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பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னிதழ்

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ஆகிய மாதங்களில் வெளிவரும்

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தமிழ்

Bhakti Marga of Saint Thyagaraja

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Abstract:

Saint Thyagaraja, an expert composer used music as a tool of worship .The lyrics acts as an internal evidence to convey the philosophy the composer wanted to express. A few references from his compositions are presented as part of this article to explain what he expresses as his purpose of birth through his compositions and his visualization of supreme god Lord Rama. A comparative study of the poetry of Saint Thyagaraja to that of the works of Alvar with details from Veda and Vedanta are presented to explain the lyrical depth.

The composition Marugelara, explains the search and realisation the composer undergoes in experiencing Lord Rama. This composition is compared to verses of Dhivya Prabandam, Valmiki Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavad Gita and works of Alvar to establish how it reflects the thoughts of the above.

Key words:

Saint Thyagaraja, Lord Rama, Alvar, Sriman Narayana, musical composition, philosophy, Bhakti.

Introduction:

Unconditional love towards the Supreme Being is expressed as Bhakti.Ramanuja Acharya clearly states Bhakti marga or Prapatti as ways to practice to reach the permanent abode –Sri Vaikuntam.Of many arts, Music has been an indispensable medium of worship.Natya Sastra by Bharata Muni states,“*Samabyo Gltamevacha*” (Chap I, verse 17), this affirms that music has been in usage since time immemorial as they are based out of Vedas which is eternal. Nammalvar compares the Supreme God SrimanNarayana to the notes of music,“*Ezh Isain Suvai Dhane*” (Thiruvaimozhi-10.8.8). Sriman Naryana himself declares on being questioned by sage Narada as to where he resides in Kali Yuga that he resides in the hearts of his ardent followers who sing and chant his holy names

“Naham Vasami Vaikunthe yoginam hridaye nacha

Madh –bhaktha yatra gayanthu tatra tishthami narada”

(Padma purana, Uttarakhanda, 92.21-22)

One can bring in several references to explain the greatness of music. Music has been used as a medium to spread the concept of Bhakti. Several composers across India have contributed through their poetry and music their utmost devotion to God. Among them, Saint Thyagaraja was a composer par excellence. As an ardent devotee of Lord Rama, he was well known for integrating the glory of the Lord with music. He offered the same as his devotional service to the Lord. The presentation of his thoughts as lyrics with clear affirmations from Veda and Vedanta in its inimitable charm attracts the seekers to delve deeper into the philosophy behind it.

Purpose of Birth:

Saint Thyagaraja as a pure devotee of Lord Rama used music as a means to realize god. He was never desirous of wealth, power or position. His only aim in life was to reach Lord Rama and do service to him. He explains that through his composition in Ragam Kalyani,“*Nidhi cAla sukama RAMuni sannidhi*

sEva sukamA nijamuga palku manasA”, Can wealth be ever comforting or will service to lord be comforting? He always wishes to be subservient to the Supreme. This is explained as the “*Sesha Seshi Bhava*”, where a soul understands that Supreme lord Sriman Narayana is the master and the jeeva is born to serve the lord. This thought is quiet identical to the hymn of *Kulasekara alvar where he expresses that, he doesn't wish for immortality like Indra or for wealth. Anything material is always perishable.*

**AnAdha selvaththu arambaiyargAL thaRchUzha
vAnALum selvamum maNNarasum yAn vENdEn**

(Perumal Thirumozhi 4.2)

As a faithful servant to Lord Rama, to him no achievement seemed bigger than the grace of Lord Rama. He puts in this thought through verses of his composition in Ragam Todi, Can achievements without grace of lord be of any value, “*Emi jEsistenEmi Sri rAma svAmi karuNa lEni varilalO*”. By being slaves to desire, misapprehension and falsehood without understanding the order of lord, “*kAma mOha dAsulaiSri rAmuni kaTTu teliya lEni vAriAO*”, echoing similar thoughts of Kulasekara Alvar in the hymn,

**UnERu selvaththu udanpiRavi yAn vENdEn
AnEREzh venRAn adimaith thiRam allAI**

(Perumal Thirumozhi 4.1)

Where Kulasekara Alvar expresses his unwillingness to be born again as a wealthy, powerful man even though he belonged to a royal clan. His only wish was to serve the lotus feet of the lord.

