

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

Lecture – 54
Post Trinity Composers

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So, when we are talking of other composers, apart from the trinity. We just saw some composers, especially from the Tamil tradition, who worked, who lived before the trinity, After the trinity, we have their own disciples many of whom were excellent Vaggeyekaras. And they mostly model their compositions, after their guru, respective gurus. Now Thyagaraja probably had the strongest shishya parampara as it is called.

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This shishya parampara is the lineage of disciples. Thygaraja had, we speak of three different shisya paramparas of Thyagaraja, Walajapet, Umayalapuram and the Thillaistanam. We speak of them as separate shisya paramparas because they were propagated through three different individuals all of them shisyas of Thyagaraja.

The resumption of the song, there are also the compositions are also slightly different, sometimes quite different. Now, Walajapet Venkatramana Bagavathar, who was Thyagaraja's disciple, a beloved disciple, we were told. He was composer of considerable merit, he composed in Telugu and in fact, his compositions are on his own guru on.

Thyagaraja swami in anandha bhairavi, is a gem of the kriti, he says "guruvaru mahimala nemani bhuvilo koniyadudura" the mahima, the greatness of the guru, is not possible to describe it and there are many other compositions of his, just come from, which are come down to his.

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In fact, Walajapet Venkatrama Bagavathar, was also one of the source of information about Thyagaraja. Because he wrote couple of biographies about his guru.

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Other composers in the Thyagaraja lineage are Thyagaraja's own disciple "Vennai Kuppier" whose compositions are precious gems. Vennai Kuppier lived in Madras and Thyagaraja in fact visited him, when he went on a pilgrimage and it is said that he composed a song.

Vennai Kuppier ista devatha was Venu Gopala and Thyagaraja composed a kriti in raga kedaragowla "venugana loluni". When he visited his disciple and Vennai Kuppier has given us very beautiful compositions.

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Another great composer also the Thyagarajar, Thyagaraja lineage was Patnam Subramanya Iyer, Patnam Subramanya Iyer's ankita was venkateswara and his it is wide, has a good number of his compositions, which are very popular on the concert platform as well.

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The Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar, he was another shisya of Thyagaraja, who also was a meritorious Vaggeyakara.

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Now Shama Sastri, his own son and grandson Subbaraya Sastri and Annaswami Sastri, they were very interesting, remarkable composers. Subbaraya Sastri in fact has, had privilege of learning from all three from Muthuswami Dikshitar, Thyagaraja as well as his own father.

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Now Muthuswami Dikshitar had many disciples. In fact, it is recorded that one temple dancer was also a disciple of his. His nephew, Subbarama Dikshitar was a Vaggeyakara and just one composition of his, is enough to earn him a place in this galaxy of composers. And that is, his composition “sankara charyam smaramyaham” in sankarabharanam. It is a magnificent composition but the contribution of Subbarama Dikshitar is more than in his capacity as a Vaggeyakara. He authored a book called the Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini it is called SSP for short.

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This book was published in 1904 and it has a very interesting story behind it, how it came to be. And the main characters in the story are, Subbarama Dikshitar himself was an orthodox brahmin attached to the “Ettaiyapuram Samasthanam” the court of Ettaiyapuram. The other very important character in this story is, one Chinnaswami Mudaliyar, who was a Catholic

Christian, living in Madras at the time another small very critical role, were roles of played by the Hindu newspaper and the Raja of Ettaiyapuram.

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You can read the story at this link but the “Sangita Sampradaya Pradarshini” was written at the behest of Chandraswami Mudaliyar and with encouragement from the raja and it is a treasure of compositions.

Subbarama Dikshitar has very painstakingly notated, a whole lot of compositions in this, not just kritis also varnams, lakshana geetams and so on. And, he has also tried to indicate the gamakas of the compositions, how the gamakas had to be rendered. So, it was a labour of love and a very hard task that, he must have toiled at. And it is because, of this book that many of the compositions, that are in circulation today. Many magnificent compositions, they have passed on to the latter generations.

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Another important set of disciples, that Muthuswami Dikshitar had were the Tanjore quartet they are called the Tanjore Naalvar or the Tanjore quartet. They were four brothers Chinnaih, Ponniah, Vadivelu and Sadasivam, these were four musically gifted brothers, who were disciples of Dikshitar they were patronized by the Maratha king and it was during that, so soon, that stay, that they were patrons of Dikshitar.

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And in fact, they have composed compositions in praise of their guru and Ponniah Pillai who was a composer of significant merit, has used the ankita of Guruguhadasa. He calls himself the slave of guruguha or the Dikshitar, that all signs his composition. Another magnificent composition in Neelambari raga "ambe neelambari" it seems to be a tribute to Muthuswami Dikshitar's composition, the same raga "ambe neelayadakshi". So, these four were, they have had a very, very strong role in the performing arts of South India.

The dance form, that is today called BharataNatyam, it is earlier called Sadir. Now these four brothers have, systematized the repertoire, the steps, the content of the dance. They eventually, they moved to the court of Travancore. Where we have, another great composer is the, king himself of Travancore, this was swathi thirunal. Swathi Thirnal particularly supposed to have patronized Vadivelu.