Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar
CHAPTER - I

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Music is an integral part of Indian Culture. Classical music indeed gives peace and harmony to our soul. The mellifluent music possesses the heavenly power to elevate everyone from depression to ecstacy when it is sung with a divine touch. In short, music consoles and comforts the worried and wearied minds. Indeed Carnatic Music, based on classical principles is one of the oldest and richest musical traditions which pave the way for a noble cultural heritage. According to William Shakespeare, If Music be the food of love, let it play on. 

The period from 1750-1850 is considered to be the Golden Era of Carnatic music. It marked several important milestones of Carnatic music in diversified angles, thus enriching this traditional art form, and preserving its past glory and grandeur. Some of the most important developments in both Lakshana (theoretical) and Lakshya (practical) aspects took place during this period. The golden age was the culmination of many decades of musical thought by the time the concept of Mela Janya raga system has established. Sage Vidyaranya (14th century) may be called the Father of Carnatic Music and had, in his work ‘Sangita Sara’ conceived a Scheme of Mela and Janya ragas. This concept was further developed by Ramamatya (16th Century) in his treatise ‘Svaramelakalanidhi’. The Melakarta scheme found its culmination at the

1 “Twelfth Night” (Drama) collected works of Shakespeare edited by Peter Alexander –1953.
hands of Venkatamakhi (17th Century) who, in his “Chathurdandi Prakasika” explored all the possibilities of raga creation.

By the end of the 19th century, notational scheme were developed, for written representation of musical compositions. They have given way for a research-oriented understanding of this practical art form. While the theoretical works were trying to keep pace with the practical music, the practical music itself was evolving continuously and a number of luminaries have made tremendous impact on the refinement of this sacred art form, to keep it fresh and alive.

The second half of 18th century (from 1763-1775 AD), emerged the birth of the three great pioneer composers of Carnatic music, who were later celebrated as the Musical trinity namely - Syama Sastry (1762-1827) Thyagaraja (1767-1847) and Muthuswami Dikshithar (1776-1835). All of them combined their immense knowledge, deep spirituality and profound traditional musicianship with an amazing sense of creativity and innovative spirit. These qualities helped them to give valuable contributions to Carnatic Music.

It was during the rule of Tulajaji (II), Serfoji (II) and Shaji the last ruler of Tanjore, that Carnatic music reached the pinnacle of its glory. Serfoji in particular, was the most enlightened patron of music of the dynasty and is stated to have had more than 300 musicians in his court. It was not by accident that the Trinity – Syama Sastry, Thyagaraja and Muthuswami Dikshithar lived during his reign. Though they were contemporaries and had close contact with each other, they were cast in

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3 An article by Karthik.S published on 15th December 2007, Music Infoguide.blogspot.com
different moulds and their contributions to the art were highly individualistic having their own integrity and stamp. In the modern era these three Vaggeyakaras had great influence on the evolution and popularization of Carnatic music.

During Post Thyagaraja period, Most of the artists in South India identified themselves as a part of the sishya parampara of the Musical Trinity. Carnatic music was also had bright chapter in annals as the talented disciples of the Trinity spread out to Tamilnadu, Andhra, Kerala and Karnataka to popularize their precious compositions. Several of them became court musicians of Royal houses in Travancore, Mysore, Ramnad, Ettayapuram and many other places. The Post-Thyagaraja period has also been quite productive in its rich crop of vaggeyakaras, musicians, violinists, instrumentalists, dancers, composers and musicologists. The stream of quintessential music flowed from 1870 until about 1950 . Tradition and different styles were set by musicians like Patnam Subramonya Iyer, Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar, Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, Koteeswara Iyer, Papanasam Sivan, Thirukkodikkaval Krishna Iyer (Violin) Subbarama Dikshitar (Musiologist and Vainika) and Pudukkottai Dakshinamurthy Pillai (Mridangam and Kanjira).

Patnam Subramonya Iyer (1845-1902) has been described as an all-time great Carnatic musician and composer. He was called Chinna Thyagaraja for the remarkable excellence of his compositions. He composed about a hundred pieces including Tana varnas, Pada varnas, Kritis, Javalis and Thillanas.

Mysore Vasudevacharyar (1865-1961) was a pupil of Patnam Subramonya Iyer who uphelded his master’s pride and esteem by making
great contributions to Carnatic music. He composed nearly two hundred songs, quite a number of which were top notch.

Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar (1867-1919) belonged sishya parampara of Patnam Subramonya Iyer who added considerable lustre and glory to his master by becoming a famous composer and musician himself. His compositions numbering about hundred pieces, where of high esteem and quality.

Koteesvara Iyer (1870-1936) a well known composer in Tamil had composed about two hundred pieces to his credit. His seventy two melakartha kritis have ranked him as an Uthama Vaggeyakara.

Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhavathar (1877-1945) was another major composer with more than four hundred compositions to his credit. They are in Sanskrit, Tamil Telugu and Kannada.

