

**NAGASWARA TRADITION IN SOUTH INDIAN MUSIC SYSTEM**

*Thesis Submitted to the University of Calicut for the Award*

*of the Degree of*

*Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Fine Arts*

BY

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that no corrections to be made in the thesis as suggested by the examiners and that the content in the both soft and hardcopy are the same.

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis titled '**Nagaswara Tradition in South Indian Music System**' is a bonafide record of original research work carried out by me, under the valuable guidance of Dr. A. Jalaja Varma, Associate Professor in Music (Retired), School of Drama and Fine Arts, University of Calicut. No part of this has been submitted for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar title of recognition.

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## PREFACE

Instrumental music has a hoary tradition in the sphere of Indian music from the very ancient period. In India musical instruments are conceived as to fulfill the requirements of an advanced melodic system of music. The history of music as prevalent in south India during the last three centuries represent the remarkable period in the development of Carnatic music. During this period instrumental performances also reached high standards.

The ancient texts like 'Natyasastra' of Bharata, 'Sangita Ratnakara' of Sarangadeva, 'Sangita Raja' of Rana Kumbha etc. referred the term 'Kutapa' for instrumental ensembles (orchestra). The Kutapas were classified into *uttama*, *madhyama* and *kanishtaka*, according to their sizes. In ancient and medieval period it mainly provided accompaniment to dramatic performances. There existed various Kutapas like *tata kutapa* (stringed band), *vamsaka brinda* (band of wind instruments), and *avanadha kutapa* (band of drums). There was a sprinkling of wind instruments in the orchestra even during the medieval period. Later the term 'melam' superseded the term *kutapa*. There are orchestras designed for playing classical music (*sangitamelam*) and folk music (*neyyandimelam*). *Sangitamelam*, which denotes a group performance of all instruments, came into existence during the reign of Vijaya Raghava Nayak (1633-1673).

Among the four classifications of Indian musical instruments: *tata vadyas* (stringed instruments), *avanadha vadyas* (skin instruments), *sushira vadyas* (wind instruments) and *ghana vadyas* (solid metals), *sushira vadyas* adorns a unique position. There are references to the use of wind

instrument Pichchora during vedic period. An instrument Ambal Kulal is depicted as reed pipe in the work 'Narrinai' of Sangam period. Thus wind instruments have a long tradition to claim.

The present form of the instrument Nagaswara came into being after going through various stages of transformation from Uthalavenu, Kuzhal, Vangiyam, Magudi, Madhukari, Kurumkuzhal, Mukhavina etc. This paved the way to the gradual evolution of Nagaswara by around 15<sup>th</sup> century AD.

It was in the text 'Kreedabhirama' of Vallabharaya (1420 AD) we find the term Nagaswara for the first time. A recorded reference about Nagaswara is from an inscription found in Tirumala in 1496.

The word Nadaswara is incorrectly used for the term Nagaswara. Evidences cited from ancient literary works prove that the correct name of this instrument is Nagaswara and not Nadaswara.

The significance of the instrument Nagaswara is that it maintained same status in folk music, temple music, and art music alike. It gave the laymen some kind of exposure to classical music. From the later part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards Nagaswara and Tavil together started to receive a separate identity to become an integral part of serious art music. The prominence of Tavil accompanying during the ragalapana is a unique feature.

As a Mangalavadya, in temple rituals, festivals and other auspicious occasions of social life Nagaswara is considered to be the most sacred and inevitable instrument. Nagaswara has played prominent role in folk music, temple music, concert music etc. Therefore it has wide scope to make study in each area.

This study titled ‘Nagaswara tradition in south Indian music system’ examines in an exhaustive manner the evolution of the instrument, development, construction, playing technique, accompanying instruments, role of instrument in various bands, its divine association, tradition of playing in various temples, exclusive musical forms played on the instrument, contributions of pioneers, the transformation of the earlier Timiri tradition to the present Bari tradition, its role in different genres of music like ritualistic music, folk music and art music etc.

The transformation to the Bari type opened up an infinite possibility of the instrument. This uplifted the status of Nagaswara which provided great inspiration to vocalists. So the study also traces the influence on vocal tradition and vice versa based on the recitals of vocal and Nagaswara clips.

This study is an inquiry into the process of transformation and development of Nagaswara music which led to the enrichment of Carnatic music, especially manodharma sangita.

It was only after 1923 that gramophone and radio came into popularity and most of the recordings are since then. Only a few studio recordings of earlier Timiri Nagawara recitals are available. This study is mainly conducted based on the recordings available on the Bari type of Nagaswara by great masters T N Rajaratnam Pillai, Karaikurichi Arunachalam and so on.

The primary data have been collected by listening over to the radio interview with T N Rajaratnam Pillai, interviewing the Nagaswara vidwans Thiruvizha Jayasankar, Vettikavala Sasikumar, Guruvayur Murali,

Vadassery Sivadasan, Palakkad Reghunadhan, the information provided by the musicologist Dr. B M Sundaram and the recordings of old maestros.

After a thorough discussion about the various aspects of the instrument the study proceed to the key area, i.e. the possibility of the instrument to satisfy the requirements of a highly developed music. The study attempts to bring out the current practice of Nagaswara playing and also a detailed analytical study of different styles of Nagaswara playing based on selected ragas with the help of audio clips of great maestros.

## **Scheme of Chapters**

### **Chapter 1- Introduction**

The first chapter begins with the introduction to the instrumental music tradition of India. Nagaswara, its growth and development from the folk streams to the well flourished classical music, Physics of sound production of the wind instruments and the classification of wind instruments are described in detail. The term Nagaswara and its etymological explanations are also discussed here.

### **Chapter 2- Evolution of the Instrument - Nagaswara**

This chapter deals with the historical background, references in literature of various periods, different stages in the evolution of the instrument and the three types of Nagaswara. The chapter concludes with the currently used Nagaswara, its construction and playing technique.

### **Chapter 3- Role of Nagaswara in Different Genres of Music**

This chapter deals with the role of Nagaswara in different fields of music like ritualistic music and folk music. Ritualistic music mainly focuses on Nagaswara and its role as a mangalavadya in temple music of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It further deals with Mallari, an exclusive musical form played on Nagaswara in temples. Procedure for playing Mallari is dealt in detail supported with musical notation. Towards the close of chapter different folk musical bands like Neyyandimelam, kavadiyattam, karakattam etc. are given.

### **Chapter 4 – Nagaswara Tradition in Carnatic Music**

This chapter contains stylistic variations of Timiri-Bari traditions and an analysis on the application of gamakas, modulation and technique of playing, style of reciting compositions and other various aspect of manodharma sangita. It also contains the documentation of different ragas played by eminent players of the two different traditions of Nagaswara, the Timiri and the Bari. It further reveals the influence of Nagaswara playing on vocal tradition and vice versa. This is done on the basis of audio and voice clips. Chapter also deals with contribution of T N Rajaratnam Pillai, the torch bearer of current Bari tradition. Style analysis of eminent players is also given based on their recordings. The chapter concludes with the role of indispensable accompaniment to Nagaswara - Taval, Othu and Kuzhitalam.

### **Chapter 5 - Pioneers**

Fifth chapter 'Pioneers' trace and mark the contributions of famous Nagaswara vidwans.

The work is appended with a chart containing the details of the audio clips and voice clips of great masters to analyse the influence of Nagaswara music on vocal music and vice versa. The photographs depicting the different parts and playing technique of the instrument is also appended.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The efforts by the primitive man who keenly listened to the sounds in the nature led to the discovery of music and thereby led to the construction of the musical instruments. Hence the musical instruments have a long tradition to claim. Instrumental music is universal as it is independent of language and words. Though the art of oration may be prior to the musical instruments, later people began to feel the significance of musical instruments not only to embellish and enrich the vocal music, but also use them as a register to keep music. Nagaswara is an ancient and still live musical instrument that has evolved over many years and undergone many transformations. This instrument can claim a long standing tradition over the centuries.

Nagaswara, grown and developed through folk streams became the basis for classical music later. Interestingly, musical instruments have an immense role in both folk and classical music. Nagaswara is an important instrument that has been adapted from musical tradition of south India to the classical music. After all tradition of music is not static; it is always dynamic. Tradition embraces preservation, innovation and transmission.

If the acoustics of Nagaswara is analyzed, we can understand that its origin, form and existence could be traced to the folk tradition. Even in the absence of technological instruments capable

of making the sound louder, this instrument could attract the larger audience. The classical music which was practiced only in royal palaces reached the common people through Nagaswara when played in outdoors. It led to the enrichment and popularization of Carnatic music. Manodharma sangita which developed through the process of give and take between the masses and musicians enriched the process of alapana thereby playing a major role in the growth of Carnatic music.

The term 'Vadya' which denotes a musical instrument derived from the word 'vad' means 'to speak'. Thus the term vadya refers to an instrument used to speak or produce sound. Vadya has played a major role in the progress of music through ages. Indian archaeology has made a considerable contribution to trace back the origin and development of Indian music. Ancient texts, folklore, paintings, sculptures, epigraphic records, reliefs etc. are the sources from which we get data related to musical instruments. They provide us information such as the construction and shape of instruments, the way in which they are held and played, types of music and dance in various periods etc. Exponents of different times and places must have invented all types of musical instruments, since they have sufficient to satisfy the needs of highly developed musical system. According to the aptitudes of the people, experts modified and remodeled the structure, shape and the size of the instruments throughout different ages. More

developed technology and materials helped to improve the tonal quality of instruments beyond expectation.

The traditional four classifications of Indian musical instruments are:

- 1) Tata vadyas (stringed instruments)
- 2) Avanadha vadyas (skin instruments)
- 3) Sushira vadyas (wind instruments)
- 4) Ghana vadyas (solid metals)

### **1.1 Wind instruments (Sushira vadyas)**

In wind instruments sound is produced by using air directly or indirectly. Wind instruments comprise a resonator or a tube and a mouth piece set at the end of the resonator. When the player blow air into the mouth piece, a column of air is set into vibration in the resonator. The pitch of the vibration depends on the length of the tube. A reed is used to blow air in some cases.

Aerophones are mainly classified into two

- 1) Free aerophones
- 2) Air as vibrator

In free aerophones, the air is not confined in any tube or column. For e.g. Bull roarer

In air as vibrator, air is blown to vibrate the air column and some kind of valve is used to control the flow of air.

These are of 3 types

- 1) Air reed
- 2) Lip reed
- 3) Mechanical reed

1) Air reed

In such cases, the air directly sent into a tube and have an effect on some kind of an edge in the instrument, creates the vibrations in the air inside the tube. For e.g. Flute, Fipple Flute

2) Lip reed

The players control the tension in their lips in cases of lip reed instruments. Here the lips acts as a valve there by vibrate under the influence of the air flow through them. For e.g. Sankh, Kahala

3) Mechanical reed

Mechanical reed aerophones should have special mechanism called 'reed' to control the entry of air into the instruments. Large and important groups of sushira vadyas itself have built-in mechanism. The sruti of the instrument is dependent on the air column in the tube and not on the reed valves. Because of these, the air contemplates as the vibrator and not as the exciter. Two types of reed are the beating and the free. One flap beats against an immovable part of the body of the tube in a single reed instrument. In a double reed instrument such as Nagaswara, Shehanai etc. there are two reeds, made of palm, cane etc. called as seevali or patti, with a small gap between them beating against each other.

Free reed has the almost same dimension of the air hole, without touching the edges vibrates within the shallot. For e.g. Harmonium

## **1.2 Physics of sound production in Nagaswara**

Sound in a wind instrument like Nagaswara is produced by a reed, through which the air is blown to actuate (vibrate) the air column inside the long tube called a resonator. A standing wave of air column will be formed inside the tube as a result of the interference between the air blown inside at a high pressure and the air return from the open end. A column of standing waves will be always formed such that a node is formed at the closed end and anti-node is formed at the open end. Therefore the standing waves inside the tube will be always odd multiples of quarter of a wave length. By closing the holes on the body of Nagaswara the vibrating length of air column is adjusted thereby producing different swaras.

## **1.3 Etymology**

Nagaswara has apparent ethnic relation to the community of snake charmer's 'Pungi'. A very close relative of Pungi is the 'Tarpo' (found in Gujarat and Maharashtra) also called the 'Ghonga', the 'Khongada' (Marathi) or the 'Dobru' (Gujarati) depending on the size. In northern parts of India, this instrument is known by the different names such as Been, Tumbi, Nagasar, Sapurer, Bansi etc. and in southern India by the names Nagaswara,

Mahudi or Magudi, Pungi, Pambattikuzhal and so on. Mahudi is obviously related to Madhukari which has typical local names like Mohari, Mori, Mohori, Muvvari, Mahuvari etc. and the earliest reference is in Matanga's Brihaddesi as Mavari and Madvari. Depending on the size and construction Mukhavina and Mohori are identical. The bunch of the name of Nagaswara are Nagasar, Nagasara, Sannadi (Timiri Nagaswara), Nayanam, Olaga (Kannada), Melam (means group) etc. It is believed that Nagaswara was known by the names Uthalavenu, Nadisanthanam, Vangiyam, Nagavangiyam etc. in the vedic and sangam texts. The other names for the instrument Shehanai are Sundry, Naferi, Zurna (in central and west Asia) etc.

The proper pronunciation of this instrument is Nagaswara and not Nadaswara. Both nada and swara means sound. The only difference is that nada is unmanifest sound and swara is manifest sound. Hence the combination of these two words is meaningless. Muthuswami Dikshitar clearly mentions this instrument as Nagaswara in his kriti 'Tyagaraja mahadhvajarooha' in Sri raga; anupallavi consists of the following sahitya

“Agama sidhanta pratipadyam  
Anantha chandrasekhara vedyam  
Nagaswara maddaladi vadyam”

The first reference about this instrument appeared in Telugu work 'Kreedabhirama' of Vallabharaya (1420 AD) as Nagasara.

Ahobala's 'Sangita Parijata' also mentions this instrument as 'Nagaswara'.

Famous musicologist Dr. V Ragahavan in an article (Sruti Magazine) by citing a volume of evidence proves that the correct name of this instrument is Nagaswara. According to him the Sanskrit play Srirangaraja charita bana of Kaundinya Srinivasa Kavi mentions the Nagasara being played by a snake charmer. The Telugu work Narasimhapurana of Haribhatta gives a long list of musical instruments, one among them is Nagaswara (verse 72 of third canto). Abraham Panditar's book on music and P Ramanathan's dictionary mention this instrument as Nagaswara. Madras University Tamil lexicon also gives the correct form as Nagaswara.

Malayala Rajyam weekly dated 9<sup>th</sup> February 1953 published an article named 'Nagaswara Samvadam' written by Chunakkara Neelakantan Pillai, a Sanskrit scholar. In this article he says that all scientific activities related to nada will enjoy the listeners, hence there is no relevance of adding nada with swara. So he prefers Nagaswara as the correct usage. The ragas like Nagavarali, Nagabhushani, Punnagavarali, Nagagandhari, Nagaswaravali, Naganandini, Bhujangini, Nagadhwani etc. are used for naga pujas. Naturally the particular instrument rendered such ragas came to be known as Nagaswara. This argument is found to be more reasonable.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **EVOLUTION OF THE INSTRUMENT - NAGASWARA**

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## CHAPTER 2

### EVOLUTION OF THE INSTRUMENT – NAGASWARA

#### 2.1 Historical background

Some primitive musical instruments were discovered during the Mohenjo-daro and Harappa excavations. The ruins of the stringed, wind, and percussion instruments found during the excavations proves the fact that they might have been used as accompaniment to dancing of those days. A continuity of this artistic tradition is found during the historical period also.

Percussion instruments have the longest pedigree among the musical instruments; wind instruments and stringed instruments respectively succeeded the percussion family. Whistles are considered to be the earliest form of the wind instruments. A number of specimens of whistles were discovered from Mohenjodaro, which existed around 2500 BC. The archaeologists presume that the officials of the palace used these whistles to summon the people and acknowledge the time of the day. There existed various shapes of whistle like bird, jar, pear etc.

The principle of the whistle head facilitated the production of sound from the vertical column of a tube. The ancient Indians must have known this principle, for several types of whistles, with a mouth hole and one finger hole have been discovered from the Indus Valley sites. (Premalatha, 1985, P-250)

Wind instrument evolved into simple, short vertical tube towards the end of pre-historic period. The next generation of wind instrument like double pipe, horn and trumpet came into existence during the period of rock painting of Mahadeo hills<sup>1</sup>. Later these simple pipes took various shapes with advanced blowing mechanism. The playing techniques varied according to the musical taste of the people of different places in various occasions.

Historically the Aryans<sup>2</sup> arrived in North India from Iran and Southern Russia about 1500 BC followed by the arrival of Dravidians around 2000 – 1600 BC. The historical evidence point to the fact that Dravidas who were also known as ‘Nagans’ used a sort of pipes with some holes and played the same at the time of pujas. It is considered that the rustic form of Nagaswara was an instrument used by the Dravidian Nagans for their serpent worship. Nagans were the clans who belonged to the race of Proto Australoid,<sup>3</sup> who had been living in India before the arrival of

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<sup>1</sup> *pre historic artists have drawn all aspects of their life independently and complete in it. The artist depicted various compositions on the rock surface. Such compositions usually comprise scenes of hunting food gathering, fighting, dancing and music, social and daily chores. (Indian Rock art : Themes in Pachmarhi Petroglyphs [www.bradshawfoundation.com](http://www.bradshawfoundation.com))*

<sup>2</sup> *The Origins of Dravidians is a very complex subject of research and debate. They may have been indigenous to be Indian sub continent. But origins in or influence from west Asia have also been proposed. Their origins are often viewed as being connected with the Indus valley civilization. (<http://en.m.wikipedia.org>)*

<sup>3</sup> *The term Proto Australoid was first used by Roland Burrage Dixon in his 1923 book Racial History of man. The proto-Astraloids were an ancient hunter-gatherer people descended from the first major wave of anatomically modern humans to leave Africa around 50000 years ago.*

Dravidas. The serpent worship dominated later in Kerala due to the prominent existence of the culture of the aboriginal people.

Vedic civilization laid down the foundation of Indian culture as well as Hinduism on the Indo-Gangetic plains between 1500 BC and 500 BC. Instruments like Venu, Toonava and Nadi (Nali) are mentioned in vedic literature. Nadi was played to please Lord Yama. As a musical ensemble Toonava was an inevitable part of vedic rituals. The flutist was believed to be sacrificed in a ceremony known as 'Purusha medha'. We can also find references of Nadi and Toonava in sutras and Venu in Jatakas. With the progress of time, the term Venu became more significant. Pictorial representations of these instruments can be seen in monuments such as Ajanta (2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to about 480 AD), Amaravati (3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to around 250 AD), Sikar, Khajuraho (950 AD to 1050 AD) etc. Many other sculptures, paintings and reliefs also represent these instruments.

