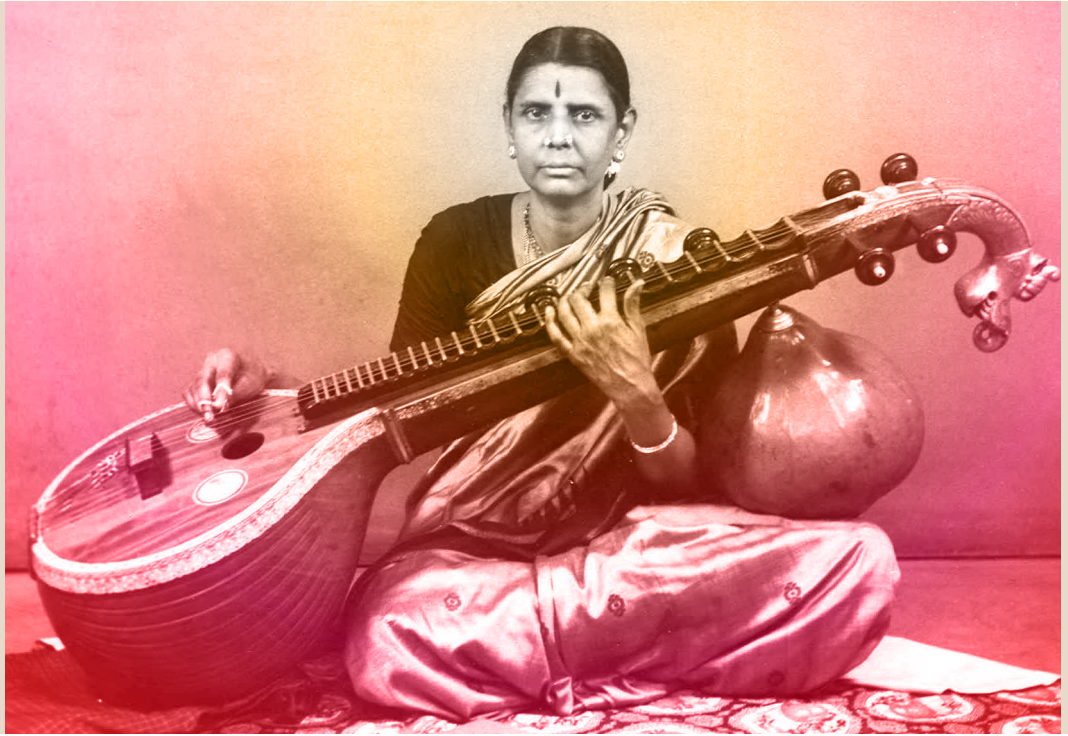# SOUTH INDIA

Ranganayaki Rajagopalan: Continuity in the Karaikudi *Vīṇā* Style

Vīṇā player Ranganayaki Rajagopalan (b. 1932) is a much-honored master of a South Indian classical (Karnatak/Carnatic) instrumental style named after the town of Karaikudi in Tamil Nadu, South India. She apprenticed from early childhood with Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer, a prominent member of a long lineage of court musicians. For this 2-disc set, she is brilliantly accompanied by the eminent *mṛidangam* (double-headed barrel drum) player Srimushnam Raja Rao. This album includes a complete concert cycle of *rāgam* and *tānam* expositions and compositions by much-beloved composers Tyāgarāja, Muthuswamy Dikshitar, and others. The subtleties and complexities are illuminated by extensive explanatory notes by Richard K. Wolf. 2 discs, 2 hours 17 minutes, 24 pages of notes.

This album is a previously-unpublished volume of the UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music which was transferred to Smithsonian to keep the series publicly available.

Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer (left) performing with Rananayaki Rajagopalan (far right) at the Music Academy of Madras in 1952. This was the year in which the Music Academy conferred the prestigious title of Sangita Kalanidhi on Sambasiva Iyer.

