

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

Lecture – 46
Thyagaraja, the vaggeyakara

(Refer Slide Time: 00:31)



Thyagaraja was born, as I said in Tiruvarur and he was named after the presiding deity there Thyagaraja. Thyagaraja is the name of the presiding deity, actually there is Siva, lord Siva, who is manifested there as Thyagaraja. Thyagaraja meaning the king of renunciants.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:59)



But Thyagaraja, the Vangeyakara sang extensively on Sri Rama. Sri Rama was his istha devatha. Rama who is regarded as the seventh incarnation of lord Vishnu, whose story is celebrated in the Ramayana. Which has been rewritten in various regional languages and which is the source of endless stories and recreations and songs myths and architecture.

Sri Rama was his istha devatha, that is his chosen god. And this is, the luxury that you have in Hinduism, that though there is pantheon of gods, it is up to the individual to choose, which god he wants to worship.

Now the freedom to choose arises from the basic conviction that, though we speak of various forms of god, there is ultimately one, “Ekam Sat Vipraah Bahudhaa Vadanti “this is something that is found in the Vedas. So, it is ultimately one principle, which we speak of as manifested in various forms.

So, Thyagarajas istha devatha was Sri Rama. He composed extensively on rama, speaking to rama, complaining to him, besieging him, various moods, describing him. Thyagaraja when he was young he was tutored in Telugu and Sanskrit by his father. Musical education was first by way of listening to his mother’s song. It is said that, she used to sing songs of Purandaradasa, Badhrachala Ramadasa, Annamaiya and that was the kind of musical exposure that Thyagaraja had.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:12)



Later on, he did undergo formal training under “Sonti Venkata Subbier” who was a court musician at Thanjavur. Though Thyagaraja was born in Tiruvarur, the family shifted to Thiruvaiyaru which is a smaller town, almost a village near Tiruvarur. Thiruvaiyaru, the word the name itself contains a reference to five rivers of which Cauvery is one.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:48)



And Thyagaraja lived in Thiruvaiyaru for most of his life. He made just one pilgrimage, but otherwise, he lived most of his life in Thiruvaiyaru. Thyagaraja’s family was originally a Telugu

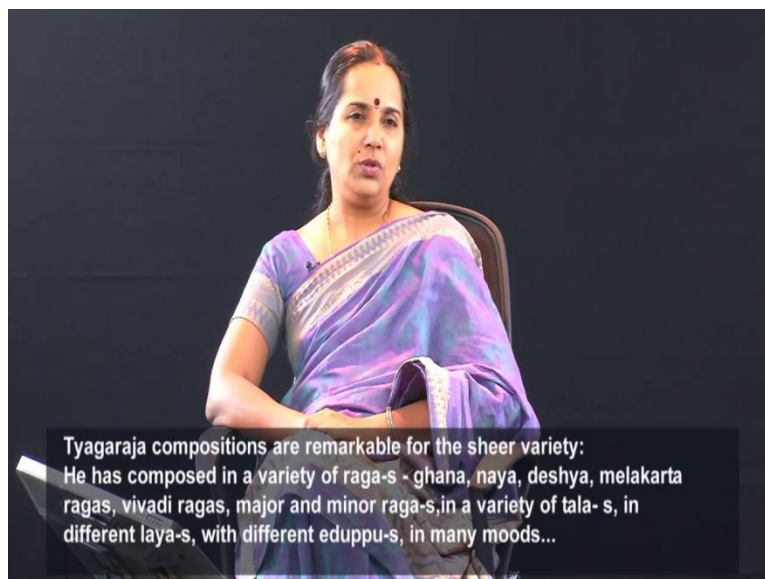
family, what is called the Kakarla asset and for few generations they have settled in a nearby Tanjavur and Tiruvarur and finally in Thirvaiyaru.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:24)



And he composed mostly in Telugu and a few compositions also in Sanskrit. His, as I said most of his compositions are in praise of, have reference to t lord Rama. But he also composed on other deities like lord Shiva, the goddess, Karthikeya, Krishna and other deities. The most striking feature of Thyagaraja's output is the sheer variety.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:02)



He has composed a variety of ragas “Ghana Naya Deshya Ragas”. He has composed in Melakarta ragas, Vivadi ragas. Talas also, he has a great variety in the layas, he has slower compositions, faster compositions. The textual content in terms of the meaning, we have a lot of moods that you can see in Thyagaraja’s compositions.

For instance, if you just take a raga thodi, he has composed about two dozen kritis. In thodi raga and each of them different from the other. The kritis movement is different, the beginning is different, the moods are different.

In kalyani he has composed about the twenty, so also in Sankarabaranam. So this sort of variety really marks Thyagaraja out. In a short while, we take a look at the various moods and themes that you finding of Thyagarajas compositions.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:29)



But, in general the structure of these compositions follows the Pallavi, Anupallavi, Charanam format. Quite often there are multiple charanams and the Ankita, that he uses the signature is Thyagaraja.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:45)



In every composition of his you have his signature is included Thyagaraja in a meaningful way. Of course, he says, the Thyagaraja says this, or Thyagaraja worships you and so on. (Refer Slide Time: 07:16)



One important contribution of Thyagaraja's work is what is called Sangati. Now Sangati is actually variation of a line of the composition. (Singing Starts: 07:24) (Singing Ends: 07:38) (Refer Slide Time: 07:28)



This is the pallavi of a very beautiful composition in the raga Usaini Rupaga talam. The pallavi says that the “Raghu veera rana dheera ra ra rajakumara” on this “ragu veera rana dheera” all addressing Rama, rajakumara also addressing Rama. Thyagaraja is asking him to come “ra ra”. The line goes like this the first line goes like this (Singing Starts: 08:06) (Singing Ends: 08:20) the same line is sung with some variation (Singing Starts: 08:24) (Singing Ends: 08:50) so I just sung just extra one one sangati.

The initial setting of the pallavi line in a certain way, there are gentle variations introduced in a step by step way, in order to bring out the mood of the line. Let us watch a Professor V.V. Subramaniam, teaching this song and you can see how the Sangati are being taught and the variations are slowly build up

(Video Starts: 09:30) (Video Ends: 19:44)

(Refer Slide Time: 19:45)

All compositions of Tyagaraja,
text and translation
from
thyagaraja-vaibhavam.blogspot.in