CHAPTER VI.

KRISHNARAJA WODEYAR-III (1799-1868)
AND HIS COURT MUSICIANS.
Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III was the successor and adopted son of Chamaraja Wodeyar-VIII. The throne he took over was not a bed of roses. After the defeat and death of Tipu Sultan in 1799, the British decided to give the throne back to the Wodeyar family. This brought the infant Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III to the political scene. The faithful Regent, Diwan Poornaiah looked after the affairs till 1812 A.D. The mutual political give and take between the British and the Wodeyars had brought the initial chaos to a stand-still. But Lord William Bentinck again snatched the power from the hands of the Wodeyars and vested it back with the British. Thus, Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III's active political career came to an end in 1831 and he stayed back as a nominal king till 1868 with a fixed annual income. The British again gave back the power to the Wodeyars in 1881 but not before the death of Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III in 1868.

The political ups and downs and the fixed annual income did not affect or curb the cultural zeal and enthusiasm of the king. Men of letters flourished in his court. The poets, sculptors and musicians flocked to the court from various parts of the country. He gave large endowments and gifts to the temples of Nanjangud, Melkote, Srirangapatnam, Chamundi Hills etc. His urge for learning persuaded him to establish many Agraharas. The gopuras of the Mysore Lakshminarayana temple, the Chamundeswari temple at Chamundi Hills and the Srikanteswara temple at Nanjangud were built during his period.1 His court was crowded with artists like veene Venkatasubbaiah, veene Kuppaiah, veene Sambaiah, Padmanabhaiah, Mysore Sadasivarao, .......
Shonti Venkataramanaiah, Mygur Subbanna, Veene Chikkaramappa, Kunigal Ramasastri, Sosale Garalapuri Sastri, Alia Lingaraj, Kempunarayana, Devachandra and others. The king himself was a profound scholar in Kannada and Sanskrit. As many as 59 works are ascribed to his credit. *Krishnakathapushpamanjari, Ramayana katha pushpamanjari, Chamundimangala Malika* are some of his famous sanskrit works. *Vatsarajakathasougandhika pariyana* is also among his works. *Krishnakatha Sangraha* deals with the incarnations of Krishna. His major contribution to the field of Kannada literature is that he translated works from sanskrit to kannada. He translated into kannada Kalidasa's *Shakunthala, Vikramorvashiya* and *Malavikagnimitra*.

*His musical attainments*

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III was a competent musician and musicologist. *Sreetatvanidhi* is an exceptional work of the king which has many chapters such as *Shakthinidhi, Vishunidhi, Shivanidhi*, *Brahmanidhi*, *Grahanidhi*, *Vaishnavanidhi*, *Shaivanidhi*, *Agamanidhi* and *Koutukanidhi*. *Brahmanidhi* deals with music and musicology. *Ragaswarupa* (format), *Ragalakshana* (features), the compositions of *Suladi Saptha talas* are well explained along with figures, which makes the understanding of them very easy. The *raga* timetable, their aesthetic importance and their traditional division, and classification is perfectly matched by the ancient texts. The *gayakalakshanas* (requirements of a singer) are also well defined. All these things testify to his theoretical attainment in music.
The age old popular 35 ragas viz., bhairava, madhyamādhi,
bhairavi, bangali, saindhavi, malava kaushika, kambhāvatī, varāli,
tōdi, goulī, gundakriya, velavali, kakubha, rāmakali, deshākshi,
lalitha, phalamanjari, pradeepa, kothara, karnata kamboji, nāti,
Desi, sree, vasantha, malavasree, sāvēri, malava, dhanyāsri,
malahari, meghabhupali, dēśikādi, takke, gurjari are mentioned
by him. We cannot just infer that all these were either random
or trespassing references because the author goes deep into the
technicalities of these ragas and also says the colour, the
particular deity, mūrchara, lakshana, swara samūha of all these
ragas. Every raga is depicted in the form of a figure also. His
sound musicological knowledge and writings owe a lot to Sranga-
deva's Sangeetha Rathnākara. The telling influence of Sangeetha
Rathnākara can be seen in the writings on the dhruve and saptatālas
The deity, group, meter, stars etc. of the tālas are explained
along with the figures. This sritatvanidhi is almost a mini-
encyclopaedia because several other chapters deal with the
various branches of knowledge including sports and games. The
extent manuscripts have as many as four thousand figures.