In Indian musical tradition, Flute has a specific role. Venu, one of the earliest musical instruments, is as important as Vina, in defining the musical scale. The first reference for the relation between the vedic scale (descending) and the Flute (ascending) can be found in Naradiyasiksha (1<sup>st</sup> century AD).

Brahmanas and Srauta sutras, had given the references about instruments played by the wives of the priests. The musical instruments functioned in the yagna are thus recorded. 'Pichchola' or 'Pichchora' is a version of wind instrument and is played by

blowing air through mouth directly into the pipe. Kandavina is the other one, which belongs to the family of stringed instrument.

Continuing the enumeration of the details furnished in the Tandya Maha Brahmana the sixth khanda of the fifth chapter tells us that the Udgatr recited the Saman, while the wives of the priests provided the upaganam (accompaniment) on a pair of instruments called Apaghatila, 'Apaghatilabhiupagayanti' - (Tand Mah Br. 5-6-8). According to the Latyayana Srauta Sutra the 'Apaghatila' means a pair of musical instruments consisting of the instruments, 'Pichchola' or 'Pichchora' and the Kandavina. . . . The device of producing sound in this instrument is technically referred to as 'Upamukha' in the Srauta Sutra of Drahyayana and Latyayana and Dhanwin the commentator of the former explains it as the air blown by the mouth. (Premalatha, 1985, P-31)

The wind instruments Venu or Vamsa or Flute, Sankha or Conch, Turya or Trumpet is referred in Ramayana. The Budhist works also have the references of instruments such as Flutes, Harps and Cymbals.

According to Dr. B M Sundaram, a prominent musicologist, Rigveda mentions two types of wind instruments called Uthalavenu and Nadi Santhanam, which can be considered as the predecessor of the Nagaswara. Uthala means vertical. Venu or flute kept vertical and played is Uthalavenu. Uthalavenu was played compulsorily during the yagas. But we do not have any

reference about the method of its playing. Nadi Santhanam was also prevalent in Rigvedic period. Nadi means reed. But there is no reference on whether the reed was made out of palm leaf or as we use in the present day. In a Tamil work, Bharata Sastiram, still in the manuscript form, there is a verse which begins

“Rigvedathile nindroru Nagaswarathin thotram  
arukalaam munchei vattam vattamayi suryan”

So it is evident that the primitive form of Nagaswara was prevalent during Rigvedic times. Dr. B M Sundaram strongly believes that both Uthalavenu and Nadi Santhanam were same and might be called by different names since they co-existed. He believes both these instruments are the predecessor of the Nagaswara.

The collection of literary works of Tamil from the period 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD is altogether known as Sangam Classics. These works contains numerous data related to music. Among these classics, Chilapathikaram is considered as unique, which contains a historical value. There is no reference to Nagaswara in ancient Tamil literature probably because of its varied name. The Sangu and the Flute are the wind instruments referred in Sangam literature. The instrument Kuzhal or Vangiyam is mentioned in Chilapathikaram. Peruvangiyam also referred in Chilapathikaram, here the epithet ‘Peru’ denotes largeness of its sound and not the size of the instrument. “It is said that the sweet

tone of the flute resembles the chirpings of the bird called Vanga. It is perhaps due to this, the flute acquired the name Vangiyam” (Premalatha, 1985, P-95)

According to Dr. B M Sundaram, Flute with holes is called Vangiyam. ‘Vanga’ means hole and ‘iyam’ means instrument. In Sangam literature there is a work named Koothannur authored by Sathanar (3<sup>rd</sup> century AD). This work mentions nine types of Vangiyam, in which one is Nagavangiyam. Though the name was not given as Nagaswara, the description given by Sangam literature clearly says that it has 7 holes, a reed and mouth piece.

T V Kuppaswami in his work ‘Carnatic music and the Tamils’ points out that Valuvar Ramiah Pillai, the president of the 19<sup>th</sup> session of the annual conference of the Tamil Isai Sangam, Madras quoted references in support of the fantastic antiquity of Nagaswara. For him, Nagaswara was called as Vangiyam in Chilapathikaram. He also states that the instrument is as old as Rigveda and had provisions for saptaswaras (7) and Brahmaswaras (5) ranging from mandrastayi gandhara to tarastayi gandhara.

Besides common Flute, various types of Flute like Konrai, Ambal and Mullai kulal are also mentioned. Among these Ambal is the only variety which consists of a mouth piece in the shape of an ambal bud. The Ambal Kulal is depicted as reed pipe in the work Narrinai. According to Nachchinar Kinyar, the commentator of Kurinchipattu, Kalithogai & Sivakachintamani the term Ambal denotes as ‘Pan’. But Atiyarkkunallar, the commentator of

Chilapathikaram, distinctly declares that Ambal is a Flute and not a 'pan'. He further added that the instrument had a mouthpiece in the shape of a lotus bud. This mouthpiece, made of bronze was attached to the tube of Flute. Dr. B M Sundaram undoubtedly states that Ambal kuzhal is the parental form of present Nagaswara. Dr. Salem S Jeyalakshmi in her book 'The History of Tamil Music' describes about the invention of wind instrument. Vangiyam or Kuzhal an important wind instrument might have developed in the context of pastoral land (land of mullai).

S Ramanathan in his book 'Music in Chilapadikaram' states that the structure and fingering system of Kuzhal matches with that of Nagaswara. He points out that the Kuzhal, one of the earliest instrument is frequently mentioned in Chilapathikaram and held a prominent place in the orchestra providing the music for dance. He further says that Kuzhal was usually made of bamboo and sometimes bronze or rosewood was also used instead.

The verse quoted by Atiyarkkunallar gives the fingering system for the Kuzhal (T.124). The eighth hole at the right end is called muttirai and is always left open. The first three holes are closed by the index, middle and ring fingers of the left hand; the remaining four holes are closed by the index, middle, ring and little fingers of the right hand. This is the fingering system that prevails to this day in the south Indian Flute. It is also the same for the Nagaswara. (Ramanathan, 1979, P-52)

By opening and closing the holes fully the swaras of the raga Harikamboji (Cempalai) are produced in Flute and Nagaswara of south India. By closing the first two holes, shadja is produced in South Indian Flute and Nagaswara, whereas in North Indian Flute the same is produced by closing the first three holes. Both Mullai Yazh and Mullai Kuzhal have some similarities. Strings of Mullai Yazh tuned to the 5 notes of Mullai pan. Similarly Mullai Kuzhal also has five holes.

It is evident that up to the beginning of 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Flute was served as a drone instrument. As referred in Kalidasa's 'Raghuvamsa' (5<sup>th</sup> century AD) the Flute pointed out the exact place of 'sthana' of the singer. As per 'Kumarasambhava' dry bamboos provided tana or sruti to the music of Kinnaras. In 'Kalithogai' and 'Paripadal', the music of Yazh was measured and checked by the Flute.

'Classical musical instruments', by Dr. Suneera Kasliwal discuss about Mohori, an instrument prevailed during 6<sup>th</sup> century AD. She points out that Madhukari, a developed form of Mohori was considered to be the predecessors of all double reed instruments like Nagaswara, Shehanai, Mukhavina and so on.

According to Dr. B M Sundaram, although this age claims a great tradition of music, the wind instruments like Kuzhal were not played in Tevaram, the earliest musical composition. Nagaswara played only ragas, which were the part of manodharma sangita.

In the Book 'History of South Indian (Carnatic) music', Rangaramanuja Ayyangar noted that the releasing of the Venu and Vina from the Kutapa paved the way for the domain of absolute music. Nagaswara together with Taval lead to the marvelous creativity in absolute music.

## **2.2 References in literature**

In south Indian literature we get references about Mukhavina only from 12<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards. 'Sangita Samayasara' of Parsvadeva (12<sup>th</sup> century AD) and 'Sangita Ratnakara' of Sarangadeva (13<sup>th</sup> century AD), mentions about the instrument Mukhavina. Madhukari is also mentioned in 'Sangita Ratnakara'. L.S.Rajagopalan in his book 'Temple musical instruments of Kerala' observed that Nagaswara was a development of Madhukari which existed in its prakrit form in the Mohuri of Orissa and it was used in the temple rituals as well as in folk dances in Orissa.

Before 15<sup>th</sup> century AD there was no reference about Nagaswara in any literary works. The Telugu text 'Kreedabhirama' of Vallabharaya (Srinatha) gives the first reference about Nagaswara in 1420 AD. A dictionary at the same period refers Nagasara and Nagasura. Apart from this, Dr. B M Sundaram finds that a dictionary named 'Mangabhidanam' compiled by Mangarasa in 9<sup>th</sup> century AD refers "Nagaswara brings out sunadam". This proves that the name Nagaswara existed even during the period of 9<sup>th</sup> century AD.

The earliest text 'Skandapurana' mentions various Kuzhal (Chinnas) and talavadyas. The term Nagaswara was written in Sivarahasya Khanda of Sambhava Khanda.

Sanskrit Scholar Thiruvencalappan who lived in 15<sup>th</sup> century AD, a contemporary of Tallapakkam Annamacharya wrote that he had invited two Nagaswara players for a ceremony. Various musical instruments including 'Nagasara' were mentioned by Haribhatta in 'Narasimhapurana'.

There is a record on festival grant given to Chinna Kesava Swamy of Neelakanta temple at Nitturu village in Tatpatri Taluk during the reign of Sadasivaraya of Vijayanagara Empire (1543-1567). There is a special mention on temple servants including practitioners of Nagaswara who had been assigned land. (mac Jengie MSS Records 15-3-39 p-109) (Jayasankar, 2015, P-27)

According to a census of Mysore in AD 1632 there was a record of the appointment of temple servants including a Nagaswara player and a Taval player.

A Tamil literary work 'Irattinagari Ula' written in 16<sup>th</sup> century AD mentions various musical instruments with a special focus on Nagaswara and Taval as its accompaniment.

An iconography belonging to the Chola period was found in Chidambaram temple. It displays various types of piped instruments. Some Scholars attribute the antiquity of Nagaswara to this iconography. A recorded reference in an inscription about

Nagaswara was found in 1496 in Tirumala. In middle of 16<sup>th</sup> century AD another inscription was found in Nitturu and Devalapura.

### **2.3 Different stages in the evolution**

There are many legends relating to the origin of the instrument Nagaswara. To mention a legend, it is said that the asura king Nagasura performed a penance for the appearance of Lord Siva. Being pleased at his act Siva appeared and presented him a musical instrument with a shape of snake (naga). Later this instrument came to be known as Nagaswara.

In olden times, rolling the leaves of poovarasu, keeping it in the mouth in between the lips and blowing through the same, produced a special sound. Later on coconut leaf was being used in the place of leaves of poovarasu. This may be the idea behind introducing the reed for Nagaswara.

Magudi, an instrument currently used by the snake charmers can be cited as an earlier variety of Nagaswara. The names Mori, Mahudi, Magudi etc. were the various colloquial versions for this instrument which belonged to tribal or folk category. So it is reasonable to believe that the instrument Magudi or Pungi used by snake charmers is similar to Nagaswara. Both instruments are almost similar in appearance, shape, playing technique and sound production. In Magudi there is a hole pierced on the top of the neck of the gourd through which air is blown and played. Some

time the nostrils are used to blow the instrument, hence it is also called as Nasajantara.

From its shape the instrument appears to be the proto type of Magudi. The addition of two long tubes; one inserted into the mouth hole while the other fixed at the bottom. The Magudi that survives has bottle gourd resonators into the bulbous end of which are inserted two canes. Their interior ends are cut so as to form reeds. One pipe gives the drone note while the other is pierced with finger holes for playing music. (Premalatha, 1985, P-4)

Magudi is carved on a pillar in a mandapa at Krishnapuram in Tirunelveli, Vaithiswarankoil and later in the Nanjangud temple. Carvings or paintings of this reed instrument can also be found in Arkesvara temple in Hale Alar of Hoysala architecture in Mysore state.

The inspiration from Magudi might have paved the way for the development of Mukhavina. Mukhavina, Kurumkuzhal, and Madhukari are almost similar in spite of some slight differences but they co-existed during the same period in various places. Mukhavina is smaller than Kurumkuzhal and its tone is more melodious than the latter. However Madhukari and Kurumkuzhal have more similarities. In the sixth chapter of 'Sangita Ratnakara' (13<sup>th</sup> century AD), Sarangadeva gives description about the instrument Madhukari.

Kururmkuuzhal is one of the earliest musical instrument existed in Kerala from the early Buddhist age. It has been traditionally used as part of the temple tala ensembles pancharimelam and pandimelam in Kerala. Occasionally it was used as solo instrument and the solo item is called as 'kuzhalpattu'. The Kurumkuzhal is used to be made in various places of Kerala such as Thripunithura (Ernakulam district), Thiruvilwamala (Thrissur district), Panamana (Palakkad district) etc. Kurumkuzhal is also brought from Narasingapettai in Tanjore district. Sometimes Kurumkuzhal is reshaped out of damaged Nagaswaras also. Usually the Nair community enjoyed the right of playing Kurumkuzhal in Kerala. Some families enjoyed the privilege of playing Kurumkuzhal in some temples and were honored by the title 'Panicker' equivalent to an army sergeant or drill master.

Mukhavina was a part of Chinnamelam, a dance orchestra of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Earlier it was used as a wind accompaniment to Mohiniyattam with turutti and talam. Later it was substituted by Flute or Violin.

The length of Mukhavina varies from 15 cm to 38 cm and of Kurumkuzhal from 30 cm to 46 cm. Mukhavina consists of 8 holes among which 7 are playing holes. Kurumkuzhal also consists of 8 holes, out of which 7 are in one line and the remaining one is at the top on the lower side, closed by the left thumb (Nishada). Both the instruments have a wooden body with conical bore and the reed is fixed at the top end. It is mostly used to play madhyastayi and

tarastayi. Mandrastayi prayogas cannot be played in Kurumkuzhal. So Nagaswara, the more lengthy instrument supposed to be developed to overcome this limitation.

It was in 13<sup>th</sup> century AD, the Shehanai finds a place in literary works. Kurumkuzhal and Shehanai are similar in every aspect. Length of Shehanai varies from 30 cm to 46 cm and has 8 or 9 holes; among which 7 are playing holes. Remaining 2 holes are either closed with wax or left open. As per the book ‘Classical musical instruments’ by Dr. Suneera Kasliwal, Madhukari was the precursor of Shehanai. Some others opined that Hakiema-bu-ali Sanai introduced Shehanai hence it named after his surname. Other experts says that Shehanai is a proto type of ancient Egyptian Nai and the name was given by Mohamedans who came to India, due to the similarity between their instrument with that of Indian. Instruments Shehanai, Nafiri, and Sundari resemble in structure and differ in size. Shehanai is a North Indian instrument used in sacred celebrations, hence it is considered as a Mangalavadya.

Name of the instrument	Sruti (Kattai)	Total Number of holes	Number of playing holes	Length of Olavu (body)	Total length including Anasu	Diameter upper side	Diameter lower side
Mukhavina	1½	8	7	30 cm	38 cm	5.5 cm	8 cm
Kurumkuzhal	2½	8	8	33 cm	38 cm	6 cm	8 cm
Timiri Nagaswara	4	12	7	53.34 cm	66 cm	7.5 cm	11 cm
Timiri Nagaswara	4½	12	7	53.34 cm	66 cm	7.5 cm	11.5 cm
Idabari Nagaswara	3	12	7	62.23 cm	77.47 cm	8 cm	11.5 cm
Bari Nagaswara	2½	12	7	68.58 cm	86.36 cm	8.5 cm	12 cm

Nagaswara and Taval have been referred as distinct musical instruments from 15<sup>th</sup> century AD. Taval could have been introduced to South Indian music by two means; either by the wandering group of dancers or directly by the Arabs during Pre-Mughal period (14<sup>th</sup> century AD). The term Taval may have been derived from the word 'Duhil'. It is equally important that drums that resemble Taval existed in Tamil Nadu from 1<sup>st</sup> century AD onwards. It suggests that only the name was adopted but the instrument is indigenous. Such instruments are depicted in Belur and Halebid sculptures.

There is a Tiruppugazh song begins with 'Tavalaka Nanparai Kalamotimilaitoni' composed by Arunagirinathar (15<sup>th</sup> century AD). 'Taval Nanparai' refers to the act of playing Taval during the worship offered to flagstaff (kotisthambam) of the temple. It is said that the old name of Taval was Dindimum. However Taval has been considered as the apt accompaniment to Nagaswara.

The instruments Uthalavenu, Kuzhal, Vangiyam, Magudi, Madhukari, Kurumkuzhal and Mukhavina had its own transformation through various ages and this paved the way to the gradual evolution of Nagaswara by around 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> century AD.

#### **2.4 Nagaswara is of 3 types**

- 1) Timiri Nagaswara (4 to 6 kattai sruti)
- 2) Idabari Nagaswara (3 to 3 ½ kattai sruti)
- 3) Bari Nagaswara (2 to 2 ½ kattai sruti)

Timiri Nagaswara is smaller which resembles Mukhavina or Shehanai. Among Timiri itself, various types existed according to the variations in pitch such as 4 kattai, 4 ½ kattai, 5kattai, 5 ½ kattai, 6kattai etc. Timiri Nagaswara having 4 ½ kattai sruti should have 66 cm of length including anasu. The olavu alone is 54 cm long. The diameter of olavu is 11 ½ cm. If it has 4 kattai sruti, length is same but diameter of olavu will be 11 cm. The Sannadi which has been mentioned by Ahobala in his work ‘Sangita Parijatha’ is the popular name of the Timiri Nagaswara.

The older type Timiri Nagaswara was firstly used in temples of Tamil Nadu in open scenario especially for temple rituals and festivals. It possesses a penetrating sound and reaches merely 5 km of distance from the temples. The purpose of playing Nagaswara in temples was to inform the villagers the timing of rituals of the temple.

During the post Trinity period Nagaswara music transformed to the concert platform. This transformation resulted in the restructuring of Timiri Nagaswara into Bari Nagaswara. It was T N Rajaratnam Pillai who worked with the Nagaswara craftsman Narasingapettai Ranganatha Achari and restructured Timiri Nagaswara and developed the present Bari Nagaswara by increasing the length of the instrument. By increasing the length, the sruti of the instrument reduced from 5 or 6 kattai to 3 or 3 ½ kattai, called Idabari and after that again restructured to 2 or 2 ½ kattai sruti called Bari Nagaswara. The present day Bari

Nagaswara has a length of 87 cm including anasu. The olavu alone is 69 cm long and the diameter of olavu is 12 cm. This transformation brought out the sound of the instrument more fascinating and majestic. As a result the base quality of the instrument increased and it felt as a heavy sound. By reducing the pitch to 2 kattai the instrument attained a universal appeal too.

