CHAPTER - II

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SRINIVASA AYYANGAR

The innumerable contributions made by eminent Vaggeyakaras and musicians showing the elegance and glories of their pieces are worth noticeable in History as they have enriched Indian culture and heritage. History is the ready reckoner of the past events written in the chronological order. Talented singers endowed with their Manodharma or powers of interpretations have been able to make the audience get a glimpse of the Vaggeyakarahrudaya. Musical Trinity possessed great sishya paramparas, and exponent musicians. Thyagaraja an ardent Nadopasaka and Sangita Acharya had more sishya paramparas to his credit than the other two. Among them Patnam Subramonya Iyer, Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar were brilliant performers-cum-composers occupying a supreme rank and paramount position till date.

Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar popularly known as Poochi Ayyangar was the beloved third son of Smt. Muthulekshmi Ammal and Anantha Narayana Ayyangar. He was born on 16th August 1860 at Pappankulam in Ramanathapuram District. There are two versions of opinions regarding his date of birth\(^4\) (ie, August 16th 1860 or September 10th 1867). His father was the tutor to the children of the Ramnad Royal family and was an acknowledged scholar in Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu. Srinivasa was the third of four sons and he had a sister also. All the three brothers except him were experts in Astrology. He was a childhood

Ayyangar's Residence situated at Ramanathapuram
playmate of Pandurrai Thevar, a scion of the Ramnad family, who later became of the Zamindar of Palavanatham. They studied upto matriculation together at the Ramanad matriculation school, and became best friends. During the journey by a coach, for time passing asked his friend to sing a Thevaram and the friend duly obliged it.

Patrons have played a very great role in our past in fostering Carnatic music. Composers and musicians had been invited, patronized & honored by both the Royals as well as the Aristocratic/Business magnets of the last few centuries. They were one of the essential components of the musical ecosystem of India. Some of these patrons themselves were musicians/composers themselves, such as King Shahji or Maharaja Swati Thirunal. Then there were those who were lovers of music and took measures to preserve the art and the artists themselves such as the Rajas/Zamindars and nobles who also came to be recorded as the Nayakas in the compositions such as the padas, chauka varnas etc. Well-known amongst them are the Raja of Karvetnagar, the Zamindars of Udayarpalayam and the Rulers of Ettayapuram. The Rajas, Nobles and Chieftains who have been singing upon including the known & the unknown. And one among them was Rajah Bhaskara Sethupati of Ramanathapuram (1868-1903). The contribution of the Sethupathis to art & culture and to Tamil even though great has now been almost forgotten.

The erstwhile Southern coastal Indian Kingdom of Ramanathapuram or Ramnad had been ruled by the Sethupathis – translated to mean the ‘Overlords of the Causeway’. Tradition has it that when Lord Rama, crossed over to Ceylon over the bridge built by his Vanara army, he built the temple for Lord Ramanatha as the thanksgiving upon his victory. He also appointed the first Sethupathi to protect the
The Matriculation School where Srinivasa Ayyangar had studied
pilgrims who would be using the causeway. Since then, they were traditionally been referred so and ruled over the “marava” region.

Bhaskara Sethupathi though western educated in western style had his moorings in Indian culture and arts. There is a kriti in the raga Surutti composed by this Raja on Goddess Padmasini Thayar at the temple at neighbouring Tirupullani kshetra. He was highly devoted as a true and sincere Sethupathi, to Lord Ramanatha of Ramesvaram and to Goddess Rajarajesvari, the tutelary deity of the Sethupathis.

MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS HAVING A NEXUS TO RAMNAD:

A number of musicians/composers have been patronized by the Ramnad Royal family. Kundrakkudi Krishna Iyer (1816 – 1889), Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer (1844 – 1893), Patnam Subramonya Iyer (1845 – 1902), Poochi Srinivasa Ayyangar (1860 – 1919) and Subbarama Dikshitar (1839 – 1906) are the notable ones. In fact, for Bhaskara Sethupathi’s accession to the Ramnad throne, the triumvirate of Krishna Iyer, Patnam Subramonya Iyer and Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer performed together.

