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FEATURES OF THE KRITI: A SONG FORM
DEVELOPED BY TYĀGARĀJA

by
William Jackson

O Mind, adore the seven lovely goddesses
Who are the seven tones which are shining,
shining!

Tyāgarāja, "Śobhillu saptasvara"¹

The *rāgas* which move so delightfully
(what mellow things melodies do)
assuming fine shapes so enchanting
they dance with ringing tones
and their anklets go jingle-jangle.
The Lord adored by the knowing
Tyāgarāja loves this music's glory.
So mind, be intent upon music
dear to the Consort of Lakṣmī.

Tyāgarāja, "Śrīpapriya saṅgītopāśana"²

Background of the Kriti

Tyāgarāja, the composer-saint who was born in 1767 in Tamil Nadu, South India, is remembered most for having perfected the song form known as the *kṛiti*. This article is an introduction to that form and an exploration of its relation to some other Hindu devotional expressions. I have combined historical and technical information in this study as well as a playful consideration of Tyāgarāja's analogy of melodies as goddesses.

If *rāgas* are like goddesses embodied in sound, as Tyāgarāja suggests, then each of his *kṛitis* is the stunning form of a goddess enshrined. The song-goddess is placed on the altar of the listeners' attention, as it were, to dance and articulate a mood (*bhava*) in the inner experiences of the devotee who is practicing *bhakti*.

In the religion of Hinduism there are many gods and goddesses and also many ways to achieve union, the yogic "yoke," with the ineffable or the godhead beyond the many divine names and forms,

depending on one's temperament and choice. One such path is *bhakti*, a devotional discipline in which one gives praise, or listens to such praise, generally within a musical form. In this way one partakes of the beauty and bliss of the divine.

Although each *kṛiti* is unique, each shares certain formal aspects, with an individual *rāga* or melody possessing beauty and the power to reveal the sacred.

A consideration of the forerunners, the tripartite structure, the *rāga* and *tāḷa*, the verbal text, and the *saṅgatis* and *rasa*, all of which are aspects of the *kṛiti*, will help us to further appreciate these "goddesses."

As a general term *kṛiti* means a work, "a doing" -- a deed done, a thing made, an oeuvre fashioned or composed. The Sanskrit *kṛiti* and the English "creation," along with Latin and German counterparts, are cognate with the Indo-Aryan root meaning "to create" (Monier-Williams 1899/1976:301). *Kṛiti* is as well a term like the English word "poem," which is derived from the Greek root *poiein*, meaning to make, to create. The poet was known as the maker, shaper, or creator in both the Greece and India of classical times. The Vedic poet is called not only *kavi*, but also *kāru* (maker). The terms *kṛiti* and *poem* have both been used to connote an epic composition. In Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśa* the poet Vālmīki is said to have taught Rāma's two sons to sing his "*kṛiti*" (Kalidasa, tr. Antoine 1975). *Kṛiti* also can mean "a wonder." It may at times as well be translated as "hymn" or "psalm," but these terms are not interchangeable, although they are both characteristically songs of praise.

Unlike the usage in South Indian music circles during this century, when Annamācārya in his fifteenth-century treatise (see Vijayaraghavacharya and Naidu 1935) and Purandaradāsa in a song³ used the term *kṛiti*, it meant a "composition," including *pada* and *kīrtana*, two song forms popular well before Tyāgarāja's time.

There had been short songs with repeated refrains before the time of the *kṛiti*. Ballads, folksongs, and short songs like *gītas* and *padas* for centuries had offered singers and listeners repetitive singable music that elaborated on a few notes and established a mood. These *gītas*, such as those of Purandaradāsa (d.1564), often tended to be simplistic and predictable. *Padas* such as Kṣetrayya's (seventeenth-

century) were more relaxed and varied. *Kīrtanas* such as those of Caitanya (d.1533), Bhadrācalam Rāmadās (seventeenth century) and Tāllapakka Annamācārya (sixteenth century) lacked artistic sophistication, maintaining extreme regularity. These elementary forms were composed and preserved because simple people found it easy to remember them, unlike complex pieces demanding greater knowledge and discipline.

Similarly, the musically repetitive *aṣṭapadis* of Jayadeva's eleventh-century song cycle *Gītagovinda* are usually considered recitative rather than lyrical pieces (Kakinada 1978), as are the *tarangams*, the songs of Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha in the *Krishnaḥlātarāṅgiṇi*, written around 1600. Along with more extensive old *prabhandas*, forms secular and sacred, some of which were performed with dances and dramas, all are held to be the forerunners of the *kṛiti*.

The songs of both *Gītagovinda* and *Krishnaḥlātarāṅgiṇi* are in Sanskrit, though in both cases the rhythms and syllabic patterns are not Sanskritic, but Dravidian. Both of these compositions were very popular in Tyāgarāja's time (Kakinada 1978 and Krishnaswamy 1968:148-149). Other forerunners are found in the simple Telugu and Marāṭhī songs of Śāhajī, king of Tāñjāvūr (d.1712), in the songs of Vīrabhadrayya and Mārgadarśi Seshāyyangar, in the songs of *Nāmasiddhānta-bhajana sampradāya* composers Āyyāvāl and Sadāśiva Brahmendra, and in the Sanskrit *pallavis* sung as part of courtly art music performances.

The full pattern of the three-part *kṛiti* -- *pallavi* (opening line and refrain), *anupallavi* (subrefrain, elaborating on the opening), and a number of *caraṇams* (stanzas) -- was used extensively by the Tāllapaka composers beginning with Annamācārya in the fifteenth century (Krishnaswamy 1968:159; 1976:121). Some of the songs of Purandaradāsa also include an *anupallavi*, but he seems to have preferred the *pallavi* and *caraṇam* structure of *kīrtanas*. Kṣetrāyya also employed similar patterns to those found in *kṛitis* in his *pada* compositions. Although many of these forms begin as *kṛitis* do, they meander and are not so tightly "knit into a severe build up," as one musicologist put it. The *pada* form in which Kṣetrāyya, for example, composed is comparatively slower paced; although this form can be simple, it is at times extremely elaborate.

Tyāgarāja perfected the form. His contemporaries, Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar and Śyāma Śāstri, also achieved compelling *kṛitis*, but Tyāgarāja appears to have extended the form's possibilities. Dīkṣitar, for example, extensively employed a two-part *kṛiti*, a *pallavi* accompanied by a *samaṣṭi caraṇam* (a *caraṇam* sung at the same rhythmic pace as the *pallavi* initially and sung to a faster pace toward its end, while maintaining the same periodicity of the *tāla*) without an *anupallavi*. Tyāgarāja achieved clarity and balanced interdependence of parts in his three-part *kṛitis*, focusing expression into songs that were more tightly knit than those previously sung and providing skillful climaxes. The *kṛiti* form offers a scheme which allows the *rāga* to be appreciated through "a gradual approach and in measured but increasing doses" (Krishnaswamy 1976:123). Tyāgarāja refined and perfected the tripartite form which had foreshadowings in previous centuries, creating an art form which further popularized *bhakti* culture.

Even today *kṛitis* are commonly called *kīrtanals* and *kīrtanai* -- the Telugu and Tamil plural forms, respectively, of *kīrtana*, meaning devotional songs. This might be a source of confusion for those outside the tradition.

Tyāgarāja's description of the *kṛiti*, found in his song "Sogasugā" could also serve to describe his *kīrtanas*. Although both are songs of praise, the differences are that in *kīrtanas* the words are more important than the music, which is not very elaborate, and that *kīrtanas* are simple, repetitive songs, meant to be sung by a leader and a group. Purandaradāsa composed various types of compositions, from elementary *padas* for beginners to elaborate *śūlādīs*, but the majority of his songs, as well as most of those by Bhadrācala Rāmadās, are good examples of *kīrtanas*. Other Haridās composers living before Tyāgarāja's time, such as Śrīpada Rāya, Vyāsarāya, and Narahari Tīrtha, also composed *kīrtanas* for group singing. These songs have little or no ornamentation and employ the more common *rāgas*. Thus, when Tyāgarāja asks Rāma in "Sogasugā" the following questions, he is not speaking of the *kṛiti* in very technical terms, but only generally listing qualities of a devotional song:⁴

Pallavi: Who is the stalwart able to melt You,
 coordinating the ensemble
 with such elegance of drum rhythm. . .

- Anupallavi*: With truthful words full of the gist of
the Upaniṣads
and with great purity of the notes
- Pallavi*: and with such elegance of drum rhythm
coordinating this ensemble
Who is the stalwart able to melt You...
- Caraṇam*: Is it possible for Tyāgarāja
to sing *bhājana* with *kṛitis* full
of the nine emotions, smacking
with sweetness of grape nectar
- Is he able to make the rhythmic pauses,
in songs of loving devotion, with rhymes
and in line with the lyrical rules?
- Pallavi*: Who is the stalwart able to melt You,
coordinating the ensemble
with such elegance of drum rhythm...

This description of the components of a *kṛiti* does not mention *saṅgatis*, considered essential to works termed as *kṛitis*. The rhyme, alliteration, pauses, devotional fervor, "grapejuice-like" sweetness and the nine *rasas* (aesthetic moods) mentioned could apply equally well to *kīrtana*. Thus Tyāgarāja was here using the term *kṛiti* generally, to include a devotional musical work, a song of praise.

Subbarama Dikṣitar does not employ the term in his book *Saṅgīta Sampradāya Pradarśinī* (1904). Hence T.S. Parthasarathy has suggested that the term *kīrtana*, which is what Tyāgarāja calls his songs in at least two separate pieces,⁵ was likely used loosely during the nineteenth century, covering popular *kīrtanas* of the kind known as *divyanāma* (songs for groups in praise of sacred names) and *utsava sampradāya* (simple songs used in festival and ritual worship), as well as *kṛitis*. As the term is used today, *kṛitis* usually have short texts, developed melodies and expressive *saṅgatis* or variations.

The Kṛiti Structure

A Tyāgarāja *kṛiti* normally has three major parts: the *pallavi*, the *anupallavi*, and one or three *caraṇam(s)*. But in performance,

before the *kṛiti* proper begins, the *tambūra* drone establishes the background constant, which represents the eternal *nāda Brahman* from which all emerges. Sometimes there is a preliminary to the performance called the *rāga alāpana* or melody elaboration, in which the singer demonstrates a syllabic range of the *rāga* to be performed. During these preliminaries the *tāla* or rhythm is not used. The performer sings various permutations of the *rāga* in ascending and descending order, conveying the *rāga's* mood and features. *Pallavi* literally means "sprout," a vegetative image associated in Indian symbol systems with *rasa* (sap, juice, flavor, essential inspiring vitality). It carries the sense of a tendril growing, suggesting a seed opening, a shoot budding, and the beginning of efflorescence with stem resource for further expansion. Prior to Dīksitar's 1904 publication, the *pallavi* was usually called *pallava*. One traditional etymology breaks the word into three syllables and derives each from a component of song: *padam* (word), *layam* (rhythm), *vinyāsam* (display) (Sambamoorthy 1975:23). Musicologist T.S. Parthasarathy (1978-79) has called this a mere guess, but perhaps this playful derivation was a mnemonic or pedagogical device. The *pallavi* may be considered the embryo, the essential spirit of the work, from which the *kṛiti* develops organically.

