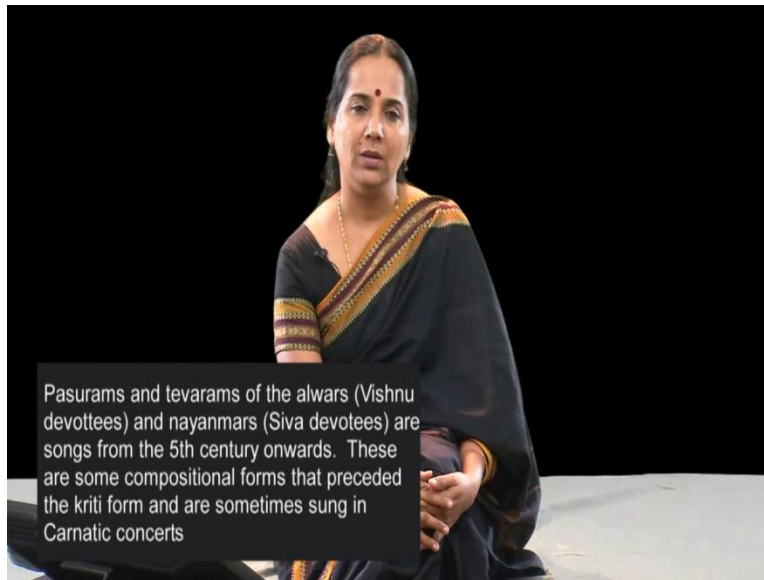


**Appreciating Carnatic Music**  
**Dr. Lakshmi Sreeram**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Lecture – 43**  
**Precursors to the Kriti**

Now, there have been precursors to the kriti format, the kriti form of composition. Carnatic music, as we know it today, is largely, it is defined by the work of the Mummooorthi, or carnatic trinity Thyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshater and Shyama Shastri. All three of them lived in the eighteenth century and they received us legacy. Many other composition forms, musical works of their predecessors, beginning from some of the oldest composition forms, that we have the Pasurams and the Tevarams,

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These are clearly and avowedly religious composition. The pasurams of alvars are hymns in praise of Vishnu, while the tevarams are praise of siva. Let us listen, to one of these Pasurams, this is a very well known composition. Alvars are assigned, from the fifth century onwards, the sixth century onwards, and this composition, that you will be hearing is of, is a composition of Andal, part of a very famous set of composition called Thiruppavai and Andal is believed to have lived and sung in the eighth century.

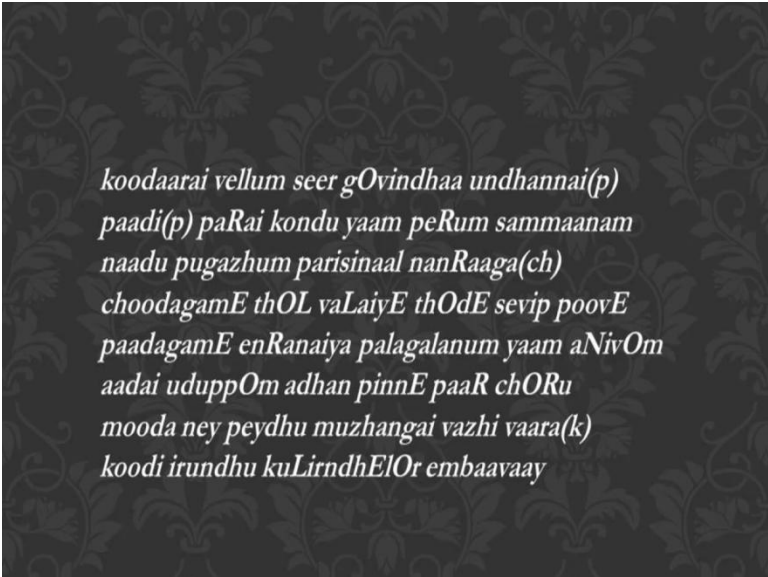
What we have today, these compositions are sung in carnatic concerts. But, we do not have the original music of these compositions. We have the text, we have the song and these are set in tunes. And in fact, right up to, just a little before, whom I refer to as Thyagaraja, Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri, right up to the eighteenth or seventeenth century. We have very few compositions whose music has survived, we do have a few, but by and large the music of those compositions is lost.