### **Length between the holes**

	Timiri 4½ kattai	Bari 2½ kattai
1 <sup>st</sup> hole to 2 <sup>nd</sup> hole	3.1 cm	3.3 cm
2 <sup>nd</sup> hole to 3 <sup>rd</sup> hole	3.1 cm	3.3 cm
3 <sup>rd</sup> hole to 4 <sup>th</sup> hole	3.1 cm	3.3 cm
4 <sup>th</sup> hole to 5 <sup>th</sup> hole	3.1 cm	3.3 cm
5 <sup>th</sup> hole to 6 <sup>th</sup> hole	3.1 cm	3.3 cm
6 <sup>th</sup> hole to 7 <sup>th</sup> hole	3.3 cm	3.7 cm
7 <sup>th</sup> hole to first side hole	4.1 cm	9.2 cm
7 <sup>th</sup> hole to second side hole	11.7 cm	13.2 cm
7 <sup>th</sup> hole to middle hole	7.3 cm	13.2 cm

## **2.5 Construction and playing technique**

Nagaswara a double reed wind instrument is made of black wood. The black wood which is also known as achamaram in Tamil and devadaru in Sanskrit, are commonly grown in the river basin of Godavari in Andhra Pradesh. This wood is stronger, colored and weightless. The instrument is made by cutting the

wood into pieces of same length. Towards the bottom end it widens into the shape of a conical bore. Machines are used to mold the instrument.

A Nagaswara consists of

- 1) Seevali (the reed through which the air is blown)
- 2) Kandai (the part to which the seevali is inserted)
- 3) Olavu (the main part of the instrument)
- 4) Anasu (the lower portion of the instrument which ends with conical part)

(1) **Seevali** (Jeevali)

It is the reed through which the air is blown. It is also known as jeevali which means the life giver. Later on it came to be pronounced as seevali. In Telugu it is called as 'aku'. In Shehanai it is known 'patti'. The seevali is made out of a particular kind of grass - naga (njanalpullu) which grows only on the river banks of Kaveri. The grass is cut and dried in sunshine and shade for one year. The top and bottom of the grass are cut and tied into small bundles which are immersed in water. Then they are squeezed and cooked along with paddy. It is cut into pieces of 3.8 cm and rolled up on to small iron rod, which are fastened with strong thread for five rounds at the edge. The uniqueness is that the rounds are restricted to five times for the right production of the sound. Of the two edges of the reed the lower is tied and the upper is kept open. This is placed between two smooth pieces of

plank and pressed to dehydrate and later dry. Thus seevali is formed in the shape with a plain upper side and rounded bottom. While rendering, when the seevali get damped with saliva it is replaced by new one in order to attain the desirable stayi. It is for this very purpose that a number of seevalis tied up to the Nagaswara like a garland on a cord.

### (2) **Kandai** (Kanda)

Kandai act as a valve that lets right volume of air pass through Nagaswara by connecting its hole with seevali. It also helps to keep seevali from clogging with pressing force of the lips. On the narrow side of kandai seevali is fixed. Now it is called kandai seevali in Tamil. Kandai which is placed in between the hole of Nagaswara and seevali helps to press the lips forcefully and also act as a support to the lips. The thin copper plate being cut to a length of 1.27 cm it is rolled in the higher diameter at the bottom and the lower diameter at the top and is soldered. A coconut shell cut into two small pieces, piercing hole at the centre and fix it into a copper tube and stick it with peanut paste. Finally a thread immersed in paste tied at the bottom of copper tube and on the pieces of coconut shell and get dried.

### (3) **Olavu** (body)

The olavu of a Nagaswara which has 2 ½ kattai sruti is 69 cm long. The upper part of the kuzhal is lesser in diameter than the downward part. The inside of the olavu is made hollow and

smooth. It then makes seven holes for swaras at a distance of 2 to 4 cm from top to bottom. These are known as jeevaswaras. From this 13 cm downward there is another hole called brahmaswara; accompanied by its two sides with two holes each. Among the four holes, one is closed with wax. It helps to control the wind passing through the pipe so as not to vary the swaras according to the volume of the wind. There is a hole on the top of the kuzhal to fix the seevali.

#### (4) **Anasu (Bell)**

The lower part of the Nagaswara called anasu, is bell shaped. The Anasu is commonly 19 cm long, the diameter of the rounded part is 14 cm and diameter for the top mounting circle is 5 cm. Anasu is made by churning the wood of 'vaka' tree in very slight thickness. Then anasu is fixed on olavu. In Timiri Nagaswaras the anasu was made with the metals like bronze, brass etc. When the lengthy Bari Nagaswara was formed, anasu made only with lightweight wood could be used. It is not recommended to use paint, varnish, polish etc. in the olavu and anasu to enhance the beauty because it will lose its original sound. Instead the instrument is polished with pure oil (sesame oil). Two or three tubes of coconut palms are used for piping and washing with pure water to remove the dirt inside the pipe. During summer occasions water would be poured inside the pipe to cool it.

## **Playing technique**

Each musical instrument has its own unique sound. Compared to the other instruments Nagaswara produces a sound which is of a higher volume. Good health, sound knowledge on music and the ability to control the breath are the pre-requisite for a good Nagaswara player. It takes a long period to perfect the sound produced. One has to place the left fingers on the upper side and right fingers on the lower side of the Nagaswara. The index finger, middle finger and the ring finger of the left hand and the four fingers except thumb of the right hand are used to open and close the seven playing holes. Both thumbs are used to hold the instrument while playing.

1<sup>st</sup> hole – index finger of the left hand (upper side)

2<sup>nd</sup> hole – middle finger of the left hand (upper side)

3<sup>rd</sup> hole – ring finger of the left hand (upper side)

4<sup>th</sup> hole – index finger of the right hand (lower side)

5<sup>th</sup> hole – middle finger of the right hand (lower side)

6<sup>th</sup> hole – ring finger of the right hand (lower side)

7<sup>th</sup> hole – little finger of the right hand (lower side)

## **Fingering techniques adopted for various swaras**

Madhyastayi Shadja: 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> hole closed and the remaining holes are kept open

Rishabha: 1<sup>st</sup> hole closed and the rest of the holes are kept open.

Gandhara: All holes are kept open.

Sudha madhyama: 1<sup>st</sup> hole kept open and the rest of the holes are kept closed.

Panchama: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> holes are closed and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> holes are kept open

Dhaivata: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> holes are closed and 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> holes are kept open

Nishada: 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> holes are closed and 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> holes are kept open

The varieties of Rishabha, Gandhara, Madhyama, Dhaivata and Nishada are produced by necessary control over the amount of air blown in while fingering techniques remains the same as said above. Higher the swarastanas of the notes, larger will be the amount of air blown in. In order to produce the inherent bhava of the ragas which takes the consecutive notes like (sudha rishabha – sudha gandhara, shadsruti rishabha – antara gandhara, sudha dhaivata – sudha nishada, shadsruti dhaivata – kakali nishada) peculiar type of playing technique is adopted. This is done by employing the technique – ‘viraladi’ of the fingers over the finger holes and also by regulated amount of air blown in through the seevali with the help of the lips.

Nagaswara has a range of 2 ½ octaves; mandrastayi shadja to tarastayi panchama. The air collected from the navel passes

through the chest and neck regions and finally reaches the mouth cavity. Later it is blown through the seevali to the tube. While rendering sahitya of a kriti the tongue should be in touch with seevali and while rendering only swaras the tongue should not touch the seevali. This is known as 'rendering with thuthukaram'. For imparting nuances and graces the playing techniques like viraladi, briga, udattu sadhakam etc. are applied. This is an exclusive technique found in Nagaswara playing.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **ROLE OF NAGASWARA IN DIFFERENT GENRES OF MUSIC**

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## **ROLE OF NAGASWARA IN DIFFERENT GENRES OF MUSIC**

Humanity has been searching for answers to understand nature since the beginnings. For the expression of thoughts and emotions music served as a medium. The evolution of music is embedded in the growth of religious centres and society. South Indian musical traditions are very much entwined in temple rituals, folk rituals and religious ritualistic traditions.

From the Sangam era there was a tradition to employ wind and percussion instruments on all auspicious ceremonies. The musical instruments Parai and Sangu which were in use during auspicious ceremony were later replaced by Taval and Nagaswara which are from the same group and type with the same intention of an announcement and invitation to the auspicious ceremony. The rich and loud tones of musical instruments Parai and Sangu as well as Taval and Nagaswara played in auspicious occasions able to attract people, as the music has the power to win the hearts of people. Thus our tradition of engaging these musical instruments for enhancing the merriment of festive environments is being continued through centuries.

### **3.1 Ritualistic music**

In the age of the Hindu revival the period between 7<sup>th</sup> century AD and 9<sup>th</sup> century AD i.e. after the dark age (3<sup>rd</sup> century AD to 6<sup>th</sup> century AD) South Indian history marks the tradition of performing devotional music in temples with the Tevaram hymns of Trinities; Tirujnana Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar and the composition of Alvars, oozing bhakti as offerings to God. The soul of India was established in temples and other religious places by way of patronizing literature and fine arts, soaked in devotion, the integral part of Indian mind set. In temples while the deity taken out for holy procession, there was a ritual of singing of Tevaram called Tevarathu currukalluri and the artiste called Tevara Nayagam. Tevaram hymns are the earliest musical compositions set to regular music and tala. Prior to this, compositions were sung in a particular chandas or vedic metre and not set to a tala. The Saivate sages followed by the Vaishnavaites, who spread the doctrines of Hinduism through their dedicated involvement in temple festivities made the rituals part and parcel of daily routine and schedule of South Indian life. Thus Hinduism re-established with a revival.

The Chera, Chola and Pandya kings were the patrons of all fine arts and protectors of religion and culture of South India. When these dynasties were in rule, the tradition of Devadasi culture was also flourished in the temples of South India. The Devadasis were treated with high esteem and in addition to temple

festivities and activities their presence were solicited even in other religious and sacred ritual outside the temple. Devadasis, both male and female dedicated themselves to the service of the temple and deity.

As a part of worship, Devadasis developed the system of music and dance. Consequently the temple evolved as a cultural centre too. This encouraged the exaltation of the musicians and dancers including instrumentalists, oduvars etc. Music and dance became the part of 'upasana' to the gods and goddesses. The music tradition has acquired regional variations based on melody and rhythm. Gradually dance and music were made an essential and inevitable part of daily rituals of temples by the rules of worship. Music masters (both vocal and instrument) and dance masters were appointed to train them. The Devadasis being the preservers of music and dance enjoyed a high decorum and status in the society during the period from 6<sup>th</sup> century to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD.

It was during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Nagaswara and Taval become the distinct musical instruments of temple rituals. The period from 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards has been considered highly significant for the development of classical music as well as instrumental music tradition in South India. Variety of musical instruments which were able to produce even the minute nuances of a raga took shape and also the prevailing instruments especially the stringed and wind instruments were mould and modified during this period. Nagaswara occupies the prominence in this context.

Marathi kirtanas composed by great saints were introduced in Tanjore during Maratha rule. This made Tanjore a centre of devotional music. Samartha Ramadasa with the establishment of his mutt in 1663 laid foundation for kirtana singing in the temples of Tanjore. All these developments made Tanjore a great seat of Carnatic music. Various musical instruments, capable of expressing zestful subtleties of the ragas developed during this era. It is believed that Nagaswara players followed the time theory in playing ragas in temples during the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Nagaswara acquired a vital role in temple music during this period. Further it became the most sacred and significant instrument in South Indian ritualistic music and temple music reached its zenith with the advancement of Nagaswara.

In the history of music the reign of Tulaja II can be considered as the beginning of the golden era of Carnatic music. Saint composers, renowned Vainikas, eminent musicians and distinguished dancers were lived and flourished during this period. It was at this time Nagaswara and Tavil received a separate identity and became the part of serious art music. Oral tradition confirms that Nagaswara could play all ragas of Carnatic music with utmost beauty and the musicians received great respect from the society. It is to be remembered that Nagaswara and Tavil adjoined to be the pivotal melodic and rhythmic instruments.

From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century AD onwards Pallavi was considered as a pivotal part of music presentation. Nagaswara

tradition introduced the system of rendering a one line composition after a detailed singing of raga and its improvisation. Ratthi mela somewhat similar to Pallavi, usually set to misrachappu tala, was another musical form exclusively used in Nagaswara. Firstly Ratthi is composed in rhythmic syllabic form. Secondly it converted to raga and thus created multiple complicated rhythmic presentations in melody. It is a form of composed music derived from rhythmic structures without lyrics.

Ramaswami Dikshitar (1735-1817), member of the court of Tulaja II had formalized and systematized Nagaswara tradition as a part of Tiruvarur temple rituals. He systematized Nagaswara music related to religious ceremonies at Tiruvarur temple. Suitable ragas were selected to delineate the mood of time in everyday rituals and occasion of festivals. This elaborated the possibilities of manodharma sangita or the boundless rendition of a particular raga according to the mood of time and artist. This provided the artist ample opportunity to mould their skills and manifest their mastery. During festivals their rendition would last even for hours, improvising on a particular raga. Although the Nagaswara players rendered music as ritual music, their mesmerizing rendering most often seemed go far beyond the rituals. This must have influenced the emanation of the modern alapana. In fact the temple centric music was transformed by Nagaswara into the people centric music.

Among the seven sacred places of Lord Tyagaraja, Tiruvarur deserves a special mention being the most important cultural centre of music and dance in South India. The uniqueness of Tiruvarur temple lies in the introduction of Nagaswara as a temple ritual. There is a legend on Tiruvarur temple that it was built by heavenly beings and not by earthly kings. It is also believed that the divine Nagaswara originated from here.

Ramaswami Dikshitar specified particular ragas for the Nagaswara players and tala for the dancers and players of percussion instruments like Panchamukhavadya, Sudhamaddala etc. The traditional ritual Arukalapujas (Six pujas a day) of Tiruvarur temple has been strictly followed the raga pattern almost for the past 30 years.

### **3.2 Day to day rituals and Nagaswara**

Followed by Tiruvarur, the tradition of playing Nagaswara and Taval as part of daily pujas and festivals further expanded to all other temples and become a regular practise. Nagaswara playing being an inevitable part of temple ritual has been performing from the opening of the temple in the early morning till the closing at midnight. The musical practise by Nagaswara had become an unwritten rule for every temple. A specific time was prescribed for each raga i.e. morning, afternoon, evening, night etc. so that the people could identify the particular time by listening to the particular raga. People could recognize what was going on the

temple even being at houses along the streets of the temple. Percussion instruments as an accompaniment also had to follow similar patterns of routine in each and every pujas of the temples.

<b>Ritual (puja)</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Ragas played in Nagaswara</b>
Tirupalliyezhucchi	5.30 A M	Bhupalam
Tiruvanandal	6.00 A M	Bauli, Malayamarutham Mayamalavagoula, Nadanamakriya, Valaji
Kalasandi	8.00 A.M	Abhogi, Arabhi, Asaveri, Bilahari, Dhanyasi, Kedaram Devagandhari, Saveri, Sudha Bengala, Sudha dhanyasi, Sudha saveri, Surutti
Uchikalam	11.00 A.M	Bengala, Manirangu, Madhyamavati, Sri
Sayarakshai	5.00 PM	Bhairavi, Darbar, Harikamboji, Kalyani, Kamboji, Sankarabharanam, Shanmughapriya, Kharaharapriya, Nattakurinji, Panthavarali.
Irاندام Kalam	7.00 PM	Abheri, Anandabhairavi, Atana, Begada, Mohanam, Kedara goula
Ardha jamam	9.00 P.M	Neelambari

### Sreekrishna Temple, Guruvayur

Ritual (puja)	Time	Ragas played in Nagaswara
Palliyunarthal Ushapuja	3.00 A M 6.00 A M	Bhupalam, Bauli, Revagupti Mayamalavagoula, Bilahari, Kedaram
Pantheeradi puja	8.00 AM to 9.00 AM	Sudha dhanyasi, Saveri, Arabhi
Ucha puja	Noon	Sri, Surutti, Madhyamavati
Deeparadhana	5-7 PM	Purvikalyani, Kalyani, Mandari, Hamsadhwani
Athazha puja	Night	Bhairavi, Kamboji, Mohanam
Ezhunnallath	9-10 PM	This ritual exists only in Guruvayur Temple. Usage of Idakka instead of Tavil is a special feature.

The specific patterns of employing musical instruments during temple rituals were subjected to Tantra sastra, which stood as the principles of the temple pujas and other rituals. According to Tantra grandhas, in most of the temple rituals sounding of musical instruments was an essential factor.

Gods were offered some services called upacharas such as Dhupa (incense), Dipa (lighted lamps) and Naivedya (offering food). Sounding of musical instruments was also one among them.

Music offered to God comprises three fold aspects gita, vadya and nritya. This music was offered to God as an accompaniment to some rituals. Besides it was also offered as a ritual itself. All these conventions and traditions had some meaningful and valuable significance.

The primitive man worshipped natural forces such as thunder, lightening etc. as Gods. He who has afraid of these Gods started to dance and sing in order to please them. He used crude drums as an accompaniment to this practise. This practise has been continued still with timely changes. A healthy and pleasing atmosphere can be created by sounding the musical instruments. Harmonious blending of omkaranada of Sangu and the euphonious sound of Idakka proves this. A serene and peaceful atmosphere can be created with these sounds. This generates the supreme feeling of devotion in human minds.

Being a holy place, the devotees were expected to think of or listen to only sacred things in a temple. If some inauspicious words are uttered in the temple premises the loud sound of instruments like Drums, Nagaswara, cymbals etc. will submerge them. This can be said to be one of the reasons for the use of instruments in the temples. The loud sound of the musical instruments and the songs in praise of God help the priest to perform his pujas with more concentration, free from all distracting elements. This sound also has some therapeutic values in some occasions.

### **3.3 Nagaswara as a Mangalavadya**

Nagaswara adorns a glorious position in temple rituals and social events. Among the numerous musical instruments in South India, only the Nagaswara has attained the distinction of a 'Mangalavadya'. The prime reasons are

- 1) It is capable of producing a sound which is audible in the atmosphere of the temple surrounded by large crowds.
- 2) It can emanate an auspicious music which helps to create a devotional atmosphere.

