

Lalitha Kala Tarangini

Premier Quarterly Music Magazine from Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira

February 2026



Prof. R Visweswaran

Recipient of the Nation's Highest Honour, the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship ("Akademi Ratna"), conferred by the Hon'ble President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, on behalf of the Ministry of Culture.

When Prof. R. Visweswaran Was Honoured by Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira

The title “Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena” was conferred upon the veteran Mysore-based veena virtuoso, Prof. R. Visweswaran, in the divine presence of H. H. Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar, on 25 October 2017.

The honour comprised a purse of ₹1,00,000, a silver medal, and a citation. The award was instituted in sacred memory of its founder, Shri G. Vedantha Iyengar, who established the institution in 1955.



Prof. R. Visweswaran receiving the title “Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena” from H. H. Sri Sri Yadugiri Yathiraja Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar of Yathiraja Mutt, in the presence of Late Sri G.V. Krishna Prasad, Dr. Yogananda, and Sri H. R. Yathiraj.

Dear Readers,

Sri G. V. Krishna Prasad, a true *kalāpoṣaka*, and Prof. R. Visweswaran, an eminent *kalāvida*, shared a deep bond of admiration and mutual respect. It was Sri Krishna Prasad's cherished wish that an entire edition of *Lalitha Kala Tarangini* be dedicated to Prof. R. Visweswaran. Though we deeply miss Sri G. V. Krishna Prasad, it is profoundly gratifying that this edition fulfils his cherished vision.

We are honoured to dedicate this special issue to Prof. R. Visweswaran. Through this edition, we attempt to present a humble glimpse of his remarkable achievements — though they remain but a drop in the vast ocean of his contributions.

At the age of ninety-four, Prof. R. Visweswaran remains actively engaged in research and composition. Rare indeed is the musician who embodies such extraordinary breadth of scholarship and depth of artistic insight. Those privileged to live during his era have witnessed and benefited from his towering musicianship and intellectual brilliance.

Blessed by the grace of Devi Saraswati from an early age, Prof. R. Visweswaran's life appears as one divinely guided by music itself. In the realm of the veena, he evolved largely through self-discovery, guided more by spiritual conviction than by conventional tutelage.

Although he did not emerge from an established hereditary musical lineage, Prof. R. Visweswaran rose to great prominence through his innate brilliance,



relentless pursuit of excellence, and profound samskara imbibed from his parents, who nurtured his early musical foundation.

Prof. R. Visweswaran stands today as a spiritually illumined *vidvān* in an age when modern musical practice often drifts away from the inseparable union of *bhakti* and *sangita*. He consistently emphasises to students the importance of cultivating devotion, humility, and freedom from materialistic pursuits — values that have historically shaped and sustained the evolution of Carnatic music. The younger generation of musicians would do well to draw inspiration from the path he has exemplified.

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira recently concluded its Spring Music Festival dedicated to the memory of Sri G. V. Krishna Prasad. As always, the festival was received with great enthusiasm by *rasikas* and musicians alike.

We extend our warmest wishes to all our readers for the year 2026.

With respectful regards,
Anand S

Contributors: GS Ramanujam, Sachi R Sachidananda, Shailesh Ramamurthy, Asha Ramesh, Dr. T. K. Venkatasubramanian, Dr. R. S. Nandakumar

Photo Courtesy: Personal collections of Prof. R. Visweswaran, Personal collections of Shailesh Ramamurthy, Personal collections of H. N. Suresh.

Cover Photograph Courtesy: Ministry of Culture, Government of India

Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira (SRLKM), founded by Sri G. V. Krishna Prasad in the year 1955, is rendering yeoman service in the field of music. In addition to music classes, music concerts are held all through the year. The significant festivals are Sankranti and Spring Music Festivals. Mandira also takes pride in conducting music awareness programs, music workshops, Lecture-Demonstrations etc. Entry to all programmes conducted by the Mandira is free as the aim of the institution is to enable everyone to listen to the best of the music and to propagate Karnatic Classical Music.

“*Lalitha Kala Tarangini*” publication is fostered by Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, disseminates knowledge in the area of Karnatak Classical Music and brings to light talent and excellence in this field. We believe this is just another step towards preserving and promoting this great Indian fine art.

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Prof. R. Visveswaran interacting with President Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam after receiving the S. V. Narayanaswamy Rao National Award in 2014. His wife, Usha Visveswaran, looks on.

Photo Courtesy: Prof. R. Visveswaran's personal collection

Contents

- 03 Veena Vaggeya Vibhushana - Prof. R. Visveswaran
- 19 Awards and Recognitions of Prof. R. Visveswaran
- 22 SRLKM: Celebrating Music and Scholarship
- 24 Gurunamana: A Salutation to the Revered Guru
- 27 Svara Raga Chitra - Pictures That Sing
- 30 The Inner Genesis of a Vaggeyakara
- 32 The Silent String in Visveswaran's Life
- 36 Sri Varahur Swamigal (Sri Achyutananda Saraswati)
- 40 Choornika Gadya: A Tribute to Prof. R. Visveswaran
- 44 A Memorable Visit by Baluswami Dikshitar to My Home
- 45 My Guru: Madurai Krishna Iyengar
- 47 Prof. R. Visveswaran: A Rare and Exceptional Vaggeyakara
- 50 The Indefatigable Veena Visveswaran



Our Upcoming Programme

07 Mar '26 05.30 pm SRLKM Auditorium	Vid. Karthik Mattur - Vocal, Vid. Vishwajith Mattur - Violin, Vid. Phanindra Bhaskara - Mridanga, Vid. Sumukh Karanth - Khanjira
14 Mar '26 05.30 pm SRLKM Auditorium	Vid. V.V. Ravi - Violin Solo, Nikshit Puttur - Mridanga, Trichy Murali - Ghata (Concert In association with M. A. Narasimhachar Foundation)
11 Apr '26 05.30 pm SRLKM Auditorium	Vid. Akshatha Rudrapatna - Vocal, Vid. Thanmayi Uppangala - Violin, Vid. Sunil Subramanya - Mridanga, Vid. B. J. Kiran Kumar - Khanjira
09 May '26 05.30 pm SRLKM Auditorium	3rd-year Punyasmarane of Sri G.V. Krishna Prasad Vid. Anagha Yoganand - Vocal, Vid. Aditi Krishnaprakash - Violin, Vid. G. S. Ramanujan - Mridanga, Vid. Omkar Rao - Ghata
13 June '26 05.30 pm SRLKM Auditorium	Vid. Anirudh Subramanian - Vocal, Vid. Keshav Mohankumar - Violin, Vid. Akshay Anand - Mridanga, Vid. A. S. N. Swamy - Khanjira
11 Jul '26 05.30 pm SRLKM Auditorium	Vid. Archana L. Rao - Vocal, Vid. Karthikeya Ramachandra - Violin, Vid. Adamya Ramanand - Mridanga, Vid. N. Phanindra - Ghata
08 Aug '26 05.30 pm SRLKM Auditorium	Vid. Srimatha Ramanand - Vocal, Vid. Jyothsna Manjunath - Violin, Vid. Raghu Bhagavat B. R. - Mridanga, Vid. Harish Chandra - Khanjira

Acknowledgement

I am deeply indebted to Prof. R. Visveswaran and his family for their invaluable support during the development of this edition. At the age of ninety-four, Prof. R. Visveswaran graciously granted us a three-hour interview filled with profound insights, which will remain with me forever. The photographs provided by Karthik V. are extremely precious and historically valuable. I would also like to thank Dr. R. S. Nandakumar for his scholarly discussion on *Cūrṇikā Gadya*.

I sincerely thank Dr. Sukanya Prabhakar for graciously permitting us to use content published in *Surabhi Sinchana*, a special Kannada edition dedicated to Prof. R. Visveswaran published in the year 2022. A few selected articles from that publication have been translated into English and included here.

Veena Vaggeya Vibhushana - Prof. R. Visweswaran

As narrated to Sri G. S. Ramanujan, Mysore



Sri Ramayya and Smt Varalakshamma, parents of Prof. R. Visweswaran.

Watercolour painting credit: Sri R. Seetharam

In this special feature, Sri G. S. Ramanujan (GSR), a layavadya exponent, presents an extended and illuminating conversation with Prof. R. Visweswaran (RV). Spanning his formative years, musical innovations, academic pursuits, and enduring artistic convictions, the interview unfolds as a thoughtful chronicle of a life dedicated wholly to music and scholarship.

GSR - Namaste.

At the outset, I express my sincere gratitude to you for sparing your valuable time for *Lalitha Kala Tarangini*, the magazine published by Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, Bengaluru.

You are a legend across multiple disciplines - as a vainika, musician, musicologist, author, and composer - having established a distinctive and highly individual musical style. You have also excelled as a maestro of the gottuvādyam and have provided musical direction for numerous productions. We regard you as a thought leader and a role model worthy of emulation, and it is our privilege to feature your remarkable

What began as a spontaneous, extempore act to prove a point became a moment of revelation - it was as if the Veena itself had discovered Prof. R. Visweswaran.

artistic journey as the lead article in this edition.

It is always a challenge to narrate such an illustrious journey with brevity, for one is inevitably confronted with the dilemma of where to begin and where to conclude.

GSR - Could you please tell us about your childhood - the environment in which you grew up, and the influence of your parents and your guru on your formative years?

RV - I was fortunate to grow up in the company of my brothers, Sri R. Chandrashekaraiah and Sri R. Seetharam - both accomplished musicians, popularly known as the Mysore Brothers, who presented numerous concerts. Listening to them, I developed an innate musical sensibility, and my mother recognised my natural ability to grasp and instinctively absorb their musical phrases.

We were staying in a rented house beside Jagannohana Palace on Lakshmi Vilas Road. On one occasion, when I was five years old, my brothers were elaborating their manodharma on the phrase "praṇava svarūpa vakratuṇḍam" from the kriti Vātāpi Ganapatim. I not only absorbed their ideas but also extended them with my own improvisations. Observing this,



Devi Sarawati - the presiding deity of the Visweswaran family

my mother remarked with pride, "My son is able to sing a step ahead of them."

Recognising that I possessed the essential qualities required to commence formal musical training, she requested my brother, Sri R. Seetharam, to teach me. Thus, my musical journey began when I was just five years old. Subsequently, my mother herself began instructing me in music; however, I have always maintained that my brother was my first guru. When my mother taught me, and on occasions when I ventured a step ahead of her, she would simply smile, taking immense pride in my progress.

GSR – Like most beginners, did you start your music lessons with sarali varisai?

RV - As I recall, in view of my natural musical instincts, I was initiated directly into *varna* lessons. Having begun my training at the age of five, I was sufficiently prepared to present concerts even before I turned nine. With special permission, I was also allowed to appear for music examinations at the age of eleven.

Around the age of nine, I received an opportunity to perform for the Vasantha Institute of Commerce, located opposite the Raghavendra Swamy Mutt, where my elder brother had completed his D.Com. (Diploma in Commerce) and stenography. I was invited to present a vocal concert as part of the institute's annual celebrations, held at Marimallappa School. The concert was a great

success and was warmly received by the audience. Sri Rangarao, the Principal of the Vasantha Institute of Commerce, expressed high appreciation, and from then on, I began to be regarded as a child prodigy.

Subsequently, I did not feel the need for further formal training, as I had received a strong and comprehensive foundation from my brother, Sri R. Seetharam, who had imparted to me far more than was normally expected of someone of my age. I consistently strove to live up to the high standards he set for me, and this was a source of great joy to him.

From that point onward, I charted my own path, guided entirely by the blessings of Devi Sarawati. I won first prize in a music competition conducted by Sri S. K. Ramachar of the Saraswati Sangeetha Sabha and was subsequently invited to present a concert there. Regarded by many as a child prodigy, I went on to secure several more prizes in subsequent competitions, to the extent that such successes became a regular occurrence. This, in turn, led to numerous performance opportunities, and I continued to present many well-received concerts. Thus, my musical journey continued to unfold.

GSR - Which year are we referring to, Sir?

RV - Around 1940–41. I had completed my SSLC and I had begun giving concerts well before obtaining my SSLC certificate.

GSR - Don't you think that winning competitions brings its own excitement and satisfaction?

RV - The inclination to participate in competitions during those days was largely influenced by elders, and it was my responsibility to comply with their wishes. During my middle school, high school, and college years, I was known more for my musical ability than for any other pursuit. Even then, I was keenly aware that my participation might have resulted in an inadvertent disadvantage to other competitors, as I was already an active concert performer.

Despite my young age, I possessed a fairly mature outlook and was conscious of these ethical considerations. It would indeed be unfair



Prof. R. Visweswaran with his mother, Smt Varalakshamma, who played a formative role in his early musical life.

for an established performing musician to enter competitions, and I participated primarily to honour the wishes of my elders and the institutions I represented.

GSR - So, until then you were primarily a vocalist. When did you begin learning the veena?

RV - I am now ninety-four years old, and I have been performing vocal concerts since the age of nine. This represents nearly eighty-five years of uninterrupted musical practice. I may humbly state that I am among the oldest living practitioners of this art, continuing to perform actively with accompanying artistes.

H. V. Krishnarayaru and H. V. Ramarayaru frequently accompanied me in concerts, with H. V. Krishnarayaru, in particular, being a regular presence. They resided to the west of Subrayana Kere (lake) and were highly sought-after violinists, admired by fellow musicians for their gentle demeanour, courtesy, and exemplary character. Their sensitivity and restraint made them exceptionally well suited to accompaniment.

Subsequently, Venkataramayya of Agrahara and Shivaramayya also supported me on the

violin. On the mridangam, I was accompanied by Sri M. S. Ramayya, one of the earliest All India Radio mridangam artistes, and later by Sri V. V. Ranganath and Sheshappa. Thus, my concert career continued steadily for nearly fifteen years. During the fifteenth year of this journey, however, a remarkable event occurred that altered the course of my life.

From a very young age, I held the firm view that the veena, as it was generally played in those days, did not adequately reflect the nuances of vocal music. The approach was largely mīṭṭu-oriented, characterised by excessive use of plucks and often lacking in gamakas. Even at that age, my musical sensibility did not resonate with this manner of veena playing.

My brother, Sri R. Seetharam, was learning under the Mysore Āsthāna Vidwan, Veene Shivaramayya. He practised regularly at home; yet, even then, the style of playing did not resemble a vocal rendition, and I did not find it appealing. Although my views differed from those around me, I remained firm in my convictions.

On one occasion, I remarked to my brother, “Seethu, nīnu nūdisuttiruva rīti hāḍida hāge

A Veena Debut in the Midst of Musical Doyens

I recall it being around 1946, a year after we had institutionalised the Varalakshmi Academy in my mother's name, which was founded in 1945. My father was alive during those days. It was the grand first anniversary (vardhanti) of the institution, organised by us and held at a venue close to our old house near Lakshmi Talkies.

The gathering was graced by towering musical luminaries such as Tiger Varadachariyar, Vasudevachariyar, Devedrappanavaru, Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu, Titte Krishna Iyengar, Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, and Veene Venkatagiriappa, all of whom were being honoured by the Maharaja on that occasion.

My brother urged me to perform before the assembled dignitaries. This marked my first public veena performance. The presentation was received with great appreciation, and the dignitaries thoroughly enjoyed my playing. Veene Venkatagiriappa fondly remarked, "My dear child, you have played extremely well and you have been gifted with excellent hands."

A noteworthy aspect of that occasion was the unanimous recognition that my style was distinctly different - one that closely mirrored a vocal rendition - and that I had acquired my musical knowledge without formal training under a professional Guru.

Following this event, I continued my journey as a vainika with an independent style, gradually attracting large numbers of rasikas. This marked the beginning of my recognition and stature as a respected vainika.

illā... ashtu chennāgi kēlisalla" (Seethu, the way you are playing does not sound like a vocal rendition, and it does not appeal to me). He brushed aside my comments, dismissing them as those of a child; however, I did not abandon my reflections on the subject. I could clearly hear distinct breaks and plucked articulations. Instead of smooth vowel extensions sustaining the syllables of the consonants, the rendering



The Mysore Brothers in concert (L-R): Sri R. Seetharam (artist), Sri R. Chandrashekaraiah (musician), Padma Shri Dr. R. Satyanarayana (musicologist), and Prof. R. Visweswaran.

came across with separated plucks — like "s a a a a a a m i i i n i i i", where continuous, flowing vowel elongation should have been maintained.

Practically every senior vainika of that period played in this manner - it was, in fact, the prevailing style of the time. I felt that they were more conscious of the limitations of the instrument than of its vast potential. My brother even scolded me, saying, "If you can play the way you imagine, then do so; otherwise, keep quiet."

Until then, I had not touched the veena at all; I had only seen and heard my brother play. Yet my conviction was so strong that I felt deeply troubled and developed an intense urge to prove my point. Summoning all my courage, I

Prof. R. Visweswaran performing during his early years - a private concert.





Prof. R. Visweswaran performing at the Musicians' Conference of Karnataka Ganakala Parishat. Accompanied by Vid. Kashinatha Sastri (violin) and Ananthaswamy (mridangam). Vidya Nataraj on tambura and Veena Jayanth providing vocal support.

finally sat before the veena. I knew that the right hand was employed for *mīṭṭu* (plucking), while the left hand moved along the strings to produce the svaras.

It was at that moment that a miracle occurred. By divine grace, the very varna I had learnt in vocal music began to unfold on the veena the instant I placed my fingers on the tāra sthāyi śadja. My vocal imagination was effortlessly transposed onto the veena, and the music flowed naturally and unimpeded from the instrument.

I rendered the Śaṅkarābharaṇa varna in its entirety and brought it to a close - an experience I regard as nothing short of divine intervention by Devi Saraswati. Every gamaka and the dīrgha svaras of the Śaṅkarābharaṇa varna that characterised my vocal rendition were faithfully and instinctively reflected on the instrument. I did not employ the *mīṭṭu* between svaras, and in doing so, my long-held conviction stood affirmed.

My brother, Sri R. Seetharam, was left wonderstruck as he watched me play exactly as I had envisioned. My mother, sister, and brother-in-law were all witnesses to this moment of intense drama. My mother observed, "This is entirely due to the blessings of Devi Saraswati, for it is impossible for someone to take up the veena for the very first time and play in a manner that so completely mirrors a vocal rendi-

tion." These words have remained indelibly etched in my heart and memory to this day.

Three months after this incident, I experienced a dream in which I was seated on the floor before Devi Saraswati, resplendent in all her grandeur and seated upon her exalted pedestal. In that divine vision, she herself instructed me in the art of playing the veena. I awoke suddenly with an electrifying sensation coursing through my entire being and immediately shared the experience with my mother. She gently remarked that this only confirmed that I had been fully blessed by Devi Saraswati.

From that day onward, I began practising the veena regularly and gradually became one with the instrument, to the point that it emerged as the greatest attraction in my life. It was a profound revelation to realise that I could accomplish so much on the veena without any human intervention. Within a span of three months, I was able to render on the veena everything I had learnt in vocal music, effortlessly and without the slightest difficulty.

At the age of eleven, I appeared for the Junior examination, which proved to be a cakewalk for me, as my proficiency far exceeded the prescribed level. In fact, I learnt the elementary *sarali varisai* specifically for the examination, since my initial musical grounding was already at an advanced stage.

My raga ālāpana and manodharma were already well developed through extensive concert experience. The veena further deepened and refined my musical expression

Prof. R. Visweswaran in performance during his early years





The Mysore Brothers during a Purandaradasa Aradhana procession in Mysore - Municipal President Smt Soundaramma Venkatesh also participated. File photograph.

and, in a profound manner, shaped and established me as a vainika. I have always held close to my heart the words of Devi Saraswati: "I am with you; you do not need a human guru."

With this conviction, I progressed without undergoing formal tutelage in veena technique. I was able to render any raga or composition effortlessly, without the need for conscious deliberation on its execution on the instrument. My style of playing stood distinct from the Mysore tradition prevalent at the time, which largely relied on segmented *mittu*-based articulation and did not emphasise a continuous, vocal-oriented rendering of gamakas. Over time, rasikas in Mysore began to recognise me as a vainika who employed a distinctive and unconventional idiom.

The Shastri Brothers, renowned for organising the Rāmotsava at T. Narasipura, approached my elder brother to arrange a veena concert for me as part of the festival. The concert was very warmly received and marked my first public performance as a vainika. I humbly believe that all of this has unfolded solely through the blessings of Devi Saraswati.