We have quite a few compositions composed on some of the Ramnad Royals as below:

1. “Sāminiveha”, a Tana varna in Ata tala in the raga Nattakurinji with the ankita “kottasami bhupala”, composed by Patnam Subramanya Iyer in praise of Kottaisami Thevar the brother of Rani Parvathavardhini Nacciar who ruled Ramanathapuram.
2. "Sāmininne" in Atana with the ankita "Ugrapandiabhopala" on Pandidurai Thevar (1867 – 1911), the Zamindar of Palavanatham and the paternal cousin of Bhaskara Sethupathi, also composed by Patnam Subramonya Iyer. 


4. 'Kamalākshinīnēkōriyunnādi', a tana varna in Kamboji set to jhampa tala composed by Kundrakkudi Krishna Iyer on Bhaskara Sethupathi’s father Muthuramalinga Sethupathi. This apart he has composed a few pada varnas as well on both Muthuramalinga Sethupathi and Bhaskara Sethupathi.

5. "Srirājadhirāja" – Ata tala tana varna composed by Subbarama Dikshitar in the raga Balahamsa, in praise of Bhaskara Sethupathi himself

6. "Garavamu ganna duraiyani" – Ragamalika in 9 ragas set in Rupaka tala, composed by Subbarama Dikshitar again on Bhaskara Sethupathi

7. 'Edo parāmukham' a Tamil svarajati in the raga Khamas composed on Bhaskara Sethupathi and ascribed to the Tanjore quartet descendant Sangita Kalanidhi Ponnayya Pillai.

The Maharaja of Ramanathapuram Sri Bhaskara Sethupathi who was a connoisseur of music once, heard Srinivasa Ayyangar singing while he was very young, he was astonished at Srinivasa Ayyangar’s musical ability that he took him to his Palace. To nurture his musical interest, he put Srinivasa Ayyangar under the tutelage of Patnam Subramonya Iyer, called as "Chinna Thyagaraja" and Srinivasa Ayyangar did gurukula vasam. Unfortunately, we do not across much available details about the

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5 Guruguha.org – Royal patron – Bhaskara Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramanathapuram.
6 Ibid.,
Ramanathapuram Palace

The Darbar Hall, where Srinivasa Ayyangar had conducted several Music concerts
time when Srinivasa Ayyangar went and stayed with Patnam Subramonya Iyer and for how long. It must have been in the 1870s and he must have returned in the 1880s, for he is said to have heard many performance of Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer (Who passed away in 1893). However, Mysore Vasudevacharyar says in his book “Nakanda Kalavidaru” that Ayyangar was the senior most among Patnam Subramonya Iyer’s disciples while he himself was the junior most. He also states that after couple of years training under Patnam Subramonya Iyer, Mysore Vasudevacharyar went to Ramnad to meet Ayyangar. Vasudevacharyar must have visited Ayyangar in the 1890s. But he recollects having seen Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Ayyangar as a student of Ayyangar during the visit. This must be an error, for Ariyakkudi began learning from Ayyangar only in 1908.⁷

In the gurukulavasam he received other kind of training as well. Like all gurukulams of those times, the disciples had to attend to the needs of their guru. With the kind of sustained and arduous training in music imparted in the gurukulam, it was quite natural that several of Iyer’s students sparkled. Patnam Subramonya Iyer certainly seemed to have had a legion of disciples.

The young disciple had a reverential regard for his Acharya Patnam Subramonya Iyer. With his unbounded enthusiasm for music, he soon made excellent progress in the art. Poochi Ayyangar sang along with his guru during the latter’s concerts. But for the personal interest and love bestowed upon him by his guru, he couldn’t have attained that eminence in the domain of music.

After the period of his tutelage, Srinivasa Ayyangar spent some years in listening to the concerts of eminent singers of the time like Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer (1844 -1893). He realised the truth of the dictum that in musical studies, what one actuality learnt from his Guru was a guidance in proper manner and that the remainder was acquired by listening to the concerts of senior musicians. By systematic practice, he brought his voice to a wonderful degree of perfection. He established himself as a singer of front rank within a short time. His name and fame spread speedily to the other parts of the country as well. He received invitations to sing at various places. Wherever he went, he became the recipient of encomiums and presents.

