

Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu, Thiru Banwarilal Purohit participated as Chief Guest at the inaugural ceremony of Pancha Ratna Kritis of Saint Thyagaraja

Thiru. Banwarilal Purohit, Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu participated as Chief Guest at the inaugural ceremony of Pancha Ratna Kritis of Saint Thyagaraja organised by Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Carnatic Sangeetha Seva Trust & Sri Sangeetha Mummoorthigal Jayanthi Vizha Committee at Lord Thyagaraja & Goddess Kamalambal Temple Sanctum, Tiruvarur today (11.05.2019) and addressed the gathering.

Hon'ble Governor said, "I am delighted to be here on the occasion of the inauguration of the annual rendering of Pancha Ratna Kritis on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Thyagaraja Swamigal at Thiruvarur. This festival which is being organized by Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Carnatic Sangeetha Seva Trust and Sri Sangeetha Mummoorthigal Jayanthi Vizha Committee shows their deep interest and devotion to Carnatic Music and their attachment to the task of preserving the memory of the famous Trinity - Thyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar and Shyama Shastri. It is efforts such as these which have resulted in the tradition of Carnatic Music being handed over from generation to generation, in its pristine glory and unadulterated form.

Carnatic Music was developed in the Southern part of India and is characterized by the total lack of adulteration from other forms of music brought in by invading rulers from Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan. In that sense it has retained its religious form, its traditional nature and its cultural purity. The special element of the tradition of Carnatic music has been the spiritual content and the devotional element which makes it unique and divine.

There is a strong tradition of linkage of Carnatic music with Gods and Goddesses. Lord Shiva is considered to be the embodiment of Nadha and Thandava. Goddess Parvathi is seen as the embodiment of Lasya, the feminine quality. Goddess Saraswathi is associated with the Veena and Nandi is considered to be the master of Laya. Hanuman was an expert on the Hanumantha Veena which is considered to be the precursor to the present day Chitra Veena. Lord Krishna is always associated with the flute. And the objective behind any composition has been to see and seek the blessings of God.

Today we are all assembled at Thiruvarur, which is famous for the Thyagaraja temple and its annual chariot festival held in the month of April. It is also famous as the birth place of the Sangeetha Mummoorthis. The first of them, Thyaga Brahmam was born on the day of the Pushya star in the month of May, 252 years back. His family which originally hailed from the Kakarla village of Kurnool district had moved to Thiruvarur, fearing oppression at the hands of the invading armies after the Vijayanagar Empire collapsed in the 16th Century CE. They were among a large number of families that sought refuge under the Maratha King of Thanjavur. Thyagaraja's ancestors were known for their expertise in singing and storytelling. Pleased with their performance the King of Thanjavur gifted a house to them in Thiruvaiyaru, to which place the family shifted after the birth of Thyagaraja. Thyagaraja started learning music at an early age and started singing small kritis even from the age of 17 years. In 1802, his guru, Sonti Venkataramanayya arranged for his arangetram where the vidwans of the palace were assembled. Thyagaraja sang his own composition, Dorakuna ituvanti in the Bilahari raga. Impressed by the young lad's talent, the king of Thanjavur, Sarfoji II invited Thyagaraja to the palace and offered him the position of Samasthana Vidwan at the Durbar. But, Thyagaraja's desire was to compose songs and only serve the Supreme Lord Rama and not any other ordinary mortal, be he a king or a noble. He decided to dedicate himself to Carnatic music and for singing the praise of his beloved Lord Rama and therefore declined the offer of the King. There lay his greatness and uniqueness.

Thyaga Brahmam's outpouring of music was inspired by devotion and divine grace and it is no wonder that even today when his songs are sung one is able to visualize the presence of Lord Rama. He composed his divine Kritis mostly in Telugu and in these he makes an appeal to Lord Rama whom he considered as his guru, guide and master. One gets transcended to another world when listening to Thyagaraja famous Pancharatna Kritis among which are Entharo Mahanu Bhavulu and Nagumomu Ganaleni. These are sung by musicians with devotion and bhakti even today.

Meaning five gems, the Pancharatna Kritis were all composed in praise of Lord Rama. All of them are set to Adi tala, and the mood of the song and the lyrics is reflected in the raga in which it is sung. Four of the pancharatna kritis are composed in Telugu, while one is in Sanskrit.

Thyagaraja has also composed Kritis in praise of Shiva, Sakthi, Ganesha, Karthikeya and Hanuman. His compositions include two musical plays – Pragalatha Bakthi Vijayam and Naukha Charitam.

I am told that only about 700 – 800 of his compositions could be recovered after his death. I am sure that the quest is on to bring back to Carnatic music the numerous other compositions of Thyagaraja Swamigal.

Thyagaraja's life was a true reflection of the meaning of the name 'Thyagaraja' which means king among renouncers. He never aspired for wealth or fame and was content in giving vent to his bhakthi through his compositions.

The second member of the trinity, Shyama Shastri, who was also born in Thiruvarur was a musician and composer of Carnatic music. Shyama Shastri did not compose so many kritis as his two prolific contemporaries, but his compositions are well known for their literary and rhythmic proficiency. The scholarly nature of his compositions made them more appealing to the learned and the erudite. In contrast, while Thyagaraja composed in a more colloquial dialect Shyama Shasri borrowed heavily from Sanskrit, to adopt a more formal form. Most of his compositions propitiate the Goddess Kamakshi. His set of three famous Svarajati(s) are referred to as "Ratnatrayam" (Three jewels). They are the Kamakshi Anudinamu, Kamakshi Padayugame, and Rave himagiri kumari, composed in the ragas Bhairavi, Yadukula kambhoji and Todi respectively.

Muthuswami Dikshitar, the third of the famous trinity was also born here and is known for his elaborate and poetic descriptions of Hindu Gods and temples and for capturing the essence of the raga forms through the Vainika (Veena) style that emphasizes gamakas. His compositions are predominantly in Sanskrit except for a few Kritis in Manipravalam, a combination of Sanskrit, Tamil language and Malayalam.

I am happy to see that the Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Carnatic Sangeetha Seva Trust, has been conducting the Jayanthi celebrations at Thiruvarur every year to honour the memory of the Trinity. During the celebrations, hundreds of popular musicians perform concerts accompanied by the Nadaswaram, the Violin, the Veena, the Mridangam, the Gatam, the Flute, the Mandolin and the Saxophone etc. The Highlight is the rendering of Pancharatna Kritis of Thyagaraja in which hundreds of musicians from different places within India and abroad pay their rich tributes to the trinity.

Let us on this occasion of Thyagaraja Jayanthi pay our respects to the memory of Thyaga Brahmam and the other two members of the musical trinity and their contributions to Carnatic music. It should be our firm resolve to make the cultural institutions of India grow stronger with time so as to cement the foundations of our great nation and thus keep the banner of our culture and tradition flying high so that generations to come will feel proud of their inheritance just as we do so now.”

On this occasion, Dr. R. Ramasubbu, President, Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Carnatic Sangeetha Seva Trust, Padmashri Nalli Kuppusami, Thiru. S. Karthikeyan, Vice President, Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peeta Carnatic Sangeetha Seva Trust, Thiru V. Balasubramanian, Auditor and other dignitaries participated.

Raj Bhavan, Chennai -22

Sd/-

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Joint Director (PR)