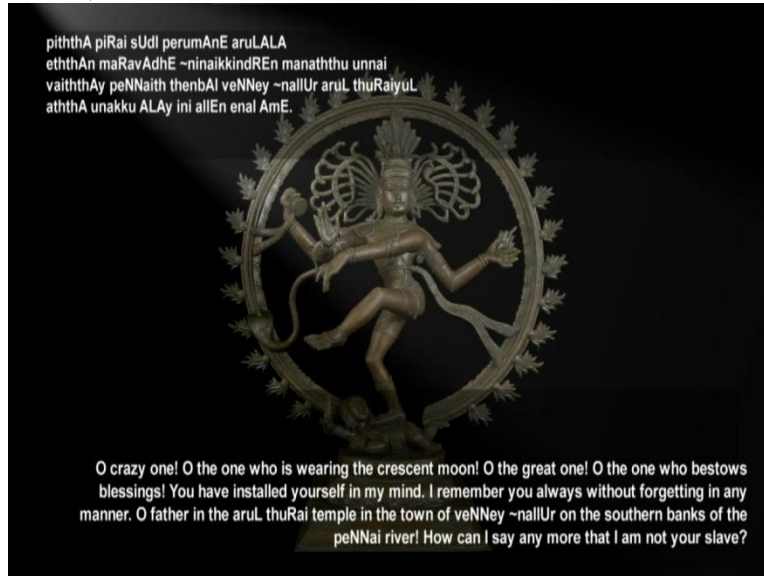


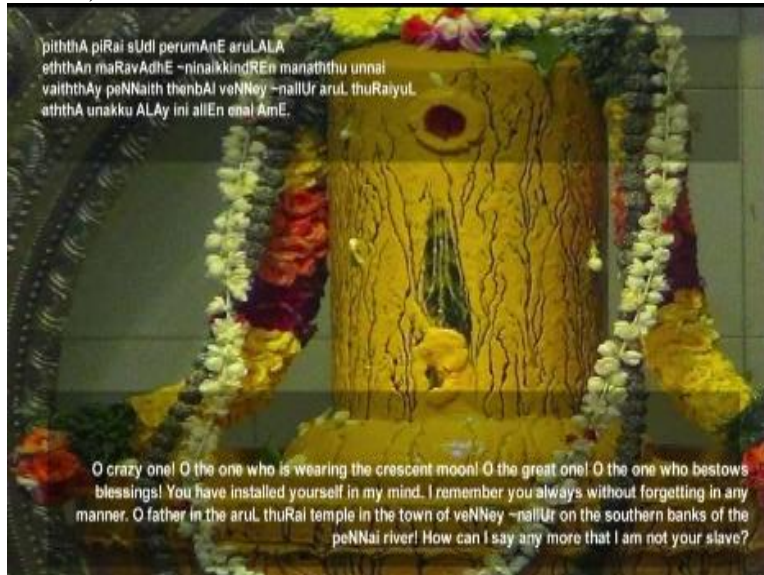
**Appreciating Carnatic Music**  
**Dr. Lakshmi Sreeram**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

**Lecture -45**  
**Tanjore and the Carnatic Trinity**

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This is the temple of Thygesha or Thyagaraja at Tiruvarur. Tiruvarur is very ancient and sacred temple town in Tamilnadu. Thyagaraja temple at Tiruvarur one of the “Patal Ptra Sthalam”  
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Is one of the temples, very ancient temple on which songs have been sung “Padal Ptra Sthalam”. The songs padal here referring to the hymens devotional hymens, that were sung by the saiva devotees, what are called Thevaram. The Thevaram, you just heard “Piththa piraichudi perumane arulala” this is the Thevaram composed sung by one of the foremost among the saiva devotees Sudaramoorthy or Sunderar as he is called.

Sunderer lived in Tiruvarur, now Tiruvarur has and its environment and Tiruvarur and its neighboring areas, half a century seen the flourishing of music, dance and many other arts. Just about sixty kilometers from Tiruvarur is the ancient town of Thanjavur. Thanjavur is a famous temple town in South India and it houses the incredible Brihadeeswarar Temple. Brihadeeswarar temple, which is a world heritage monument according to UNESCO.

Now, in fact Brihadeeswarar temple has inscription detailing the number of dancers musicians, that were attached to the temple. Thanjavur has been the capital of political capital of many dynasties that ruled South India. Beginning with Chozhas and Pandayas, later Nayakas of the Vijayanagar empire. And then still later the Marathas kings all of them, all these dynasties which ruled Tamilnadu and other areas, neighboring states, all these dynasties have Thanjavur as their capital.

Thanjavur not only a political center it is also, for cultural, religious centre. And Thanjavur is a fertile land with the Cauvery cursing through it. And when you have prosperity, the arts also flourished. So it is that all this many of these dynasties that ruled from Thanjavur have been liberal patrons of arts, beginning with music and dance.

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Raghunatha Nayaka in the seventeenth century a Nayaka ruler was himself a musicians and he wrote very significant Lakshna Grantha musicological treaties is called Sangeethasudha. Later

on later part of seventeenth century Maratha rule was established. And king Sharabhoji has left behind many, many compositions. He was a prolific composer, and he composed many genres. He as much interest as in dance and his successors and all his successor Maratha king were also liberal patrons to music and dance.

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And king Sarabhoji II his contribution is particularly significant. In that he built he envision he built the “Saraswathi Mahal Library”, which is still in Thanjavur.

