

The Two Savants in Carnatic Music

A. Madhav
(madhav@telerama.com)

The Bhakti movement was infused with musical fervour by many saint -musicians all over India over the centuries. Notable among them -Purandara Dasa and Tyagaraja played key roles during their lives. Both these men belonged to the line of saint- musicians, who influenced the masses for their moral and spiritual upliftment through the medium of their musical compositions. Both men have emphasized that bhakti without sincerity of devotion is meaningless. These two ardent devotees of God were in a manner of speaking, trend-setters. Their reformist zeal to set bhakti in its proper perspective devoid of sham and meaningless rituals was frequently stressed in their kritis. The spiritual and philosophical contents of their kritis are often compared to the Upanishads.

While Purandara Dasa was instrumental in laying the foundations of Carnatic music, Tyagaraja took Carnatic music to the peak of its perfection. It is not surprising that these two musical stalwarts are featured more often than other musical personalities in many discussions of Carnatic music.

Purandara Dasa (1484-1564) had enjoyed the privileges and comforts in his youth and middle age. However, he realized the tawdry selfishness of people and the world around him which prompted him to give up all his wealth and physical comforts and devote himself to a life of high ideals of philosophy and spirituality. After his tutelage from his guru-Vyasa Raya, Purandara Dasa devoted his second half of his life to composing songs in praise of Lord Krishna- the deity of Pandharpur. He, thus became Purandara Dasa - a devotee or servant of

Supreme Lord.

Purandara Dasa was a great bhakta, musician and composer. His kritis are set in simple words which exude bhakti, common sense and philosophy and which have universal appeal. He was a pioneer and creative genius. His contributions to Carnatic music are immense. He adopted 'Malavagoula' (later changed to 'Mayamalavagoula') to enable beginners learn the basics of Carnatic music. He introduced various musical forms like Sarali, Janta varisas, Hecchu and Taggu stayis, Alankaras, Geetas etc. Simple lessons (pillari geethams) in ragas like Malahari and Shuddasaveri were introduced by him. He also systematised suladi sapta talas. He is credited to have composed several thousands of kritis. Unfortunately, only a fraction of his total output of kritis is available.

It is incredible that even four centuries later, Purandara Dasa's teaching models have been handed down to us with no variation! His immense contributions to music have earned him the recognition as the Sangeetha Pitamaha-the grandsire of Carnatic music.

Tyagaraia (1767-1847) was born of modest means, but eschewed all material comforts even as a youth and devoted himself to the worship of Lord Rama.

He had his musical training from Sonti Venkataramanayya. Tyagaraja was influenced by the music of Purandara Dasa and other great savants. Tyagaraja has paid tribute to Purandara Dasa in his "Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam". His unswerving devotion to Rama is demonstrated through emotional outpourings in many of his kritis. His compositions are

simple but laden with bhakti and philosophy which caught the appeal of many music lovers. Tyagaraja's kritis reached the height of perfection. He was instrumental in developing several new ragas, which were used in his compositions. One outstanding feature of Tyagaraja's kritis is its inherent scope for adding sangatis eg: Dorakuna itu vanta (Bilahari) and Dharani telusu (Shudda saveri).

Similarity in their thought process

While these musical geniuses (Purandara Dasa and Tyagaraja) lived almost three centuries apart, it is interesting to compare their lives, their contributions to music and philosophical thoughts.

There are several parallels in their lives. Both Purandara Dasa and Tyagaraja were pious, saintly and great devotees of Krishna and Rama respectively. The lyrics of their kritis were simple, but with high philosophical and spiritual contents. Both were musical prodigies who disliked royal patronages and gifts. They abhorred 'narastutti' or praising of mortals. Purandara Dasa was not enamoured of the royal bounty and wealth of King of Vijaya nagar. Similarly, Tyagaraja too refused invitations from the Tanjavur Maharaja and other Kings of Travancore and Mysore. Both have commented on their feelings in musical forms and idioms. In Purandara Dasa's kriti '*Namma bhagya doddado, Nimma bhagya doddado*', he feels more blessed because of the Lord's protection compared to the King, who has just material possessions. In another kriti '*Antarangadalli Hariya kaanadava*', Purandara Dasa reiterates the same concept '*Narara sevisa bedavo endendigu*', while Tyagaraja says in his '*Nidhi chala sukhama, Ramuni sannidhi seva sukhama*' that he does not need anybody's blessings but Rama's.

Purandara Dasa and Tyagaraja have expressed their thoughts and feelings on other aspects of life as well. A general concept of the meaning of their songs is given within brackets. Regarding music, what Purandara Dasa has said in '*Talabeku takka mela beku*' Tyagaraja has echoed similar ideas in his '*Sogasuga mrudanga talamu*' (basic details of an ideal kriti). The words '*Sakala tirtha yaatreya maadidante nikhila punyada phalavu*' in Purandara Dasa's '*Smarane onde saalade*' have parallel expressions in Tyagaraja's '*Dhyaaname varamaina Ganga snaanamu*' (Plunging in holy waters will not purify from the sins of deceit). To focus one's mind to the devotion of the Lord, the words used by both Purandara Dasa and Tyagaraja in their kritis are almost identical. Purandara Dasa says '*Manava nilisuvudu balu kashta*' and Tyagaraja's lyrics are '*Manasu nilpa shakti leka pothe*' (Controlling one's mind for worship is hard). Purandara Dasa's '*Sakala graha bala neene*' and Tyagaraja's '*Graha bala memi*' are close in their contents (Strength from the Divine protection is better than those from all planets). Similarly, Dasa's '*Dwaitavu sukhava*' and Tyagaraja's '*Dwaitamu sukhama*' alike in their philosophical content (the decision to follow Dvaita or Advaita for bliss). There are several examples where the thoughts of these two men run very similar. A few relevant lines are mentioned.

Mosahodenallo naanu (Purandara Dasa) and *Mosabegu vinave satsaha-vasamu* (Tyagaraja) (Do not get deceived by not thinking of God)

Manuja sharira enu sukha (Purandara Dasa) and *Pranamuleni vaaniki bangaru baaga jutti in Bhakti beecha meeyave* (Tyagaraja) (Praise the Lord to get eternal bliss) *Samananyavalla Sri Hariye seve* (Purandara

Dasa) and *Adi gadu bhajana manasa* (Tyagaraja) (false pretence is no bhajana at all).

Daasana madiko enna (Purandara Dasa) and *Meluko Dayaanidhi* (Tyagaraja) (Accept me as your own).

Idu bhaagya Padumanabha paada bhajana sukhavayya (Purandara Dasa) and *Ide bhaagya gaka yemi yunnadira, Rama* (Tyagaraja) (blessed is the one who worships God sincerely).

Kaliyuga dalli Hari naama (Purandara Dasa) and *Padavini s̄adbhakti galkude* (Tyagaraja) (only true devotion to God can bring a status of value).

Raama naama paayasakke Krishna naama sakkare(Purandara Dasa) and *Raama kathaa sudha rasapaanam* (Tyagaraja) (Drink the divine nectar).

Dharma shravana yetake (Purandara Dasa) and *Chevitiki-yupadeshinchi natu gaado* (Tyagaraja) (Worship of God is more important than other trivial pursuits).

Conclusion

The contributions of these two vaggayakaras are enormous in terms of the voluminous number and different types of compositions. Their rich bequest to Carnatic music continues to captivate and fascinate music lovers all over the world and will carry through for many centuries more.

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