Disc 1

1. Rāga: Gauḷa / ālāpana 0:56

2. Kriti: "**Śri Mahāgaṇapati**" / pallavi 1:15

3. Kriti: "Śri Mahāgaṇapati" / anupallavi 0:55

4. Kriti: "Śri Mahāgaṇapati" / madhyamakāla sāhitya (1) 0:29

5. Kriti: "Śri Mahāgaṇapati" / colkaṭṭu svara 1:39

6. Kriti: "Śri Mahāgaṇapati" / caraṇam 1:24

7. Kriti: "Śri Mahāgaṇapati" / svara kalpana 1:10

8. Kriti: "Śri Mahāgaṇapati" / svara kalpana, second speed 3:10

9. Kriti: "Śri Mahāgaṇapati" / madhyamakāla sāhitya (2) 0:27

10. Kriti: "Śri Mahāgaṇapati" / colkaṭṭu svara, third speed 0:51

11. Rāga: Valaji / ālāpana 5:16

12. Kriti: "**Jālandhara**" / pallavi 1:13

13. Kriti: "Jālandhara" / anupallavi 1:32

14. Kriti: "Jālandhara" / caraṇam 1:55

15. Kriti: "Jālandhara" / svara kalpana 5:52

16. Rāga: Pūrvikalyāṇi / ālāpana 8:07

17. Kriti: "**Mīnākṣi Me Mudam**" / pallavi 1:46

18. Kriti: "Mīnākṣi Me Mudam" / anupallavi 1:41

19. Kriti: "Mīnākṣi Me Mudam" / madhyamakāla sāhitya (1) 1:16

20. Kriti: "Mīnākṣi Me Mudam" / caraṇam 2:02

21. Kriti: "Mīnākṣi Me Mudam" / madhyamakāla sāhitya (2) 1:56

22. Kriti: "Mīnākṣi Me Mudam" / niraval 4:58

23. Kriti: "Mīnākṣi Me Mudam" / svara kalpana 6:44

24. Rāga: Bēgaḍa / ālāpana 4:35

25. Kriti: "**Nādōpāsana**" / pallavi 2:47

26. Kriti: "Nādōpāsana" / anupallavi 2:38

27. Kriti: "Nādōpāsana" / caraṇam 3:29

Disc 2

1. Rāga: Hamsavinōdhini / ālāpana 0:35

2. Kriti: "**Caraṇam Bhava**" / pallavi 1:15

3. Kriti: "Caraṇam Bhava" / anupallavi 1:43

4. Kriti: "Caraṇam Bhava" / caraṇam 2:15

5. Kriti: "Caraṇam Bhava" / svara kalpana 2 :31

6. Rāga: Kharaharapriya / ālāpana 7:49

7. Rāga: Kharaharapriya / rāgamālika tānam 4:59

8. Rāga: Nāṭā / tānam 3:04

9. Rāga: Gauḷa / tānam 2:14

10. Rāga: Ārabhi / tānam 2:14

11. Rāga: Varāḷi / tānam 1:53

12. Rāga: Śrī / tānam 3:14

13. Rāga: Kharaharapriya / tānam 1:05

14. Kriti: "**Ĉakkanirāja**" / pallavi 6:05

15. Kriti: "Ĉakkanirāja" / anupallavi 3:26

16. Kriti: "Ĉakkanirāja" / caraṇam 3:52

17. Kriti: "Ĉakkanirāja" / niraval 4:25

18. Kriti: "Ĉakkanirāja" / svara kalpana 5:08

19. Kriti: "Ĉakkanirāja" / tani āvartana (drum solo) 5:07

20. Bhajan: "Krīḍata Madhubana" 3:18

21. Mangaḷam: "Pavamāna" 1:03

South India

Ranganayaki Rajagopalan: Continuity in the Karaikudi *Vīṇā* Style

Richard Kent Wolf

Śrīmatī (Smt.) Ranganayaki Rajagopalan, recipient of the Government of India's prestigious *Sangeet Natak Award*, is one of India's finest exponents of Karnatak, or South Indian classical, music. She illumines this recording with an exemplary performance in the Karaikudi style of *vīṇā* playing. In addition to showcasing Smt. Ranganayaki's outstanding musicality, these recordings aim to present a small body of substantial *rāga*s and compositions, and to render this body of music accessible to those not already familiar with the technical specifics of Indian music. To preserve a live concert atmosphere—in character, in balance, and in repertoire—Smt. Ranganayaki and the producers of this studio recording have chosen to limit editing to an absolute minimum.

Ranganayaki Rajagopalan, 1999

Ranganayaki Rajagopalan

Smt. Ranganayaki was born in 1932, daughter of an employee of the Chettinad Palace in Madras. A mischievous child, she was sent off to live with a childless uncle in the south Indian town of Karaikudi—this is not the cruel banishment it may appear: sharing offspring with siblings is commonplace in India. Fortuitous it was, for her uncle lived next door to the renowned *vīṇā* exponent Sambasiva Iyer. Although Iyer was noted for his brusque and strict personality, he came to delight in toddler Ranganayaki, who demonstrated the ability to reproduce the pitches of his singing when she was only two years old. (For more information on Ranganayaki Rajagopalan, see Wolf 1991).

Sambasiva Iyer (1888–1958) and his older brother Subbarama Iyer (1875–1936), the "Karaikudi brothers," were illustrious *vīṇā* players of the period, the seventh generation in a lineage of Tamil *vīṇā* players patronized by the rulers (*Rājā*s) of Sivaganga and Pudukottai. Sambasiva Iyer produced no surviving offspring and, in part due to his exacting standards, few disciples. Smt. Ranganayaki, his seniormost disciple, and Iyer's grand niece, Smt. Rajeswari Padmanabhan (1939–2008), are the two performers who benefited from the most significant period of training with him.

Sambasiva Iyer maintained a "no nonsense" approach to music, typical of the conservative musicians of his time. Impatient with musical discussions, he believed the practical execution of music contained its own rules and standards. He emphasized preliminary exercises, which were uniquely refined in the Karaikudi school: elaborate ornaments and additional rhythmic components served as models for technique and improvisation at an advanced level. Sambasiva Iyer is credited with the composition of a number of melodic/rhythmic interludes, called *ciṭṭasvara*s, and with several innovations on the instrument, both of which are firmly embedded in the practice of music in contemporary South India. Among the changes in the instrument were the introduction of a sound hole underneath the main playing strings and the use of wound strings for the bass, or *madhyama sthāyi*. It is said that he used gold and silver to wind the strings.

Young Ranganayaki sits next to Iyer's home-made string-winding machine, circa 1940. Photographer unknown.

Both these innovations supported the unique style which has come to be known as the "Karaikudi style." Because the brothers performed in an age in which microphones were not yet common, they needed to project the sound of their instruments using natural acoustic means. Sambasiva Iyer, in particular, appears to have refined the performance of *gamaka*s (integral ornaments) on the *vīṇā*, using a combination of on-the-fret plucks, hammer-ons, pull-offs, and string deflections, such that every detail was balanced and clearly audible. Such clarity and balance he then extended to every level of performance, *prayōga* (musical phrases), *sangati* (successive elaborations of a line of text), composition, and improvisation. The use of wound strings added volume and clarity to the lower range, and the hole in the *vīṇā* provided minor amplification overall.

More than any other contemporary *vīṇā* player, Smt. Ranganayaki is said to play in a manner that recalls the style of her illustrious guru. After Iyer's death in 1958, Smt. Ranganayaki continued to grow as an artist by learning new compositions from other musicians, listening to concerts and recordings, and through a combination of these means and the use of published notations. The documentation for each piece below includes an item entitled "source" which provides information as to how a particular piece was transmitted to Smt. Ranganayaki. In general, the compositions transmitted to her directly by Sambasiva Iyer are preserved both in their structure of ornaments and sequential variations; she has gradually molded and worked with pieces learned from other sources to conform to her style.

Srimushnam V. Raja Rao, 1999

Srimushnam V. Raja Rao

Sri Raja Rao is one of India's finest performers on the double-headed barrel drum, *mṛidangam*. Born in 1955, the fourth in a lineage of classical drummers, Sri Raja Rao began performing at the age of seven. Since then, he has performed with India's top Karnatak musicians, earned numerous awards, and toured extensively around the world.

Fluency in Karnatak music requires knowledge of the system as a whole, not just of one instrument or technique. Raja Rao is also an accomplished vocalist and *kanjīra* (small frame drum) player. An effective teacher, Raja Rao is dedicated to the techniques of the past: in an age when many teachers offer instruction in music schools and in hour-long lessons once or more per week, Raja Rao teaches only a few students at a time, inviting them to live in his house in the traditional method of *gurukulavāsa*. These students have assisted in the day-to-day running of the household.

Performing with a *vīṇā* player is a challenge for *mṛidangam* players; they must tease out the rhythmic subtleties of the music without overpowering the instrument. Sri Raja Rao, who has been performing with Smt. Ranganayaki from a young age, is a master *vīṇā* accompanist.

The Music: Karnatak Music

The classical or "Karnatak" music of South India shares its two basic approaches to musical organization with Hindustani music of North India: a system of melodic types called *rāga*, and a system of metrical frameworks for articulating rhythm called *tāla*. (For a good introduction to Karnatak music, see Reck 2009 and Viswanathan and Allen 2004. For a glossary of frequently used musical terms, see the end of this essay.) *Rāga*s are made up of individual scale degrees, called *svara*s, grouped into phrases (*prayōga*) characteristic of the *rāga*. *Svara*s are positions, or *svarasthāna*s, in a scale combined with contextually delimited shakes, bends and slides between notes; although usually called "ornaments" in English, these musical gestures, or *gamaka*s, are more than mere embellishments of a fundamental melody: they constitute the very fabric of Indian music. There are seven *svara*s, whose names are abbreviated as *sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni.* Other than *sa*, the drone tonic for virtually all *rāga*s, and *pa,* the fifth, which are fixed, each *svara* can be located at one of several possible *svarasthāna*s. Taking *sa* as "C" (in this recording, Smt. Ranganayaki tunes her *vīṇā* to E♭), the range of *svarasthāna*s for the remaining *svara*s are shown in Figure 1. Some of these values are rather theoretical in *rāga*s that require extensive *gamaka*s.

