Carnatic Music in Films, TV & Radio
"My plan was to synchronize the camera and the phonograph so as to record sounds when the pictures were made, and reproduce the two in harmony. We had the first of the so-called "talking pictures" in our laboratory thirty years ago” - Thomas Edison 1925

After the silent movie era, came the talking pictures. Initially it was just some orchestra performing live along with the silent movie, to provide an interesting background to the movie. With the introduction of sound recording, in the early 1930's the 'talkies' had reached India and created a demand for songs on record which was to change the function of the sound recording industry in India, to the extent that the previously dominant classical and light music became virtually redundant within a couple of years amounting to just a few percentage of the company's output. The songs from the films were what the buying public wanted on discs, and although the Dum Dum factory of the Gramaphone Company of India, which was the only company that was producing records, was working to capacity, the era was one of the most productive.

India has the unique distinction of producing the largest number of films anywhere in the world and in many languages. India produces more than 1000 feature Films and 900 short films every year. At a rough estimate, a total of about 15 million people see films in India everyday, either in its over 13,000 cinema houses, or on Video and Cable\textsuperscript{107}. It is estimated that an audience as large as India's entire population flocks to its cinema houses every two months. Films have played a major role in developing a post-Independence Indian identity.

"If people can recognize the raga of a cine song, they can also appreciate the classical music in the same raga. If they are able to listen to 10 cine songs in Kalyani, they can easily identify many classical songs that are set in Kalyani..."

Sundararaman in Ragachintamani

\textsuperscript{107} www.culturopedia.com/cinema/cinemaintro.html
For most Indians, cinema is integral to their lives; it is not a distant, 2-3 hour distraction, but a vicarious lifestyle for them. The large screen provides an alternative, an escape from the realities of day-to-day life. The cinema has largely been an urban phenomenon in India, except in some states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, where they are equally popular in rural areas right from the beginning.

Indian cinema started as a filming of drama. In those days, drama had a profusion of music. Most of the actors sang their parts. This characteristic of drama was inherited by cinema of the early days. Initially, during the filming of a song, even the supporting musical instruments used to be on the sets and near the singer. It is only later that the technique of play-back, using the voice of a different person or the same actor for singing that was recorded in a sound studio was introduced.

Another aspect of film music is that of composing the music. Normally, the words of songs are set by one person and another person sets the tune for the songs and also the background music. This is totally different from carnatic songs where the kirthanams were sung extempore - both the words & music coming out simultaneously as manodharma during a bhakthi pravaagam from the composer.

The songs are also sung by persons other than the actors. These persons called play-back singers, record these songs first and later, based on the recorded songs that are played back on a loudspeaker during the shooting, the scenes for the song are pasteurized. After the film has been shot, it is edited and then screened. The music director then composes and records background music. This is known as re-recording.

108 Indian Culture & Music, B.A.Music, II Year University of Madras, Institute of Correspondence Education
4.1 **History of Carnatic Music in Films**

The history of cinema began in Tamil Nadu when M. Edwards screened the first ever movie show in South India at Victoria Memorial Hall, Madras in 1897. In 1900, Electric Theatre - the first ever cinema house in South India was built by Major Warwick on Mount Road, Madras\(^\text{109}\). In 1905, Swamikannu Vincent formed Edison's Cinematography, the first touring cinema in South India. He traveled around showing short films like Life Of Jesus Christ. In 1911, The Coronation of King George V was shot by Marudappa Moopanar which was later screened in Madras. In 1914 R.Venkiah built Gaiety, the first Indian owned cinema-house in South India. In 1916, S.M.Dharmalingam Mudaliyar and Nataraja Mudaliyar started the first film producing concern in South India at Madras. Nataraja Mudaliyar made Keechavathanam (1917) the first feature film to be made in South India. Mudaliyar went on to make many successful films like Draupadhi Vastrapaharanam (1918), Lava Kusa (1919), Rukmini Satyabhama (1922) and Mahi Ravana (1923). R.Prakash (1901-1956) was the first South Indian to receive training abroad at Barker's Motion Picture Studio, London. Prakash's famed films include Bhisma Pratigna (1922), Bhakta Nandan (1923), Leile: Star of Mingrelia (1931), Lanka Dahanam (1935) and Anaadhai Penn (1938).

Kalidas, the first Tamil talkie was screened in 1931. It was directed by H.M.Reddy, with T.P.Rajalakshmi playing the lead role. In 1934, A.Narayanan started Srinivasa Cinetone, which was the first sound studio in South India. A. Narayanan's Srinivasa Kalyanam (1934), became the first Tamil talkie to be produced in a Madras studio. Narayanan's other films include Rajambal (1935), Meerabai (1936) and Tenali Raman (1938). Kausalya (1935), made by South India Film Corporation, was the first Tamil movie on a contemporary theme. T.P.Rajalakshmi became the first female producer and director of Tamil films.

\(^{109}\) www.culturopedia.com › Cinema in India
with the release of Miss Kamala in 1936. Raja Sando (1894-1944) an acclaimed silent film star, filmmaker and producer, directed several Tamil and Telugu films in Bombay and Madras. His films include Anaadhai Penn (1929), Parijatha Pushpaharanam (1932), Menaka (1935), Chandrkantha (1936), Minor Rajamani (1937), Thiruneelakantar (1939), Choodamani (1941) and Sivakavi (1943).