Tiruvottiyur Thyagayyar (1845-1917) was the son of Vina Kuppayyar who was also a disciple of Thyagaraja. His compositions comprising of Tana varnas, Ragamalikas and Kritis, included the evergreen varnas ‘Inthamodi’ in Saranga, ‘Karunimpa’in Sahana and ‘Chalamela’ in Darbar fully replete with raga bhava.

Papanasam Sivan (1890 - 1973) has been rightly named the Architect of Tamil musical renaissance and Tamil Thyagaraja. He composed about two thousand songs in about seventy five ragas. His compositions were mostly in Tamil and a few in Sanskrit in many ragas like Vijayanagari, Sivaranjini, Salagabhairavi, Mand, Sohini, Bimplas, etc. The ragas Chandrahasta, Sivasakti and Amrutha behag are some of
the creations to his credit. He has also composed songs in Sanskrit and Telegu in seventy two melakartha ragas.

In addition there are many more composers like Neelakanta Sivan Lakshmanan Pillai who have enriched the rich treasury of Carnatic Music.

Vaggeyakaras or composers have traditionally played a very dynamic role in the development of Carnatic music. It is they, who, through their colourful compositions established the grammar and bhava of the many ragas as they are vogue in Carnatic music today. Among the above said Post Trinity composers, Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar occupies safe and significant niche as a Vaggeyakara and musician.

The worthy compositions of Ayyangar are noted for their sublimity in thought, simplicity in diction, and rich in literary splendour. They are equally good and highly musical as compositions of high level and rank.

SCOPE & OBJECTIVE OF THE TOPIC

The proposed research study titled as “A study on the Literary and Musical excellences in the compositions of Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar” is a novel attempt to deal with his musical repertoire and many of the composition like Varnas, Kritis, Thillanas and Javalis both popular and rare are to be preserved for future generations. The scope of the work is very vast and deep and hence an analytical/descriptive study to be made in this aspect. It is with this intention that the present study is being taken up to make an analytical, descriptive and research oriented study of the compositions also. It is hoped that the present study will serve to popularize the unknown and lesser popular kritis to the future generations.
METHODOLOGY

A systematic, analytic, research methodology is adopted for this study. Both primary and secondary sources are adhered to. The primary sources which provide information on topic are from

a. Reference books consisting of compositions, articles on life sketch.
b. Data from major websites and internet.
c. Journals of the Music Academy, Central Sangitha Nataka Academy.
d. Articles appeared in Sruti, the magazine devoted to arts and culture.

The secondary sources are the translation into English and text books from Tamil concerned with the biography and contribution of the composer. C.Ds and Cassette recordings of Ayyangar’s kritis rendered by many musicians of the past like Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Ayyangar, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, K.V. Narayanaswami, Ramnad Krishnan, Alathur Brothers, M. S. Subbalekshmi, M.L. Vasanthakumary, D.K. Pattammal and performing artists of today like Bombay Sisters, Sudha Raghunath, Malladi Brothers and many others have been collected. The notations of Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar’s compositions edited by Salem Chellam iyengar have been considered for Analysis. Compositions are learned from the available notations, and included in the study. An analytical and descriptive study is attempted in this work. The tentative chapterisation of the proposed research study is as follows:-
INTRODUCTION

A brief description of the status and prominence of Carnatic Music from the Post Trinity period is attempted.

CHAPTER II

The brief biography of Ayyangar and the lineage of his disciples are described. This chapter is divided into A and B Part. Part A gives a brief description of the life sketch of Ayyangar and Part B deals with his prominent disciples.

CHAPTER III

The contributions, made by Srinivasa Ayyangar in different fields of musical forms are highlighted in this chapter.

CHAPTER IV

Ten selected compositions of Srinivasa Ayyangar, are selected, examined and evaluated here analytically, so as to expose their Literary and artistic splendour and excellences.

CHAPTER V

The Musical excellences of selected ten compositions are adjudged critically, so as to bring forth brilliantly their musical, rhetorical and rhythmical features.
CHAPTER VI

A Comparative study of his kritis with Thyagaraja Swami, his precursor and Patnam Subramonya Iyer, Muthaih Bhagavat who were his contemporaries are attempted.

CHAPTER VII

Ragas and Talas dealt by Srinivasa Ayyangar for his compositions are codified and analysed.

CONCLUSION

The utility and informatic value of the study will be highlighted, based on the analytical studies made.

APPENDICES

A. List of Compositions of Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar

A list of compositions taken from Salem Chellam Iyengar’s Book “Compositions of Asthana Vidwan Sreeman Poochi Srinivasa Ayyangar” will be given along with the corresponding name of the raga and tala.

B. List of Notations of Selected Compositions of Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar

Detailed Notations of compositions from all the mela and janya groups will be included.
C. Bibliography

A concise bibliography consisting of the various books and music journals which have been referred for the study will be included.

D. Discography

Discography gives details of the kritis of Srinivasa Ayyangar sung by eminent musicians in cassettes and CDs.

The following chapter deals with the life sketch of Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar.