
Mela Ragamalika by Maha Vaidyanatha Shiva Iyer

श्रीमहावैद्यनाथशिवविरचिता मेळरागमालिका

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Maha VaidyanAtha Iyer (1844-1892 A.D.), popularly known as shivan, was born in the village of VaiyacEri, near Ta njAvUr. His father,

Pa ncanada Iyer, who gave him initial training in music, was a music scholar and devotee of Lord shiva. Of the four sons, shivan was the third, and his elder brother, RAMasvAmi shivan was also a proficient musician and composer.

Later, the shivan brothers learnt the subtle aspects of music from Anayya, and from MaNambucAvadi Ve NkaTasubba Iyer, a direct disciple of Saint TyAgarAja. Even as a boy of ten, VaidyanAtha shivan could sing in all the three SthAyi-s with remarkable skill and accuracy. He used to sing in the GandhAra shruti- the third kaTTai of Harmonium, and move between six kAla-s with great speed. At the age of 12, he gave his first public performance in KalliDaikuricci, in the distinguished presence of SubrahmaNya DEshikar and AmbalavANa DEshikar, the Adhipati-s (chiefs) of TiruvADutturai Matham. Among the audience were two reputed musicians of that time, Periya VaidyanAtha Iyer, and Cinna VaidyanAtha Iyer. Impressed with his performance and the depth of his musical knowledge, SubrahmaNya DEshikar as well as the Sadas (assembly) conferred upon him the title MahA. His favourite musical form was Manodharma sa NgItaM (extempore rendition), and at a very young age, he became proficient in rendering AlApana, tAnaM, pallavi, neraval and kalpanA svara. He was also gifted with a magnificent voice. Once, during a pallavi competition, he thrilled the audience with an amazing exposition of nArAyaNagauLa rAgam, and defeated one famous Pallavi VidvAn, VeNu, and won several laurels. Fiddle Ve Nkoba Iyer accompanied him on the violin. On another occasion, he stunned the Sabha with his famous pallavi in kalyANi rAgam, set to Simhanandana tALaM, (the longest of the 108 tAla-s) consisting of 128 akShrarkAla-s, The sahityam of this lengthy and intricate pallavi reads:

गौरीनायक कनकसभा नायक

हालाहलधर गङ्गाधरहर ।
स्मरहरपुरहर शिवकामेश्वर
चिदंबरेश्वर नटराज मामव ॥

Later, he recast this pallavi into a tillAnA, ThIM tara tiranA in KalyANi, in the same Simhanandana tALaM. This tillAnA is also sung in rAga kAnaDa. VaiyanAtha Iyer was also a gifted performer of HarikathA kAlakShEpaM. Throughout his life, shivan enjoyed the healthy patronage of the rulers of RAmanAthapuraM.

The kAmbhoji pada varNaM, Pa NkajAkShi pai, and the nAgasvrAvali kRRiti shri sha Nkara GuruvaraM are his well-known compositions, among various other kRRiti-s in Tamil and Sanskrit. In addition, many of the compositions which are attributed to his elder brother RAmasvAmi, undoubtedly enjoy co-authorship with VaidyanAtha shivan, and contain the rAgamudra guha dAsa. Here is a partial list of such compositions by shivan brothers:

पाहिमाम् श्री राजराजेश्वरि (जनरञ्जनि)
मनविनि वरु (कनकाङ्गि)
पङ्कजाक्षि पै (काम्भोजि वर्ण)
कडैक्कण् (बेगड)
एकालत्तिलुं (नाट्टकुर न्जि)
मुत्तुकुमारय्यने (शङ्कराभरणं)
उन्तु पादं तुणये (चक्रवाकं)
नटनं शेय्युं (केदारगौळ)
श्रि शङ्कर गुरुवरं (नागस्वरावलि)
माल् मरुगनै (बिलहरि)

