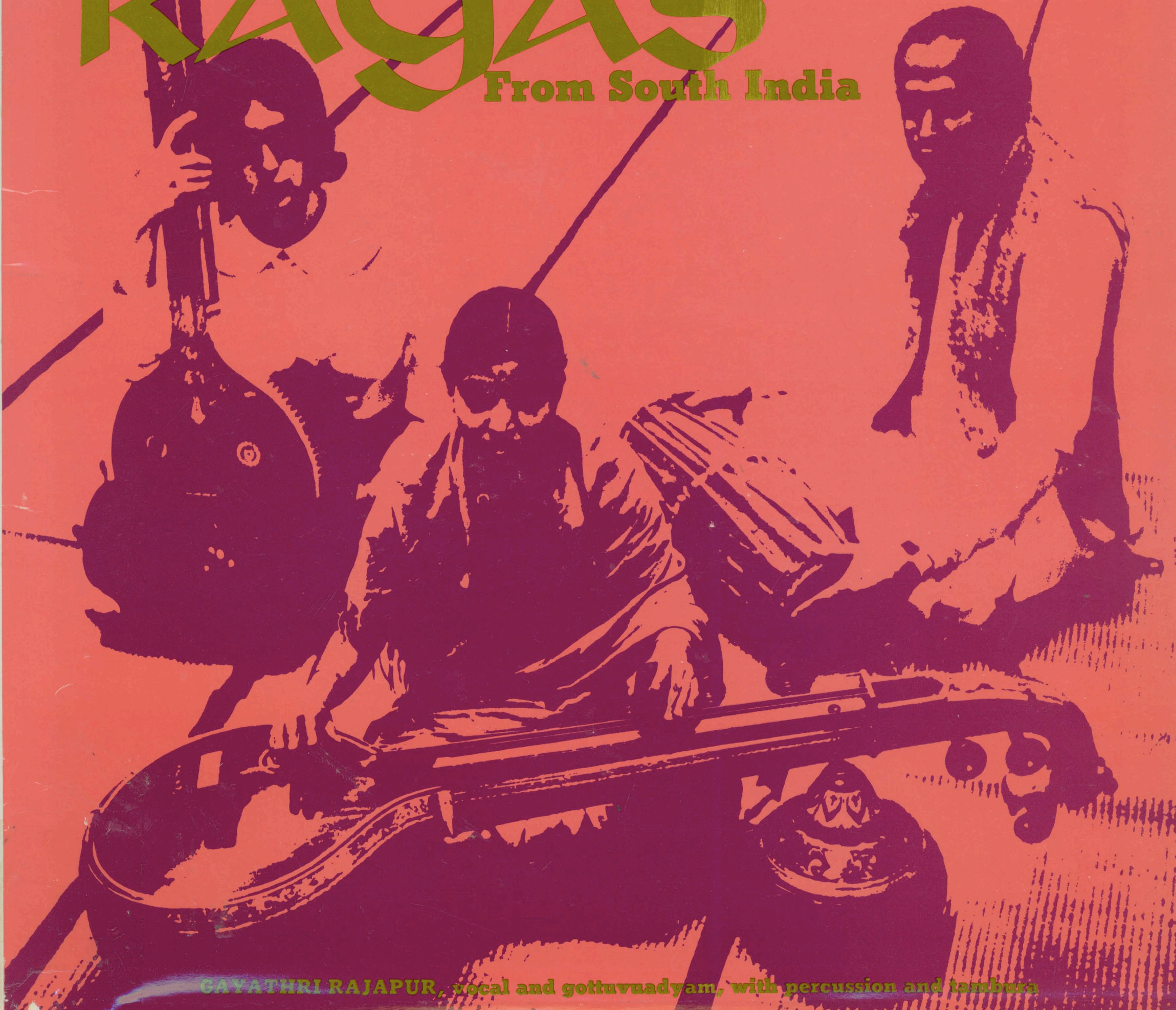


Vocal and Instrumental

RAGAS

From South India



GAYATHRI RAJAPUR, vocal and gottuvadyam, with percussion and tambura

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Side I Vocals (Adi Tala)

Band 1 — VARNA: SHANKARABURANA 5:55
 Band 2 — KRUTI: BHAIRAVI RAGA 15:20

Side II

Band 1 — KRUTI: HATHA RAGA 11:30
 Band 2 — RAGA MALICA WITH TILANA 15:45
 (All are in Adi Tala)

The Music

The music of India has its roots in pre-Christian centuries of Aryan civilization and, thus, in the Hindu religion. With the advent of the Moslems, and their occupation of North India in the 12th and 13th centuries A.D., the Aryan musical system branched into the Northern and Southern systems in existence today. In the North, the Muslim courts encouraged and subsidized virtuosity. The secular aspects of **raga** and **tala** — the sensuous, evocative elements — were emphasized. The religious aspect of music became less pronounced. In the South, the musical system remained basically an element of the larger system of worship; the music retained and retains today the religious songs as its base. It thus remained more readily accessible to society at large than the relatively esoteric style of the North.

