

## THE MUSIC ACADEMY

### PIBARĒ RĀMA RASAM

Synopsis of the Lec-dem by T.S. Parthasarathy on 17.10.96

Vocal Support: Dr. Premeela Gurumūrthy

The saint singers of India may be broadly divided into Kṛṣṇa bhakta and Rāma bhakta kavi-s. There are also composers like Śyāmā Sāstri who have sung on other deities like the Dēvi.

In the north, Kṛṣṇa -bhakta kavi-s usually belong to one of the sampradāya-s like the Vallabha Sampradāya, Gaudiya, Rādhā-vallabhiya, Haridāsi or Numbarka sampradāya. The eight composers who belonged to the Vallabha sampradāya, collectively known as the 'Aṣṭa Chāp' were Sūrdās, Paramānanda Dās, Kumbhan Dās, Kṛṣṇadās Adhikāri, Nanda Dās, Chaturbhujā Dās, Gōvinda Dās and Cheeta Swāmi. The other poets who sang on Krishna were Mīra Bāi, Raja Asakaran, Hari Dās Swāmi and so on. The list is a long one and includes Vidyāpati, the Padvali composers of Bengal like Chāndidās, Narsi Mehta of Gujarat and the Haridāsas of Karnataka.

Similarly, there is a long list of Rāmabhakta kavis from different parts of India. These include Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Tulsidās, Samartha Rāmadāsa, Bhadrāchala Rāmadāsa and Tyāgarāja. Kabīr goes to the extent of exclaiming 'kahata kabīra jō mukha Rāma nahin, vō mukha dhula bhari' (The mouth that does not repeat the Rāma nāma, deserves to be filled with dust).

In south India, Tyāgarāja is the Rāma bhakta par excellence next to Bhadrāchala Rāmadāsa, who was his mānasīka Guru. Rāmadāsa is the only composer whom Tyāgarāja mentions in no less than four kṛti-s although he pays homage to others in

padyam-s. Tyāgarāja was a follower of the Nāma Siddhānta tradition of Tamilnadu which believed that the mere chanting of the Lord's name was the easiest path to salvation. But Tyāgarāja was a musical genius and combined bhakti with music, declaring that such a combination alone can lead one to heaven. Although he composed nearly 80 Divyanāma kīrtana-s for choral singing, the bulk of his kṛti-s depicts the numerous qualities of Rāma and incidents from the Rāmāyana which Tyāgarāja portrays in his inimitable fashion, using all the nine rasa-s.

Tyāgarāja did not write a full Rāmāyana as such but his kṛti-s can be arranged in the sequence of the Kāṇḍa-s and they cover the whole Rāma story. He was a great Rasika and can present an incident from the epic in an aesthetic manner not attempted by any other composer. He must have soaked himself in the beauties of Vālmiki Rāmāyana in the man and has also used other Rāmāyana-s like the Adhyatma Rāmāyana and the Ānanda Rāmāyana.

Before Tyāgarāja's time, kīrtana-s were merely Nāmāvaḷi-s or strings of names of the Lord or plaintive appeals for his mercy. Tyāgarāja was the composer to spell out the lakṣhaṇa-s of a kṛti in his song 'Sogsuga mṛdaṅga tāḷamu' in which he stresses the fact that, in addition to prosodical beauties, a kṛti should depict the nine rasa-s. Where could one find a better hero than Rāma to portray the nine rasa-s! (The sloka 'Srṅgāra kshitinandini viharane' depicts Rāma as the embodiment of navarasa). Srṅgāra is acclaimed as the 'king of Rasa-s'. Tyāgarāja says in his kṛti 'Saṅgīta sāstra jñānamu' (Mukhāri) 'Srṅgāra rasādi akila sāra purita Rāma katha' (the story of Rāma, saturated with different rasa-s like srṅgāra).

Tyāgarāja has selected numerous interesting anecdotes from the Rāmāyana and presented them in his kṛti-s in a style all his own. There are two beautiful kṛtis on why

Rāma incarnated himself on this earth. The boyhood of Rāma is covered in several songs and Tyāgarāja feels jealous of Kausalya, Daśaratha and even Viśvāmitra who enjoyed the bliss of Rāma's company when he was a boy. There are songs of the lullaby type to put the child Rāma to sleep.

In the kṛti 'Alakalalla' in Madhyamāvati, why did Tyāgarāja decide to describe the forelocks of Rāma and Viśvāmitra's joy at seeing them waving from side to side on two occasions? When Viśvāmitra asks Daśaratha to send Rāma to protect his sacrifice, he describes Rāma as 'Kakapaksha dharma suram jyēshtam me datumarhasi'. Kakapaksha is the forelocks of kshatriya boys and Tyāgarāja appears to have been fascinated by this description. Viśvāmitra also says 'Aham vedmi mahatmanam Rāma satya parākramam' and he was fortunate when Rāma followed him meekly. Tyāgarāja says 'when I am going to see the feet that walked behind Viśvāmitra?' Viśvāmitra merely says 'vatsa Rāma dhanur paśya'.

The Ahalya incident receives special attention in a kṛti 'Sri Rāmapādama' (Amritavāhini) in which Tyāgarāja declares that 'the grace of Rāma's feet alone is sufficient. Did they not turn a stone into a woman at their mere touch?'

'Āḍamōḍi galadē' in Chārukēsi is a unique kṛti in which Tyāgarāja admits that he was too small a person when compared to Āñjanēya, the nava vyākaraṇa paṇḍita and was an amsa of Śiva. But Rāma, who is all praise for Hanumān's command over Sanskrit, does not speak to him directly and asks Lakshmaṇa to reply Hanumān.