K. Subrahmaniam (1904-1971) was the pioneer of South Indian Cinema who used cinema as a tool of social protest and change. He attacked the evils in society during 1930-1940's in his films. Some of his great films include Balayogini (1936), Bhakta Chetha, Sevadasan (1938), Thyaga Bhoomi (1939) and Kacha Devayani (1939). The last two films advocated women's rights and self-dependence. Sevadasan also introduced to the world through the silver screen, the great singer M.S. Subbalakshmi, who came to be immortalised for her role in and as the poet-saint Meera both in Hindi and Tamil. Chinthamani (1937) became the first Tamil film to run for more than a year in a single cinema house. D.K. Pattamal sang the first play back song for the long documentary Mahatma Gandhi (1940) by A.K. Chettiar. The film Thukkaram (1938) with Musiri Subramani Iyer in the lead set the popular trend in Tamil cinema.

The multi-story movie pattern registered a new landmark in 1939 with the release of Sirikkadhe. The film had five different stories and themes. The same year also saw the release of an extraordinary movie called Thyagabhoomi, based on Kalki’s masterpiece novel. Tamil cinema got its first foreign filmmaker when Ellis R. Duncan released his film Sakunthala with two great Carnatic music maestros G.N. Balasubramaniam and M.S. Subbalakshmi as the lead pair. The famous comedies of the period were Sabapathy and Alibabavum 40 Thirudargalum. A.V. Meiyappan (1907-1979) created history in South Indian cinema when he introduced playback singing in his film Nandakumar (1938). In
1943, he produced the first 'dubbed' film Harishchandra (Tamil), which was dubbed from Kannada. Meiyappan also launched the AVM-baner of movies. He produced several hit films like Bhookailas (1939), Sabapathi (1941), Sri Valli (1945), Nam Iruvar(1947), Vazhkai (1949), Andha Naal(1954) and several others. Vazkhai introduced Vyjayanthimala to movies. Andha Naal was the first South Indian film without any songs and dances.

The beginning of 1940s also saw the emergence of Gemini studios which gave great hits like Madhana Kamarajan, Nandhanaar and Chandralekha. C.N.Annadurai (who later went on to become the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu) wrote the script for Velaikkari (1949), which set a new trend in Tamil films. M.Karunanidhi followed the footsteps of C.N.Annadurai, and started as a script-writer, but later joined politics and is currently the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. Alibabhavum Narpathu Thirudargalum (1955), produced by Modern Theatres, was the first full-length colour film in Tamil. The first cinemascope film in Tamil Rajarajacholan was made in 1973. The first 3D film in Tamil Annai Bhoomi was made in 1985. In 1986, the first 70mm Tamil film Maveeran was released. The Tamil film producer Giridharilal Nagpal created a record of sorts in 1998 when he completed his film Swayamvaram within 24 hours.

The other early Tamil film-makers of high-repute were S.S.Vasan, M.K.Thyagarja Bhavathar, T.R.Sundaram, S.M.Sriramulu Naidu and Jupiter Somu. M.K.Thyagarja Bhavathar (MKT), who was also a popular singer-actor of the early forties, gave big box-office hits like Mathru Bhoomi, Ambikapathi, Ashok Kumar, Sivakavi and Haridas. M.K.Thyagarja Bhavathar (MKT) is considered as the first super star of the Tamil cinema. P.U.Chinnappa (Dhayalan (1941), Kannagi, Mamonmani, Utthamaputhiran) and T.R.Mahalingam were the leading names among the Tamil actors of yester years. M.G.Ramachandran, another former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, began his career as a film actor.
Classical music pieces had to be modified when adapted in films. Only the essential features of the 'ragas' were used. So the songs were reduced in time, without the embellishments. This had been done earlier when classical songs were recorded in 78 rpm, 10" discs that lasted only for three or four minutes. Here was a process of popularising classical music, making it acceptable to a wider audience. The compulsions of sound technology also acted as a shaping force of the emerging film music. The musicians responded to the challenges and utilised the new opportunities offered. The stage-singers, used to singing at the top of their voices in the absence of an amplifier, had to adjust their voice to suit the microphone and a characteristic style of singing in film, a mellifluous and subdued crooning in contrast to the full-throated expression on the stage, was born.

As long as recording was done through a single microphone, there could be only one or two instrumentalists to accompany the singer. Filming and recording had to be done simultaneously and a trolley with the instrumentalists would follow the camera, to be within the ear-shot of the microphone and the actor-singer. Often it was difficult for the actor to move about and sing, and so in song sequences the camera had to be static. With better recording techniques it was possible to use more than one microphone and therefore more instrumentalists. Film music grew more complex.

When the facility for pre-recording music for films became available, it was possible to separate recording and picturisation\textsuperscript{110}. This had an interesting repercussion on cinema. As long as sound was recorded even as the film was being shot, only those who could sing were hired for acting. But once songs could be recorded independently and then synchronised with the lip-movements of the actors, there was no need for actors to be singers. Artistes with good

\textsuperscript{110}www.jstor.org/stable/4397432
looks and acting ability came to be preferred and a separate group of artistes known as play-back singers who lent their voice to non-musical heroes and heroines, appeared.

Tamil film music is probably unique in the sense that there is a remarkable continuity in the style of composition over time. It initially absorbed elements of carnatic music and folk music of that time (the therukkoothu and kuraththi paattu prevalent in dramas). In earlier years, all of the songs were written by Papanasam Sivan - mainly devotional themes, but substantial numbers of secular themes were also dealt with. This was the only time in Tamil film music that purely carnatic songs in Tamil where set to music. In later years, Ilayaraja started introducing Thyagaraja krithis into his films – Brova Bhaaramaa, Nee Dhayaradha, Manasuloni, etc.