The Nagaswara is highly celebrated in South India especially in Tamil Nadu, a land with cluster of villages where there is not even a single temple exist without practising Nagaswara. Kings, Lords (zamindars) and Heads of Mutts (Hindu monasteries) of those days, who were believers of God, have done a lot for the development of the temples under their control. Realising that the people around the temple should be aware of the systems of worship they introduced a systematic traditional pattern of worship for which they appointed 'Kurukkals' and 'Brahmins' from Tamil Nadu and 'Namboothiris' from Kerala. Along with this they also appointed Nagaswara and Taval players and Nagaswara playing was made customary during the pujas of temples. Gradually Nagaswara playing became essential for all auspicious functions from upanayana (sacred thread ceremony) and from Sappathi (70<sup>th</sup>

Birthday) to Aseethy (100<sup>th</sup> Birthday). Moreover it was able to reach out the common man.

Later it became indispensable for social functions like wedding etc. 'Kettimelam' is the tune exclusively played during the tying of the mangalyasutra. 'Muthaliyars', 'Saivapillais' and 'Kampars' of Tamil Nadu and 'Marars' in Kerala took up playing Nagaswara as their hereditary occupation.

In temple premises pujaris, dancers and Nagaswara players together organised 'Sadirus' (concerts). With the advent of the trained Nagaswara players there was a tremendous development in this art which led to the spread of its fame. Thus Tamil Nadu became the seat of art of Nagaswara playing. The heads of mutts 'Dharmapuram Adheenam', 'Kundraikkudi Adheenam' and 'Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam' appointed Nagaswara players as the artistes of Head Quarters in their mutts providing them all kinds of amenities.

Among the reed instruments Nagaswara possessed a comparatively higher status. Nagaswara tradition in Tiruvarur is extensive and immutable. Tiruvarur tradition is matter of proud secret of every Nagaswara vidwan. It is a unique treasure house of ritual music naduppati, tattam, padavarnas etc. Melakkara community enjoys the privilege of playing Nagaswara and Tavil in Tanjore.

### **3.4 The Role of Nagaswara in the rituals of Kerala temples**

There are predominant hints in the fourteenth century text like, 'Unnuneelisandesam', 'Chandrotsavam' etc. that Nagaswara was being used from the very olden times within the boundaries of the land presently known as Kerala. As is evident from the studies conducted in the other states in India, it could be argued that the mural paintings and the granite Nagaswara found in Vaikkom, Ettumanur, Omallur, Thiruvananthapuram Padmanabhaswami temple, Kochi Thirumala temple etc. there are evidences that the musical instrument Nagaswara did exist in Kerala from the very olden times. Also researchers have succeeded in finding out the proto type of the early forms of the Nagaswara in the contemporary Kerala.

Even though the instrument was born in Tamil Nadu, it was being used by and large in Kerala, which was also a part of Tamil Nadu in those days. Nagaswara was generally used in the temples of Southern parts of Kerala, but slowly it was extended to northern parts also. In Malabar regions there were existed celebrations related to kavus instead of great temple festivals where Nagaswara playing was part of the rituals.

Due to the combined effort of the temple priests (pujaris), teachers (gurus), Devadasis, musicians etc. there was an astonishing growth in the field of music in Tamil Nadu temples where as in Kerala temples, the priests especially namboothiris

interests were restricted to the recital of the sacred hymns (mantras) and developing of tala ensembles where in percussion instruments like Chenda, Maddalam, Thimila, Idakka etc. and wind instruments like Kombu, Kuzhal etc. were used in profusion. It is interesting to note that in Tamil Nadu even today, prior to the temple ceremonies like Kumbhabhishekam etc. the priests would make a special reference to the temple musicians to play the musical instruments in specific ragas and the priests would utter the mantras in that specific ragas alone. In Kerala temples the ceremonies are devoid of such practice. But still there are evidences to prove that there existed 'ponnin Nagaswarakar' and 'thanka Nagaswara vidwans' who were honored by receiving gold or silver Nagaswara.

In Ulloor S. Parameswara Iyer's 'Vignana Deepika' while narrating Rameswaram journey of Karthika Thirunal Maharaja of Travancore there is a reference that 'ponnin Nagaswarakkar' performed in their instruments to entertain the Maharaja during his overnight stay after visiting various shrines. Hence it is evident that 'ponnin Nagaswarakkar' present in Kerala though we know only a little about the instrument and whether they were manufactured in Kerala itself.

Parallel to the systems of caste based occupation in Tamil Nadu, where the Saivapillais and Mudaliyars dealt with the performing of temple instruments of music, in Kerala the Panickers, a sub group of the Marar community had accepted the

performing of the musical instruments like Nagaswara and Taval as their hereditary occupation.

### **Kerala Temples**

The Nagaswara rendering during pujas and temple festivals vary in the temples of southern, northern and central regions of Kerala. In southern regions the current practice of the Kerala temples is that Nagaswara is played during important annual ceremonies like Pallivetta etc. While the idol is taken out on caparisoned elephants for 'arattu', Nagaswara is extensively played stopping on definite important places before entering into the temple.

Thiruvananthapuram Sri Padmanabha Swami temple has long been known for its rituals where Nagaswara playing occupy a prominent role. It is said that Maharaja Swathi Thirunal has designed the kirtanas composed by him to be played by the Nagaswara players for various pujas. The Nagaswara vidwans and Taval players were appointed according to their capacity for this. At present in a procession to Shankumukham, there is a custom of playing kirtanas in Timiri Nagaswara, players standing together in a line. Sri Padmanabha Swami temple is the only place in Kerala where Timiri Nagaswara is played today.

In Thiruvananthapuram Attukal temple there is a system of playing Neelambari raga for more than ten minutes, after 'ezhunnallath'. The temple closes only after this.

The 'Urul festival' at the Chirayinkeezhu Sarkkara Devi temple is very special. This festival is organized by twenty eight 'karakkar' (nearby residing people) irrespective of their caste and religion. They delegate famous Nagaswara vidwans from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh for this festival. After playing Nagaswara in a temple for two hours, Urul starts with the Nagaswara players in a well decorated vehicle with loudspeakers. This Urul stops at major places and the rendering on Nagaswara prolongs until finally it reaches at the temple premises. Urul from various places would take part in this procession. All Uruls together playing Nagaswara circle around the temple. The speciality is that 28 Nagaswara bands take part in the festival at the same time same day in this temple.

The temples of Kollam, Kayamkulam, Mavelikkara etc, give importance to rendering of Nagaswara in the evening as part of seva ezhunnellippu. This Nagaswara playing in front of deity extends up to 7 p.m. to 12.30 midnight. The same system has been followed at Chettikulangara Devi temple, Muthukulam Pandavarkkavu temple, Pathiyur temple, Evur temple, Ramapuram temple etc. In the temples of Ambalappuzha and Alappuzha, Nagaswara is played for rituals like Kalakabhishekam at noon and pujas at evening. In Thuravur Narasimhaswami temple festival, the rendering of Nagaswara on the day of deepavali during night is a great experience. Shakthikulangara temple also gives importance to Nagaswara.

In Vaikom Mahadeva temple festival, the day of ashtami is of great importance. On the twelfth day of the festival Nagaswara is played with solemnity during the most important ceremony where Lord Vaikkathappan along with gods and goddesses receives his son, Udayanapurathappan on his victorious returning after the assassination of Tharakasura. After the departing his son, Mahadeva (Vaikkathappan) sorrowfully returns to the srikovil (sanctum sanctorum) where the raga 'Dukhahandara' is played without the accompaniment of Taval. This Nagaswara rendering alone with sruti creates a sorrowful mood, which is a splendid experience for the listeners. It is said that it was Vaikom Kunjupillai Panicker who started this sorrowful raga rendering. This practice is still continued by his son Radhakrishna Panicker.

Guruvayur temple, Thrissur Vadakkumnathan temple, Thriprayar temple, Kodungallur temple etc. are the major temples of central Kerala where Nagaswara is played as part of rituals. Usually at Guruvayur temple for all pujas of the daily rituals; palliyunarthal, ushapuja, pantheeradipuja, uchapuja, deeparadhana, athazhapuja etc., Nagaswara is played along with Taval and Eduthudi. Ragas according to the theory of the time are played for each pujas. There is a unique pattern of playing Nagaswara during the 'vilakku' (a procession around the temple) in which Idakka is used instead of Taval.

'Vilakku' (a procession) is a unique ceremony held in Guruvayur temple. It is a rhythmically important procession where

in the main Kerala percussion instruments like Idakka, Chengila etc. are included. The procession starts from eastern nada of the temple. Here Adantha tala (misrachapu of 14 akshara kala) is played on Idakka continued with Gambhiranattai raga alapana on Nagaswara. When the procession reaches the south nada, Gambhiranattai is stopped and the rendering continued with a major raga. A vilambita kala pallavi in tripata tala followed with kalpana swaras is played when the procession reaches the west nada. A kirtana in misrajati tripata tala followed with another kirtana in tisra nadai is played. By this time procession reaches the north nadai. When the procession reaches the north east part of the temple a kirtana in Eka tala is played and finally when the procession reaches the front part of srikovil it is concluded with playing of raga Madhyamavati. This is the rendering pattern of 'Kuzhalpattu'.

In the famous Chembai sangeetholsavam, the day next to the inauguration Tantri, after lighting lamp sangitarchana begins with playing Nagaswara. The main attraction of the festival is that on the concluding day, just before the pancharatna kirtanalapana, the main attraction of the Chembai sangeetholsavam, there will be a traditional Nagaswara concert as the practice at Thiruvayyaru where the Tyagaraja Aradhana is held.

Excellent Nagaswara vidwans from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh reach Guruvayur every year regularly to take part in the Nagaswara concert held in connection with

Brahmotsavam in the month of Kumbha (a Malayalam month corresponding to mid-february to mid-march of the English Calendar).

In Kalpathi Siva temple, during the evening and night pujas for the deeparadhana and athazhapuja, playing Nagaswara is a tradition. Ragas like Revathy, Ranjini, Todi, Charukesi, Abhogi etc. are played during this ritual. In Kalpathi Sri Thiruppuraikkal Bhagavati temple for all pujas from dawn to doom Nagaswara is played. For morning pujas which extends up to about 20 minutes to 30 minutes ragas such as Mayamalavagoula, Bhauli, Bilahari, Mohanam, Todi etc, are played. During the noon puja ragas like Kapi, Bindumalini etc. are played. In the evening for deeparadhana ragas like Hamsadhwani, Gowla, Charukesi, Rajini etc. are rendered. For the night puja (athazhapuja) which is the longest, major ragas like Kamboji, Kalyani, Simhendramadhyamam etc. are played in Nagaswara. For the Kalpathi festival which extends for 10 days only Taval is played in the first day. In the Siva temple for the vasthupuja, as per the directions of the tantri (the main priest) different ragas will be played. Beginning with Gambhiranattai and followed by Hindolam, Saveri, Revathi, Mohanam, Madhyamavati etc. During the chariot festival (Redholsavam) Nagaswara is very important for all pujas. On the fifth day of the festival, the 'Redhasangamam', Nagaswara playing has a prominent role. On the eighth day of the festival during 'paruvetta' the 'pallakacheri' (concert of Nagaswara) is arranged. The concert begins at midnight

12 O'clock and extends up to morning 6 a.m. This concert is in the same pattern of a vocal concert but the taniavarthana part alone lasts for about two hours. Major ragas like Shanmukhapriya, Todi, Kalyani, Sankarabharanam, Kamboji etc. are played in this concert. After the procession when God enters the chariot mallari playing is a compulsory tradition. During the ritual 'annabhishekam' also Nagaswara is played.

In Kallekulangara Emoor Bhagavati temple playing Nagaswara is a compulsory tradition. It is a special feature in this temple that during seeveli instead of Nagaswara, kurumkuzhal is played.

At Palakkad Noorani temple during the ritual 'Sasthapreethi' Nagaswara playing has a prominent role. This ritual is in the month of December or January. While God Sasthavu celestially roams around the temple, a group of singers gather around and sing special kirtanas praising Sasthavu. Same kirtanas will be repeated later in Nagaswara. It starts around 9 a.m. and extends up to 12.30 p.m. till Sasthavu completes his ceremonial journey around the village this playing pattern is continued. Vadassery Brothers; Sivadasan and Sethumadhavan play Nagaswara for this ritual for the last 32 years continuously.

During the temple festival of Thripattukavu in Ponnani of Malappuram district after the procession when God is placed back

and after the ritual 'trippuka' playing Nagaswara is a compulsory tradition. Madhyamavati raga is played for this ritual.

### **3.5 Mallari**

Some art forms were not allowed to present outside the temple since they were considered as sacred and strictly dedicated only to Gods and Goddesses. For e.g. Sudhanrithyam, Kouthuvams, Bhujangatrasita Nrthyam etc. Mallari, Ratthi, Hecharika etc. are the items played exclusively on Nagaswara in temples. Mallari is connected to the five elements, earth, sky, air, water and fire. Universe and multitude of living beings are formed merging with these five elements and are connected as earth to body, water to life force, fire to mind, air to the varied expressions of mind and sky to the spiritual wisdom. Temples and dwelling places of human races have been built up in accordance with the philosophy of five elements.

Prior to the temple entry proclamation when people belonging to lower strata of the society were not allowed to enter into the temples and in order to provide them an opportunity to have a divine sight the deities were taken out in lofty chariots in Tamil Nadu and on elephants in Kerala in solemn procession as a ritual. On such occasions the procession is accompanied with 'Mallari' an exclusive musical form played on Nagaswara. It is not available in any records as to when and how the name Mallari came into being. The tradition is that the procession is to destroy

the evils of mankind and to shower virtue. There are two connotations for the word Mallari. One is that it is a combination of two words Mallu and Ari, mallu refers to fighting and Ari refers to the enemies. Thus Mallari means the one who fights with the enemies. The majestic nature of the Mallari aptly implies the victorious return of the Almighty. The second version is that the palanquin on which the divine image is seated is borne by wrestlers. To inspire and strengthen the bearers the majestic form Mallari is played. Gambhiranattai is the only raga in which Mallari is played. Gambhiranattai is such a raga which can depict the bhava of valour or bravery capable of strengthening the palanquin bearers.

Gambhiranattai is an audava raga which omits rishabha and dhaivata with the arohana and avarohana

S G M P N S – S N P M G S

It is a janya raga of 36<sup>th</sup> mela, Chalanatta and notes used in this raga are shadja, anthara gandhara, sudha madhyama, panchama, and kakali nishada. The raga Gambhiranattai is equivalent to Nattadai pan of the Tamils, devised by Karaikkal Ammaiyar, a Tamil Saivaite saint.

The Mallari is peculiar to Nagaswara music hence no other instruments plays Mallari. Ramaswami Dikshitar systematized playing Mallari in the processional ceremony of temple rituals. Mallari assumes varied structure and talas. Mallari having no

sahitya, consists only the swaras within a specified rhythm. Very rarely we find Tamil sahitya for some Mallari. In temple processions kirtanas are played in Nagaswara only after playing Mallari. Mallari indicates the different stages in the procedure of worship.

### **Procedure of playing a Mallari**

Most of the Mallaris are in the complex and varied talas such as misrajati tripata, khandajati tripata, misrajati jhampa, sankirnajati tripata etc. At the beginning the Taval artist plays the alarippu ‘takatakita’ in khanda nadai. This is followed with an elaborate ragalapana. All Mallari commences in 2<sup>nd</sup> degree speed, gradually changing over to 3<sup>rd</sup> degree speed, 1<sup>st</sup> degree speed, 2<sup>nd</sup> degree speed, 3<sup>rd</sup> degree speed, tisra nadai respectively. This is continued with kalpanaswara appended with muthayippu, and finally concluding with the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree speed. Whole of the Mallari played in three different speeds is a demanding feast, while kalpanaswaras and taniavarthana marks the prodigious vidwat. Mallari must be learnt from a guru with keen observation in order to attain the craft. Fluent perception can be achieved only through the prolonged practise or anubhava.

Some vidwans take half an hour to three fourth of an hour; where as some others elaborately play for two to three hours. Just as musicians set new pallavis, Nagaswara exponents compose and

set new Mallaris. But there are some specific Mallaris played even today in the temples of Chidambaram, Tiruvarur and Tanjore.