The Royal family was known for its magnificence when it came to musicians, Saints and seers, Mahavaidyanatha Iyer, Patnam Subramonya Iyer, Swami Vivekananda. The Sringeri Sarada Pitam and many other were greatly benefitted by their patronage. It was therefore fortunate for Poochi Ayyangar that he was known to the family. Later when he turned professional, Poochi Ayyangar also became the Samsthana Vidwan at Ramnad and composed a few pieces in praise of his patrons also.

PERSONALITY CULT & PHYSICAL FEATURES

Srinivasa Ayyangar was fair complexioned, well built and of average height of a serene disposition, he was quite generous and helpful. According to Mysore Vasudevacharyar he had a tendency to hoard his personal possessions, no matter how tribal they must have been.

By nature he was a very careful person in matters concerning money and material goods. He took infinite care to ensure the safety of
the money, jewels and presents that he had achieved. He was particularly interested in encouraging young and upcoming musicians and would praise them lavishly to his patron, Bhaskara Sethupathy of Ramnad. The patrons would in turn promptly issue invitations for them to perform at the next Navarathri celebrations, a lavish affair in Ramnad. Poochi Ayyangar was invited and honoured by the Maharaja of Mysore at the behest of Veena Vidwan Seshanna and Subbanna. Ayyangar ensured that they were in turn honoured by the Raja of Ramnad.

If anyone in Ramnad was in need of money, they would approach Ayyangar. He had a never-failing master plan for helping others. He would at once go to the palace and inform the Raja, that he was in good mood to sing. The Raja would be delighted and once the concert was over he would ask Ayyangar what he wanted in return. Ayyangar would say that he had enough, but could the Raja favour so and so with the money? The needed person will be benefitted by the King.

Ayyangar was very particular of what he ate, and consumed in enormous quantities (25 idlies dipped fully in ghee and a pot of coffee for breakfast, according to Vasudevacharyar). He would personally select the vegetables from the market and would issue instruction an hour before they were to be prepared. Vegetable shopping hobby and it was on one such occasion that he slipped on a banana peel and sustained a fracture. It is said ‘Saragunapalimpa’ was composed as a prayer for a cure. Ayyangar was attached very much to the Kodandarama shrine on the outskirts of Ramnad and would visit the shrine before leaving for any outstation concert. His own son was named after this deity. Ayyangar was also very devoted to Thyagaraja and was Vice President of the Committee that conducts the annual celebration of Thyagaraja Aradhana at Thiruvayyar for sometime.
LINGUISTIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NAME POOCHI

There are various versions to the association of the word Poochi with the name of Srinivasa Ayyangar. Poochi literally means an insect, came to be associated with his name, because the ring of his voice compared favourably with the delightful humming of the beetle.

Another version is that the name Poochu became Poochi. It is said that Ramanad Srinivasa Ayyangar was very fond of coating his body with sandal paste after his meal. (This is one of the healthy customs in India. The application of the sandal paste on the stomach after a meal conduses to healthy digestion. Besides the paste gives a pleasant smell). In the case of Srinivasa Ayyagar, it appears he had a fondness for applying a thick coat of sandal paste on his body and hence the name Poochu Srinivasa Ayyangar, which later became Poochi Srinivasa Ayyangar.

A third version is that on account of his smartness brisk movements and active nature he was called Poochi early in his life by his father.

A GARLAND OF IMPORTANT ANECDOTES IN AYYANGAR’S LIFE

The following anecdotes serve to throw light on certain aspects of Poochi Ayyangar’s life career and character held by him.