Those days, most of the south Indian films were highly musical – had many songs. So the actors were chosen rather for their musical talent than looks or acting skills. Since till the introduction of film music, the only music that was in vogue was carnatic and light music, it was to the carnatic musicians that the film world turned to when it came for singing stars, music composers & music directors. This resulted in the music of the early south Indian films to be largely carnatic based. Music directors like G.Ramanathan, Viswanathan – Ramamurthy, K.V.Mahadevan, actors like P.U.Chinnappa, M.K.Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, G.N.Balasubramanian, Balamurali Krishna, M.S.Subbulakshmi etc., dotted the scene.

If one looks at the chronology of singers, Kittappa was followed by T.R.Mahalingam, who was followed by T.M.Soundarajan, Sirkali Govindarajan, all persons who could sing in very high pitches. G.Ramanathan brought a fresh air to cine music. P.U.Chinnappa was followed by

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Chidambaram Jayaraman, Tiruchi Loganathan. Gantasala was followed by P.B.Srinivas, S.P.B, Mano and so on. The songs belonging to this era having a kind of organic fluidity that is so natural to good music. The tunes flow to the natural sequence of music and don't have the strain of an artificial imagination at all. The accidental notes fall so perfectly in their places and add charm.

In earlier years, all of the songs were written by Papanasam Sivan - mainly devotional themes, but substantial numbers of secular themes were also dealt with. This was the only time in Tamil film music that purely carnatic songs in Tamil were set to music. In later years, Ilayaraja started introducing Thyagaraja krithis into his films – Brova Bhaaramaa, Nee Dhayaradha, Manasuloni, etc.

The music directors did mix a folk tune or two and lightened the ‘heavy’ portion of the carnatic tune so that the common man, who was the target audience for these films was also able to enjoy it. Since these songs were not too complicated with alapanais, kalpanaswarams etc and the song had simple lyrics that was written around the story and in a language that any one could understand, people started enjoying this music and started singing along. This promoted carnatic music in two ways.

1. The carnatic music vocalists who acted out in these films became famous among non followers of carnatic concerts also. They stared getting a lot of fans who in turn started listening to their favorite film personalities sing non-film songs. They started listening to their concerts in AIR, temples, weddings etc., the popularity of both carnatic music & musicians increased.

2. The ‘folkness’ or the ‘lightness’ introduced into carnatic music by the music directors meant that people not trained in the intricacies of carnatic music were also able to enjoy the music without having to
‘understand’ the music. The ‘small, elite’ audience that these concerts enjoyed so far slowly became bigger to include many film fans who, though untrained in music were able to enjoy lilting melodies. This resulted in lighter carnatic songs (thukkadas) becoming popular. When these fans started attending regular carnatic concerts because their favorite hero / heroine was performing, the requests for the songs from those films became common and slowly the format of the concert changed – the last quarter were light songs – film based or Hindustani based bhajans etc. songs like ‘kaatrinile varum geetham’ by MSS, ‘orunaal podumaa’ by Balamurali in Thirivilayaadal, etc became household melodies.

When the records for these films were produced, they sold like hot cakes along with the previously released carnatic records of these singers, now famous film personalities. Slowly carnatic music left the exalted places it hitherto occupied like palaces of Kings, residences of Zamindars and entered the houses of common people. These records started playing in ‘tea shops’ all over south India that were the ‘hanging out’ places of the labour class of the society.

In between, during the 70s, the trend started changing slowly in south Indian films. Folk songs, rural themes and loud orchestral music took center stage and carnatic based music took a back seat, except for some films like Shankarabharanam, Sagara Sangamam, Chalangai Oli etc. where the story revolved around musicians or dancers. Even in those times, these movies became super hits. Samajavaragamana became a ‘film song’ than a Thyagarajar kruthi.

During these times, the interest in carnatic music started waning among youth, as recording companies started churning out many folk based records with loud music and films had raunchy music in them. The ‘rock n roll’ music also was
popular. Pop music, rock music, jazz etc started attracting a lot of following among youth. This slowly proceeded to a situation wherein it was fashionable to ‘dislike’ carnatic music.

Perhaps the most significant development of the 1970's was the introduction of the cassette, which had found most companies in India fettered by Government regulation in regard to the importation of machinery and tariff restrictions\textsuperscript{112}. While the matter were being sorted out 'pirate' cassette concerns in Singapore and Thailand were saturating the Indian and Asian market for sound recordings with 'illegal' copies of much of The Gramophone Company of India, Ltd repertoire. Although the importation of 'pirate' cassettes was basically brought to a halt as far as India was concerned, the public demand for product of both old and new recordings was such that several cassette manufacturing concerns came into the market in India, again often producing 'illegal' copies of The Gramophone Company of India, Ltd, repertoire, or versions of the same film songs and 'hits' that The Gramophone Company of India, Ltd., and Music India, Ltd., had paid high royalty rates for access to.

Amongst the dozens of new cassette manufacturing companies, most of whom were engaged in quite legitimate marketing of there own products, there were a number of operators who had quite blatantly sought to damage The Gramophone Company of India, Ltd dominance of the market by marketing pirate copies of their product, and very nearly succeeded in forcing closure of the once almighty company.

