PRELUDE
PRELUDE

The basic challenge - music is made of sounds and a thesis is made of written words. How much the words can portray sounds is a big question. That remains a perennial challenge to musicologists. The challenge is deepened further in a thesis like this, where attempt is made to explain the mysteries of śrūthis and gamakās through the medium of written words.

"Śrōoyathē ithi śrūthi:" asserts that śrūthis are to be "heard" and enjoyed. But, a thesis on śrūthis is a collection of chosen words that can only be "read" and understood. Interestingly, this quote itself has come down as written words. Listening and reading are two distinctly different functions based on the senses of hearing and seeing respectively. The challenge for anyone who writes about music is that written words can never convey the sound, especially the musical sound and the pleasure imparted by it, though they can convey almost everything about the sound. Like any other art, music also has two sections of people handling it - the artists concentrating on the performance, and the
musicologists more concerned about the theory and science of music. Thus, there has always been a section of people who got deeply absorbed in the sound portion of music which itself would demand a lifetime. At the same time, we have voluminous material about music, written with equal dedication by musicologists of all ages.

Words are the chief ingredients of speaking as well as writing. The former has the facility of mixing relevant passages of samples of sound and also of revolving to any topic. Whereas speech is acquired naturally through hearing, even the basics of reading and writing can be acquired only through strenuous and continuous efforts. When we are speaking, the tonal variations, gestures and body language help us a lot in communicating the subject precisely. Written words are abstract in nature – just black and white. Hence, they are of greater challenge in many ways than spoken words. Despite these challenges, the contribution of written materials to the world of knowledge is matchless when compared to any other medium of communication.
There is room for a question as to why so much of written materials have come into being on music, when there is a belief that detailing the musical sounds through written words will be incomplete without sound. This must have been because of the fact that any written material is assured a longer life of existence and utility than the spoken or sung words. Written words had to be resorted to, whenever mankind wanted any idea or concept to be preserved for posterity. Written words undergo no change even after passing through several hands, unlike the spoken words. It is exactly because of this, we have today the words of many hundreds of compositions of saints like Puṇḍaraṅgāsa. But, the music of not even one composition is available with total authenticity. Because, preserving sounds was unknown to mankind until the very recent technological development of sound recording. What Bhaṅgatha wanted to convey to mankind, about the greatness and mysteries of Indian music some two thousand years ago, is available to us in the magnum opus Nātya Śāsthra. But, we are absolutely in the dark in areas like the actual pleasure of listening to all that the author wrote about. In fact, the lack of facilities to record music
increased the gravity of the challenge faced by various musicologists. They had to find out several new terms, definitions and interpretations to present "sound and music" in words.

It is true that the growth and preservation of our music is not just because of the voluminous writings we have. Music has come down the generations more by oral tradition than by any other means. There are authentic renditions of the vēḍās even today. They have been handed down to us entirely through oral tradition and the vēḍās are rightly known as śṛuthis. One can assertively say that communication was being made verbally, even when the mode of communication through written words was not known to mankind in the deeply antiquated period. The chanting of vēḍās today stands as solid example of the efficacy of oral traditon.

Certain aspects of music can, of course, be preserved only through written words. The biography of great personalities in music is an important portion of musical knowledge and this can be acquired effectively through written material. The literature of numerous
grand old compositions is available even today without much variation, thanks to the art of writing. The past would always have been blank, but for the art of documentation and preservation of information in writing.

Yet, the fact remains that the books cannot sing. Any amount of written material can never convey the impact of even a single vital phrase - ōga. Analytical listening to ōga is inevitable for understanding the nuances of śruthis and gamakās.

It is exactly in this context that the thesis becomes a challenge, particularly to a performer and Ph.D. aspirant, the humble authoress of this written presentation. It is felt that this writing on practical music – the performance part, is necessarily to be accompanied by music referred to therein.

The authoress has, therefore, chosen to enclose an audiocassette, to meet the challenge of words and to ensure that the mission is complete.