The purpose of life directs one to the goals. Saint Thyagaraja was no exception in trying to understand what his purpose was and why was he born at all. Though he had already established that he was not desirous of wealth and power, he dared to question his personal god Lord Rama who is none other than the Supreme reality Sriman Naryana, “*E panikO janminticiani nIvu enca valadu sri rAma nEnu*”, (why was I born at all) .He continues to explain his wish that, “*VALmiki munulu narulu ninu varNinciri nA Asa tiruna*”, sages like Valmiki and other great poets have already sung your greatness, will my wish be ever fulfilled! This expresses his deep longing to sing the glory of lord.

He also explains his direction of life in the composition, “*Dasarathu ni*” in raga Todi, that his birth in Kali Yuga is to teach and spread to the world through music the pathway to salvation, “*bhukti mukti kalgunani kIrtanamula Bodhincina tyagarAja karArcita*”. He says, “Exponents in poetry who are devoid of devotion will never understand my emotional thought flow-”*bhakthi lEni kavi Jala varENyulu bhAvameruga lErani kalilONA jani*”. Through a few references presented above, one can be certain that Saint Thyagaraja committed his life to the service of Lord Rama.

Form of Lord Rama-From Saint Thyagaraja's perspective:

Throughout his lifetime Saint Thyagaraja has dedicated several compositions praising his personal deity Lord Rama. His description of Lord Rama in the form of NAda (musical sound) expresses how he has incorporated music as a vehicle to be descriptive about the form of Lord Rama.

This composition in Ragam Arabhi “*nAda sudha rasambilanu nara kRtiAyE manasA*”, tells that music has taken a human form which is Lord Rama .It is interesting to find an identical expression in the work of Namalvar, where he compares the matured music from the musical instrument yAzh(harp) to the Supreme god head Sriman Narayana, “*mun nal yAzh payil nUl narambin mudhir suvaiyE*”(Thiruvaimozhi-2.3.7). **After giving human form to music as Lord Rama , he adds**

value to the form saying ,*"vEda puraANAgama SAstra dulakA dhAramau"* ,which means that this sound which has taken human form is also the essence of Vedas, Purana, Agama and Sastra. If one could image a form with such a greatly valued base, it could only be the Supreme reality Sriman Narayana. If there could also be a musical sound which could justify itself to be the essence of the above three, it will be Pranava (Aum) as it forms the base for all the vedic sounds. This comparsion is also justified as Lord Krishna declares that he is the inner soul of pranava,*"pranavah sarvavedesu sabdahkhe paurusham srunu"* (Bhagavad Gita chapter 7, verse 8).

He has also established that this form, Lord Rama is the sole protector of the entire universe in a composition in Ragam Todi,*"nl daya rAvala gAka nEnenta vADanu rAma"*. He brings the reference, *"vEda SAstra purANamulu –anni nIvE gati –anucu mora peTTu ganuku"*. Vedas, Sastras and Puranas declares that Lord Rama is the sole protector and I plead for your grace lord .The term Gati crystalizes that the mercy of God is the only way to reach him coinciding the thought of Kulasekara Alvar, *"ninnaiyE thAn vENdi neeL selvam vENdAdhAn"* (Perumal Thirumozhi 5.9) expressing the firmness that Kulasekara alvar seeks only the Lord and not the wealth.

Marugelara - A composition in realisation

This composition is compared to verses of Dhivya Prabandam, Valmiki Ramayana, Srimad Bhagavad Gita and works of Alvar to understand the multiple configurations meaning the lines present.

Pallavi

MarugElara O rAghava

Saint Thyagaraja asks lord Rama, Why do you hide yourself from me lord?

Anupallavi

marugEla carAcara rUpa parAt

para sUrya sudhA-kara IOcana

- **marugEla carAcara rUpa parAt:-**

He says that the entire universe is your form .This is in agreement with the words of Lord Krishna where he asserts that he is the source and cause of everything.*"aham sarvasya prabhavO maTah sarvam pravartatE"*.(Bhagavad Gita – Chapter 10,verse 8).The lord establishes that all living beings come from him. *Prabhava* expresses that he is the place of origin and *pralaya* establishes that it dissolves in him.

"etad yonIni bhUtAni sarvAnityupadhAraya

Aham kritsnasya jagatah prabhavah pralayas thathA"

(Bhagavad Gita – Chapter7, verse 6).