But as fashions change, once more melody started making inroads into south Indian movies. Fusion music started a revival of interest among youth. Alaipaayuth with background music using western instruments was a great hit. Many carnatic musicians brought out records of fusion music like Balamurali

\textsuperscript{112} [www.hamaraforums.com › ... › Music › Sangeet Ke Sitarey]
Krishna, Kadri Gopalnath etc. Again, with senior carnatic musicians like Sudha Raghunathan, Bombay Jayashree, Nithyashree etc entering playback singing and many institutions organizing music competitions including carnatic rags in films as a category, the modern youth have again found it fashionable to learn, appreciate, perform and enjoy carnatic music.

4.2 **Early Days of Film Music**

When sound came to Tamil cinema in 1931, it came basically in the form of songs. During the first decade of its history, the Tamil film was a mere vehicle for songs. This aspect of Indian cinema, the song sequences, lends it a distinct character and helped popularise Carnatic music. People initially went to cinema to listen, as if at a concert, not so much to watch. When moving picture began, artistes from company dramas moved into the world of cinema. They were singers familiar with Carnatic music. Here the difference between Carnatic musicians and stage singers must be registered. The former were trained classical musicians and sang in concerts. The later only acted and sang on the stage, though some like K.B. Sundarambal and Devudu Aiyer, after gaining fame through dramas, gave solo concerts.

Carnatic music and the Tamil film industry have been closely associated with each other for a long time. Any producer of the films in those days would be immensely pleased when the film producers started to take up stories from the Ramayana, Mahabharatham and all mythecalogical films. To add more interest to the audience they started introducing music in the film sung by hero, or/and heroine, clowns and etc. there is a book “108 Cine Ragams: Carnatic Music in Tamil Films (CD-Rom Inside) / S. Parthasarathy”, which has a great account of carnatic music in films. The chapters:

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113 [www.thehindu.com › Arts › Magazine](http://www.thehindu.com)

114 [http://www.carnaticdarbar.com/views_09.htm](http://www.carnaticdarbar.com/views_09.htm) by Sudha Jagannathan
• Kalidas introduces you to the various aspects of Carnatic music in Tamil films.
• Ambikapathi takes you on a voyage into the world of 108 Ragams selected by the author out of which 72 are discussed in detail.
• Nandanar takes you to meet 27 music directors who have used Carnatic ragams in films.
• Meera deals with 18 singing stars.
• Avvaiyar introduces you to 36 playback singers in Tamil films.
• Tillana Mohanambal is about 18 lyricists in Tamil films.
• Salangai Oli is a medley of Cryptic crossword clues, Cryptograms, jumbles and anecdotes about Carnatic music in Tamil films.
• Sindhubhairavi is an introduction to the important aspects of Carnatic music.

Movie business came to mean big money and this did not fail to catch the attention of classical musicians who had hitherto been ignoring cinema as a plebian entertainment. There were other reasons also for the attraction. Cinema had become somewhat respectable because of the money it was making. It had grown and was not capable of providing the facilities demanded by the classical musicians who had independent status as vocalists. When any art form is in an experimental stage, the established artistes are hesitant to get into it. In the early days of gramophone also, classical musicians were reluctant to record. Musicians like Papanasam Sivan, who wrote and composed more than 500 film songs, entered films and seduced the other classical musicians also into cinema. Musical luminaries of the late 1930s and late 1940s like G N Balasubramanian, Dandabani Desigar, Musiri Subramanya Iyer and V V Sadagopan, all had their stint in films. Some of their films became memorable only because of the songs in them, like Baktha Meera (Tamil, 1938) in which M S Subbulakshmi was the heroine.
Sivan, who is a composer of many songs in Tamil on all the deities in many Carnatic ragams (his inspirations for composing of music have come from many of Thyagaraja’s Kruthis) made use of his knowledge in composing music for the films. Having worked in the tinsel world for many years, Sri G.S.Mani had full praise for the songs composed by Sivan in films and demonstrated in his lec-dems how the compositions of Sivan in many Carnatic ragams in films were immortalized by the vintage actors M.K.Tthyagaraja Bhagavathar, P.U.Chinnappa, and other actors and heroines of yester year. Sri Madurai Mani, D.K.Pattammal, and D.K.Jayaraman were great admirers of Sivan and they have popularized the Sivan’s Carnatic krithis. They had great understanding of the krithis composed by Sivan and conveyed the Bhakthi content of the songs in their concerts and immortalized the krithis of Sivan.

Taking carnatic music to the masses: GNB with Vasundhara Devi in "Udayanan Vasavathatha".

We have seen many hit numbers in the past. We have this lovely number “Konjum Purave” (Film: Thai Ullam) sung by the nightingale of Carnatic music late Dr.M.L.Vasanthakumari. The song is so beautifully sung, with fine intonation and crystal clear expression of lyrics. It is still haunting. The indefatigable Dr.M.Balamuralikrishna has made the film song “Oru Naal
Poduma” in Tiruvilayadal, starred by Sivaji Ganesan, a popular piece even today with his clear diction. Queen of Carnatic music late M.S. Subbulakshmi had sung great melody songs in Bhaktha Meera. She may have gone into the pages of history, but her “Katrinile Varum Geetham” still lingers in our minds.