Now, the compositions you are going to hear, “Koodarai vellum seer Govindha” this is a composition. It is a song written, it is a poem, written by, sung by Andal. Andal was a devotee of Vishnu and this is sung in Poori Kalyani. Now the set of thiruppavai, all these compositions are set to tune by Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, in the twentieth century, in the first half of the twentieth century. And these songs are mostly, almost always, sung in these ragas as he set up.

So, let us listen to this, and please see how you can, what you think of the sections of the composition. Whether you can make out sections to the composition.

(Music Starts: 04:03) (Music Ends: 06:43)

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*koodarai vellum seer gOvindhaa undhannai(p)  
paadi(p) paRai konu yaam peRum sammaanam  
naadu pugazhum parisinaal nanRaaga(ch)  
choodagamE thOL vaLaiyE thOdE sevip poovE  
paadagamE enRanaiya palagalanum yaam aNivOm  
aadai uduppOm adhan pinnE paaR chORu  
mooda ney peydhmu muzhangai vazhi vaara(k)  
koodi irundhu kuLirndhElOr embaavaay*

These song is sung without any sections, even the song if you see it, on the screen right now “Koodarai vellum seer govindhaa undhaaniap paadip parai kondu yam perum sammanam” and so on. There are no sections to the song, it is a set of eight lines. Most Pasurams run to eight lines.

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Now the interesting thing about this and, this is legacy, that is a part of carnatic music even today, this is what is called the diviti akshara prasa. Prasa is a litration, it is the repetition consonant, the repetition of the same syllable, same sound which makes for poetical effect.

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So, when it is “Kanana kinkini noopura dhuni suni” here you have the “ka” and the “na” these all prasa. These is a kind of figure, of a poetic ornamentation, prasa.

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Or lalita lavanga latapariseelana komala malaya sameera, this is another very famous line from Jayadevas Astapadi. So, here the recurrence of “la” that is, this is prasa.

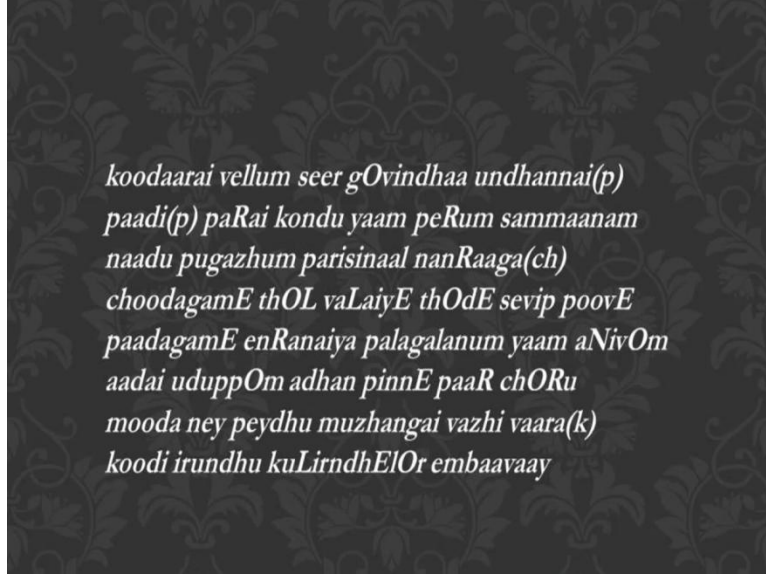
Now, musical compositions obviously, have to go easy on excessive verbal ornamentation, because then in that case, music it will be difficult to keep up certain level of the music. But prasa, is very much a part of carnatic music compositions.

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As in this case, as you will see the Dwiteeyaksara. Dwiteeya second, akshara syllable, the second syllable of each line is the same sound.