GSR - Could you please elaborate on the construction of your veena and explain how it differs from conventional veena?

RV - I initially played on a small veena that my brother, Sri R. Seetharam, had used during his training under Veene Shivaramayya. Though old, it was a marvellous instrument. I am not certain how it came into our possession, particularly since no one else in our family played the veena.

As early as my fifteenth year, I began reflecting on the kind of veena required to match the speed of my musical thought and execution. While the veena is inherently a melodious instrument, musical expression must also possess impact, demanding a certain sonic strength. I therefore realised that, for the nature of music I sought to express, the *nāda* produced by my existing veena was inadequate.

In due course, I approached Rudrappa, a senior and highly respected instrument maker who lived on Ramanuja Road. His grandfather, Puttadasappa, was a master craftsman who had made veenas for doyens such as Veena Sheeshanna and Veena Subbanna. He had long been entrusted with the repair of our instruments, including the *tambūra*. Though I was much younger than him, I had the conviction to request that he craft a new veena for me - one endowed with a more powerful *nāda* and the resonance required to complement my style of playing.

I showed him my existing veena and explained that the new instrument needed to be larger in proportion. I also provided him with a design drawing specifying the dimensions of its various components. For instance, I desired the *kōḍa* (the main resonator) to measure sixteen inches, whereas a conventional veena typically has a thirteen-inch *kōḍa*. This initially puzzled him, but I patiently clarified my requirements.

I further explained my views on the *vyāḍi* - the lion-like figure carved on the scroll or head of the instrument - and on the *ēḍe halage*, the flat or gently arched wooden soundboard forming the upper surface of the veena, on which the strings rest via the bridge. I was particular that the *vyāḍi* should face upward, in keeping with the classical Saraswati veena tradition.

Rudrappa was astonished by my expectations and remarked, "I have never made a veena of these proportions, nor does anyone use such an instrument. Do you truly intend to play on this veena, or will it merely serve as a show-piece?"

I replied, "You make it exactly to my specifications, and I will show you how it can be played."

Rudrappa smiled and said, "I will make it - what follows is up to you."

I was barely twenty years old at the time, and my conviction stood in stark contrast to the prevailing practices of those days.

When he completed the instrument, it emerged as a marvellous creation, crafted precisely to my specifications. The thickness of the *kōḍa* was perfectly proportionate to its enlarged size - barely two-eighths of an inch - giving it an almost paper-like appearance. My joy was boundless on seeing my design transformed into an instrument that I knew would sing exactly as I had envisioned.

I continue to use this veena to this day, and I say with pride, "This veena was crafted by Rudrappa." I can state with confidence that no

It was a music connoisseur's concert.... Visweswaran has shared the majestic grandeur of Veena and his rendition will remain evergreen in the minds and hearts of the audience. It is hard to describe Visweswaran's concert as emotions and spiritual bliss find no appropriate words.... one of the most memorable musical evenings presented in the Bhavan.

-Journal of the Bharatiya Vidyabhavan, London.

one had previously attempted to construct a veena of this nature, and that it remains the largest veena ever used continuously for over seven decades. I was gratified to realise that I had arrived at the correct proportions in my very first attempt, and that the instrument proved to be so well balanced and perfect that



it has always been a joy - and entirely comfortable - to play.

The positioning of the *vyāli* became a distinctive feature of my veena. It aroused considerable curiosity among audiences, as no other veena of that period had the *vyāli* facing upward. Thereafter, every veena I commissioned or had made followed this orientation, including the one I had crafted for my wife after our marriage.

Much later in life - nearly two decades on, after I had gained deeper insight and experience - I came to understand that Muthuswami Dikshitar too had played a veena with the *vyāli* facing upward. This realisation confirmed my original conviction and was deeply reassuring.

GSR - Could you kindly elaborate on your academic journey and educational background?

RV - I completed my Intermediate education in Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics (PCM) at Sharada Vilas College, and I was the first student to be admitted to the Master's programme in Indology.

After completing my Intermediate studies, I developed a keen interest in pursuing Psychology. My brother, Sri R. Chandrashekaraiah, subsequently approached Dr. M. V. Gopalaswamy - then the Principal of Maharaja's College and a distinguished authority in Psychology - for guidance. Dr. M.V. Gopalaswamy was well aware of our family's artistic lineage and my deep engagement with music. He advised me to take up Indology, which the college was soon to introduce, observing that the discipline was deeply rooted in Indian tradition and closely connected with music and the allied arts. He further noted that Psychology, though valuable in its own right, bore limited relevance to the artistic path that my family and I were pursuing.

I was well known as a musician within the college, and both faculty members and classmates took pride in my achievements. I actively participated in several college programmes and performed extensively on the veena. By the time I completed my M.A. in Indology, I had

already become a well-recognised musician and a vainika of repute.

Subsequently, for a period of three years, I served as a part-time lecturer in Musicology at Maharaja's College, working under Sri Krishnappa, the brother of Vidwan Sri Devendrappa.

The Fine Arts College at the University of Mysore was established in 1965 (it was then known as the University of Music and Dance). By that time, I had applied to be considered for the veena faculty, as I was already a well-established vainika. Mysore Sri T. Chowdiah was a towering figure during that period, and the University authorities entrusted all academic decisions to him.

Sri R. N. Doreswamy, who shared a close association with Sri T. Chowdiah, was ultimately favoured by him in matters concerning the veena department. Sri Ramaratnam, a disciple of Sri T. Chowdiah, was appointed Principal. Although I possessed the requisite qualifications - including a Master's degree in Indology and three diplomas in music - the decision was not reconsidered.

However, in view of my background and competence, the authorities found it difficult to reject my application altogether. Consequently, I was appointed to the Department of Musicology. I still vividly recall the words of Sri T. Chowdiah: "He appears competent and seems to have a good command. Assign him musicology, and give the veena department to R. N. Doreswamy."

At that point, I knew very little about musicology beyond the theoretical foundations I had mastered for my Junior and Senior examinations. Yet, destiny led me to become a musicologist - and, in time, a teacher of musicology. I regard this phase as a significant turning point in my career, one that compelled me to grow into the role of a musicologist.

I developed a deep interest in the subject and was particularly keen on demonstrating theoretical concepts, firmly believing that musicology would become dry without practical illustration. My students responded with great enthu-

siasm and thoroughly enjoyed my sessions. Even today, some of them recall those days with deep appreciation.

I found both success and fulfilment as a musicologist, deriving great satisfaction from teaching the subject with clarity and flair. After eight years, the university announced a Reader's post in veena. I was considered for the position and was subsequently transferred to the veena department, returning to my primary discipline. After serving for six years, I was promoted to Professor.

Thus, my journey began as a vocalist, I became a vainika by a stroke of divine grace, evolved into a musicologist, and ultimately found my way back to the veena.

GSR - Could you tell us about your experiences performing outside Karnataka and internationally?

RV - I began performing outside my home state as early as the age of eighteen or nineteen. A discerning patron residing in Mysore and hailing from Thiruvananthapuram recommended me as a promising vainika for a concert there. My first out-of-state performance in Thiruvananthapuram was received with great appreciation.

My international debut took place in 1979, when I was about fifty years old. A devoted patron in England sponsored the tour and arranged between ten and fifteen concerts across major cultural centres such as London, Cambridge, Durham, and Scotland. In addition to concerts, I conducted numerous lecture-demonstrations, sharing insights into Indian classical music. An interview with an Independent Television broadcaster during this visit proved pivotal, as it led to further interviews with the BBC and London Radio, significantly widening the reach and visibility of Indian music.

A close friend of mine, Sri Lakshmi pathi - a senior and enterprising London-based Indian - went on to establish a University Circuit for Indian music and played a vital role in its dissemination. At his request, I undertook further tours in 1982 and 1986, continuing to present



Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar - artistic portrayal by Smt Usha Visweswaran.

concerts and lecture-demonstrations across academic and cultural platforms.

I was the first musician to be associated with this initiative, and during these tours I was invited by several universities across England, Scotland, and Ireland - including Belfast and Dublin - to perform and present lecture-demonstrations.

I vividly recall a concert in Dublin, held in a beautiful church. Only upon arrival did I learn that another concert had been scheduled on the same day by a Hindustani flautist named G. S. Sachdev - a tall and striking bansuri player whom I had not met earlier. This naturally made me somewhat anxious, as the tonal impact of the two instruments could create very different impressions on the audience. Although I was already a mature and seasoned veena artist at the time, the situation caused a degree of tension.

I resolved to give my very best and left the rest in the hands of Devi Saraswati.



Prof. R. Visweswaran with Veena Sri S. Balachander

My concert was scheduled after the flute recital, which had been excellent. He played with great *nāda* (melodic depth) and sensitivity, and the performance was warmly received by the audience. When I took the stage with my veena, I realised that for most members of the audience, it was the first time they were seeing the instrument in their lives.

After a brief introductory announcement, I began my concert and soon sensed that the performance was unfolding well. To my surprise, after about an hour, the audience rose to their feet in a standing ovation. I was deeply gratified by this response; yet, in my heart, I felt that Devi Saraswati herself had taken over and presented the concert through me, earning such profound appreciation. I regard this as the most memorable concert of that period. The acoustics were excellent, and the ambience made the experience even more special.

GSR - Do you consider any of the doyens of earlier generations to have influenced your music? Did you develop your musical thinking based on the style or approach of any particular musician?

RV - Throughout my life, I have remained firmly convinced that Devi Saraswati has blessed me completely and that I did not require another human guru. It was the Goddess who shaped me into a vainika, and in that sense, I may say that I was not influenced by any other vainika. Rather, over time, many came to be influenced by my approach.

During my childhood, when I regularly listened to radio broadcasts during the Sadguru Tya-

garaja aradhana, I was deeply intrigued by Veena Balachander, who was about two years older than I was. He was already an established vainika at that time, having transitioned from the sitar to the veena - unlike my own journey, which was from vocal music to the veena. I had heard that he had earlier rendered Carnatic music on the sitar.

What fascinated me most was his approach to the veena in a distinctly vocal style, a path that I too had intuitively chosen. Each time I listened to him, I was filled with a sense of wonder and admiration. During that period, he was perhaps the only vainika who adopted such a vocal-oriented approach. Initially, I was curious to know who this musician was.

I met Veena Balachander in person for the first time in Bengaluru. A sabha was celebrating Shankara Jayanti and had organised a concert by Veena Balachander in the evening. I had been invited to serve as a judge for the music competition scheduled earlier that morning, and Veena Balachander was also on the jury. It was on this occasion that I met him for the first time.

At the time, I was not yet married, though my wife - who was then my disciple - was one of the participants in the competition. In fact, I had personally recommended her for participation. She presented *Tōdi* in the competition. Among the other participants, the daughter of another vainika, L. Rajaram - if I recall correctly, her name was Tara - also performed exceptionally well, presenting her piece in a distinctive and individual style.

I had initially ranked Tara above the others, even though she hailed from another state, as my guiding principle was to accord merit where it was due. Veena Balachander, however, held a different view. He awarded the top ranking to my future wife, observing that rendering *Tōdi* on the veena is no easy task and therefore merited special recognition.

We debated the matter at length. While I felt that Tara's originality and individuality deserved the highest honour, Balachander argued that my

future wife had chosen a particularly demanding raga and adopted a challenging approach on the veena. He observed that very few musicians could render Tōḍi with the kind of *gama-ka prayōga* she employed and expressed surprise at who could have trained her in such a style. Eventually, it was decided that my future wife would be awarded the first prize.

When Balachander later came to know who had trained her and who had presented the Tōḍi, he was highly appreciative and commended my value system. Subsequently, he invited me to spend some time with him in his room.

He was staying at the Woodlands Hotel. When I met him there, I could sense his keen curiosity to hear how I would play. Although he was not someone who normally parted with his instrument, on that occasion he asked me to pick up his veena and play.

I began with a Darbār raga ālāpana. He listened intently as I played on his veena, in his own inimitable setting. He was overjoyed - pac-

ing the room in excitement - before breaking into spontaneous applause. He exclaimed, "I never knew there was someone who could play like this." He then remarked, "What are you doing here?" - implying that I ought to be in Madras (now Chennai) rather than spending my time in Mysore.

From that day onward, we developed a deep mutual respect for one another. Wherever he travelled, he would often remark that there was only one musician whom he truly accepted and regarded highly. He expressed generous appreciation for my music, even though many considered him egoistic and not easily inclined to acknowledge the merit of others.

A Tamil magazine titled *Idayam* once interviewed him and posed the question: "Whom do you consider a good vainika today?" He replied that there was one in Mysore named Visweswaran, adding that he loved my veena playing and accepted it wholeheartedly. When the magazine was published, he shared the clipping with me, underlining both the question and his response.

Excerpts from Dr. B.M. Sundaram's letter

Professor R. Visweswaran of Mysore, an outstanding veena virtuoso and a worthy musicologist, is known to me at least for the past five decades. I have simply awed, while listening to his nimble fingers doing melodic wonders on the frets of veena, Really feats on the frets!

Having had written several articles and presented lectures in various conferences, he has now authored another work, which is a very valuable contribution to the world of musicology and music, in general. Prof. R. Visweswaran, himself being a praiseworthy Vaggeyakara, has very rightly narrated how incorrect pronunciation (also in the case of long or short vowels-Deergha and Hrasva), lisping and faulty splitting of words in any lyric are nothing but twaddle and insults to the psyche of the composer. He also cites some instances, among many, where injustice is done to music, in general and to the composers, in particular.

As a true 'Vīṇā Vadana Tatvajnya' (both in letter and spirit), Prof. R. Visweswaran has very clearly extolled about this very ancient stringed instrument and the qualities one should possess to handle it melodiously perfect. No wonder that this book is both scholarly and motivational to the musicians. This amazing and very purposeful work by the eminent Professor is a Baedeker, to be studied deep, digested and usher into practice by musicians. For me, words have no power to compete with my heart, in lauding this highly valuable work. I also eagerly look forward to many more such instructive works from the author.

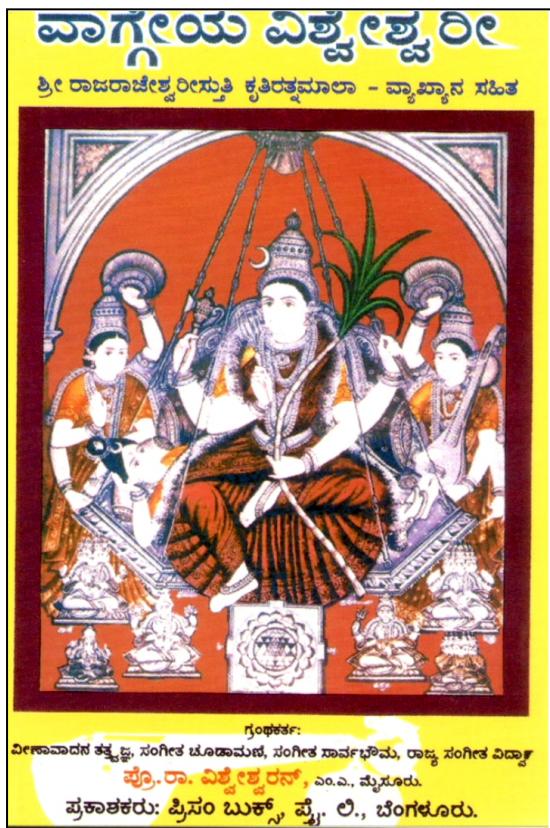
*.Ananta kotii Namaskarams.
Dr. B. M. Sundaram, Musicologist*

(The above testimonial is reproduced verbatim)

He later invited me to his home and honoured me in his pūjā room in the presence of other musicians. On another occasion, when he came to Mysore for a concert at the Jaganmohana Palace, he called me onto the stage and honoured me with a *ponnadaai* (ceremonial shawl). I was taken aback, as I was completely unprepared for this gesture. He then remarked that the vocal style of veena playing was extremely difficult and announced that he was honouring a great vidwan of the city who had adopted this approach. He went on to say that Visweswaran was a vidwan greater than himself - not merely a vainika, but also a distinguished composer.

While his words came straight from the heart, a few senior vidwans present at the gathering were not entirely pleased with this open and public honour bestowed upon me.

Cover page of the publication 'Vaggeya Visweswari.



Visweswaran - A Four-in-One Phenomenon: a vainika, gayaka, musicologist and composer.

-*Sruti Magazine, Madras.*

GSR - Could you please explain how you developed an interest in composing? Was there any particular background or influence that led to this?

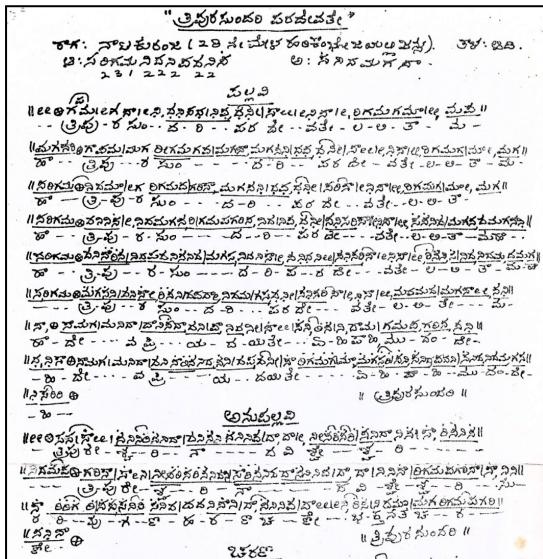
RV - I have always held deep reverence and *bhakti* for the Musical Trinity. Even as a child of around nine, while performing in concerts, I felt a strong inner urge to pay my respects to Sadguru Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Shyama Sastri in a meaningful way.

When I was about sixteen years old, I was once sitting alone in front of my sister's house in Hassan, reflecting on this very thought. It then dawned on me that the truest way to offer my homage was through a kriti. This realisation awakened my instinct for composition, and I created my first composition, "tripura sundarī gauri tripurēśvarī śārikarī," set in raga Madhyamavati and *tisra gati Adi tala*.

Having begun the kriti "tripura sundarī," I felt compelled to express my gratitude to the Trinity within the composition itself. Once again, I felt the guiding presence of Devi Saraswati - I invoked the Musical Trinity in the *caranam* and offered my reverential salutations to them through this kriti, thus marking the birth of my first composition.

When I composed this piece, the *prathama akṣara* and *dvitīya akṣara prasa* aligned naturally. It was my desire that my composition should also contain a *rāga mudrā* and *madhyamakālā sahitya*, in the manner found in Dikshitar's compositions.

Since then, I have continued to compose, and to date have created around 150 compositions, of which 112 have been published under *Vaggeya Visweswari* through Prism Books Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru. The remaining works are forth-



A snapshot of a composition in his characteristically meticulous handwriting.

coming as a second volume. All my spiritual reflections are encapsulated in a concentrated form in *Vaggeya Visweswari*.

My compositions include ten Tillanas, two Sringara padas, and five ragamalikas, among other forms within my total corpus of 150 compositions.

I chose to compose in Telugu not because it was my mother tongue, but because I was deeply inspired by Sadguru Tyagaraja. Even during my childhood, I made it a point to understand the meanings of his kritis and render them with a clear grasp of their lyrical content and devotional essence. In addition to Telugu, I have also composed in Sanskrit and Kannada. My Sanskrit compositions follow the Dikshitar template, and discerning listeners often perceive an affinity with his compositional idiom. Inspired by the Dikshitar school, I have employed *rāga mudrā*, *dvitīyākṣara prasa*, and *yamaika alarikāra* in my compositions. I am equally drawn to the intimate and deeply personal approach to the Devi found in the compositions of Syama Sastri.

I firmly believe that theory and practice must go hand in hand; without this balance, the holistic nature of music cannot be fully realised. In

the same spirit, *lakshya* and *lakshana* are of equal importance - a principle I have articulated in my Mukhāri composition "Lakshya Lakshana Samanvayamu Mukhyatanu." Similarly, I have explored the balance between *sāhitya* and *gēya* (*vāggeya*) in my Kalyāṇa Vasantha composition "Maatuvu Mukhyamā Dhātuva Mukhyamā." I have also emphasised that merely skimming the surface is inadequate in music, a theme I have expressed in my Devagāndhāri composition "Antharaṅgamunu Delisi Pādina."