We have one more of the popular hits “Vasantha Mullai…” of T.M.Soundararajan from the cinema “Sarangadhara” in raga Charukesi. In 1944, there was this super hit film “Haridas” starred by M.K. Thyagaraja Bagavathar (MKT) and N.C. Vasantha Kokilam. Often compared with MS those days, she had sung a few songs in this film and also donned the role of Haridas’s wife. MKT had given the big hits such as “Krishna Mukunda”, “Manmatha Leelaikal” and a duet song “Kanna vaa manivanna” in tandem with Vasantha Kokilam. The music was scored by Papanasam Sivan. In fact, many hit songs of MKT were composed by Papanasam Sivan. The song “Premayil” from `Sakunthalai’ was sung by classical singers G.N.Balasubramanian and M.S.Subbulakshmi115.

The song from the famous Tamil film ‘Vanjikottai Valiban’ - “Kannum Kannum Kalandu...” - is a popular dialogue song. The song features two beautiful has been well choreographed with a dialogue-like song in the ragam. Perhaps, Illayaraja had this in mind while composing music for the song “Abinayam Kaatuginra,” which is sung by Sudha Raghunathan and Bombay Jayashri in Kalaignar’s film. The song is very Carnatic in style and presentation, as it brings the two top Carnatic musicians in a duet-singing. More often, Illayaraja takes to Carnatic music route to compose music for film songs.

The foundation laid by stalwarts of yester-year appears to have strongly influenced the youngsters of the modern day to combine Carnatic and film music to bring in a new genre of audience. Further, this interface between the

115 www.carnaticdarbar.com/views_09.htm -
film and carnatic music is also helping rasikas to identify the ragas and appreciate differing styles of Carnatic musicians. Surely, the courtship with film industry has indeed helped the Carnatic music world to reach out to newer people and places.

4.3 **THE RISE OF PLAYBACK**

The technology of recording songs separately and placing them in the soundtrack became available in the early 1940s. It was no longer necessary to synchronise song recording with picturisation. There was no need for actors to possess singing ability. It marked the end of the era of Carnatic musicians as actors. A new class of film artists known as playback singers came into being. However, some Carnatic musicians continued as playback singers. D.K. Pattammal was one the earliest. That tradition still continues with Bombay Jayasri and Unnikrishnan entrancing film goers by lending their voice to characters in films.

4.4 **G.RAMANATHAN & CARNATIC MUSIC**

If you listen to G Ramanathan (1935-1960 when he reigned supreme) the fact that early days of film music was basically carnatic, comes through clearly - in fact it is almost completely carnatic music for M.K.Thyagaraja Bhagavathar, PU Chinnappa, etc. It's only for NS Krishnan and TA Mathuram or in the late 50s Sivaji, MGR films that the folk elements crop up - vaanga machchaan vAnga vantha vazhiya pATHu pOnga (madurai veeran), ERAtha malai thaniE vegu jOrAna kauthAri rendu (thookku thookki). Even in these films there are straight carnatic compositions (Adal kAneerO, sundari soundari niranthariyE).

Even though some of G.Ramanathan’s greatest hits were in 1959-61 (kappalOttiya thamizhan, veera paandiya kattabomman) the phenomenal popularity of viswanathan - ramamoorthy's Gul-e-bakavali, mannAdhi mannan, pathi bhakthi, baagappirivinai, paalum pazhamum eclipsed these achievements.
What they had done was to move from pure carnatic music to mellisai - orchestration was in, and even pure carnatic music couldn't be recognized as such by the layperson. Playback was also in big time. The folk element was still there.\(^\text{116}\)

Of course there were other composers and writers producing occasionally brilliant stuff right from the days of G Ramanathan. SV Venkatraman's Meera and Sakuntalai for instance are still a pleasure to listen to.

### 4.5 KV Mahadevan and Carnatic Music

KVM used lot of carnatic ragas in films\(^\text{117}\). In fact he typically used only carnatic music with orchestration. Let us first take the film 'Tiruvilayadal'. This is a film that not many tamil film buffs would forget. The best section, musically, is the last one involving the singer 'Bana Battar'. This segment involves four songs, of which we can safely discard the philosophical song that Sivaji sings in the movie and concentrate on the other three. The singer challenges the king to find a singer in his kingdom who can sing and win against him. His ego is busted by Lord Siva who comes down to earth to teach him a lesson.

To tune for this sequence is very tricky. In case the song that Shiva sings is not good, the effect is gone. In case the song that Bana Battar sings is not up to mark, you will have a feeling that you have been setup by the music director. Bana Battar, in Balamurali's voice, starts his singing with Mand and does a ragamalika in Todi, Darbar, Mohan and Kanada. The lyrics of Kannadasan wonderfully portray the egotism of the singer and the tune is an all time favourite. The court singer sings a song in Ragam Abheri. "Isai Tamizh Ni

\(^\text{116}\) Ram Ramakrishnan in the Society.Culture.Tamil

Seida Arum Sadhanai" in front of the Lord. Shiva heeding the plea of his devotee comes to sleep outside the house where Bana Battar is staying, starts singing one of the best and the definitive Gowri Manohari's ever heard in film music. Right from the brief alapanai that TMS does till the end the song has the majestic stamp of Gowri Manohari. The song is an excellent amalgamation of the lyrics of Kannadasan, the tune of KVM and the flawless execution of TMS.

Similar to Gowri Manohari, KVM has left behind a couple of Shanmugapriya tunes that have again become the standards for the raga. The best Shanmugapriya, which everyone loves, is 'Maraidirundhe Parkum' from Tillana Mohanambal. The other Shanmugapriya that KVM comes up is for K B Sudarambal’s lovely "Pazam Ni Appa".