Figure 1: The range of possible svara positions taking C as drone tonic

sa   ri   ga   ma   pa   dha   ni

A South Indian *tāla* is a distinct pattern of structural counts. In a concert one may observe experienced listeners articulate the *tāla* by gently clapping or waving one hand, and counting on the fingers. Singers, like listeners, show the *tāla* by rhythmic motions of the hand, while *vīṇā* players do so by using the small finger of the right hand to stroke a set of three side strings, called *tāḷam tanti*. Melodies and drum rhythms may articulate the *tāla* explicitly or create rhythmic tension by cutting across the structure of the *tāla*, later joining on an important count, usually the first attack point of the composition, i.e. the beginning of the first line of text. In South Indian music the attack point of the composition, called the *eḍuppu* (from the Tamil verb *eṭu-* "take up"), is not always the same as the first count of the *tāla*, which is called the *samam.* The name for one cycle of the *tāla* is *āvartana*, literally "turning around" or "revolving."

In the technical descriptions below, the placement of *svara*s within the framework of the *tāla* is represented by the *svara* abbreviations, *sa, ri, ga,* etc., and a series of dots, representing subdivisions of the count. Thus, eight-count *ādi tāla* would be represented as //1̲ . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . / 5̲ . . . 6 . . . / 7̲ . . . 8 . . . //, with each number representing a count, each underscore representing a hand-clap, and in this case, each dot representing a subdivision (the number of subdivisions depends on the tempo of the piece). *Ādi tāla* is shown with the hand by a clap and three finger counts (counts 1̲ 2 3 4) and two sets of one clap and one "wave" (counts 5̲ - 6 and 7̲ - 8). For longer *tāla*s such as *ādi* when rendered in a slow tempo, one line of text will correspond with one cycle (*āvartana*) of the *tāla*. For shorter *tāla*s such as *miśra cāpu* (1 2 3 4̲ 5 6̲ 7), a line of text may span several *āvartana*s.

The complex and demanding systems of *rāga* and *tāla* are important not only for their regulatory

roles, but also for their symbolic roles in modeling the orderliness of the cosmos. In one famous story, the misrendering of *rāga*s on earth led to the maiming and disfigurement of the celestial musicians, the *gandharva*s. In a conservative South Indian household, such as that in which Ranganayaki Rajagopalan studied, a musical error is regarded as something of a moral flaw; growing up in an age of such conservatism, a student could be beaten for minor technical errors in playing.

Karnatak music repertoire is vocal; unlike the instrumental tradition of Hindustani music in North India, there are no compositions in Karnatak music that are specifically intended for melodic instruments, although each instrument lends a unique idiomatic style to the rendering of a *rāga*. Karnatak compositions are songs; spirituality pervades the lyrics of these songs, most of which propitiate Hindu gods. Musical literacy entails understanding the lyrics as well as the placement and groupings of syllables; the musical quality of text is so important that connoisseurs criticize instrumentalists who do not properly articulate the phrases of the text using the techniques available on their instruments, plucking at all consonant attacks. Most Karnatak musical lyrics are in Telugu and Sanskrit, and the literal understanding of their meaning varies among listeners according to their regional vernaculars—Tamil speakers will have only a general understanding of Telugu texts and vice versa.

The extra-musical associations of Karnatak music are not exclusively religious; a few *rāga*s may be connected with particular times of the day, others with distinctive moods, and even supernatural powers. Since the prevailing mood of a *rāga* should match its performance context, performers avoid performing a sad *rāga* such as *mukhāri* during a wedding. Students learn customary musical behavior through sometimes humorous anecdotes, "don't perform *rāga* X before breakfast, or you may not be able to obtain food for the entire day." They also learn that the correct performance of a *rāga* may create a potential for extra-musical power, such as the bringing of rain. Few people actually regard musical performance as crudely efficacious or magical; still the idea that *rāga*s point beyond themselves to the physical and spiritual worlds is firmly entrenched in South Indian musical culture.

The fact that Karnatak music boasts rich and imaginative cultural associations should not lead us to conclude that musical performances generate an aura of mysteriousness for Indian listeners; on the contrary, musical practice retains an everyday quality: audience members shuffle in and out of concerts; babies shriek, and air horns of trucks and buses penetrate the air. Traveling in South India, one may observe performances of Karnatak music in a variety of venues—peoples' homes, Hindu temples, and modern concert halls. During music festivals, such as the December festival in Chennai (Madras), one may hear dozens of concerts every day; music performances are also common in connection with weddings, birthdays of famous composers, and Hindu holidays.

The *Vīṇā*

The *vīṇā* in Karnatak music, like the piano in Euro-American art music, is an icon of the classical musical system; it is also an embodiment of divinity, the goddess of music and learning, Sarasvati.

The instrument features twenty-four brass frets, laid in wax under four main playing strings. Three additional strings (*tāḷam tanti*) lie on a curve approximating a forty-five degree angle and

Sambandam's disciple, P. Manavalan, carries on the trade in his master's shop, 1999

are stroked with the little finger of the right hand to mark out the *tāla*. The frets must be reset from time to time, and the wax, a mixture of beeswax and lamp-black, needs also to be refreshed. Artisans who perform this type of work and other minor repairs can be found in all major south Indian cities. The late C. D. Sambandam was the specialist entrusted with setting the frets of Ranganayaki Rajagopalan's *vīṇā*. His small, crowded shop, located near the famous Kapaliswara temple in Mylapore, Chennai, is shown at left.

Each octave is subdivided into twelve, roughly equal intervals. The increased popularity of the Western pitch pipe has led to a gradual adoption of equal temperament in tuning some instruments. Ideally, intervals in relation to the tonic drone are more or less just; thus the fourth fret on the *vīṇā* should produce a third scale degree intoned slightly lower than a tempered major third. Whereas singers may derive some intervals from the overtone series of the drone-producing stringed instrument, the *tambūrā*, *vīṇā* players compromise between the intervals they can deflect from adjacent frets and those they produce by playing a note on a fret.

Instruments called *vīṇā* and cognates have found a place in Indian organological history since approximately 1000 B.C.E. The term *vīṇā* has generically referred to stringed instruments, harps, plucked lutes, and bowed lutes; now the term *vīṇā* refers to particular types of plucked lutes. The modern Sarasvati *vīṇā*, represented in this recording, evolved out of a combination of stick zithers and central Asian long-necked lutes, probably about three centuries ago. The body, neck, and head of this Tanjāvūr-style instrument are carved out of jackwood (in this case, a single piece) and decorated with color-inlaid deer antler. The secondary resonator, which rests on the performer's left knee, is a natural gourd—although most players opt for the more robust materials of paper mache, metal, or fiberglass.