Vidwan R. K. Srikantan held me in high regard and, while writing the foreword to my book *Vaggeya Visweswari*, graciously observed:

"Prof. R. Visweswaran has composed over 150 compositions, and I am honoured to write the foreword to this publication. Visweswaran, who is a devotee of Sharada Devi, has aptly titled the work *Vaggeya Visweswari*."

He further noted that the compositions are rich in *madhyamakāla sāhitya*, *cittēśvara* passages, *atīta graha* usage, and a refined confluence of *anulōma* and *vilōma* swaras. He observed that several of the varnas are eminently suited for dance, veena, and vocal performance, reflecting both versatility and aesthetic sensitivity. He also highlighted the inclusion of several rare ragas, such as *Bindumālini*, *Rasālī*, *Tarangini*, *Pāli*, *Sālagabhairavi*, *Vāgadeeshwari*, *Sāramathi*, and *Lālitha*."

Vidwan R. K. Srikantan further expressed the hope that my compositions would attain wide popularity, be warmly received by scholars, rasikas, and students alike, and gain enduring life through active performance. He added that, in such a fulfilment, my service to music would find its true fruition. He further conveyed his prayer that my artistic service may continue uninterrupted in the years to come and wished me every success.

While composing a Tillana, I consciously visualise myself rendering the piece in close dialogue with the mridangist. Each Tillana is conceived with careful attention to rhythmic articulation, ensuring that the essential idioms and strengths of the mridangam are incorporated

at appropriate phrases. This approach allows the percussion to merge seamlessly with the composition, making the mridangam an integral part of the musical expression.

The role played by the mridangam in our musical heritage is immense, with a galaxy of stalwarts having contributed over generations to enrich and elevate the tradition. I hold the mridangam in the highest regard, considering it a remarkable creation and an indispensable pillar of Carnatic music. It is in this spirit that I may state that my Tillana compositions are inherently mridangam-oriented, conceived with a deep awareness of the instrument's rhythmic aesthetics and expressive potential.

I have discovered and conceptualised a few new ragas, with Rāga Rājarājeśwari - a janya of Gourimanhari - standing as my foremost creation. Among the other ragas I have formulated are Enākshi - meaning "the one with deer-like eyes," an epithet evocatively associated with the Devi, Parjanya and Varuṇa, among others.

When a composer creates a raga, he must possess the ability to articulate its defining lakshana-s (characteristic features). A composition set in that raga must fully embody its essential characteristics and aesthetic flavour. In other words, the raga should be comprehensible and revealed through the composition itself.

For example, consider the raga Varuṇa. The composition in this raga fully reflects its intrinsic nature. When rendered or played in the correct manner, capturing the very life-breath of the raga, it possesses the power to move both the performer and the listener to tears. It is precisely because of this profound emotional potency - this *sattva* - that the raga has been named Varuṇa.

I firmly believe that a vāggeyakāra must also possess the necessary subtle sensitivity related to these aspects. At the same time, this should never lead to transgressing or departing from tradition.

I have composed four varnas, one of which is a pada-varna in raga Kedaragowla, conceived primarily for dance. In addition, I have

composed ten Tillanas and three pada compositions (sringara rasa) in the ragas Saveri, Mukhari, and Kapi.

These padas were originally composed in Telugu. Subsequently, at the request of Bangalore Nrithya Kala Parishath, I rendered them into Kannada, carefully preserving the original musical structure, rhythmic pattern, and prosodic length, ensuring that the aesthetic integrity of the compositions remained intact.

I have also composed five ragamalika kritis, employing five, seven, and eleven ragas in different compositions. One notable ragamalika, set to Adi tala and composed in three speeds (tisra gati), is in praise of Rajarajeshwari. This composition was conceptualised on the model of anga puja performed during ritual worship and is intended to be sung as part of such a ceremonial offering. I have titled this work "Rajarajeshwari anga puja Sutra."

Another ragamalika, employing five ragas and set to Khanda Chapu tala, was conceived with a didactic (moral lesson) intent. It is directed at average practitioners who may develop a sense of premature accomplishment or inflated self-assessment. Through its musical and conceptual framework, this ragamalika seeks to caution against ego and encourage humility.

Recently, I composed a ragamalika - Sūrya Stuti, dedicated to Sūrya Bhagavān, employing the ragas Bowli, Saurāshtra, Gajatōdi, Ārabhi, and Durgā. The composition draws its spiritual inspiration from the Āditya Hṛdaya Stōtra, invoking the life-giving and healing radiance of the Sun.

This ragamalika was deeply inspired by a personal moment - watching my wife perform pūjā to Dhanvantari, the divine healer and bestower of good health. That act of devotion became the conceptual seed for the composition.

One of my Kannada ragamalikas, created a few days ago, also employs five ragas.

GSR - You are a guru to all of us who practise music. Could you please share insights into your teaching style and speak about your disciples?

RV - My wife Usha, and my daughters Vidya Nataraj and Veena Jayanth, are among my disciples. Among my other prominent disciples is Nagamani Srinath. Over the years, I have taught the veena to many students, and I have unfortunately lost track of several names, as many have since settled abroad or in other cities. It has therefore become difficult to recollect everyone. I can, however, say that a large number of my disciples are vocalists.

My style lends itself more readily to vocalists, whereas adapting it to the veena is considerably more challenging. Several veena students have found it difficult to grasp the nuances of this style, as it is extremely delicate and sensitive, with intricate gamakas that demand great control. Many have frankly expressed that fully assimilating this style is not easy.

I have never compromised on the rigour of my teaching. While I may not be able to point to veena torchbearers practising strictly in my own style, several of my students who trained in vocal music are doing very well today. Among them, N. R. Prashanth and Varada Rangan have established themselves commendably. One of my students, Mohan Chandra from Kerala, was also doing extremely well, but unfortunately, he passed away far too soon.

GSR - Could you comment on Sri Purandaradasa's method of teaching music to young students?

RV - The method and norms for teaching Carnatic music were firmly established by Sri Purandaradasa himself. He created a structured template for musical instruction beginning with *sarali varisais*, *janta varisais*, and *alankaras*, followed by *pillari geetams*. Together, these form a comprehensive pedagogical framework in music.

In this sense, he laid the foundation for systematic musical learning. One may say that the essential building blocks of musical education were established by Sri Purandaradasa. As practitioners of Carnatic music, we owe him profound recognition for this invaluable contribu-

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"Sangita Sastra Chintana Rasayana" authored by Prof. R. Visweswaran.

tion. Indeed, pedagogy in Carnatic music and Sri Purandaradasa are virtually synonymous. Once a student builds a strong foundation through this method, they are free to progress to more advanced lessons and explore higher musical forms.

GSR - Please tell me about your experience as an acclaimed author

RV - I have published five books. My first book, *Vaggeya Visweswari*, is a comprehensive compendium of all my compositions. In this work, I have provided detailed explanations along with musical notations for each composition, with the intent of making it both scholarly and accessible to students and practitioners.

Subsequently, I authored *Facets of Music*, which was published at the request of Dr. Raghavendra by the Ananya GML Cultural Academy, Bengaluru.

Over a long period, I contributed articles to the magazine *Ananya Abhiyakti*. These writings were later compiled and published by the Sangeeta Nritya Academy, Bengaluru, under the title *Sangeeta Sastra Chintana Rasayana*.



07/09/2014

File Photograph taken during Purandara Aradhana - Smt Varalakshamma in the centre; to her right, Vid. R. Satyanarayana and Vid. R. Visweswaran; to her left, Vid. R. Chandrashekaraiah and Vid. R. Seetharam.



07/09/2014

Visweswaran and his brothers with Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer, during the latter's gracious visit to them in 1956, accompanied by his disciples Ranganayaki Rajagopalan and Rajeswari P. (now Rajeswari Padmanabhan). The photograph also shows the presentation of a painting of Saint Tyagaraja to the veteran.

The President of the Academy, Smt Gouramma, expressed great satisfaction in bringing out this publication, noting with pride that four brothers from Mysuru, forming their own distinct lineage, have made outstanding contributions to the world of music. The Academy considered it a privilege to publish *Sangita Sastra Chintana Rasayana* in recognition of Prof. R. Visweswaran's significant contribution to the field. The foreword to this publication was written by Sri S. Krishnamurthy, the grandson of the legendary Mysore Vasudevacharya.

Objectivities and Subjectivities in Music is my most recent publication. It has been brought out by the Veena Visweswaran Foundation, which is managed by my son, Karthik. The book seeks to unearth objective musical principles from subjective artistic experience, thereby bridging intuitive expression with analytical understanding.

In another publication, I have provided detailed commentary and exposition on all the compositions of Shyama Sastri. Written in Kannada, this work is the only book in the language that comprehensively covers this subject.

Dr. Sarvamangala Shankar, Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore Music University, expressed keen

interest in this work and undertook its publication on behalf of the University.

At present, I have undertaken the task of authoring a book that brings to light my interactions and associations with legendary musicians such as Veena Balachander, V. V. Sadagopan, and others. I also intend to publish my compositions in English, with the aim of reaching a wider global audience. The challenge in this endeavour lies in the fact that I must translate my own writings for the translation to be truly effective - a process that demands considerable time and sustained effort.

At ninety-four years of age, I remain hopeful and committed to completing these works in the near future.

GSR - Sir, on behalf of Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira, we wish you good health, and may Goddess Saraswati continue to bless you with vitality and guide you towards continued success in all your endeavours.

(Lalitha Kala Tarangini places on record its heartfelt gratitude to Prof. R. Visweswaran for the precious time he devoted to this interview. At ninety-four years of age, it is truly remarkable that he spent nearly three hours sharing his invaluable knowledge and experiences with us. His articulation was scholarly, profound, and reflective of his enduring stature as a consummate perfectionist.)

Awards and Recognitions of Prof. R. Visweswaran

Among the countless honours and felicitations Visweswaran has received at home and abroad, the following are of special significance :

- 'Sangeeta Saarvabhouma' - Prestigious title awarded by Sri Vyasaraja Dharma Samsthanam, Sosale, 1981.
- National Award in Akashavani Annual Awards for Special Musical Feature for World Music Day, 1991.
- 'Gaanakalaa Bhooshana' - Karnataka Gaana Kalaa Parishat, Bangalore, 1995 - As elected President of 25th Musicians' Conference.
- 'Laya Kalaa Nipuna' along with Palani Subramanya Pillai Award - Percussive Arts Centre, Bangalore, 1996 - Only Vainika of the Country to receive this National Award.
- "Sangeeta Choodamani" title and felicitations bestowed by - Sri Krishna Gaana Sabha, Chennai, 2000- Only Musician from Karnataka to receive this National Award.
- 'State Musician 2002 Award - Rajya Sangeeta Vidwan' from the State Govt. of Karnataka.
- 'Tyagaraja Prasasti' - Bangalore Nagarathna Memorial Trust, 2002.
- Himalayottunga Shikharam Veena Paani Visweswaran' - Book release and presentation by Andhra Music Academy, Vishakhapatnam Singular Supreme Honour, 2003.
- 'Gandharva Vidya Nidhi' As Raagasrti Music Conference President, D.Subbaramaiah Fine Arts Trust, Bangalore, 2004.
- 'Rajyotsava Award' from Govt. of Karnataka, 2005.

Receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award (Nadashri) from Bangalore Gayana Samaja at Vadya Vaibhava – 2014



Beyond Applause: The Approval That Matters

As artistes, we accept music as an art, a profession, and a way of life. But whether art, in turn, has accepted us is a question worth pondering. After receiving abundant appreciation, respect, felicitations, and awards from people, it is natural for many to wonder why such a question should even arise. To those who do not perceive its depth, it may appear to be nothing more than a naive question.

But my question is this: who is it that truly accepts us? The one who must accept us is she-Saraswati-and no one else. How do we come to know this? That itself is the *mauna vyakhyanam* - the silent exposition. Those rare moments when she seems to say, "Yes, I have accepted you," are bestowed upon an artist only occasionally, and with great restraint.

This is an indescribable experience accessible only to the artist - one that unfolds as a silent and spontaneous process of communication between the artist and Devi Saraswati, when the artist is completely absorbed in the elaboration of a *rāga*. To me, this is the answer to the question of who it is that must truly accept the artist.

Whenever my art has been appreciated, or I have been congratulated or honoured with felicitations and awards, I have undoubtedly felt great joy. There is no denying that. Yet, my perspective is that this "joy" should not arise from human beings alone. It must emanate from an unseen, decisive force - the supreme power that exists beyond the visible.

Only when pure, unsullied devotion takes deep root in the heart does the feeling of complete surrender arise naturally, of its own accord. This is the moment when the Lord and the devotee dissolve into one another. To me, this is what is meant by the direct realisation of the Divine.

It is a unique and extraordinary experience of bliss that arises unknowingly, often accompanied by goosebumps and profound emotion, leading to a state of deep contentment where one feels that nothing more is required - this itself is enough.

Once, while I was performing *Yadukula Kambhoji rāga* at a concert held in Bengaluru on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the *Ganakala Parishat*, I found myself unable to stop. I simply kept going on and on. As I continued, each accumulating nuance of emotion began to create its own wondrous effect. Tears started flowing from my eyes, unbidden. Among the listeners too, many were moved to tears of joy. People were whispering among themselves that something extraordinary was taking place.

I, however, became aware of this only after I returned to the external world. In the context of *Yadukula Kambhoji*, that day the Divine accepted me - this itself is the proof.

Why did this happen? It is my firm belief that Devi Saraswati accepted my *Yadukula Kambhoji* that day.

Appreciation from listeners, or even from eminent scholars and musicians, is not sufficient. More often than not, such praise can be hollow - unworthy of true acceptance - because it may be offered for various reasons. Rarely is appreciation entirely unbiased. This is my principle.

What truly matters is when the unseen declarer declares: "What you have done is right."



- 'Gamaka Gandharva' - Only Musician to be honored with this title by the Music Department of Telugu University, Hyderabad, 2005.
- 'Hamsadhvani Puraskaara' Hamsadhvani Creations, Bangalore in 2005.
- 'Veena Vaadana 'Tattvajna' - National Veena Foundation, New Delhi, 2006 Only Musician from Karnataka to receive this National Award.
- 'Vainika Gayaka Lakshya Lakshana Saarvabhouma" Andhra Vainika Komanduri Anantacharya Centenary Celebrations Committee, Tirupati, 2007 Only Musician from Karnataka to receive this Award.
- 'Sangeeta Vidya Nidhi' award bestowed by - Andhra Music Academy, Vishakhapatnam, 2008, Only Musician from Karnataka to receive this National Award.
- K.K.M.M.Chowdiah National Award' - First recipient from the Academy of Music, Bangalore, 2008.
- 'Veena L.Raja Rao National Award' - First recipient from the Veena L.Raja Rao Foundation, Bangalore, 2009."
- Presenter of Saraswathi Veena in the Documentary Film "Veena-The Intangible Heritage of India" produced by Kendra Sangeet Natak Akademi, Delhi for UNESCO, 2009.
- 'Naada Nidhi' - National Award from S.G.S.Datta Peetha, Mysore, 2010.
- 'Vainika Brahma' Naada Brahma Sangeeta Sabha, Mysore, 2010.
- Nandini Yugadi Puraskara - Sri Shankara TV Channel, 2011.
- Tagore National Award : Kendra Sangeet Natak Acadami, in 2012, Visweswaran is the only musician from Karnataka to receive this National Award.
- 'Naada Yajna Deekshita' - Sri Vadiraja, Aradhana Trust, Bangalore, 2012.
- "Kala Saraswati' - Vagadheeswari Kala Kendra, Bangalore, 2013.
- 'S.V.N.Rao Memorial National Award' in 2014. Ramaseva Mandali, Bangalore
- T. Chowdiah National Award' State Govt, of Karnataka, Bangalore, 2014.
- Bharata Ratna Pandit Bheemsen Joshi National Award' - First Recipient, SVAK & Mysore University, Mysore, 2014.
- 'Lifetime Achievement National Award and title-Naada Sri' - The Bangalore Gayana Samaja, 2014.
- "Veena Gana Vaggeya Maharshi' - As President, National Veena Conference, Mantralaya, 2014.
- Kannada Ratna Award : Vishwa Kannada Sammelana, Navika, USA in 2015
- Honorary Doctorate : Karnataka State Dr. Gangubai Hanagal Music and Performing Arts University, Mysore in 2015
- Bharathi Tyagaraja Samman Award : First recipient, Shree Shringeri Sharada Peetham and Sadguru Shree Thyagabrahma Aradhana Kainkarya Trust, Bangalore, in 2015.
- "Sangeetha Vedantha Dhureena" bestowed by Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira - 2017
- Naada Brahma Title - Gottuvadyam Narayana Iyengar, Memorial Award-2022.
- Academi Ratna, SNA fellowship : Kendra Sangeet Natak Academi, New Delhi, in 2024
- Veena Vaggeya Vibhushana award : during National Music and dance Festival 'Kalabhivardhana - 2024' Held in Mysuru, Karnataka by Kala Sandesha Prathishthana.

Others:

- 'Aasthana Vidwan' - ISKCON Temple, Bangalore.
- First Musician of Mysore, Karnataka to be honored with TOP GRADE' from Akashavani.
- Documentary film "Ananda" on Visweswaran by Theodore Thomas of California, US.
- 'Vaggeyakara Veena Vadana Giri' - Girinagara Sangeeta Sabha, Bangalore.
- 'Lalita kalaa Ratna National Award' - Lalita kalaa Academy, Mysore.
- 'Ananya Award' - Ananya GML Academy, Bangalore.

(Selected photographs from these recognitions are featured on the inside back cover of this issue.)

SRLKM: Celebrating Music and Scholarship

SRLKM continues its commitment to nurturing Carnatic music through well-curated concerts, lecture-demonstrations, and collaborative initiatives. The year 2025 stood testimony to our endeavour to balance performance with scholarship. What follows is a chronicle of programmes that resonated deeply with artistes and rasikas alike.

We at SRLKM strive to make Indian classical music more engaging by conceptualising and presenting innovative programmes. From October 2024 to February 2026, over fifty programmes were organised under our banner.

In 2025, alongside our regular monthly concerts at the SRLKM premises, we presented several thematic and scholarly programmes. A major highlight was the thematic concert *Shatha Raga Vaibhavam* on 2 March 2025 by the well-known musician and musicologist Dr. Radha Bhaskar. The concert was a meaningful step in this direction and was widely appreciated by the audience.

On 9 March 2025, we hosted a lecture-demonstration on *New Dimensions of Bhakthi in the Compositions of Thyagaraja* by the highly renowned musician and musicologist Dr. T. S. Sathyavathi. True to her trademark scholarly and refreshing approach, Dr. Sathyavathi presented the topic with remarkable research depth and earnestness. She was ably supported by her students, who rendered the compositions soulfully.

On 31 March 2025, Prof. Aravind V. Hebbar delivered an insightful lecture titled *Carnatic Music - Where Tradition Meets Tomorrow*. His depth of knowledge and analytical clarity made the session truly thought-provoking. He was

Smt Rajashree Yogananda, Bangalore

ably assisted by his disciples, Vid. Archana and Vid. Samanvi, whose melodious renditions delighted the audience.

The second-year Punya Smarane of Vid. Krishna Prasad was observed in May 2025. Representing the family, Vid. Anagha Yoganand presented a befitting concert in memory of her mentor and grand-uncle at the SRLKM premises.

July 2025 began on a high note. The Saraswathi veena, one of India's most ancient string instruments, was celebrated through a two-day Veena Festival organised in association with Vid. Jayanthi Kumaresan and the Smt. Padmavathy Ananthagopalan Trust.

On 12 July 2025, Vid. Geeta Ramanand performed, followed by a veena recital by Vid. Yogavandana. The following day featured performances by Vid. Shubha Santosh and the well-known veena artist Vid. D. Balakrishna.

July also featured a unique lecture-demonstration by Dr. Shatavadhani R. Ganesh on *Aesthetics of Raaga-valli Rasaala* - a collection of new musical compositions examined in the light of Rasa, Dhvani, and Auchitya, the canons of classical Indian aesthetics. Accompanied by Vid. Ranjani Vasuki on vocal during the demonstration, Dr. Shatavadhani R. Ganesh captivated the audience with his lucid explanations and effortless scholarship, making it a truly distinctive presentation.

Our August monthly concert on 9 August 2025 presented an innovative instrumental exploration titled *Collaborative Concept of Melody-Rhythm*. This was performed by Team

SamYukth, featuring Keshav Mohankumar on violin, Sai Shiv Lakshmi Keshav on mridangam, Shamith S. Gowda on ghatam, and Rakshita Ramesh on the veena.