In any case, MahA VaidyanAtha Iyer's greatest contribution to CarNatic music is of course, his famous 72 MELa rAgamAlIkA. But this was not the first, single composition covering all the 72 mELa rAga-s. One LAvaNi VE NkaTa Rao, a court poet in the Tanjore kingdom, a scholar in Marathi, Tamil and Telugu, and a brilliant exponent of of LAVani (a type of Marathi folk style) singing, composed a version of the 72 mELa rAgamAlIkA, called "BAhattara MELakartA" in Marathi. This composition begins with the phrases shrImAn Jokari RAjya ViShNu sama, and incorporates the RAga mudrain each line of the charaNaM. The theme is erotic, and is in praise of SakhArAm SAhEb, the son-in-law

of the ruler. MahA VaidyanAtha Iyer was entrusted with the task of setting this composition to music. He accomplished this with great ease in a short period of seven days, and was awarded 2000 rupees, besides many gifts. It is said that LAvaNi Ve NkaTa Rao played the mRRida NgaM to the singing of MahA VaidyanAtha Iyer. However, MahA VaidyanAtha Iyer did not relish the erotic nature of the theme and the nara stuti(praising a human) in this composition, so, he wrote a suitable alternate sAhityamin praise of Lord PraNatArtihara (shiva) of the mammoth temple at TiruvaiaAru. This is the version that is currently in vogue as the MELarAgamAlikA. The entire rAgamAlikAis set to Adi tALaM. The pallaviis sung in shrI rAgam, followed by some beautiful jatiphrases in the tillAnA style; there is no anupallavi, and the charaNam has 72 lines, one for each mELakartA, with the rAgamudra (signature) skillfully woven in each line. At the end of each mELa rAgam, there is a chiTTa svaram, and further, to enhance the beauty of the composition, his brother RAMasvAmi shivan added additional chiTTasvara-s at the end of each line, whose pUva NgaM (the first half) is in the same mELaM, but the uttarA NgaM (the second half) is in the next mELaM. At the end of each chakraM, the pallavi is repeated in shrI rAgam, and after line 36, at the commencement of the Prati madhyama series, the jati phrases are also sung.

This is not a composition that we hear in a concert platforms. Occasionally, in the past, one or two chakraM-s of this lengthy composition has been rendered by singers like Musiri SubrahmaNya Iyer, and Smt. M. S. SubbalakShmi. In June 1989, the Gramophone Company of India (HMV) released an album (LP No. ECSD 40553), and simultaneously, a 60 minute cassette (No. HTCS 03B 3346) under the title: mELa rAgamAlikA cakra, where Smt. M. S. SubbalakShmi melodiously sings the complete rAgamAlikA with all the above-mentioned features and ciTTa svara-s. Another audio-cassette is excerpts from a live recording of a Music Academy concert by Mudikondan Venkatarama Iyer, that features selected chakraM-s from the MELarAgamAlikA.

The theme of this rAgamAlikAis advaitic, and highly philosophical, and is packed with several well-know (and not so well-known) anecdotes from ancient mythology. A full-fledged commentary in Tamil, known as "shivapriya", written by V.S.V GurusvAmi shAstrigal of VaragUr is available in a 1989 Music Academy publication, "The MELarAgamAlikA of Maha Vaidyanathan Sivan. This tamil book, edited by T.S.Parthasarathy, also includes the notations of the rAgamAlikA, as sung by M. S.

Subbalakshmi. The text of the original Marathi language rAgamAlikA, BAhattara MELakartA of LAvaNi VE NkaTa Rao is also given in this book.

This text (with notations in English) appeared earlier in the scholarly work, The SaMgraha CUDamaNi of GovindAchArya (Edited by Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri, and published by The Adyar Library, 1938).

Another valuable book, MELarAgamAlikA of MahA VaidyanAtha shivan, edited by Pandit S. Subrahmanya Sastri, published by the Adyar Library and Research Center, Madras (1937), later revised by Smt S. Sarada (1979) (in Sanskrit and English) provides Notations in both English and Sanskrit.

। ताळं - आदि ।

। पल्लवि - श्रीरागम् ।

प्रणतार्तिहरप्रभो पुरारे प्रणवरूप सम्पदे पदे ।

प्रणमामि श्री प्रकृतिप्रेरक प्रमथगणपते पदे पदे ॥

। जति ।

तां तां तकणक धीं धीं धिमितरि किटतक तरिकुडु

तधीं धीङ्कु तकधिमि तकतरि किटतक झं

नादिरु दिरुधों दिरुदिरु दित्तिल्लाना दिरिना ताना दोन्तिरि

तकणक तकजणु तकधिमि ध्रुक्डतत् तळाङ्गुतों तकतिक तधिङ्गिणतों

। अनुपल्लवि - चरणम् (७२ मेळ) ।

(शुद्धमध्यममेळ १ - ३६)