Before the term *pallavi* came to be associated with Tyāgarāja's life and times and his use of *kṛitis*, it was the term for the dominant form of *Karṇāṭaka* musical court performances. Designated more fully as *rāgam-tānam-pallavi*, or simply *pallavi*, it was one expression of *manodharma saṅgīta* (the duty of the mind inventing music) — an exercise of the imagination in the improvisational art music of the times (Peterson 1979, 1979-80). This form, generally the centerpiece of competitive concerts in the period preceding Tyāgarāja, often continued for many hours. It was called *pallavi* probably because a single line of text was musically elaborated, especially in lengthy competitive exhibitions of musical technique, including displays of rhythmic and melodic virtuosity and improvisation on the theme. The text could be secular or religious, amorous or humorous, but usually had multiple meanings and poetic associations. Even meaningless words were sometimes used as a basis for improvisations, however, or simply the syllables of the Sanskrit word *ānantam* (infinite).⁶

An element common to both the antecedent court *pallavi* and the *pallavi* in a Tyāgarāja *kṛiti* is an appealing image which cannot be exhausted within a single singing. One musicologist has stipulated

"fairly certain criteria for the singable lyric poem... [that is] it must project one predominant feeling-image ... an image that arouses what you might call a singable concern for the experience itself (Ferguson 1969:206). The opening line of the *pallavi* is periodically repeated as the refrain, and it must be both inherently enjoyable and also satisfying in closure.

The *pallavi* of the typical Tyāgarāja song provides the core pattern or the inspirational matrix of the rest of the song; all else must be integral with it, whether in similarity or contrast. The best of *pallavis* can be repeated with many variations, bringing out nuances. New contexts can emerge around this section of the song to bring out additional potential meanings: thus the *pallavi* develops the initial thought further each time it is sung.

It is generally thought that the composer-saints Purandaradāsa, Annamācārya, and Bhadrācala Rāmadās, who lived prior to Tyāgarāja, were less subtle than he in construction and lyrics. The sequences of their *caranams* and *pallavis* sometimes seem disjointed in comparison with the lyrics of Tyāgarāja's more unified productions.

Tyāgarāja's *kṛiti* titled "Sogasugā" exemplifies the elements of the *kṛitis*. The *pallavi* of "Sogasugā" in the original Telugu is in the reverse word order of the expression in English:

P.	<i>sogasugā</i>	<i>mṛidaṇa</i>	<i>tālamu</i>	<i>jatagūrci</i>	<i>ninu</i>
	elegant	drum	rhythm	arranging	you
				an ensemble	
	<i>jokkaṭṭeyu</i>	<i>dhīru</i>	<i>devvaḍḍo</i>		
	make melt	stalwart	who is		

When these sentence parts are arranged in English word order, they form the question:

P. Who is the stalwart able to melt you,
arranging an ensemble of elegant drum rhythm?

As the nucleus of the song, one theme of the *pallavi* is the power of music to dissolve the patterns of formality into formless

bliss. "To melt you" means to dissolve into the beloved Rāma, eliminating any distance or boundary. It also means to move the beloved Rāma to shower grace, to reveal himself, and to take shape before the composer. It is a song about music, a sacred song about the sacredness of song.

The second part is the *anupallavi* or subrefrain. This was made a standard part of the *kṛiti* by Tyāgarāja, although other composers, such as Kṣetrāya and Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha in the seventeenth century, also seem to have used it sometimes. It extends the theme of the *pallavi*, both melodically and lyrically. Literally, *anupallavi* means "following the *pallavi*," i.e., an extension of the "sprout" growing in the same direction.

To differentiate further between *kīrtana* and *kṛiti*, a piece without an *anupallavi* but with several (often ten) *caranams* is usually considered a *kīrtana*. Songs in praise of divine names, *divyanāma kīrtanas*, consist of vocatives or dithyrambs, holy names which call to mind the Lord's actions and features. *Utsava sampradāya kīrtanas* are festive pieces celebrating the deity in a series of worshipful acts: waking, making offerings of milk etc., swinging, celebrating marriage, lullabying etc. These groups of songs are sung for hours on certain holy days, such as Vaikuṅṭha Ekadaśī, offering householders a chance to intensify their spiritual striving. Some of these *bhakti* celebrations last all night, in an *akhanda bhajana* -- nonstop singing. *Kīrtanas* constructed in the *divyanāma* and *utsava sampradāya* manner are better suited to group singing than are *kṛitis*, which demand much finesse by a practiced individual. Tyāgarāja, not given to artistic snobbery, composed great songs in both forms. His *pañcaratna kīrtanas*, the "five-gem" masterpieces, show that some of his songs are exquisitely and extensively complex yet adaptable to group singing.

A piece with an *anupallavi* following the *pallavi*, as well as with one to three *caranams*, is considered to be a *kṛiti*. In "Sogasugā" the *anupallavi* is:

A.	<i>nigama</i>	<i>śirōrthamu</i>	<i>galgina</i>
	Vedas	meaning of	full of

<i>njavākkulatō</i>	<i>svarasuddhamutō</i>
with true words	with purity of notes

In English word order, this is construed as follows:

- A. with truthful words full of the gist
of the Upaniṣads and with great purity of notes

The third part of the *kṛiti* is the *caraṇam*. The word *caraṇam* means "foot" or "the part that moves about," enabling the song to go somewhere else and then return. Musicologist S.Y. Krishnaswamy believes that the term *caraṇam* may suggest the idea of "settlement" of the theme (1968:160). In the *caraṇam* the theme is given concrete example, or is elaborated into specific details or particular metaphors, and is completed. In the final *caraṇam* it is usual to find Tyāgarāja's signature or *mudrā*, which literally means "seal," incorporated into the lyrics. The single *caraṇam* of "Sogasugā" is:

- C. *yati* *viśrama* *sadbhakti vi-*
rhyme repose true devotion
- rati* *drākṣārasa* *navarasa*
pause grape nectar nine moods
- yutakṛiticē* *bhajiyiñcē*
with song having to worship
- yukti* *tyāgarājuni* *taramā* *śrīrāma*
is able Tyāgarāja is it possible O Rāma

Arranged in the English word order, this *caraṇam* asks:

- C. Is it possible for Tyāgarāja
to sing *bhajanas* with *kṛitis*
full of the nine emotions, smacking
with sweetness of grape nectar,
is he able to make the rhythmic pauses
in songs of loving devotion,
with rhymes and in line with
the lyrical rules?

In many songs the structure of a *kṛiti*'s text is similar to patterns of sequences found in Sanskrit texts: the *pallavi* is like a *sūtra* -- an aphorism giving the essential idea in a nutshell; the *anupallavi* is like the *vṛitti*, the explanation in which the initial idea is

furthered; the *caraṇam* is like the *bhāṣya*, the commentary which goes further in elucidating and giving new examples.⁷ Musically, if we allow the first letter of each of the three parts to stand for them, the general sequential pattern of the *kṛiti* is P-A-P-C-(A)-P. (The second theme of the *caraṇam* is not always similar to the *anupallavi*.)

Rāga Dimensions of the Kṛiti

Because the melody of the song depends on its specific *rāga* mode, with only certain notes to be used in ascent and in descent, the *rāga* provides limits and hence a unifying dimension. The *rāga* in which "Sogasugā" is cast in *Srīrañjanī*, which is limited to the following notes:⁸

Ascent: CDE^b,FAB^{b,c} (B^b, in ascent may be omitted)

Descent: cB^b,AFE^b,DC

In this *rāga* the note G or *pa* is never used. Traditionally, songs in *Srīrañjanī* begin with c (*sa*), D (*ri*), F (*ma*), or B, (*ni*) (Kaufman 1976:309).

Tyāgarāja is associated with this *rāga*, *Srīrañjanī*, which is a variation of *Kharaharapriya rāga* and is known largely through his works in it: "If today you hear a piece in *Srīrañjanī*, you may be sure it is one of Tyāgarāja's or one which is an imitation of it" (Subbarao 1962:61). It is one of many *rāgas* in which he worked. No strict mood-times to his songs are assigned, unlike the North Indian practice.

A study of Tyāgarāja's compositions reveals that he consistently followed a melodic pattern in many of his *kṛitis*. In the first impulse of the song, the *pallavi*, a provocative statement introduces the *rāga* by a sequence of the lower notes in the octave. In the *anupallavi*, the range and atmosphere of the *rāga* are more fully presented, and the upper notes of the octave are used; there is an excitement expressed in reaching the higher tetrachord — the notes above the upper *sa* (some say the notes between *pa* and high *sa*). Then, in the *caraṇam* we find a new departure, "a calm rendering of the middle notes," with *pa* or *ma* as the center; later in the *caraṇam* a repetition of the *anupallavi* notes brings a second ascent toward the upper notes. In the *caraṇam* the composer may elaborate with less intensity but more intimacy. This pattern of lower notes, further development and higher notes, then gravitating toward the calm middle notes, with reascent to the higher notes and finally return

to the *pallavi* origin is found in many of Tyāgarāja's songs (Krishnaswamy 1968:158; 1976-77:119) The pattern seems to reflect the lyrics: an assertion or question; a buildup of wondering about the question in suspense, tension and ascent; a wandering return; and reascent up to a high point of release and resolution of the *bhakti* dilemma that is being voiced, a conclusion of the distraught emotions in sound cycles coming to rest in peace.

In ways not fully translatable into words, the *rāga* embodies feelings and, dancing through cycles of change, exercises mysterious power. Might one speculate that all musics — given a form, arranged in mathematical patterns with limits, measure, a certain end, energies capable of shifting and surprising with expressions of feelings — provide the freedom to play in time and act to vitalize the nervous system? I would agree with the poet who said, "In the melody... the emotion of history, its lasting light without dates or facts, takes refuge. The love and breeze of our country are inherent in the tunes... bringing vivid life out of dead epochs, the opposite of the stones, the bells, the people with character or even the language, the melody, to a greater extent than the text, defines the geographical characters and the historic lineage of a region, and marks out, in an acute way, defined moments of a profile which time has rubbed out" (Lorca 1953:13). Tyāgarāja has saved something of the soul of Chōladeśa, the Southland, in his *rāgas*; and these curves of sound, like well-shaped goddesses depicted in visual art, move with a vitality all their own.