Coinciding with the birthday of G. V. Krishna Prasad on 6 September 2025, SRLKM organised a vocal duet concert by veteran artistes Vid. S. Shankar and Vid. Ramani Shankar, which served as a fitting tribute. September also marks the birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna M. S. Subbulakshmi. On this occasion, a special Harikatha on her life was presented by Kum. Gowri N. Prasad and Kum Prajna N. Prasad.

October featured a concert dedicated to the compositions of Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar, organised in association with Bharatiya Sangeetha Vaibhavam and superbly presented by Vid. Vivek Sadasivam.

In November, we hosted a special Hindustani concert titled *The Havaldar Family in Concert*, featuring Nagaraj Rao Havaldar and Omkarnath Havaldar (vocal), Sameer Havaldar (harmonium), and Kedarnath Havaldar (tabla). Their performance, which included several Kannada compositions, held the audience in rapt attention.

December featured a concert by Vid. Ashwini Sateesh.

SRLKM also collaborated with other sabhas and foundations to organise several additional programmes, including a violin concert by Vid. K. J. Dileep and vocal concerts by Vid. Venkat Aylur and Vid. B. S. Suhas. Notably, in May 2025, we conducted a Carnatic music competition in association with Arunodaya School of Music.

The New Year, January 2026, commenced with two special concerts. A vocal duet by Vid. Archana and Vid. Samanvi set an inspiring tone for the year with a scintillating and scholarly presentation.

The Sankranti Special Concert was held in the open-air auditorium, featuring a Carnatic Instrumental Quintet comprising Vid. Yogavandana (veena), Vid. Smitha Srikiran (flute),

Vid. Aditi Krishnaprakash (violin), Vid. Deepika Sreenivasan (mridangam), and Vid. Bhagyalakshmi Krishna (morsing). The serene open-air ambience, enhanced by the deep amber hues of the setting sun, added greatly to the memorable musical experience.

Our much-awaited Annual Spring Music Festival was held in February - an eight-day musical bonanza.

SRLKM has many more thoughtfully curated programmes lined up throughout the year and eagerly looks forward to presenting them to our rasikas. After all, joy is doubled when it is shared.

SRLKM is pleased to organise this play on Saturday, 21 March, at the Bangalore Gayana Samaja Auditorium. Rasikas and well-wishers are cordially invited.

 Sri Rama Lalitha Kala Mandira®
9th Main Road, Banashankari 2nd Stage, Bangalore - 70
Website - www.srlkmandira.org
Email - srlkmandira@gmail.com

Welcome to a
Musical Drama
by TV Varadharajan and team-
“SANGEETHA MUMMOORTHIGAL”
21st March, 2026
Saturday
5:30 pm

A musical and dramatic representation of the lives of our musical trinity - Shyama Shastri, Thyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshitar.

Concept - VSV
Dialogues - C.V. Chandramohan and 'T.V' Varadharajan
Music - Vid. Bombay Jayashri Ramnath
Screenplay and Direction - 'T.V' Varadharajan

Venue
Bangalore Gayana Samaja
K.R. Road
ALL ARE WELCOME



Gurunamana: A Salutation to the Revered Guru

Original article published in Surabhi Sinchana, a Kannada quarterly magazine. From the special issue dedicated to Prof. R. Visweswaran (July–September 2022).

*Original author - Dr. Sukanya Prabhakar, Mysore
Translation credit - Smt Asha Ramesh, Bangalore*



Dr. Sukanya Prabhakar, a disciple of Prof. R. Visweswaran at Lalitha Kala College, has paid a rich tribute to her Guru by bringing out a ninety-page Kannada special edition on his life and achievements. We are grateful to her for graciously permitting us to translate and publish a few articles from this volume in English.

This photograph was taken at the release function of the special edition, held on 27 November 2022. The renowned Sanskrit scholar Prof. H. V. Nagaraja Rao graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

Photo courtesy: Star of Mysore.

एकं नित्यं विमलम् अचलम्।
सर्वधिसाक्षिभूतं तं नमामि गुरुम्॥

As easy as it is to pronounce the two-lettered word “Guru,” so difficult it is to find one. What should a Guru be? How should he be, so that students who receive his blessings remember

him for years to come? It is only when they continue to walk the path he has laid out for them that this becomes possible. When, in time, those students themselves become teachers and embody all that they have experienced, the true influence of a Guru is revealed. I have experienced this truth firsthand.

The objectives and characteristics of music, the methods of instruction, enabling the student to comprehend both the depth and breadth of the art, imparting wisdom and knowledge with the necessary affection for the pupil, and the manner of correcting shortcomings - this article is an attempt to articulate all these experiences. By opening the memory box of the mind, a humble effort has been made to offer this Gurunamana (a salutation to the revered Guru).

It was around 1969–70 that I travelled from Hunsur to Mysore to seek admission to the B. Music (Bachelor of Music) course at Lalita Kala College. I carried a heavy heart, burdened with fear, shyness, and hesitation from the very beginning. On the same day, I encountered several teachers, each with a distinct style of instruction. Some of my classmates had already completed their Vidwat examinations, whereas I had only completed the Senior Grade in music, creating a strong sense of low self-esteem.

It was my first class in Lakshanastra, and the name of the teacher on the timetable was simply “R. V.” The lesson on the characteristics of the raga Ānanda Bhairavi has remained

etched in my memory. The manner in which he explained the raga - singing and revealing each subtle emotion - was deeply memorable. As he deconstructed its nuances and finer shades, I found myself thinking that one day I too should be able to teach in this way. Time seemed to pass unnoticed. At the end of the class, he instructed us to write everything in our own words, making it clear that he would not be providing any notes.

His way of teaching compelled us to return home and begin writing immediately. I prepared diligently for the next class and kept the sheets I had written along with the others. That day, a different topic was taken up, and there was no assessment of what we had written.

Two days later, he entered the class holding a sheaf of papers and asked in a loud voice, "Who has written this? No name, no clan." Already nervous and lacking confidence, I replied softly that I had written it. He immediately asked, in a raised voice, "Why are you hesitant? You have written it very well. This is how the characteristics of a raga should be written." In that moment, I felt as though I had regained my breath.

It was not that my writing was exceptional; rather, it was the broad-mindedness of the Guru that led him to praise it in front of the entire class. This, truly, is the role of a Guru. I find myself at a loss for words to describe how a hesitant student like me was filled with strength in that moment.

In the same year, he gave me the opportunity to sing as the lead vocalist in the musical drama version of *Brahmara Gīte* by Śrī Vādirāja Tīrtharu. This was presented at a conference organised by the Bangalore Ganakala Parishat. How many Gurus possess the magnanimity to recognise and showcase even the smallest talents of their students?

The way the Guru taught us has remained with me even after fifty years. The chapter "Kannada Kavyagalalli Sangeeta," which explained how our age-old traditional music is deeply ingrained in poetic forms, was handled with such depth and

clarity that everyone was able to understand it fully.

To give form to that enduring memory, I began writing a series for the monthly magazine *Tillana*, which continued for an entire year. My Guru noticed this and said, "You write very well." In that moment, I was on cloud nine. What more could a student ask for?

It was almost twenty years after I had completed my college education that I presented a live programme on *Akashvani*. I gave a detailed exposition of the raga Āhiri and also sang the song "Vikṣēham kadā Gōpālā-mūrtiṁ" composed by Narayana Teerthar. After the programme concluded, as I was walking out, the announcer informed me that there was a telephone call for me.

As I began speaking, a voice on the other end said, "How are you, child? Today you sang Āhiri very well. You presented it most satisfactorily. God bless you." On hearing these words, I instinctively folded my hands. The credit for the presentation of Āhiri belongs entirely to my Guru, for it was he who had taught me the raga.

Once again, I had a live programme on *Akashvani*, in which I adapted a raga that I referred to as *Mishra Kannada* and set it to *Adi tala* for the pada "Bāro Namma Manege" by Sri Padarajaru. As soon as the programme concluded, the telephone in the announcer's room rang.

"Child, did you sing in *Mishra Kannada raga*?" the Guru asked. With great enthusiasm, I replied, "Yes, Sir. I composed it myself." He immediately said, "Did you not know that in Carnatic music there is no usage of 'Mishra' in this manner? This is incorrect. You may call it *Miśramaṇḍ*, but it is not *Mishra Kannada*."

A teacher is always a teacher. Even after so many years, he corrected me without hesitation. It is truly my privilege to have a Guru who could guide and correct me even in such moments.

It was around 2012–2013 that our small institution, *Surabhi*, celebrated its Silver Jubilee

year. On that occasion, we organised twenty-five programmes over the course of the year. One of these was a veena recital by the Guru. He not only accepted my request to perform without hesitation but also returned the honorarium we had offered as a token of our gratitude, donating it back to the institution. Such is the phenomenal personality of my Guru.

I have many more memories to share if I were to truly journey down memory lane. However, keeping in mind the length of this article, I have limited myself to these few experiences.

The purpose of sharing these recollections is to affirm that while the primary duty of a teacher is to impart education with integrity, going beyond this to nurture and shape the student's personality is indeed rare. When a disciple becomes a teacher, the teacher himself must serve as the mirror for reflection to occur. I found such a teacher in Prof. R. Visweswaran - one who corrects me when I err and encourages me when I do well. I do not consider myself worthy of speaking about the immense knowledge and achievements of such a Guru. I can only say that I am one who has learnt in his class and has been deeply enriched by those meaningful experiences.

Veena - The Embodiment of the Divine

From the Vedic period onwards, the veena - referred to and described within a spiritual framework - has been declared a bestower of liberation by the great sage Yājñavalkya. This proclamation has been conceived by Prof. R. Visweswaran as a musical composition in the raga Bhagesri, composed in Telugu. Presented here is its English interpretation.

He who understands the principles of veena playing, who is adept in śruti and jāti, and who possesses mastery over tāla - such a person, declares the sage, attains liberation with ease. Tyāgarāja extols and affirms Nārada - who, having grasped the essence of veena playing, bears the great veena - through his own inspired words. That beauty in veena playing lies in propriety, grace, and order - this is the eloquent declaration of Śrī Vāṇī herself, as voiced by Vīṇāpāṇi Visweswaran.

Moreover, such was the sanctity of the veena that during Vedic sacrificial rites, the wife of the yajña-kartā (the officiating priest) was required to sing and play the veena as part of the ritual. The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa declares that the veena itself is an embodiment of auspiciousness. We find an echo of this same resonance in the writings of the sacred scholars (lakṣaṇikās).

On the neck of the veena resides Śambhu (Śiva); in its strings, Umā; at the kakubha abides Lakṣmīpati (Viṣṇu); on the delicate plate affixed above the kakubha rests the Moon; in the frets of the veena - called sārikas - abides the Sun; in the resonating chamber (the kudam) dwells Brahmā; and at the very centre of the kudam's navel resides Saraswati. Thus, the veena, in which all gods and goddesses dwell, is described as sarvadevamayī - the embodiment of all divinities.

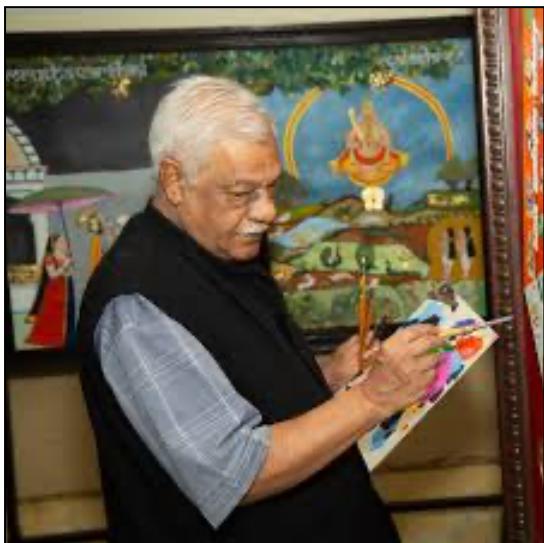
Therefore, as Sarvamarīgalā, it bestows enjoyment, heaven, and liberation merely through its sight, touch, and sound. More than that, the assurance that it grants deliverance - even to those fallen into grievous sins such as brahma-hatyā - stands as the pinnacle of the spiritual value of the veena, and of the music it so profoundly symbolises.

For us Indians, inheritors of a musical culture unparalleled anywhere in the world - one that stands as a representative and symbolic expression of immense depth and capability - can there truly be any measure to our reverence, or to our pride in the aesthetic values, the beauty within complexity, and the complexity within beauty that lie at the heart of Carnatic music?

(This is an excerpt selected from his book)

Svara Raga Chitra - Pictures That Sing

Sri Sachi R. Sachidananda, Bangalore



Sri H. N. Suresh, the creative mind behind 'Svara Raga Chitra'

When paintings titled “Shubhapantuvarali”, “Hindola”, and so on, spring in front of your eyes, and Swaras begin telling their “story”, what would you think?

As Lalitha Kala Tarangini, a gift of love from the visionary G.V. Krishna Prasad, celebrates 12 years of extensive readership, there is a story I wish to share. Recently, while attending some events in the renovated Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (BVB) auditorium in Bengaluru - large, elegantly framed and displayed paintings announced themselves as “Hindola”, “Shubhapantuvarali”, “Vasantha”, and so on, to me. In other paintings there, gods and mystic symbols painted a picture of the Sapta Swaras. You can imagine my amazement and curiosity.

Located on Race Course Road behind the Vidhana Soudha, the institution we all call BVB beckons all enthusiasts of culture and art, not punters and horse owners. BVB takes us back to the roots of our culture and history in a unique way. Its director for many years now is a well-known figure in arts and culture circles, Sri H. N. Suresh. He also happens to be the artist who has painstakingly created these masterpieces of paintings, in a series called Svara Raga Chitra.

These paintings sparkle with motifs of plants, animals, birds, clouds, gods, demons, palaces, princesses, hand-maidens, vassals and princes, all enacting a life of idyllic, aesthetic, ecstasy. This is something I had not hitherto seen, although I had had some acquaintance with the Raga Mala miniatures of Rajasthan.

I was reminded of Keats’ poem, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”. In this poem, Keats addresses an ancient Greek urn, describing the scenes depicted on its surface - lovers, musicians, and villagers preparing for a sacrifice. The urn, as a work of art, is silent but eternal.

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?
Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;

Sri. Huskur Narayana Rao Suresh, HNS henceforth in this article, was born and brought up in Bengaluru’s Sheshadripuram. His father, Dr. Narayana Rao, RMP, practised Ayurveda. The doctor also founded the Sriramapuram Brahmana Vidyarthi Sahaya

Sangha. This was run in his house itself, which in time became a hostel for poor Brahmin boys.

Two of HNS's sisters pursued music actively, and his uncle Gopala Rao of HAL was a music teacher, being a student of Chintalapalli Ramachandra Rao. HNS was also popular as a singer of Kannada film songs in "Sarasavani" orchestra, under Director Ratnam, and their ensemble had over 50 instruments.

HNS's initiation in classical music was when he was active in the Sheshadripuram Rama Seva Samithi from a very young age. For the young volunteers, the music of the legends like MDR, MLV, DKP, Sundarambal, Chinna Moulana, and Mali built up great Shravana Samskara. Also, for the boys, the test of a successful concert was the largesse of the plate collection that day.

HNS worked in NGEF and took VRS in 1996 and joined Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan without a day's delay. Even earlier, HNS was associated with the Bhavan, having created an endowment in the name of his elder brother Dwarakanath (Dwarki) who was a good writer, radio artist and theatre personality and media secretary to the Chief Minister before passing away at a young age.

HNS learnt sketching and painting in Ken School of Art, a modest establishment, founded and run by Sri. R. M. Hadapad. It was in Seshadripuram and fostered many artistes and art enthusiasts. HNS's painting of Omar Khayyam won a prize in an all-India art exhibition and competition held in the Banquet Hall of Vidhan Soudha by the Karnataka Chitra Kala Parishat. HNS's other works won prizes at Lalitha Kala Akademi and elsewhere.

HNS was the active secretary in Karnataka Sangeetha Nrithya Academy when Vidwan Doreswamy Iyengar was its President. HNS moved closely with many musical stalwarts like Dr. Gangubai Hangal. HNS was also the editor of the magazine, "Nada Nrithya", of the Academy. He brought out a souvenir on Vid. R. K. Srikantan titled, "Siri Kantha." He edited a book on the famous dancer duo Prof. U. S.

Krishna Rao and Chandra Bhaga Devi, titled "Sringara".

HNS was the art and music critic for the Indian Express and Kannada Prabha newspapers for over 20 years, when he reviewed many concerts including those held in SRLKM festivals. He fondly remembers Sri. G.V. Krishna Prasad and SRLKM for their wonderful service to the cause of Carnatic music.

Dr. Raja Ramanna, the famous scientist who held many key posts in the government of India for more than two decades, was highly knowledgeable in Western music. He authored an interesting book called, "The Structure of Music of Raga and Western Systems", published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. In that book, Raja Ramanna acknowledges the pivotal role of HNS in the writing and publishing of this book, stat-



Sadja Svara

"Satyamevdayate" – Sadja is the primeval, primordial, primary sound represented by "Sa" which is born in six positions assuming the nature of the other six notes R, G, M, P, D and N. That is because, as a monotone it may be considered as any note and all other notes exist just in relation to this basic note which is equivalent to the "Pragya or conkita".

It is the first note to manifest from the primordial of "Nada" – "Sound" which is pure, natural and unaltered.

You are in front of one of the Singing Portraits Swara Raga Chitra.
Paintings based on Sri-Tattva-Nidhi of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III of Mysore.

Concept, Research and Art by Shri H.N. Suresh. Music composition by Vidushi Dr. T.S. Sathyavathi.



Scan the above QR Code from Google Lens
to listen to the music on your smart phone.
Acrylic multimedia on canvas:
size 895mm x 1275mm

ing, "Finally, I thank Sri H.N. Suresh but for whose enthusiasm, this book would never have been written."

Before painting on classical music themes, HNS had distinguished himself with paintings on Nakshatras, Rashis, and Grahas. These were based on the ancient scriptural descriptions of these elements and how they hold sway on our lives on this planet. These were considered epochal in their artistic value and were acquired by Kailash Ashram in Sri Raja Rajeshwari Nagar where they have been put up for



display.

The Svara Raga Chitra series was born after studying Sri Tattva Nidhi of Mummadri Krishna Raja Wodeyar, Vol.I, edited and published by Prof. S. K. Ramachandra Rao, whom HNS calls his "Guru and Mentor". HNS spent many long hours going over this magnum opus which covers so many dimensions of Indian iconography and Shabda-Rasa-Chitra elucidation, especially in southern India.

A glance at the original drawings in that book on "Shadja" and comparing them with HNS's own composition, "Sadja", gives us an insight into HNS's multidimensional creativity of presentation, arrangement of motifs, visual appeal, and a syncretic approach to the art form that pervades all of HNS's works.

In this series of paintings, HNS has collaborated with Dr. T. S. Sathyavathi who has given ex-



pert commentary on the Swaras and Ragas. There are also renditions of the Ragas in both Carnatic and Hindustani styles. These are embedded as audio clips via QR codes. So, when one is seeing the painting, one can listen to the commentary and the rendition of the Ragas. This surely heightens the aesthetic experience, bringing aural and visual treats into one single moment.

Coming to these paintings depicting "Shubhantuvarali", "Hindola", and so on, how does one create a painting, mapping the aural experience into a visual paradigm?. How can I relate the sublime rendition of Sri Satyanarayana by MDR or of Neerajakshi Kamakshi by KVN to these colourful portraits of scenery and life in royal courts of a bygone era?

I think all experience is in the Time-Space continuum, and one can rise beyond sensory limitations only through one's extended imagination. One can then divine the experience of seeing and feeling the Ragas, not merely listening to the sounds. In other words, the artist is urging us to break the shackles of our conditioning about these ragas. Can you romance a Raga in its pure melodic grandeur, shorn of the sahitya-driven presuppositions about these Ragas?

Indeed, what made Sri Tattva Nidhi present these elaborate drawings and icons of Ragas and Swaras? In HNS's deft hands and his fervent imagination, these Ragas have flown into a different world that speaks a much larger story

than what our conditioning has given us. It is like throwing open a large door, hitherto shut for long in a palace, only to lay open to us a wonderful new world of colour and feeling, informed by all the Bhavas and Rasas of a splendid cultural life that was our Bharat of yore. Nature never stinges in what it gives. The same should be with our own cultural imagination! Then these Ragas will give us new experiences, and something similar to all that Keats saw and imagined will be in front of our eyes, too! Perhaps even more, given our rich Sam-skaras!