Rāma is an embodiment of compassion and does not kill Rāvaṇa straightaway. He tries, Sāma, dhāna and bhēda before deciding on Danda. Let us see how Tyāgarāja describes this in 'Sarasa sāma dāna bhēda' in Kāpinārāyaṇi.

Rāma's arrows not only kill his enemies but can also protect his devotees. 'Rāma bāna trāna śaurya' (Sāvēri) describes how Rāma, by the mere twanging of his bow, drove away the rākshasa-s and saved Lakshmaṇa who had fainted in the battle field. This is based on Sarga 103 of Vālmiki's Yuddha kāṇḍa wherein he uses the phrase 'Jyaghosham akarot tivram vajra nishpesha nissvanam'.

Tyāgarāja must have seen Rāma in his mental vision and describes his beauty in dozens of kṛti-s as if he had seen him at close quarters. 'Mēru samāna dhīra' (Māyāmāḷavagaḷa) is a moving piece popular in concerts.

Tyāgarāja, in his kṛti-s, has dealt with Rāma as a child, a faithful son, a protector of the virtuous, an unconquerable hero, a noble ruler and finally as the Prabrahman himself. 'Rāma ēva daiva tam', 'Vāḍēra daivamu', 'Sarame gani' and other kṛti-s stress the fact that Rāma was the ultimate Brahman. The benefits of Rāma Rājya are described in the kṛti 'Kārubāru' in Mukhāri. The programme is concluded with the Tyāgarāja maṅgaḷāshṭakam.

List of kṛti-s rendered by Dr. Premeela Gurumurthy

	Kṛti	Rāga	Composer
1.	Swāmiki sari	Dēvagāndhāri	Mānanbuchāvaḍi Veṅkaṭasubbayyar
2.	Evarikai	Dēvamanōhari	Tyāgarāja
3.	Sri rāma jayarāma	Yadukulakāmbhōji	-do-
4.	Alakalla	Madhyamāvati	-do-
5.	Vinayamunanu	Saurāshṭram	-do-
6.	Manasa manasa	Vardhani	-do-
7.	Śrīkānta niyada	Bhavapriya	-do-
8.	Āḍamōdi galadē	Chārukēsi	-do-
9.	Sarasa sāmādāna	Kāpinārāyaṇi	-do-
10.	Rāma bāna	Sāvēri	-do-
11.	Mērusamāna	Māyāmāḷavagaṭa	-do-
12.	Kārubāru	Mukhāri	-do-
13.	Sarame gani	Pantuvarāḷi	-do-
14.	Maṅgaḷāshṭakam	Madhyamāvati	Wālājāpet Veṅkaṭaramaṇa Bhāgavatar

## DEVOTIONAL MUSIC COMPOSERS

The history of Indian music tells us, the various stages and the exhaustive unparalleled literature and the musicians it has produced at different times. The history of Indian music may be divided into three sections - ancient period, medieval period and modern period.

The very old pre-historical period when grāma mūrchanā system prevailed and other Sanskrit works were recited may be called as the ancient period. The medieval period was an important time when lots of internal changes had occurred (till 18<sup>th</sup> century). When British rulers dominated and music had almost faded, what little remained was left in the modern period.

Music of India owes its origin to the Vēdas. 'Sāmavēdadidam gītam sanjagraha pitāmaha'. Chanting of vēda was prevalent in those days. A sort of metre also established with it. The priests used to chant the hymns in a musical tone with accurate pronunciation and with pauses now and then for a fairly long duration. That is how the melody, rhythm and harmony came into existence.

Indian music is of divine origins. It is said that the four-faced Brahma, created music, extracting it from Sāmavēda and diversifying it as vocal, instrumental and choreographic. Classical music, known as Mārgi deteriorated later on into Dēsi. Mārgi music is no longer current on earth (declared by Sāraṅgadēva). Māri type of music is said to have been in vogue up to the time of Saint Rāmānujāchārya (1017 - 1137 AD).

The singing of the hymns of the Āḷvār saints, collectively known as Divya prabandams, the compositions of Mūvar known as Tēvāram and the songs of the

ancient Tamils known is understood to have followed the pristine Mārgi pattern. The Divya prabandham of the Āḷvār-s which got sunk into oblivion, were resuscitated by the Vaishnava preceptor, Srimān Nādamuni (9<sup>th</sup> century AD). Tiruvaraṅgapperumāḷ Araiyaṅ of Srīraṅgam and Varamaturam perumāḷ Araiyaṅ of Kāñchi sang these songs and danced in the temples. The temple bards, called Araiyaṅs are still in vogue, in Vaishnava temples. The rendering of Tēvāram is also believed to have come down from the pristine standards.

The paṅs employed in Tēvāram, Divyaprabandham, Paripādal, Eṭṭuthogai sung by the ancient singers between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD have gradually become obsolete. The 12,000 tunes in vogue in the days of Pingala muni have come down to just 103 tunes during the Kaḍaicaṅgam (last saṅgam) period.

## PURANDARA DĀSA

The name of Purandaradāsa is quite well-known to all south Indian lovers of music. Purandaradāsa, born in a place near Humpi, A.P., has poured forth his precious compositions, drenched in divine love. His very first song is 'Mōsahōdenallō' in rāga Aṭhāṇa. Purandaradāsa's bhajans and discourses have become very popular. His compositions number a few lakhs, and they are generally sung with great reverence. These songs convey the divine sublime thoughts, in a beautifully united meaning in rare and fascinating rāgas. He had his mudra as 'Purandara Viṭṭala'. In addition to devotional songs, he has composed pillāri gītams, ganarāga gītams, alaṅkāras and prabandhas. He gave a series of graded lessons for the beginners. He is hailed as the father of Karnāṭik music, who laid the foundation for the development of Karnatik music. It is interesting to note the rāga Māyāmāḷavagauḷa attained an importance in coaching the students their first svara alaṅkāra, during his time.