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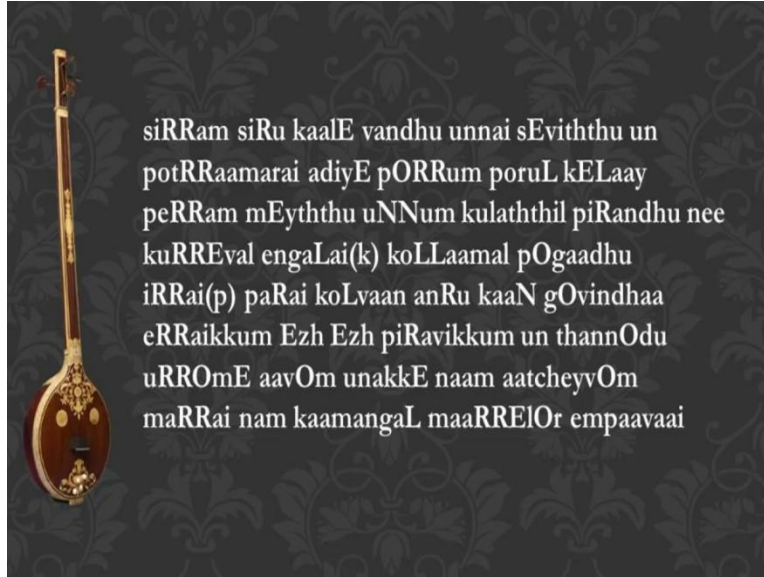
In this case, it is da, the koodarai vellum, the second line is paadi, third line is naadu and the fourth line is choodagame and so on.

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This is a device that in tamil, it is called “Etugai” and carnatic compositions almost all of them have this Dwiteeyaksara Prasan.

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To give another example, this is another Thirupavai “Sitram siru kale vandhu unnai sevithu unpottramarai adiyE potrum porulkelaay”, so here it is the syllable, “Tra” almost, which is made to, which is repeated in the second position in each line.

“Petrum meithunnum kulathil pirandhu nee kutrevel engalai kollamal pogadhu itrai paria kolvaan andru kaan govindha etraikum ezh ezh piravikkum un thaanodu utrome aavom unake naam atcheyvom matrai nam kamangal maatrelo rempavaai”, so this Dviteeyaksara prasa is a legacy of the tamil literary, tradition which was adopted into carnatic music by all composers, whether they composed in Telugu or Malayalam or Sanskrit or Tamil.

The significance of this, Dviteeyaksara prasa as a device in composition is that, it helps us demarcate the sections of a composition. Now, like a composition of thiruppavai that we just saw, it is the same syllable, that is alliterated, throughout, and just suggest that there are no sections. The whole set of eight lines is just one song, it is just one section, the song is not divided into sections.

If we look at this other composition, also fairly well known it is popularized by Srimathi M. S. Subbulakshmi, it is a composition of Annamachariya. (Music Starts: 11:30) (Music Ends: 13:48)

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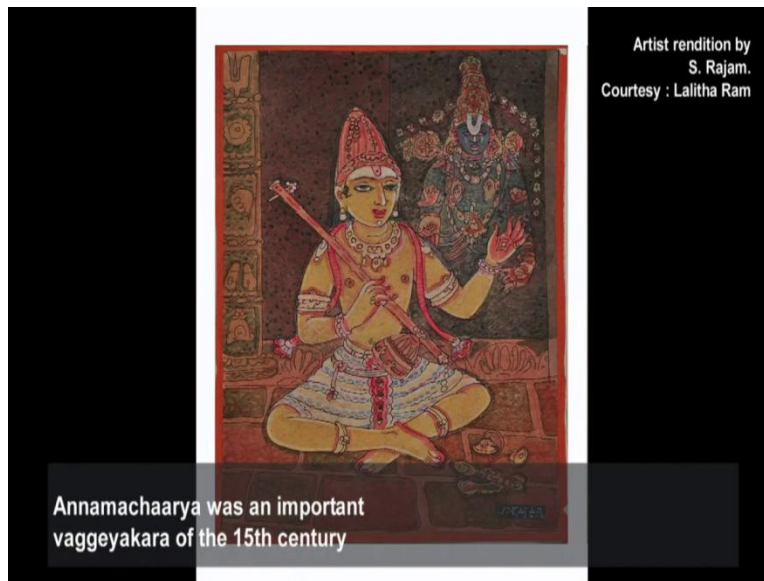
Annamachariya lived in the fifteenth century, we look at the composition, we see this, “Nanati brethuku natakamu kanaka kannadi kaivalyamu” so here you see the first two lines of the Dwiteeyaksara prasa of “na” the second syllable of lines of the first section is “na”. Whereas the first charanam, but this as you see the different structure, there is no pallavi anupallavi and charanam. There is pallavi followed by charanams. This is a kind of composition called Keerthana. It is also called padha.