Krishnaraṇa Wodeyar as a Composer:

His absence from the active political field probably
facilitated for his excellence in other creative fields. His
depression due to his being a nominal ruler is very well
reflected in his jāvalis. These jāvalis are the outcome of self
examination and a token of his introvert nature. Chamundi was
his mudrika. The requirements of a composition like palla, anupallavi, charana etc. are found in his kritis also. One more
work called anubhavapancharatna is also attributed to him.

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Foremost among his compositions is saptatāleswari kriti. This kriti bears testimony for his skill in composition and also for his mastery over the rhythm. This kriti is composed in rettīgōula rāga. The uniqueness of this kriti is that, if seven people start the different talas like drūva, mathya etc. along with the kriti, both the song and the āvartanā (cycles) of all the seven talas end simultaneously. This indeed demands perfect command over the movements of all the talas, which can only be found in a seasoned composer. It is also learnt that the music was composed by the Āsthāna Vidvān veene Vankatasaubbaiah.² The composition begins with the line "Bhūdhajane nitōshakara".

Krishnaraja Wodeyar as patron of musicians:

His personal attainments in both theory and practice naturally influenced him to support and encourage the musicians of high quality. The king was himself a master player on veena. He held it vertically from his shoulders down to his knees. The king was a contemporary of the great trinity (Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dixitar, Shyama Sastry) of carnatic music. Thus, many of their disciples were also the Āsthāna Vidvāns in his court. The music was pure and traditional. The holding of the veena vertically itself is a sign of the traditional purity of music.

Shonti Venkataramanaiah gave several concerts in the Darbar during Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III's reign. This Venkataramanaiah is believed to be the music teacher of saint composer Tyagaraja. The king was pleased by his music, honoured him with
many gifts and appointed him as *Asthana Vidwan.*

There was harmonious relation between the king and his courtiers. The king performed *kanakabhiseka* in the honour of veena Kuppaiah which is a rare feat. Kuppaiah returned this favour with a composition as a token of his gratitude to the king. Mysore Sadashivarao, the court musician of Krishnaraja Wodeyar's reign, composed a *kriti* 'Dorekenu nedu sri Krishnadu' in *deva gandhari rāga* keeping his patron as the hero of that song. The musical excellence and exuberance of Krishnaraja's court was such that a *Vidwan* by name Savyasachi Iyengar played veena by plucking the strings with his left hand and playing on the frets with his right hand with equal fluency and mastery, as he would play with the right hand plucking and left hand on the frets.

It would not be an exaggeration if we say that Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III sowed the seeds of typical Mysore music's heritage. He gave it a momentum by drawing inspiration from his ancestor Chikkadevaraja. His precedents inspired the forthcoming rulers of the dynasty for an extravagant musical activity. The list of musical giants who adored the court of Krishnaraja Wodeyar is quite lengthy and they are dealt subsequently as individual artists. The Maharaja glorified and immortalised his court and himself specially with regard to music in the whole of South India.

He was never just content by appointing them as *Asthana Vidwans* and giving them a handsome salary. His personal creativity and skill kept all the musicians alert and innovative.
A sort of competitive nature developed amongst the musicians themselves to seek the king’s appreciation and honour. The patron was a seasoned musician and he expected a very high standard from them. His nominal kingship probably came very handy and blessed him in disguise. Thus, his own compositions and his court musicians' creative genius went a long way in developing and adding to the repertoire of Carnatic music.