***Tāla*: The Cycles of Rhythm**

Turning to the *tāla*, the rhythm in cycles of beats, we might think of it as the heartblood circulating in the embodied goddesses which are the *rāgas*, for the rhythm gives continuous life. To continue the metaphor, considering the playful elaborations and improvisations possible within the cycles, the rhythm is also like the lively and delightful jingling of the anklets on the feet of these dancing beauties. The lyrics of "Sogasugā" praise the mastery of rhythm, the song itself demonstrating rhythmic power. In a rhythmic piece "... the pattern itself is a vast cyclic agitation spreading all over the body, a tide of excitement pouring through the channels of the mind" (Richards 1925, chap. 27). The sung lyric appeals to and resonates with the whole person. The Vedas, which are chanted, and many of the scriptures which constitute the fountainheads of later traditions, are in verse, utilizing a rhythmic and emotive use of language. Such works seem

intended to agitate and to imprint their codes upon the entire person — body, mind, and emotions. As is well known, music can affect breathing and heartbeat, thoughts and feelings, patterning the nervous system and shaping a life.

In the hands of a master musician the rhythm has a driving force and is a major source of power and unity. Its percussive patterns, repeated cycles of time measures, are usually sounded on the *mṛidangam*, a drum used to keep time in most Karnāṭaka music performances. In a *kṛiti* or any other musical piece the *tāla* or rhythmic cycle is the ground in which the musical phrasing, as well as the words, are set, or the time unit with which the sung melody interplays. The *tāla* is counted out over and over during the course of the song, the singer often counting with established gestures of the right hand while performing Karnāṭaka music. The number of syllables per *tāla* cycle may vary, but they are set within, and coordinated by, the *tāla*. Sometimes, as in the *divyanāma* and *utsava sampradāya kīrtanas*, there is a corresponding poetic meter used also, a metric structure within which the syllables are organized, as opposed to nonmetric or loosely metric lines of verse which are found in *kṛitis*. Tyāgarāja composed more melismatic lyrics, offering greater freedom from the rigid distribution of one note of music per one syllable of word, which was the generally accepted mode of earlier *bhakti* composers. Thus his songs are more demanding but less tedious. He also used variants in *tālas*. For example he composed many *kṛitis* in *adi tāla* starting one and one-half beats off, and this syncopation adds an unexpected charm.

Kṛiti lyrics do, however, have *yati* and *prāsa* (first- and second-syllable rhymes and alliteration patterns), and so, strictly speaking, are not exactly prose. Yet the syllables are not all cast inflexibly in regular metric units and some syllables stretch over a number of time beats, unlike the strict and simple metric lyrics of most earlier South Indian devotional music. Hence Tyāgarāja found them more suitable for composing *kṛitis*, which are art songs (as opposed to *kīrtanas*, which are meant for group singing and depend more on metricity). Concerning *tāla*, what Yeats said of the function of meter might apply, its purpose being “to lull the mind into a waking trance” (Richards 1925:143). The basic *tāla* is the undercurrent of rhythm within a song. It may not vary, and yet it is not metronomic or mechanical, but may be expressed by the drummer in various ways, keeping the basic count while superimposing rhythmic patterns upon

it. The *tāla*, marked out by the drummer, is a structure within which all the performers of an ensemble must operate and which serves to integrate them. The *tāla* units are usually filled in with shorter rhythmic durations, meshing cycles within cycles of the whole.

Ādi tāla is thought to be the oldest of the *tālas*, and it is most favored by Tyāgarāja. It consists of eight beats: four plus two plus two. *Rūpaka*, the *tāla* used in "Sogasugā," is the second most-used in Tyāgarāja songs. It consists of three beats (some consider it strictly six beats) per rhythmic cycle and is counted with the hand by a motion of: beat, beat, wave of the hand; beat, beat, wave of the hand, etc. *Ādi tāla* (and its regional folk variant *Deśādi tāla*) is intimately pervasive in Karnataka music. Tyāgarāja employed various *tālas* in different tempos, slow, reposeful, medium, and lively.

While the parts of the song depart from and return to the *pallavi*, the *tāla* cycle is repeated, a constant repeated again and again throughout the *pallavi*, the *anupallavi*, and the *caranam*. Tyāgarāja favored a quick tempo in his songs, expressing his sense of rhythmic vitality.

Tyāgarāja's music, besides exploring new *rāgas*, displays his genius for rhythm and the bold inventions he made in that field (Ayyangar 1967-68:49). In the religious sphere, *smārta* Brahmans like Tyāgarāja typically innovate within traditional frameworks. Karnāṭaka music, in which both *sampradāya* (the tradition of rigorous discipline learned from one's teacher) and *manodharma* (the "duty of the intelligence" -- imaginative improvisation) are essential, proved well-suited to *smārta* achievement (Jackson 1984).⁹ Tyāgarāja approached the ancient rhythmic element of this art with radical freshness.

ChinNASwami Mudaliyar (1893), differing from some other musicologists,¹⁰ focused on the opening words of "Sogasugā" ("elegant *mṛidanga* rhythms") and understood the song primarily as one of

... homage to the *mṛidanga*... the inseparable concomitant of all vocal music in India [which] constitutes a most pleasing and scientific accompaniment, serving better than any other instrument or conductor to guide and encourage the singer in observing his intricate time-measurements.

Sāhitya: Accompanying Lyrics

The question as to who can blend the beautiful, elegant drum rhythms with the rest of the ensemble and melt the heart of Tyāgarāja's *iṣṭadevatā*, his "favorite form of the divine," touches also on the topic of lyrics and the rules governing their composition. Tyāgarāja's *kṛitis* blend rāga notes and word sounds. May one compare them to the breasts of a goddess, both beautiful and nurturing? In South India that region's songs are described as comprising two main components: *saṅgita* (music), and *sāhitya* (lyrics). The oral tradition is that *sāhitya* stems from the Sanskrit word *sahita* meaning "togetherness" or "harmonious communion," thus suggesting the interfusion of word, sound, and meaning. The Sanskrit critic Kuntaka of the tenth century spoke of the complementary roles of *śabda* and *artha*, the sound of the word and its meaning (Joshi 1969:37). Tyāgarāja is often called a *vāggeyakāra*, that is, a lyrical master of both *vāg* (words) and *geya* (music). Tyāgarāja uses colloquial Telugu in his lyrics, idiomatic, yet with some elements not commonly found in the spoken tongue of today. About two dozen of his songs are in Sanskrit (Ramanujacari and Raghavan, 1966:23). Even in his Telugu songs, with some words originating in Sanskrit, words with a wealth of pan-Indian associations, he mixes Sanskrit vocatives in some songs with lyrics otherwise in Telugu.

Telugu devotional song-composer Annamācārya, in a sixteenth-century treatise of which only a summary is now available, basing his views on earlier Sanskrit treatises,¹¹ briefly mentioned the three types of language in which a *pada* may be composed: Sanskrit, Prākṛit, and Deśi Bhāṣā.¹² Tyāgarāja's songs, like those of many *bhakti* saints, fall chiefly in the third category, which is regional language. Telugu, noted for its mellisonance, has vowel word-endings which allow the smooth expression of ideas without harsh consonants and abrupt word-ends. It is extremely difficult to achieve this flowing quality in Sanskrit. In part, the Sanskrit of Muttusvāmī Dīkṣitar's songs create a formal abstract distance, unlike the intimate flavor possible in Telugu. Tyāgarāja's distinctive sound is in part due to his use of Telugu: "Words and music have a special relationship, particularly in music which is vocal in character. Words affect the melody line, even the rhythmic structures. The inflections of language leave their imprint on melody and rhythm, on style and phrasing" (Menon 1980). Telugu has often been called the Italian of the East. Both Telugu and Italian are tongues suitable for vocal flights and each has a

developed vocabulary of musical terms often borrowed by other languages.

Because Telugu is a Sanskritized language, many of the words in the song "Sogasugā," although derived from Sanskrit, are "Teluguized," either by being given new endings or by a more basic transformation. For example, the word *sogasugā* stems from the Sanskrit *sukham* meaning "happy, good, or agreeable." From Telugu it went into common Tamil usage as *sogasu* (C.R. Sarma 1978:20). An echo of *sogasugā jukkajēyu* is in the second line of the *pallavi*. Some of Tyāgarāja's best lyrics use words which combine pleasant sounds with an interplay of meanings, resulting in a heightened state of awareness.

"Sogasugā" is an unusual song. It consists of lists of elements employing Sanskrit-based nouns. But the verbs are in Telugu with Dravidian roots: *gūrci*, *cēyu*, *galgina*, *galugu*. The question of the song contains *iṣṭadevatā* ("O Śrī Rāma"), and is in a sense a self-portrait, or else a comment on Śiva's capacity as a musician. Hence it is a song in praise of music which, at its best, is able to "melt" the heart of Lord Rāma, as well as being a song in praise of a god.

In Tyāgarāja's songs the Telugu is both lyrical and minimal, often with an urgent colloquial flavor, yet possessing classical dignity and propriety. Sound and meaning coincide uniquely. One might say that his heart beat in Telugu. Sometimes the situation in the lyrics is presented directly, in a "rhetoric of spontaneity" (Ramanujan 1981:164). That is, it conveys an outburst within artistic limits. In many of Tyāgarāja's *pallavis*, for example, we find the imperative *rā* ("come here"), a word used casually in spoken Telugu.¹³ The inclusion of everyday speech within a classical song context builds spontaneity into the lyrics, which creates an instinctive sympathy of response.

Some critics and grammarians, however, are unfamiliar with the reasons why *bhakti* poets use the mother tongue -- to give common people more access to religious devotion, expressing feelings more naturally. (This *bhakti* "democratization" of spirituality which broadened possibilities for participation is similar to Protestant developments in Christianity which resulted in translations of the Bible into spoken languages, colloquial hymns and "the priesthood of all believers.") Some have criticized Tyāgarāja for not being more of a classical poet. For example, Ananthakrishna Sarma writes that

Tyāgarāja “did not cultivate the art of poetry with such avowedness as he displayed in respect of Rāma Bhakti and music. Hence purists find fault with his phraseology” (A. Sarma 1947). Sarma probably had C. Tirumalayya Naidu in mind, for in his 1910 publication on Tyāgarāja, Naidu wrote: “It must be admitted that Tyāgarāja is not always very happy in the choice of his language. His diction is neither varied nor copious. His phraseology is commonplace and prosaic (Naidu 1910).¹⁴

It was Tyāgarāja’s great art to seem artless. The best artists take pains to create effortless-seeming masterpieces, planning spontaneities and taking every opportunity to build what are later taken to be fortuitously inspired works as offerings to man and God. Whether easy-sounding lyrics came with or without labor to Tyāgarāja, they are a rare achievement. Recent Telugu anthologies of poetry seem to appreciate this fact, and include a selection of Tyāgarāja’s eloquent lyrics alongside works of major Telugu poets (Rao 1957/1976:182).¹⁵ Perhaps, as some believe, Tyāgarāja foresaw the trend of secularization which was already beginning in his times, and put the gems of his religious experience into a setting which would be passed on, whether or not later generations might know the origins and depth of religious significance. It has been the fate of the Vedas as well to be repeated without being fully understood.¹⁶ A typical song of longing for Rāma requires the recognition of only a few key words to start the flow of *rasa* in South Indian minds and hearts, even if little Telugu is known. To one who knows the meanings, the composer may still play with sound to befuddle the analytical properties of the left side of the brain and simultaneously to clarify with music the instinctual right side of the brain, providing an interplay of energies with the capacity to reinvigorate and renew. Some would attribute this effect to the reversal of the mind’s subtle energies.