There is the first charanam, you see “puttutayu nijamu povutayu nijamu natta nadi mee pani natakamu yetta neduta galadi prapanchamu katta katapatidi kaivalyamu” so here you see that there is” ta”, ta syllable which is, which has prasa. So, that marks it out as another section. And the second charanam, you will see the prasa is on “dha” and the third charanam it is on the syllable “ga” is a recursor in the second position, in each of these lines.

So, this is the significance of the Dwiteeyaksaraprasa. It helps in identifies sections, in these compositions, especially old compositions. Of course, the meanings of these lines, also helps in demarcating sections. But structurally also there is this feature of the Dwiteeyaksaraprasa.



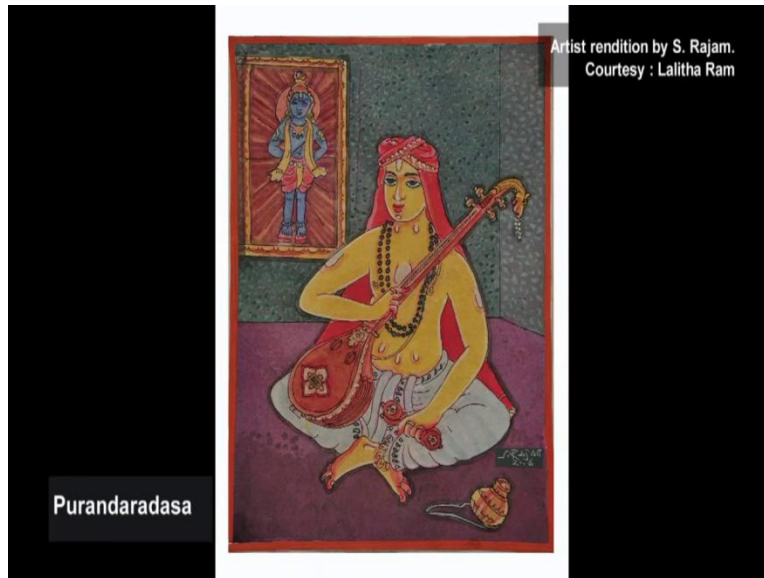
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So Annamiya, Annamachariya was an important Vaangeyakara. He lived in the fifteenth century, and he wrote, he sang songs on lord Venkateswara of the Tirumala.

