

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Carnātic music is made colourful by its powerful musical forms and rāga-s. Our composers have presented their compositions to us in an excellent and artistically complete manner. For that, we are always grateful to them. Carnātic music composers are popularly known as vāggēyakāra-s. Śri Śārngadēva, in his treatise '*Sangīta ratnākara*,' mentions that the word itself is a sandhi of vāka+gēya+kāra. "Vāka is lit. speech and therefore by contexts implies the verbal text or the verbal structure of a musical composition; gēyam is lit. that which is the object of singing, i.e. dhātu, the tonal rhythmic structure of melody."¹

Those who set the compositions with deep knowledge of the implication of musical terms are referred to as vāggēyakāra-s. The famous vāggēyakāra-s Śyāmasāstri, Tyāgarāja, and Dīkshitar were collectively known as the musical Trinity. Śyāma śāstri was the eldest of them.

The significance of this study is that Subbarāya śāstri is the only person who got a chance to learn the great art of music from the Trinity. The Trinity were directly connected to his life. Subbarāya śāstri's father Śyama śāstri was in contact with Tyāgarāja and Dīkshitar. This helped Subbarāya śāstri to develop a relationship with them.

¹ www.carnatic.com

Subbarāya śāstri has composed more than 40 kṛti-s. But only a few kṛti-s are available now. Smt Vidya Shankar – one of the direct disciples of Śyama śāstri’s ancestry – produced only 11 kṛtis in notation. They are in the following ragas – Tōdi, Dhanyāsi Mukhāri, Rītigaṭṭa, Yadukulakāmbōji, Kalyāṇi, Hamirkalyāṇi, Darbār, Bēgada, Dēsyā tōdi, and Śri.

Śri TK Gōvinda Rao – a leading vocalist of Indian classical Carnatic music – who was from a family of musicians and who also compiled and edited the “compositions of Śyama śāstri, Subbarāya śāstri and Annaswāmi satri”, mentions one more raga ‘vasantha.’

We get additional information from an article named ‘Famous Carnatic Composers’ that a Śankarābharaṇam kṛti ‘entanucu varṇimpa’ also come under the list of Subbarāya śāstri’s kṛti-s.¹

Even though only a few kṛti-s are available, all those kṛti-s have a unique place among the classics of Carnatic compositions. This was only because of their great individuality and excellent quality. By the analysis of Subbarāya śāstri kṛti-s, one can focus on the point that his kṛtis are highly influenced by the Trinity.

Subbarāya śāstri was a great devotee of the Mother Goddess and his compositions are mainly in praise of Her. And he also composed kṛti-s in praise of Thirupathy Venkadachalapathy and Śri Parthasarathy Perumal of Triplicane in Madras.

¹ www.karnatik.com

SUBBARĀYA ŚĀSTRĪ – A SHORT LIFE SKETCH

Subbarāya śāstri – the youngest son of the great composer Śyama śāstri – was born in the Dundhubhi Samvatsara, Simha māsa, kṛtika nakshatra day in the year 1803. He benefited a lot from the strong guidance of the Trinity – Śyama śāstri, Tyāgarāja, and Muttuswāmi Dīkshithar. Not only did he gain excellence in composing kṛti-s but he also improved his skill in singing. He was able to handle the languages Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu very fluently and was a veteran in music. Subbarāya śāstri's kṛti-s are said to be the cream of the Trinity style.

Personal life

Subbarāya śāstri was the second son of Śyama śāstri. He had one brother, named Panchu śāstri. Subbarāya śāstri got married from Kanchīpuram, and had only one daughter. So Subbarāya śāstri adopted his brother's son Annaswāmy śāstri. Annaswāmy śāstri also became a famous composer.

Subbarāya śāstri was an expert violinist. It is said that he was invited as the āstāna vidwān of Udayārpālayam samastānam. Śāstri got a lot of encouragement in his musical career from there. He loved that place very much and he found peace there.