## MĪRĀ

Mīrā, the ardent devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, wife of Mahā Rāṇa kumbhā of Mēwār, lived in the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. She lived in the supreme divinity and talked to the eternal infinite Lord through her musical compositions. Mīrā revealed the eternal truth through her soul-stirring devotional songs, composed by herself and attained salvation. Mīrā's inspiring songs more all young and old alike touching the core of the heart. Some of her masterpieces are 'mērē tō giridhara gōpāla', 'chalō mana gaṅgā' and so on.

## TYĀGARĀJA

Tyāgarāja, the glittering gem of the ocean of music, the immortal poet, composer and musician was born in Tiruvārūr where the Telugu and Tamil cultures had both flourished. Tyāgarāja became a Nādōpāsaka of the highest order. He convinced the



world through his songs (kṛtis) that one can attain mukti through music. His compositions are of eternal value or rare musical excellence and brilliance, breathing the spirit of devotion to Lord Rāma in each line. His kṛtis were all on the Rāmāvatāra of Lord Viṣṇu, 'Prahālāda Bhakti Vijaya' on Narasimhāvatāra and the 'Nauka Charitram' on śrī Kṛṣṇāvatāra as the theme.

### HINDUSTANI AND KARNATIK SYSTEMS

With the advent of Muslim rule in India, Indian music was separated into two parts - Hindustani and Karnāṭik. Till about the 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, there was only one system. There was no literature in Hindustani music. With the influence of Persians and Afghans, there existed a new system called Hindustani system. While the southern system could retain its initial early texts and style, the old music could retain its original colour which came to be known as Karnāṭik system. In north India, the few granthas that were still available then, were seldom looked into. Practical music was more popular and was encouraged. The systems which are now prevalent, received their early nourishment from the same original fountain head. These systems which are originally derived from the same origin had naturally been changed and improvised with time and circumstances. Both the systems have their own grandeur and charm about them.

### TIRUMURAI AND MUSIC

South Indian music is generally classified into various categories according to the area to which it belongs to. Art music is that which developed into what is performed in concerts which is also having two categories of the compositions that which is learnt (kalpita) and that which is improvised (the creative music such as ālāpana, niraval, tānam, svara singing and so on). Apart from this, there is also the category of

devotional music. Here the text is given the first priority and the music is rather secondary. But whereas in art music, the rāga and its varied cantons takes priority to that of the text.

When analyzing the devotional music, each region in India has developed its own literatures which are the outpourings of the saints in devotional ecstasy. We have such type of compositions in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Malayalam and Hindi. These have formed an important part of temple music and ritualistic worship like bhajana where there is congregational music.

In Tamilnadu, we find the Panniru Tirumuṟai, the sacred books of the saivaite tradition and the Nālāyira Divyaprabandham, the four thousand sacred hymns belonging to the vaishnavite tradition all in chaste Tamil set to paṅs which correspond to the later rāgas which itself is not taken as synonymous by the scholars, as they disagree in equating the paṅs with the rāgas. The paṅs associated with the Tēvāram hymns number around 23. They have been classified as Pagal (day), Iravu (night) and Podhu (general) with regard to the time of rendering during the temple rituals. The ōduvārs (musicians) have traditionally learnt the paṅs as the tunes of the Tēvāram are not very well-versed with the grammar of paṅs like that of the study of rāgas. For example, when they sing Mōhana equated to Gāndhārapaṅ touches of the two svaras absent in the paṅ namely niṣāda and madhyama are touched upon, without realizing the occurrence as they have blindly followed the teacher. The svaras are the musical notes namely seven in a gamut or octave sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha and ni called as shaḍja, riṣhaba, gāndhāra, madhyama, pañcama, dhaivata and niṣāda. The notes sa and pa have no varieties but the rest ri, ga, ma, dha and ni have a lower and a higher variety totaling to 12 svarasthānas or svara positions. The ancient Tamils give the following

names for these seven names viz., kural, tuttam, kaikkilāi, uḷai, ilī, viḷari and tāram.  
While singing, they are said to have used the vowels ā, ē, ū, ae, ai, o, au

## Objectives of the seminar

Respected scholars on the dias, Harikathavidvān-s and friends, very good morning to all of you.

At the outset on the behalf of everybody here I wish to thank Sri. R. Krishnaswamy for taking the initiative of hosting this two day seminar on Harikatha. Some years ago Sri. N.S. Viswanathan under the auspices of Kalamandir Trust organized a one day Harikatha workshop but unfortunately due to the untimely demise there was no follow up. Fortunately for us, the Nārada Gāna Sabha Trust willing to organize this type of seminars cum performances annually which will go a long way in popularizing and propagating this art.

It is my pleasant duty to present the objectives of this seminar.

1. We wish to highlight the art form by not only analyzing the various aspects, but also by organizing four Harikatha performances by senior artistes like Brahmasri T.S. Bālakrishṇa Sāstri, Smt. Kamalāmūrthy and Sri Ārāvamuthan.
2. Other objective is to present a Harikatha style of a neighbouring state. For this purpose we are happy that Sri. N.C.H. Krishṇamāchāryulu from Andhrapradesh readily responded to our invitation and he will present a Telugu harikatha. He is not only a musician, a harikatha artiste and a violinist of eminence, but is also teaching harikatha in both Sanskrit and Telugu in Sarvarāya Harikatha Pāṭasāla at Kapilēśvarapuram.