कनकाङ्गा रमया पूजित सनकादिप्रिय कृपालय ॥ १ ॥

रत्नाङ्गा धर्मसंवर्धन्या रमण मां परिपालय ॥ २ ॥

गानमूर्तिरिति घनशास्त्रमानमूर्धन्यैर्गदितोऽसि ॥ ३ ॥

श्रीवनस्पतिदलसमर्चनेन पावनभक्तैर्विदितोऽसि ॥ ४ ॥

मानवतीभिः स्मृतिभिरुक्तकर्मकृन्मानवपापं वारयसि ॥ ५ ॥

तानरूपिणं त्वां भजन्ति ये तारमुपदिशंस्तारयसि ॥ ६ ॥

देवसेनापतिजनक नीलग्रीव सेवकजनपोषण ॥ ७ ॥

हनुमतो डिण्डिमभवं स्तुवतः सुतनुमतोऽददा भूतिभूषण ॥ ८ ॥
 भानुकोटिसङ्काश महेश धेनुकासुरमारकवाहन ॥ ९ ॥
 आनन्दनाटकप्रियामरवर श्रीनन्दनाटवीहव्यवाहन ॥ १० ॥
 कोकिलप्रियाम्रकिसलयाङ्ग गोकुलपालनपटुभयभञ्जन ॥ ११ ॥
 बहुरूपावतीह भवान् मां मुहुर्मुहुरूर्जितभक्तजनरञ्जन ॥ १२ ॥
 धीरभद्राख्यगायकप्रिय वीरभद्रादिपालितशरण ॥ १३ ॥
 देवकुलाभरणोद्धारक श्रीवसुदेवकुलाभरणनतचरण ॥ १४ ॥
 जितमाया माळवगौळान्तर्गतमाहेशाः त्वां विन्दन्ति ॥ १५ ॥
 चक्रवाककुचार्धाङ्ग त्वत्कृपया शक्रवाक्पतिसुराः नन्दन्ति ॥ १६ ॥
 तेजसा जितसूर्यकान्त्या गौर्या ओजसाऽनुलप्रताप ॥ १७ ॥
 शुभकर हाटकाम्बरिशराब्जनिभकर हतभक्तपरिताप ॥ १८ ॥
 झङ्कारध्वनियुतमालाधर टङ्कारध्वनियुतचाप ॥ १९ ॥
 महानट भैरवीमारुतिभारतीसहायदेवैर्नतकोप ॥ २० ॥
 शिव नत्कीरवाणीवशग भवन इव वस मे मनसि ॥ २१ ॥
 खरहरप्रियमालोक्य परात्पर हर दयया पालितवानसि ॥ २२ ॥
 गौरीमनो हरिदम्बर सततं गौरिव वत्से रमते भवति ॥ २३ ॥
 योऽसौ अरुणप्रियादित्यः तं त्वा सा श्रुतिरानता भवति ॥ २४ ॥
 माररञ्जनीवरद निरहङ्कारजना मुक्त्यै त्वां स्तुवन्ति ॥ २५ ॥
 चारु के शिवलिङ्गमनार्च्य मेरुधन्वन् सुखमाप्नुवन्ति ॥ २६ ॥
 सरसां गीतिं कीर्तिं दिश मे तरसा अङ्गीकृतहतमदन ॥ २७ ॥
 हरिकाम्भोधिसम्भवामरदुरितनिवारक स्मितवदन ॥ २८ ॥
 धीर शङ्कराभरणसमं त्वां घोरशङ्कया नो जाने ॥ २९ ॥
 ज्ञानगानं कृतवतां वरद श्रीनगानन्दिनीजाने ॥ ३० ॥
 यागप्रियामरत्यागप्रियं विधिं द्रागप्रियेण शिक्षितवानसि ॥ ३१ ॥

सदानन्दे त्वयि रागवर्धनीं मुदा पुनितवतीं रक्षितवानसि ॥ ३२ ॥

श्रितगजवदन गाङ्गेय भूषणीकृतभुजङ्ग नतसुरकदम्ब ॥ ३३ ॥

वागधीश्वरीश्रियौ यदङ्गसम्भवे भोगमोक्षदा जगदम्बा ॥ ३४ ॥

शूलिनी तथा धर्मवर्धन्या खेलसि दयया सुरवरिष्ठ ॥ ३५ ॥

कैलासाचलनाटनकृद्भुजशैलदण्डकचरणाङ्गुष्ठ ॥ ३६ ॥

(प्रणतार्तिहर प्रभो पुरारे)

(प्रतिमध्यममेळ ३७-७२)