K V Mahadevan came up with some memorable melodies for the movie 'Tiruvarutselvar'. The opening song in Kalyani is the famous, 'Mannavan Vandhanadi Thozi'. Kalyani seems to inspire most of the music directors. The other song in this movie which is very nice is the Sindhubhairavi song, 'Siddamellam Enaku Sivamayame'. This is definitely one of the top class Sindhubhairavis that film music has thrown up. KVM had this great ability to retain the color of the raga at the same time giving it a 'lightness of touch' so that it reaches the masses easily. The other famous song in the movie is 'Nadarmudi Mel Irrukum Nalla Pambe'. This Punnagavarali based number is enhanced by the lyrics of Kannadasan.

KVM came up with a wonderful ragamaligai for the movie 'Kandan Karunai'. The song 'Aurpadai Veedu Konda' describes the aru padai veedu of Lord Muruga. The song starts off with Kambhoji and details of each 'padai veedu' are given in a different ragam. The ragams chosen other than Kambhoji are Hindolam, Charkravakam, Kanada, Hamsanandi, Natakurunji and Kapi.
Mahadevan comes up with a full song ‘Kalviya, Selvama, Veerama’ in Kambhoji in 'Saraswati Sabadam'. While the Kambhoji is not very great, the song is a nice one. Another song 'Solla Solla Inikudada' in 'Kandan Karunai' is an all time favourite. The song 'Parthen Sirithen' from Veera Abhimanyu in mesmerizing Sahana is a gem. K V Mahadevan's carnatic music based tunes for Shankarabharam became popular nationally.

4.6 **ILAYARAJA AND CARNATIC MUSIC**

Ilaiyaraaja's music is characterised by the use of an orchestration technique that is a synthesis of Western and Indian instruments and musical modes. He uses electronic music technology that integrates synthesisers, electric guitars and keyboards, drum machines, rhythm boxes and MIDI with large orchestras that feature traditional instruments such as the *veena*, *venu*, *nadaswaram*, *dholak*, *mridangam* and *tabla* as well as Western lead instruments such as saxophones and flutes. He uses catchy melodies fleshed out with a variety of chord progressions, beats and timbres. Ilaiyaraaja's songs typically have a musical form where vocal stanzas and choruses are interspersed with orchestral preludes and interludes. They often contain polyphonic melodies, where the lead vocals are interwoven with supporting melody lines sung by another voice or played by instruments.

The basslines in his songs tend to be melodically dynamic, rising and falling in a dramatic fashion. Polyrhythms are also apparent, particularly in songs with Indian folk or Carnatic influences. The melodic structure of his songs demand considerable vocal virtuosity, and have found expressive platform amongst some of India's respected vocalists and playback singers, such as S. P. Balasubramaniam, K. J. Yesudas, S. Janaki, K. S. Chitra, Swarnalatha, S. P. Sailaja, T. M. Soundararajan, P. Susheela, Sujatha, Malaysia Vasudevan, Asha
Bhonsle, Lata Mangeshkar, Sadhana Sargam and the latest sensation Shreya Ghoshal. Ilaiyaraaja has sung over 400 of his own compositions for films, and is recognisable by his stark, nasal voice. He has penned the lyrics for some of his songs in Tamil and other languages. Ilaiyaraaja's film scores are known both for the dramatic and evocative melodies, and for the more subtle background music that he uses to provide texture or mood for scenes in films such as *Johnny* (1980), *Mouna Raagam* (1986), *Geethanjali* (1989) and *Guna* (1991).

To a guy who knows carnatic music, the ragas are explicit, and to a non-classical rasika, they are just great tunes! This was one of his specialties, to give the raga in almost good shape and also make a good cinema tune out of it. And of course, the rhythm should give scope for good dance movements so that the hero and heroine could share their love by dancing! Maybe, many of his tunes have to be branded as semi-classical or light music (even though the raga form might be pure) only because of this rhythm factor.

In many films he has demonstrated his skill over Carnatic music, handling some difficult ragas. In 1989 when the Classical Musicians Forum honoured him, Ilayaraja pointed out that classical musicians were not being innovative and were parroting the same ragas and songs. He went on to point out that film musicians, just to survive, have to be creative.

### 4.7 Effect of Gramophone Records & All India Radio

Music has always been conceived in terms of human voice in India and film music is mostly in the form of songs. Backed by a mammoth industry, it is in the air constantly, transistors and tape-recorders have aided the ease of availability. By the beginning of this century the situation changed with the arrival of the gramophone. When music came to be mechanically multiplied, through the medium of discs, the division between upper and lower class tastes
began to blur and music was able to transcend the barriers of social strata. Classical music came to be recorded and for the first time the common man had an opportunity to listen to it.

The gramophone industry has been closely allied with the development of film music in India. Since 1902, when gramophone first made its appearance in South India, both classical and folk music were recorded and released as discs. The arrival of talkies coincided with massive import of cheap (Rs 10 to 15) gramophone machines made in Japan. Film songs were released as discs. To begin with songs were recorded separately, often by singers other than those who had acted and sung in the film. Later, the songs from the sound track came to be reproduced. They could be heard independently even when not viewing the film and by those who could not see the film. Right from the beginning film songs were composed with an eye on the gramophone market. The songs usually lasted for three or four minutes, the duration of a 78 rpm disc, a practice that persists to this day.