Needless to say the significance of number ‘5’ in connection with the form

- 1) 5 swaras taken by the raga
- 2) khandagati (Takatakita)
- 3) Five elements connected to the form

Notation of a Mallari as per the procedure of its playing

### **Mallari in the raga Gambhiranattai, Aditala (2 kala)**

1<sup>st</sup> degree speed

|| s , , , p , , , m , p , , , s , | p , , , m , p , | , , s , g , m , ||

|| p , , , , ṥ , n , p , m , n , | p , m , g , p , | m , g , s , s , ||

|| g , s , g , s , g , m , , , p , | , , p , , , , | n , p , n , p , ||

|| m , p , , , ṥ , , , ṥ , , , , , | ġ̇ , ṥ , ġ̇ , ṥ , | ġ̇ , s , , , ġ̇ , ||

|| , , ġ̇ , , , , ṁ , ġ̇ , , , ṥ , | , , n , , , p , | n , , , ġ̇ , ṥ , ||

|| , , n , , , p , , , m , p , , , | n , p , , , m , | , , g , , , s , ||

2<sup>nd</sup> degree speed

|| s , , , p , , , m , p , , , s , p , , , m , p , , , s , g , m , |

p , , , , ṥ , n , p , m , n , | p , m , g , p , m , g , s , s , ||

|| g, s, g, s, g, m, , , p, , , p, , , , n, p, n, p, |  
m, p, , , ṡ, , , ṡ, , , , | ġ, ṡ, ġ, ṡ, ġ, ṡ, , , ġ, ||  
|| , , ġ, , , , ṁ, ġ, , , ṡ, , , n, , , p, n, , , ġ, ṡ, |  
, , n, , , p, , , m, p, , , | n, p, , , m, , , g, , , s, ||

3<sup>rd</sup> degree speed

|| s, , , p, , , m, p, , , s, p, , , m, p, , , s, g, m, |  
p, , , , ṡ, n, p, m, n, p, m, g, p, m, g, s, s, |  
g, s, g, s, g, m, , , p, , , p, , , , n, p, n, p, |  
m, p, , , ṡ, , , ṡ, , , , ġ, ṡ, ġ, ṡ, ġ, ṡ, , , ġ, ||  
|| , , ġ, , , , ṁ, ġ, , , ṡ, , , n, , , p, n, , , ġ, ṡ, |  
, , n, , , p, , , m, p, , , n, p, , , m, , , g, , , s, |  
s, , , p, , , m, p, , , s, p, , , m, p, , , s, g, m, |  
p, , , , ṡ, n, p, m, n, p, m, g, p, m, g, s, s, ||  
|| g, s, g, s, g, m, , , p, , , p, , , , n, p, n, p, |  
m, p, , , s, , , ṡ, , , , ġ, ṡ, ġ, ṡ, ġ, ṡ, , , ġ, |  
, , ġ, , , , ṁ, ġ, , , ṡ, , , n, , , p, n, , , ġ, ṡ, |  
, , n, , , p, , , m, p, , , n, p, , , m, , , g, , , s, ||

Tisram

|| s , p , m p , s p , m p | , s g m p , | , ś n p m n ||

|| p m g p m g s s g s g s | g m , p , p | , , n p n p ||

|| m p , ś , ś , , ḡ ś ḡ ś | ḡ ś , ḡ , ḡ | , , ṁ ḡ , ś ||

|| , n , p n , ḡ ś , n , p | , m p , n p | , m , g , s ||

|| s , p , m p , s p , m p | , s g m p , | , ś n p m n ||

|| p m g p m g s s g s g s | g m , p , p | , , n p n p ||

|| m p , ś , ś , , ḡ ś ḡ ś | ḡ ś , ḡ , ḡ | , , ṁ ḡ , ś ||

|| , n , p n , ḡ ś , n , p | , m p , n p | , m , g , s ||

|| s , p , m p , s p , m p | , s g m p , | , ś n p m n ||

|| p m g p m g s s g s g s | g m , p , p | , , n p n p ||

|| m p , ś , ś , , ḡ ś ḡ ś | ḡ ś , ḡ , ḡ | , , ṁ ḡ , ś ||

|| , n , p n , ḡ ś , n , p | , m p , n p | , m , g , s ||

## **Various types of Mallari**

### **Periya Mallari**

#### Procedure of playing a periya Mallari

Periya Mallari is an indicator of purappadu or starting the procession, played in an important event, Rishabhavahana in Siva temple. Periya Mallari is the Mallari in complex and varied talas like sankeernajati ata, sankeernajati dhruva, sankeernajati jhampa, misrajati ata etc. and it may take two or three hours to complete a single Mallari. Rendering Gambhiranattai raga elaborately, Mallari starts in madhyamakala gradually move to drutakala, vilambakala, madhyamakala, drutakala respectively. After drutakala, it plays not only in tisra nadai but in varied nadai such as khandanadai, misranadai and sankirnanadai also. Varied and complex patterns and phrases of tala played is a special feature of periya Mallari. There were specialists to play periya Mallari as per the procedure in olden days. But today it is outdated. All the Mallaris other than this are known by the name chinna Mallari. Some of the important chinna Mallaris are Ther Mallari, Teertha Mallari, Taligai Mallari, Triputa Mallari etc.

## 1) Ther Mallari

Ther Mallari is in chaturasrajati triputa in Khandagati or khandajati triputa played during the procession of the God on chariot.

### Notation of Ther Mallari

Raga: Gambhiranattai

Tala: Chaturasra eka (khandagati) or chaturasra triputa

1<sup>st</sup> degree speed

1. || p̣,, p̣,, ṇ,, p̣,, p̣,, g,, s,, g,, s, g, sgsṇ ||

|| p̣,, p̣,, ṇ,, p̣,, p̣,, ṇ,, ,,, s,, ,,, ,,, || (3)

2. || p̣,, p̣,, ṇ,, p̣,, p̣,, g,, s,, g,, sgṃg sgsṇ ||

|| p̣,, p̣,, ṇ,, p̣,, p̣,, ṇ,, ,,, s,, ,,, ,,, || (2)

|| g,, ,,, m,, p,, n,, p,, ,,, ,,, ,,, ,,, ||

|| m,, g... s,, g,, ,,, s,, ,,, g,, s,, ,,, || (3)

|| g,, ,,, m,, p,, n,, p,, ,,, ,,, ṣ,, n,, ||

|| p,, m,, g,, s,, g,, ,,, s,, ,,, g,, s,, || (3)

|| g,, ,,, m,, p,, n,, p,, ,,, ,,, ṣ,, n,, ||

$$\| p_{,,,} m_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} \dots s_{,,,} \dots \dot{s}_{,,,} n_{,,,} \|$$

$$\| p_{,,,} m_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} \dots s_{,,,} \dots \dot{s}_{,,,} n_{,,,} \|$$

$$\| p_{,,,} m_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} \dots s_{,,,} \dots \dots \dots \|$$

2<sup>nd</sup> degree speed

$$1. \| \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{n}_{,,,} \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{p}_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} \dot{n}_{,,,} \|$$

$$\| \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{n}_{,,,} \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{n}_{,,,} \dots s_{,,,} \dots \dots \| (2)$$

$$2. \| \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{n}_{,,,} \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{p}_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} \dot{n}_{,,,} \|$$

$$\| \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{n}_{,,,} \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{p}_{,,,} \dot{n}_{,,,} \dots s_{,,,} \dots \dots \| (2)$$

$$1. \| g_{,,,} m_{,,,} p_{,,,} n_{,,,} p_{,,,} \dots \dots \dots \|$$

$$\| m_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} \dots \dots \dots \| (3)$$

$$2. \| g_{,,,} m_{,,,} p_{,,,} n_{,,,} p_{,,,} \dot{s}_{,,,} n_{,,,} p_{,,,} \|$$

$$\| m_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} \dots \dots \dots \|$$

$$3. \| g_{,,,} m_{,,,} p_{,,,} n_{,,,} p_{,,,} \dot{s}_{,,,} n_{,,,} p_{,,,} \|$$

$$\| m_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} \|$$

$$4. \| g_{,,,} m_{,,,} p_{,,,} n_{,,,} p_{,,,} \dot{s}_{,,,} n_{,,,} p_{,,,} \|$$

$$\| m_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} \dot{s}_{,,,} n_{,,,} p_{,,,} \| (3)$$

$$\| m_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} p_{,,,} m_{,,,} g_{,,,} s_{,,,} \dot{n}_{,,,} \|$$

3<sup>rd</sup> degree speed

$$\| \underset{\cdot}{p}, \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{n} \| \underset{\cdot}{p}, \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{n}, s, , \| (5)$$

$$\| s, g \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g}, , , , \| s \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g}, s, , \| (3)$$

$$\| p \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p}, p \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{m}, m \| g \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{g}, g \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s}, , \| (2)$$

$$\| p \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{m} \| g \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g}, s, , \| (2)$$

$$\| \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{n} \| \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{n}, s, , \| (3)$$

$$\| \underset{\cdot}{p}, \underset{\cdot}{n}, \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{s}, s \| \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g}, g \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{m}, m \|$$

$$\| g \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{p}, p \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{m}, m \| g \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{g}, g \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s}, , \| (2)$$

$$\| \underset{\cdot}{p}, \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{n} \| \underset{\cdot}{p}, \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{n}, s, , \| (2)$$

$$\| g, m \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p}, , , , \| m \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g}, s, g \underset{\cdot}{s}, \| (3)$$

$$\| g, m \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p}, n \underset{\cdot}{p}, \| m \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g}, s, g \underset{\cdot}{s}, \| (2)$$

$$\| g, m \underset{\cdot}{p} \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p}, n \underset{\cdot}{p}, \| m \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g}, s, \dot{s} \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \|$$

$$\| m \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g}, s, \dot{s} \underset{\cdot}{n} \underset{\cdot}{p} \| m \underset{\cdot}{g} \underset{\cdot}{s} \underset{\cdot}{g}, s, p \underset{\cdot}{m} \underset{\cdot}{g} \|$$

## 2) Teertha Mallari

Teertha Mallari is played during the holy bath of the Lord or Tirumanjanam for which water is brought from the temple tank or nearby river.

### Notation of Teertha Mallari

Raga: Gambhiranattai

Tala: Misrachappu

1 || p̣, ṇ, p̣ p̣ ṇ || p̣ ṇ, p̣, ṃ, || p̣ ṇ p̣ ṇ, , , || , , , , , , ||

|| ṇ, ṣ ṇ, ṣ, || ṣ, , , , , , || , , , , , , || , , , , , , ||

2 || p̣, ṇ, p̣ p̣ ṇ || p̣ ṇ, p̣, ṃ, || p̣ ṇ p̣ ṇ, , , || , , , , , , ||

|| p̣, ṇ, p̣ p̣ ṇ || p̣ ṇ, p̣, ṃ, || p̣ ṣ ṇ ṣ, , , || , , , , , , ||

3 || p̣, ṇ, p̣ p̣ ṇ || p̣ ṇ, p̣, ṃ, || p̣ ṇ p̣ ṇ, , , || , , p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ ||

|| p̣, ṇ, p̣ p̣ ṇ || p̣ ṇ, p̣, ṃ, || p̣ ṣ ṇ ṣ, , , || , , p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ ||

|| p̣, ṇ, p̣ p̣ ṇ || p̣ ṇ, p̣, ṃ, || p̣ ṇ p̣ ṇ, , , || , , p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ ||

|| p̣, ṇ, p̣ p̣ ṇ || p̣ ṇ, p̣, ṃ, || p̣ ṣ ṇ ṣ, , , || , , p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ ||

|| ṣ, p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ || ṣ, p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ || ṣ, , , , , ||

|| , , p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ || ṣ, p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ || ṣ, p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ || ṣ, , , , , ||

|| , , p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ || ṣ, p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ || ṣ, p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ ||

### 3) Taligai Mallari

Taligai Mallari, commonly in misrachappu tala is played when nivedyam (food) is brought for the deity from the kitchen of temple. It is played in a single speed only.

#### Notation of Taligai Mallari

Raga: Gambhiranattai

Tala: Misrachappu

1. || p̣, p̣, , , | ṇ, , , | p̣, , , ||

|| s, s, , , | , , , , | g, , , ||

|| s, , , , , | , , s, | s, , , ||

|| , , , , , | , , , , | , , , , ||

2. || p̣, , , p̣, , , | ṇ, , , | p̣, , , ||

|| s, s, , , | , , , , | g, , , ||

|| s, , , , , | , , , , | g, , , ||

|| s, g, , , | s, g, | s g s ṇ ||

3. || p̣, , , p̣, , , | ṇ, , , | p̣, , , ||

|| s, s, , , | , , , , | p n p m ||

|| s, , , , , | , , , , | ṇ s g m ||

$\| p n \dot{s} \dot{g} \dot{s} n \mid p n p m \mid g m g s \parallel$

4.  $\| \dot{p}, , \dot{p}, , \mid \dot{n}, , , \mid \dot{p}, , , \parallel$

$\| s, s, , , \mid s, g, \mid s g s n \dot{\phantom{s}} \parallel$

5.  $\| \dot{p}, \dot{p}, \dot{n}, \mid \dot{p}, \dot{p}, \mid \dot{n}, , , \parallel$

$\| , , , , , \mid , , g, \mid s g s n \dot{\phantom{s}} \parallel$

6.  $\| \dot{p}, \dot{p}, \dot{n}, \mid \dot{p}, \dot{p}, \mid \dot{n}, , , \parallel$

$\| , , , , , \mid , , n p \mid m g s, \parallel$

$\| \dot{p}, , \dot{p}, , \mid \dot{n}, , , \mid \dot{p}, , , \parallel$

$\| s, s, , , \mid , , , , \mid , , , , \parallel (1^{st} \text{ plan})$

#### 4) Triputa Mallari

Triputa Mallari is the Mallari known by the tala, triputa of different jatis.

#### Notations

Khandajati triputa Mallari

Raga: Gambhiranattai

|| p̣, , p̣, p̣ ṣ, , p̣ ṣ, , ṇ ṣ g̣ ṣ ṇ p̣ ṣ |

ṇ ṣ, g̣ ṃ p̣, ṣ | ṇ p̣, p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ ||

|| ṣ g̣ ṃ p̣, p̣, g̣ ṃ p̣ ṇ ṣ̣ g̣̣ ṃ̣ g̣̣ ṣ̣ ṇ̣ ṣ̣, p̣ |

ṇ ṣ ṇ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṃ p̣ |, p̣ ṃ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ ||

It can also be sung in three tempos; 1<sup>st</sup> degree speed, 2<sup>nd</sup> degree speed and 3<sup>rd</sup> degree speed within two avarthas of tala

p̣, , p̣, p̣ ṣ, , p̣ ṣ, , ṇ ṣ g̣ ṣ ṇ 1<sup>st</sup> degree speed

p̣ ṣ ṇ ṣ, g̣ ṃ p̣, ṣ ṇ p̣, p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ 2<sup>nd</sup> degree speed

ṣ g̣ ṃ p̣, p̣, g̣ ṃ p̣ ṇ ṣ̣ g̣̣ ṃ̣ g̣̣ ṣ̣ ṇ̣ ṣ̣

, p̣ ṇ ṣ ṇ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṃ p̣, p̣ ṃ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ 3<sup>rd</sup> degree speed

Misrajati tripata Mallari

Raga: Gambhiranattai

|| p̣, p̣ ṇ p̣, p̣ ṇ p̣, p̣ g̣ ṣ, , , ṣ g̣ ṣ, , , ṣ g̣ |

| ṣ, , , g̣, , ṣ | ṣ, , g̣ ṣ, , g̣ ṣ g̣ ṣ g̣ ||

|| ṣ, , ṣ, , ṣ p̣ ṃ ṇ p̣, , ṣ, ṣ ṃ g̣ ṃ, ṣ p̣ ṇ p̣, , ṣ ṃ ṃ ṇ ṃ, , |

| g̣, , ṣ, , g̣, , ṃ, | , ṇ p̣ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ ||

Chaturasrajati eka (khandagati) Mallari

Raga: Gambhiranattai

|| p̣, ṇ p̣ p̣ ṣ, g̣ ṣ ṇ p̣, ṇ p̣ p̣ ṣ, ṣ, , ||

|| p̣ p̣ ṇ p̣ p̣ ṣ ṣ g̣ ṣ ṇ p̣ p̣ ṇ p̣ p̣ ṣ, ṣ, , ||

|| ṣ, ṣ g̣ ṃ p̣, p̣, , p̣, ṃ g̣ ṣ g̣, ṣ, , ||

|| ṣ ṇ ṣ g̣ ṃ p̣ ṃ p̣, , ṇ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ g̣, ṣ, , ||

|| p̣, p̣ ṇ p̣ ṃ, ṃ p̣ ṃ g̣, g̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ, ṣ, , ||

|| p̣ ṇ p̣ ṇ p̣ ṃ p̣ ṃ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṃ g̣ p̣ ṃ g̣, ṣ, , ||

|| ṣ ṇ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṇ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ p̣ ṃ g̣ ṣ ṇ g̣, ṣ, , ||

There are some other Mallaris such as Mudal Mallari, Kumbha Mallari, Palli arai Mallari, Pancharatna Mallari etc. which are of less relevance and are not played by the traditionalists. The Mudal Mallari (in Adi tala) first among all other Mallaris played when the deity is taken in procession and hence the name Mudal Mallari. Kumbha Mallari is played when purnakumbham is offered to deity. Kumbha Mallari is also called as Kalasa Mallari. Palli arai Mallari is mainly practised in Vaishnava temples during the 'lali oonjal' after the entry of the deity to the temple. Pancharatna Mallari is played in ragamalika contrary to the Gambhiranattai tradition. According to Agamas everything belong to god should be related to the number five, hence pancharatna has a significance.

System of playing different Mallaris in the temples of Tamil Nadu during festival:

Till the deity is taken to the 'yagasala' from the 'alankaramandapa' the Periya Mallari 'unathupadame gati' in adi tala is played. On reaching the yagasala, without any tala accompaniment the ragas like Kapi, Kanada, Kedaragoula etc. are played simply to the accompaniment of sruti or othu. When the deity is taken out triputa tala Mallari is played and when the deeparadhana is over chinna Mallari is played. By then the idol reaches the chariot. When this is over a detailed delineation of a rakti raga – Kamboji, Sankarabharanam, Bhairavi etc. is played. After this, a misrachappu cholketu in different kalam which is

otherwise known as 'Ratthi' is played. This is followed by a pallavi and ragamalika swaraprasthara. When the deity enters back to the sanctum sanctorum different musical forms like Padam, Tevaram, Thiruppugazh etc. are played.

Other musical forms played exclusively on Nagaswara:

### **Ratthi (Rakthi)**

The term Ratthi means beauty. Ratthi is to be followed after the Mallari when the deity is brought outside the temple. It is an intricately woven set of beats to any raga and does not contain lyrics. It is highly technical and scientific set in tala misrachappu after being elaborated in misrachappu, tisra nadai and sarvalaghu are played. It is preceded by raga elaboration and followed by detailed swarakalpana. Swara kalpana with the edupus shifted is the most challenging aspect of Ratthi. Purvanga, utharanga, aruthi etc. are not found in Ratthis. Though Ratthi is a pleasure to the listener, it is a great challenge to the artist. It is believed that the Sempanarkoil family formulated Ratthi and performed skilfully. The system of playing Ratthi is almost outdated today.

### **Hecharika**

Hecharika was usually played to awaken the God. At the end of the procession when the Goddess reaches the steps of the temple this composition is played. The raga Ahiri is more suitable for this composition.

## **Odam**

Odam songs are played during the theppotsavam of the temple.

## **Udakkuru**

A complex composition set to misrachappu tala. In Chidambaram temple udakkuru is played in raga Nandanamakriya on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of the festival.

There are two prominent Mallari traditions; Tiruvarur tradition and Chidambaram tradition. The former is ceased today where as the latter is alive. Koorainadu Natesapillai is the founder of Chidambaram tradition. This great tradition was preserved by Chidambaram Vaidyanatha pillai, the son of Koorainadu Natesapillai. He handed over the legacy to his disciple Chidambaram Radhakrishna Pillai, who dedicated his whole life to Nagaswara music. This tradition is being carried out even today in the Chidambaram temple. Despite of its glory during 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Mallari tradition is dying out gradually which is a disappointing fact for the lovers of the Nagaswara music.

### **3.6 Nagaswara bands – Chinamelam and Periyamelam**

Chinamelam and Periyamelam are various sets of Nagaswara band. Artists of Chinamelam only accompany dance and theatre whereas the Periyamelam came to be reserved for temple rituals only. According to a Maratha Painting (17<sup>th</sup> century AD) of a performance held as a part of the procession,

Chinamelam depicts the Devadasis dressed in pleated skirts and blouses of different colors and designs. The dancers hold many poses and the nattuvanar is almost always leaning towards the dancer with the Cymbals in his hands. Behind him is the Mridanga player. The dancer is accompanied by a Flutist, a Tutti and a Sangu.

