

SUNADA

Music, Therapy and More...  
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**When you're Happy you enjoy  
the *Music*, But When you're Sad,  
you Understand *The lyrics* "**

From the Editor's Desk..

At a time when lots of web magazines are in circulation, we are venturing to launch a new one, completely dedicated to Music, Therapy and More. We intend to bring to our readers world class articles related to Music, Music Therapy and many other connected subjects. We are sending the inaugural edition of this new venture and hope and trust that readers will not only welcome it as a pioneering effort but also enjoy reading it.

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MUSIC THERAPY USING INDIAN  
MUSIC

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Music is a universal expression. It is also a well known fact that the musical notes are also universal be it western or Eastern Music. Indian Music is well known all over the world for the last seven to eight centuries. The reason for this is that India held a lot of interest to all the foreign travelers or centuries on. This has exposed them to Indian music although they may not have understood the nuances in great detail. What appeals to the ears does not know any barriers and in the case of music,

it knows no boundaries. It may be of interest to all of you to know that the musical notes that are used in western classical music – “Do Re Mi Fa So La Ti” are the equivalents of the “Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni” of Bilaval/Shankarabharanam in Indian Music. Music has that kind of immense capacity to unite the entire world.

Coming to Indian Music, ever since its birth in the Vedic period in the Sama Veda, it has evolved and reinvented itself again and again. Indian Music was divided for the first time when the Mughal invasion happened and experienced for the first time, influence of Arabic Music. Thus a new kind of Indian music was born into the Northern India which came to be called as Hindustani Music. The Southern part of India has not been greatly influenced by any of the invasion in terms of cultural changes. For a long time till the

emergence of Bhatkhande, we had the same set of 72 Melakarta Ragas or Schemes of complete Ragas which had all the seven notes. Bhatkhande, shortened these into 10 “Thaats” or Schemes. Another major difference between the South and North Indian Music is the presence of “Gamakas” or Half Notes/ Spikes in the South Indian Music which has come to be known as “Carnatic Music”. In spite of these differences, today’s film music has played a very important role in bridging the gap between these two schools of music. And today, we have great Indian Film Music, with composers like A.R. Rehman of international repute.

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## THYAGARAJA- THE SONG BARD OF SOUTH INDIA

**BY Surmani K.S. Vasantha  
Lakshmi**

For centuries South Indians traveled to Banaras to study Vedas, Sanskrit, arts and music. By the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, however, the great universities of the North were destroyed by the Muslim invaders and many ancient classics on music and other arts and their traditions were lost forever. The Hindu singers of North India, who till then used to sing in the temples, imbibed the Muslim and Arab culture and became court singers. For example, the interpretations of the Ragas and music varied from person to person and court to court which in turn gave birth to different forms of rendering now popularly referred to as

Gharanas, e.g., Banaras, Lucknow, Dharwad, Patiala etc. such influence spread slowly but steadily to South up to Bijapur and Golkonda. Although one may say that this practice of Gharanas was absent in Carnatic Music as we knew till now, recently, some musicians have begun to introduce the new practice of Gharanas in Bani or style. The recent example is that of Tanjavur Bani. It is not yet clear what this actually implies. The tradition of pure classical music remained deep in South, and was actively revived during the reign of Shri Krishna Devaraya. The foundation for the renaissance of the music that is now called "Karnataka Music" was laid by the greatest saint poet Purandara Dasa, aptly referred to as the "Karnataka Sangeetha Pitamaha". He did a lot of pioneering work and presented us with an excellent repertoire of a prescribed

system of graded Preliminary Exercises, the Tala Prakaranas (types of keeping time) and compositions.

The period of between 1750 - 1850 may be called the golden era for music world wide. Beethoven and Mozart captured the beauty of nature in their symphonies. Around the same time in India, were born the great Trio – Thyagaraja, Muthuswamy Dikshitar and Shyamashastri, appropriately called the "Trinity". These three had composed thousands of kritis known for their versatility, devotion, beauty, melody and poetry.

Thyagaraja is undoubtedly the greatest of them all, credited with over twenty four thousand original compositions and three operas, Pahlada Bhakta Vijayam, Nauka Charitram and Janaki Parinayam. It is a pity that only 800 or so of the above compositions are now available.

