Rhetoric and Literature (*Apara Vidya*) *Vedantaas* and *Thathvaarthas*(*Para Vidya*) is of no avail without the ultimate wisdom by which the imperishable is attained (*yaya thath Aksharam adhigamyathe*)”. This refined intellect is termed “*peddala vale buddhi*” by *Thyagaraja*- the one that is called “*agryaya, sookshmyaya buddhya*” (sharp, subtle intellect) by *Kathopanishad*.

Let us now examine how Saint *Thyagaraja* pursues his quest for the Supreme wisdom. This is clearly brought out in the next *Krithi*.

*Inthakanna Aanandamem Oh Raama! Raama! Santhajanulakella
sammathiyai undugaani
Aaduchu naadamuna paaduchu yedururaa veduchu manasuna koodi
yunduta chaalu
Shree Hari keerthanache Dehaadi indriya sa moohamulu marachi*

raja (2nd Edition) by P. Sambamoorthy and published by The Indian Music Publishing House in 1970). However, I could not find even the lyrics in any of the books I have had access to so far. There may be more such known and yet unknown (to the general public) *kritis* of *Thyagaraja*. Of course, I do not have all the books on *Thyagaraja kriti*s, especially those in languages other than Telugu and English, and it is quite possible some of my curiosities are put to rest there.

Now let us consider the musical renderings of the songs, for which the lyrics are available. Are the recordings of all these songs publicly available, for reference purposes at least? I have but 467 and I know that others have over 600 renderings. But are these renderings complete? It is well known that most musicians typically limit themselves to rendering Pallavi, Anupallavi and usually the last or the mudra charanam. We also know that at least some songs have more than one charanam. Are we missing something in omitting these additional charanams? If not, why would a great composer like *Thyagaraja* compose them in the first place? Out of curiosity, I tabulated the number of charanams for all the 726 *kritis* and plotted them in a graphical form, as shown below. It is interesting to observe that most *kritis* have either 1 or 3 charanams, whereas highest number of charanams in 23! Many of the songs with a large number of charanams are usually the bhajana type of kirtanas, which are musically simpler.



The 'Other' Thyagaraja

It is fascinating now to turn towards the body of knowledge or lack thereof about the 'Other Thyagaraja'. In addition to recognizing various holes in our knowledge of the personality and life of *Thyagaraja*, even what we know of it appears to have undergone interesting trans-

In this essay, I shall attempt to make the point that even the Musical Thyagaraja is not completely known. As for the value of trying to understand the Other Thyagaraja, it is simply the curiosity of history and science.

The 'Musical Thyagaraja'

I hope that I am wrong and that my knowledge is highly deficient, but I think that much remains to be known about our "Musical Thyagaraja". I shall try to justify my ignorance with some examples. A simple one is the number of kritis that Thyagaraja wrote. We have come across the number of 24,000 kritis, equal to the number of slokas in the Valmiki Ramayana. However, no book that I have come across or a web page that I saw has even 1,000 songs! What happened to the rest? How could his faithful disciples not have cared to document so many thousands? Or was that number only a hyperbole? My point is that this is a simple and basic fact of the Musical Thyagaraja and we do not seem to have an accurate answer.

Even among published works, there is not a complete agreement. One of the first books that I referred to was "The Spiritual Heritage of Thyagaraja", written by C. Ramanujachari & V Raghavan (published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras in 1981). This book cataloged but only 564 songs, with several well known songs missing, including the famous Nata raga kriti Jagadanandakaraka. A more comprehensive and almost monumental work is the "Compositions of Thyagaraja" written by TK Govinda Rao (published by Ganamandir Publications, India in 1995). This book contains an envious number, 688, of kritis, whereas a more recent book "The Complete Kritis of Sri Thyagaraja" by Maddali Venkata Subbayya (published by Icfai University Press in 2006) contains 716 kritis. And then there is a recent recording by Nedunuri Krishnamurthy of 8 Thyagaraja kritis, that were apparently hitherto unknown and were discovered from the Walajapet Venkataramana Bhagavathar manuscripts by two Professors from Hyderabad in 2005! After laborious comparison of all these works, the total is now 726.

But then there must be more. It is mentioned that Thyagaraja composed this kriti "Svari Vedalina Parthasarathyni ganare" in Raga Todi, when he visited the famous Parthasarathy Temple in Madras ("Sangita Jagadguru Sri Thyagaraja Kirtanalu", by Bhavaraju Narasimharao, T.S. Parthasarathy and published by Triveni Publishers, Machilipatnam in 1988, and also "Great Composers, Book II, Tyaga-

sohamainade chaalu

Nee japamula vela Nee jagamulu Neevai Raajillunayya Thyagaraanutha charitha.

In this *Krithi*, Thyagaraja asks "Is there Bliss(Supreme) that is greater than (*aparokshaanubhooti*)? Oh RamaRaama (*saguna Eswara Raama*, the embodiment of Truth and all virtues)! Oh Raama (*Nirguna Brahma Raama*- the All-supporting *Sath* and the All-enlivening *Chith* principle). It is this True Knowledge or Self-Knowledge in the form of Supreme Bliss that is known only to the enlightened *vedantins* (*santhajanulu*).

Suffice it to understand this Self-Knowledge, the *Aparoksha Jnanam*, in unison with the subtle mind- intellect through the entreating touch of music and dance. Suffice it to understand this *Soham*-Knowledge (Self-Knowledge) available in *sahaja samaadhi* when sense organs of perception and action dedicated to *Hari Keerthana* are withdrawn from the objective world. Suffice it to understand that in moments of meditation, the worlds of experience culminate in the brilliance of *Jeevaathma Paramaathma Aikya Jnanam*.