One might compare the *sāhitya* to the cloth wrapped around the dancing goddesses, veils which flow with the form and both conceal and reveal her charms. Similarly the *sāhitya* or lyric is one with the note-body of the song.

The Poetic Dimensions of *Sāhitya*

Yati is the term for initial syllable rhymes or similarities in sound which are found in the *pallavi* (i.e., *soga* and *jokka*), and in the

anupallavi (i.e., *niga* and *nija*). They are examples of a Dravidian poetic practice dating from the Tevāram compositions (eighth century) of placing words with similar sounds at the beginning of lines, rather than at the end, as found in some other literatures (Brown 1981:344-345).¹⁷ In Telugu poetry the traditional verse forms require the composer to modulate with *yati* and *prāsa*. *Prāsa* in music and in Sanskrit means "caesura, pause." In Telugu poetic meter, it is the alliteration pattern which chimes with similar sounds in the second syllable of each line (*soga* and *jokka*). The metric forms, with marked cycles measuring time in sounds, resemble *tāḷa* patterns. In the "Sogasugā" text, *yati* and *prāsa* provide cohesiveness and a pattern of cycles within the parts, for the *pallavi* and *anupallavi* are interdependent in that they both have *yati*; the lines of the *caranām* also complete each other at their beginnings with *yati*. The use of *yati* and *prāsa* is a Dravidian practice: poetry in the Dravidian languages -- Telugu, Tamil, Malyalam and Kannada -- commonly uses these features. The Tevāram (sacred hymns) of Saivism and the Divyaprabhandas of Vaiṣṇavism employ *yati* and *prāsa*. Necessities of *prāsa* and *yati* limit word choice, just as end rhymes do, and these rules sometimes cause distortions. Tyāgarāja, in his mature work, usually avoided resorting to forced rhymes. These patterns form links within the lines of the song, because they mark the beginnings of *tāḷa* cycles and are unobtrusively built into the lyrics. Thus they provide measured guides, helping the singer to learn and perform the songs. Such features are considered compulsory in South Indian *padas*, *kīrtanas*, and *kṛitis* (Brown 1905/1980:1059).¹⁸ They function as an enduring Dravidian language solution to problems of formal literary structure and to retention in the memory -- "learning by heart."

Saṅgatis: Connections in New Variations

Repetition, dwelling on an image or thought and returning to it again and again, has a hypnotic effect; such incantation has since ancient times induced reverie and trance states. Tyāgarāja developed his song refrains to utilize nuances of difference in repetition. The *pallavi*, when first sung, begins the search for full expression of an impulse. Variations carry this search through a series of combinations to arrive at a completion. These variations on the refrain are called *saṅgatis*. They are not to be confused with *sāṅgita* (music) or *sāṅgataṁ* (accompaniment). *Saṅgatis* involve both lyrics and melody. The *kṛiti* starts with a simple *saṅgati* and each successive step builds on the previous one, budding in new directions, opening vistas in the

rāga, and climaxing. Through the repetition of musical notes and words, expectations are aroused; when an unexpected combination of notes startles the listener, it often brings a burst of joyous laughter. An unpredictable nuance may sometimes also move the listener to a mood of compassion and introspection. This is one of the refining aspects of *bhakti* arts.

It is significant that the description of devotional song in "Sogasugā" does not list *saṅgatis* as an essential part. Purandaradāsa, who also wrote a song about the ingredients of an ideal devotional song, also does not include them. (Since Tyāgarāja specialized in *saṅgatis* and developed them fully, he might be expected to point them out, yet he does not. Perhaps he did not want to call attention to his own unique genius; perhaps he believed that *kīrtanas* which lacked the *saṅgati* and which nonmusicians could sing were as worthy as those which were more artistic but were singable only by the few.) Purandaradāsa listed as essential: rhythm, suitable accompaniment, a peaceful time, people who want to listen, first syllable rhyme, alliteration, a steady pace, deep love of Viṣṇu, a clear voice, knowledge of the song's meaning, the absence of discordant grief, a happy face, listeners who understand, a crescendo of ecstasy, and the regarding of Viṭhala (a name of Viṣṇu, and Purandaradāsa's *mudrā* or signature) as supreme (Purandaradāsa 1959:67).¹⁹

Prior to Tyāgarāja, the *pallavi* performances of *saṅgatis* were improvised by singers spontaneously. In the works of Tyāgarāja, *saṅgatis* were developed and fixed and the capacity to elaborate potential variations on the refrain within the *rāga's* gamut was maximized. The *pallavi* was repeated with slight changes of notes and emphasis to bring out different nuances of meaning and feeling. *Saṅgatis* also represent the logical unfolding of the musical theme through methodical fulfillment of the *rāga's* potential. In spoken Telugu *saṅgati* means "message, news," and indeed it headlines the mood-story which follows. It also means "union, a coming together, variation," as well as "arrival" and, hence, "climax." In Sanskrit it means "meeting, association, connection." It is the meeting place where parts are joined, the connection that binds the whole together.

Usually the first *saṅgati* is a simple melodic line, subsequent lines becoming increasingly elaborate. Nevertheless the *saṅgatis* must be sung within the same time limit. "All the *saṅgatis* glide into one another so easily and gracefully that they seem to be natural

evolution and involutions of one another" in Tyāgarāja's songs (Aiyar 1927). Through subtle permutation, *saṅgatis* develop gradually, and at their climax the utmost rhythmic excitement and melodic elaboration are attained within the given limits. Musicologists have considered that the development of the *saṅgati's* potential is Tyāgarāja's main contribution to Karṇāṭaka music and "the central feature of Tyāgarāja's compositions" (Krishnaswamy 1968:162). They manifest a joyful inventiveness. "The gaiety of form comes from the labor of its playfulness."²⁰

While it is clear that Tyāgarāja was not the first composer to use *saṅgatis* in his compositions, he was the first, it would seem, to fully realize the potentials inherent in the *saṅgati* within the compact *kṛiti* form. *Saṅgatis* seem to appeal to modern sensibilities. "Each act is virgin, even the repeated one," John Cage quotes Renē Char as saying, pointing to the modern artist's awareness that novelty sprouts naturally from repetition.

Tyāgarāja repeated the same *mantra*, a naming and invoking of one particular deity, Rāma, for twenty years, through many changes. Dance dramas, and Bharata natyam in particular, illustrate the words of songs by offering visual equivalents of *saṅgatis*. Seeing a series of gestures which in three, ten, or twenty different ways illustrate the same words might have sparked some similar experimentation in his music, deriving multinuanced meanings from methodically repeated phrases. Before the loss of Hindu political autonomy in Tāñjāvūr in Tyāgarāja's times, court music had a leisurely quality. Pandits indulged in technical exhibitions for hours. When the court lost power, the pandits faced the possibility of becoming an endangered species. Perhaps the need to find less leisurely, more compact, memorable expressions of devotional art music moved Tyāgarāja to explore other structures. The compact *kṛiti* with set *saṅgatis* in a thematic climax was the form which evolved. In this form, created more under creative tension than leisure, every nuance counted, and every facet could be counted on to make its necessary impact.

The compact yet intricate design of Tyāgarāja's *kṛitis* bespeaks a highly conscious poetic technique. Tyāgarāja followed the musicologist Govindacari's 72 *rāga melakārta* system of classification, and this is the one used in Karṇāṭaka music today. This system and other theoretical structures outlining possible *rāga* varieties provided a potentially creative influence for the discovery of new *rāgas*. Tyā-

garāja was apparently a well-trained musician, with access to erudition in practice and theory, as well as being an ecstatic mystic, bringing him to the source of his inspiration, a saintly man for whom Rāma, a name of the godhead, literally meant all. For Tyāgarāja the search for new song was not separable from his search for divine vision. R. Rangaramanuja Ayyangar (1972:231) rightly notes that "The intense concentration promoted by Rāma Nāma Japa was a dynamo that discharged undreamt of light and power in musical expression." I would add that it was a combination of this *bhakti* discipline with *smārta* Brahman training, individual talent, experience and inspiration which made this possible.

In a small framework with strict limits, Tyāgarāja made the most of every note and syllable to evoke a lyrical theme, intensifying each part. Thus in a few lines the saint suggests the whole Rāmāyaṇa epic or a dramatic moment of *bhakti* which is the high point of a long lifetime. The typical Tyāgarāja *kr̥iti* seems sharp-pointed and concise, patterned like facets of a gem, especially when compared with the more intellectual, rambling and discursive style of Dīkṣitar. Tyāgarāja's sparing use of words give his compositions room for more *saṅgatis*, whereas the scholarly Dīkṣitar's compositions are full of words, not allowing much room for *saṅgatis*. Tyāgarāja's rhythms are also more lively.

Each Tyāgarāja *kr̥iti* celebrates the occasion of a *bhakti* mood (*bhava*). The variety of moods Tyāgarāja was able to elicit even within the same *rāga* was extraordinary. By limiting the length a more profound examination of possibilities in rare *rāgas* becomes possible. Instead of a nightlong elaboration of myriad possibilities, the precise best method of exploiting the potential in one line becomes the challenge. This was an advance in specialization, solving a certain kind of problem musically, a miniaturization. It was like the preparation of an ark of musical ideas designed to perpetuate them in a new era. Alfred North Whitehead has stressed the non-static existence of traditional ideas: "They are either fading into meaningless formulae, or gaining power by the new lights thrown by a more delicate apprehension." Tyāgarāja was a force for the latter dynamic intensification, choosing to "preserve the life in a flux of form," rather than "preserve the form in an ebb of life," in the words of Whitehead (Frankfurter 1939),²¹ Tyāgarāja developed the potential in *saṅgatis*.