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Saraswathi Mahal Library houses rare manuscript on varied subjects like Music, Dance, Jodish or Astrology, Ayurveda, Silpasastra and what have you.

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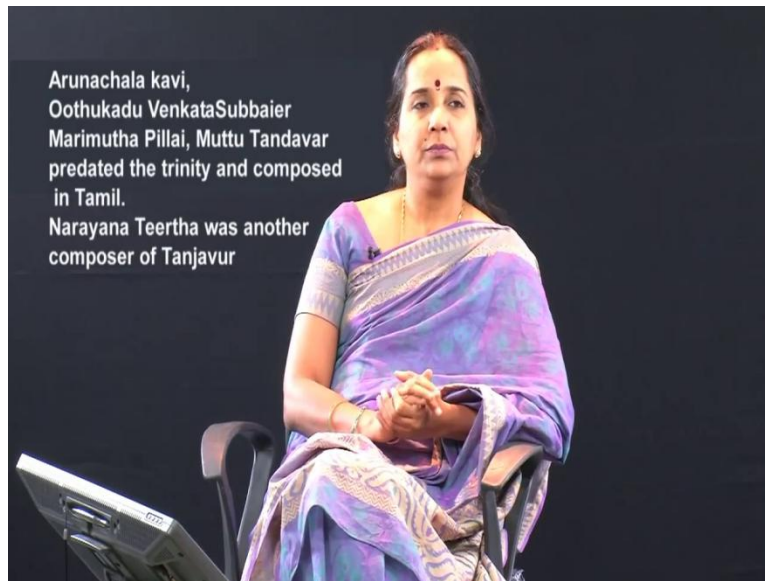
So it is a treasure house, really under such omnipresent political patronage music and dance flourished, and so the other arts. Thanjavur and Tiruvarur and many surrounding areas produced many musicians for centuries. So much so that there is saying unless you are born in or near Thanjavur and have drunk the sacred water of Cauvery, you cannot be a carnatic musicians, that is obviously gross exaggeration and certainly not true.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:18)



But it only indicates the centrality, the Thanjavur had in the evolution of carnatic music. The carnatic trinity or the Mummoothy, as they are called Tyagaraja Muthuswami Diskhitar and Syama Sastri all of them were born in Tiruvarur. Though only Dikshitar only lived here any length of time, they were all born in Tiruvarur. Before the trinity many are musicians had left amok besides the devotional out pouring the saiva and vaishnava devotees that we have spoken earlier.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:59)



We have had musicians like Arunachalakavirya, Oothukadu Venkatasubbiaiyar, Marimutha Pillai, Muthu Tandavar and others who composed in Tamil and other like Narayana Teertha who are all lived by Tanjavur and Tiruvarur and nearby places enriching the musical atmosphere. Now besides this, musicians of course, there were also other tradition of music like notably the “Bhajana Sampradhaya”.

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Nama Sangeerthanam established by Sridhara Aiyaval and with this nama sangeerthanam traditions, of course is part and group from the Maratha bhajan sanpradaya tradition. There was also the Melatru Bhakavatha Mela tradition. All these factor, so many musicians and so many musical traditions all of them contributed to very, very musically surcharged environment in Tanjavur. And Tiruvarur and neighboring areas Tanjavur that was a region is short through music and more music.

When we speak of the carnatic trinity, we always mentioned them in this order Thyagaraja Diskshitar and Syama Sastri. Thyagaraja was not oldest among these and he was not the youngest, Syama Sastri chronologically comes first, dikshitar comes last. But this Thyagaraja, who is always mentioned first and it is worth while pondering over why while they can be many answer prop up, another question which is also valid is, why only these three.

There were good great composers, before these three and after these three. And why it is these three are grouped together has carnatic trinity, there was no doubt that there is certain privileging of their compositions. And every carnatic musicians has passed to internalized their compositions, and compositions of the trinity really seen as the bedrock of the carnatic music.

Now why this is so it is an important question, it cannot be easily answered, but I here offered some ideas, some of my own ideas, one is that of course their output, there were very good

musicians, there were great musical minds. And they did not compose ten or fifteen compositions, they composed many, many compositions. Tyagaraja has left, what we have received Tyagarajas compositions run to about between 700 to 800.

Of dikshitar, we have 500 to 600 compositions. Samashastrri, we have very few, we have only 80. Though he reputed have composed three hundred only 80 are in circulation, because these compositions had to be passed from generation to generations by from teacher to student. And only some compositions got preserved this way, so by sheer numbers their output is significant musically they are of course of high order, and within the composition, that each composed.

So if Thyagaraja, his compositions have come down to few hundred there is great considerable diversity within this corpse. So it is not as if all of Thyagarajas compositions are alike, which is the case with some other composers. Again, with Dikshatar and Samashasthri within their compositions the corpse of their own compositions there is some diversity. And perhaps, what is most important is that the literary and the musical sensibility of these three composers, vaggeyakaras.

What we should be saying is they were vaggeyakaras musical and literary sensibility, their styles are very different. There is a whole gambit, here and within these gambits many other composers can be fitted. So it is the three are identified has Mummoorthy. In fact many later composers consciously and unconsciously, modeled their compositions one after the other of these three vaggeyakaras.

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All compositions of Tyagaraja,  
text and translation  
from  
[thyagaraja-vaibhavam.blogspot.in](http://thyagaraja-vaibhavam.blogspot.in)