HNS's paintings have been displayed in many parts of the world and have been bought by

connoisseurs all over. In June- July 2025, HNS's paintings were on display at the Millennium Art Gallery of BVB, London.

HNS expresses his attitude to music: "there are no independent systems of music isolated from one another. There are only two types of music – good music and bad music!" In his newspaper reviews, he did not bother with too much of music theory, but captured the spirit and core aesthetics of the music presented. I feel this syncretic artistic background and a holistic approach underlines HNS's venture into this project, Svara Raga Chitra. He is planning to do a series of paintings on Talas, and says that will complete the series.

The Inner Genesis of a Vaggeyakara

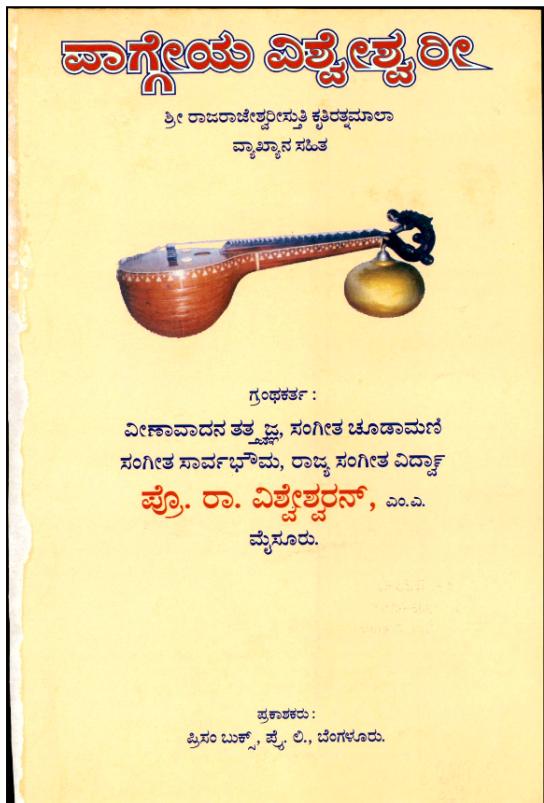
Original article published in Surabhi Sinchana, a Kannada quarterly magazine. From the special issue dedicated to Prof. R. Visweswaran (July–September 2022). As narrated by Prof. R. Visweswaran

There is a finite period of inner preparation involved in becoming a *vāggeyakāra*. One's mind and heart must gradually mature and equip themselves to truly compose music. To my mind, this process ultimately flows from divine grace or divine inspiration - an unseen force that guides the *vāggeyakāra*.

There can be no two opinions that a *vāggeyakāra* reveals his true self through his compositions. For him, the composition itself becomes the medium through which inner vision is revealed and innermost thoughts are expressed. A *vāggeyakāra*'s *vāggeya* represents the collective outcome of his ideals, life values, and philosophical thought. In essence, his compositions serve as a mirror of his mind and inner consciousness. Through this mirror, one

perceives the deeper contours of his personality. Beyond doubt, a *vāggeyakāra*'s *vāggeya* stands as a reflection of who he truly is.

The thematic conception of a *vāggeya* is often shaped by specific circumstances, events, and inspirational influences. Filtered through the *vāggeyakāra*'s lived experiences, thought, and ideals, the *vāggeya* emerges as an inner offering filled with *sāttvika* devotion. It remains in communion with the revered deity in whom the composer believes. Within this spiritual intimacy lies the sentiment of complete surrender - the realisation that "You alone are everything." As the cumulative effect of all this, a profound bond is formed between the devotee (*vāggeyakāra*) and the Divine. It is



against this philosophical backdrop that a vāggeya comes into being. One cannot compose casually or at random; for although the eyes may have slept all those days, the mind has remained wakeful. Even when the composer appears inactive, his mind is silently preparing - and such creation can never be compelled.

Above all, one who calls himself a vāggeyakāra must possess a deep understanding of the very essence of music. Writing only the lyrics - without musical knowledge or singing ability - and relying on others to set them to music does not qualify one as a vāggeyakāra. Likewise, the creation of vāggeya follows a tradition handed down over generations; only that which embodies such traditional values can truly be regarded as vāggeya.

Very often, the creation of a vāggeya begins with a single spark of inspiration. In keeping with the structure of the composition, its lines must align harmoniously with one another and

be bound by emotional coherence, while also adhering to traditional conventions. At times, the non-availability of appropriate words midway through a composition can retard its overall flow. When no words come to mind, I leave that space blank and continue writing the subsequent lines. Then, on some other day - often in the middle of the night - I awaken as if struck by a sudden flash of lightning, and the very words that eluded me earlier come flooding into my mind. For although the eyes may have slept all those days, the mind had remained awake, relentlessly searching for those very words.

In the *Kenopaniṣat* (केनोपनिषत्), there is a profound statement that explains how brahmajñāna manifests, and this thought is deeply relevant here: "Vidyuto yadyutaraḥ" - it is like everything becoming visible in the blinding flash of a sudden lightning strike, though only for a brief instant.

Knowledge is imparted through the instruction of the guru; it is a process of continuous guidance. Yet the disciple often remains in a state of inquiry, unable to grasp its full import. Then, at a certain moment, knowledge dawns suddenly: all questions find their answers, and one attains a state of supreme bliss (*brahmānanda*). This, in essence, is the teaching of the *Kenopaniṣat*.

That lightning-like flash is the Goddess's grace itself. In that instant, I rise and complete the line, and the composition becomes whole and fulfilled. This may well be true for many vāggeyakāras. Afterwards, one is left wondering, "Was it really this simple? I feel as though I knew this word all along." The word reveals itself only when the time is right. What is essential is an unwavering faith that the lightning will indeed arrive - that is the supreme truth. Rather than merely waiting for it, we must continue to perform our duty and persist in our efforts, without ever giving up.

The Silent String in Visweswaran's Life

- An interview with Smt Usha Visweswaran

Original article published in Surabhi Sinchana, a Kannada quarterly magazine. From the special issue dedicated to Prof. R. Visweswaran (July–September 2022).

Interviewer - Smt Vijayamala K. Saralaya, Mysore
Translation credit - Smt Asha Ramesh, Bangalore

Mrs. Usha Visweswaran, daughter of Prof. M. Yamunacharya, a distinguished professor of Philosophy, and the wife of the luminary of classical music, Prof. R. Visweswaran, is the embodiment of tradition, simplicity, and devotion. Endowed with a natural talent for sketching and drawing, Mrs. Usha chose classical music as her primary discipline. She later pursued the study of Sanskrit as a personal interest and also undertook the study of Ayurveda independently.

An ideal wife, an affectionate mother, and a loving grandmother, she is a source of immense pride to her family. Above all, she remains the

sruti in the life of the vocalist–veena maestro Visweswaran - the unwavering tonal centre that lends meaning, balance, and resonance to his life and music. Reminiscences shared by his wife follow:

I was studying at the intermediate level at the time and had a keen interest in drawing. One day, during a class in high school, I was deeply engrossed in sketching the images of Goddess Lakshmi and Goddess Saraswati when my teacher noticed me and walked up to my desk. He looked at my drawings and, instead of rebuking me, said, "It is very beautiful. Improve it." I remember this moment quite vividly.

Smt Usha Visweswaran with Prof. R. Visweswaran



I often implored my father to find someone who could teach me drawing. Finally, one day he said, "Wait. I have a student named Prof. R. Visweswaran. His brother teaches drawing. I will take you there."

Saying this, my father took me to Sri R. Seetharam, who was already a well-known artist at that time. He gave me a picture and asked me to draw it. After examining my work, he agreed to teach me. Thus began my introduction to the family. As my love and attraction for art grew stronger, my interest in formal studies gradually diminished.

There was a photo studio next to Chamundeshwari Talkies, run by two brothers popularly known as the Raj Brothers. They lived as tenants near my mother's house and were well known for their expertise in photo colouring. From the elder brother, Mr. Govindarajan, I learnt the technique of colouring black-and-white photographs using transparent coloured paper. The method involved cutting the paper into small pieces, dipping them in water, and carefully applying them to the photograph.

Seeing my keen interest and quick grasp, he taught me with great enthusiasm. I created many paintings using this technique, though the only one that has remained with me is a portrait of the Maharaja. I also had a painting of my mother-in-law.

My father used to visit the palace to teach philosophy to the Maharaja. In those days, sandalwood cards were available from the sandal factory. I would draw coloured portraits on these cards and send them to the Maharaja through my father. I believe the Maharaja appreciated my painting of him.

My father worked for a period at the University of Pennsylvania, and during that time many American students would visit our home to meet him. I was not yet married then. Around this period, my husband, Prof. R. Visweswaran - had composed a beautiful raga based on the theme of "Sthita Prajña Lakshanagalu," drawing upon the eighteen

ślokas of the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

My father wished these students to listen to this composition, and so he would send word to him. He would come home and render the piece with great feeling, while my father offered interpretations in between the musical passages. My father also wanted the American students to listen to his veena recitals. Such informal yet enriching programmes took place many times and continued even after our marriage.

I used to go to his house to learn drawing when one day, I saw Sri R. Seetharam teaching the veena to one of his students. Watching her play, I felt a strong urge to learn the veena myself. I sat beside her, observing intently, when Seetharam noticed me and asked, "Do you want to learn? Shall I teach you as well?" I said yes immediately, even before he could finish his sentence. Thus, I began learning the veena alongside my drawing lessons.

A few years later, one day, Seetharam said to me, "My brother is the right person to teach you," and entrusted me to him. It was then that I began my training under Prof. R. Visweswaran.

My mother-in-law was very fond of me. Even before my marriage, whenever I visited their house, she would lovingly comb and braid my long hair, as I did not know how to braid it myself. I remember this quite vividly. She took great joy in braiding my hair.

I was born and brought up in a Mangalore-tiled house named "Veda Gruham", situated within a large compound in front of Harding School. Vedic recitations filled the house every day. My grandmother was named Vedanayakamma, and it was in her honour that the house came to be called "Veda Gruham".

No one in my family had a background in music. However, my sister-in-law (my brother's wife) played the veena and owned one as well. Watching her, I too developed a desire to learn the veena. My marriage ceremony was also performed at "Veda Gruham".



Prof. R. Visweswaran with his daughters, Vidya Nataraj and Veena Jayanth, immersed in an intense musical session.

I was often afraid of learning from him - not out of fear, but because he insisted on absolute correctness. I had to play exactly as he did, and he would not move on until every note was rendered accurately. Not a single note could be missed. Yet, he taught me with immense patience and perseverance. I practised rigorously.

My mother would wake me at 4:00 a.m., give me a cup of coffee, and make me practise in the kitchen. His style of veena playing closely mirrored vocal music, and I found myself unable to appreciate any other approach to the instrument. Following his style was demanding, and he was indeed strict. During class, it made

no difference to him that we were his wife or his children.

Once, my daughter Vidya gave a recording at Akashvani. After the recording, the respected Veena Vidushi A. S. Padma remarked that she had sung very well. However, Vidya smiled and said, "Just wait until I reach home and speak to my father. He will be standing right at the entrance and will ask, 'Is this the way to sing?'" All of us knew that he was a perfectionist.

Whenever Veena and Vidya come home, we ask them to sing. He teaches them something new each time, even as he continues to learn himself. He has not forgotten a single music lesson and recalls them verbatim. Vidya, at least,

It was Exactly Like Singing

Once, a jugalbandi concert featuring my veena and Joost Flach, a well-known French oboist - a Western classical double-reed woodwind instrument known for its clear, penetrating, and voice-like tone - was organised in Singapore. Among the senior musicians present, a Chinese string instrumentalist was seated in the front row. Immediately after the concert, he came up to me and shared his thoughts. He said, "*I find your veena playing amazing. It was exactly like singing.*"

When a person from a completely different culture - one with no prior exposure to our music or to the veena - expresses such an opinion, it feels to me like one of the highest compliments.

Prof. R. Visweswaran

has the opportunity to take regular lessons; Veena does not. That she has retained her musical knowledge despite the environment she lives in is itself remarkable. She is able to do so because she understands its value.

During his recent visit to Veena's home, he taught her all the *Navāvaraṇa Kṛtis* of Muttuswamy Dikshitar. As he had not sung many of these compositions earlier, he first practised them himself before teaching her. She, in turn, learns with great diligence. For both of them, this has become a meaningful and cherished ritual.

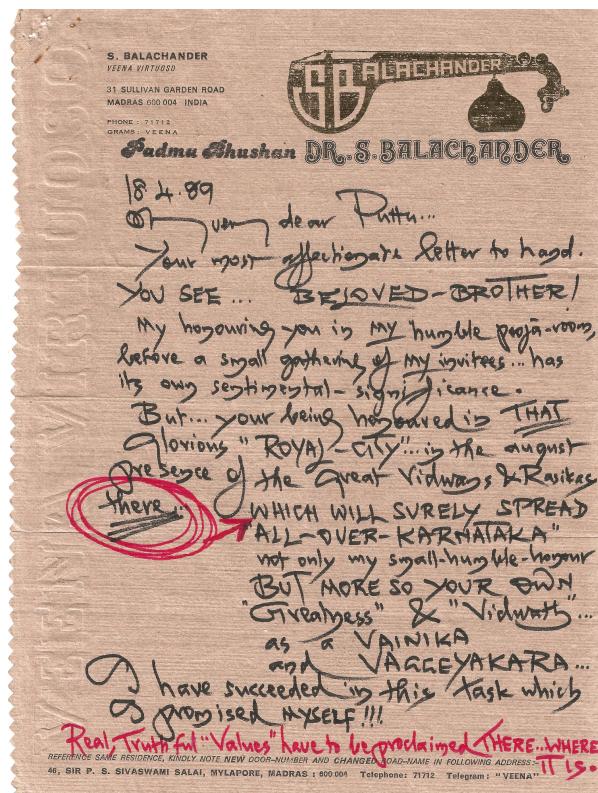
I have had the opportunity to accompany my husband in several veena concerts. One of my most vivid memories is of a duet concert in 1961, held during the inauguration of the Lions

Club (now the Exhibition Grounds), over which Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar, the Maharaja of Mysore, presided.

I had learnt the veena for about five to six years before my marriage. Even after marriage, and continuing to this day, I have been learning many *kṛtis*. Last month, I learnt *Bālāsubrahmaṇyam*, composed by Muthuswami Dikshitar - a *kṛti* set in *Suruṇi* raga and *Ādi* tala - typically presented along with the *Kamalāmbā Navāvaraṇa kṛtis*.

Whatever the circumstances, and despite bearing the responsibilities of running a family, I have never deviated from my music or my art. My mind simply does not allow that to happen.

A Tribute from a Maestro



Prof. R. Visweswaran and Veena R. Balachander shared a warm rapport and mutual admiration for each other. Whenever the opportunity arose, Balachander openly praised Prof. R. Visweswaran as an outstanding artist and, in particular, acknowledged him as a distinguished *vāggeyakāra*.

On one occasion, at a public function in Mysore, Balachander invited Prof. R. Visweswaran onto the stage and remarked:

"Where I am only a vainika, Visweswaran is a vainika greater than me. I will tell you why. While I am only a vainika, he is a vainika of that order and also a great composer."

He further added, "This is an honour for Mysore."

Prof. R. Visweswaran believed that receiving the blessings of such great and illustrious personalities who have attained perfection in music is a constant form of divine protection.

Veena Balachander's letter to Prof. R. Visweswaran

Sri Varahur Swamigal (Sri Achyutananda Saraswati)

Sri Shailesh Ramamurthy, Bangalore



Aradhana at Arasavanangadu, Jan 2026

Sri Achyutananda Saraswati (1871–1933), revered as Sri Varahur Swamigal, was a yati of exceptional discipline, scholarship, and inner refinement, whose influence extended well beyond the strictly spiritual sphere into the cultural and musical sphere of south India in the early twentieth century. Though he lived a life of renunciation and austerity, his gentle, discerning guidance and the stature he attained spiritually played a significant role in shaping the modern reception of the compositions of Sri Sadashiva Brahmendra, today an integral part of the Carnatic music tradition. This year, the

ārādhana of Sri Varahur Swamigal was observed on January 17, 2026, marking another sacred remembrance of his lofty contributions.

Early years

Born in 1871 in the sacred village of Bhupatirajapuram, also known as Varahur, in the Tanjore district, Sri Varahur Swamigal was named Sri Panchapakesa Sivan in his pūrvāśrama. The village itself derives its sanctity from the ancient Sri Venkatesa Perumal Temple and has long been a centre of spiritual heritage. He was born into the respected lineage of Sri Vembayyar, renowned for learning, piety, and a strong tradition of annadānam. His father was Sri Anai Iyer and his mother Smt Sundari Ammal. He was later adopted by his paternal uncle, Sri Duraiswami Iyer, who had no children of his own.

From a very young age, Sri Panchapakesa Sivan exhibited an intense inclination toward spiritual pursuits, alongside notable physical strength and an absence of caste-based distinctions in his outlook. He willingly engaged in hard physical labour, including agricultural work, and was known for his compassion toward the poor and his sensitivity to suffering. Along with Vedic studies and Vedanta, he acquired deep familiarity with Sanskrit grammar and classical literature, a foundation that later informed his rare depth of interpretation and clarity of expression.

Gṛhastha Life and Renunciation

Under the spiritual guidance of Sri Swayamprakasendra Swamigal, for whom he

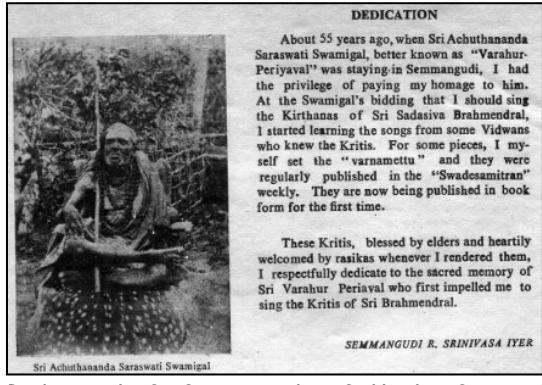
held lifelong reverence, Sri Panchapakesa Sivan initially expressed a desire to embrace sanyāsa at a young age. At the insistence of his adopted father and following his guru's counsel, he returned home and entered gr̄hasthāśrama. He married Smt Seethalakshmi, the second daughter of Sri Angarai Jambunatha Iyer, belonging to the illustrious annadāna lineage of Sri Annadana Subbayar. The couple was blessed with two daughters, Smt Rajalakshmi and Smt Swayamprakasam, the latter named after his guru.

Although outwardly a householder, Sri Sivan lived with an austerity and restraint that closely resembled that of a sanyāsi. This inward disposition eventually culminated in an irrevocable decision to renounce worldly life. Entering sanyāsāśrama as Sri Achyutananda Saraswati, he expressed the finality of his resolve through a few brief statements that came to be widely remembered. To quote a couple of these pithy utterances (translated from tamil) – 'A corpse does not return from the cremation ground' (signifying the absolute and irreversible nature of his renunciation); 'A fly has no place in a smithy' (underscoring the incompatibility of worldly life with the path of ascetic discipline) - words that conveyed both renunciation and compassionate detachment.

Life of a Yati

Thereafter, Sri Varahur Swamigal lived strictly by yati dharma, travelling extensively across sacred kṣetras of South India. Wherever he stayed, he conducted Vyāsa Pūjā and Guru Pūjā, upholding the continuity of the guru-śiṣya tradition with scrupulous adherence to śāstra and custom. He lived with extreme simplicity, accepting whatever was offered after a single utterance of the traditional bhikṣā request, and quietly moving on if none was forthcoming, eating only once a day, and never re-entering household life. He was deeply devoted to the worship of Medhā Dakṣiṇāmūrti.

He also established nandavanams, sacred flower gardens, at several places he resided. This reflected his belief that care for nature and selfless labour were integral to spiritual life.



Dedication by Sri Semmangudi to Sri Varahur Swamigal in his book on Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra

His personal conduct exemplified vāymai (absolute truthfulness), thūymai (purity of body and mind), kollāmai (non-violence), *paṭṭinmai* (*patrinmai* or non-attachment), and *deivya paṭṭu* (*deiva pattru* or single-minded devotion to the Divine), qualities remembered by devotees as lived realities rather than abstract ideals.