Rasa: Smacking of Grape Juice

In Hindu aesthetic treatises, art's function is said to be the stimulation of the experience of *rasa*, the "essential juice, emotional state, taste of a mood" — an aesthetic mood inspired in the enjoyer of art. It is the lyrical quality of all the components together in a *kṛiti* which give it the *drākṣarasa*, "the juice of the grapes," mentioned in "Sogasugā." The taste of grapes on the tongue is an immediately enjoyable experience: Tyāgarāja's music is likewise intended to be directly enjoyed, rather than requiring a laborious process of hermeneutical decoding and esoteric puzzle-solving. Tyāgarāja's songs directly stimulate the primary emotions in a flow of *rasa*. As V. Raghavan wrote: "An emotion is recognized as *Rasa* if it is a sufficiently permanent major instinct of man, if it is capable of being delineated and developed to its climax with its attendant and accessory feelings and if there are men of that temperament to feel imaginative emotional sympathy at the presentation of that *Rasa*" (Sankaran 1929/1973).²²

It is said that the scholarly Dīkṣitar and the reserved Śyāma Śāstri achieved beauty through the cumulative buildup of repeated effects, as in discursive arguments; their works were articulated with style and careful diction, and they depended upon successive elaborations for their effect. In the traditional comparison, such works are said to be like coconuts which must be dehusked and cracked open and chewed rather laboriously before they release their *rasa* to be enjoyed and assimilated. Tyāgarāja composed music which is immediately tasted, like grapes smashed on the roof of the mouth, their juice or *rasa* stimulating thirst for more. We find ourselves quickly drawn into sympathy with the mood, rather than gradually being won over. The overall *bhava* (feeling, mood) is inseparable from the musical sequences and the rhythm and words which express it. Once the mood is established by the *pallavi* it is consistently developed, built to a point of suspense, expressed, and resolved. A *kṛiti* such as "Sogasugā" or "Baṅṭu riti" enacts a mood and situation of excitement and hopefulness, yet it is questioning, suggestive of answers. The *rasa* of *karuṇa* (compassion) is also stimulated in this as in many other of Tyāgarāja's songs: sympathy with the impossibility of ever doing justice to Rāma in praise, yet also sympathy for the yearning and valiant effort of whoever comes closest to succeeding.

M.S. Ramaswami Aiyar suggested that Tyāgarāja contributed a fivefold service to Karnāṭaka music through the composition of *kṛitis*: First, he comprehensively surveyed the products of musical science of previous eras, grasped previous composers' talents and resources, and focused the accomplishments of their art in his new songs. Second, "as a necessary corollary, he introduced for the first time in the history of Indian Music the system of developing *saṅgatis*." Third, he freed devotional songs from an overly strict metric form and verbal dominance, introducing more fluid melismatic passages. Fourth, he demonstrated that colloquial poetic prose has a "freedom which suits music better than too-formal poetry." Fifth, he explored many rare *rāgas* in his *kṛitis*, thereby discovering and giving them actual viability (Aiyar 1927:109).

Each of his songs is a self-contained artistic whole celebrating a moment of religious ideational or emotional crisis or climax. Each enacts the resolution of those situations, whether in words or subliminally in the outburst voicing pleasing melody and rhythm, the completion of which leaves the listener with a sense of *santosam* (rest). "Very often the whole state of mind in which we are left by a poem, or by music ... is of a kind which it is natural to describe as belief" (Richards 1925:279). Tyāgarāja's songs evoke moods of *bhakti* which demonstrate moments of his multifaceted *bhakta-bhagavān* (devotee-Lord) relationship, from insistent longing through grateful satiation and thanks.

The poet who becomes the conscience of his or her people is the source of subsequent responses and resolutions. Thus, through the *kṛiti* form, Tyāgarāja fulfilled deep needs in a changing South India. Crises which he underwent and resolved in his faith could be shared and recapitulated by others, and because of his great artistry and saintliness, his work has led to the refinement of sensibilities. The artful crying out of life's questions and exclamations amid all tribulations kept Tyāgarāja bound to his beloved *iṣṭadevatā*, which even today keeps South Indians who enjoy his songs bound on a religious path through remembrance. His songs are felt to be conducive to a spiritual liberation and a fulfillment of *bhakti* potentialities. As stated by Augustine, one of the West's great theologians,²³ "It is not the tongue, but our very life, that sings the new song." South Indians, through Tyāgarāja's songs and the example of his life, found the needed voice for new songs in their lives, singing the timeless in the face of change and beyond. For *rasa* in its highest

form, according to Hindu aesthetics, is *ānanda* (bliss, the divine reality).

Tyāgarāja left a lively body of music, which makes listeners remark, "In every song, the saint lives" (Sastri 1929). Also alive in his songs is a viable part of the past which is helping shape the Hindu future. Tyāgarāja, as an archetypical *bhakti* musical genius, remains a significant "guru" in the lives of many today.

THE MUSICIAN AS MYSTIC: TYĀGARAJA'S VISION OF SACRED SONG

In this section I introduce and interpret the religious philosophy of music which Tyāgarāja sang in the lyrics of some of his *kṛiti*. I have selected and translated from the Telugu the passages cited below, and have made comparisons with Indian precedents and non-Hindu examples when it seemed useful to do so.

In this great uproar (*kolāhala*) of these three worlds created by the play of the Lord whom Tyāgarāja adores, Rāma *bhakti* is the empire of those who attain enjoyment of it, O mind! (Tyāgarāja, *Rāmabhakti samrājyame*.²⁴

The Divine as the Embodiment of Music

Tyāgarāja, the Hindu composer-saint of South India, expressed his devotional moods in lyrics, precise and evocative, and in melodies which formed an integral part of his worship of his deity, Lord Rāma. As lovers of Karnāṭaka (classical South Indian music) know, Tyāgarāja was the proponent of a musical mysticism which affirmed that the vibrations of euphonious dedicated music are a subtle form of the divine. Tyāgarāja, in theory and practice, stood for the understanding of music as both a divine medium and message: the vibration of sacred concord is the source and goal of life. *Nāda yoga* is the discipline of sound which leads to *nāda brahman*, the eternal supreme consciousness, a luminous pure vibration. In this discipline the yogi masters musical knowledge, control of the voice, and rapt listening. Using artfully controlled sounds, the yogi strives to know the "unstruck cosmic sound" -- *anāhata nāda* -- the eternal substratum.

When Tyāgarāja sang of Lord Rāma as the “embodiment of sacred sound” there had already been many centuries of precedents. The Vedic concept that the creation of the cosmos is founded upon sound (*śabda niṣṭam jagad*) is ancient,²⁵ and non-Hindu religions have also expressed it (Langdon 1918).²⁶ Whether the creator’s voice says “Let there be light” or “Om,” in the beginning was the divine sound, the word; “... and the word was with God, and word was God.” For the prophetic imagination, revelation is the voice of God. “I am their music,” says the Old Testament prophet speaking for the supreme in Lamentations; biblical creation is signalled at the founding of earth by music: “the morningstars sang together,”²⁷ and the final koranic judgment at the end is prophesied to be announced by a single mountain-shattering trumpet blast.²⁸ Between creation and the end of the world, shamans and yogis, prophets and mystics are known to dance and sing in trance and ecstasy, and the common form of praise and communion for many communities is unifying soul-stirring music.

The Sanskrit tradition has many examples of music as divine art and ethereal reality. In the Vedic view the universe is founded on two principles: harmony (*ṛita*) and sacrifice (*yajña*). In the Sāma Veda (which is the traditional Hindu foundation for music) (Chand 1981) and in the Bhagavad Gītā (the “Song of the Lord”), the divine is said to be sound in space.²⁹ The Maitri Upaniṣad speaks of meditation on the Brahman of sound, for “only by sound is the non-sound [that which transcends sound] revealed.” Another Upaniṣad likens the joy derivable from music to the bliss found in knowledge of the true self.³⁰ The satisfaction of experiencing wholeness or of “feeling altogether complete” is associated with enjoying song in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.³¹ In the Viṣṇu Purāṇa it is said that “All songs are a part of Him who wears a form of sound” (Krishnaswamy 1968).³² Bharata’s *Nāṭyaśāstra* (ca. first century B.C.E.) treats music as a divine art, and Sārṅgadevā’s *Sarigītaratnākara* (“Ocean of Music”), written in the thirteenth century, suggests that the worship of *nāda brahman* is the way to liberation: “we worship the *nāda brahman* [divine sound], the life of all beings, transformed in the shape of the world, the sentience, the bliss.”³³ The singer and the listener can enjoy the flavor of the spirit, because *rasa*, the essential “juice” or flavor of appreciative feeling or pleasurable sentiment, is a divine bliss: *raso vai sah*,³⁴ in which “He [the Lord] is *rasa*.” A śloka from the legendary Svarāṅṇava points ever more inwardly to the arcana of a secret truth: “In the center of the body is the *prāṇa* (vital force associated with breath); in

the center of the *prāṇa* is the *dhvani* (sound); in the center of the *dhvani* is the *nāda* (musical sound); and in the center of the *nāda* is Sadāśiva, the Supreme Lord” (Svarārnava, cited by Sambamoorthy 1970:247). At the heart of all matter, which is basically energy vibrations, is pure consciousness, according to Hindu tradition.

In the vernacular *bhakti* tradition we also find the idea that music is divine. The Tamil Cilappadikāram reflects South India's high esteem for music as an already elaborate and sacred art in Tamil Nadu about 1500 years ago. In the *sundarar tevāram* the Lord is said to be “the embodiment of the seven musical notes” and is “the very fruit of music” as well.³⁵ Appar, the seventh-century convert from Jainism to Saivism, asserts in a Tevaram song that “spiritual freedom is for those who glorify Him as the Being who vibrates throughout the universe and in every soul.” Māṇikkavācakar exhorted Śiva devotees to “Behold Him who is inherent in creatures like sweet music in the *vīṇā*. Behold Him who discovered music therein.”³⁶ Śaṅkara, the *advaitin* (monist) reformer of Hinduism, is supposed to have said that “Those who sing here sing God,” and the Tamil Mahābhārata of poet Villiputtūrār speaks of Śiva as the very form of music (Coomaraswamy 1962).³⁷ Therefore, when Tyāgarāja composed “Nādasudhārasambilānu,”³⁸ it was an extension of traditional ideas which conceive of Lord Rāma as the embodiment of sacred sound, a divine warrior-prince with bells along the length of his bow:

The nectar of beautiful musical sound
took human form in this very world, O mind!
It is the basis of the Vedas, the Purāṇas,
the traditional scriptures, and the Śāstras.
The nectar of beautiful musical sound
took human form in this very world, O mind!
The six plus one tones are the bells,
the noble melody, the *rāga*, is the bow.
The three kinds of *rāgas*: the heavy,
the delicate, the regional,³⁹ form the bow's
triple-woven string; the rhythm of the syllables
makes up the arrows, and Lord Rāma's words,
apropos of the theme, are delightful variations.
It is our great good fortune to worship with song
that form in this world, and Tyāgarāja worships
this nectar of beautiful musical sound which
took human form in this very world, O mind!

Music and Devotion

Tyāgarāja delighted in spreading the joy inherent in the sounds of spiritual music, and sang of it as a “nectar” in a number of his songs. For example, in “Rāga sudhārasa”⁴⁰ he invites music-lovers:

Drink up the nectary juice called *rāga*
 and be joyful, O mind;
 It gives the fruits of rites and disciplines,
 renunciation and enjoyment (Drink...)
 Those who know that the tones and the primordial *Om*
 compose the body of Śiva, are liberated souls
 — Tyāgarāja knows! (Drink...).