Academic career of Subbarāya śāstri

At first, Subbarāya śāstri learned music under his father. His father Śyama śāstri had a healthy friendship with Tyāgarāja. And Śyama śāstri wanted Tyāgarāja to accept his son as a disciple of him. The tutelage under Tyāgarāja should have had a lot of influence in Subbarāya śāstri's musical career and he became a perfect lyricist as well as a great composer.

Subbarāya śāstri composed and sang the kṛti 'Ninuvina gatigāna' in kalyāṇi rāga at Sri Dharmasamvardhini temple in Thiruvayyār, in front of his revered Guru. Tyāgarāja was very excited and became proud of his disciple, for the great talent he had. He had his 'araṅgetram' at Madhurai Mīnākshi amman sannidhānam.

Muttuswāmi Dīkshitar stayed at the house of his disciples who were collectively called the Tanjavor quartet. It was just behind Śyama śāstri's house. This gave an opportunity for Śyama śāstri and Dīkshitar to meet frequently. During their meetings, Subbarāya śāstri presented his kṛtis before Dīkshitar. Dīkshitar was quite impressed by Subbarāya śāstri's talent and taught his own compositions to Subbarāya śāstri. Subbarāya śāstri also received valuable advice from Dīkshitar.

Subbarāya śāstri learned Hindustani music from Mēru gōswami and Rāmadās swāmi. Mēru gōswami was the palace musician of Tānjore and Rāmadās swāmi was a recluse who lived in Thirumarudur near

Kumbhakōnam. It is said that the association with Dīkshitar and Mēru gōswami led Subbarāya śāstri to compose a kṛti in Hamir kalyāṇi.¹

As a vaggeyakara

Smt Vidya śhankar states that Subbarāya śāstri composed forty to fifty kṛti-s but there are only 11 kṛti-s existing now.² He used to transfer compositions to his disciples only after he himself practiced it several times until he felt that it was perfect. Maybe because of this, his disciples did not get so many kṛtis from him and it also adversely affected their popularity.

After the death of Śyāma śāstri, Subbarāya śāstri moved to Triplicane and then he composed the kṛti *ninu sēviñcina* in Yadukula Kāmbōji in praise of Pārthasārathy, Triplicane. Then he was selected as the samstāna vidwān of Udayār pālayam and he stayed there till his death.³

Even though he composed very few kṛti-s, their ‘rāga bhāva’, literary beauty and devotional character elevated them to a high rank in the canon of Classical compositions. He composed most of his kṛti-s in praise of the Mother Goddess. Telugu was the basic medium for his compositions. His mudra was ‘*Kumāra,*’ perhaps as a tribute to his father.⁴ His birth was on kṛtika nakshatra which is the star of Lord Muruka. This may also be a reason for choosing ‘*Kumāra,*’ one of the synonyms of Lord Muruka, as his mudra.

¹ www.carnatic.com

² Shankar vidya- Subbarāya śāstry’s and Anna swāmy śāstr’s compositions –page no -2

³ Śāradāmbāl- Syamaśāstri his disciples and descendents research (Thesis) (Internet)

⁴ Vidya shankar- Subbaraya sastry’s and Annaswamy sastry’s compositions- page no 3

His kṛti-s contain decorative aṅgas like swara sāhityam, madhyamakāla sāhityam, etc and literary devices like muhana, dwitīyākshara and antyākshara prāsa.

Disciples of Subbaraya Sastri¹

He was a good performer and he performed with his disciples like:

1. Aṅṅaswāmy śāstri, his adopted son and a famous composer;
2. Chandra giri Raṅgāchārulu, also known as fiddle Raṅgāchārulu; he was very brilliant at playing violin in the jaru style;
3. Kāmākshi amma, a famous dancer and the grandmother of the famous Veena Dhanammal;
4. Thirujnana mudaliyar;
5. The Nāgaswara vidwans of Kāmākshi amman temple;
6. Ponnu swāmi;
7. Sōbhanādri;
8. Chinmata Raṅgamulu chetti;
9. Bālu – violinist;
10. Tachur Śiṅgārchārulu – the cousin of Fiddle Raṅgāchārulu.