Sri Varahur Swamigal, Sri Semmangudi, and Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra

Sri Varahur Swamigal's profound thoughts and knowledge extended beyond his ascetic life into the spiritual and cultural spheres of South India.

A significant period of Sri Varahur Swamigal's later life was spent in and around the village of Semmangudi, where he was a revered and familiar presence.

Among greats advised by Varahur Swamigal was the eminent Carnatic vocalist Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. In Sri Semmangudi's youth, when embarking on his musical journey, he received a gentle advice from Swamigal, who urged him to propagate the compositions and teachings of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra, a revered saint and advaitin. This request left a lasting impression on Sri Semmangudi, who also musically tuned many of the kritis of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra. Decades later, when Sri Semmangudi published a musically notated book of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra's compositions (Compositions of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra, set to music by Dr.

Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, published by the Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer Golden Jubilee Trust), he dedicated the work to Sri Varahur Swamigal, commemorating the sage's inspiration.

The following account, translated from original Tamil, is recorded by mahavidvan Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer (source 'Semmangudi Oru Sakabdhām – செம்மங்குடி ஒரு சகாப்தம்', Shankar Venkatraman.)

"In the 1920s, Sri Achutananda Saraswati, more widely revered as Varahur Periyava, resided in Semmangudi. He was deeply familiar to me, as I hail from Semmangudi myself. I would frequently seek his darshan and receive his *āśīrvāda* (blessings).

One day, he called me and said, 'Sing the compositions of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra.' Hence, I began learning some of the kritis from seniors I was acquainted with. For other compositions, I set the tunes myself. These were first published in the Sudesamitran and later compiled in a book of compositions. Today, many musicians render compositions such as Bhajare Gopalam (Hindolam), Smara Vaaram Vaaram (Kaapi), Bruhi Mukundeti (Kurinji), Maanasa Sancarare (Saama), Gaayati Vanamaali (Mis'ra Kaapi), Bhajare Yadunaatham (Peelu), Pibare Ramarasam (Yamunakalyani), Khelati Mama Hrudaye (Athana), Chintaa Naastikila (Navaroj), Sarvam Brahmamayam (Cenjurutti), and Tunga Tarange (Kuntalavarali).

The credit for establishing and popularizing this tradition of rendering the compositions of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra in full belongs entirely to Sri Varahur Periyava, who instructed and inspired me to sing Sri Brahmendra's works."

Shortly thereafter, and in the years that followed, many other vidwans and vidushis rendered the compositions of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra in their own distinctive styles and tunings.

An anecdote recounted by the renowned Carnatic music maestro Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer to Sri H Krishnamurthy (grandson of Sri Varahur Swamigal through his



Unchavitti (From a Past Arādhana)

pūrvāśrama) beautifully captures the saint's serene detachment and spiritual perspective. He recalled:

"When we were young, Sri Varahur Swamigal used to lie beneath the trees in our village - even in spots where snakes were known to dwell. The next morning, we children would ask him in wonder: 'Swamigal/thatha, weren't you afraid of the snakes?' He smiled and asked each child, 'Who do you sleep next to at night?' One replied, 'My father,' another said, 'My mother.' Swamigal then said, 'Likewise, my children, the snakes, sleep beside me. Why should I fear or disturb them?'"

This incident illustrates his fearlessness and compassion for all beings.

Scholarship and Intellectual Esteem

Sri Varahur Swamigal was widely revered as a Sanskrit scholar of exceptional depth, known for offering multiple layers of Vedantic interpretation to classical verses. His intellectual stature was such that Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, the Kanchi Mahaswamigal (Mahaperiyava), held him in the highest regard. Elders recount that the two engaged in written exchanges on subtle points of Vedanta, marked by mutual respect, restraint, and clarity.

This milieu, where philosophy, discipline, and aesthetic sensitivity were inseparable, forms an important backdrop to Sri Varahur Swamigal's



Aradhana in progress at Adhishtanam (17th Jan 2026)

influence on musicians, particularly those who sought a deep alignment between sāhitya, bhāva, and spiritual intent.

Samādhi and Continuing Ārādhana

Sri Varahur Swamigal attained samādhi at Arasavanangadu, near Kumbakonam, in 1933. In the early hours of Thai Krishna Chaturdashi, at around four o'clock in the morning, he calmly enquired whether Magha Nakshatra had reached its zenith. Upon receiving confirmation, he entered samādhi and merged with the Nitya Jyoti, the eternal light. At the sacred site of his samādhi, a Tulasi māḍam stands as a symbol of sanctity and remembrance.

In an unbroken tradition that continues to this day, his Ārādhana is observed annually at Arasavanangadu on Thai Krishna Chaturdashi. This year, the Ārādhana was celebrated on 17th January 2026.

The observance includes unchavṛtti during which his portrait is respectfully carried with accompanying bhajana, Vedic recitation, subsequent abhiṣekam, puṣpārcanai, ārādhanai, devotional singing, and veneration of the guru-paramparā (the lineage of preceptors). This

divine succession in guru-paramparā is invoked with deep humility and devotion, and represented by an assembly of learned vedic practitioners. Following this, their pāda tīrtha (sacred waters of the feet) is collected in a ceremonial pitcher. In a spirit of celebration, pradakshinas (circumambulations) are performed around the learned vedic participants, often accompanied by an expression of joy - traditionally a nartana (dance) style gait or at least a jubilant leap - symbolising the divine presence of the Guru enshrined in the honoured assembly and the joyous blessing of the sacred tirtha.

Some decades back, the Aradhana was conducted by Sri A. K. Venkata Narayana Iyer, younger brother of the ghatam vidvan Sri Alangudi Ramachandra Iyer, along with the residents of Arasavanangadu. In recent times, Sri Ramamurthy Iyer and his family in present times, have hosted the Aradhana, along with the residents of Arasavanangadu.

Enduring Presence

Affectionately known as "Sivanvālī" in his earlier years and revered across South India as Sri Varahur Swamigal after embracing sanyāsāśrama, he remains a luminous figure whose life exemplified renunciation grounded in compassion, scholarship, and inner stillness. In the sphere of Carnatic music, his legacy endures most visibly through the continued presence of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra's compositions on the concert platform, which attests to the power of quiet guidance and spiritual discernment in shaping living tradition.

Biographical details adapted from Tamil Booklet published by littérateur Smt Ha Ki Valam (grand-daughter of Sri Swamigal through pūrvāśrama).

The author of this article, Sri Shailesh Ramamurthy, is the son of Sri H. Ramamurthy (who is a grandson of Sri Varahur Swamigal through his pūrvāśrama). Shailesh, a gold medalist from IIT Kharagpur, is a technology researcher by profession. He is also an accomplished flautist, musician and music researcher. He shows a deep commitment to chaste and aesthetically refined classical music, carefully balancing practical performance with musicological insight. He has composed, as musical offerings, varnams and kṛtis. A few of the kṛtis venerate Sri Varahur Swamigal in the guru sthānam.

Choornika Gadya: A Tribute to Prof. R. Visweswaran

As narrated by Dr. R. S. Nanda Kumar, Mysore



Indian literature (*sahitya*) comprises two principal expressive forms: prose (*gadya*) and poetry (*padya*). While *gadya* conveys meaning directly through written language, *padya* requires an act of rendering - such as recitation, chanting, or musical interpretation - for its full aesthetic and expressive potential to be realised. Poetic beauty in *padya* is achieved through the orderly structuring of akṣaras into defined *gaṇas*, together with the observance of *prasa* and *yati*, which collectively impart rhythm, musicality, and elegance to the composition. *Gadya*, on the other hand, is capable of expressing ideas with equal effectiveness and serves as a powerful medium for refining thought through reading and contemplation, even though it is not bound by the strict metrical regulations that govern *padya*.

During the 16th century, particularly in the Vijayanagara kingdom under King Achyutaraya, the region was frequently engulfed in conflicts and battles. The prevailing atmosphere, which had earlier nurtured and sustained literary activity, was severely disrupted. As Saint Tyāgarāja aptly observes, “śāntamu lēka saukhyamu lēdu” - without peace, there can be no well-being, and consequently, no creative work. In the absence of a peaceful and conducive environment, literary pursuits inevitably suffered.

Consequently, the intellectual community migrated to other parts of South India, often accompanied by their families and *gurukulas*. These scholars became closely associated with temples, which emerged as stable centres of learning where teaching, preservation, and the continued flourishing of literary traditions could take place. Over time, they formed identifiable groups and lineages rooted in specific kṣetras. The temple thus became the epicentre of literary activity, encompassing both *gadya* and *padya*.

Thus, between the 16th and 18th centuries, both *padya* and *gadya* were created and nurtured by poets and scholars closely associated with temple traditions. As these literary practices evolved, they gave rise to Ālikrama Prabandhas - forms of *devatā stuti* in which each sentence praising the deity leads naturally to the next, following a sequential and orderly progression.

Those compositions that were devoid of tāla came to be classified as Ālikrama Gadya. In due course, Ālikrama Gadya further evolved and

manifested as Puṣṭikā Gadya (ಪುಷ್ಟಿಕಾ ಗದ್ಯ), a supportive and explanatory prose form intended to strengthen, supplement, and reinforce the primary Ālikrama Gadya by elucidating its ideas and intent. The term puṣṭikā may be understood by analogy with the ritual offering of puṣpa (flowers): just as flowers enhance the beauty and sanctity of a pūjā, particularly during arcana, Puṣṭikā Gadya enriches and amplifies the primary text by offering interpretative and supportive prose.

Puṣṭikā Gadya gained widespread popularity, and authorship of this form extended across social strata, ranging from members of royal households to practitioners of folk traditions.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, numerous Puṣṭikā Gadya compositions were in circulation within temple-centred literary and ritual traditions. One such *gadya* came to my attention during a visit to the temple at Thiruvanur, dedicated to Lord Thyagarajaswamy and Goddess Kamalambika. During the course of performing prescribed rituals at the Kamalambika shrine, accompanied by my disciples, I encountered a text known as the Kamalambika Cūrṇikā Gadya.

The term cūrṇikā here signifies a concentrated spiritual potency arising from the confluence of several factors, including the inherent virtues of the presiding deity, the sanctity of the kṣetra, and the accumulated ritual authority of the temple tradition. Historically, a Śrī Vidyā *gurukula* was closely associated with the ritual observances of Goddess Kamalambika. Certain practices, particularly those pertaining to Śrī Vidyā, were conducted in a guarded and esoteric manner, in accordance with long-established conventions of ritual secrecy. Upon approaching the *gurukula* with a request for access to the Cūrṇikā Gadya, and following their recognition of my standing as a Śrī Vidyā upāsaka, the custodians of the tradition consented to share the Kamalambika Cūrṇikā Gadya with me.

At present, Cūrṇikā Gadya compositions dedicated to revered gurus, ṛṣis, munis, vidvāns, and musicians are preserved in Varanasi, although

several of these manuscripts are in a state of deterioration. I have examined a number of such texts and have authored Cūrṇikā Gadya compositions of my own on two distinguished personalities. Both Cūrṇikā Gadya compositions were composed in Sanskrit, in keeping with the classical idiom traditionally employed for such prose forms.

The first was composed in honour of Sri Srikantham Nagendra Shastry, a senior vidvān hailing from an illustrious scholarly lineage, and was presented during a programme titled Śāstrīya Sambrama. Subsequently, I authored another Cūrṇikā Gadya to honour Dr. T. V. Venkatachala Śāstri, one of the foremost authorities on Kannada grammar, prosody, and classical literature, on the occasion of his being conferred the title Kannada Sahitya Suri. I composed both Gadyas in Sanskrit.

My most recent Vīṇā Vāggeya Vibhūṣaṇa Cūrṇikā Gadya was composed in honour of Prof. R. Visweswaran, a senior member of my extended family, who has been a paternal figure in my life. In recognition of his multifaceted contributions as a vainika, scholar, author, and composer, I conferred upon him the honorific title “Vīṇā Vāggeya Vibhūṣaṇa” - one who excels in the art of the veena, in literary authorship, and in the composition of kritis.

I have developed a structured format for the Cūrṇikā Gadya that functions as a reusable template, enabling others to adapt it for composing tributes. This format systematically incorporates essential elements such as life history, scholarly and artistic achievements, and personal contributions, and is crafted with deliberate use of appropriate alliteration.

(Dr. R. S. Nanda Kumar is an eminent Carnatic vocalist, musicologist, composer, researcher, and scholar of Indian artistic traditions. He is recognised for his efforts in reviving ancient and rarely performed musical forms such as Gadya, Dandaka, and related traditions. He has also served as a Professor of Musicology and has been associated with the Karnataka State Dr. Gangubai Hangal Music and Performing Arts University.)

Kannada Translation of Vīṭṭā Vāggeya Vibhūṣaṇa Cūrṇikā Gadya

ವೀಣಾವಾಗ್ನೀಯವಿಭೂಷಣ ಎಂಬ ಕನ್ನಡ ಚೂಣೀಕಾ ಗದ್ಯ

ರಚನೆ : ಸಂಗೀತವಿದ್ವಾನ್ ಡಾ. ರಾನೆನಂದಕುಮಾರ

ಹೇ ಸಜ್ಜನರೇ ! ನಿಶ್ಚಯದ ಹೃದಯರೇ ! ಸನಾತನ ಭಾರತೀಯರೇ ! ಕನ್ನಡಕುಲಭೂಷಣರೇ ! ಸರಸಸಂಗೀತವೆಂಬ ಆಗಮವ ಬಲ್ಲವರೇ ! ಸಂಗೀತಶಾಸ್ತ್ರವೆಂಬ ಸಾಗರದ ಉದ್ದಗಲವೂ ಸುಲಭವಾಗಿ ಸಂಚರಿಪುವನ್ನಕ್ಕ ನಾವಿಕರೆ ! ಪರಮಕಾರುಣ್ಯಮೂರ್ತಿ ವಿಶ್ವವಂದ್ಯ, ವೀಣಾಪುಸ್ತಕದಾರಿಣಿ ಭಗವತೀ ತ್ರಿಪುರಾಭಾಲಾದಂಡಿನಿಯ ಕೃಪಾಕಶಾಙ್ಕವನ್ನ ಮಾತ್ರ ಅವಲಂಬಿಸಿ ಈ ಕನ್ನಡ ಚೂಣೀಕೆಯು ರಚಿತವಾಗಿದೆ ! ಕೇಳಿ ಕೇಳಿ !

ಈ ಅನನ್ಯ ಚೂಣೀಕಾಗದ್ಯವನ್ನ ಸಮಾಧಾನ ಜಿತ್ತದಿಂದ ಅವಧರಿಸಿ ಎಂದು ವಿಜ್ಞಾಪಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳುತ್ತಿದ್ದೇನೆ.

ಸಮಸ್ತಸರಸಸಂಗೀತಸಾಹಿತ್ಯ ವಿದ್ಯಾಮಂಡಲವೂ ಶೋಭಾಯಮಾನವೂ ನಿಖಿಲ ಕಾಣಾಟಕದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಜಾಜ್ಞಲ್ಯಮಾನವಾಗಿ ಬೆಳಗುತ್ತಿರುವ ಮಹಿಳೆಯರುಮಹಾಸಂಸ್ಥಾನದಲ್ಲಿ ಅನೇಕಾನೇಕ ವಿಧಾವಾದ ದೇವಪೂಜನ-ಯಜ್ಞಯಾಗಾದಿ ಜಪತಪನವೈಗಳ ಅನುಷ್ಠಾನ ಫಲರೂಪ ಸತ್ಯಶಾಲೀಗಳಾಗಿ, ವೇದಾಂಗವಾದ ಜೀರ್ಣತ್ವಾನ್ತಪು ವೈಖೀಕರಿಸುವ ಸೂರ್ಯೋದಯಾದಿ ಅಮೃತಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ ಸುನವಾಂಶ ಹೋರಾ ದ್ರೀಕೂಟ ವರ್ಣೋತ್ತಮ ಸಮಯದಲ್ಲಿ – ವರ್ಕೋಚ್ಚೆ ಸ್ವಾಕ್ಷೇತ್ರ ವರಕೇಂದ್ರ ಮೂಲತ್ವಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಶ್ರೀಂಬಾಂಪಟ್ಟಿಂಶ್ರೀರಾವತಾಂಶ ಪಾರಿಜಾತಾಂಶ ಗೋಪುರಾಂಶ ಮಹಾರಾಜಯೋಗಳು ತಮ್ಮ ಜಾತಕದಲ್ಲಿ ಸನ್ನಿಹಿತವಾಗಿರುವಾಗ ಲಲಿತಾಭಗವತೀ ಸಮೀತ ಶ್ರೀರಾಮಲಿಂಗೀಶ್ವರ ಪ್ರಸಾದರೂಪವಾಗಿ ವೆಲನಾಡು ವಂಶಜರಾಗಿ ಭಾಗವಚ್ಚವನ ಅವ್ಯವಾನ ಜೀವ ಜಾಮದಗ್ನಿಪ್ರೇರ್ಯ ಎಂಬ ಪಂಚಾಂತರ ಪ್ರವರಪಡಿದು ಶ್ರೀವತ್ಸಗೋತ್ತದಲ್ಲಿ ಹುಟ್ಟಿ ಆವಸ್ತಂಬಸೂತ್ರ ಯಜುವೇಂದ ಶಾಖಾಧ್ಯಾಯೀ ಸಂಪೂರ್ಣದಾಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ನಿಷ್ಪರ್ಣಾದ ಶ್ರೀರಾಮಯ್ಯ ವರಲಕ್ಷ್ಮಿದಂತಹಿಗಳ ವರಪ್ರತ್ಯಾಗಾರಿ ಜನಿಸಿರುವ ಹೇ ವಿಶ್ವೇಶ್ವರ ಶರ್ಮ ! ನೀರೀಗಿ ದಿಟವಾಗಿಯೂ ಆಗಭ ಸಂಗೀತವಿದ್ವಾ ಸಂಪನ್ಮರೇ ಹೋದು !

ಶ್ರುತಿಜಾತಿಸ್ವರಲಯತಾಳಾಲಂಕಾರ-ಮೂರ್ಖನಾದಿಸಹಿತ-ಸರ್ವಮೀಳ-ಜನಕರಜನ್ಮರಾಗ ಸಮುದ್ರವನ್ನೇ ಮಧಿಸಿ, ಸರ್ವಶಾಸ್ತ್ರಪ್ರಯೋಗ – ಸಂಪೂರ್ಣ – ಪರಂಪರೆಗಳನ್ನ ತಡೆಕೊಳ್ಳಿಸಿ ತಪಸ್ಯಮಾಡಿ ಪ್ರಬಂಧಾದಿ ಸರ್ವಭರತಿದ್ವೈಗಳನ್ನು ಅರಿತ ಲಕ್ಷ್ಯಲಕ್ಷಣಪ್ರವರ್ತಕರೇ ! ಶ್ರುತಿಸ್ವಾತಿ ಪುರಾಣ ವೇದವೇದಾಂಗ ಆಗಮ-ನಿಗಮಗಳನ್ನೇ ಸಾರವತ್ತಾಗಿಸಿಕೊಂಡ ಸಂಗೀತ-ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರ – ಪ್ರಯೋಗಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಅನವರತವಾಗಿ ನಿರತರಾಗಿರುವ ವಿದ್ವಾನ್ ಶ್ರೀಗಳಿಗೆ ! ಆಗಭ ಸಂಗೀತಾಗಮವಿದ್ವಾಸಂಪನ್ಮರೇ !

ರಾಗತಾಳಪ್ರಬಂಧಹೃದಯರಹಸ್ಯವಿದರೇ ! ಸರಸಹೃದಯ ಸಂಪನ್ಮರೇ ! ಸಂಗೀತಶಾಸ್ತ್ರಪು ನಿರೂಪಿಸುವ ಸರ್ವಲಕ್ಷಣಸಂಪನ್ಮ-ಸರ್ವಾಲಂಕಾರಭಂಗಿತ-ಸರ್ವದೇವದೇವಿ ಕರಕಮಲವನ್ನಲಂಕರಿಸಿರುವ ಮಹಾವೀಣಾವಾದ್ಯವನ್ನ ಜಾರುತರಪಟುತರವಾಗಿ ದ್ವಾಪಳಿಗಿಸಿಕೊಂಡ ವಾದನ ನಿಪುಣರೇ !