And in “Svara rāga sudhārasayuta” the saint again asserts the idea that *bhakti* full of sweet tones and feelings is the highest bliss. In this song we also find an idea which is voiced in “Yajñavalkya Smṛiti”: one who has mastered the mysteries of the *vṛṇā* and knows well the rhythmic cycles (*tāla*) may easily attain liberation (Parthasarathy 1979-80).⁴¹

Devotion steeped in the nectar of melodious tones
 and modes is supreme celestial bliss, O mind!⁴²
 To become a Wise One after many births is freedom;
 one who knows the *rāgas*
 and has inborn devotion
 is a realized soul, O mind!
 The secrets of that ocean of musical tones, revealed
 by the Lord of the Silver Peak to Pārvatī,⁴³
 Tyāgarāja knows and has mastered; have trust
 and learn them, O mind! (Devotion steeped...)

The practice and knowledge of music as rigorous spiritual practice (*sādhana*) is as complex a discipline as any other yoga in India. *Nāda yoga*'s roots in the ancient Vedic sense of the power inherent in sound lead one back to the *mantras* discovered by seers; like *rāgas*, it may be said that they are eternal, awaiting discovery and performance to manifest their sacred powers. In this view *śabda* (divine vibration) is the manifestation of the subtle principle of consciousness em patterning matter. *Śabda* is the animating principle of form, something like the Greek *logos*, the “word” of creation. Vibration is also the quality characteristic of *ākāśa* (ethereal space), the vast

dimension which “carries” sound. The *anāhata śabda* is the eternal and all-pervasive, mysterious ringing of infinite space, from which secondary transitory sounds come into being. Everything in existence has its own share of imperishable *śabda*, which is the subtle aspect of its vital principle or life-energy.

The sounds we hear are but notes caught at random, with vast spaces, as it were, between them in which beyond our hearing is their continuity. In this sense you think of existence, in terms of sound, as a tremendous, continuous pattern, of which tiny fragments are perceptible, just as the light of the sun strikes a dewdrop among leaves.

(See Pym 1930, Wulff 1984, and Gonda 1963.)⁴⁴

Thus classical Indian music is a “tuning in” to the eternal, drawing out the essence of existence at a particular moment, harmonizing with the deeper, “unheard sound” of life. The differences of the notes are usually not emphasized through abrupt contrasts; rather, a scale of finer intervals is employed as the tune meanders in a flow of ripples, and extra strings on the *vīṇā* augment the resonance. The theme of the *rāga* is varied in a multitude of cycles, not abruptly ending, just as it did not abruptly begin. According to the Hindu philosophy of music, it rises into audibility from eternity, again to merge into the mysterious infinite.

For religious Karnāṭaka musicians such as Tyāgarāja, who aspired so fervently to reach the supreme, *nāda yoga* was even more complex and demanding than other yogas, both in strict technicalities of performance and in the esoteric quality of conceptualization and philosophy.

This musical knowledge would seem to be a *sine qua non* for liberation, in Tyāgarāja's view. He sang, for instance, of musical wisdom as a sure way for the ardent in “*Saṅgīta śāstrajñānamu*”:

The wisdom of music's art and science
 is the bestower of the ecstasy
 of sharing in the Beloved's divinity;
 That wisdom, soaked in the divine bliss-ocean
 of the story of Rāma, replete with

separation pangs and other emotions,
 That musical wisdom bestows the ecstasy
 of sharing in the Beloved's divinity.
 It gives the affection of the virtuous, piety
 and heartfelt love; it brings the grace
 of Lakṣmī's divine consort; it will give
 self-control, peace of mind, wealth of fame.
 That wisdom, learned by the knowing Tyāgarāja,
 and drenched in the Rāma-story Sea,
 is the bestower of the ecstasy
 of sharing in the Beloved's divinity....⁴⁵

In "Mokṣamu galada"⁴⁶ Tyāgarāja asks if there can be liberation for those who have not known release -- those who have neither true devotion nor musical wisdom. He explains that through the combination of the life-force or vital breath (*prāṇa*) and fire (*anala*), the vibration of Om manifests in the form of the seven tones of music -- an idea stated in the *Śaṅgītaratnākara*.⁴⁷ Then he asks: "For those who have not experienced the consciousness of Śiva Dakṣiṇamūrti [Śiva as the teacher who taught by wordless silence] who is fond of playing the *vīṇā*, can there be liberation -- for those who have not already known release?" In the discipline of divinely entrancing vibrations, Tyāgarāja offered an inlet to this way of freedom.

Not all *bhaktas* in India's history pride themselves on expertise in the technical knowledge of music. Basavaṅṇa, the twelfth-century Lingayat poet, wrote, "I don't know anything like time beats and metre, nor the arithmetic of strings and drums... I'll sing as I love" (Ramanujan 1973, Coomaraswamy 1956:55).⁴⁸ Tyāgarāja, being the link between the *bhakti* songsters and the professional musicians in Tāñjāvūr, did consider knowledge and care in performance to be important. What is known as the "science of music" in South India -- the intricate rules and lore, the precision of correct performance, and the knowledge of exactly which liberties could be taken and which could not -- was Tyāgarāja's forte, without which he would not have been a master, either musically (because the strict guardians of the discipline would have dismissed him), or spiritually (because the beauty of the classical form preserves his vital impulses and spiritual message). Some of his songs, such as "Telisi rāmacintanatō" and "Vinayamunanu," seem perhaps too design-conscious to have been uttered in the abandon of a trance or passion. But who is to say: once

formal concepts and discipline have become second nature to a composer, he may sing "unawares," as Śrī Sai Sathya Baba has suggested Tyāgarāja did. Ultimately it is the historian who is "unaware" of the mental state of an artist. It because of his musical knowledge coupled with his inspiration that Tyāgarāja, even in his own lifetime, could sing that Rāma had made his "fame shine in far lands."⁴⁹

Songs in Praise of *Bhakti* Music

Most saints did not write songs about the medium of their praise. Tyāgarāja uniquely wrote more than a dozen songs about the greatness of spiritual music. These songs sum up, in a general way, his musical mysticism.

In two songs Tyāgarāja speaks of the *rāgas* as beautiful celestial maidens, and he enthusiastically exhorts his mind to attend and serve these subtle-bodied goddesses: "O mind, be intent upon music" which is divine, above the problems the rest of phenomenal existence is prone to suffer through. These lovely sound shapes are said to dance, enchanting both Tyāgarāja and his Lord.⁵⁰

In "Śobhillu saptasvara" ("O mind, serve...")⁵¹ Tyāgarāja further describes the seven notes and lists their residences, both internal and external:

O mind, serve and worship the beautiful shapes
of the seven tones which are shining
in the navel, in the heart, in the throat,
in the tongue, nose and other centers⁵² (O mind),
shining in the world in the Ṛig, the Sāma, and
the other Vedas, in the very core
of the best of *mantras* -- the *gāyatrī*,⁵³
in the minds of gods, *brahmans*, in good
Tyāgaraja!
O mind serve and worship the beautiful shapes
of the seven tones which are shining, shining!

Glorifying music further, the song "Nādopāsana" (Raghavan 1953),⁵⁴ pictures music as capable of sustaining even the gods:

Meditating on musical sound

Śiva, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā shine
 and happily thrive, O mind!
 These Veda-uplifters transcend
 The Vedas, and they pervade the
 Entire cosmos (Meditating...)
 They are the *mantras*' selves,
 The *yantras*' and *tantras*' selves,
 And they live innumerable eons;
 They revel in melody, rhythm,
 And tones, these masters of
 Themselves, adored by Tyāgarāja; (Meditating...)

Songs in Praise of Holy Musicians

In another song⁵⁵ Tyāgarāja offers his homage to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, along with others who "know music... know the Sāma Veda composed by Śiva... and who know the seven tones which are made of the divine vibration." The other music lovers he honors are Lakṣmī, Pārvatī, Sarasvatī, Kāśyapa, Caṇḍikeśvara, Hanumān, Subrahmaṇya, Gaṇeśa, Mārkaṇḍeya, Agastya, Tumburu, Someśvara, Sārṅgadeva, Nandi and other "leading lights" who know "the secret of the nectar-ocean called Vast Bliss."⁵⁶ These are some of the mythological and historical heroes of the Hindu musical tradition in India. In "Gītārthamu" Tyāgarāja singles out Hanumān, the heroic simian servant of Rāma, for praise: "For the sense of the song and the joy of the music, look here, look here, O mind! Look to the wind-god's son.. Hanumān...." In one line Hanumān is credited with knowing the secrets of the different religious creeds, as well as being an expert at music.⁵⁷ In the Saṅgīta Ratnākara Hanumān is mentioned as a great musician, and in popular art he is shown with the *bhajan* leader's time-keeping clappers, dancing in ecstasy. Tyāgarāja's songs in praise of Nārada describe him as "The honey-bee in the lotus of divine sound,"⁵⁸ and honor him as the master of the Vedas, of yoga, and of music.⁵⁹ In Śrī nārada muni⁶⁰ Tyāgarāja sings in a mood of gratitude that he has seen Nārada with a shining *vīṇā* in his hand. A number of biographies depict Tyāgarāja's devotion to Nārada and his receiving blessings and esoteric knowledge from this legendary Vaiṣṇava musician. Nārada, Hanumān, and the other exemplars of devotional music provide a pathway for devotees to follow. Their lives have been declarations and proofs of the Lord's existence, and have been demonstrations of how one may reach the Lord's presence. Because

there have been musician-*bhaktas* before Tyāgarāja, he can make demands of Rāma:

You are the compassionate Lord
 who provides protection
 to devotees who faithfully, without faltering,
 give up their sleep, take up the *tambūra*,
 and, strumming it charmingly,
 sing with a pure mind,
 melodiously, O Lord adored by Tyāgarāja--
 Or will the words of the wise become lies
 today -- the words which harp to believers:
 He exists! He *is!*⁶¹

Music as the Meeting Place of the Human and Divine

In some of Tyāgarāja's songs Rāma is spoken of as the ultimate *rasika*, the "divine connoisseur" of most excellent taste who enjoys music.⁶² He is said to love music⁶³ and to be "full of skill in the music which is nectarful, born of the Sāma Veda." Tyāgarāja speaks of him as the "Light on the hill of the seven notes of sound born of the Mother called Om, the crest of the Vedas... [and] born in the Yādava clan," as Krishna who relishes flute playing.⁶⁴ Thus the Lord and the devotee are both musicians; both appreciate the beauties of the music, which is a powerful, invisible spiritual medium for both to share. (The root of *bhakti* is *bhaj* ["to share, divide, apportion"] and is associated with intimate sharing and participation.)