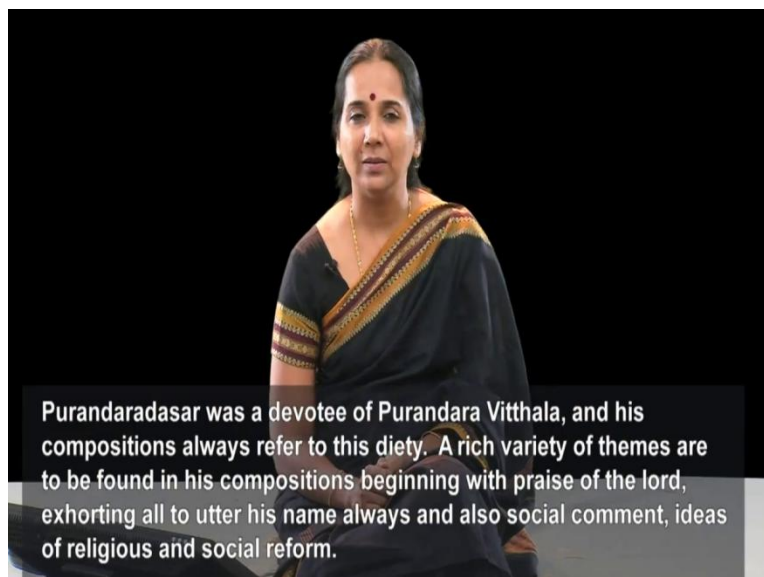
The legend, as if he composed one song everyday of his life. And there is a fascinating story of how his compositions were discovered very recently, after being stowed away in a chamber, in the Tirumala temple. And for almost four to five centuries, nobody knew that, though the oral tradition maintained the story of treasure of, composition by Annamachariya. The composition was not found, until they were found few decades ago. Annamachariya is an important Vaangeyakara, whose compositions have left a deep impact on carnatic music.

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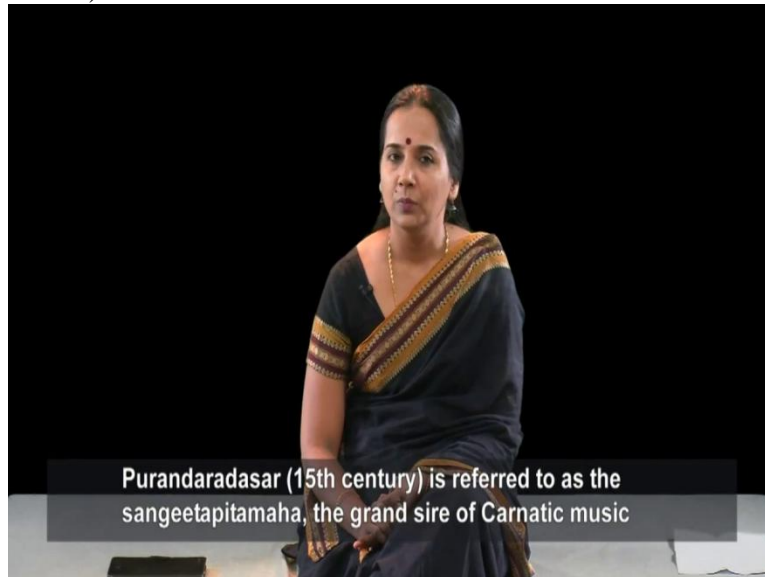
Another very important figure, also of the fifteenth century was Purandaradasa, whom I have referred to earlier. Purandaradasa also have a fascinating story, he was a very successful businessman, he was completely obsessed with material success and being and simply making money. Because it was completely wrapped up, in the idea of being a very successful businessman, until a life changing event is suppose to happen and he completely, he spends all his wealth and took a life of mendicancy.

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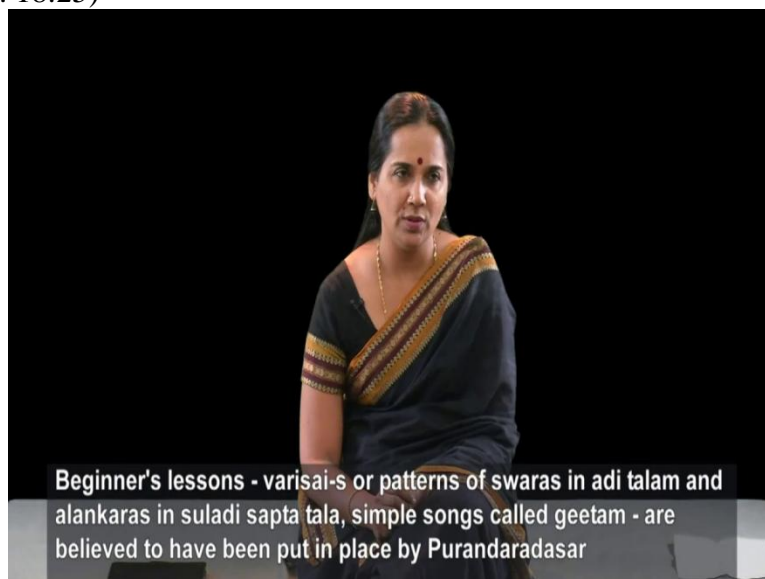
And he has sung, songs to his Purandara Vitala the Vitala of Purandara, he, in all his compositions have reference to this deity.