Key to Notation:

x⌣   = release of *svara* ″x″ with a deflection of string, leading to a slight raise in pitch

⌣x   = approach to *svara* "x" from above

a⌢b   = slide from *svara* "a" to "b"

〜   = shallow oscillation on a single note

⨁   = oscillation between two adjacent *svara*s accomplished through string deflection

〜〜   = deep oscillation between two *svara*s at least a minor third apart, accomplished through string deflection

South Indians do not ordinarily transcribe Karnatak music using Western staff notation; rather, they use their own notation, which is based on the *svara* names *sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni.* To illustrate this, in some of the following examples the *svara* name corresponding to a note or group of notes is placed above the staff. The "key" signature is merely a convenience here, meant to indicate roughly the position of each scale degree.

The Performance

Disc 1

Tracks 1–10

Genre: *Kriti*
Composer: Muthuswamy Dikshitar (1775–1835)
Rāga: *Gauḷa*
Tāla: *Miśra Cāpu* (seven counts, grouped **1** 2 3 **4** 5 **6** 7)
Title: "Śri Mahāgaṇapati"
Language: Sanskrit
Source: Kandadevi Narayana (a disciple of the famous vocalist, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar)

Rāga characteristics:
Ascent (*ārōhaṇa*): C D♭ F G B C (*sa ri ma pa ni sa*)
Descent (*avarōhaṇa*): C B G F D♭ E F D♭ C (*sa ni pa ma ri ga ma ri sa*)

Gauḷa ideally introduces this recording because it illuminates important aspects of the *rāga* concept. A *rāga*, more than a mere scale or collection of discrete pitches, is a system for structuring melodic composition and improvisation characterized in part by syntax. In this example there is a gap between D♭ and F in the ascent (i.e. *ga* [E] is absent) and the melody descends via a crooked path as seen above. The final descent from *ma* (F) to *ri* (D♭), often features a prolongation of the second degree and is an especially characteristic phrase of this *rāga*. According to South Indian classical music theory, the value of this second degree is special, spanning an interval of slightly less than a semitone above the tonic. In practice, this interval is somewhat variable and is articulated through an upward oscillation from the drone tonic.

Just as syntax is an important component of a *rāga*'s internal structure, so too is syntax important in macro performance structures, including that of the whole concert. Karnatak musicians often mark the commencement of a concert with a special type of piece, the *varṇam*, which is a technical warmup piece played in several tempos. Sometimes, as in this recording, they begin with a *kriti,* a type of piece that can be played at any point within a performance. In this example, a sense of "beginning" is conveyed through lyrics and choice of *rāga*. Here the lyrics (*sāhitya*) address the auspicious elephant-headed god, Ganapati (Ganesh), who is propitiated before any important undertaking and at the outset of every musical and dance performance.

Before rendering the composition (marked by the entrance of the drum, *mṛidangam*), Smt. Ranganayaki performs a rhythmically elastic form of improvisation called *ālāpana* (lit. "discourse, conversation," track 1). The length of an *ālāpana* in a performance depends on a number of factors, including the length of the piece it precedes, the position of the piece within a recital, and what is known as the "scope" of a *rāga*, or its range of possibilities for variation. *Gauḷa*'s distinctive crooked descent makes it easily recognizable, but also places a limitation on the number of ways a performer can sequence its constitutive *svara*s.

The rhythmic framework (*tāla*) for the composition "Śrī Mahāgaṇapati" is called *miśra cāpu tāla* and contains seven brisk counts. One should listen for the return of the instrumental rendition of the first line of text, "Śrī mahāgaṇapatiravatumām," which can be recognized by the *svaras sa ri ma / pa* (C D♭ F / G) corresponding to counts one, two, three, and four of the *tāla* respectively. At the fourth count Smt. Ranganayaki gently strikes the angled side strings, or *tāḷam tanti*, to indicate the *tāla*. In the notation below, the bar line corresponds with the first count of the *tāla*, dotted lines indicate the fourth and sixth counts of the *tāla*, and the asterisk on the fourth count indicates the articulation of the *tāla* on the *vīṇā* using the *tāḷam tanti*.

Figure 2: Śrī Mahāgaṇapatiravatumām

pallavi (CD 1, track 2):

This composition, like most Karnatak compositions, contains three main sections, the *pallavi* (track 2), *anupallavi* (track 3), and *caraṇam* (track 6). Within each section is a series of repeated melodic lines (again, lines of text when sung) building in the manner of a theme and variations. Each full line of variation is called a *sangati*. These *sangati*s are part of the composition proper and are not normally improvised by the performer. At the end of each of these sections the first line of the *pallavi* recurs. Following this is a gap, during which the *vīṇā* provides an *ālāpana*-like filler and the *mṛidangam* player improvises a brief cadence which leads into the attack point (*eḍuppu*) of the section that follows.

Figure 3

anupallavi (first complete rendition of line below begins 6″ into track 3)

Muthuswamy Dikshitar commonly inserted additional subsections into his *kriti*s; this is one example. Following the *anupallavi* proper is the *madhyamakāla sāhitya* ("middle-speed text," track 4), beginning with the words "komaḷatara." As shown below, the distinctive features of this "middle speed" section are the density of syllables—almost every *svara* is articulated by one—and the regular subdivision of the count into two pulses, yielding a straightforward sequence of 14 pulses for each *āvartana*. The composer inserts his own *nom de plume*, "guru guha," into this section.

Figure 4

madhyamakāla sāhitya #1 (CD 1, track 4). This is the full form. The first half repeats with a transition measure interspersed.

ko ma ḷa ta ra pal la va pa da ka ra gu ru gu hā gra ja śśi vā tma ja ḥa

Immediately following the *madhyamakāla sāhitya* is a less common subsection, called the *colkaṭṭu svara* (track 5). *Colkaṭṭu* ("word construction") refers to the mnemonic syllables drummers and dancers use to vocalize rhythmic patterns. In this example, Dikshitar combines drum mnemonics with *sargam* syllables (the *svara* names, *sa*, *ri*, *ga*, *ma*, *pa*, *dha*, *ni*) to create a hybrid text. The first *āvartana* uses *sargam* syllables *pa-ma-ga-ma-ri-ga-ma* corresponding to the *svara*s performed; the second *āvartana* makes use of the rhythmic vocalizations "ta-na-ka-jam" followed by the *sargam ni-sa*. The first eight *āvartana*s are notated below.