Music is the shared realm in which the Lord and the devotee meet and mingle. According to Tyāgarāja, this kind of devotional music, both in doctrine and in practice, at its best offers to those who are attuned and receptive an experience of transcendence. The power of music lies in its ability to provide an inroad to spiritual ecstasy: "The wisdom of music's art and science is the bestower of the ecstasy of sharing in the Beloved's divinity."⁶⁵

Tyāgarāja praises music as the source of many benefits. Musical knowledge, when coupled with devotion, in Tyāgarāja's view, provides a means to the ultimate goal of life: *mokṣa* -- final release, liberation. In fact this is Tyāgarāja's definition of *mokṣa*, the ultimate goal of the Hindu tradition: "Knowing the musical sound born from the *mūlādhāra*⁶⁶ -- that is ecstatic liberation! To distinguish the proper

home of the seven notes amidst the great tumult⁶⁷ — listen, O mind, that is *mokṣa*. Devotion steeped in the nectar of melodious tones and modes, that is the final beatitude, O mind!"⁶⁸ The term *kolāhala* is used here to mean the "great tumult," the confusion of *samisāra* or historical worldly life. It is related to similar words in Hindi and Bengali which mean "fracas, riot, agitation." To discern the proper positions or, literally, the homes of the seven musical tones amid the disconcerting uproar, is to find the music of salvation amid life's conflictual noise. The "homes" of the seven tones are the mystical centers (*cakras*) of the body known to yoga and *tantra*. The higher harmony, inherent in the microcosm which is the individual, can be drowned out by the uproar of the physical world clamoring for attention. To overcome the mere anarchy of noise and find the perfect and eternal order in chaos is the creative *bhakta* musician's mystical task. (Like the Jewish mystics whose mission is to "redeem the sparks," to know the eternal within and beyond the flux, the mystic musician of India seeks to reach "home," no longer to wander in exile.)

Hence, singing praise is a genuine discipline, and it is natural that Tyāgarāja should bow to music, which is also an embodiment of the Lord, whether conceived of as Rāma or as Śiva. The divine source of music, however named, is the goal of Tyāgarāja's *sādhana* of devotion, as he suggests in his song "Nādatanumaniṣam," which has a Vedic chant-like pattern in its melody:

To Him whose body is sound — Lord Śaṅkara —
 I bow again and again, mentally and physically
 To the essence of the Sāma Veda, the greatest
 Veda, which gives such exaltation... (To Him...)
 To Him who protects pure-hearted Tyāgarāja
 Who conquered death and revels in musical wisdom
 Of the seven sacred tones: *sa ri ga ma pa dha nī*
 Which are born from his five heads
 (To Him whose body is sound...)⁶⁹

In Tyāgarāja's happiest songs the saint expresses satisfaction and comfort at the thought that he has woven clothing of his utterances, and has fashioned ornaments of concordant notes, for his Lord to wear.⁷⁰ And he asks what joy could ever transcend the happiness of devotees in harmony, praising together, living the life of *bhakti*.

Tyāgarāja considers the human being's ability to sport in the "ocean of ecstasy" to be so important that in his estimation one who fails to swim in this sea "which is called musical wisdom" leads a useless life and wastes his human birth, becoming "a mere burden to the earth."⁷¹ On the contrary, his heroes fulfilled their roles through loving service and musical praise, experiencing mystical realization in so doing. Tyāgarāja praises them and their path in his songs on the glories of music.

Indeed, Tyāgarāja, in "Intakannā yānandamēmi" ("What happiness"), describes the highest bliss as a harmony of souls in devotion:

What happiness could ever surpass this bliss, O Rāma
 When there is unanimity in the meeting of devotees...
 In devotion they dance, they sing tunefully, praying
 That the Lord appear before them (What happiness...)

It was this self-forgetfulness, which music and devotion sometimes effect, that inspired Tyāgarāja's concept of satisfaction, or so it would seem from his lyrics:

It is enough to merge one's mind in him...
 When one says "I am he," forgetting the body
 With its bundle of senses, singing the Lord's glories
 (What happiness...)
 When I murmur over and over your name -- O prince
 Whose story is praised by Tyāgarāja -- these worlds
 Seem to shine! What happiness could ever surpass
 this bliss, O Rāma?⁷²

Tyāgarāja's words may voice doubts: "When will you come? Where are you? Have you forgotten me?", but his music puts them to rest with a pattern of completion. Tyāgarāja's music projects the climactic *bhakti* vision he experienced, which was precipitated by devoted longing and repetition of the Name. His *bhakti* experiences are characterized by a sense of mutuality and reciprocity. In Tyāgarāja's visions and dreams he looks to Rāma with joy and gratitude, and Rāma relents and appears with amazing grace, listening to his pleas and looking at him with mercy and generosity. Music is Tyāgarāja's favored way both to reach and to express this ecstasy or *ānanda* (Macdonald 1901).⁷³ Taken as a whole, his lyrics reveal a synthesis of

complementary strands. There is *bhakti*'s cultivation of *viraha* feelings, longing love toward the divine with hope of reciprocity. There is *advaita* philosophy -- perfect unity of "soul" and "God" as the ultimate goal, as well as the reality along the way, if illusions are lost. There is *tantra*-like faith in the *sādhana* or discipline of *mantra* and the drive toward the goal of vision, the direct manifestation of the deity, experiencing the macrocosmic in the microcosmic. And "Rāma" means for Tyāgarāja both his beloved and the ultimate formless reality. Rāma is a name for the absolute being-consciousness-bliss, Brahman, and so is pictured in some songs as greater than deities with limited forms and roles -- Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. Tyāgarāja's stance on *mantra* and *tantra*, *bhakti* and monism seems subject to change, being emphasized or not, depending on his moods; but for him, experiencing Rāma was his reason for singing. He was not concerned with the construction of perfectly consistent verbal systems.

Tyāgarāja's metaphysical notions about music are not the only cosmicization of an art or profession in India. It may be said that God is the author who writes the drama of universe; the divine warrior king who battles evil; the cosmic smith who artifices creation; the priestly sacrificer and chanter of the great offering which generates existence -- there are many arts and professions associated with cosmic symbol systems (Bachelard 1969).⁷⁴ But uniquely among them, this cosmic way of music was potentially more accessible, open to all in modern South India who would sing or listen. By exploring the form Tyāgarāja perfected, the *kṛiti*, to give this access, one may better understand his accomplishment.

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Notes

¹ Translated by the present author. For the original Telugu see Ramanujacari and Raghavan (1966:596).

² Translated by the present author. For the original Telugu see Ramanujacari and Raghavan (1966:596).

³ Purandaradāsa in a song mentions that he had written 475,000 *kṛitis*.

⁴ For the Telugu text of “Sogasugā” see Ramanujacari and Raghavan (1966:106).

⁵ Tyāgarāja calls his songs *kīrtanas* in *Rāgaratnamālika: Spiritual Heritage of Tyāgarāja*: 104-105. For “Daśarathi ni runamu,” see 518-519.

⁶ See T.S. Parthasarathy. Even today the Rāgam-Tānam-Pallavi format is extensively used in performances of Karnāṭaka music, and often the central theme of a concert may be built around the rendering of a *Rāgam-Tānam-Pallavi*. Also, in concerts today, the *pallavi* in *Rāgam-Tānam-Pallavi* is repeated many times, each time in a different *rāga* forming a *rāgamalika* or garland of melodies. With the exception of this format, singing a composition in any *rāga* other than the one it was composed in is considered improper by Karnāṭaka music purists.

⁷ T.S. Parthasarathy, in an interview, 1981. Sambamoorthy has also noted this pattern.

⁸ The small “c” denotes the octave C, not the C note of the piano; it is equivalent to the tonic note chosen by the musician performing the piece.

⁹ *Sampradāya* and *manodharma* serve as a good example of the bipolar principles involved in the continual renewal of tradition, a topic I explored in my 1984 Harvard Ph.D. dissertation “Tyāgarāja: Musician Saint of South India: The exploration of a religious life and legacy,” and is a theme in my book titled *Tyāgarāja and the Renewal of Tradition: Reflections and Translations*.

¹⁰ Also compare T.V. Subbarao (op. cit.:209): “In ‘Sogasugā’ he wonders whether it is possible to please the Lord with music with which the *mṛidanga* is made to agree and by means of a composition whose words are true and contain the meaning of the Vedas and are rendered to harmonious notes, in easy style with all the essentials of prosodial requirements. He was indeed speaking, as we know, not from his own standpoint, but from that of the ordinary man of the world for whom all his compositions are meant.” C. Ramanujacari (op. cit.:91), begins his translation with the question “Where is that great man...,” giving the song yet another emphasis.

11 This work is a condensation of the lost treatise, made by Chinna Tirumalacharyalu, son of Peda Tirumalacharyalu, son of Tāllapakam Annamāchārya.

12 See Vijayaraghavacharya and Naidu (1935, verse 27:142).

13 If I were asked for a single word most characteristic of the mood of Tyāgarāja's vast body of lyrics and music, one which comes to mind immediately is the Telugu word *rā*. In many songs this word of demand, literally meaning "Come!", is the gist of the message. Bhavanuta nā hridayamuna, Rā rā mā iṅṅidāka, Dayajūcuṭakidi vēḷarā are a few examples. *Rā*, called out to Lord Rāma, is the informal address -- a familiar, even short-tempered, impatient demand, spoken as if to a family member or one known very well: "Come here!" Tyāgarāja's is a singing in absence, a singing as a substitute for the desired union; the songs also enact an overcoming of depression caused by estrangement. However pleasing they are, their urgency reminds us that "Singing is sweet, but remember this: lips only sing when they cannot kiss."

14 Page 20 of a typed copy in the possession of T.S. Parthasarathy. Naidu further believed that "Apart from the sentiments, philosophical and ethical, of the songs, they possess little literary merit, and would have been long ago relegated to the limbo of oblivion, but for the music and for the profundity of his meditations and his inward struggle to unveil the great mystery of which they give evidence": End of paragraph 14.

15 The songs are "Entani nē" and "Sogasu jūḍa taramā."

16 Ramanujacari, C. and V. Raghavan, *Spiritual Heritage of Tyagaraja* (1966:4) uses the image of a *gopura* so magnificent that one neglects the deity in the sanctum within.

17 Brown discusses first and second syllable rhymes in Welsh, Icelandic, Finnish and in Saxon poetry. He cites sources for examples of this practice in Western literature. In recent times, Edmund Wilson experimented with poetry rhyming at the beginning of lines. The Tamil terms for *yati* and *prāsa* are *etukai* and *monai*.

18 *Yati* is defined as "a syllable rhyming to the initial of a line of poetry," *prāsamu* is defined as "the second letter of each verse, the rhyming letter," and as "alliteration," in *Brown's Dictionary Telugu-English* (1980:853).

19 I am indebted to T.S. Parthasarathy for this and other interpretations of Kannada texts.

20 Robert Bly; line in a poem recited at Phi Beta Kappa exercises, Harvard, June 4, 1985.

21 Examples of rare *rāgas* include Jayantaśrī, Hamsanādam, Candrajyoti, Dhenuka.

22 The first five chapters offer a brief history of the concept of *rasa*.

23 Augustine, *Ennaratione, Psalm 32*.

24 For the *devanagari* (Sanskrit-script) version of *Rāmabhakti samrājyamē*, see Ramanujacari and V. Raghavan, *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyāgarāja* (1966:104). This book will be cited hereafter as SHT. For the Telugu-script version of *Rāmabhakti samrājyamē* see Sastri, *Tyāgarāja Keertanalu* (1975), in two volumes, cited hereafter as KVS I and II. Tyāgarāja found Rāma's bliss in the uproar, and many other musicians and composers also have said such things, e.g. George Gershwin: "I frequently hear music in the heart of noise."