The other objective is to introduce the other styles of Harikatha of Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra by organizing scholars to speak on this style and probably next year we will organize more regional performances. However since the main objective is to create a better understanding of the art so that it will provide an opportunity for the

lovers of this art to witness performances and to create interest among others especially youngsters to come forward to learn this unique art. Tomorrow some eminent scholars and performers will discuss as to what can be done to make this art more flourishing and to put it back in its old grandeur and popularity which it enjoyed some fifty years ago. We solicit co-operation of the artistes, scholars, philanthropists and rasikas for this purpose.

## HARIKATHA THEN AND NOW

### KIRTAN OF MAHARASHTRA

Dr. Premeela Gurumurthy

The art of Harikatha is popularly known as kīrtan in the state of Maharashtra and the performer is referred to as kīrtankar. Kīrtan literally means to praise and is one among the navavidha bhakti. However here it refers to the art form of story exposition coupled with music related to religious themes performed by ne person with proper accompaniment. The written text of this art form is called Nirupana. This term was used by the Marathi saints which was adopted by South Indian Bhāgavatar-s. As early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century Saint Samartha Rāmadās who was the preceptor of the great king Chatrapati Shivāji refers to this in his Dasabodh puravya Harikatha Nirupana Dusarentho raja karana Tisarentho savadhapana Sarva vishayim (11-5-3).

In this context the Marathi work kirtan taraṅgiṇi published in two volumes is worthy of mention. As most of our Bhāgavatar-s made use of the following story themes along with suitable songs found in the kīrtan taraṅgiṇi. To cite a few examples, Chandrahasākyayanam, Usha Svayamvara, Dhruva Charitra.

Though the art of Harikatha was developed in each state the Kīrtan of Maharashtra is unique as it became a social and religious necessity to gather one and

all to sustain unity especially during the onslaughts of religious crisis in particular to avoid mass conversions. The main binding element was Bhakti and Nāmasiddhānta which was propagated by kīrtankar-s. The three main styles of kīrtan are as follows. Nāradīya padhdhati, the Varkari style and the Rāshṭriya kīrtan. In this paper I shall elaborate the Nāradīya style which was adopted in Thaṅjāvūr.

### The Nāradīya style

The Nāradīya kīrtankar was well-known for his erudition and scholarship. He is said to belong to the parampara of Lord Nārada himself who is considered the originator of this style and a great bhakta of Lord Nārāyaṇa himself. It is interesting to note that we find a miniature Tambura (Tamburi in Marathi) adorning the shoulder of the Nāradīya kīrtankar, just as we see in the depictions of Lord Nārada himself. The Nāradīya style is well-known for its scholastic exposition, and the performers are mostly Brahmins. The Nāradīya kīrtan is divided into two parts namely the Pūrvāṅga and Uttarāṅga. The pūrvāṅga is the first part which begins with the Namana which is the pañcapadi - invocation to the five deities namely Lord Ganēśa, Viṣṇu, Rāma, Guru and Ānjanēya. (I shall play a recording of the pañchapadi sung by Smt. Banni Bāi). This is followed by a song which is known as the Prathama pada or the primary song - the theme found is explained and is substantiated by a story.

(The following prathamapada figures in the Rukmiṇi Kalyāṇa rendered by Bannibāi)

The versatility of the performer is proved by his ability in elaborating the prathamapada with other suitable quotations which go in support with the central idea. After the conclusion of the pūrvaraṅga a Bhajan or a Dhrupad is sung followed by a Tillāna and Tani āvarta. This Tillāna is not like the normal Tillāna.

In the Uttarāṅga the main story which is taken up is narrated with suitable songs specially composed in the Marathi metres such as the Sāki, Dindī, Ovi, Abhaṅga and so on. At the end of the story the prathama pada is again sung to sum up the main theme.

In Tanjore before the reign of Maratha rulers, the Harikatha form was fully of bhakti closely allied to the Bhajana sampradāya. At this juncture many kīrtankār-s from Gwalior and Pune were invited by the Maratha rulers in Tanjore. Two such kīrtankār-s were Mēruswāmy and Rāmachandra buva morgaumkar. They popularized this kīrtan in and around Tanjore staying for four months during the chaturmāsya. They performed and trained many disciples. Mṛdaṅgam Nārāyaṅaswāmi Appa was prominent among the disciples of Morgaumkar bava. The specialities of the Marathi kīrtan are the navarasa-s which are ably enacted with the dramatic fervor, the dance movements and the catchy tunes of the Marathi metrical forms.

#### Varkari style

Var means pilgrimage. Those who undertook this pilgrimage from Alandhi (the Samadhi of Jñānēśvar to Pandarpur) were called as the varkari. These varkari kīrtankar-s along with a group of devotees performed bhajan and Nāma saṅkīrtan. Here they sang songs of various saint composers namely Ēknāth, Rāmadāsa, Tukārām and Jñānēśvar. Each song was explained by the kīrtankar. In between, there was congregational singing. This is similar to the vīdhi bhajana. The only difference was the exposition which was performed interpreting the songs interspersed with philosophical doctrines explained in simple language. The congregational aspect of singing was opened to one and all without any barrier of caste and creed. A very good example which can be cited is that of Swāmi Haridāsgiri's bhajana saṅkīrtan-s. The varkari kīrtankar was more a bhakta or a saint who was also a poet. He sang his poems along with that of others and expounded its contents. One such was saint Tukārām who

attracted thousands of people for his performances who sang and danced together with him in devotional ecstasy.