The circumstances which occasioned this beautiful composition ‘Saragunapalimpa’ in Kedaragaula Raga, Adi tala by Ramnad Srinivasa Ayyangar are of human interest. During his 42nd year, he met with an accident in the right leg and was bedridden. It was during that time that he composed this song.
Navarathri festival in Ramnad is one of the major festivals. Crowds gather to witness the festival from the nearby villages. Two or three days after the festival in that year, when the entire crowd had not melted away, Ayyangar went to the market to purchase vegetables. Usually he goes accompanied either by his disciples or servants from the palace. That day as he was returning home from the market, he had to make through the crowds in the street. He accidentally set foot on a rind of plantain fruit, slipped and dashed his right leg against one of the empty deal wood boxes left on the road side by a Betel leaf vendor. He fell down in a cross-legged manner. The bone below the knee cap of his right leg got fractured. The bones of his right ankle also got displaced. People who came to know of this, immediately rushed to the scene to know the details of the accident. Pandidurai who was just then playing billiards in the palace, heard the news and rushed to the market place with a carriage to attend on the Vidwan. The senior Surgeon Dr. Sundaram Achari was immediately sent. He came and attended to the fracture and dressed the leg. He was brought home. During the course of the second week, the doctor assured him that he was on the road to recovery. But the Vidwan felt a sense of despair. On that day, Poochi Ayyangar asked for a paper and pencil and sketched the song “Saragunapalimpa”. He also completed the Thillana in Purnachandrika raga in praise of Naganatha Swami of Nayinarkoil, also contains the autobiographical reference to his fracture.

He was in bed for 45 days and afterwards he was allowed to get up. Subsequently for a month he just kept on moving over short distances by placing his hands on the shoulders of two friends. It was during this period of convalescence that he completed and polished the piece in Kedargoula raga and taught it to his disciples. The reference to Gajendra Moksha in the first avartha of the charana has a special significance.
Gajendra was unable to extricate his foot from the grip of the Crocodile's mouth. Finding that his own strength was of no avail, he fervently appealed to God and got the needed succour like wise Srinivasa Ayyangar who suffered from a fracture in his leg, finding that medical treatment was not of quick avail, appealed to God and got cured.

By way of thanks to Lord Sri Venkateswara, he made a leg of silver plate costing about Rs. 100/- and went to Tirupati and deposited it as an offering to the Diety. A similar silver leg was also made by him and given as an offering to the Diety, Naganatha Swami.

On the day of the accident, he whispered to the Surgeon that, he was suffering from a weakness in the lungs and suggested to him that he may carry out his treatment without administering chloroform. This weakness in the lungs resulted during a concert which Poochi Ayyangar gave in Mayavaram. The violin accompanist Thirukkodikaval Krishnayyar played a long and fascinating briga in a fleeting manner in all the three octaves and reminded the audiences of similar musical flights executed by Mahavaidyanatha Iyer. Poochi Ayyangar, in his turn attempted such a briga and as he was just completing it, due to over strain he heard from the lungs part a sound of a cracking bone. Since that time, he abandoned executing such long brigas. Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer himself appreciated the capacity of Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar in negotiating such long brigas and used to call him affectionately Seenu Sivane implying that Srinivasa Ayyangar was a duplicate of himself in this difficult branch of singing.

Srinivasa Ayyangar paid the medical bill himself. When Pandidurai came to know of this, he was angry with him and said "Sir, Is
not the Samasthanam capable of paying even your medical bill?" This reveals the great regard Pandi Durai had for Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar, the Samsthana vidwan.

Once Srinivasa Ayyangar and Thirukkodikaval Krishna Iyer had gone for a music concert. At the end of the performance, the vidwans were offered their fees. The next morning Ayyangar and Iyer got ready to leave. Ayyangar as was usual with him, had a final check up of his bedding. In fact, he started counting his clothes and articles one by one. One of the articles was found missing! He was very upset that he nearly collapsed! He ransacked the entire room but could not trace it. Holding his head in his hands, he sat there with full of despair. His face was so pale and pathetic that the poor man must have lost something very precious, he had lost and old Anantane Dara (Sacred thread). At that time, Thirukkodikaval Krishna Iyer who had gone out returned to the room and he quickly took out the sacred thread from his waist where he had tucked it away and placed it before Ayyangar. Ayyangar got back his life. From this incident we can understand that he was cautious about even small things.