25 Sabda niṣṭam jagad is said to be from the Ṛig Veda, or the Upaniṣads.

26 The Logos (divine utterance or creative word) is an ancient concept in world religions. See Langdon (1918). The origin of religions as the sound of God in revelation, and the continuity of religions as hearing and transmitting the word of God, together form a common base of the Torah and the Vedas.

27 Lamentations, III.63. In this passage the prophet calls himself the music, the burden of the song, of the oppressed people for whom he speaks. The Book of Job, XXXVIII.7.

28 *Qur'ān, sūras* 23, 36, 37.

29 *The Sāma Veda* (see Chand 1981), Aranyakkāṇḍa III.4:93. Bhagavad Gīta verse is *vedānām sāmavedo 'smi*: "Of the *Vedas*, I am the *Sāma Veda*" (X.22). "I am the sound in ether" is found at VII.8.

30 Maitri Upaniṣad 6.22.

31 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, VI.I.i.15.

32 Viṣṇu Purāna (see Krishnaswamy 1968).

33 Sārṅgadeva, *Sarṅgīta Ratnākara*, I.iii.1.

34 *Raso vai saḥ* is a well-known Sanskrit statement from the Taittirīya Upaniṣad interpreted by some to imply the unity of aesthetics and religion.

35 The Śaiva saint Sundarar sang a Tevāram hymn in which he stated: "God is the embodiment of musical notes and the fruit of music," according to Sri T.S. Parthasarathy, Madras musicologist.

36 Māṅikkavācakar, Tiruvācakam, III.35. There is a tradition that Śiva first evoked music which was inherent in the *vīṇā*.

37 Śaṅkara: "Those who sing here sing God," cited by A.K. Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva*: (1962:95); and Mahābhārata by Villiputtūrār: 10.6.

38 *Nādasudhārasambalanu, The Spiritual Heritage of Tyāgarāja* (SHT):229. For the Telugu script see Sastrī's Tyāgarāja Keertanalu (KVS):458. Other songs praising the Lord as the embodiment of sound include "Ni bhakti bhāgya": 146; "Nīdaya galgutē": 12; and "Nammi vaccina": 81. The Lord is glorified as the embodiment of the divine bliss of the taste of sound in "Nī dayacērama": 230, and in "Talacinantanē": 491.

39 The three kinds of *rāgas* mentioned here are *dura* ("heavy," sometimes called *ghāna*); *naya* ("lighter," more delicate melodies), and *deśya* ("regional").

40 "Raga sudhārasa," SHT: 92-93; KVS II: 117. "Svara rāga sudhārasa yuta," SHT: 92, 512; KVS II: 217.

41 "Yājñavalkya Smṛiti." T.S. Parthasarathy translates this verse in "Glory of Tyagaraja" (1979-80):

"He who knows the mysteries of playing the *vīṇā*
he who has mastered the knowledge of *śruti* and *jati*
and he who is an adept in *tāla*
goes the way of *mokṣa* without effort."

42 Literally, it is said that devotion combined with the nectar of notes and modes is the final beatitude of heaven (*svargāpavargamurā*), or detachment from matter.

43 In a number of myths, Śiva teaches his consort music. Both of them are dancers, and sometimes they compete in their dancing.

44 Pym, *The Power of India* (1930). Also see Wulff, "Practicing Religiously" in *Sacred Sound* (1984:159). This is an excellent introduction to the importance of music in India. Related to this theme of primal sound, the sacred vibration of mantras, and seers' intuitions of correspondences, see Gonda, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets* (1963).

45 "Saṅgīta śāstrajñānamu," SHT: 91, 512.

46 "Mokṣamu galada," SHT: 509; KVS II: 101.

47 Śārṅgadeva, *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*: I. iii. 6.

48 Basavaṅṅa, in Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva* (1973). Importance of aesthetic theory is stressed in works both Eastern and Western. Homeric Hymn IV speaks of the necessity of art and wisdom in the making of music. Guido d'Arezzo, the tenth-century A.D. Italian originator of the European solfa system, wrote that "Not just art, but wise doctrine makes for real singers": Cited by Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (1956: 55).

49 "Dāśarathinīruṇamu," SHT: 437.

50 "Śrīpapriya saṅgītopāśana," SHT: 513-514; KVS II: 201. The term *saṅgītopāśana* means meditation on, devotion to, or attending upon, music.

51 "Śobhillu saptasvara," SHT: 514-515; KVS II: 203. This song is based on *ślokas* from the *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*: I. iii.4, which discuss the relationship between sound and the centers of the body. Specifically, in III.4. many of the same words are employed.

52 Ibid., see also *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*: II. 120-147. In Tyāgarāja's song the "beautiful shapes" of the notes could be translated as "beauties" or "goddesses." This song shows the overlapping of *nāda yoga* ("the discipline of sacred sounds"), *bhakti*, and *tantra* traditions with their physiological concepts and use of visualizations.

53 The *gāyatrī* is said to be the essence of all the Vedas and is taught at the time of Hindu initiation. It is a prayer for divine light to impel intelligence.

54 "Nādapāśana," SHT: 510; KVS I: 459. This is also similar to a *śloka* in the *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*: III.2. It is quoted in the *Svarārṇava* treatise as printed by Raghavan (verse 13), as are several other *ślokas*: "The So-Called Svarārṇava" (1953:1-12). Raghavan's footnotes to this text give corresponding *Saṅgīta Ratnākara* verses. The 1908 text of this song is the most correct version, it would seem; others seem either garbled or "corrected."

55 "Vidulaku mrokkeda," SHT: 33, 511; KVS II: 170.

56 Musicologists and *rasikas*, both mythical and historical, are catalogued here: Lakṣmī, Pārvaṭī, Sarasvaṭī are the consorts of Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Brahmā, respectively; Kāśyapa, mate of Adīṭī and progenitor of living beings; Caṇḍīśa or Caṇḍikeśvara; Hanumān, the servant-devotee of Rāma; Subramanya, the offspring of Śiva and Pārvaṭī, deity of power and youth; Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed god of beginnings, also the offspring of Śiva and Pārvaṭī; Mārkaṇḍeya, the sage who wanders the cosmos, discovering the greatness of Viṣṇu; Agastya, the legendary sage and culture hero whose *āśram* was in South India;

Tumburu, the legendary singer-musician; Someśvara, musicologist; Śārṅgadeva, author of *Saṅgīta Ratnākara*, a treatise on music; Nandi the bull, vehicle of Śiva.

57 "Gitārthamu," SHT: 230; KVS I: 393.

58 "Śrī nārada nāda," SHT: 39; KVS II: 192.

59 "Nārada guru sāmi," SHT: 40; KVS I: 461.

60 "Śrī nārada munī," SHT: 38-39; KVS I:200. *Rajillu vine* means "shining *vīṇā*."

61 "Kaddanuvāriki," SHT: 96, 382. Cf. Psalm 107 in which the singer speaks of faithfully chanting praise, awaking before dawn to play on lyre and harp. See also Isaiah 26:19. Rāmakrishna and other Indian saints taught disciples to meditate before dawn, the quiet time when darkness turns to light.

62 "Deva rāra rāma mahādeva," KVS I:434

63 "Prahāda Bhakti Vijaya," 15.3; here Viṣṇu is said to love music. Purandaradāsa in a song "Śrīnivāsanine" calls the Lord *gānalola*, "song-enamored." The Lord grants salvation to a singer sooner than to others, according to this song. In the *Lalitāsahāsrāma* the 857th name of the Goddess is *Ganalolupā*, "She who delights in music" and the 909th is *Sāmagānapriyā*, "She who loves the chanting of the *Sāmaveda*."

64 "Vidulaku mrokkeda," SHT: 33; KVS II:170. In an article titled "The Philosophy of Tyāgarāja," JMA: vol. XVIII: 58, it is said that "The Seven Hills (Tirupati) represent the *swaras* and the *Paramātmā* is seated at the top of the flight of seven steps . . . as a shining beacon."

65 "Saṅgīta śāstrajñānamu," SHT: 91, 512; KVS II: 204.

66 *Mūlādhāra* is literally "holder of the origin," the yogic center at the base of the spine.

67 The meaning here, “to distinguish the proper home of the seven notes amidst the great tumult,” is to perform the feat which an inspired composer performs, creating music from the chaos of noise, as well as to know and be established in the harmonious spiritual truth amid illusion’s discords.

68 “Svara rāga sudhārasayuta,” SHT: 93, 513; KVS: 217.

69 “Nādatanumanīśam,” SHT: 232; KVS I: 456. Traditionally it is said (and shown iconographically) that the seven notes (*sa ri ga ma pa dha nī*) emanate from Śiva’s five heads. The notes of the *Sāma Veda* are reproduced in part of the melody of this song, as if to echo the ancient “source of music.” The opening *śloka* of the *Sangīta Ratnākara* refers to Śiva as Nādatanu, “he whose body is composed of sound.” There are mystical connections to the notes in medieval Latin monastic traditions. Meanings of the syllables given are: DOminus (God the Father), SIdera (the star systems), LActea (the milky way of our galaxy), SOL (our sun, the head of the solar system), FAta (fate, the planetary net), MICrococosmos (the small world, man on earth), REgina de Coeli (Queen of Heaven, the moon). It is said that between FA and RE is MI, ignorant man screening out the full light from above. See Whone (1980: 120). The origin of the solfa is also linked with a Sapphic stanza in Latin: “*UT quaent laxis RE sonare fibris/MIRA gestorum FA muli tuorum/SOLve polluti LABii reatum/SANcte joannes.*” See Mudaliyar (1893/1974).

70 “Nīdayacē rāma,” SHT: 230, 492. See *caraṇam*.

71 “Ananda sāgaramīdani,” SHT: 512.

72 “Intakannā yānandamēmi,” SHT: 508.

73 Ibid. It is interesting to compare the great Muslim philosopher al-Ghazzālī’s *Iḥyā’ Ulūm ad-Dīn*, a treatise on music and ecstasy, with the views expressed in Tyāgarāja’s songs. The Muslim philosopher was obliged to be strict in his reasoning, yet he arrived at similar conclusions about the ability of music to induce and express religious ecstasy. “Ecstasy is truth. It is what grows up out of the abundance of the love of God Most High and out of sincerity in desiring Him and in longing to meet Him.... He who has a heart and experiences its natural

qualities knows that verses of poetry and musical tones move it with such a moving as is not encountered through other thing ... and so he imposes upon himself this method of moving his heart either by his own voice or that of another." See Macdonald, translator "Al-Ghazzālī on Music and Ecstasy" (1901:733, 748). Tyāgarāja was content to immerse himself in this ecstasy and sing it demonstratively, rather than philosophically explain or defend it.

⁷⁴ Bachelard, *The Poetics of Reverie* (1960:211), discusses the cosmic destiny of the great trades.

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