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VEENE VENKATASUBBAIAH

The establishment of the office of the Veenabhakshi was one of the many steps the Wodeyars introduced to popularise music. Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III, the Bhōjaraja of Karnataka, heralded a new chapter in the cultural history of his kingdom. From his times started a long series of immortal vairikas and gāyakas. The first man to hold the office of Veenabhakshi was Veene Venkatasubbaiah. His genealogy takes him back to veene Kuppaiah. Venkatasubbaiah's father Seshayya was an Āsthana Vidvān of Tanjore under Sharabhoji. Some domestic misunderstandings drew Venkatasubbaiah back to his ancestors place, Mysore. Dr. R. Sathyanarayana aptly puts it when he says, "the musical cauvery of Mysore was again flowing back after reaching Tamilnadu.-modal Maharāni Lakshmamman appointed Venkatasubbaiah as Rāja Guru. Even Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III learnt vocal and instrumental music under his guidance. The honour and splendour of Venkatasubbaiah was peerless and unsurpassed. Krishnaraja Wodeyar, in appreciation of Venkatasubbaiah's services, presented a golden veena and granted the villages Chakkuru, Kalibundi and Shankarali in the Heggadevana.
Kote taluk and Hanakere, Gowdagere, Alakere in the Mandya taluk. His monthly allowance was raised to 500 varahas.  

Venkatasubbaiah became the friend, philosopher and guide of the king. His advice was acceptable to the king without any reservations. He spared no means to popularise the musical splendour of the Mysore Court. The doyans of Carnatic Music were convinced about themselves only after performing in Mysore Durbar. Shonti Venkataramanaiah, the Tanjore a Āsthāna Vidwān, came to Mysore to exhibit his talents. He was so much moved by Venkatasubbaiah's hospitality and generosity and, as a token of his gratitude he composed a lakshanageetha in ādhāna rāga in praise of Venkatasubbaiah.

Venkatasubbaiah enjoyed many royal privileges and richly deserved them for the services he rendered. His residence was almost like a mini palace. The guards and the servants deputed from the palace were at the beck and call of the Bhakshi. This was probably an unprecedented privilege enjoyed by Venkatasubbaiah. His music descended from the great Tyagaraja parampara and that itself is a compliment for his calibre. The instinct and inheritance were amplified to their best. The royal support served as a great incentive and he set a right example for Mysore music tradition.

Venkatasubbaiah's enthusiasm and generosity were not confined to music alone. He is also said to have built two
temples i.e., the Anjaneya and the Iswara temples near Dodda kere at Mysore. He was impartial enough to recognise, accept and appreciate the talents of other Vidwans. This quality made his much more greater. He was instrumental in spreading the fame of the Wodeyars far and wide.

He kept the musical ball moving by adopting a boy called Seshanna. Later, the same boy known as Dodda Seshanna, in turn contributed two veteran veena players, Veene Seshanna and Subbanna.

The first Veenabhadra's examples and precedents went a long way in guiding the future officers. His life inspired his successors to develop and enrich the personal and contemporary music. Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III's experiment of starting a new office in Veenabhadra paid rich dividends right from its inception.

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VEENE KUPPAIAH

The Wodeyars' hunger for good music induced them to import musicians from various parts of the country. But they were also generous enough to spare their artists to their counter-parts. This often led to the movement of musicians from kingdom to kingdom. This began as early as in the period of Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III. Veene Kuppaiah was one among such visiting artists who was honoured for his art.
This great vainika was born at Tiruvatiyar near Madras. His father Sambhamurthy was also a vainika. He was popularly known as Veena Sambaiah. His playing was of legendary fame and no wonder his son literally stepped into his father's shoe. The music that was flowing in his blood was further nurtured and enriched under the tutelage of the great saint composer Tyagaraja. He learnt his veena lessons under his father's guidance which Tyagaraja was unaware of.

Once it so happened that Kuppaiah started playing on Tyagaraja's veena in his absence. The music was so bewitching, his teacher's wife stood behind the door and was listening, without Kuppaiah's knowledge. He was totally involved in the playing and his teacher Tyagaraja also came home. The melodious, divine recital caught the teacher spell bound. He was extremely happy. But then Kuppaiah was feeling guilty for taking undue liberties. However, his music had over shadowed his mistake and his teacher felt proud and happy about his student's attainments.  