¹ Page no 2 - Subbarāya śāstry's and Annaswamy śāstry's composition by Vidya śhankar

The End of Sastri's life

He “shook off his mortal coil” in the year 1862. It was on a Krishna dasami day of chapa masa, Durmati samvatsara.

He had a talent in foresight like his father. Through this, he understood that his end was nearing. Subbarāya śāstri visited Udayārpālayam in the year 1862. One day, while he was doing his daily prayer, he poured water on the earth as a part of sandhya vandanam. At that time, he came to know by his spiritual divinity that his last days were nearing. When he declared it, all his relatives, friends and well-wishers rushed to the spot. Udayārpālayam Zamindar, who had been looking after Śyamaśāstri's family for many years, came near Subbarāya śāstri and requested him to inform him of his last wish. He replied “I have the blessings of ‘Ambikai’ and I do not require anything more”. Within a short time, the excellent composer and the great follower of the musical Trinity breathed his last.

Contribution:

Kṛti	Rāga	Tāḷa
1 Ninuvinā	Kalyāṅḷ	Ādi
2 Nannubrōcutaku	Tōdi	Ādi
3 Dalacinavāru	Dhanyāsi	Ādi
4 Ēmaninē	Mukhāri	Ādi
5 Venkata śaila vihāra	Hamīrkalyāṅḷ	Ādi
6 Entanucu	Śankarābharāṇa	Ādi

7 Ninusēvincina	Yadukulakāmbōji	Miśra cāp
8 Janani ninuvina	Rītigaṭṭa	Miśra cāp
9 Mīnanayana	Darbār	Rūpakam
10 Śankari nīvani	Bēgada	Rūpakam
11 Vanajāsana	Śri	Rūpakam
12 Śri kamalāmbike	Dēśiya Tōdi	Rūpakam

Structure of Subbarāya śāstri's kṛti-s.

Subbarāya śāstri's kṛti-s possess the sections pallavi, anupallavi, swarasāhitya, and caraṇa. Depending on these sections, it can be divided under 3 categories:

- a) Kṛti-s with pallavi, anupallavi, and caraṇa-s
- b) Kṛti-s with pallavi, anupallavi, swarasāhitya and one caraṇa
- c) Kṛti-s with pallavi, anupallavi, swarasāhitya and more than one caraṇa

a) Kṛti-s with pallavi, anupallavi, and carana-(s)

- 1 Dhanyāsi - pallavi, anupallavi, 3 caraṇas
- 2 HamīrkalyāṇḌ - pallavi, anupallavi, 5 caraṇas
- 3 Darbār - pallavi, anupallavi, 3 caraṇas
- 4 Śankarābharāṇa - pallavi anupallavi and caraṇa

b) Kṛti-s with pallavi, anupallavi, swarasāhitya and one carana

- 1 Mukhāri - pallavi, anupallavi, swarasāhitya and carana
- 2 Yadukulakāmbōji - pallavi, anupallavi, swarasāhitya and carana
- 3 Dēśya Tōdi - pallavi, anupallavi, swarasāhitya and carana

c) Kṛti-s with pallavi, anupallavi, swarasāhitya and more than one carana

- 1 Śri - pallavi anupallavi and 3 carana-s
- Tōdi - pallavi anupallavi swarasāhitya and 2carana-s
- Rītigaṭṭa - pallavi anupallavi swarasāhitya and 3carana-s
- KalyāṇI - pallavi anupallavi swarasāhitya and 3carana-s
- Bēgada - pallavi anupallavi swarasāhitya and 3carana-s