Supreme wisdom and Uttama Bhakthi

Bhagvan Ramana in his *Upadesa Sara* calls the Ultimate as *Uttama Bhakthi*. He says "The actions done by the body and mind viz. pooja, japa and meditation are serially superior to each other. To chant or sing the glories of the Lord is good. Superior to that is loud *japa*. Superior to that is soft *japa*. Superior to soft *japa* is *japa* done by the mind. Mental *japa* is the subtlest and the best. Meditation without duality (*SOHAM*) is considered superior to contemplation with duality. By the strength of the *soham* thought, firm abidance in the existence principle is gained which is free from thought modifications. This indeed is Supreme Devotion."

The term *Japamulu* applied by Thyagaraja includes the entire spectrum of physical, verbal and mental disciplines that are ingrained in all his activities. The "*Sohamaina Aanandam*" that is referred to in the kriti "*Inthakanna Aanandamemi*" is the very *Sath-bhaava-susthih or Uttama Bhakthi* presented to us by *Bhagvan Ramana* in *Upadesa Sara*.

Lord Krishna equates *Jnanee Bhaktha* to *Uthama Bhaktha* in *Bhagavad Gita* Ch.7 verses 14 and 16.

*Chaturvidha bhajanthe maam Janaasukrithinorjuna
Artho jijinaasu varthaarthee Jnanee cha Bharatharshabha//
Vudaaraassarva Yevaithe Jnaneethvaathmaiva matham
Aasthithah ssahi yukthaathmaa maamevaa nuthamaam gathim//*

“Four kinds of virtuous men worship Me, Oh *Arjuna*, the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of wealth and the wise. O best among the *Bharathaas*. Noble indeed are all these four. But the wise one, I deem as My very Self. For, steadfast in mind, he is established in Me alone as the Supreme Goal”.

Ecstasy of Self-Knowledge

Lastly, I present to you another *Krithi* that reveals his ecstasy in Self-Knowledge.

*Entha Bhagyamu Ma Paala kalgithivi, Evvareedu mujjagamulo-
thanaku
Chenthajeri sou janyudai baliki Chinta baaga thola ginchi brochitivi
Munnu nee sarneepamuna velayu sath Munula nella naNimaadi leela-
lache
Thinnagaanu paalanamu jesinattu Nannu gaachithivi Thyagara-
janutha*

“What a great fortune has come within our range of cognition! Who can rival this (*sath-chith-anaanda*) in the three worlds of experience (waking, dreaming and deep sleep) of the Body-mind-intellect complex? Moving close with compassionate expressions and removing all sorrows thoroughly, you are the doubtless protection indeed!

In the distant past, sages with siddhis such as *anima* or capacity for *sookshma darshanam*, who were close to you, were convincingly protected by you. So also you have now protected and blessed me (with the *ekathvam* of *Chith roopa Athma* and the *Sath roopa Jagath* which is the very *Ananda swaroopan* of the Self)! Oh, *Thyagaraja* praised”.

Conclusion

It is noteworthy Saint *Thyagaraja* refers to in his *Krithis*, *Raama*, interchangeably in the context of *Saguna Sakara Seetha- Raama* and also *Nirguna Nirakara Atma-Raama*. He is well aware of the scriptural message that *Saguna Eswara Upasana (Dhyanam)* is incomplete without *Nirguna Brahma Upasana (Nidhidhyasanam)*; and *Nirguna*

Brahma Nidhidhyasanam is impossible without *Saguna Eswara Dhyanam*. *Thyagaraja's Raama* signifies both and he revels in the abidance in either as per his musical mood, although he is a *Jeevan muktha* with the cognitive conviction of “*Soham*” and “*Thathavam Asi*” declared in our scriptural *mahavakyas*. All glory to Saint *Thyagaraja*. All glory to *Raama* the *Jagadanandakaraka* – The One Reality *Satchit Anandaswaroopo* whose proof is the very creation itself with its multiplicity of *namas* and *roopas*.

(Mallikarjuna Rao is a retired marketing executive living in Chennai. He was a disciple of the late Sri R.K.Venkatarama Sastri in classical Carnatic music and a disciple of H.H Swami Paramarthananda Saraswathi, Chennai in Vedanta. The article was provided by the author's niece, Dr. Gayathri Rao.)

Thyagaraja Then & Thyagaraja Now

By Prabhakar Chitrapu

The Then was not so long ago. It was 1847, just over 150 years, when *Thyagaraja* was still a live person, in flesh and blood, with all his human characteristics and scholarship. No more and no less.

Since then, however, *Thyagaraja* has grown both more and less. He grew more in fame and less in detail. His music propagated and flourished, bringing joy to multitudes and livelihood to musicians and others in related professions. The details blurred and *Thyagaraja* as a man and the totality of his works became hazy and sometimes a matter of myth.

It does not have to be so. We know of many men and women that lived centuries before, whose lives and work details are still preserved with great care and pride. As examples come to mind such names as Mozart, Beethoven, Franklin, Lincoln etc, whose lives are so well documented. Unfortunately of the pride of our music, *Thyagaraja*, we know comparatively little.

One may say, however, that *Thyagaraja* is mainly known for his music. That makes for the most important person - the "Musical *Thyagaraja*". Thanks to his devoted students and their lineages of subsequent musicians, this *Thyagaraja* is well preserved. The rest is - the "Other *Thyagaraja*". Is it so important if this *Thyagaraja* is only vaguely known? Is not such knowledge strictly secondary?