Figure 5

colkaṭṭu svara (CD 1, track 5). The first eight *āvartana*s in the first speed are notated below. Following these, the density doubles.

pa ma ga ma ri ga ma ta ṇa ku jam ni sa

ri ki ṭa ta pa ni sa ja ṇu ta ni sa ri ma
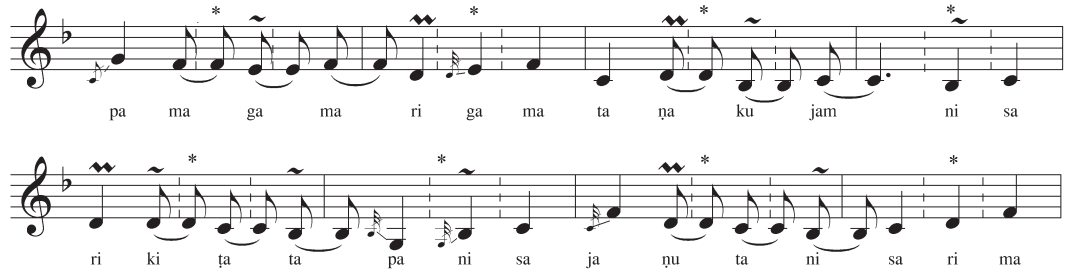
In ethnomusicological writings, it is common to talk about rhythmic texture in terms of density in contrast with tempo. One can maintain a steady tempo and play notes at, say, one note per pulse, or two notes per pulse, or four notes per pulse. The texture becomes more dense, but the tempo remains steady. The density of *svara*s in relation to counts of the *tāla* decreases in this section and this gives the impression of a decrease in tempo, however, the speed of the *tāla* always remains constant. When South Indians refer to the speed at which a musical passage is rendered within the framework of a constant *tāla* pulse, they use the term *kālam*. The first eight *āvartana*s of the *colkaṭṭu svara* are rendered in the slowest speed, or the first *kālam*. Smt. Ranganayaki then performs the next eight *āvartana*s of the *colkaṭṭu svara* in the second *kālam,* doubling the density of *svara*s in relation to the count. Moving to the third *kālam*, she doubles the density again as she renders the last two *āvartana*s of the *colkaṭṭu svara*. Following this she repeats the entire *colkaṭṭu svara* in the third *kālam*. Since the first eight *āvartana*s, played now at four times the original speed, require only two *āvartana*s; the second section, now played at twice the density at which she originally rendered it, requires four *āvartana*s, and the final two *āvartana*s are repeated unaltered, the repetition of the entire *colkaṭṭu svara* in this speed is completed in eight *āvartana*s. The whole *anupallavi,* including *madhyamakāla sāhitya* and

colkaṭṭu svara, then concludes with a repetition of the *pallavi*.

The next major section, the *caraṇam* (track 6), begins with the words "sūvarṇā karsana." It contains three lines of text, each with a distinct melodic setting. The first line is notated below. After introducing the third line of the *caraṇam*, "prakāsakaro," Smt. Ranganayaki improvises in a form called *svara kalpana*. Like composed *sangati*s, each *svara kalpana* phrase must return to the beginning of a line of text on a particular count using a string of *svara*s that blend in melodically. After the first couple of iterations in which she renders the line, "prakāsakaro bhavajaladhināvo," and cycles back using transitional phrases, Smt. Ranganayaki begins *svara kalpana* and returns only to the phrase "prakāsakaro" (track 7). The listener may recognize this section by syncopation on the octave "C" at each returning phrase. Generally *svara kalpana* progresses from shorter to longer phrases. Theoretically these conform to a proportional expansion of *āvartanas* (i.e. ½, 1, 2, 4, 8); in practice, musicians seldom adhere rigidly to this model. Unless the piece is itself in a rapid tempo, the *svara kalpana* is usually performed in two speeds (*kālam*s), as it is here (the second speed begins at track 8). After finishing *svara kalpana*, Smt. Ranganayaki completes the melody accompanying the third line of the *caraṇam* text (not notated), performs a second *madhyamakāla sāhitya* (track 9)—different from that in the *anupallavi*—repeats the entire *colkaṭṭu svara* in the third *kālam* (track 10), and concludes with a return to the *pallavi*.

Figure 6

caraṇam (CD 1, track 6), first line:

sū   var   ṇā   kar   ṣa   ṇa   vig   na   rā

jo   pā   dām   bhu   jo gaura   var   ṇa   va   sa   na   dha   ro

bā   la   can   dro

caraṇam (first half of third line, begins 1' into track 6; bracketed sequence taken as basis for svara kalpana in track 7)

pra   kā   ṣa   ka   ro   bha   va   ja   la   dhi   nā

vo

Tracks 11–15

Genre: *Kriti*
Composer: Muthiah Bhagavatar (1877–1945)
Rāga: *Valaji*
Tāla: *Tiśra Eka* (Three counts: // 1 2 3 //)
Title: "Jālandhara"
Language: Sanskrit
Source: Aural learning from contemporary practice in Madras

Rāga characteristics:
Ascent (*ārōhaṇa*): C E G A B♭ C (*sa ga pa dha ni sa*)
Descent (*avarōhan.a*): C B♭ A G E C (*sa ni dha pa ga sa*)

Smt. Rajagopalan precedes her performance of "Jālandhara" with an *ālāpana* in the rare *rāga valaji*. Characteristic in this *rāga* is an emphasis on the *svara ga* (E), which appears at the beginning and ending of many musical phrases, and is striking as the only *svara* lying between the first and fifth scale degrees. The composer of "Jālandhara," Muthiah Bhagavatar, was famous for this and other compositions in unusual *rāga*s.

This composition is played here in *tiśra eka tāla* of three counts. Smt. Ranganayaki strokes the *tāla* strings on count one. After completing the *ālāpana* (track 11), *pallavi* (track 12), *anupallavi* (track 13), and *caraṇam* (track 14), she performs *svara kalpana* (track 15), returning to the *svara*s *ga pa*, corresponding to the first two syllables of the first line of the *pallavi*, "Jāla." The *eḍuppu* is on count one.

Tracks 16–23

Genre: *Kriti*
Composer: Muthuswamy Dikshitar
Rāga: *Pūrvikalyāṇi*
Tāla: *Ādi* (Eight counts in which each count gets two pulses: // 1 . 2 . 3 . 4 . / 5 . 6 . / 7 . 8 . //)
Title: "Mīnākṣi Me Mudam"
Language: Sanskrit
Source: Sambasiva Iyer

Rāga characteristics:
Ascent (*ārōhaṇa*): C D♭ E F♯ G A G C (*sa ri ga ma pa dha pa sa*)
Descent (*avarōhaṇa*): C B A G F♯ E D♭ C (*sa ni dha pa ma ga ri sa*)

With this item Smt. Ranganayaki introduces an element of grandeur into her recital. The *rāga pūrvikalyāṇi*, an evening *rāga* described by the late musicologist P. Sambamoorthy as appropriate for expressing "loneliness and detachment from the world," provides extensive scope for improvisation. In keeping with the *rāga*'s character and the length of the composition, Smt. Ranganayaki precedes the composition with an appropriately lengthy *ālāpana*.