Once Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar performed in Triplicane, Madras to the Violin accompaniment of Thirukkodikaval Krishnayyar. After the concert was over, Krishnayyar returned to the house of his host in Kachchaleesvara Agraharam in George Town. Srinivasa Ayyangar said to Krishnayyar that he preferred to spend the night in the house of his friend in Triplicane. But he knew that Krishnayyar would practice Violin early morning next day. He made up his mind to go to Kachchaleesvara Agraharam, unnoticed.
Accordingly after his night meal, with a thick coating of sandal paste over his body, he went to Kachachaleesvara Agraharam at about 11pm and slept in the pial of the house adjacent to the one where Krishnayyar was staying. The Violinist as usual got up at 3 am and began his practice. He played Varali raga that morning. His creative talents found full vent at that time. After Krishnayyar began his practice in the drawing room, Srinivasa Ayyangar came and sat on the pial of that house and was feasting his ears with the delightful music. At about 5 am Krishnayyar came out and was surprised to find Poochi Ayyangar "How do you happen to be here just at this time" quired Krishnayyar. Ayyangar replied "Sir, I knew that you would carry on your practice and wanted to profit by it. I came last night at about 11pm to this place (In the presence of musicians, Krishnayyar practiced only the familiar pieces and ragas and would not attempt rare ragas and creative flights in unexplored regions. It is for this reason that Poochi Ayyangar came without giving him prior intimation).

The anecdote about 'Viriboni' Varna is also interesting and inspiring to note. At a concert where he was accompanied by Dakshinamurthi Pillai on the Mridangam. Srinivasa Ayyangar started off with his own Varna Kanada. When he found the mridangam player not accompanying him, he asked him what the matter was to which the reply came 'Andavane' my hands, have been accustomed for so long to play well only for 'Viriboni' and they are hesitant to play for a new varna. "The vidwan caught the mood of the accompanist and with pleasure rendered "Viriboni".

Once when Ramanad Srinivasa Ayyangar visited Mysore, as usual he stayed at Subbanna’s house. Subbanna requested Poochi to sing in the
post dinner session. But the latter was not in a mood to sing and was very sad. When it was enquired about Poochi said that he had lost the diamond ring presented to him by the king of Ramanad. Immediately Subbanna brought his box containing precious rings and requested him that he can select any ring he wanted but had to come out from his grief and sing for them. Later everything went on as per the wishes of Subbanna.⁸

Some interesting points need attention here:

- Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, Patnam Subramonya Iyer and Kundrakkudi Krishna Iyer were a trio belonging to the same (performing) generation roughly who indulged in 'vyavahara' laden music, in other words indulging in complex svara and rhythmic pyrotechnics as a part of their pallavi renditions. All the three of them were recipients of honours from the Ramanathapuram Court. We do have accounts that they constantly competed actively on & off the concert stage. Interestingly we have a unique Varna from each of them in raga Kamboji. Krishna Iyer's aforesaid Varna is in Jhampa tala, a rare one. Similarly Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer's Kamboji creation "Pankajakshinipai" is littered profusely with beautiful svaraksharas. One can indeed wonder if they produced them in (friendly?) rivalry!

All the above three performed together, setting aside their professional rivalry at the request of Bhaskara Sethupathi on the occasion of his accession as King. The three of them sang together the famous Thodi pallavi ‘Ganalolakarunalavala’, which incidentally was derived from the pallavi line of the kriti in the same raga, composed by Chinnaswami Dikshithar, brother of Muthusvami Dikshithar.

Sulamangalam Bhagavathar in his memories recalls that the rendition of the pallavi by the three Titans in unison was a veritable treat, fit for celestials! The reference of both Patnam Subramonya Iyer & Poochi Srinivasa Ayyangar to the great Pandidurai Thevar as “Ugrapandya” is hardly surprising. King Ugrapandya was the last of the Madurai/Pandyan sovereigns who had presided over the last (Third) Tamil Sangam (College of Poets). Pandidurai Thevar was the supreme force behind the 4th Tamil Sangam which helped to set up with the participation of U.V Swaminatha Iyer, R Raghava Ayyangar, Shanmugham Pillai & others. Also Pandidurai Thevar’s father was a close associate of Tamil Mahavidwan Meenakshisundaram Pillai, the preceptor of U. V Swaminatha Iyer.