- **para sUrya sudhA-kara IOcana:-**

He compares the eyes of the lord to that of the sun and moon. There are several references where the eyes of the lord are compared to the Moon and Sun.Mundako Upanishad states

a similar comparison , "chaksushi Chandra sooryau". In Vamiki Ramayana, Yuddha Kanda, there is a similar comparison, "te sUryachandrAmasau drsau" (6-117-8).

Charanam

Anni nIvanucu antarangamuna
tinnagA vetagi teluukoNTinayya
nine gAni madinenna JAlanorula
nannu brOvavayya tyAgarAja nuta

- **Anni nIvanucu antarangamuna tinnagA vetagi teluukoNTinayya**

Here the composer proposes that I have understood that you are everything and everything is within you. This explains that god is all pervasive. This concept that universe is the body of Lord Rama is expressed by Valmiki in Ramayana (Yuddha Kanda), "*Jagath sarvam sariram*" (6-117-26). Namalvar establishes the pervasiveness of the lord in his pasuram, "*engum uLan kannan*" (Thiruvaimozhi-2.8.9) Lord Krishna says that the entire cosmos is pervaded by him. He exists in them and controls them. He is the inner soul and they form the body through the lines

*"mayA tatam idam sarvam jagad avyaktamOrtina
matsthAni sarva bhOtAni na chAhamteshvavasthitha"*

(Bhagavad gita, chapter 9, verse 4)

- **nine gAni madinenna JAlanorula nannu brOvavayya tyAgarAja nuta**

Here the composer says, I cannot think of any other god in my mind. Please protect me prays Saint Thyagaraja. This thought has been highlighted by Alvars in their hymns. "*KaRpAr rAma pirAnai allAI maRRum kaRparO*", (**Thiruvaimozhi-7.5.1**), **learning anything other than Lord Rama is considered as not learning at all says Namalvar**. Kulasekara alvar establishes that lord's divine feet is the only way to remove him from the bondage of birth and death, "*un charaN allAI saraN illai*" (Perumal Thirumozhi-5.1). "*ninneye dAn vEndi niRpan aDiyenE*" (Perumal Thirumozhi-5.9), Kulasekara alvar firmly tells the lord that I seek only you lord! The above thought that I cannot think of any other god establishes the utmost faith of a devotee. This is an *anga* (limb) of Saranagati – MahA VisvAsam where a refugee places unshaken faith on the lord. He is confident that the supreme is the way and means to reach the permanent abode.

Conclusion:

Sriman Narayana, the Supreme lord promises the world that those who are in constant thought of him and worship him will gain the knowledge which would lead them to the path of salvation by burning the ignorance,

"TeshAm evAnukampArtham aham ajnAna-jam tamah

NAshayAmyAtma-bhAva-stho jnAna-dIpena bhAvastatA"

(Bhagavad Gita – Chapter 10, verse 11).

Thyagaraja Swami completely devoted his life singing the praise of god. "*smaraNE sukhamu rAma nAma naruDai puTTinaduku nAma*", having taken this human form constantly chanting the name of Lord Rama is ever comforting. In his composition, "*Giripai*" raga Sahana, he mentions that the lord

assured that he would take care of him in ten days ,”*kaluvarinca kani padi pUTalapai kAcedaanu tyAgarAja vinutuni*”.In another composition, “*paritaapamu kaniyaadina palukula marachitvo na*”,On seeing my pitiable state, Have you forgotten the words you said to me lord? The words of promise was that he would show his grace on ten days, “*karunincedananu kre-kannula tyagraja*”. Tradition also says that these were the two compositions of this legendary composer before going to the permanent abode of the Lord. As promised by the Lord, after multiple births, the wise realises that possessor of auspicious qualities is Sriman Narayana. He understands that meditating on him is the means to reach the permanent abode-Srivaikuntam.

”bahUnAm janmanAm ante jnAnavAn mAm prapadyate

vAsudevah sarvam iti sa mahatma su-durlabah”

(Bhagavad Gita – Chapter7, verse 19).

Saint Thyagaraja’s composition at the outset are not just pleasing to the ears but shows a path to salvation. On delving deep into the philosophical perspective one will certainly agree that his compositions will stand the test of time.

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அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னஞ்சல்

அறிவிப்பு / Announcement

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