In addition to the striking tonal features of this *rāga*, its contour is crooked: proceeding from the fifth to the upper octave tonic, melodies characteristically ascend to *dha* (A) the sixth scale degree, return to *pa* (G) the fifth, and leap to the octave *sa* (C). Aside from the tonic and fifth, which are theoretically supposed to remain "pure" or free from ornament, all the *svara*s of this *rāga* are rendered with *gamaka*s; commonly, phrases will alternate between those that omit *sa* and *pa* (C and G), these plain, stable *svara*s, and those that include them. "Mīnākṣi Me Mudam" is set to *ādi tāla*, consisting of eight counts; counts one, five, and seven are articulated on the *tāla* strings of the *vīṇā* (and again by an asterisk in the notated examples).

Figure 7: Mīnākṣi me mudam

pallavi (CD 1, track 17), first line:

The composition is addressed to the goddess Mīnākṣi, whose most famous temple sits in the center of the South Indian city of Madurai. According to popular belief, Dikshitar, a devotee of the mother goddess in all her forms, composed a set of pieces to goddess Mīnākṣi shortly after receiving word of his brother Chinnaswami's death. This was also one of Dikshitar's last compositions, and it is said that he asked his disciples to sing this piece to him just as he was about to die. Like the Dikshitar piece heard at the beginning of this recording, this composition too includes two *madhyamakāla sāhitya*s, one at the end of the *anupallavi* (track 19) and one at the end of the *caraṇam* (track 21). (The second *madhyamakāla* is played in the second speed 48 seconds into track 21).

Since this is a piece of considerable classical import, Smt. Ranganayaki introduces an additional type of improvisation, *niraval* (track 22)*,* using the first line of the *caraṇam* as its basis. *Niraval* is a melodic improvisation on a line of text, roughly preserving the distribution of syllables within the structure of the *tāla*; on the *vīṇā*, the syllables of this text are articulated by plectrum strokes on the string. The essential difference between *niraval* and *svara kalpana* on the *vīṇā* is that in the former the improvisational section is tied to the durational patterns of the text so that *svara*s intervene between plucks; in the latter, the rhythms are independent so that virtually every *svara* is plucked. It is a rule in Karnatak music that if *niraval* is performed, *svara kalpana* must follow. Thus *niraval* tends to appear in only the most elaborate expositions of repertoire.

In this piece, *niraval* and *svara kalpana* (track 23) take the first line of the *caraṇam* as a point of departure. The line of text begins not on the first count, but halfway through. Note that the first line of the *caraṇam*, when rendered in the context of the *kriti* proper, begins with the *svara*s *ga, ri, sa* (E, D♭, C). This same first line is rendered with a slight difference in the *niraval* and *svara kalpana* sections, beginning instead on *pa*: *pa . pa ma ga ri . sa* (G G F♯ E D♭ C). In relatively

expansive pieces such as this, the *tāla* pace is rather slow. You will notice a point of emphasis on count five of the *tāla* after each episode of *niraval* and *svara kalpana*. The technical term for this is *ṟuti* (the "t" is pronounced like "th" in "the"), which means "termination" in Tamil. In English we may call this the "arrival point" in that, after the *eḍuppu*, the two instruments cadence here—usually on the important *svara ga* (E) in this composition.

Figure 8

caraṇam (CD 1, track 20), first line. Syllables above the staff are *sargam* (solfège); those below the staff are lyrics:

First line of *caraṇam* as rendered at the commencement of *niraval* (track 22) and later used as basis for *svara kalpana* (track 23):

Tracks 24–27

Genre: *Kriti*
Composer: Tyāgarāja (1767–1847)
Rāga: *Bēgaḍa*
Tāla: *Ādi*
Title: "Nādōpāsana"
Language: Telugu
Source: Kandadevi Narayana

Rāga characteristics:
Ascent (*ārōhaṇa*): C E D E F G A G C (*sa ga ri ga ma pa dha pa sa*)
Descent (*avarōhaṇa*): C B♭ C A G F G E D C (*sa ni sa dha pa ma pa ga ri sa*)

In general, the theoretical structure, "ascent" (*ārōhaṇa*) and "descent" (*avarōhaṇa*), of a *rāga* provides only the barest outline of that *rāga's* characteristics. The characteristics of this *rāga* are a case in point: different sources provide varying degrees of detail and emphasize alternate aspects of a *rāga* even in so brief models as those of the *rāga's* ascent and descent. The versions of *bēgaḍa rāga's* ascent and descent provided here were taught by Sambasiva Iyer to Ranganayaki Rajagopalan. Of note here, again, is the characteristically crooked syntax of the *rāga*. There are also features difficult to represent on paper. For example the *svara*, *ma* (F), is

always rendered with a *gamaka*; this *gamaka* sometimes oscillates between E and F, sometimes between E and an unspecifiable interval above F, and sometimes clearly between E and G. This *ma* is important and unique to this *rāga*, owing both to its intonation and insistent, accentual quality. The *svara*, *ni*, is also prolonged with a special, insistent *gamaka*, usually spanning the interval between A and C. The *gamaka*s on *ma* and *ni*, combined with the phrases in which they appear, provide a parallel phrase structure. This is an example of a *rāga* in which a *svara* takes alternate varieties according to context: another manner of descent requires *ni* to be a B♮—in this case not prolonged, but rather quickly passed over.

The composition "Nādōpāsana" is the creation of South India's most popular Karnatak composer, Tyāgarāja, who, along with other composers such as Muthuswamy Dikshitar, is a saintly figure. In this piece, Tyāgarāja sings that the trinity of Hindu gods, Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā, glory in the sound of music. They transcend formalistic Vedic religious practices of the past, and embody the sacred formulae (*mantra*), designs (*yantra*) and rituals (*tantra*) of the mystics. The following is adapted from William Jackson's translation of "Nādōpāsana" in *Tyāgarāja: Life and Lyrics* (264):

pallavi: ‖: Intent on musical sound, Śiva :‖
                  Viṣṇu and Brahmā shine, and happily thrive, O mind!

anupallavi: These *Veda*-uplifters transcend the *Veda*s;
                  Pervading the entire cosmos;

pallavi: Intent on musical sound, Śiva
                  Viṣṇu and Brahmā shine, and happily thrive, O mind!

caraṇam: They are the spirit of the *mantra*s, the *yantra*s and the *tantra*s
                  Living innumerable aeons,
                  They revel in the rhythms of strings and melodies of tones
                  These self-mastered ones, whom Tyāgarāja worships;

pallavi: Intent on musical sound, Śiva
                  Viṣṇu and Brahmā shine, and happily thrive, O mind!