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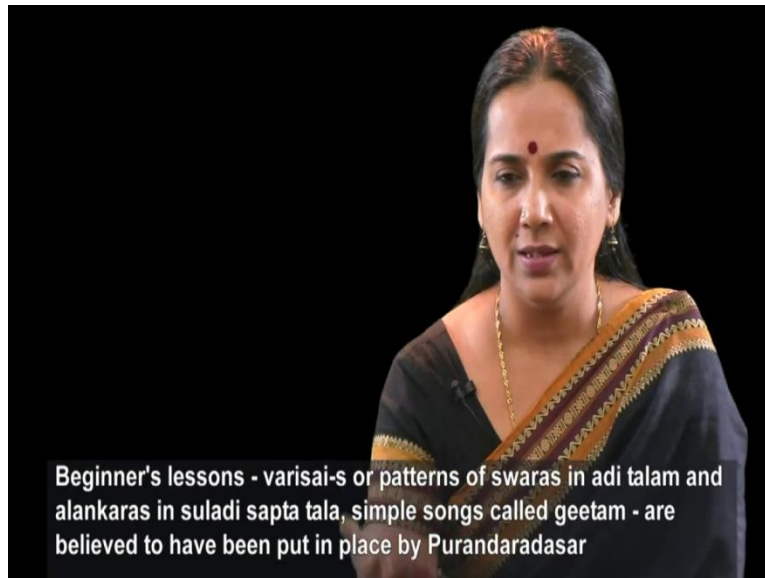
Purandaradasas contribution to carnatic music, has been enormous. Purandaradasa is regarded the Sangeetha Pithamaha, that is the grand sire of carnatic music. Such has been his immense contribution.

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The beginners' exercises that I have referred to earlier, what is called the Abyasa Ganam, which consists of, a set of systematic exercises, in the Mayamalavagowla scale.

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These exercises which are called “Varisai”, Sarali Varisai and Jantai Varisai and so on. These are exercises, that every beginner is exposed to. Every beginner initiated into, the music through these exercises and these are not only very good for practice. This is in fact called Abyasa Ganam, which means practice exercises.

But also, they are very good pedagogical tool. These exercises impart, basic skills in understanding of fundamental ideas of carnatic music. The concept of avarthana for instances, very firmly imparted by these exercises, concept of patterns of swaras.

The Alankaras in the suladi sapta tala, which also, we seen earlier, all these are suppose to have been put in place by Purandaradasar. Geethams small songs, simple songs, they have also been composed by Purandaradasa, “Sri Gananatha” for instance in raga Malahari. Every student of carnatic music learns the song Sri Gananatha and Kunda Gowra, then Padumanabha. All this

composition is in the raga Malahari. These also forms the part of the training of any carnatic student. (Singing Starts: 20:24) (Singing Ends: 21:46)

Purandaradasa belongs squarely in the, what is called the bakhthi sampradhaya. He wondered from place to place, after life transforms in experience. He gave up his worldly pursuits, and took to singing the glory of Purandara Vittala. And he wondered from place to place singing of the lord.

His song also contains social comments, social and religious reforms, ideas for social and religious reforms. And like all bakhthi saints, he sang his songs there is both poetic content and musical content. And purandaradasa was obviously also very great musical mind and he has, so to say given us a foundation for carnatic music in these exercises. So, he is regarded as the Sangeetha Pithamaha.