In another pictorial presentation of a Chinamelam found in Santanayaki Amman Temple at Pudukottai, it consists of a main artist, a Sruti player and a Taval player. All artists in this troupe are in standing posture.

The Isai Vellala community had established Periyamelam as an integral part of the worship and musicianship. The term Sangitamelam which denoted a group performance of all instruments, dancing and vocal music came into existence during the reign of Vijaya Raghava Nayaka (1633-1673). The same had been referred by Bharata as tata, avanadha and natya kutapas. It seems that the terms Chinamelam and Periyamelam are inspired by Sangitamelam. All instruments of temple music are included in Sangitamelam. As referred by Shahaji in his Pallaki seva Prabandham till Maratha period the term Sangitamelam was in use.

Periyamelam (Peddamelam/Rajamelam) constitute two performers of Nagaswara, two Taval players, a pair of Jalra (thick brass Cymbals) and a performer on Othu kuzhal, which provide sruti. Traditionally the sruti was provided by Othu kuzhal, a variant

of the Nagaswara producing a single continuous note. Othu kuzhal consists of a small anasu and olavu with two or three holes at the centre. Sivali used in Othukuzhal is much bigger than the sivali of Nagaswara. It was T N Rajaratnam Pillai who introduced the use of Tambura instead of Othukuzhal. Nowadays Srutibox is used instead of Tambura.

In a fresco depiction of Periyamelam, it is a more significant musical orchestra which included many musical instruments belonging to the variety of pipes like Yekkalam, Karna and Nagaswara. There are also flutists and people blowing the Sangu.

In the above referred frescoes, Nagaswara was treated just as a member of the large orchestra which refers to the fact that it had an active role in orchestral music too.

It seems in Tiruvarur fresco that an invisible boundary was drawn between the two melas by the artists. This indicates that the Chinamelam was considered as a separate artistic community. The manner of placing of artists and size of their figures proves this demarcation.

### **3.7 Folk music - Neyyandimelam**

Neyyandimelam is a folk art form which is a part of the folk festivals of Tamil Nadu. The Nagaswara music may have originated from rich folk arts like Neyyandimelam. Nagaswara is not such an instrument which can be confined within the four

walls of courts and palaces. Playing Nagaswara indoors may not be pleasing to ears. At same time when the same instrument played outdoors it becomes more enjoyable.

Karakattam, Kavadiyattam, Poykalkuthira, Aaliyattam etc. are the folk art forms of Tamil Nadu where Neyyandimelam occupies a predominant role. It is a unique art form in which all the villagers take part and perform while travelling along the villages.

A Neyyandimelam group comprises of two Nagaswaras, two Tavils, Pambai, Thamukku and Ilathalam. Dance while playing the instruments is the peculiarity of Neyyandimelam. Neyyandimelam has a great significance as an accompaniment in the part of Kuravan-Kurathi dance in kavadiyattam and karakattam. Nagaswara became an integral part of Neyyandimelam because of its high acoustic quality.

Unique folk tunes like kavadichindu were commonly used in Neyyandimelam. Annamalai Reddiar who lived around 19<sup>th</sup> century in Tamil Nadu is considered as the father of kavadichindu. Kavadichindu begins with the songs praising Lord Vigneswara and Lord Muruga. The following songs describe Kazhukumala town, mountains, temple, temple tank etc. Here Muruga becomes the ideal symbol of divine love. Kavadichindu is famous for its poetic quality, musical elegance and describing nature. The

underlying concept is that every human soul has to become one with his God.

Although rendered in ragas, Neyyandimelam has no scientific foundation as such. In this the ragas take the notes other than that its own. Raga is played in a dance-style tune, beyond the ragaswarupa. For e.g. in a kavadihindu in Huseni raga, unique phrase of the raga Huseni can be seen only in the prayoga 'rgmrgrs'. Being folk tunes, only simple and melodious gamaka prayogas are applied. Chenchurutti, Navroj, Huseni, Anandabhairavi, Punnagavarali, Sindhubhairavi, Nandanamakriya, Neelambari, Yadukulakamboji etc. are the ragas commonly used. Tisragati (takita), khandagati (taka takita), misragati (takita takatimi) etc. were skilfully integrated in the talas. 'Mudukku' tala prayoga in drutakala is a main attraction in kavadihindu.

### **Kavadiyattam**

Kavadiyattam is an art form performed as a part of temple festivals such as skandashashti, thaipooyam, karthikadeepam, vaikasi visakam etc. for seeking the blessings of Lord Muruga. In Tamil Nadu it is a medium for divine worship. Every Muruga devotee prepares for kavadiyattam through rigorous fasting. The devotees carry the puja materials filled in the 'kavu' (wooden/metallic stand) on his shoulders by walking to the hill top where the Muruga temple is situated. They relax by singing and dancing while climbing. Since it was a pilgrimage naturally

the songs were in praise of Lord Muruga. Later instruments such as Nagaswara and Taval became the part of music and dance by which the art form Neyyandimelam took its complete form. Kavadis are of different types like chandanakavadi, matsyakavadi, velkavadi, pushpakavadi, paneerkavadi, sarpakavadi, palkavadi etc. The art form kavadiyattam attained novelty through kavadichindu, an elegant and poetically rich composition composed by Annamalai Reddiyar. It may be called as 'vazhinadaichindu' hence it was sung by the devotee while they ascend the hill. In kavadiyattam mostly the songs describing the divine love of Muruga and Valli are sung. When the melody and rhythm becomes more intense, pace of the dance will reach at its peak.

### **Karakattam**

Karakattam is a folk dance that is developed in association with the Mariamman shakti of Tamil Nadu. The word 'karakam' refers to a pot filled with holy water. Dancers who dance skilfully, with a brass pot on the head consider it as a divine act. Dancers in shining costumes, having pot on the head dance skilfully according to the rhythm of Neyyandimelam which comprises of Nagaswara, Taval, Urumi and Tamukku. It is one of the most ancient art form. In Chilapathikaram it is referred to as Kudakoothu. It is of two types; Shaktikarakam and Attakarakam.

## **Aaliyattam**

Aaliyattam is performed in Ammankudi festivals in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. Artists (aali) appear to be intimidated by wearing the masks of demons. Three or four aalis dance together. They themselves play the talavadyas and Flute and perform the role of Kuravan and Kurathi. But in Amman procession all artists dance in accordance with Nagaswara and Neyyandimelam.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **NAGASWARA TRADITION IN CARNATIC MUSIC**

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### **NAGASWARA TRADITION IN CARNATIC MUSIC**

Carnatic music attained a glorified status from seventeenth century onwards through the contributions of eminent musicians and composers and also simultaneously due to the contributions of magnificent players on varied musical instruments like Vina, Nagaswara, Flute, Mridanga etc. In the history of music the reign of Tulaja II (1763-1787) marks the beginning of the golden era of Carnatic music. From this period onwards Nagaswara and Taval together started to receive a separate identity to become an integral part of serious art music. Possibilities of the instrument for bringing out the requisites of the serious art music like application of gamakas, technique of playing, the manner in which the technique of modulation applied, style of reciting varied musical compositions and various full-fledged aspect of manodharma sangita must have contributed for Nagaswara becoming an indispensable part of Carnatic music in south India.

#### **4.1 Nagaswara traditions – Timiri and Bari**

Timiri and Bari are the two main classifications of Nagaswara traditions. The older type of Nagaswara called Timiri existed even before the era of the Trinity of Carnatic music. It was played in open air, particularly for temple rituals and festivals. The purpose of playing Nagaswara in temples was to alert the villagers about the timing of rituals. This instrument was played in front of

huge crowds during festivals. Classical music was part and parcel of the Tamil culture. So they enjoyed the music flowing from any instrument. The greatest advantage of the instrument Nagaswara was the sound produced could be heard to a reasonable distance without depending on the technology to enhance the volume.

In this chapter after a brief study on Timiri tradition and the reasons for its decline, the focus of the study is shifted more on the Bari tradition which is followed in the current practice of Nagaswara playing. For delineating the characteristic features of the playing techniques, a detailed analytical study of the manodharma aspects of different ragas in different styles is chosen. In other words this is the documentation of practical music through different ragas by eminent players of two different traditions of Nagaswara. This study also reveals the influence of Nagaswara playing on vocal tradition and vice versa.

Here it is worthy to mention the reasons for the decline of the Timiri tradition. Of the two types of Nagaswara - Timiri and Bari, Timiri is shorter in size and tuned in high pitch level (5 or 5½ kattai). There were limitations to produce appropriate gamakas, swaras in zigzag manner and modulations. So it was a great challenge for the artiste to play or bring modulations melodiously while playing Timiri Nagaswara. It is a herculean task to play gamakas perfectly in instruments which are in high pitch. This may be the reason why one who learns to play Nagaswara, usually starts practice first in Timiri and then move to Bari. After rigorous

practice in short Timiri Nagaswara an artist is able to play perfect gamakas in long Bari Nagaswara with ease. The length of the instrument and the space between the holes plays a vital role in producing intricate gamakas more perfectly. It is difficult to sustain the air for longer duration. Due to the structural disadvantage of this instrument, an artist cannot play gamakas within this short time. It may also lead to the sounding of viluthi (apaswara) frequently. Moreover the introduction of the public addressing system also led to the instrument to become obsolete.

#### **4.2 Role of T N Rajaratnam Pillai in the transformation**

Transformation of Timiri Nagaswara to Bari Nagaswara is an important milestone in the history of Carnatic music. The transition of Carnatic music from traditional music is largely associated with the growth and development of Nagaswara music. It was a need to restructure Nagaswara by addressing its shortcomings in accordance with Carnatic music, which has been in path of revolutionary change. It was T N Rajaratnam Pillai, the great Nagaswara maestro who strove for this change. T N Rajaratnam Pillai who was also a great vocalist and Narasingapettai Ranganathachari jointly restructured Timiri to Idabari and then to Bari in his attempt to overcome its limitations. They increased the length of the instrument and thereby providing enough space for air to be stored. Gamakas could be played perfectly in long Bari Nagaswara because of the relatively more space between the holes. This helps the artist to play the gamakas

with ease and perfection. By increasing the length of the instrument there was a reduction in the pitch and this paved the way for facile rendering of sancharas of ragas in all tempos and thus making the instrument readily to adopt and adapt to the radical changes which came into being in Carnatic music with the emergence of kritis of all composers especially the Trinities. This marks the emergence of Bari tradition.

T N Rajaratnam Pillai deserves a special mention in this study as a torch bearer of Bari tradition who searched for soulful rendering, one who revolutionarily transformed Nagaswara music, and one who brought out boundless possibilities of Carnatic music. T N Rajaratnam Pillai becomes a milestone in music history here. It was from his intuitive rendering that we were convinced of obvious distinctiveness of Timiri – Bari Nagaswara rendering. We can see the reflection of T N Rajaratnam Pillai's unique melody concept in his creation of Bari Nagaswara. The transition from Timiri to Bari can be seen as a transformation of his melody concept itself rather than a mere change in instrumental music. The recordings of T N Rajaratnam Pillai playing Timiri and Bari Nagaswaras prove its distinctiveness.

It was T N Rajaratnam Pillai who established the wide potentials of manodharma sangita of Carnatic music, melodious rendering with utmost ragabhava, prominence of Nagaswara in Carnatic music etc. through his scintillating rendering of Nagaswara. Rendering for hours, method of rendering by

sustaining in the same swara for a long time, briga sangatis, melodious possibilities of vakra prayogas etc. are his unique contributions. It was during this period when there was a trend of great players acquiring honour of mastery by playing competitively rare ragas and in complex talas in the occasion of 'Swamipurpadu', people understood the greatness and peculiarities of T N Rajaratnam Pillai's Nagaswara recital. With the talent of the musician alone the new music coming out of him may not become popular. The popularity depends on the way in which he deals with his music. It is also a responsibility or duty of the performer to educate the common people by creating in them a musical awareness and aptitude. Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar became popular not because he sang a lot of kritis. His music was enticing to people's heart. T N Rajaratnam Pillai's rendering was similar to that of Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar. Narration creating an awareness of raga along with the rendering was part of his concerts. Long lasting rendering for hours as part of rituals and his inborn talent made this possible. The influx of ragabhava in rendering became a great blessing for those who know music. The musical effect created by T N Rajaratnam Pillai made deep influence upon the vocal musicians and other instrumental performers.

T N Rajaratnam Pillai rendered Todi raga beyond the imagination. It is a great task for a musician to render for hours without repeating the phrases. For this the musician has to apply all

his creativity. T N Rajaratnam Pillai would render elaborately the ragas such as Todi, Kamboji, Bhairavi, Kalyani, Keeravani, Shanmukhapriya, Abheri etc. without repeating the phrases. Melodious blending of phrases in ragalapana was his great contribution which paved the way for his contemporaries and successive musicians to develop and improve manodharma music. The blending tradition of swaras makes the music more melodious. The term blending refers to the ideal fusion between the swaras. First a small phrase is rendered within a small circle. Then the circle is further expanded. The melody is full of such stages of this improvisation. This type of circling gamakas may not be seen in Timiri Nagaswara. But Rajaratnam Pillai created such melodies when he rendered in Bari Nagaswara.

The control of breath capable of producing soft and loud tones has technically been known as jaru. T N Rajaratnam Pillai was a master of it. Jaru is the one which skilfully interwoven in gamakas. It comprises minute srutis. It was in the Bari Nagaswara jaru was effectively applied. Such gamakas manifested in instruments are formed through the constant rendering experiences. He had a potential in vocal rendition too in the same speed of Nagaswara. All these factors contributed to develop Bari tradition on Nagaswara.

## **Result of the Transformation**

When Timiri Nagaswara was restructured into Bari Nagaswara, the music came out of it was more enjoyable. The most important was the difference in the playing of the instrument. The melodious impact resulted from this was amazing. The melodious impact made possible by reducing the Sruti from 5 Kattai to 2 kattai. More over dasavidha gamakas of Carnatic music was able to apply in this instrument with great elegance. Circling gamakas (churuttu gamakas) which were commonly practiced in Vina began to yield to Nagaswara. Being able to apply dasavidha gamakas in a zigzag manner the Vina bani became more and more intimate with Nagaswara. T N Rajaratnam Pillai's contemporary Vina Dhanammal influenced his music. T N Rajaratnam Pillai revealed in a radio interview that Vina Dhanammal was his manasa guru. The Vina music was not as popular as it was confined to palaces. At the same time the Nagaswara which became the main instrument of the temple, where the common people came together became a popular instrument. Influence of Vina bani, transformation to the concert platform, use of microphones etc. opened up a huge possibility to Nagaswara. When Vina bani confined only to the higher class community, the Nagaswara music was enjoyed by all sections of the society. Thus Bari Nagaswara played a great role in the enrichment of lakshya sangita.

## **Nagaswara Bani**

Melody is the musical component which is capable of enticing a person's mind. Here melody concept refers to Bani, a unique style which musician owns or possess. T N Rajaratnam Pillai opined in an interview to All India Radio that Karnataka Bani is the melodious rendering in which swaras, gamakas, and brigas blend beautifully, based on vilambita kala music. It may be vocal music or instrumental music. Banis are of different kinds such as vilambita style, briga style, style prominence to different gamakas currently used etc. According to T N Rajaratnam Pillai existence of the Bani depends upon the audience. The period, space and attitude of the audience have deeply influenced the concept of melody. The style which peeps up the audience will be more preferable in a festival concert. Briga was widely used or played in outdoor concerts, but less importance was given to modulations. On the other hand, modulations were given great importance in an indoor concert with less audience. This naturally increases the smoothness of the concert. Depending on the aptitude of listeners of each period the style of melody was decided.

In fact the gamakas themselves become the melody. Even though in theoretical perspective gamakas and melody differs, in actual practise both are same. The melody is the sum total of the gamakas of swaras in each raga. One of the radio interviews of T N Rajaratnam Pillai was a reference to the popular enjoyment of Carnatic music; Madhurai Ponnuswami Pillai gave great

importance to the compliments of the gas light holders expressed by saying ‘Bale Bhesh’ during his Nagaswara concert in connection with temple festivals. When the music scholars notice the flaws in the ragalapana, proper enjoyment was not possible. But the general public who do not know the lakshanas of the raga often enjoyed the concert. Ponnuswami Pillai, who had a good knowledge of the raga lakshana played Nagaswara in such a way that it was enjoyed by the common man. It is interesting to note that the Nagaswara music rendered for hours was enjoyed by the common people without any boredom or hesitation. This kind of long rendering played a major role in shaping and developing the Nagaswara Bani. Only a limited rendering was possible in Timiri Nagaswara which lacked the perfection of gamakas. But the transformation from Timiri to Bari made the existing Nagaswara Bani more expanded and enriched.

#### **4.3 The influence of Nagaswara music on Vocal music and vice versa**

Nagaswara was elevated to concert platform status from a mere temple ritualistic instrument during the post Trinity period. Various ragas that enriched Carnatic music were created and developed melodiously during the period of the Trinity. So many compositions having the typical nature and nuances of each raga were composed by Trinity. It also laid down a strong musical foundation for the elaborate delineation of the manodharma

aspects. Many janya ragas were formed and created out of melakarta ragas like Harikamboji, Kharaharapriya, Sankarabharanam etc. and this contributed immensely to the development of Carnatic music raga system during this period. This led to the nourishment of all types of musical forms in Carnatic music. Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar was a pioneer in introducing a systematic order for concert whether it is vocal or instrumental. Along with the vocal performing pattern, other musical instruments like Vina, Violin, and Nagaswara also followed this path gradually.

Let us take a look at some of the similar features in vocal music and Nagaswara music.

Vocal music was once closely associated with Nagaswara music, when closely analysed, vocal tradition was derived from and is identical with the fingering system of Nagaswara. Every vocal musician of that period was deeply influenced by the style of rendering manodharma sangita in Nagaswara, for hours as part of rituals. This helped a lot to the development of vocal music. Although various musicians within the possibilities of their throat formed different styles, ultimately the gamakas and other prayogas belonged to Nagaswara tradition. A closer look at the manodharma sangita at that time reveals the extent of the contribution made to vocal music by Nagaswara. In a high pitched Timiri Nagaswara rendering with modulation was a herculean task. This led the vocalist to the style of open rendering. These musicians were noted

for the distinguished gamakas that flowed from the open throat. A special style named 'Briga Bani' was created when the musicians applied these distinguished gamakas through their blessed throats. The great masters like Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Musiri Subrahmanyayyer, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Madurai Somasundaram, Madurai Mani Iyer, Alathur Brothers etc. followed the unique Nagaswara Bani as it was.

- (1) Lengthy phrases with high speed, is one of the special features of Nagaswara music. It was largely rendered by the great vocalists like Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Musiri Subrahmanyayyer, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Alathur Brothers etc.