Although this is a substantial composition, the relatively determinate contours of the *rāga* and the need for special treatment of scale degrees four and seven (*ma* and *ni*, F and B♭) limit its suitability for *svara kalpana*; furthermore, this *kriti* immediately follows a lengthy *kriti* by Muthuswamy Dikshitar, and thus should be shorter for the sake of balance. The juxtaposition of these two *rāga*s, *pūrvikalyāṇi* and *bēgaḍa*, is interesting and well-planned. Two of the half-step intervals, *sa-ri* and *ma-pa* in the former *rāga*, are in this *rāga* whole-step intervals. This provides a strong sense of contrast and replaces the "lonely" and "detached" quality of the previous *rāga* with the lively, optimistic quality of the this one. Yet a curious continuity is afforded between the two via the shared characteristic phrase *pa dha pa sa*.

Disc 2

Tracks 1–5

Genre: *Kriti*
Composer of the text: Narayana Tirtha (1650–1745)
Composer of the melody: T. M. Tyagarajan
Rāga: *Hamsavinōdhini*
Tāla: *Rūpakam*
Title: "Caraṇam Bhava"
Language: Sanskrit
Source: T. M. Tyagarajan (via Ranganayaki Rajagopalan's daughter, Jayanthi)

Rāga characteristics:
Ascent (*ārōhaṇa*): C D E F A B C (*sa ri ga ma dha ni sa*)
Descent (*avarōhaṇa*): C B A F E D C (*sa ni dha ma ga ri sa*)

The poet who composed the text of this piece, a musician who gave up the pleasures of a worldly life to become a *sanyāsi*, or religious ascetic, lived in Tanjāvūr in the early 17th century. It is common in the history of Karnatak music for a musician in a later period to adopt the text of a famous composer and set it to a new melody. This is an example of such a piece, set to a melody by the late musicologist and vocalist T. M. Tyagarajan, a longtime professor at the institution where Smt. Ranganayaki formerly offered instruction, the Music Academy of Madras. Jayanthi, Smt. Ranganayaki's daughter, received instruction from T. M. Tyagarajan and others when she was enrolled there. Ranganayaki Rajagopalan learned this piece from her daughter, vocally, and adapted it to the *vīṇā*.

In the context of a concert, this piece serves as an upbeat, brief interlude between compositions of comparative gravity. Noteworthy in this *rāga* is the absence of the fifth degree of the scale, G. Smt. Ranganayaki concludes the piece with a brisk *svara kalpana* (track 5), returning each cycle to the first word of the *pallavi*, "Caraṇam," on the *svara*s // *dha ma ga . . .* //.

Tracks 6–19

Genre: *Kriti*
Composer: Tyāgarāja
Rāga: *Kharaharapriya*
Tāla: *Ādi*
Title: "Ĉakkanirāja"
Language: Telugu
Source: Sambasiva Iyer

Rāga characteristics:
Ascent (*ārōhaṇa*): C D E♭ F G A B♭ C (*sa ri ga ma pa dha ni sa*)
Descent (*avarōhaṇa*): C B♭ A F G E♭ D C (*sa ni dha ma pa ga ri sa*)

All Karnatak music concerts climax in what is known as the "main piece." In this case it is the substantial *kriti*, "Ĉakkanirāja." Smt. Ranganayaki enriches her rendition with all four major types of improvisation: *ālāpana* (track 6) and *tānam* (tracks 7–13), which precede the composition (tracks 14–16), and *niraval* (track 17) and *svara kalpana* (track 18), which follow it. *Tānam*, a pulsed improvisation on the *rāga*, usually appears only once in a concert, and is particularly well suited to the *vīṇā*. *Tānam* is recognizable on the *vīṇā* by a constant pulse, strumming of the plectra on the strings, and rhythmic cadential phrases; *tānam* may or may not be accompanied by the *mṛidangam*, but in either case is not in a *tāla* per se.

During the *tānam* Smt. Ranganayaki embeds within her rendition of *kharaharapriya* "a garland of *rāga*s" (*rāgamālika*). One of these *rāga*s, *gauḷa*, was already encountered on the first piece of the first disc in this set. The *rāga*s in the *rāgamālika* appear in the following order:

1: *nāṭā* (*ārōhaṇa*: C D♯ E F G A♯ B C   *avarōhaṇa*: C B G F D♯ C)   (track 8)

2: *gauḷa* (*ārōhaṇa*: C D♭ F G B C   *avarōhaṇa*: C B G F D♭ E F D♭ C)   (track 9)

3: *ārabhi* (*ārōhaṇa*: C D F G A C   *avarōhaṇa*: C B A G F E D C)   (track 10)

4. *varāḷi* (*ārōhaṇa*: C E♭♭ D♭ E♭ F♯ G A♭ B C   *avarōhaṇa*: C B A♭ G F♯ E♭♭ D♭ C)   (track 11)

5. *śrī rāga* (*ārōhaṇa*: C D F G B♭ C   *avarōhaṇa*: C B♭ G A B♭ G F D E♭ D C)   (track 12)

The Karaikudi style of *vīṇā* playing is famous for *tānam*, especially in this standard series of five *rāga*s. These are known as *ghana rāga*s (*ghanam* is a vocal style related to *tānam*) because they are easily delineated in the *tānam* style. The trick in a *rāgamālika* is to introduce a change in *rāga* cleverly, and also to reveal the characteristics of the new *rāga* quickly, using a small number of *svara*s.

Let us now examine the structure of the first line of Tyāgarāja's composition in *kharaharapriya*. The *pallavi* (track 14) begins after one half a count with a slide on the second string of the *vīṇā*, from the open string on the *svara*, *pa* (lower range G), to *ri* (D). This *pa-ri* combination is conceptualized as the *svara ri* in this context. Similarly, the slide from *pa* to *sa* (G to C) after that is conceptualized as the *svara sa* (C). The two iterations of the *svara ni* on the sixth count are played with a *gamaka* spanning the notes A-C. Although Karnatak music is largely an oral tradition, the use of written notation is also common. As mentioned previously, the melody of a composition is sometimes notated in *sargam,* using *svara* names, with varying degrees of rhythmic precision and melodic detail. Compared below are notations of the first line of "Ĉakkanirāja": the first is in *sargam* notation; the second is *sargam* transcribed with Western letter-note names; and the third is staff notation:

(Note: the count is subdivided into four; *svara*s with only the first letter of the abbreviation and an underline indicate double the speed)

// . . ri . . ga ri . sa . . . . . srsr / snd. . dha ni ni sa . / . . . . //

    cak   ka ni   rā   ja   mār   ga mu

(As long as a royal road exists. . . [why take a small lane?])

// . . D . . E♭D. C . . . . . cdcd / cb♭a. . A B♭B♭C . / . . . . //

// 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . / 5 . . . 6 . . . / 7 . . . 8 . . . //

Each time a line is performed it is repeated once; after performing this basic form of the melody, the artist plays a number of composed variations (*sangati*); in this case there are a total of four *sangati*s (the first version is also considered a *sangati*).