Kuppaiah was also known as Tiruvatiyar Kuppaiah and Narayamagoula Kuppaiah. The latter name undoubtedly proves his mastery over Narayamagoula rāga. The waves of his melodious music took no time to reach the music loving ears of Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III. In 1856, he was invited to the court. The king moved by his music performed
Kanakabhisekha in his honour. He also presented him a silver veena stuck with pearls. Kapisthala was awarded as a jahagir (gift) to him. As the king advanced to place a beautiful pāga (a turban) on the artist's head, Kuppaiah responded with a pallavi in mōhana rāga 'pāga ichche ga sarīga' and in turn, the king also sang 'sāda pāga ichche nu'. This shows that Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III was still not happy with what he had given to the artist. Kuppaiah is also stated to have composed a kriti 'intaparake lana su' in begade rāga set to rupaka tāla. This kriti is in praise of Goddess Chamundi in which Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III's also occurs.

The Madras Port Band which he heard quite frequently, introduced him to western music. His flair for western music could be seen in his yetugada varna and Intachouka varna in Bilahari. His composing abilities almost equalled his master, Tyagaraja. He was famous for composing divyanama kritis. Paramatmani in khāmañ rāga, jagadabhi-rama of kanada rāga and māpatinamānu of kapi rāga are some of his famous divyanama kritis. This type of kritis required four charanams (stanzas). Other than this, he is credited to have composed many varnas, tillanas and kritis. His special flair and love for Narayanagoula and reetigoula rāga naturally brought out two varnas. 'Maguru ninni kori' and 'vanajaksha ninni' are the compositions
in the above mentioned rāgas and these are considered as master pieces. His mudrika was Gopaladasa.

His own son, Tiruvatiar Tyagaiah was one among his famous disciples. He was a first grade composer known for his rāgamalikas. 'Sree ramana padmanayana hari' was a rāga malika set to sixteen rāgas. Kottavasal Venkataramanansir and Pitilo Ponnuswamy were two other famous and illustrious disciples of Kuppaiah.

This great Vaggeyakara contributed vehemently to the field of music, in the form of compositions and disciples. The Wodeyars in turn took a share and pride in those contributions, indirectly, by honouring and patronising Veene Kuppaiah.

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MYSOHE SADASIVARAO

Though the name is Mysore Sadasivarao, he was not a native of Mysore. On the contrary, he hailed from Andhra Pradesh and joined the band of Krishnaraja Wodeyar III's court musicians. He was born at Girampet near Chittoor in Arcot District in the first quarter of the 19th Century. His father Ganesh Rao was a smārtha deshastha brahmana and mother was Krishnabai.
Valajpet Venkataramana Bhagavathar, a direct disciple of Tyagaraja, was the music teacher of Sadasivarao. Thus, his music had a stamp of tradition, purity and authority. Once, Tyagaraja had come to Bhagavathar’s house and Sadasivarao immediately composed and rendered the kriti 'Tyagaraja swami vedalina' in todi rāga and sought his blessings. Those were the days when music was not yet commercialised and the following incidents goes to show how humble, dedicated and devoted musician Sadasivarao was. He was an ardent devotee of Lord Narasimha and his compositions Narasimhudu davinchenu in kamala manohari rāga was quite familiar which he seldom rendered in public. But, during a concert, his friends forced him to render that kriti. "As he uttered the words, sarasijasanamama pagule, it is said that the glass of the frame of the portrait of Lord Narasimha crashed into pieces and all the lights went off! Sadasivarao is stated to have stopped singing at once and performed mangalarathi. From then onwards, the audience never used to press him to sing that piece".