ತನ್ನ ಕರಕಮಲದಲ್ಲಿರುವ ವೀಣಿಯ ಮೀಟಿದ ಇನಿಧ್ನಿಯನ್ನ ಆಲಿಸುತ್ತ ಕುತೂಹಲ ಸುಲಭದಲ್ಲಿ ಮಗ್ನಾಗಿರುವ ಕಾಮೇಶ್ವರನಿಂದ ಆಲಿಂಗಿಸಿಕೊಂಡ, ಪಾಶಾಂಕುಶಗಳನ್ನ ಧರಿಸಿದ, ಬಾಲಸೂರ್ಯಪ್ರಭಾ ತೇಜೋಮಯಿಯಾದವಳು ದೇವಿ ಷಟ್ಕಿ !

ಚತುಮೂರುಬುಕ್ಕಾದಿಗಳೇ ಅರಿಯಲಾರದಷ್ಟು ಮಹಿಮಾಸ್ವಿತಿ – ಇನಿತು ಅರಿತಷ್ಟು ಸಹ ಭಕ್ತಿಲಂತಾಪಗಳಿಂದ ಬಣ್ಣಿಸಲಾರದಷ್ಟು ವಾಕ್ ಮನಸ್ಸುಗಳ ಸೀಮಾತೀತ ಸ್ವರೂಪಿಣಿಯಾದವಳು ಖುಷಭದೇವಿ !

ಉಜ್ಜವಲಾದ ಸುವರ್ಣಕಾಂಗಿಳಿಂದ ಹೊಳೆಯುತ್ತಿರುವ ರೂಪವೇಶ ಅಲಂಕಾರಗಳಿಂದಲೂ ವೀಣಾವಾದನ ವಿನೋದದಿಂದ ಸನುಸಗುತ್ತಿರುವವರಳೂ ಮೃದುಮೀಲಿತಾಂತ್ರಿಯೂ ತನ್ನ ಆಶ್ರಿತ ಮಕ್ಕಳ ಮೀಲಿನ ಕನಿಕರದಿಂದ ಪ್ರೀತಿಯಿಂದ ಹೃದಯವನ್ನೇ ಕರಗಿಸಿ ಕಣ್ಣತುಂಬಿ ನೋಡುತ್ತಿರುವ ಗಾಂಥಾರ ದೇವಿ !

ಮಂದಾರಕುಂದಕುಮುದಪ್ರತಿರೂಪವೂ ಸೂರ್ಯಚಂದ್ರ ಅಗ್ನಿ ತೇಜಸ್ಸುಕೂಡಿದ ವಿಶಾಲವಿಲೋಲನೇತ್ಯಯೂ ಇಂತಹ ಸೌಂದರ್ಯರೂಪಕ್ಕೆ ಮರುಳಾದ ಜಂದ್ರದೀಪಿಲರನು ಪ್ರೀತಿಯಿಂದ ಪಾದಪದ್ಮಗಳನ್ನ ಬುಂಬಿಸುತ್ತಿರುವಂತಾದ ಮಧ್ಯಮಸ್ತರಮಯೀ ದೇವಿಯೇ !

ವಶಿನ್ಯಾದಿವಾಗ್ನೇವತಾಸ್ತುತಳು ಪಂಚಮವೇದದೇವನಾದ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮನೂ ದೇವೇಂದ್ರಾದಿಗಳೂ ತನ್ನ ಪಾದ ಹಿಡಿದ ಮಾತ್ರದಿಂದಲೇ ಮಹಾಸ್ತ ಸಫಲಾರ್ಥಗಳು ಹೊಡಲು ಸಮರ್ಥಳಾದ ದ್ವಿಪತದೇವಿಯೇ !

ವಸುಧಾರಕಪ್ರಭಿಯನ್ನು ಹೊಂದಿ ಸರ್ವವರ್ಣಗಳಿಂದ ರಂಜಿತವಾದ ದೇಹಪ್ರಭಿಯಿಳ್ಳ ಸಮಸ್ತಗುಣ ನಿಭರ ವಿಜ್ಞಮಾಂಗಿಯೂ ಆಗಿ ಸಮಸ್ತಸಜ್ಜನ ಹೃದಯದಲ್ಲಿ ನಾನ್ಯಾಪಿತಳಾಗಿ ಶರ್ವಪ್ರಿಯಿಯಾಗಿ ಚಂದ್ರಕಲೆಗಳನ್ನು ತನ್ನ ಶಿರಸ್ಸಿನಲ್ಲಿ ಧರಿಸಿರುವ ಸ್ನೇಹಾಧಿದೇವಿಯೇ

ಸರಿಗಮಪದನಿ-ಪ್ರಪಂಚಸಂರಕ್ಷಣಾದಿಭ್ರೀತೀಗೀರ್ಲಾಲಿತಾಂಬಿಕಾಂಬಿಕೆಯೇ !

ಜಗದಂಬಿಕೆ ! ಭಗವತೀ ಕಾಣಾಟಕಸರಸ್ವತಿಯೇ ! ಇದೋ ಸಮೋ ಸಮ್ಯಃ !

ಇಂತಹ ಮಹಾಮಾತ್ರಿಯ ಪೂರ್ಣಕೃಪಾಕಂತಾಕ್ಷರಿಂದಾಗಿ ಅವಳ ಸ್ವರೂಪವನ್ನೇ ನೋಡಿನೋಡಿ ದಿವ್ಯಸ್ವಾತ್ಮಿಕ್ಯಿಂದ ನಿಜಸಂಗೀತವಾಗ್ನೀಯರನಾನಂದಮಹತ್ತನ್ನು ಪಡೆಯ ಹ್ಯಾನ್ಯಾನಗಳ ತುಂಬಿ ಹಾಡಿಸುಡಿಸಿದ ಗಾಯಕವೈಣಿಕ ಸಿದ್ಧಿಪುರುಷರೇ !!

ತಮ್ಮ ಜೀವನವಿಡಿ ಹೋಟ್ಯನುಕೋಟಿ ಸಂಗೀತಪ್ರಯೋಗ - ಪ್ರದರ್ಶನಗಳನ್ನು ನೀಡಿರುವ ಫನವಿದ್ದುಂಸರೇ !

ಸಂಗೀತಾಸ್ತ್ರಜೀಂತನರಸಾಯನ, ಶ್ರೀಎಂಬ್ರಹ್ಮಣವಾಗ್ನೀಯವಾಯಾಖಾನ, ವಾಗ್ನೀಯವಿಶ್ವೇಶ್ವರಿ, ಶ್ರೀಕಮಲಾಂಬಾ ಜಯತೀ, ಭಾರತೀಯಸಂಗೀತ ಮೂಲವಿಷಯವನ್ನು ತೋಲನಿಕ ನಿರೂಪಣ ಇತ್ಯಾದಿ ಮಹದೃಂಥಕರ್ತ ! ಅನ್ಯಾನನವೀನಗೀಯರಚನಾದಕ್ಕ !

ಭಾರತದ ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರಪತಿಗಳೇ ನೀಡಿರುವ ಅಕಾಡೆಮಿ ರತ್ನ ಕನಾಟಕ ರಾಜ್ಯಪ್ರದಾವಾದ ಕನ್ನಡರತ್ನಮ್ರ
ಕನಾಟಕರಾಜ್ಯಸಂಗೀತವಿದ್ವಾನ್, ರಾಜ್ಯ-ರಾಷ್ಟ್ರ - ಅಂತಾರಾಷ್ಟ್ರೀಯ ಖ್ಯಾತಿಯ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯಾದಿ ಮಹಾಸಂಸ್ಥೆಗಳು
ಸಮಾಜೀನಿರುವ ಡಾಕ್ಟರ್ ರೇಚ್, ಸಂಗೀತಜ್ಳಾದಾಮಣಿ, ಸಂಗೀತವಿದ್ವಾನಿಧಿ, ಹಿಮಾಲಯೋತ್ಸಂಗಶಿಲರಸದೃಶವೀಜಾವಾಣಿ,
ವೈಜ್ಞಾನಿಕಗಾಯಕಲಕ್ಷ್ಯಲಕ್ಷಣಾಸಾರ್ವಭಾಂತ, ವೀಜಾವಾದನತತ್ತ್ವಜ್ಞ, ವೀಜಾಗಾನವಾಗ್ನೀಯಮಹಣ್ಣ, ನಾದಶ್ರೀ, ಕಲಾಶ್ಯಂಗ,
ಸಂಗೀತಸಾರ್ವಭಾಂತ, ಇತ್ಯಾದ್ಯನೇಕನ ಬೀರುದಾಂಕಿತ ಶ್ರೀವಾಸುದೇವಾಚಾರ್ಯ ! - ಜೀರ್ವಿ ಕೆಂಪೇಗೌಡ ಇತ್ಯಾದಿ ಅನೇಕ
ಪ್ರಶಸ್ತಿಪೂರಸ್ಯ ತಸಂಗೀತವಿಭೂತಿಪುರುಷ !

ವೀಜಾವಿದ್ವಾಸಿದಿಕಾತ್ಮಕೇಯರ ಆಗಿರುವವರೆ ! ದೀಪಾಂಜೀವಮಾನದ ಈ ಸಾರ್ಥಕ ಉಪಃಕಾಲದಲ್ಲಿ ಸೂರ್ಯಪ್ರಭಿಯಿಂದ ಹೊಳಿಯುತ್ತಿರುವವರೆ ! ಎಂದೆಂದೂ ಜಿರಯೋವ್ವಾನದಂತೆ ದೃಥವೂ ಶಕ್ತಿಶಾಲಿಯೂ ಆಗಿರುವ ವಜ್ರಕಾಯ ಸುಂದರೇ !

ಜೀವನವೆಲ್ಲವೂ ನಾದಮಯವಾಗಿಸಿಹೊಂಡ ಯೋಗಿಗಳೇ | ಹೇ ಅಧಿನವಪ್ಪರುಷವೀಜಾಸರಸ್ವತಿಯಂತಿರುವವರೇ !

ವೀಜಾವಾಗ್ನೀಯವಿಭೂತಂ ! ಶ್ರೀ ವಿಶ್ವೇಶ್ವರರಶಮ್ !

ವಿಜಯೀ ಭವ ದಿಗ್ಂಜಯೀಭವ ! ಪರಾಕ್ರಂಬಹುಪರಾಕ್ರಂ...!!

ಓ ತತ್ತತ್ವ

The Power of Pure Music

When I was conferred the title Sangeetha Choodamani by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha, Chitraveena N. Ravikiran, the renowned chitraveena exponent, remarked in his felicitation address:

“Youngsters like us often employ clever and engaging techniques to connect with audiences. However, someone like Prof. R. Visweswaran requires no such ‘gimmicks’ to please listeners. He has earned the appreciation of rasikas through pure and unadulterated music. This, by itself, stands as a testimony to his ideals.”

Prof. R. Visweswaran

A Memorable Visit by Baluswami Dikshitar to My Home

*Original article published in Surabhi Sinchana, a Kannada quarterly magazine
From the special issue dedicated to Prof. R. Visweswaran (July–September 2022)
As narrated by Prof. R. Visweswaran*



Baluswami Dikshitar with the Visweswaran family, with Vidya in front and Karthik V. in the background.

There are a few events in my life that remain eternally memorable, having given me immense joy and a truly wondrous experience. Foremost among them was the visit of the descendants of Muthuswami Dikshitar to our home in Saraswatipuram.

The youngest brother of Muthuswami Dikshitar was Baluswami Dikshitar. His daughter's son - that is, his maternal grandson - was Subbarama Dikshitar. Subbarama Dikshitar's son was Ambi Dikshitar, and Ambi Dikshitar's son too was named Baluswami Dikshitar.

This incident took place nearly fifty-two years ago. At my invitation, Baluswami Dikshitar came to Mysuru. When he arrived, he brought with him the small veena once used by Dikshitar, the Śrī Cakra that was worshipped in their lineage, the Gaṇapati idol, and a picture of Lord

Subrahmaṇya. Not only did he stay at our home for two days, but during that time all these supremely sacred objects - treasured heirlooms of the Dikshitar lineage - were worshipped in our house. This remains one of the greatest blessings of my life.

From the very moment I laid eyes on Dikshitar's veena, I was overwhelmed with emotion. Unable to restrain myself any longer, on the second day I hesitantly asked Baluswami Dikshitar, almost trembling, "May I touch that veena just once?" Perhaps, during those two days, he had come to recognise the depth of my affection, admiration, and reverential devotion towards the Dikshitar lineage.

He replied with a single sentence:

"Why merely touch it? You may hold it in your hands and even play it. I have understood everything from your words. You are not an outsider; you are one among our own lineage. You may play it freely."

There was no limit to my joy. I immediately took the veena in my hands and played the varna *Ninnukori*. I had always held boundless devotion and reverence for Muthuswami Dikshitar; but this experience created in me a feeling of blessedness - as though Muthuswami Dikshitar himself had come to our home.

Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar's veena with a curled up vyali



My Guru: Madurai Krishna Iyengar

As narrated by Dr.T.K.Venkatasubramanian, Bangalore
Courtesy : Kumbakonam M Rajappa Iyer Trust, KR Ganesh



During the 1950s, Trichy Raghavaiyar (hereafter referred to as Raghavaiyar), a native of Angarai near Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, and the brother of Alathur Srinivasa Iyer of Alathur Brothers fame, was actively engaged in teaching mridangam to students in Mylapore, Madras. He became my first guru. On several occasions, he would pull me away from a cricket match just as I was about to take my turn to bat, saying, "You are a gifted boy with a flair for the mridangam - come, I will teach you."

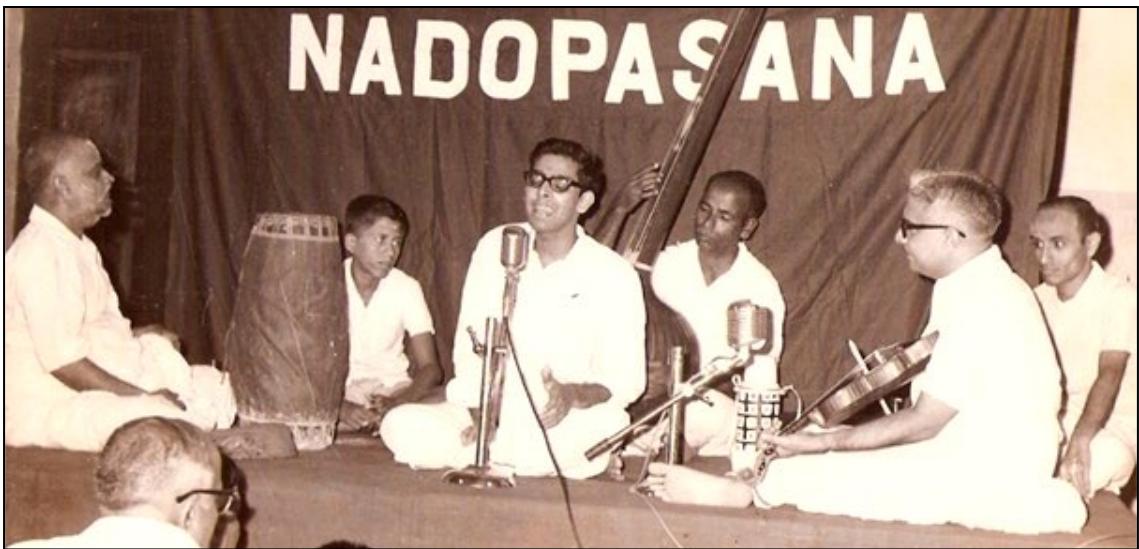
Among his students were Umayalapuram Natarajan, Melakaveri Krishnamurthy, and M. R. Ganeshan, all of whom were senior to me. Palghat Raghu is also understood to have learnt from him for a brief period. In those days, our lives revolved around studies, cricket, and the mridangam, and it was Raghavaiyar who firmly

ingrained the fundamentals of the instrument in me.

I acquired advanced training in the finer aspects of mridangam playing from my second guru, Madurai Krishna Iyengar (hereafter referred to as Krishna Iyengar), between 1963 and 1971. His centenary is being celebrated this year. Deeply influenced by T. K. Murthy mama, I learnt much as an Ekalavya and, from 2013 onwards, have been providing technical commentary on his playing and assisting in the authoring of his book. It is fair to say that *Raghavaiyar gave me the foundation, Krishna Iyengar the vision, and T. K. Murthy mama the wisdom.* Much of my learning from Krishna Iyengar took place on stage, as I sat behind him during concerts.

As this is Krishna Iyengar's centenary year, I have been revisiting his recordings, including several available on YouTube. Of particular interest was the konnakol support he provided in a concert of Manakkal Rangarajan, where the tani āvartanam was set to khaṇḍa chāpu tala. Though konnakol was not part of his regular concert repertoire, he did participate in a few such concerts with Manakkal Rangarajan. He performed primarily on the kanjira, accompanying stalwarts such as Palakkad Mani Iyer, Palani Subbudu, and C. S. Murugabhoopathi. I had the privilege of sitting behind him on stage for several of these concerts.

He accompanied Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer on the mridangam at the Madras Music Academy in 1956. I came upon this rare recording by chance while accompanying



Madurai Krishna Iyengar on mridangam, accompanying Alleppey Venkatesan, with T. N. Krishnan on violin

Geetha Bennett on the veena in Los Angeles, United States. A connoisseur named Viswanathan recognised my lineage through my sarvalaghu theka-s and gifted me the recording.

Krishna Iyengar accompanied V.V. Sadagopan in concerts featuring multiple violin combinations, including Thiruparkadal S. Veeraraghavan, V. Sethuramaiah, and Kandadevi S. Alagiriswamy.,

Madurai Mani Iyer often preferred Krishna Iyengar for his concerts before V. Ramabadrani began accompanying him. Krishna Iyengar was known for a distinctive mannerism of moving his head in concentric circles, which earned him the affectionate sobriquet "Mandai āṭi sāmi" - a name by which even rickshaw drivers recognised him. He wore both vibhuti and nāmam on his forehead, was deeply devoted to Lord Muruga, and taught me a couple of pallavis dedicated to Muruga.

Chitsabai Servai, the father of Ramanathapuram C. S. Murugabhoopathi and a practitioner of the Pudukkottai tradition, taught mridangam to Babu Srinivasa Iyengar, the brother of Krishna Iyengar. Krishna Iyengar, in turn, learnt from his brother and later received training from Karaikudi Muttu Iyer. He was proficient in konnakkol, kanjira, and mridangam, and had also attained a high level of proficiency in vocal music.

In those days, performing on stage demanded a very high level of proficiency in mridangam. A percussionist was expected to be adept in all

thirty-five tala-s, as leading artistes would extemporaneously render raga-thana-pallavi in any of them. Even in an Adi tala pallavi set to four chowka kāla, one had to execute patterns of thirty-two units rather than the more common sixteen or eight.

He taught me rare lessons based on 15½-akṣara patterns for application in Tiruppugazh, which I later found immensely useful while accompanying T. R. Subramaniam. I have even performed tani āvartanam for Tiruppugazh. My guru specialised in the use of intervening karvai-s in his patterns, inspired by Dakshinamurthy Pillai, a legendary figure of the Pudukkottai school. His mathematical formulations were exceptionally advanced, despite his limited formal academic training.

I thank the Sri Kumbakonam Sri M. Rajappa Iyer Trust and everyone present here for giving me the opportunity to speak about my guru, Krishna Iyengar.

Dr. T. K. Venkatasubramanian learnt the art of playing mridangam under Trichy Raghavayyar, Madurai Krishna Iyengar, and Ramanathapuram Kandaswamy Pillai. He is now learning the art of percussion as it existed in 19th century from Dr. T.K. Murthy who is the link between past and present. He is currently authoring an autobiography on Dr. T.K. Murthy.

Dr. T. K. Venkatasubramanian is a Musician and Historian. He served as a Professor and Head of the Department of History at Delhi University and retired in 2012.

Prof. R. Visweswaran: A Rare and Exceptional Vaggeyakara

*Sangita Kalanidhi R. K. Srikantan on Prof. R. Visweswaran's Vāggeya
Originally published as the foreword to Vaggeya Visweswari
Padma Bhushan, Sangita Kalanidhi, Vid., R. K. Srikantan*

Prof. R. Visweswaran, who has been honoured with titles such as *Sangeetha Choodamani*, *Sangeetha Sarvabhouma*, and *Rajya Sangeetha Vidwan*, is a highly distinguished scholar who is extremely close to me and like a brother in spirit. Through his distinctive musical brilliance, he has enhanced the prestige and honour of Karnataka not only within India but also abroad.