Recent developments in sound technology, audio cassettes and the 'walkman' have completed the picture. Now film songs constitute a multi-million rupee industry. Though there are only three recording companies in India, all film songs are released as cassettes. A massive thrust to the soaring popularity of film songs was provided by a development in neighbouring Sri Lanka. In 1949, a commercial broadcasting outfit called Radio Ceylon began beaming film song programmes across the sea for nearly six hours a day. The sale of radio sets accelerated and film music was brought to into the drawing room. In a large number of homes, film songs came to form the background music for all household chores. The state-owned All India Radio, the only broadcasting service in India, later opened a commercial wing and began to air film songs.

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The availability of other channels, like the radio, discs, audio-cassettes, amplifiers and television endowed film songs with the strength of an independent aural medium.

All India Radio (AIR) launched a separate channel for Carnatic music on the DTH platform. The FM channel ‘Ragam’ now available exclusively on Prasar Bharati’s DTH platform, is being broadcast from Tiruchi. Station Director-Chennai, says, “This is aimed at meeting our audience’s demand for Carnatic music.” Now available from 6 a.m. to midnight, the channel is all set to go 24X7 very soon.

Amruthavarshini 100.10 FM is a classical music channel and an integral wing of All India Radio. Amruthavarshini 100.10 FM can be heard everyday from 6 p.m. to 10 pm only in Bangalore. This radio channel was created with the objective of raising awareness about Carnatic music in South India. Authentic and traditional Carnatic music make up the programmes of Amruthavarshini 100.10 FM. Most of the Carnatic music enthusiasts in Karnataka are associated with the club formed by Amruthavarshini 100.10 FM.

4.8 **TELEVISION**

Introduction of television in the seventies brought in a new opening for carnatic musicians. So far only All India radio & other Radio stations were broadcasting carnatic music programs of film songs based on carnatic ragas. Radio Ceylon was very popular in this and it was through the continuous broadcast of film songs that film songs became very popular. And those based on carnatic music gave a push to the popularity of carnatic music. AIR used to broadcast carnatic music lessons in the morning and concerts at night.

Now Doordarshan allowed the rasikas to ‘see’ their favorite artist perform on TV. Since there was just one government channel, and the time allotted per
week for carnatic concerts was limited, the race to get into the performer list was very hot. Actually TV itself was a novelty, and not everyone could afford to buy one. It was common to see people crowding around a neighbour’s TV, waiting to watch their favorite program – be it ‘oliyum oliyum or concert or a serial.

There was a big competition to get featured on Television. This allowed the artist to ‘walk’ into the houses of the rasikas, endearing themselves. Before this through Radio, the rasikas could only hear them. Seeing them on TV brought these artists closer home to the rasikas, helping their popularity sky rocket. This was a boom time for any music/dance/art that was telecast on TV and carnatic music also rode on this success bandwagon.

Slowly more channels in Doordarshan and many other private channels were introduced and today we have more than 300 channels available with broadband, DTH etc also thrown in. Each channel competes hard for TRP ratings. Many south Indian channels have carnatic music based content – like competitions, junior programs, concerts, quiz, relaying live coverage of festivals like Chennaiyil Thiruvayyaaru, Margazhi Mahotsavam etc. As the competition between channels grows, the audience is definitely the winner, with a wide choice to choose from.

Raga Ratnam Junior is a musical talent search in the Carnatic classical tradition that seeks out phenomenally gifted young exponents of the art, in the 10-14 age groups; a reality show that locates talented vocalists in the oldest practiced classical music system in the world and brings out a musical prodigy from amongst its ranks. This program offered the first TV platform for young Carnatic devotees to compete against each other.
Exacting and exhaustive auditions bring to the fore 10 outstanding singers, who will contend for the final prize. Most of the competitors not only have a good grounding in the intricacies of the classical genre, but also claim to have manodharma, kelvi gnanam, proficiency in mudras, knowledge of ragas etc.

There are many music festivals now organized in Chennai, more for the primary reason of relaying it on TV than to attract local crowd.

Chennaiyil Thiruvaiyaru – the grand Carnatic music festival held in Chennai during December last week, saw over 45 eminent personalities from the Carnatic music world performing on stage witnessed by over 75000 audiences. Now, the music festival goes on air on Vijay TV from 3rd Jan to 7th Jan, at 7 am with a repeat telecast at 5 pm.

In its 6th consecutive year, Chennaiyil Thiruvaiyaru returned with an even bigger line up of stars from the Carnatic Music world and for the first time ever, popular singers from the Film Industry also participated in the event.

Eminent Carnatic Vidhwans & Classical music giants like Sri. T.N. Seshagopalan, Sri. P.S. Narayanaswamy, Sri. Santhana Gopalan, Sri. T.V.

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Sankaranarayanan, Sri. O.S. Arun, Smt. Sudha Raghunathan, Smt. Nithyashree Mahadevan, S.Sowmya, Ganesh Kumaresh, among many others were a part of this grand Carnatic music fest. Popular film singers like the legendary Sri. S P Balasubramaniyam and Sri. P. Unnikrishnan, Smt. Harini have also participated in the event. Musicans of international & national repute like Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma & Pt. Vishwa Mohan Bhatt gave performances to a packed house.

The fact that there are so many channels giving carnatic music related programs means the number of youngsters who get exposure also has increased multifold. These youngsters have benefited greatly by this and are in turn propagating carnatic music, helping it develop in different routes.

Carnatic musicians these days don’t feel shy of making a foray into film music. They now see the film industry as an opportunity grab with open arms. They also look at film industry as one way of drawing fresh fans into the Carnatic music fold. This appears a sure way to spread Carnatic music among masses. K.J. Yesudas especially deserves praise for bringing non-traditional audience to Carnatic concerts. His success in the film industry has indeed seen many of his fan flock to his traditional sabha kutcheries.