Now, this composition is very famous, very popular, very well known “Jagadoddharana adisidale yashode” (Singing Starts: 23:08) (Singing Ends: 26:03)

Purandaradasa’s composition is supposed to have penned innumerable, many compositions. Music of this has not survived and there is wide range of themes in his compositions. There is of course, the idea of singing the glory of the Purandara Vittala that is there. That is the idea in many of his compositions. He says he exhorts his own himself and others.

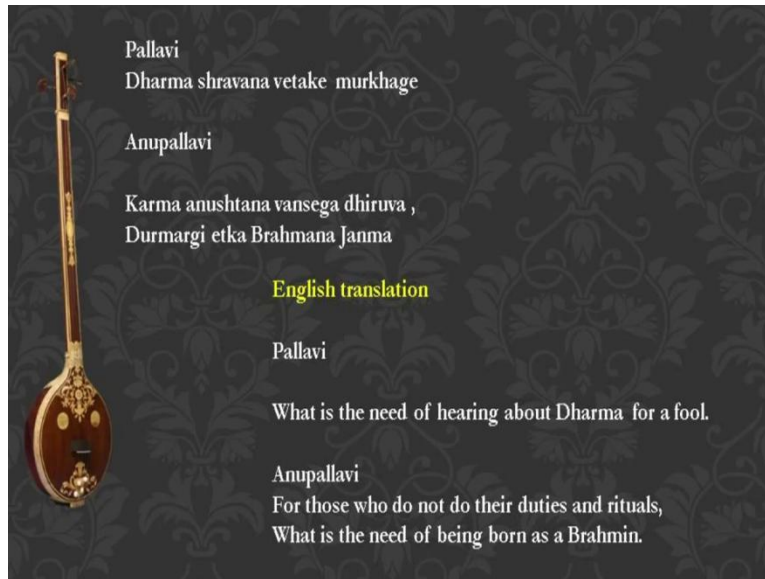
To sing, to always utter the lord name, he says “nara janma bandaga nalige iruvaga Krishna enabarade” as long you have human birth, you have human birth, you have a tongue, why don’t you utter Krishna always.

This is all, as I mentioned very clearly “Bakhthi Sampradaya” ideas. He has also talked about in the composition I referred to “Jagadoddharana”, he says that, yeshoda plays with Krishna, he who is “Jagadoddharana”, he who is the (()) 27:30 of the whole world, of the whole universe.

That lord, yeshoda plays with him “Anoraneeyana Mahatho Maheeyana” he is smaller than the smallest of the atom “Mahatho Maheeyana”. He is greater than the greatest galaxy or greatest universe, that Purandara Vittale. He who has manifested us Purandara Vittale, who is that Krishna, yeshoda plays with him.

This is very, as I said a composition that, this has been adopted to the caranatic repetitua, dancers also like to. Dancers also use this composition to perform, what is called Abhinaya or Mime.

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Pallavi  
Dharma shravana vetake murkhage