Likewise peculiar to the South is the existence and perpetuation of composed music by master musicians of the past and present. These compositions are often simply highly skillful improvisations of the masters, laboriously memorized by their pupils, and thus passed on through generations. In the hands of skilled musicians these "classitized" improvisations become themselves subject to intricate improvisation.

Classical music of South India, while primarily derived from song, is, like its Northern counterpart, an improvised music; the performer is acclaimed not for interpretation but for creativity. A performance may include many pieces, made up of combinations of traditional song, set compositions, and improvisation. Generally, each piece is called by the name of the composition or song included in it.

The basis for improvisation is the **raga** — the collection of pitches which the performer may use in a piece. Like the Western scale, the **raga** is made up of seven steps, with "do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do" corresponding to "sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, da, ni, sa." However, where the Western scales are limited to one major and a few minor forms, the South Indian **raga** system admits of 72 basic scales and more than 500 derived forms. The **raga** also differs from the scale in that it involves certain melodic patterns that do not always follow the simple ascending-descending order (see for example the **Devagandari** **raga** in the **raga malica** below). Finally, each **raga** has particular pitches of primary and secondary melodic importance, as well as specific variety and placement of ornamentation. All of these elements combine to make the **raga** characteristic of the emotion it seeks to establish.

Each section of an Indian composition has a particular function. Among these possible sections are: **alapana**, a slow arhythmic presentation of the **raga**; **tana**, a free — but rhythmic — **raga** presentation; **kruti** and **varna**, large composition forms; **pallavi-anapallavi-charna**, generally a large precomposed piece; and **raga malica**, or "garland of ragas," a sort of **alapana** wherein the performer subtly shifts from one **raga** to another.

The rhythmic system of South Indian music revolves around a repeated sequence of stressed and unstressed beats. Superficially, **Adi tala**, the **tala** or "rhythm cycle" used in these recordings, resembles a two- or four-measure phrase in 4/4 time. How-

ever, the pattern of stresses is: a single predominant beat, three silent beats, strong-weak, strong-weak, i.e.:

X — — — / X o X o

South Indian audiences "keep tala" with the musicians by clapping on strong beats and waving on weak ones. While this might be disconcerting to a Western performer, the Indian musician welcomes this practice, for it not only establishes a metric rapport between himself and the audience, but allows him more freedom for improvisation, since the audience has assumed the responsibility for counting time.

The Musicians

Gayathri Rajapur began study of voice with Musuri Shubhramanyi Iyer at the age of 13. At 16 she entered the Central College of Karnatic Music (University of Madras) where she studied **gottuvuadyam** with Guru Krishnamurti Shastri. Now 25, she is a recognized artist in the tradition of the South. As a teacher, she has written a basic music text in Kannada, the language of Mysore, taught at Karnatic College in Dharwar, and is now a staff specialist in residence at the Institute of Ethnomusicology at UCLA.

Harihar Rao, mridungam, is a student of North Indian music at the Institute, where he studies **tabla** and other Northern drums.

Dorothy Moskowitz, tambura, is a pupil of Miss Rajapur.

The Instruments

Gottuvuadyam is, with the **vina**, the traditional plucked-string instrument of the South. While similar to the **vina** in construction and tone quality, it is played in a manner similar to the Hawaiian guitar, i.e., with a wooden bar. While this technique allows nearly all the ornamentation possible with the voice, it somewhat inhibits speed. For this reason, and because of the great difficulty of technique necessary, the **gottuvuadyam** is today a rare instrument; there are probably fewer than 15 players in all of India.

Mridungam is the classical drum of the South, from which the Northern **tabla** is said to have evolved. It is two headed: the right-hand head is actually three layers of drumskin cut away to reveal concentric rings, while the left and larger head is tuned with a piece of moist dough placed in the center before playing.

Tambura is the drone-stringed instrument in both North and South. The "buzz" associated with its sound is caused by the insertion of strands of silk thread between the strings and bridge.

Notes by Joseph Byrd

Gayathri Rajapur, Gottuvuadyam
 Harihar Rao, Percussion
 Dorothy Moskowitz, Tambura
 Recorded by Joseph Byrd

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