One also finds a new-found enthusiasm among the present day Carnatic musicians to take up some popular compositions of Papanasam Sivan, Periasami Thooran, Arunachala Kavi, Muthutandavar and Bharathiyar. Well, the works of such great Tamil composers seem to have now spurred Carnatic musicians to sing more Tamil songs in their concerts. Hailing from an orthodox school, violin maestro Lalgudi G Jayaraman, has scored music for the national award winning Tamil film “Shringaram”. A song in this film - “Yen Indha Mayamo” - has been sung by Sowmya and Bombay Jayashri separately in raga Hamir Kalyani. “Mamara Thopilla” is sung by O.S.Arun and “Ninival Yennai” by

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Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi. Senior violinist Kunnakudy Vaidyanthan plays exclusive cinema songs such as “Tirupathi Malai Vazhum” for the audience. He has composed a song for the film Agathiyar—“Thalaiva Thavapudhalva”. His music composition for film “Todi”, where vocal singer T.N. Seshagopalan plays the lead role, is based on rich Carnatic music.

In later days Illayaraja came up with some good Shanmugapriyas. "Than Thananam" (Pudiya Varpugal), "Takida Thadimi" (Salangai Oli), "Kadal Kasakudaiya" (A Pandiyarajan film) etc are memorable. But the Shanmugapriya of Illayaraja that is really impressive is from Moga Mull, "Sollayo Vai Tirandu". It takes a genius to use Shanmugapriya, which is always used in a robust manner; in a 'viraha' situation as in 'Moga Mull' and Illayaraja is a genius. Music directors have got great tunes out of Ananda Bhairavi and Reethi Gowla. The 'Aval Oru Bhairavi' part in Apoorva Ragangal is a good example in Bhairavi. Illayaraja came up with a nice Bilahari in 'Koonadalile' and 'Nee onru dhana sangeetham' but both have the classical tinge. The song ‘Iyengarathu azhaga’ in Anniyan is in nattai. There is ‘Alanguyil’ in Parthipan Kanavu, composed in kaapi. The songs in the film Chandramukhi are again based on ragas.

In recent times, we see many youngsters with Carnatic music background making a beeline for the film world. Nityashree Mahadevan’s song in ‘Jeans’, “Kannodu Kanbathelam”, has made a good impression not just on film buffs but also on the Carnatic music rasikas. Bombay Jayashri and Unnikrishnan’s “Narumugaye” song from the Tamil film `Iruvar’ is pleasant to listen, even as it is peppered with a few nuances from the Carnatic music.

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Recently, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Dr. Kalaig nar M. Karunanidhi, has released a film named “Uliyin Osai” in Tamil. Illayaraja, who has composed the music probably had the song in Vanjikkottai Vaaliban in mind while composing music for the song “Abinayam Kaatuginra,” which is sung by Sudha Raghunathan and Bombay Jayashri in Kalaignar’s film. The song is very Carnatic in style and presentation, as it brings the two top Carnatic musicians in a duet-singing. More often, Illayaraja takes to Carnatic music route to compose music for film songs.

The foundation laid by stalwarts of yester-year appears to have strongly influenced the youngsters of the modern day to combine Carnatic and film music to bring in a new genre of audience. Further, this interface between the film and carnatic music is also helping rasikas to identify the ragas and appreciate differing styles of Carnatic musicians. Surely, the courtship with film industry has indeed helped the Carnatic music world to reach out to newer people and places.

4.9  **MARGAZHI RAAGAM - 1**ST **CARNATIC CONCERT ON CINEMA**

Margazhi Raagam, starring TM Krishna and Bombay Jayashri, takes Carnatic music to theatre viewers across the world. Real Image, the pioneer in media technologies in the country and Aghal Films released the first-ever Carnatic
concert produced for cinema. Conceptualised and directed by Jayendra Panchapakesan, founding director of Real Image Media Technologies, this groundbreaking new platform for Carnatic music was produced by Aghal Films.

With the availability of technology for a complete workflow in Hi-Definition (HD) from shooting with high-end Digital Cinema cameras to online editing and post-production, the concept of alternate content like concerts and sports footage for the Indian cinema hall has become real. One of the pioneers of digital cinema worldwide with Qube, Real Image has not just been working untiringly to bring the best technology to the Indian film industry, but also with content creators to make maximum use of the technology available to them.

A string of technical geniuses have lent their creative talents to this production. The first-ever classical concert shot exclusively for a cinema audience, Margazhi Raagam has many firsts to its credit - a seven camera shoot using the latest RED Digital Cinema cameras and live sound capture mixed in 5.1 Digital Surround Sound at a THX- certified mix stage to name a few. All set to be released in Blu-ray, DVD and audio CD in 6-track Surround Sound, it is also the first classical music concert to be shot in 4K and post-produced entirely digitally using these 4K images as the source. The 120-minute concert is all set to release in digital theatres worldwide.

4.10 **CARNATIC DVDs**

After the CDs and MP3s, now it is the turn of carnatic DVDs that have caught the interest of Rasikas, Artistes and producers of music records. The concert is recorded with visuals –some times like a song picturisation in films with interesting background unlike the staid live concerts on TV channels. Now there are many lec-dems, carnatic lessons – basic to RTP available as DVDs. In future more concerts will be available and the DVD will be the norm than the novelty.