The Rāshṭriya kīrtan was encouraged by leaders like Sri Lōkamānya Tilak. This served the purpose of spreading the spirit of patriotism during the freedom struggle. The stories of great freedom fighters like the Queen of Jhānsi, Vīra Sarvarkar and Shivāji were narrated to instill patriotic fervor in the minds of the listeners. While celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence it is relevant to remember the services of many kīrtankar-s who courted arrest for propagating the spirit of patriotism among the listeners. This was a powerful medium of instruction of mass communication. I quote Sri Y.B. Damle - "A note on Harikatha" - bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, June 1955 page - 18.

"Harikatha was used as a very effective platform for indoctrinating the masses. Even economic movements like the Swadēsi movement (boycott of foreign goods) were preached through Harikathas. Small wonder then that the British Government in India issued orders for arresting kathākar-s who indulged in this sort of propaganda"

It is believed that even great freedom fighters like Bālagangādhara Tilak evinced a keen interest in kīrtan as a medium to propagate rich doctrines and ideals and recognized it as an important source of mass communication. Observers say that Tilak had mentioned several times that he could have taken to katha if he had not entered the field of Journalism.



## STORY TELLING IN SOUTH INDIA

Story is called as Katha in Sanskrit and Katai in Tamil. The performing art Kathākālakshēpa constitutes of three words. In Sanskrit it means Katha - story, Kāla - time, Kshēpa - throw away or spending with regard to time. In total it means listening to stories and spending time. This is common to all people around the world. We have heard of bed time stories. Grandma or grandpa narrating stories and parables narrated by saints and so on.

In India, during the Vedic period the term used for episodes or story was Akhyana and the expert story teller was called as Akhyana - Vid. There were professional story tellers who were called as the Suta - Pauranika who were experts in narrating the genealogies of the kings and their heroic deeds. In the Tamil grammatical work called Tolkāppiyam, we have references to stories of God being narrated and this was named as Tonmai (meaning old).

In the various states of India there are three traditions of story-telling. One is the Purāna - Pravachana meaning expounding the Purāna. The purāna-pravachana was narrated by the Pauranika who was an expert in the exposition. Such expositions are solemn and serious.

The Kathākālakshēpa is unique because the story is carried through various songs and compositions in different Indian languages like Sanskrit, Tamil, Marathi, Telugu, Kannada and Hindi which is a peculiarity in the Tamil Nadu style of story telling. This is the second tradition.

The third is the folk type. In South India in Andhra Pradesh we have a folk story tradition called Burrakatha. Burra is an instrument, literally meaning a human skull. It is in that shape and gypsies narrate stories beating this drum. In Tamil Nadu the folk story tradition is called as Villupāṭṭu, viz., the bow-song. Here a large bow with jingling bells is kept in front of the performer and he narrated the story beating the bow with two sticks.

Krteyadhyayato Vishṇum

Trētāyām yajato maghaihi

Dvāparē paricaryayam

Kalautatu Harikīrtanatu

In Kṛta yuga, Trēta yuga and Dvāpara yuga-s one had to do Yajñas, Tapa and other severe austerities to obtain the grace of God. But in the kaliyuga, there is a very easy method through which one can attain or receive Lord's blessings. That is through Harikīrtan. Harikatha, Harikīrtan or Kathākālakshēpa are all synonymous, meaning narrating stories from epics and purāṇa-s interspersed with musical compositions. Kīrtan is a very typical usage of Maharashtra.

In South India it was the Tañjāvūr katha tradition which adopted certain fine elements from the Maharashtra Kīrtan. This Tañjāvūr Harikatha influenced the story traditions of the other states viz, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. There is always a misnomer that there was no Harikatha in Tañjāvūr before the Marathi Kīrtan. This is wrong and I have cited details about it in my book entitled Kathākālakshēpa - A Study which was my Ph.D thesis.

Sri. Doraiappa Bhāgavatar has written articles on Harikatha and its exponents in the 1940s in the Journal called 'Natyam' which was edited by Ranjan the well-known Indian dancer and film actor of yester years. According to him there were three traditions prevailing before the Maratha Kīrtan was introduced in Tañjāvūr.

1. The Ōduvār-s and other scholars, expounded the Kambarāmāyaṇam, Villiputtūrār Bhāratam and the Periyapurāṇam in the Temples along with musical compositions. This was mainly in Tamil. This was the type of story telling called as Kathāprasaṅgam which was performed by Aruṇāchala Kavirāyar (17<sup>th</sup> Century), Gōpālakrishṇa Bhāratiyār, Mahāvaidyanātha Sivan and Rāmaliṅga Swāmi (19<sup>th</sup> Century); Nellai Sundaramūrthy ōduvār, Kripānanda Vāriār, Pulavar Kīran (20<sup>th</sup> Century) and others. Even today we have scholars like Suki Sivam, Trichy Kalyāṇarāman and many others who are performing in this style. One important factor is that the element of music in these expositions depends solely on the musical ability of the individual. Some who were equally adepts in music used it more and those who were experts in literature used more of their knowledge in that area. Some had a good command over both which reflected in their performances and popularity.
2. The other style of story narration was the Pravachanam (exposition) which was expounded by scholars mainly Brahmins who were experts in Epics, Purāṇas, Sāstra-s, Upanishad-s and other philosophical works of Advaita, Vishishtādvaita, Dvaita and Saiva āgama-s. They concentrated mainly on Sanskrit and Tamil texts. Music was kept to the minimum and was only used sparingly to musically recite the slokas. Andamin Sivarāma Bhāgavatar, Paruttiyūr Krishna Sāstri, Paṇḍit Lakshmaṇāchārya and Tiruppazhanam Pañcāpakēsa Sāstri (19<sup>th</sup>

Century), were well-known Pauranika-s. Mukkūr Lakshminarasimhāchāryār, Tūpil and Vēļukkuḍi Krishṇan (20<sup>th</sup> Century) are continuing this tradition.