### **Audio clip - 1**

Raga: Kamboji

Artiste: T N Rajaratnam Pillai (Nagaswara)

### **Audio clip - 2**

Raga: Shanmukhapriya

Artiste: T N Rajaratnam Pillai (Nagaswara)

### **Voice clip - 3**

Raga: Kamboji

Artiste: Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer (vocal)

**Voice clip - 4**

Raga: Todi

Artiste: Musiri Subrahmanyayer (vocal)

- (2) Nagaswara music was featured by the style of incorporating a variant melodic vibration in each swara. The similar style can be largely seen in the vocal tradition of the period.

**Audio clip - 5**

Raga: Kamboji

Artiste: T N Rajaratnam Pillai (Nagaswara)

**Voice clip - 6**

Raga: Kamboji

Artiste: Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer (vocal)

- (3) The usage of the same phrase in tarastayi and madhyastayi was another peculiarity of Nagaswara rendering. The same application of the phrase was largely rendered in vocal music too. This is an instance for the influence of vocal music in Nagaswara music.

**Audio clip - 7**

Raga: Kamboji

Artiste: T N Rajaratnam Pillai (Nagaswara)

### **Voice clip - 8**

Raga: Kharaharapriya

Artiste: Seerkazhi Govindarajan (vocal)

- (4) Another speciality of Nagaswara music is crispy landing of notes. Landing notes may not be plainly sustained in the raga alapana of Nagaswara. The famous vocalist G N Balasubrahmaniam largely followed the same style in his renderings. G N Balasubrahmaniam could maintain the same speed of Nagaswara in his throat.

### **Audio clip - 9**

Raga: Todi

Artiste: T N Rajaratnam Pillai (Nagaswara)

### **Audio clip - 10**

Raga: Kharaharapriya

Artiste: Karaikurichi Arunachalam (Nagaswara)

### **Voice clip - 11**

Raga: Sahana

Artiste: Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar (vocal)

## **Voice clip - 12**

Raga: Panthavarali

Artiste: G N Balasubrahmaniam (vocal)

- (5) A vocal musician could acquire from Nagaswara rendering a clear sketch on how to develop a ragalapana. This is said to be the remarkable feature of Nagaswara music.

Changes in Nagaswara music were also reflected in vocal music. Apart from the vocal masters of old generation like Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, Musiri Subrahmanyayyer, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer, Alathur Brothers, Madurai Somu etc. the next generation vocal musicians like K V Narayanaswami, Nedunnuri Krishnamurthi, T V Sankaranarayanan, D K Jayaraman, M S Subbulakshmi, D K Pattammal, T N Seshagopalan etc. gave more importance to the voice modulations in their concerts. The older generation of vocalists handled the traditional ragas like Todi, Kalyani, Sankarabharanam, Kamboji, Bhairavi etc. It became a new musical experience as successive musicians began to seek out the possibilities of new ragas. It was G N Balasubrahmaniam who began to explore the possibility of new ragas. He elevated the enjoyment to a whole new level by selecting many lesser-known minor ragas for deerghaalapana. The manodharma sangita feels different when a raga that has not yet heard, is rendered. This was because the audience was listening to the raga for the first time.

The manodharma level of the newly heard ragas and that of the familiar traditional ragas are entirely different. It requires a careful quest for the rendering of new ragas. This will further explore the possibility of each raga. This will uplift the musician's potentials in manodharma sangita. The eminence in manodharma sangita alapana will reflect in the later renderings of traditional ragas. One can maintain this difference throughout the rendering. The musicians who came after G N Balasubrahmaniam continued this musical trend which seeks the possibilities of minor ragas and modulations.

#### **4.4 Style analysis of eminent players based on the recordings**

It requires a distinguished study on musical aspects of both Timiri and Bari Nagaswara. It has been studied based on the old recordings of the recitals of Nagaswara. The study is centred on a selected few Nagaswara masters from the available collection. The features such as the growth of the music of that period, style of the ragalapana, usages of gamakas, style of recital of kritis, technique of playing etc. are described here. Study of the stylization of Nagaswara playing can be done into two periods i.e. prior to the period of T N Rajaratnam Pillai and the period after T N Rajaratnam Pillai.

**Ragas rendered: Nattaikurinji, Sahana, Sourashtram by Sempanarkoil Ramaswami Pillai**

**Sruti: 1 kattai (tarastayi shadja)**

Sempanarkoil Ramaswami Pillai occupies a prominent position in the Timiri tradition of Nagaswara playing. The major portion of rendition is in medium and speedy tempo. There are not many oscillations or gamakas in zigzag nature as of now. Major prayogas of raga are confined to flat gamakas or plain gamakas. Almost all prayogas land in each note without much more oscillation. In a detailed evaluation we can ascertain that this type of rendering gives importance to speed melody, which are generally known as Nagaswara Bani. For e.g. in the rendition of Nattaikurinji raga is filled with high blown speed gamakas in hasty nature. When compared to modern ragalapana style, this style mostly devoid of soothing of serene feelings. Another speciality of this style is the balanced application of various kalapramana. Sempanarkoil Ramaswami Pillai treated both Sahana and Nattaikurinji in the same kalapramana i.e. the medium tempo. Though these ragas are usually sung or played in slow tempo, here these ragas are rendered in speed tempo. We can pinpoint that all ragas were generally treated in the same way in those days.

## **Madhurai Ponnuswami Pillai**

**Ragas rendered: Todi, Kapi**

**Sruti: 6 ½ kattai**

Madhurai Ponnuswami Pillai was another eminent player who occupies a prominent position in the Timiri tradition of Nagaswara playing. Todi raga rendition by Madhurai Ponnuswami Pillai, a doyen in the field of Nagaswara playing is a traditional one having the plain notes or plain gamakas. It is devoid of ornamentations or graces. Ragalapana whether it is wide or crisp in nature, was in medium or speed tempo. Even though they were branded as Nagaswara artists, they were all versatile musicians too. It is a herculean task for any Nagaswara player to make high flown melodies with this short type instrument (Timiri). Ponnuswami Pillai was an extra genius player and he could make much more exploration in Todi raga with his high flown melodious fingering techniques. Briga-ladden sangatis or many crisp phrases can alone make a scintillating impact among the audience. When it is compared to modern melodic concept of music we can find that it lacks the feel of soothing or soft touch.

The music played by Madhurai Ponnuswami Pillai and his contemporaries were torrential in nature. The melodic intonation of phrases by T N Rajaratnam Pillai paved the way for a new ragalapana system and approach to each raga in Carnatic music. Before T N Rajaratnam Pillai we can pinpoint a fact that, there

would not have wide range of imaginative exploration in improvisational music.

Listening to the raga Kapi played by Madhurai Ponnuswami Pillai we can understand that the tempo followed by him is almost same as that of Sempanarkoil Ramaswami Pillai.

### **Tanjavur Krishnan**

**Raga: Atana**

**Sruti: 6 ½ kattai**

Listening to the raga Atana played by Tanjavur Krishnan, a renowned Timiri Nagaswara player, we can realise that the limitation of the Timiri Nagaswara was a main problem to the player in dealing with such high flown melodious raga like Atana. However their overwhelming knowledge and outstanding potentiality alone was capable of bringing out the nuances and embellishments of such raga in a melodious raga. Especially in the raga Atana it is not an easy task for a musician to explore in such a way as it is having many intricate gamaka patterns.

## **Enjikkudi E K Pichaikannu Pillai and E P Kandasami**

### **Raga: Begada**

### **Sruti: 4 ½ kattai**

In this recording the kriti rendition was a customary. There are not many importance is given to the segment kriti. In instrumental music especially in Nagaswara the rendition of kriti was not in a coordinated manner. It was played in speedy manner. In this kalapramana, sangatis may not be in a précised manner. An artist can render sangatis precisely bringing out its musical ingredients melodically, only if it is sung or played in medium or vilambita kala tempo. Then only the artist could win the acclamation of the audience. Strict adherence to a balanced kalapramana, sangatis in precise manner, way in which the artist interact with audience etc. are the prime factors of kacheri dharma.

The style of Timiri Nagaswara players we discussed so far were almost similar in all aspects such as technique of play, similarity of tones, tempo or kalapramana, application of gamakas and so on. Though they were versatile artists they might not be able to produce gamakas in a delicate manner. This may be due to the limitation of the instrument itself. Notwithstanding when considering the limitation of Timiri Nagaswara, T N Rajaratnam Pillai, a doyen in Nagaswara music have greatly succeeded in incorporating many pleasing melodies bringing out the nuances of

each raga. Even in Timiri Nagaswara he delineated wide scope of exploring Todi raga.

### **T N Rajaratnam Pillai**

#### **Raga: Todi**

#### **Sruti: 6 kattai**

Here we can analyse an amazing Todi by T N Rajaratnam Pillai in Timiri Nagaswara. Though the instrument is having a limited scope for producing extra ordinary nuances and embellishments, T N Rajaratnam Pillai, an outstanding exponent have considerably succeeded in evoking the essence of each raga within the limit.

In this Todi, the rishabha prayoga in higher octave is capable of evoking a special melodic feel.

#### **Audio clip - 13**

This plain rishabha have special 'briga laden' vibrations when it is rendered as nyasa prayoga. It is an extremely herculean task for a Nagaswara player to employ such intricate gamaka patterns in the swaras like rishabha and gandhara in Timiri Nagaswara in order to produce the so called swaras in its original essence. In this recital rishabha and gandhara are melodiously decorated with kampita gamakas.

### **Audio clip - 14**

s r g m p d n s r – s , n d p m g r – s r g m p d n s , r s d,

In the above mentioned phrase, the speedy rendition of arohana and avarohana of T N Rajaratnam Pillai is capable of evoking a scintillating effect in the minds of music lovers. It is a unique feature of the style of T N Rajaratnam Pillai.

### **Audio clip - 15**

Here we can enjoy the enchanting beauty of panchama varjya prayoga in Todi.

### **Audio clip - 16**

p , p , p n d d p p , m p , p , p s s n n d d m ,

m p , p d d p p m m p p n n d d p p m

In the above mentioned phrases, the combination of landing notes in plain manner are in no way resembles the raga Sindhubhairavi.

After the restructuring of Timiri Nagaswara to Idabari and Bari Nagaswara the melodious application of gamakas in each raga increased manifold. The ragalapana system having the perfect blend of slow, medium and speed tempo have been materialised through Idabari and Bari Nagaswaras. In Bari Nagaswara the melodic purity of subtle gamakas of each raga are clearly portrayed.

## **T N Rajaratnam Pillai**

### **Raga: Abheri**

### **Sruti: 3 kattai**

In Bari Nagaswara the application of gamakas or the modulation technique are capable of creating a scintillating impact in the minds of music lovers and listeners by the Nagaswara Chakravarthi T N Rajaratnam Pillai. Actually this was an Idabari Nagaswara recital which had a pitch level of 3 kattai. Ragabhava emanating is more melodic in nature, bringing out the nuances of each note in an appealing manner. Many bold sangatis or prayogas are out flowing spontaneously, touching the core of each swara with ease. This type of gamaka application are highly interconnected with 'Vina Bani' which is considered as the base for vocal music where as in Timiri Nagaswara only gamakas in speedy nature are usually portrayed by the artiste which rarely capable of evoking a feeling of soothing and serenity. Because of the technical disadvantage of the instrument, Timiri Nagaswara the nuances or embellishments cannot be produced in a melodic way. I think, this prompted T N Rajaratnam Pillai to make structural changes in Timiri Nagaswara which led to the emergence of more melodic instrument, Bari Nagaswara.

### **Audio clip - 17**

n s , n s g , n s g m , n s g m p ,

p , m g , m p m m , p n p g , m p g , r s

This type of phrases having beautiful blending, are effectively produced. Here the commencing note mandrastayi nishada are melodiously progress through shadja to panchama and finally merges with madhyastayi shadja. This notation shows the melodic merging of phrases.

### **Audio clip - 18**

g m p n,,,

Here the long sustaining on nishada with slight vibration and sudden upward and downward prayogas reach at a point where we can experience the ragabhava in high voltage.

The main prayogas in Abheri raga lies in the swaras gandhara, rishabha and nishada and considering the fact, T N Rajaratnam Pillai was a doyen in producing the effective and charming blending of phrases comprising above mentioned jivaswaras mellifluously. Such improvisational techniques by T N Rajaratnam Pillai had greatly influenced and helped the later on generation to explore the essence of each raga. Route of above mentioned raga sanchara bringing out its swarastanas with utmost

perfection have greatly influenced the musicians and music lovers. T N Rajaratnam Pillai's ragalapana system is noteworthy for its powerful imagination and improvisational techniques which in turn paved the way for a new outlook on ragalapana system for later on generation.

This subtle gamaka prayogas having the perfect blend of medium and slow tempo which is considered as the typical nature of Vina or Vainika tradition have been beautifully incorporated by T N Rajaratnam Pillai in Idabari Nagaswara. It was a breakthrough in the history of Carnatic music.

**Raga: Shanmukhapriya**

**Sruti: 2 ½ kattai**

**T N Rajaratnam Pillai as a promulgator of the Bari tradition**

The detailed delineation of raga Shanmukhapriya evokes the feeling of serene effect coupled with vibrant sancharas. T N Rajaratnam Pillai's effective and melodious blending of phrases with special focus on mandrastayi shadja and tarastayi shadja is clearly indicating the samvadtwa or consonant relationship of swaras.

### **Audio clip - 19**

s , , , , s

Here we can find a change of melodious gamaka applications in Bari Nagaswara rather than Timiri Nagaswara. Vilambita (slow) and druta (speed) gamakas are skilfully coined. Such prayogas in vilambita and druta simultaneously cannot be played in Timiri Nagaswara. It is the limitation of the instrument Timiri Nagaswara. T N Rajaratnam Pillai, throughout his alapana gives importance to the combination of phrases with focus on a single note; e.g. panchama

In Bari Nagaswara in 2 ½ kattai, T N Rajaratnam Pillai, a doyen of music very easily and mellifluously portrayed the raga bhava of Shanmukhapriya in madhyastayi e.g.

### **Audio clip - 20**

n s r s n r s n d p d n s,

d n s r s s n n d d n s r g g r r s s n d

A special vibration of phrases having repetition of one note in three or four times (kampita gamaka application) can be seen. This type of prayogas, are rarely seen in Timiri Nagaswara. For attempting

this type of prayogas, instrument itself demands such technical advantages for effective space on holes for air circulation.

### **Audio clip - 21**

In vilambita laya prayogas in madhyastayi,

n s r , r , g r s n s r , r , n ,

r g , r g , r n , s s , r , r g r g , r r , n ,

the best combination of rishabha and nishada are the shining examples of his command on manodharma sangita.

r g , s r , n s ,

In this phrase a plain combination of Shanmukhapriya can be heard.

**Artiste: Karaikurichi Arunachalam**

**Raga: Kamboji**

**Sruti: 3 kattai**

The vibrant Kamboji in 3 kattai Idabari Nagaswara clearly showcases both artistic and instrumental excellence. This ragalapana emanates from an innermost emotions of an artiste

absolutely portrays the melodic beauty and finest application of gamakas in Bari Nagaswara rather than Timiri Nagaswara. In Timiri it is very difficult to produce such an excellent gamaka application. This outstanding Kamboji by an eminent player, Karaikurichi Arunachalam totally exhibits the rare combination of phrases such as shadja (madhyastayi) and madhyama. At the commencement he beautifully portrays the beauty of nishada in Kamboji

### **Audio clip - 22**

s n , , , d p d , , ,

Such crystal and clear enunciation is not possible in Timiri Nagaswara.

### **Audio clip - 23**

d s r, g r s d s r, g r s d s r n , n d p d ,

This nishada evolves from shadja and melodiously progress through dhaivata to panchama in ascending order itself is an identical phrase in prayoga of Kamboji. This prayoga lands in dhaivata bringing out the excellent beauty of dhaivata as nyasa swara in Kamboji. This particular nishada in Kamboji itself

resounds the mixing of kakali and kaisiki nishada. It also suggests the importance of 22 sruti concept in Carnatic music.

Though Kamboji raga usually gets its fullest energy in higher octave, Karaikurichi Arunachalam mellifluously exhibits the raga bhava in mandrastayi by travelling in between mandra shadja and panchama. Some of the prayogas are given below

#### **Audio clip - 24**

s, r g, m g r s s r g s, s r g r, , , ,

This ending note rishabha is an important note. This type of soft rishabha gamaka is a noteworthy feature in Bari Nagaswara.

#### **Audio clip - 25**

g , , , , ,

elongated rendition of gandhara in plain nature followed by g , , , m g g r , s , , , is a clear indication of the sustaining of swaras in such a manner.

#### **Audio clip - 26**

s r , g, m g r, g, m g r, g, m g r, g, m g r g, r s, s n d  
p,

In the above mentioned phrase, the melodic feature played in Bari Nagaswara may not be experienced in Timiri Nagaswara in its fullest extent.

Another beauty applied in plain madhyama having a serene effect can be seen in this phrase

**Audio clip - 27**

g g m m , (first madhyama in this phrase is plain madhyama)

g , r s n d p m , , here the combination of two madhyamas indicates the relationship of madhyastayi and mandrastayi. This prayogas are rarely seen in Kamboji.

In Timiri Nagaswara the landing notes are not melodious as in Bari Nagaswara. The vibrant nature of Kamboji is clearly seen in the phrases in tarastayi, given below

**Audio clip - 28**

p d s s , s , s    d s r , g r , s    d s r , s    s d r s n d p    d , g ,  
m g r , s

**Artiste: T N Rajaratnam Pillai**

**Raga: Kalyani**

**Sruti: 1 ½ kattai**

T N Rajaratnam Pillai, in a vibrant Kalyani raga delineation has melodiously blended the vilambita and speed gamakas. It may be noted that in this performance the instrument was tuned to 1 ½ kattai. It is a rare feature in Bari Nagaswara as normally the instrument is tuned to 2 or 2 ½ kattai. In the first segment of the ragalapana T N Rajaratnam Pillai is focussing on mandrastayi, as he brilliantly traversed in between mandra shadja and madhya panchama. Through some jumping prayogas (e.g. p , d p p , m s) from madhya panchama to mandra shadja, he rightly essays or trying to exhibit the marvellous beauty of consonant notes or samvadtwa, which is considered as the backbone of Canatic music. The ragas having consonant notes are more pleasing melodies because they enjoy the excellent blending of gamakas. Here are some phrases which have an excellent combination of swaras in madhyastayi and mandrastayi.