Figure 9: Ĉakkani rāga mārgamu

pallavi (CD 2, track 14), first *sangati:*

pallavi (CD 2, track 14, 30"), second *sangati:*

The tessitura of the *anupallavi* (track 15) is different from and usually higher than that of the *pallavi*; rather than exploring and extending the register above and below the lower *sa,* the *anupallavi* begins on *dha* in the middle range. This time the section begins not on the ½ count but on the ¾ count.

Figure 10

anupallavi (CD 2, track 15), first *sangati,* incomplete line:

The *caraṇam* (track 16) begins again on the ½ count, with a *gamaka* outlining the *svara*s *pa-dha-pa* (G-A-G), and proceeds to develop a melody in the lower range once again. The second half of the *caraṇam* (lines 3–4 of the text, 1 minute 2 seconds into track 16) is melodically similar to the *anupallavi* but carries a different text. This melodic parallelism is found in many *kriti*s. At the end of each section, *pallavi*, *anupallavi*, and *caraṇam*, the *pallavi* theme serves as both a melodic and textual refrain.

After the *pallavi* refrain, Smt. Ranganayaki proceeds seamlessly from the *caraṇam* into *niraval* (track 17) and uses the first line of the *caraṇam* as the point of departure. Note again that the improvisations return to the *pa-dha-pa* figure (and variations thereof) on the half-count; this does not occur every cycle, for the length of the improvisations increases incrementally. And like our previous example, there is a secondary cadence on count five, the *aṟuti* of the *tāla.* The speed of the *niraval* then doubles, again starting short and increasing in length. *Svara kalpana* follows (track 18), maintaining the same structure: short-to-long, slow-to-fast.

Figure 11

caraṇam (CD 2, track 16), beginning of first line. This is also the basis for *niraval* (CD 2, track 17) and *svara kalpana* (CD 2, track 18):

After the *svara kalpana*, Sri Raja Rao plays a *mṛidangam* solo, or *tani āvartana* (track 19); this too is calculated to conclude on the ½ count, or first *svara* of the *caraṇam.*

Track 20

Genre: *Bhajan*
Poet: Sur Das
Rāga: *Hambir* (also known as *Hamirkalyāṇi*)
Tāla: *Ādi*
Title: "Krīḍata Madhubana"
Language: Braj
Source: Sambasiva Iyer

Rāga characteristics:
Ascent (*ārōhaṇa*): C E G F♯ G A B C (*sa ga pa ma pa dha ni sa*)
Descent (*avarōhaṇa*): C B A G E F♮ E D C (*sa ni dha pa ga ma ga ri sa*)
{n.b. authorities disagree on how to define this *rāga*}

According to Smt. Ranganayaki, the text to this piece is attributed to Sur Das, a devotee of the Hindu deity Krishna who lived in North India sometime in the late 16th or early 17th centuries. It is not clear who set the poem to music, or when it was set. The *rāga* was borrowed from North India, probably in the early decades of the 20th century. The genre, *bhajan*, is a devotional song; although it is possible that this song was popular in North India at some time, it is also possible that the *bhajan* was composed by a South Indian using a North Indian *rāga*. Following the main piece of a concert, the remainder of a performance is usually dedicated to pieces of a "lighter" nature, such as devotional songs, folk songs, and pieces in regional languages. This is an example of one such piece, although typically a concert will include a number of such pieces, often performed at the request of audience members.

Track 21

Genre: *Mangaḷam*
Composer: Tyāgarāja
Rāga: *Saurāṣṭra*
Tāla: *Ādi*
Title: "Pavamāna"
Language: Telugu

This recording, like Karnatak music concerts generally, concludes with a genre called *mangaḷam*, which means "auspicious." The *mangaḷam* is a special kind of *kriti* whose *rāga* is considered particularly auspicious.

Glossary of Frequently Used Terms

ālāpana A form of rhythmically elastic melodic improvisation in a *rāga*.

āvartana The name for one cycle of the *tāla*.

eḍuppu The attack point at the beginning of a composition, which does not always fall on the first count of the *tāla*.

*gamaka*s Integral ornaments. More than embellishments of a fundamental melody, these musical gestures constitute the very fabric of South Indian music.

kālam The speed at which a musical passage is rendered within the framework of a constant *tāla* pulse.

kriti A three-part vocal composition that can be sung or played with or without improvisational sections preceding and following it. The *kriti* is the main compositional genre heard in a Karnatak music performance.

mṛidangam A double-headed barrel drum.

niraval A melodic improvisation on a line of text that roughly preserves the distribution of syllables within the structure of the *tāla*.

rāga The melodic framework for composition and improvisation in Karnatak music.

sangati A full line of variation. Each composed *sangati* must return to the beginning of a line of text on a particular count using a string of *svara*s that blend in melodically.

Temple depiction of Sarasvati *vīṇā*. Photographer unknown.

sargam **syllables** The svara names *sa*, *ri*, *ga*, *ma*, *pa*, *dha*, *ni*.

svara kalpana A form of melodic and rhythmic improvisation using *sargam* syllables. Each episode of *svara kalpana* must return smoothly to the pitch and position of the *eḍuppu* within the *tāla* structure.

*svara*s Individual scale degrees combined with context-sensitive *gamaka*s that make up *rāga*s. There are seven *svara*s, whose names are abbreviated as *sa*, *ri*, *ga*, *ma*, *pa*, *dha*, *ni*.

tāla The metric framework for compositions and improvisational forms such as *svara kalpana*, *niraval,* and the drum solo.

tāḷam tanti A set of three side strings on the *vīṇā*. Players mark out the *tāla* by stroking this set of strings with the small finger of the right hand.

vīṇā A plucked string instrument with 24 brass frets. *Vīṇā* is an iconic instrument of South Indian classical music. It typically has two steel and two wound copper strings on the neck and three side strings from pegs on the side of the neck called the *tāḷam tanti*.

Reference and Further Reading

Jackson, William J. 1991. *Tyāgarāja: Life and Lyrics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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Credits

About Smithsonian Folkways

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding among peoples through the documentation, preservation, and dissemination of sound.

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The UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music includes more than a hundred pioneering audio recordings of the world's traditional musics, published between 1961 and 2003 on a number of recording labels, including Bärenreiter-Musicaphon, EMI, Philips, Auvidis, and Naïve. The series was launched in collaboration with ethnomusicologist Alain Daniélou (1907–1994) and the International Music Council (IMC, created by UNESCO in 1949), joined in 1963 by the International Institute for Comparative Music Studies and Documentation (IICMSD), and from 1994 stewarded by the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM). The Collection comprises mostly field recordings made *in situ*, in their original context. Each recording is accompanied by scholarly annotations and photographs. Together, these albums are a reflection of the immense variety of music-making and of the position music holds within cultures around the globe. Between the late 1980s and 2003, 115 albums were issued on CD but went out of print in 2005. In 2010 UNESCO and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings forged an agreement to make the UNESCO Collection of Traditional Music available to the general public again. In addition to the previously released titles, 15 never-released albums will also be available as digital downloads and on-demand physical CDs.

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