Anupallavi  
Karma anushtana vansega dhiruva ,  
Durmargi etka Brahmana Janma

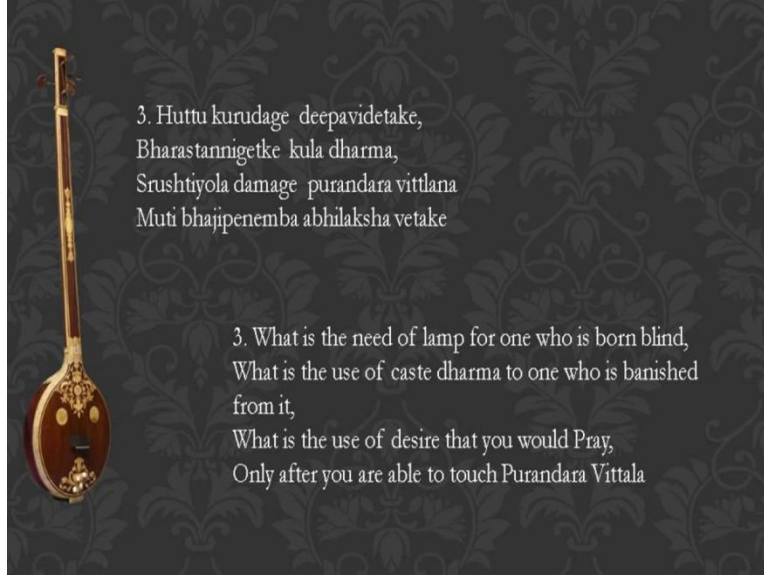
English translation

Pallavi  
What is the need of hearing about Dharma for a fool.

Anupallavi  
For those who do not do their duties and rituals,  
What is the need of being born as a Brahmin.

There are also ideas of social reform, social command as in this composition, “dharama shravana vitake murkhage karma anushtana vansega dhiruva durmargi etka brahmana janma”. (Music Starts: 28:48) (Music Ends: 30:23)

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He says, what is the point of a lofty birth? of a birth in a high family, if you are a fool. When you are a fool, what a fool understands of dharma? of the high way of living. He says it is like showing, a lamp to a blind man. There is no point, so also preaching dharma to person who is incapable of absorbing. It is even, if is to come from very high family, very lofty family.

There is no point in talking of dharma to such person. So, this such ideas, is rich variety of ideas in his compositions. His compositions are called Padas, Dasara Padas. Not only purandaradasa, there were other saints, belonging to the same traditions, they are called Dasakutas. And many of them came up with beautiful compositions.

For instances “krishna nee begane baro” is another composition, that has come from this tradition. The composer is “Vyasariah”. As I mentioned, these compositions only have the text of this compositions, we do not have the music.

So, later musicians, contemporary musicians, set music to these pieces. And in the case of some, a particular tune, so closely associated with that song. That nobody would have dream of wanting it to set it in another kind of music, in any other tune. For instance, “Jagadoddharana” or “krishna nee begane baro”

Jagadoddharana is sung in Kapi and it so closely associated with that song. So, also “krishna nee begane baro” is in Yamuna kalyana, because it is not inconceivably and certainly not unacceptable, if somebody were to accept set this composition to some other music.

But the association is, so strong and these song is so well loved, the way they are sung. In fact, very few will think of tinkering with the music.

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Another great Vegayakara, who left a great impact on carnatic music, particularly it is said “Thyagaraja, who was Bhadrachala Ramadosa”. Bhadrachala Ramadossa, lived in seventeen centuries and he was actually a government official and he sang songs in place of Rama at Bhadrachala

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Now this is the composition, of his text, of his compositions “emayya rama brahmedra adulaku naina nimaya teliya vashama shri rama” to look at the Dwiteeyaksara Prasa. And you can see this charanam is very beautiful, “sutudanucu dashrathadhu hitudancu sughrivudu atibalundanucu kapulukistiniathudanucu bhupatulu kolicirigani patita pananudanucu matitelyalreayiri”.

So, here the prasa on “ta” is very interestingly maintained. And the meaning of this song, and many of his compositions, all his compositions that are referred to here, it is rama. is it possible for Indra, Bhrama and other gods to comprehend your mysteries, n”emayateliya vashama” it is possible of understand your mysterious ways.

The most striking and most obvious is feature of all this krithis is the religious tone. Many of these composers as I said Anamacharier, Purandaradasa, Bhadrachala Ramadossa are venerated as saints, even Thyagaraja.

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Artist rendition by S. Rajam.  
Courtesy : Lalitha Ram

Krithi, the krithi form reached the zenith in the hands of, in the compositions of the trinity Thyagaraja, Dikshater and Shyama Shastri. And we will consider the work of these great Vageyakara. Now they received legacy, the legacy of the musical work of Tamil bakhthi movement. Tamil bakhthi composers, the Alwars, the Nayanmars, the deverams, paasurams and also the inherited legacy of compositions of Purandaradasa, Ramadassar and Anamacharier. We will take a detail look at three composers and their compositions.