Vāggēyakāraka Mudra

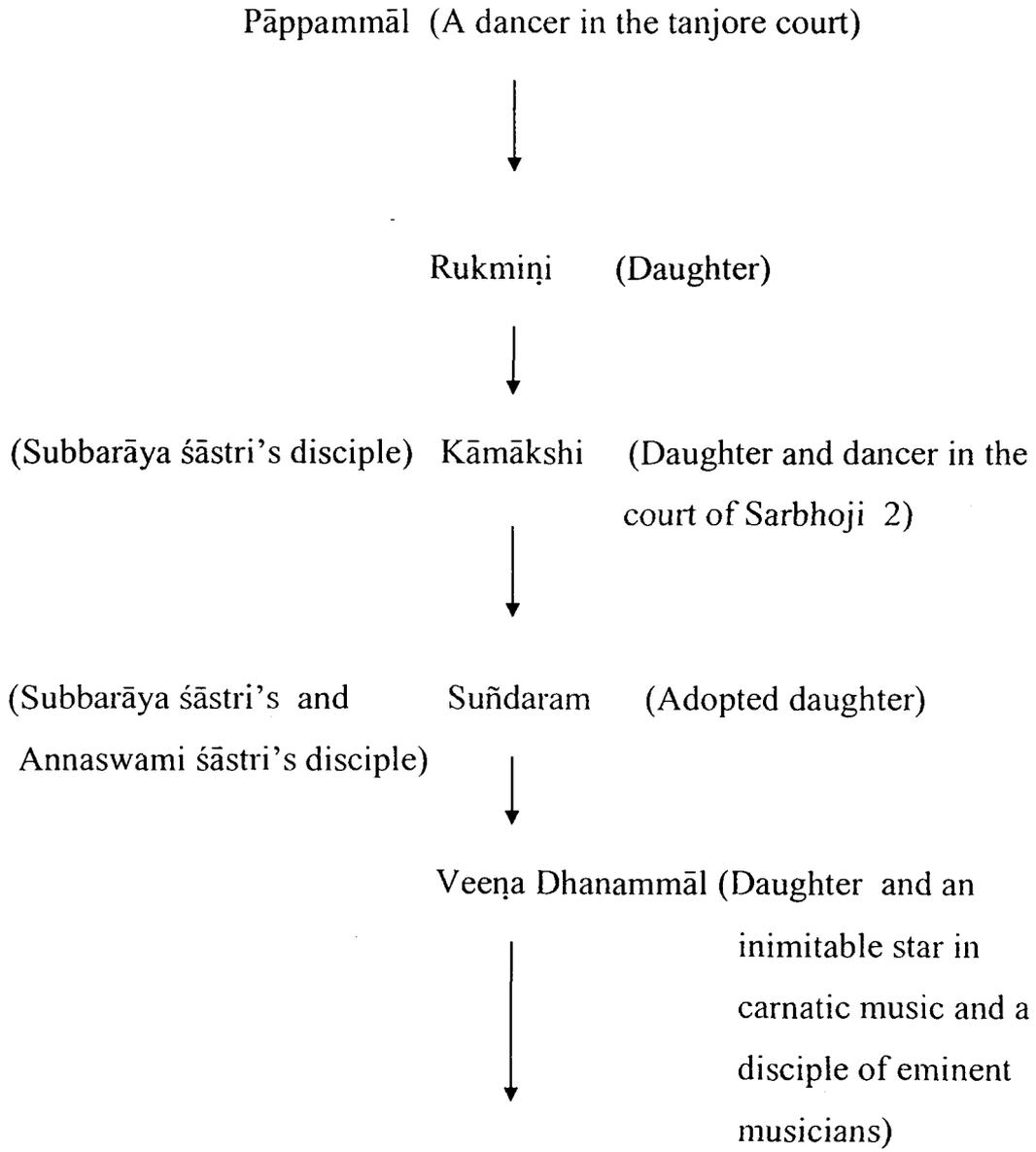
‘Kumāra’ is the mudra of Subbarāya śāstri. He used ‘kumāra’, ‘kumāra janani’, ‘kumāruni’, ‘kumāruda’, ‘kumārudu’ etc in his kṛtis. The mudra appears in the last carana.