प्रतिबिम्बरसालगफलसमा विषया इति बिम्बाधराः सन्त्यजन्ति ॥ ३७ ॥

ये भवजलार्णवं सन्तरितुं ते भवदङ्घिनौकां भजन्ति ॥ ३८ ॥

झलं झलवराळिगीतमालाधर जलन्धरासुरमारक ॥ ३९ ॥

सुरदानवनीतामृतविमुख वरदाननिरत तारक ॥ ४० ॥

भोः पावनीपिष्टास्वादन रसिकभूप अव नीपवनसुन्दर ॥ ४१ ॥

रघुप्रियार्चितराजीवचरण मघप्रणाशन भुजमन्दर ॥ ४२ ॥

गवाम्भोधिः तीर्ण इव मया भवाम्भोधिः तव दयया ॥ ४३ ॥

इह प्रसन्नो भव प्रियतमया सह प्रमथप द्रागुमया ॥ ४४ ॥

सर्वशुभापं तु वराळिकाक्षं कुर्वनुग्रहं त्वां वन्देऽहम् ॥ ४५ ॥

सदय षड्विधमार्गिणि मनुजे हृदयग न कुर्वे सन्देहम् ॥ ४६ ॥

सुवर्णां गीतिं समुपदिश प्रथमवर्णाङ्गीकृतवैकुण्ठ ॥ ४७ ॥

दिव्यमणिबन्धे बद्धनागकङ्कण भव्यमणिलसितश्रीकण्ठ ॥ ४८ ॥

सुबलारिमुखामरप्रपूजित धवळाम्बरीपतेर्दुर्दर्श ॥ ४९ ॥

सुरूपनामनारायणीसहचर स्वरूपभासकादर्श ॥ ५० ॥

धर्मकामवर्धनीविलसित निर्मलाङ्ग शुभदायक ॥ ५१ ॥


नितरां अप्रियवादिनि विमुख नतराम अग्निसायक ॥ ५२ ॥


चिदम्बरगमनश्रमापहरणं कदम्बरमण मम दीयताम् ॥ ५३ ॥

विश्वं भरितं त्वयाष्टमूर्त्या शश्वद्धनमाधीयताम् ॥ ५४ ॥
 श्यामळाङ्गीकृतवामभाग कोमळाङ्गजशरभङ्ग ॥ ५५ ॥
 षण्मुखप्रियाङ्गुप्रियजनक हिरण्मयाङ्गनत शरभाङ्ग ॥ ५६ ॥
 हर सिंहेन्द्रमध्यमार्धाङ्ग नरसिंह अजिनाम्बर ॥ ५७ ॥
 पुरहर हैमवतीमनोहर हर रक्षितसुरनिकर ॥ ५८ ॥
 विदितधर्मो अतिकायजिद्रामौ मुदितमनाः त्वं रक्षितवान् ॥ ५९ ॥
 नीतिमतीह जनेऽतिप्रियोऽसि प्रीतिमतिरहितान् शिक्षितवान् ॥ ६० ॥
 श्रियोऽधिकां तां अणिमादिदां पयोधिकान्तामणिसेविताम् ॥ ६१ ॥
 धर्मवर्धनीं सुरर्षभप्रियां निर्मलभक्तैर्भाविताम् ॥ ६२ ॥
 मननशीलतां गीर्वाणपतेः जननवर्जितामुक्तवतीम् ॥ ६३ ॥
 भूमिषु वाचस्पतिसम्बन्धस्वामिने ज्ञानं दत्तवतीम् ॥ ६४ ॥
 मेचकल्याणीं वाचं दिशतीं मोचकदायिनीं रमसे ॥ ६५ ॥
 विचित्राम्बरीषवरदभाग सचित्रगुप्तयमागः क्षमसे ॥ ६६ ॥
 सुचरित्रमुखभक्तसङ्गीत सुचरित्रमुखरितवाद्य ॥ ६७ ॥
 ज्योतिःस्वरूपिणि त्वयि प्रसन्ने भाति स्वरूपं किं नाद्य ॥ ६८ ॥
 धातुवर्धनीं तवाभिधासुधां पातुकामिनी मम रसना ॥ ६९ ॥
 सुवेन आसिकाभूषणं हि सतां मुखे नासिकेव विवसन ॥ ७० ॥
 कोसल्पः त्वाऽऽपूज्याघं हित्वा सभापते मुमुदे हि ॥ ७१ ॥
 भक्तापदानरसिकप्रिय त्यक्तापदानन्दं मम देहि ॥ ७२ ॥
 (प्रणतार्तिहर प्रभो पुरारे)

॥ इति श्रीमहावैद्यनाथशिवविरचिता मेळरागमालिका समाप्ता ॥

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