3. The other was the Kathākālakshēpa which was closely connected with the Bhajana Sampradāya. The Bhāgavatar-s who knew music, dance, stories and epics narrated them with upakatha-s and interspersed with suitable musical compositions, in various languages with instrumental accompaniment. The compositions used are common to the Bhajana Sampradāya (Congregational singing) like Asṭapadi-s of Jayadēva, Taraṅga-s of Nārāyaṇa Tīrta, compositions like Tēvāram, Divyaprabandham, Kīrtanas, Tiruppugazh in Tamil, Kīrtanas of Annamāchārya, Bhadrāchala Rāmadās, Tyāgarāja in Telugu, Purandara dāsa padas and other Dāsara padas in Kannada, and the Bhajans of Tulsidās, Kabir, Mīra and Sūrdās were all used. This is the style of katha which was modified by Tañjāvūr Krishna Bhāgavatar who is considered as the father of the Tañjāvūr style of Kālakshēpa. This had its golden days with his entry into the field. His period was from 1847-1903. Almost all the exponents were inspired by his performances and took to Harikatha. They were pandit Lakshmaṇāchārya, Tiruppazhanam Pañcāpakēsa Sāstri, Sūlamaṅgalam Vidyanātha Bhāgavatar, Māṅguḍi Chidambara Bhāgavatar and others.

What are the elements from the Marathi Kīrtan which were introduced by Krishna Bhāgavatar? The format of performances, the Marathi metrical forms like the Sāki, Dindi, Ovi, Arya, Abhaṅga, pada and so on. The tāḷa-s Usi, 3 beat, 7 beat and 5 beat were reckoned on the Cipla and Jāḷra used in a special method. The Nirupana-s (story text) were adopted from the Kīrtan Taraṅgiṇi, a Marathi text. Writing a Nirupana interspersed with all the above said songs are entirely a Marathi concept which was adopted by the Tamil performers. These were translated into Tamil by Sri T.S.V.

Mahādēva Sāstri (early 20<sup>th</sup> Century). Visvāmitra yaga samrakshana, Sulōchana sati, Vibhīshaṇa Saranāgati, Draupadi Māna samrakshaṇa, Sri Rāmajanana, Garuḍa garva haraṇa, Vatsala Kalyāṇa, Rukmiṇi Kalyāṇa are all Nirupana-s from Kīrtan Taraṅgiṇi.

So far we have seen the classical tradition of story telling. There is also a folk narrative style called as Villupāṭṭu or the bow-song. In villages such performers who are called as Pulavar (poet) in Tamil, narrated stories. The main instrument is a Bow where many small bells are tied on the bow string. The main story teller narrates the story beating the bow. The bow rests on a mud pot which is kept facing downwards. Another person beats the pot while singing. There is also a co-singer who replies saying 'yes yes' 'is it so' and so on to the main story teller to make it more interesting to the performer as well as the audience. The stories chosen are heroic ballads commonly known in the villages. However this form of story telling is also popular in urban areas and this medium is utilized to propagate social welfare programmes like Aids awareness, family planning and also for election propaganda. Kanian kūthu and the Uḍukkaippāṭṭu prevalent in the villages of South India are also folk story telling traditions. Stories like Suḍalaimāḍan kathai, Draupadi amman kathai, Kōvalan kathai, Muttupattan kathai, Marudu sahōdarar kathai etc are narrated.

### Andhra Pradesh

In Andhra Pradesh there are two types of story-telling the Puranapravachana and the Harikatha. The folk style of Katha is the Burrakatha. The purana pravachana is similar to what is happening in any other state. Here it will be interpreting the Sanskrit or the Telugu texts and the narration will be in Telugu with suitable quotations from Sanskrit.

Scholars feel that Harikatha in Telugu had its origin from Yakshagāna (Telugu dramatic literature). The other opinion is that it branched off from the Bhajana tradition. Similar to what Tañjāvūr Krishna Bhāgavatar was to the Tamil Harikatha Sri Ajjada Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās is considered as the father of the Telugu Harikatha tradition. Yakshagāna with slight changes became Vīdhi Nāṭaka (street play) or Baya latta of Karnataka or Terukkūthu the folk street theatre of Tamil Nadu.

Bhajana tradition owes its origin to one Sankīrtanapadakavita prapita Mahudu Simhagiri Krishnamāchāryulu of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Later the Tāḷapākkam brothers Annamāchārya and Chinnayya (15<sup>th</sup> Century) and Bhadrāchala Rāmadāsa enriched the art with their compositions. The common link between Bhajana and Kālakshēpa is something similar to Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and even Maharashtra. The main difference in Bhajana is that one individual leads and the group joins in the singing. In Harikatha, it is only the individual who sings and also narrates the story with occasional audience participation by way of singing or joining in the Jaijaikara (meaning long live - or hail).