His compositions have elevated him to a revered place in the annals of Carnatic music. The extant compositions are in Telugu and Sanskrit, which are well balanced from the point of view of sahitya, rasabhava and selection of the rāga etc. He is one among the acclaimed 'tillanakaras'.
of the country. The Madras Music Academy has published seventeen kirtanas with the notations. The Sangeethakala-
hivriddini Sabha of Mysore has published 35 kirtanas with
notations and 12 pieces without notation. The choice of
ragas is apt, popular and also rare. Abhōgi, gambhira-nātā,
poorna sadja, punnagatōdi, chandrachuda are some of the
ragas he has chosen. Speaking of Sadasivarao, Channa-
akeshavayya opines, "in a few kirtanas he uses madhyama
kāla sāhitya. His kirtanas are full of Bhakthi and confirm
to the cannons of yati, gana and prāsa. They are fully
expressive of the rāga chāhāya and also strike departure
from the beaten track. The chitti svaras for several of
his kirtanas and their accompanying sāhitya stand out for
their rāghabhava and imagination. While they are certainly
impressive if rendered properly, they are generally not easy
to learn and sing approximate more to the variety known as
narikela-paka". Indeed, his compositions demand deep
knowledge and rigorous practice for rendering.

It will not be an exaggeration to say that Sadasivarao
assimilated the original Tyagaraja Parampara into Mysore
style. The veena maestros Sheshanna and Subbanna were his
pet disciples. Anekal Chidambaraiah, Chikkanakanahalli
Venkateshaiah, Ganjam Suryanarayanappa were also privileged
to be under his tutelege. His music and personality were
equally rich and but for him, probably, the talents of so many
illustrious disciples would not have blossomed to its fullest
extent.
Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III was a magnanimous personality so far as his cultural extravaganza was concerned. Many artists voluntarily came and performed; the king lavished on them, gifts like pearls, jewels, gold chains etc. These artists did not stay at Mysore. But there was a group of men, who came here to seek the permanent patronage from the palace. Veene Shamanna belonged to this category. He came from Tamilnadu and settled down permanently at Mysore.

Ramabhagavathar, a veena Vidwan of Tiruvannamalai was Shamanna's father. His father initiated him into music and the son responded to it equally well. By 1854 Shamanna migrated to Mysore as he was sure about his own ability and Krishnaraja Wodeyar's generosity. He found no difficulty in entering the court. Once he entered, he went on serving as Asthana Vidwan during the reigns of Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III, Chamaraja Wodeyar-IX and Krishnaraja Wodeyar-IV. Shamanna was a versatile genius who could play the other instruments like violin, swarabat and jalatarang along with veena. Shamanna's supernatural abilities rescued the king's prestige with a musical miracle. Once it so happened that a jalataranga maestro had come to Krishnaraja Wodeyar-III's court. He played pallavi of natikuranji raga set to a faster tempo. Immediately he threw a challenge to the court musicians that anybody among them should play the same pallavi, but the tempo should be four times faster than the original one. In fact, speed is the only criteria for an instrument like jalataranga as the notes do not sustain longer. Shamanna coolly accepted the
challenge and started playing. The difference between Shamanna and the invited Vidwan was what looked to be the fastest tempo of that Vidwan was the starting tempo for Shamanna. Later he increased the speed by four times to its starting tempo. Moreover, Shamanna’s recital flowed with gamakas also.

The above incident speaks volumes for his astounding musical calibre. His control and mastery over rhythm were impeccable. His music was a perfect blend of melodic sensitivity and rhythmic excellence. His concerts in South India were very popular and won for him many titles like Abhinava Bhūja and Tālabrahma. In fact, the prejudiced Madras music fans were also taken away by his veena recital.

He was not only a competent performer but also successful teacher. A big band of illustrious students was the greatest contribution of Shamanna to the world of Carnatic music. His son, Subbrammanna Iyer, and nephew, Subbarao, were his disciples. They too became the Asthana Vidwans. Court musicians like Veena Padmanabhaiah and Karigirirao owed a lot to Shamanna for his impartial guidance and teaching.

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Ref:-


2. Mummadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar, *Sreetatvanidhi*, (MSS) Oriental Research Institute, Mysore, pp.159-171


4. Ibid., pp. 82-83


11. Ramaratnam, V., *op.cit.*, p.79


13. Ibid., p.106


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Paintings from Shee Tatvamidi
(MSS) O K I, Mysore

Raga: Ghuljahi
Raga: Megh