Through innate talent combined with relentless practice, he has evolved innovative techniques in veena playing and has earned the esteemed recognition of being regarded as a leading vainika of the *gāyana* style. His musical journey began with training in vocal music.

In addition to being a vainika of the highest calibre, he is an accomplished vocalist, a distinguished musicologist, and an eminent teacher. He is held in high esteem for his writings, lectures, and lecture-demonstrations on music. A composer (*vāggeyakāra*) and a thinker, he is a dedicated scholar who has steadfastly preserved and upheld the traditional values of the art of music with the utmost integrity.

A recipient of numerous honours, Sri Visweswaran, an M.A. degree holder, served the University of Mysore as Professor and Head of the Department of Music before retiring from service.

Just as talent is essential for artistic excellence, so too is intellect. Talent without intellect and intellect without talent are both futile. In Sri Visweswaran, these two qualities are harmoniously balanced. His artistic discipline,

restraint, and intellectual clarity leave no doubt that he is a profound exponent of veena playing. He possesses a comprehensive understanding of the instrument-its structure, scope, and vast potential.

Music is the supreme medium of emotional expression. The creation of *geya* compositions endowed with *lakshana* demands exceptional creative acumen from a *vāggeyakāra*. Compositional creativity is largely inborn and cannot be taught. Perception of beauty and refined aesthetic sensibility are therefore fundamental, while artistic structuring of *swaras* forms the core of a composition, which must ultimately embody serenity, majesty, intensity, and melodic beauty.

For a *vāggeyakāra*, *kṛti* composition must be distinctive in every respect. An appealing *dātu-mātu* style and musical idiom, along with the independent evolution of *nāda* and *laya*, together define the hallmark of a *geya kavi*'s artistry and the essence of *vāggeya* *vaibhava*. Artistic life is a continuous flow nourished by imagination and reflection; as artistic wisdom deepens, the divinity, depth, and extraordinary power of art reveal themselves. Sri Visweswaran has composed more than 150 *kṛtis* as a *vāggeyakāra*. I first offer my heartfelt thanks to him for giving me the opportunity to study and analyse these compositions.

In Carnatic classical music, the *kṛti* is a distinctive compositional form characterised by the special interplay of *dātu* and *mātu*. The *kṛti* represents the evolved form of the *kīrtana* and stands as a highly sophisticated compositional



Prof. R. Visweswaran receiving the Ananya GML Academy Award from Sangita Kalanidhi R. K. Srikantan

genre. The principal aim of a *kṛti* is musical aesthetic experience (*gāna-rasānubhava*).

Primacy is accorded to melodiousness, and the objective of the composition lies in achieving a balanced synthesis of the *kṛti*'s *bhāva* and *rasa*, bringing both together in proper measure. The ability to explore familiar ragas through fresh approaches is a rare and remarkable quality; indeed, it is difficult to fully comprehend the immense possibilities inherent in the art of music. Diversity thus emerges as music's greatest asset and strength - the very essence of its tradition.

Within the classical domain, everything functions within the bounds of discipline and tradition. A *kṛti* is a creative expression that blossoms within a pre-defined framework, yet bears the distinctive stamp of individuality and scope for improvisation. It is also an intense process of creative exploration. The appealing harmony of *nāda* and *laya* makes *kṛtis* favourites among rasikas and therefore central to concert performance. The *dātu* of a *kṛti* vividly depicts the unique characteristics of the raga.

As a devoted worshipper of Goddess Sharada, Sri Visweswaran has meaningfully titled his collection of compositions *Vaggeya Visweswari*. It is noteworthy that the 112 *kṛtis* in this compilation are composed in Kannada, Sanskrit, and Telugu, truly marking him as a trilingual *vāggeyakāra*. The corpus includes varnas, *kṛtis*, ragamalikas, padas, tillanas, and light classical

songs. From the perspective of *dātu*, each *kṛti* offers a comprehensive and vivid portrayal of the raga.

In addition to well-known ragas such as Tōdi, Kalyāṇi, Kharaharapriyā, Śaṅkarābharaṇa, and Vācaspati, he has employed melakarta ragas including Naṭabhairavi, Nāmanārāyaṇi, Vakulābharaṇa, Kanakāṅgi, Citrāmbari, and Jyōtisvarūpiṇi. Notably, ragas from the Hindustani tradition - such as Mārvā, Rōhiṇi, Māḍukauś, Candraṅkauns, Gōrak Kalyāṇ, Śuddh Kalyāṇ, and Miyān Mālhar - are also incorporated. This breadth reflects Sri Visweswaran's holistic and integrated approach to the art of music.

Such an integrated outlook is generally rare among *vāggeyakāras* and is seen only in exceptional figures such as Muthuswami Dikshitar, Swathi Thirunal Maharaja, Lalgudi Jayaraman, and Visweswaran. In addition, the collection includes ragas conceived by him - namely Rājarājeśvari, Smṛti, Antarakaiśiki, Enākṣi, and Parijanya - further attesting to his capacity for original creation.

Sri Visweswaran is truly a composer of unfailing originality and innovation. While being guided by the path laid down by the Carnatic Trinity - Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Syama Sastri - he has retained a distinct individuality in his *kṛti* compositions, entirely free from even the faintest hint of imitation.

Other distinguishing features of his *kṛtis* include the use of madhyamakāla sāhitya, citta-svaras, atīta graha, and rare anulōma-vilōma graha-svara and svara patterns. Tillanas suitable for vocal, instrumental, and dance performance have also been composed, along with works in relatively less-explored ragas such as Bindumālini, Rasālī, Taraṅgiṇi, Pāḍi, Saramati, Vāgadhīśvari, Salaga Bhairavi, Lalita, and others. This constitutes an unparalleled contribution to the vast repertoire of music.

Is it any wonder that Sri Visweswaran has earned the acclaim of scholars, critics, and reputed journals? The inspiration and motivation required for composition, innate

talent, an aesthetic and sensitive creative temperament, experiential depth, and a vision that never transgresses the bounds of śāstric discipline - all these qualities are present in him in their entirety. He is a vidwan academically par excellence.

For an artist and a practitioner of art, life itself must exist in a state of creative ecstasy. Artistic sensibility stands far above mere technicality; for this, the strength of refined cultural grounding (*sāṁskāra*) is essential.

The Sahitya: The sahitya of kṛtis demands that the words used in songs be harmonious with the intended emotion, familiar, and simple, structured in clear and accessible sentences. Since the needs of the performer must be kept in view, the craftsmanship of a kṛti necessarily differs from that of other poetic forms. Above all, the words must be eminently renderable.

Words and phrases should be concise, in keeping with ease of breathing. To enable complete attention to music, the lyrics should avoid excessive subtlety or semantic density; in other words, intellectual clarity - not complexity - is paramount. The form of a kṛti must be formal and well defined, and the music should intensify and elevate the emotion expressed in the composition. In essence, when submits itself to music, even simple and ordinary experiences and emotions are capable of acquiring extraordinary intensity.

All these aspects are naturally and seamlessly integrated into the kṛtis of Visweswaran.

The lyrics of his compositions are replete with prosodic beauty, exemplified by *yati*, *prasa*, *yamaka*, and *svarākṣara*. The language of the songs reflects the language of feeling, and the diction is impressive, classical, and formal. The compositions are marked by elegance and charged with emotion. They provide ample scope for *manodharma* and, upon analysis, reveal considerable depth.

Each kṛti exhibits a harmonious integration of *bhāva*, *rāga*, and *tāla*, enriched by appropriate *alaṅkāras* and structural propriety. Meaning and a distinctive explanation are provided for every

kṛti. The compositions bear the composer's own signature (*rāga-mudrā/ārikita*), which is incorporated with relevance and refined aesthetic sensitivity.

The opening composition is dedicated to Sri Vighnesvara, set in the raga *Harīṣadhwani* and *Rūpaka tāla*. The second kṛti is a *Sarasvatī stuti* in the raga *Vāgadhiśvari*, also set to *Rūpaka tāla*. The composition dedicated to Tyagaraja reflects the composer's deep devotional fervour in its lyrics:

“Erīti gauravintu ne ninnu Tyāgarāja Rāmanāma Bhogarāja Rāgarāja.”

In a similar manner, he has composed kṛtis on Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri as well. Were one to continue analysing all his compositions and the elegance of their *dātu* constructions, this foreword itself would turn into a separate volume. These observations have already grown lengthy; it is therefore best to draw them to a close here.

Visweswaran is a vidwan endowed with incisive and penetrating thought, qualities that stand out prominently in his compositions. May his works attain wide popularity, be warmly received by scholars, rasikas, and students alike, and be given life through active performance. Then, indeed, his service to art will have found true fulfilment. With this hope, I further wish that his artistic service may continue uninterrupted in the years to come, and I pray for him every success.

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RK Srikantan
10 October, 2005
Bangalore

The Indefatigable Veena Visweswaran

Original article published in Surabhi Sinchana, a Kannada quarterly magazine.

From the special issue dedicated to Prof. R. Visweswaran (July–September 2022).

Original Author: Dr. R. S. Nandakumar (Son of R. Visweswaran's brother Dr. R. Satyanarayana)

English translation credit - Smt Asha Ramesh

Dr. Sukanya Prabhakar, the eminent vocalist of Karnataka, suggested that I write an article on my uncle, Prof. R. Visweswaran - who has been a *vīṇāpāṇi* by birth - as seen through a son's eyes, for publication in an issue of *Surabhi Sinchana*. She also mentioned that this issue would be specially prepared and dedicated to that great scholar.

I felt an immediate sense of happiness and pride. However, when I began preparing myself to write about the *vīṇāpāṇi* - his music and his achievements - and finally sat down to reflect upon the fulfilment and vast possibilities of this Varavīṇāpāṇi's musical life, a quiet anxiety set in. I began to wonder whether it was truly possible to capture, even in a single article, the stature of such a great achiever - this *Puruṣa-Saraswati*. I questioned whether such a task was possible for me at all.

Just as music can emerge through triadic exploration, I felt it might suffice to reflect upon only three aspects of his life. Having watched him with wonder since childhood, I now place before you a few experiences and memories that have stayed with me.

I must have been seven or eight years old at the time. I had to go to school, and my aunt, Vidushi Subbamma, woke me up and asked me to get ready. In a moment of impulsive haste, I rushed into the bathroom and hurried back out again. Holding a comb, my uncle (R.V.) came up to me and gently tugged my hair. There was an oil-like, unbroken intensity in his

eyes; affection lingered at their corners; and faint lines of gentle reproach appeared on his face at my impulsive behaviour.

Seeing my stiff and awkward posture, his lips curved into a gentle smile. Yet he carefully parted my hair with the comb, drawing a neat, straight line that matched the breadth of my forehead. Everyone present at the Ramavilas Mysore Brothers' house in Kashipati Agrahara, Mysuru, exclaimed in unison, "Ah! A perfect perfectionist!"

R. Visweswaran is the gifted son of Berur Rammaiah and Varalakshamma. On the *Kṛṣṇa Pratipadā* of the *Phālguna* month, during the *Uttarāyaṇa* of the auspicious *Vikrama* year and in the spring season, it felt as though there were two sunrises: one at the usual 6:30 a.m., and another at 6:31 in the evening - the latter marking the advent of that *Puruṣa Vīṇā Saraswati*.

From the moment my mind first awakened to awareness and memory, my entire childhood was immersed in the world of his music. Holding his veena with devotion and reverence, just as Muthuswamy Dikshitar describes in the *Āhiri Kamalamba Navavarana* kriti - "prītyukta maccittam," a state of inward absorption - ragas flowed effortlessly, and kirtanas rich with subtle gamakas and melodic movements unfolded one after another.

I grew up watching in utter amazement - svarālapanas filled with captivating *rāga-bhāva*,

energy, and life; a naturally radiant and expressive face; and the courage to subject any thought to rigorous reflection, mature it fully, assimilate it through subtle intellect, and then express it with razor-sharp clarity.

Some words he spoke during my childhood remain deeply etched in my mind even today:

“Look, Nanda! A raga is a living entity - it is like our own life force. To render a true ālāpana, one needs the Goddess’s grace. We can only pray to her and, with devotion and faith, make the effort to engage in raga ālāpana - that effort alone is ours. But the glory of its sound, its very life, is entirely her grace. Never regard music as a business. You are the first listener to the music you sing; therefore, you must cultivate honesty within yourself and preserve it throughout your life. It is Mother Lalitā Tripurasundarī alone who immerses you in the ocean of nāda, purifies you, and makes your life meaningful.”

(These were the words he spoke one afternoon at our Saraswathipuram home, when I was overwhelmed by his Śaṅkarābharaṇa raga ālāpana, kīrtana, and svara-prastāra.)

In my childhood, he taught me many aspects of life. He showed me how to maintain everyday attire - how to wash clothes, hang them to dry, fold them neatly, and iron them for special occasions without leaving a crease. When I was unable to iron my clothes, I would carefully fold them and place them under a pillow; by morning, they would appear neatly pressed.

He taught me how to behave, how to dress, and how to comb my hair properly. He also taught me how to maintain a scooter - first his Vijay Super and later a Lambretta - how to wipe it clean, periodically clean the carburettor, ride it correctly, and develop proper road sense.

Beyond these practical lessons, he taught me something far more profound: how to let go of things not meant for me and of matters that did not truly concern me. Above all, he was a master of practicality. Whatever the task - however mundane - he insisted on performing

it with propriety, contextual sensitivity, and a sincere desire to do it perfectly.

He showed special affection and quiet care towards me. I know that this was not merely because I followed instructions or was capable, but because of something deeper - an unspoken bond of guidance and responsibility.

The splendour of his music itself is a lived spiritual discipline (anuṣṭhāna). Listening to Sri Muthuswami Dikshitar’s Navāvaraṇa kṛtis, Guru kṛtis, and Viśeṣa-raga kṛtis (Āhiri, Maṅgalakaiśikī, and others), and later studying Subbarama Dikshitar’s *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini*, I absorbed much that felt beyond my intellectual grasp - yet remained permanently etched in memory.

Even in childhood, I understood that wherever R. Visweswaran sang or played the veena, that space transformed into a musical laboratory. I would be awestruck watching him teach music to his exceptionally talented daughters, Veena and Vidya. Whether the students were his own children or others, he would always turn inward while teaching. Only after receiving the music from the Devi would he pass it on, carefully attuned to each student’s individual abilities.

His creativity in music is extraordinary, and invariably pure. Although deeply rooted in tradition, his music has never lost its lustre or become outdated. It remains a living tradition - like the festive adornment of the sanctum sanctorum of the Devi.

With his remarkable talent, he has authored the book *Vaggeya Visweswari*, in which one encounters the effortless flow of musical notation and the grandeur of Saṅgīta Śāradā herself. His lecture-demonstrations and concerts stand as shining examples of this legacy.

He often differed from the prevailing opinions and practices of the musical community of my childhood. Yet, through his speech and actions, he compelled that very community to listen, reflect, and eventually acknowledge his vision.

I learnt another invaluable lesson from my uncle - the meaning of love-filled partnership and harmonious marriage. I have never heard him raise his voice to my aunt, nor her to him. There are only melodious voices in this marriage.

Together they have celebrated life through every occasion - upanayanams, weddings, naming ceremonies, award functions, joys, and life's inevitable trials - surrounded by children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Even today, they sit together studying and conversing in Sanskrit, exploring its vast treasury of meanings, sounds, and poetry.

Usha Visweswaran is a distinguished artist and a person of remarkable talent. Her work includes beautiful sketches, vibrant drawings, portraits, and evocative studies of nature. She is a highly respected presence in the art world, and this is a source of immense pride for R.Visweswaran.

When listeners praised his music, one could see a gentle smile on his face. But when they spoke of Usha's achievements - her creativity, her mastery of Sanskrit, and her professional excellence in Ayurveda - his face would truly light up.

He often reminded us that we must appreciate our own people openly and sincerely. "If you cannot appreciate," he would say, "say nothing at all." In this, as in many other ways, he stands as an exemplary human being.

Alright! If one were to ask, "What are your expectations of me, a nephew cherished as a son?", an immense list would unfold. It would be impossible to enumerate all my hopes and aspirations. Many of my friends may already be aware of them; yet, I feel compelled to express them once again.

Not merely in India, but across the entire world, there is no other vainika who, even at the age of ninety-four, displays an enthusiasm that puts the younger generation to shame. He performs with total absorption, devotion and reverence, discipline and propriety, truth and purity. He can present a Nādalaharī concert lasting at least three hours, offering to listeners

across the world the splendour and greatness of Carnatic music.

I say this without the slightest hesitation.

Following our ancient and time-honoured tradition, we pray to Bhagavati to bless this great soul and his family with strength, health, happiness, and prosperity for a hundred samvatsaras. We also earnestly hope that this gifted son of Karnataka will be bestowed with the highest honour of India this year. Together, in unison, we shall place this humble appeal before the Government of Karnataka, the Government of India, and the awards committees concerned.

For R.Visweswaran, awards may be insignificant, but for us, they are as precious as gold. For the world of music, for our state, for the musical fraternity, and for the people of Mysore, would this not be a fitting crown?

On behalf of our family, I extend my heartfelt wishes and gratitude to Dr. Sukanya Prabhakar for bringing forth a wealth of information about Prof. R. Visweswaran in this issue of *Surabhi Sinchana*.

Dr. R. S. Nanda Kumar is an eminent Carnatic vocalist, musicologist, composer, researcher, and scholar of Indian artistic traditions. He is recognised for his efforts in reviving ancient and rarely performed musical forms such as Gadya, Dandaka, and related traditions. He has also served as a Professor of Musicology and has been associated with the Karnataka State Dr. Gangubai Hangal Music and Performing Arts University.

Selected Honours and Recognitions of Prof. R. Visweswaran



Receiving the “S. V. Narayanaswamy Rao Memorial National Award” from Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, Bangalore, 2014.



Receiving the “Sangeetha Choodamani” Award instituted by Sri Krishna Gana Sabha from Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, 2000.



Receiving the “Naada Nidhi” Award from Sri Ganapathy Sachidananda Swamiji at Dattapeeta, Mysuru, 2010.



Receiving the “K. K. Murthy Memorial National Chowdiah Award” from Sri Mallikarjuna Kharge, Bangalore, 2008.



Receiving the National Award and title “Sangeetha Vidya Nidhi” from Sri N. D. Tiwari, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, in 2008.



Receiving the Honorary Doctorate in Music from Karnataka State Dr. Gangubai Hangal Music and Performing Arts University, 2015.

Spring Music Festival - 2026



Vids. Heramb and Hemanth (Flute Duet), Vid. L Ramakrishnan (Violin),
Vid. B.C. Manjunath (Mridanga), Vid. G. Guru Prasanna (Kanjira)



Vid. Kavitha Saralaya and Vid. Triveni Saralaya (Vocal Duet), Vid. Nalina
Mohan (Violin), Vid. Anoor Ananthakrishna Sharma (Mridanga),
Vid. Sunaad Anoor (Kanjira)



Vid. Kalavathy Avadhoot (Vocal), Vid. Mattur R. Srinidhi (Violin),
Vid. H.S. Sudhinda (Mridanga), Vid. Omkar Rao (Ghata).



Vid. B. Vijayagopal (Flute), Vid. Mylai M. Karthikeyan (Nadaswaram),
Vid. Puttur Nikshith (Mridanga), Vid. Trichy S. Krishnaswamy (Ghata).



Vid. Amrutha Venkatesh (Vocal), Vid. Bombay R. Madhavan (Violin),
Vid. Arjun Ganesh (Mridanga), Vid. Chandrasekara Sharma (Ghata).



Vid. Kumaresh Rajagopalan (Violin), Vid. Kishore Ramesh (Mridanga),
Vid. Giridhar Udupa (Ghata).



Vid. Vignesh Ishwar (Vocal), Vid. H.M. Smitha (Violin), Vid. Delhi Sairam
(Mridanga), Vid. Anirudh V. Athreya (Kanjira).



Vid. Sikkil Gurucharan (Vocal), Vid. Charulatha Ramanujam (Violin),
Vid. H.S. Sudhinda (Mridanga), Vid. Ranganatha Chakravarthy (Ghata).