In 1883 one Kuppuswāmi Nāiḍu from Madras performed Dhruva Charitram at Vijayanagaram where Ādibhaṭṭa Nārāyaṇa Dās who happened to listen to it was so inspired that he wrote his own text of the Dhruva Charitram and began a career as a Harikatha Bhāgavatar. He was already a singer, poet, a writer who knew dance also. He had all the necessary requisites to become a Harikatha performer. One Dr. S. Gaṅgappa who wrote about Nārāyaṇa Dāsa refers to him as the architect of the modern Telugu Harikatha.

The written text of a story with songs is called as Yakshagāna in Telugu. Nārāyaṇadāsa not only wrote such works in Telugu but also in Sanskrit. Telugu

Harikatha Bhāgavata-s have a violin or Harmonium, Tabla or Mṛdaṅgam as accompaniments. They perform in the standing posture narrate the story, sing and dance also.

There are specific poetic metrical forms in Telugu like Padya, Churnika, Dvipada, Campakamala, Utpalamala, Kanda padya and Sisapadya. Dulipali Krishnakavi, Chittimalle Raṅgayadāsu, Rāmānujadāsu, Bageyapalli Ananta Rāmānujāchāryulu, Mushti Rājalakshamma, Lakshmi Narasimha yogini are some of the many Harikatha artistes of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Dr. T. Donappa's book Telugu Harikatha Sarvasvam has dealt with the subject extensively.

### Burra-katha

Burra-katha is a popular folk style of story telling in Telugu. Burra means skull. The instrument resembles a human skull and is made of baked clay with a hollow shell. It is wide on one side and tapers towards the other end. At times it is made out of brass and copper. The Burra-katha story teller's wife assists him in the singing. The performers belong to the Telaks, Mutharasi caste and are also called as the Sarada Kandru (The Sarada people) worshippers of Goddess Sārada dēvi.

The story telling art with music is also popular among the Christians and Muslims of Andhra Pradesh. Abraham Bhāgavata's Yēsu Charitram, Manōhara kavi's Christu janma rahasya, Ratna kavi's Samson and Delaila, Khader khan Sahib's Mohammed vilāsam are all story texts which have been used by the performers.

### Karnataka

Here the art is called as Kīrtan, Kathākīrtan, Kathākālakshēpa and Harikathe. The Jains called it Jinakathe and the Saivaites call it Sivakathe. Yakshagāna of

Karnataka is a very popular, theatrical art. The term Prasaṅga is used to denote the written text of the Yakshagāna and the Tālamaddale. The Tālamaddale is a Yakshagāna performed without make up, in a seated posture with tāla and maddala. Each person takes up a character and has to improvise his own dialogue.

One Tumkur Vēṅugōpāla dāsa in a personal interview way back in 1983 told me that, "The Haribhakti propagated by the Āḷwār-s the Tamil Vaishnavite Saints upto the 12<sup>th</sup> century was carried on by the Dāsakuta line of composers.

Harikatha śravana māḍō nirantara

Paragatigidu nirandhara nōḍō

sings a Kannada poet.

Two sources influenced the Kannada Harikatha. One was the Marathi Pandharpur Bhajana tradition. Sri Rāmachandrabuva Mogaunkar who taught many at Tañjāvūr also propagated and popularized Marathi Kīrtan in Karnataka, during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Srīpādarāya, Kanakadāsa, Jagannādadāsa and Purandaradāsa the Dāsa kuta line of composers performed religious discourses from 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Bhadrāgiri Achyuta Dās, Bhadrāgiri Kēsava Dās, Konanuru Srikanta Sāstri, Gururājulu Nāiḍu, L. Lakshmiṭi, Tumkur Vēṅugōpāla Dāsa, are some of the well-known Kannada Kathakāra-s. The other source of influence was the Tañjāvūr Harikatha.

The subject encyclopedia in Kannada mentions the origin of Harikatha thus:

"Any story with Saṅgītabhinaya coupled with anecdotes is called Kathākālakshēpa. This has had its origin in Maharashtra. Before this form entered Karnataka there used to be Purana Patana, Bhajana in temples. In course of time Purana Patana has taken shape into Kathākālakshēpa. The actual form and popular appeal for this art has been given by Krishna Bhāgavata of Tañjāvūr and



Tiruppazhanam Pañcāpakēsa Sāstri. Today Harikatha vidvān-s in Karnataka are following the path laid by them.

## Kerala

In Kerala the art of story telling branched out into three different types the Patakam, Harikatha and the Kathāprasaṅgam.

Patakam is similar to Purana Pravachana. This is the exposition of the Sanskrit texts in the vernacular viz., Malayalam. The Harikatha was introduced by Mahārāja Svāti Tirunāḷ who was very much influenced by the Tañjāvūr style of Harikatha. The kathāprasaṅgam is very unique to Kerala which was started and popularized to propagate the Malayalam language and literature.

## Patakam

Patakam is an individual's solo performance. This had no instrumental accompaniment. Slokas are recited followed by narration and exposition. This was performed by the Nampiyar community earlier but today it is not restricted to them alone. This was a traditional orthodox art and drew its material from the sacred lore. Sanskrit and Malayalam were the only languages used.

## Harikatha

Professor S. Guptan Nair a scholar in Malayalam literature in an interview mentioned to me in 1983 that Harikatha with all its musical richness was introduced by Mahārāja Svāti Tirunāḷ and the latter wrote Kuchēla and Ajamilōpakhyāna and these two Charitrams were performed by one Mēruswāmi, a Marathi Kīrtankar. It consists of slokas and songs in Sanskrit. This was sometime in 1836. He was also called as

Anantapadmanābha Gōswāmi and was the Kulaguru (teacher) of the Royal family of Travancore.

