

Appreciating Carnatic Music
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Lecture – 55
Swathi Tirunal – the Versatile Royal Composer

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Swathi Tirunal himself as I said was an important composer. He was a linguist, he composed in many languages, even Hindi, Marathi and many of his compositions was in Manipravalam. And he has composed many genres. He has composed varnams, he has composed kritis of course, keerthanas, padams and also some other forms like tillana, even khayal northern forms, he has composed. He is a very interesting obviously versatile musician.

The family deity of the Travancore court, is the Padmanabha Swami, at Trivandrum is lord Padmanabha. We have the padmanabha swami temple at Trivandrum and that is the family temple of the royalty.

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And Swathi Thirunals ankita is Padmanabha in all of his composition, it is Padmanabha or Sarasijanabha. Now he composed, as I said he composed, Padams and we are still to take a look at the padams as compositional forms, we will do so. We will learn to listen to the padams in the raga Dwijavanthi.

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Dwijavanthi is a raga from the north, it is of northern import. Incidentally Muthusamy dikshitar also has composed a composition in Dwijavanthi. And this padam, that I am talking about, padams are srngara oriented, the tone is romantic. And here the hero is Padmanabha, the composition starts with, a Nayika telling her Sakhi her friend taruni, taruni” is the young woman.

She is addressing her friend as young, “taruni nyan endu cheiyum”, what should I do, it is as if my beloved has forgotten me, when shall I see his lotus like face again, and here his love failed speech. I never thought that, this would happen to me that, he would forget me.

So, we will listen to rendition of this padam by Ramakrishnamurthy. Now this the padam, has been prefaced with what is called viruttam.

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Viruttam is something that is a part of, Kalpana Sangeetham, that is it is improvised music. In this, a few verses taken and they are elaborated in one or more ragas usually, it is, it is like a Ragamalika. So, a set of verses is taken and a few ragas are used to bring out the, poetic content of those verses. Now, How the words are handled? How the raga phrases are used to bring out the mood and feel of the words? That is where the art of Viruttam lies. It is very challenging

aspect of carnatic music and it can be very powerful. When done well and can move the audience like little else can.

And the Viruttam is usually prefixed to some composition. And then there is obviously, there has to be some kind of connection between Viruttam and the composition that is to follow here. The Viruttam is, he is singing, Ramakrishnamurthy, here has performed Viruttam in Sanskrit. The verses are in Sanskrit, on lord Krishna and the composition, this padam, were the heroine spanning for lord Padmanabha, this composition is in Malayalam. So, we will now listen to.

“Taruni nyan taruni nyan endhu chaiyum” in the raga Dwijavanthi and misra chapu talam sung by Ramakrishnamurthy.

(Music Starts: 05:46) (Music Ends: 22:21)