Born in the present day Rayalaseema area of Andhra Pradesh, into a Telugu Murikinati Brahmin family, he studied the Vedas, Sanskrit and Mathematics thoroughly. He was also a great mathematician. Even though his family hailed from Andhra, his ancestors settled in Tamilnadu and thus, Thyagaraja continued to live there. Yet his mastery over Telugu language was such that his compositions captured in simple musical Telugu poetry, a wide range of human emotions and situations yet to be unsurpassed in the history of music. His use of simple spoken Telugu reminds one of Wordsworth's poetry with its simple rustic muse. It is this simplicity of expression that makes every singer and listener strike an emotional chord with his compositions alike. For instance, the passages in the famous compositions "Nagumomu" in Raga "Abheri"

says "Jagameley paramatma evaritho moralidudu", meaning "Oh lord who rules this universe, where else can I appeal" and "Manasa etulorthuney" meaning "How do I console my heart" in Raga Malayamarutham when he condoles the death of his dear wife.

The specialty of his compositions is that even if rendered by a novice with a mere Alapana sans Tala and Sahityam (Time and Words), bring out the salient features of the Ragas in which they are composed. He always chose the appropriate ragas to suit the emotion of the composition. They could not have been sung in any other Raga.

Thyagaraja is perhaps the first playwright and Opera writer in Telugu literature. His Opera "Prahlada Bhakta Vijayam" has 45 kritis. It is dedicated to Lord Rama. He starts the opera after invoking the blessings of his

guru, great devotees and saints and his Ishtadevatas or favourite dieties. Devotion, philosophy are transported to a metaphysical plane in these compositions. The opera starts with the Demon King Hiranyakkashyapa torturing his son Prahlada. The dialogue between Prahlada and Sagara is a delightful one. The arrival of Sage Narada, Prahlada's desperation and the subsequent deliverance from the torture and the Darshana of Lord Madhava are the highlights of this opera. Some of the memorable Kritis from this opera are "Sri Ganapathini, Vasudevayani, Vinatasuta, Rara maa intidaaka, Nannu Vidachi Kadalakura, Naradamuni vedaley, Challarey, Ramachandruripai, Ennaga manasukurani" and finally the most famous Mangalam "Nee Nama Rupamulaku". This Song is almost always is the last item in any concert.

Thyagaraja's other opera "Nauka Charitram" is a romantic description of Gopika Bhakti or Rasa Leela. This type of devotion is also known as Madhura Bhakti. This opera has 21 kritis. Here, Thyagaraja imagines himself to be a Gopika or a milk maid in love with Lord Krishna. The compositions are full of Shringara Rasa or Romance. The opera starts with an invocation to Lord Ganesha, Saraswathi, Shree Rama and Saint Narada. The compositions are full of magnificent imagery. Krishan and the Gopikas are out on a pleasure trip on a bejeweled ship in the river Yamuna. To test the devotion of the Gopikas, Lord Krishna creates a storm in the river. The boat is almost about sink. The Gopikas pray and surrender themselves to the Lord's protection unconditionally. Lord Krishna then sets every thing alright and takes the girls into his

umbrage. The celestial beings watch this wonderful sight and shower golden flowers on the Lord. Not many of compositions of this opera are known. A few are however, sung here and there. "Odanu Jaripey", "Gandhamu Puyyaruga", "Chalu chalu nee yuktulu" and "Shringarinchukoni" are some of the very popular ones. I understand that AIR Vijayawada has made a programme on this with none other than Padma Vibhushan Balamurali Krishna and Late Padmashri Gopalaratnam, way back in the sixties. I am not sure about this.

The third opera "Janaki Parinayam or Seetha Rama Vijayam" had not become as popular as the other two. The story of this is taken from Utthara Ramayana. The only composition that is perhaps of the best known kriti of Thyagaraja happens to be from

this opera, i.e., "Maa Janaki" in raga Kambhoji.

In all the three operas the first and last compositions are written in the same raga. There is an extensive use of Padyams (poems) in Dwipada (Couplet) and other forms of poetry like Kandanam, Seesam, Choornika, Utpalamala, Champakamala and Shardoola which have different grammatical formats. Some folk songs have also found a permanent pride of place in these operas.

Every word Thyagaraja wrote seems to come from the very core of his heart and is charged with emotion and feelings and has an instant appeal. It is a matter of pride that he is an Andhraite and that he wrote in Telugu, despite the fact that he lived in Tamilnadu. His lyrics and music are regarded as "Drakshapakam" meaning like grapes and have no doubt contributed to Telugu being

regarded as the “Italian of the East” because of the suitability of this language to music.

**Articles related to Music and Music Therapy, not exceeding 500 words may be sent to:singvasantha@gmail.com. No remuneration will be paid.**

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