SELECTION OF BRINDA-MUKTA TRADITION.

The analysis of the kṛti-s of Subbarāya śāstri requires an authentic and powerful platform of notation. Here, this analytical study is based on the notation of kṛti-s, which the researcher learned from the oral tradition of the Brinda-Mukta style.

Why this particular style?

In the case of Subbarāya śāstri's kṛti-s, this particular tradition plays an important role. T Brinda and T Mukta, popularly known as Brinda-Mukta, belong to the lineage of musicians with a long tradition. The following chart portrays the followers of this tradition in succession.



(Disciple of veena Dhanammāl) Kāmākshi, Lakshmiratnam (Daughters)



(Disciples of Nainapillai Brinda- Mukta (Daughters)
Kāmākshi, Veeṇa Dhanammāl,
Lakshmiratnam)

Pappammāl was a dancer in the Tanjore court. Her granddaughter Kāmākshi, who was the daughter of Rukmiṇi, also danced in the court of Sarabhōji II. She learned music from composers like Anai and Ayya. When Kāmākshi and her family shifted to Madras, she got an opportunity to learn music under Subbarāya śāstri.

Kāmākshi's adopted daughter Sundaram was also a disciple of Subbarāya śāstri. Sundaram had 9 children and the famous 'Veena Dhanammāl' was one of them. Dhanammāl was a peerless star in the area of carnatic music. The tradition of Dhanammāl is a very popular one. And it is a Gamaka-oriented bāṇī. Dhanammāl had 4 daughters. Lakshmiratnam aka Cinnakkutty and Kāmākshi were two among them.

Brinda and Mukta were the daughters of Kāmākshi. They were responsible for the propagation of Dhanammāl's tradition in this century.

Brinda and Mukta learned the basics of music from their mother Kāmākshi. Then they became the disciples of Kanceepuram Naina pillai. After 4 years' tutelage under him, the Guru advised them to polish their music by learning more from their grandmother's bani (Dhanammāl), since

he had imparted everything he knew to them. Later, they – Brinda and Mukta – became the disciples of Lakshmiratnam, who was their mother’s sister and a disciple and daughter of Dhanammāl. Dhanammāl also taught Brinda and Mukta some compositions including padam-s and jāvali-s.

Under the guidance of Lakshmiratnam, they learned a lot of compositions and at the same time they got the correct essence of ‘Dhanammāl bāṇi’. Thus Brinda and Mukta became the powerful successors of the Dhanammāl tradition. They tried to express music with all its clarity which they heard and learned from their grandmother, mother, Guru Naina Pillai, and aunt Lakshmiratnam.

Brinda and Mukta never made any compromise or adjustment with their valuable tradition.

According to an article,

They sang the compositions of only great masters like the Trinity, Gōpālakrishṇa Bhārati, and Kshetrāyā. The fact that they came in the direct disciple line of the Trinity stood them in good stead. These great compositions had come to them without undergoing much of change from what the composers intended. Brinda and Mukta were thus able to present authentic versions of the Trinity’s compositions.¹

¹ Bridaya-Mukthā: Bastions of a glorious Tradition-Article by Ravi and Sridhar-Sruti June 2007-Page 27

Once in an interview with KN Sashikiran, Mukta mentioned “Subbarāya śāstri kṛti-s which had come as treasure to our family through a couple of his direct disciples in Kāncipuram”.¹

In another article, Ravi and Sridhar mentioned that “The bhāva-laden compositions of Śyāma śāstri and Subbarāya śāstry received special attention as they were the precious property of their family, Dhanammāl’s grandmother being Subbarāya śāstri’s disciple.”²

All this information proves the importance and authenticity of Brinda Mukta tradition.

¹ www.hinduonnet.com

² Brinda-Muktha: Certain aspects of their music- Article by Ravi and Sridhar-Sruti june 2007-Page 20