One K.K. Vādyār has written a book entitled 'Kathāprasaṅgam Endu Endinu Engane' which discusses the Katha scene of Kerala. Apart from the traditional Patakam and the introduction of Tañjāvūr Harikatha the unique modern story telling style of Kerala is the Kathāprasaṅgam. If we analyse the term it is story-exposition. So there is no religious element apparent in the term. It could be any story which is taken up for exposition.

The content was non-religious. Their purpose was not to propagate bhakti or devotion but to popularize and create awareness for the Malayalam language and literature. The other purpose was to fight against the evils of the society and to strive for its upliftment.

This was conceived by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those who were not well-versed in Sanskrit or music took to this form of art of the Kathāprasaṅgam. The music used was light and light classical similar to film music. Their motive was one God and one Race (community) (orē deivam, orē kulam) propagated by Sri Nārāyaṇa Guru who was a social reformer.

Modern simple novels and stories of the Malayala Kavitrāyam (poet-tiro) viz, Asan, Vallatol and Ullūr were adopted. Satyadēvan was the pioneer of Kathāprasaṅgam and later M.P. Manmadan, K.K. Vādyār, P.C. Abraham, Joseph Kaimamparamban and V. Sāmbasivan popularized this art form which was tremendously popular and attracted large audiences.

The popular themes of Kathāprasāṅgam were Candalabikshuki and Karuna popular novels of Sri. Kumaran Asan. Vallatol's works 'Magdalena Mariam', 'Romeo and Juliet', Anna Karanina (in Malayalam) were adopted. The narration was highly dramatized like the dialogues of drama. There was also an elaborate orchestra like the keyboard, drums, etc (similar to light music orchestra) which even provided the background music for the narration a concept borrowed from cinema.

Out of all the above mentioned performers only Sri Joseph Kaimamparamban is alive and continuing this tradition. He was a staff artiste at the All India Radio Trivandrum.

This is the scene of story telling in South India and it is quite interesting that how each region has developed its own style from the common origin which was and is the Purana Pravachana. This was the system of formal teaching of transmitting the scriptures and ethics in the form of story by a learned teacher to a gathering of eager listeners. As long as one wants to listen to a story and another wants to narrate it, the story telling will continue to be an interesting way to spend time. The television and the computer have become our modern story-tellers. But yet there is a human mind and brain behind them.

## DIVYA PRABANDAM

Collection of Vaishnava religious hymns are called 'Nālāyira Divyaprabandam'. Those who sang these hymns are called 'Āzhwārs'. There are twelve Āzhwārs. They are,

1. Periyāzhwār
2. Āṇḍāḷ
3. Kulasēkara āzhwār
4. Tirumazhisai āzhwār
5. Toṇḍaraḍippoḍi āzhwār
6. Tiruppānāzhwār
7. Madurakavi āzhwār
8. Poigai āzhwār
9. Būtaththāzhwār
10. Pēyāzhwār
11. Nammāzhwār
12. Tirumaṅgai āzhwār

Since Ālvār-s who were also called as divyasūri-s has composed the auspicious qualities of the presiding deity of divya kshētra-s duly sung with true bhakti and it contains 4000 songs, they are called 'Nālāyiram'. As it binds Lord Śrīman Nārāyaṇa who is residing at Vaikuṅṭam, it was called Prabandam. Prabandam binds the Lord. If he hears Prabanda-s of Ālvār-s gōshṭi, he will not proceed even a single step further. Kambar in his Saḍagōpar andāti says,

"Kuruhūr puvitan kavi ōr pātatin mun sellumē thollai mūḷa parañcuḍarē"

We can find the words "Vēdatin mun selga" in the very beginning of this song. Even today we can find this tradition. We find Divya Prabanda gōshṭi in front and Vēda Pārāyaṇa gōshṭi at the back during procession in Vaishnavite temples.

## Structure of Divyaprabandam

### First āyiram

Periyāzhvār	-	Tiruppallāṇḍu , Periyāzhvār Tirumozhi
Āṇḍāḷ	-	Tiruppāvai, Nācciyār Tirumozhi
Kulasēkara āzhvār	-	Perumāḷ Tirumozhi
Toṇḍaraḍippoḍiyāzhvār	-	Tirumālai, Tiruppaḷḷiyezucci
Tiruppānāzhvār	-	Amalanādipirān
Madurakavi	-	Kanninun siruttāmbu

### Second āyiram

Tirumaṅgaiyāzhvār	-	Periya Tirumozhi Tirukkuruntāṇḍakam Tiruneḍuntāṇḍakam
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### Third āyiram

Poigai āzhvār	-	Mudal Tiruvandādi
Pēyāzhvār	-	Iraṇḍām Tiruvandādi
Būdattāzhvār	-	Mūṇḍrām Tiruvandādi
Tirumazisaiyāzhvār	-	Nānmugan Tiruvandādi
Nammāzhvār	-	Tiruviruttam, Tiruvāsiriyam Periya Tiruvandādi
Tirumaṅgaiyāzhvār	-	Tiruvezhukkūṟṟirukkai Siriya Tirumaḍal Periya Tirumaḍal

### Fourth āyiram

Nammāzhvār	-	Tirumozhi
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Amongst these four thousand, third āyiram is called 'lyarpā'. We can assume that the rest three thousand songs should be sung with music. Publishers of Divyaprabandam says that it is clear except lyarpā, the rest three thousands are called Isaippā.