- It was Pandidurai Thevar/Ponnusvami Thevar who had apparently recommended and also sponsored Poochi Srinivasa Ayyangar to learn under Patnam Subramonya Iyer. Apart from Patnam Subramonya Iyer and Poochi Ayyangar, Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer and his brother Ramaswami Sivan were closely associated with the Ramanathapuram Royals.9

- We have a Varna in Mohana by Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar “Manamohana” in Ata tala with the raja mudra of “Muthuramalinga” which Dr. B.M. Sundaram, says as alluding to Muthuramalinga Sethupati, Bhaskara’s father. Muthuramalinga Sethupathi passed away in 1872 while Muthiah Bhagavathar was born only in 1877. It is unsure how this Varna can be ascribed as having been composed so.10

- The Royal House of Ramnad also patronized a descendant of the Tanjore Quartet, Vadivelu Pillai – a grandson of the Quartet

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9 Guruguha.org – Royal patron – Bhaskara Setupathy the Raja of Ramanathapuram.
10 Ibid.
Sivanandam by making him an Asthana vidwan. We have a beautiful Svarajati in the raga Khamas 'edo paramukam' composed probably by this Vadivelu Pillai or by his brother's (Kannusvami Pillai) son Sangita Kalanidhi Ponnayya Pillai (1889 – 1945). This composition in which Bhaskara Sethupathi is portrayed as a nayaka is again a very rare one. The svarajathi made its way out of oblivion from the private manuscripts of the famous dance guru K.P Kittappa Pillai and was subsequently published by the Music Academy.

PART - B
SISHYA PARAMPARAS OF THYAGARAJA

Musical Lineage

Thyagarajaswami (1767 – 1847)

- Vinakuppayyar
  - Thiruvottiyur Thyagayya
- Manambuchevedi Venkaita Subbaier
  - Patnam Subrahmonya Iyer
    - Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar
      - Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Ayyangar
Meaning: Guru is Verity, and is the representative of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. He creates, sustains knowledge and destroys the needs or ignorance.

Parampara denotes a succession of teachers and disciples in traditional Indian culture and Dharmic. In the parampara system, knowledge (in any field) is passed down (undiluted) through successive generations. The Sanskrit word literally means an uninterrupted series or succession. In the traditional residential form of education, the shishya remains with his or her guru as a family member and gets the education as a true learner. The fields of knowledge taught may include, for example, spiritual, artistic (music or dance) or educational.

In paramapara, not only is the immediate guru revered, the three preceding gurus are also worshipped or adored. These are known variously as the kala-guru or as the “four gurus” and are designated as follows:

- Guru – the immediate guru
- Parama-guru – the Guru’s guru
- Parapara-guru-the Parama-guru’s guru
- Parameshti-guru-the Parapara-guru’s guru

As far as Carnatic music is considered, Thyagaraja was like a great Vatavriksha or Banyan Tree. He represented the main stem, a strong and
powerful support which looms large, casting a shadow under which thousands of musicians, patrons and art lovers have gathered and taken shelter. From the rock steady tree, came many more terrestrial roots, which were his sishya paramparas. Each one was unique, having a character of its own, leaving its mark on the fertile soil of Carnatic music, and gathering greater and greater numbers of followers. In course of time, the main stem, became a legend, surrounded as it was by the thick foliage of its own offshoots. There were three main sishya paramparas, those of the Walajahpet, Thillaisthanam and Umayalpuram Schools. In addition there were numerous others, some famous, some not so, who had all learnt music from Thyagaraja at some point of time or the other. In their opinion, his disciples were great men of talent, who led lives dedicated to music. They in turn passed on the tradition several disciples, all of whom became torch bearers of a great tradition.

Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbayyar, the prathama sishya of Thyagaraja, he was also a cousin of the composer. He was a Violinist as well as a Sanskrit and Telugu scholar. Among Thyagaraja’s disciples, he was probably the longest with him in time and after the composer’s death he set up his own school at Thiruvayyaru. Among the many star disciples he had, Mahavaidyanatha Sivan, Patnam Subramonya Iyer and the blind flutist Sarabha Sastrigal were famous artists.

Patnam Subramonia Iyer: Known as Chinna Tyagaraja, for his awesome composing capabilities, born in 1845 into a music rich family, he initially trained under Melattur Ganapathy Sastrigal. Commencing his music career in 1875, Subramonya Iyer, remained a star performer throughout his life, with the royal courts of Mysore, Travancore, Sivaganga and Ramnad, vying for honouring him. He trained a long line
of disciples, the first of whom was Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar. Others included Mysore Vasudevacharyar and Tiger Varadacharyar.

More disciples include Raja Mudramalinga Sethupathi of Ramnad, Jalatarangam Subbayyar and Mannargudi Krishnamurthy Bhagavatar as disciples. From Sulamangalam Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar’s account, we also come to know of other disciples – Salem Doraiswami (Chellam) Ayyangar, Karaikkudi Rajamani Ayyangar and Kuttralam Srinivasa Iyengar.

DEDICATED AND DISCIPLINED DISCIPLES

Mysore Vasudevacharyar[1865-1961]

It is said that Mysore Vasudevacharyar also learnt music from Poochi Srinivasa Ayyangar. He composed about 200 pieces in Telugu and Sanskrit and the music for four of Rukmini Devi’s series of six dance dramas on the theme of Ramayana. They were; Sita Svayamvaram, Rama Vanagamam, Paduka Pattabhishekam, and Sabari Moksham. He is reckoned one among the most influential Carnatic musicians and composers of the twentieth century. The beauty of the compositions earned him the title of Abhinava Thyagaraja. Mysore Jayachamaraja Wodayar, a composer in his own right, was among his prominent disciples. As Principal of Kalakshetra he organized the Sangitha Siromani Course. He was conferred the birudu ‘Sangithakalanidhi’ by the Music Academy in 1935. He lived up to the ripe age of 96.
Koteesvara Iyer (1870 – 1936)

Hailing from Manamadurai, Trichi, Koteesvara Iyer was the son of Naganatha Ayyar of Nandanur and grandson of Kavi Kunjara Bharati. Apart from Patnam Subramonya Iyer, he was also trained under Poochi Srinivasa Ayyangar. He composed around 200 Kiritis mainly in the Tamil language and used the mudra Kavi Kunjara Dasan as a tribute to his grandfather. He has also composed Varnas. In addition he has to his credit composed kritis in all the 72 Melakarta ragas including Vivadi ragas. His major work was Kandha GanaMrutham. He contributed to music while being active in Government service. Along with Papanasam Sivan, he is considered one of the greatest contributors to Tamil compositions in recent times.

Tiger Varadacharyar [1876-1950]

He was said to be a disciple of Poochi Srinivasa Ayyangar. He was like a gigantic tree that flowered late in life. It was in the thirties of this century that his talent earned appreciation and his fame as a musician of high caliber was well established. He was at his best in singing ragas. His fancy and imagination were so unbounded that he could render a raga each time with surprising freshness. His official career began in the Music Academy as the first principal of the Teachers’ College of Music. About a year and a half later he was appointed as the
Head of the Music department in the university of Madras. After three years he became the principal of the Music college of the Annamalai university. He then came over to the Kalakshetra where he remained until his death. Many of his students were able to shine as brilliant musicians.

Salem Doraiswamy Ayyangar [1890-1952]

He was a favourite disciple of Poochi Srinivasa Ayyangar of Ramnad. Doraiswamy initially had his training under Srinivasa Ayyangar. In 1921, on Vijayadasamiday, he made his debut before the Ramnad Raja, Bhaskara Sethupathi. Captivated by his rendition, Krishnaraja Wodayar of Mysore offered him the post of Mysore Asthana Vidwan. But Ayyangar did not accept this offer. In 1926 the Coimbathore Sri Purandara dasa Mahotsava sabha conferred on him the title; Ganasikhamoni. Salem Chellam Ayyangar, his son and disciple compiled the compositions of Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar in book form.

Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Ayyangar (1890 – 1967)

Ayyangar had trained a number of disciples of whom Ariyakkudi Ramanuja Ayyangar was most famous. Ariyakkudi established his own individuality in Carnatic Music.

He was born on May 19, 1890 in the village of Ariyakkudi, in the Ramanathapuram district, into a family of astrologers. His father, Thiruvenkatacharya, cast his son’s horoscope and discovered that he was destined to make a name for himself in the musical world. After being initiated into music by Pudukkottai Malayappa Iyer, Ariyakkudi came
under the tutelage of Namakkal Narasimha Ayyangar, a disciple of Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbayyar. When Narasimha Ayyangar retired from public performances, Ariyakkudi was sent to Ramanathapuram Srinivasa Ayyangar, court musician of Ramanathapuram, who was one of the earliest disciples of the celebrated composer Patnam Subramonya Iyer of the Thyagaraja sishya – parampara, Poochi Ayyangar was himself a musician – composer as well as a theoretician. He created a musical path for him to become a successful platform singer and a shining star musician.

Ariyakkudi’s greatest asset was his voice which retained its rich vibrancy till the very end. The superb voice culture that he went through in his youth made it a powerful medium to execute his creative ideas. It was never erratic or temperamental and could sustain a uniformly good performance on all occasions. He has been universally acclaimed as a master of gamaka. The madhyamakala or middle tempo that has come to characterise Carnatic music today was Ariyakkudi’s chosen tempo. His alapanas were brief and succinct, with no unnecessary frills. In Niraval and Kalpanasvara, he emphasised the importance of adhering to the time honoured free-following sarvalaghu pattern rather than mathematical permutation.

The titles and honours conferred on him are innumerable. He was the earliest among the musicians to receive President’s Award from Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then President of India. Madras Music Academy conferred on him the title ‘Sangitha Kalanidhi’ in 1938, ‘Sangitha Kala Sikhamony’ by the Indian Fine Arts Society, ‘Gayakasikhamony’ by Mysore Durbar, ‘Isai Perarignar’ by Tamil Isai Sangam in 1950, later Fellow of Sangitha Academi, New Delhi. He became a padmabhooshan too. He believed all his attainments were due to Guru Kadaksham.
Ariyakkudi was a votary of sampradaya and did not deviate an inch from what his guru had taught him. Hailed as the architect of the new kutchery paddhati [Concert format], he reigned supreme as the uncrowned monarch of Carnatic music for over a century.

**Jalatarangam Subbeyyar**

The first disciple of Srinivasa Ayyangar was Kalaiyar Koil Subbeyyar, a jalatarangam vidwan, such was his respect for Ayyangar, that once they met at a railway station and Subbeyyer prostrated at Ayyangar’s feet on the platform. Then they boarded the train, wherein Subbeyyar remained standing till Ayyangar got off at Tanjore. Jalatarangam vidwan Srinivasa Ayyangar was the grandson of the brother of the composer Srinivasa Ayyangar. He said that originally Jalatarangam was played on bronze cups and it was Vina Seshanna of Mysore who used porcelain cups and played on them after his vina recital during his visit to Ramanad during Bhaskara Sethupathi’s time. It was at that time Ayyangar asked Jalatarangam Subbeyyar to practice it.

Subbeyyar was an eminent performer on this instrument. It may be pointed out that it is one of our ancient instruments and is referred to as the Udakavadyam. Under the name of water organ it went from India to Greece during the time of Alexander the Great. Metallic cups were used in ancient times. Subbeyyar achieved the magnificent task of performing Kalpana Svara simultaneously in two different talas. This became possible since it is a polyphonous instrument.

A brief description of the marvelous (brilliant) contributions of Ayyangar to the world of music are given in the next chapter.