**Audio clip - 29**

s n r s n , d p ,

**Audio clip - 30**

P d n d n s , p

It portrays the consonant beauty between shadja and mandrastayi panchama.

### **Audio clip - 31**

s , m , (in the same way, shadja and mandrastayi madhyama)

In this chapter, detailed analysis of Timiri-Bari traditions of Nagaswara bani has been made through different major and minor ragas of Carnatic fold. The study intends to focus on the influence and contribution of Nagaswara music on many Carnatic vocal traditions which is the core of its content. Many stalwarts of both Timiri and Bari traditions have tremendously succeeded in elevating manodharma aspect of Carnatic music into such a higher place which is truly considered as the heaven of melody.

## **4.5 The indispensable Taval, Othu and Kuzhitalam**

### **Taval**

Unlike other percussion instruments, Taval has been considered as the most perfect accompaniment to Nagaswara due to its acoustic quality. The significance of this instrument can be seen from the fact that the Taval player has always the privilege of commencing to play before the main artist begins. Unlike in other concerts, the tradition of playing percussion instrument in the midst

of ragalapana is only in Nagaswara concerts. It is a conventional practise of Taval player to play the laya intricacies in between the ragalapana. This is done for maintaining the ambience of melam or the rhythmic atmosphere in the temples, where a lot of common people gather. The playing of Taval also gives some rest to the continuous playing of Nagaswara.

A Taval player should have the qualities such as clarity of syllables, vallina-mellina playing system with perfect tonal variations, the coordination of both left and right hand, ability for the easy playing of the complicate and intricate tala syllables etc. At the beginning and in between the ragalapana, Taval player used to play in the chollu ‘thom thom thomthomthom’ in chaturasra nadai. It will create an ambience throughout the concert. Just like playing the muktayiswaras in Nagaswara, the ‘Uruttichollu’ is played in between the ragalapana according to their improvisation in Taval. But in a main concert, Taval have a separate taniavarthana, as same as in a vocal concert.

Taval is a guiding instrument for all other percussion instruments. It adorns the crown of improvisation of laya aspects. As much as Nagaswara has contributed to vocal music, Taval has greatly contributed to the other percussion instruments like Mridangam, Tabla etc. The most intricate and complicate talas were played in Taval. Mridangam players imbibed most of the tala patterns from the Taval.

In Chilapathikaram Taval is considered to be one among the 14 skin-instruments. Earlier, Taval was made from karungali (ebony), margosa wood, redwood etc. but nowadays it is from jackwood. Taval is commonly used in both folk and classical music in south India. In the past, the shape of the body of this instrument was cylindrical, but today it has a barrel shaped, more or less symmetrical. A Taval player beats on one side (left) with a stick and the other side with his fingers. Special bandages are wound round the tips of fingers to produce the desired effect and to protect the fingers hence the striking is so hard and forceful.

Some of the noted performers in this instrument are Ammachathiram Kannuswami Pillai, Ammapettai Pakkiri, Pasupathikoil Veerabhadra Pillai, Vazhuvur Muthuveera Pillai, Karaikkal Malaiiperumal Pillai, Needamangalam Meenakshisundaram Pillai, Ilupur Panchapakesa Pillai, Thiruvazhaputhur Pasupathi Pillai, Papanasam Sreeman Pillai, Thirumullaiyayil Muthuveera Pillai, Nachiyarkoil Raghava Pillai, Thirukadaiyur Chinnaiah Pillai, Needamangalam Shanmugha Vadivelu, Yazhpanam Dakshinamurthy, Malaikottai Panjami Pillai, Thiruvazhunthur Ramdas, Valankaiman Shanmughasundaram, Valayapetty Subrahmaniam, Haridwaramangalam Pazhanivel, Kalayamurthi, Bangalore Munirathinam etc.

## **Othu**

Previously, a long pipe like Nagaswara was used for playing sruti called Othukuzhal. It has the length of a Nagaswara and a small anasu at the bottom, consist of two or three holes in the middle. There are no holes on the olavu and only adhara shadja can be produced. The seevali of the Othu are a bit longer than that of the seevali of Nagaswara. The length of the Othu playing for Timiri is same as Timiri Nagaswara and Othu for Bari is same as the length of Bari Nagaswara. Nowadays sruti box is being used in place of Othu.

## **Kuzhitalam**

Kuzhitalam belongs to the group of Ghana vadyas. The shape and structure of Kuzhitalam is small compared to Ilatalam. It is a flat circular bronze plate. It is the Kuzhitalam player, who reckons the tala for the Nagaswara player. In a Nagaswara concert, the most difficult job is that of the Kuzhitalam player. The tala balancing of the total concert is controlled by the Kuzhitalam player. In a concert, the real exchange of laya aspect is made between the Kuzhitalam player and the Taval player.

## Observations

- ❖ The restructuring of the instrument opened up a new era in Nagaswara playing.

Features of Nagaswara which influenced the vocal musicians

- ❖ Lengthy phrases with high speed
- ❖ Style of incorporating a variant melodic vibration in each swara
- ❖ Usage of the same phrase in tarastayi and madhyastayi
- ❖ Crispy landing of notes
- ❖ Wide potentials of manodharma sangita with utmost ragabhava, briga sangatis and vakra prayogas.

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PIONEERS**

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## CHAPTER 5

### PIONEERS

During the reign of Sarabhoji II (1798-1832), there lived expert players of Vina, Nagaswara, Mukhavina, Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Taval, Mridangam etc. Music and dance were inseparable part of temple worship. Nagaswara players of this age contributed much to the Carnatic music. For instance, a Nagaswara player named Thiruvazhundur Nagesvara Subrahmanyam, who wonderfully played in the Tanjore court was honored by the king. The king presented him with silver Nagaswara. Subrahmanyam was a disciple of Ghanam Krishnayer and learnt the art of Ghanamarga, chakra tana and a number of Tamil Kirtanas from him.

It is said that there lived famous Nagaswara experts in Tamil Nadu even before the period of Trinity. Name of two pioneers of Nagaswara has been specifically mentioned in the book 'Dictionary of South Indian music and musicians' written by Prof. Sambamoorthy. Among one was famous Nagaswara player Bilvanam, disciple of Muthuswami Dikhitar. The other one famous Nagaswara vidwan, Dasari who lived in the early part of 19<sup>th</sup> century was a disciple of Syamasastri. It is believed that he was directly blessed by Tyagaraja Swamikal. It is true that most of the Nagaswara players did not play kritis or kirtanas until the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century AD. According to Sambamoorthy, Dasari played Tyagaraja kriti 'Darini telisi' in the raga Sudhasaveri

in front of the Saint himself. It proves kriti had been played in the Nagaswara repertoire from the period of Tyagaraja onwards. Dasari's playing was on the occasion of chariot procession in Tiruvayyar temple. When the procession reached 'Thirumanjana vedhi', where Tyagaraja resided, Dasari started to play ragalapana in Sudhasaveri wonderfully with extra ordinary flexibility. Followed by this, Dasari played the kriti 'Darini telisi'. When he played pallavi, anupallavi and charanam with a heavenly beauty, the listeners became extremely exultant. Having listened to his charming performance, Tyagaraja went to him and appreciated him without any formalities. Being emotional, Dasari pleaded for the saint's blessings. Swami blessed him too. It is recorded that Swami was at the age of 80 when this incident occurred.

Kritis of Trinity has been considered to be the melodious essence of each raga. This melodic individuality of ragas led to the standardization of their lakshana. It paved the way to the development of manodharma Sangita in all its varied aspects. According to Dr. B M Sundaram, the Thiruvizhimizhalai Brothers Subramanya Pillai and Nataraja Sundaram Pillai (1893-1984) had played kritis extensively in their concerts. This marked milestone in the history of Nagaswara.

Momentous change took place in Nagaswara repertoire during the post Tyagaraja period. The 19<sup>th</sup> century, which can be called to be the golden era of Nagaswara, witnessed many instances of alapanas rendered by Nagaswara vidwans. Nagaswara

vidwans celebrated as masters of alapana and pallavi and remained as great inspiration for the uprising of the modern musicians and a music system. During this period Nagaswara tradition grew from strength to strength and attained glory.

It was hundreds of Nagaswara players who brought out boundless possibilities of ragalapana and popularized the compositions of the Trinity. Thus these Nagaswara players substantially contributed to the growth and enrichment of Nagaswara music. Hence this study is yet to be continued through the representatives of numerous artists of Nagaswara.

### **Panthanainalloor Viruswami Pillai (1815-1889)**

Viruswami Pillai was a Nagaswara vidwan who transformed the Nagaswara playing in such a way as it was able to emulate with that of Vina playing. Viruswami was a vidwan at Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam. His fame of concert reached even in Srilanka. He who was born at Panthanainalloor chose his last days to be spent here itself.

### **Nachiyarkovil Amritham Pillai (1819-1904)**

Amritham Pillai and Valamkaiman Sokkalinga Pillai, the native of Thirunaraiyur near Kumbakonam are believed to be the first duo performers of Nagaswara. The duo performance declined

after their period and became popular again with Tirupamburam brothers. The renowned Nagaswara vidwans Chinnapakkiri Pillai and Tirumarugal Natesa Pillai were inspired by Amritham Pillai and learnt Nagaswara.

### **Koorainadu Nadesa Pillai (1830-1925)**

Nadesa Pillai who was born at Koorainadu rendered about 100 varnas in the age of nine. Besides rendering ragas and kirtanas melodiously, he showed an extraordinary skill in playing pallavi. When he was playing pallavis in a prescribed tala, abiding in it, he used to dismay the audience by changing the tala. Moreover he compulsorily played varna in every concert. He composed 116 tanavarnas in Telugu. He, who was appointed as the chief Nagaswara vidwan in Thiruvazhunthur Parimala Ranganatha temple, devised a proper system in Nagaswara playing.

### **Keezhvelur Kandaswami Pillai (1836-1897)**

Kandaswami Pillai who was born at Keezhvelur near Nagapattanam was a fabulous player of Nagaswara. A stone inscription about him in Thiruvallikeni Parthasarathy temple in Chennai is an evidence for his fame and mastery in Nagaswara.

### **Koviladi Lakshmana Pillai (1837-1919)**

Koviladi Lakshmana Pillai who was born in Thirupernagar near Tanjore was a pioneer in playing pallavis. He was particularly interested in the inclusion of kritis of Trinity in his concert. He would play raga Sankarabharanam charmingly. He also played prodigiously the kriti 'Ksheera Sagara' in the raga Devagandhari.

### **Kumbakonam Sivakolunthu Pillai (1838-1911)**

Sivakolunthu Pillai was the great Nagaswara vidwan who amazed the people by playing stone Nagaswara in Kumbheswar temple continuously for 45 minutes. He frequently played his favourite kriti 'bhavanute' in Mohana raga delightfully in his concert.

### **Kottai subbaraya Pillai (1843-1919)**

Subbaraya Pillai, a native of Sirkazhi was an artist who played Nagaswara with utmost clarity and beauty having no apaswaras. His Nagaswara playing was in such a way that the lakshana of the raga portrayed obviously. Kamboji and Todi were his favorite ragas.

### **Nagapattanam Venugopala Pillai (1861-1917)**

Venugopala Pillai, a native of Tirukavala near Tanjore was an Asthana vidwan of Nataraja temple at Chidambaram. His Nagaswara recital was an inevitable part of the festivals of this temple. He had a unique talent for playing kirtana, tana, ratthi, pallavi and excellent swara prastharas.

### **Kottor Soundararaja Pillai (1865-1952)**

Kottor Soundararaja Pillai had a systematical practice of playing Nagaswara. His rendering of Nagaswara was loud and clear having no mistakes. He was interested not only in rendering ragas but playing new kirtanas also.

### **Sikkal Rudrapathi Pillai (1865-1937)**

Sikkal Rudrapathi Pillai was excelled in raga alapana and he rendered Todi raga with immense beauty.

### **Tanjavur Krishnan (1866-1931)**

He was born at Kasipuram near Salem. He played kirtanas with alluring sangatis. Music lovers of the time called him 'Kirtanai Krishnan' taking into account of his mastery over kirtana rendering. Isai Poshakar, Thinduvayyar of Tanjore presented him

with 'Golden Nagaswara' considering his proficiency in Nagaswara playing.

### **Panthanainallur Ayyakannu Pillai (1868-1944)**

Panthanainallur Ayyakannu Pillai was an expert at rendering Nagaswara for long time in a single breath.

### **Mannargudi Chinnapakkiri Pillai (1869-1915)**

Mannargudi Chinnapakkiri Pillai is the name written in golden scripts in the history of Mangala vadyas. He was such a distinctive Nagaswara player that no other player could compare. He began his carrier practicing Othu Nagaswara under the discipleship of famous Nagaswara vidwan Velu Pillai. According to T N Rajaratnam Pillai, it is only in Mannargudi the expertise in playing kirtana, raga alapana and pallavi as well as the application of the distinct playing styles of Nagaswara such as thuthukaram, thannakaram, akaram, briga, viraladi etc. assembles in harmony.

### **Thirupamburam Nataraja Sundaram Pillai (1869-1938)**

Nataraja Sundaram Pillai who was born in Thirupamburam composed a work named 'Dikshitar Kirtanai Prakasikai' which comprises fifty swara sahityas.

### **Vandikkaratheru Ramayya Pillai (1871-1949)**

Ramayya Pillai was a Nagaswara vidwan who played ragas and kirtanas with lakshana, by giving importance to viraladi.

### **Thirukanna Mangai Natesa Pillai (1872-1942)**

He is the Nagaswara player (vidwan) who played Ashtapati in Nagaswara first time. Hence he is known as Ashtapati Natesa Pillai.

### **Tiruvarur Veedhividangam Pillai (1873-1933)**

After learning vocal music Veedhividangam Pillai started learning Nagaswara. For this reason the influence on the vocal music was evident in his Nagaswara playing. He was interested in theatre arts also.

### **Thirumarugal Natesa Pillai (1874-1903)**

Natesa Pillai was born in Thillaiyadi near Tanjore. He became famous in the art of Nagaswara playing within a short period. His significance was in playing brigas throughout the ragalapana. It is said that he was invited to Ettaiyapuram palace for conducting concerts. The king, who was impressed with the musical performance of Natesa Pillai, blessed him with anointing

of gold. The audience would enjoy his concerts forgetting themselves.

### **Panthanainalloor Guruswami Pillai (1875-1963)**

He was a magical performer in playing pallavi related to laya. Guruswami Pillai was a great expert in comprising panchagatis in tala and creating pallavis on the spot.

### **Madhurai Ponnuswami Pillai (1877-1929)**

Madhurai Ponnuswami Pillai is one among the Trinity of Nagaswara. The other two are Mannargudi Chinnappakkiri Pillai and T N Rajaratnam Pillai. It was Ponnuswami Pillai who began applying grihabedam (sruti bedam) in ragas in Carnatic music. He became famous in a short period. He is credited with composing the book 'Poorvika Sangita Unmai'.

### **Sempanarkoil Ramaswami Pillai (1880-1939)**

He was an expert in playing pallavis and ragamalikas. The word ratthimelam brings our memory back to the golden era of Ramaswami Pillai. It was his Nagaswara playing firstly recorded in gramophone in the history of Nagaswara music. He cut 78 rpm disc (Columbia Records Co.) of ratthimelam when he was the Asthana Vidwan in Mysore. He is well known for his difficult and intricate

pallavis and ratthis. In concerts, Chinnapakkiri Pillai and Ramaswami Pillai used to perform Nagaswara competitively.

### **Tanjavur Kannayya Reddiyar (1880-1939)**

Reddiyar who dealt with raga and pallavi in a well manner marvelously played kavadichindu and Hindustani music in Nagaswara. His favorite ragas were Begada, Sahana, Kedaragoula, Anandabhairavi etc. His elaborative playing of particular raga would prolong for 3 hours and more.

### **Rajamadam Shanmugha Sundaram Pillai (1883-1931)**

He was an expert in playing pallavis. Considering his mastery over pallavi, Somasundara chettiyar, a wealthy man honored him by presenting with silver Nagaswara. He was also honored with a gold medal for he had played excellently ratthi in trikala.

### **Thiruvalamchuzhi Manikkam Pillai (1883-1967)**

Following Chinnapakkiri Pillai, Manikkam Pillai was an expert in playing melkala swaras in Nagaswara.

### **Chidambaram Vaidyanatha Pillai (1884-1937)**

Vaidyanatha Pillai was a rich treasure of pallavi. He was known as 'Pallavi Churangam' as a Nagaswara vidwan who had extensive collection of pallavis. He gave a special focus on kalapramana. After Nataraja Pillai, he was appointed as the Asthana Vidwan in Chidambaram Govindarajar temple.

### **Periyatheru Subrahmanya Pillai (1886-1958)**

He would have been playing Nagaswara ragalapana for a long time. He would play kirtana in vilambita kala as well as druta kala without affecting melody. 'Enthukudayaradura' in Todi raga was his favorite kriti.

### **Thiruvidaimaruthur Sivakolunthu Pillai (1887-1913)**

Sivakolunthu Pillai was more concerned with singing and learning kirtanas beautifully. As an honor he was presented with golden Nagaswara and golden earrings by king of Kochi and Thillaiwal Dikshitar respectively.

### **Kottur Kuppaswami Pillai (1887-1955)**

Kuppaswami Pillai harmoniously blended briga and viraladi in all sangatis of the compositions. He would frequently play in

concerts his favorite kriti 'Raghuvamsasudha' in the raga Kathanakuthuhalam.

### **Perumpalloor Angappa Pillai (1890-1964)**

Angappa Pillai, well known for viraladi, played kirtanas in Nagaswara in accordance with sahitya. He was a vocalist too. He received gold medal, diamonds, bracelet etc. from the king of Mysore Ettayapuram as recognition to his talent.

### **Thirucherai Muthukrishna Pillai (1892-1929)**

Muthukrishna Pillai, an expert in ragalapana and kirtana playing had also special interest in playing Taval. He would frequently visit Srilanka for concerts. Saveri ragalapana was his masterpiece.

### **Thiruthoorai Poondi Sakkalinga Pillai (1892-1972)**

Sakkalinga Pillai's style of Nagaswara rendering was a blend of lakshana sangita and lakshya sangita. He was an excellent teacher who gave prominence to sampradaya sudhi, patanthara sudhi, kirtana patantharam etc. He also played Mridangam in concerts and radio recordings.

### **Thiruvizhimizhalai Subrahmanya Pillai (1893-1984)**

Learning by singing the sahitya of kirtanas, Subrahmanya Pillai played it in Nagaswara beautifully. Subrahmanya Pillai and Nataraja Sundaram Pillai were the renowned Nagaswara vidwans popularly known as 'Thiruvizhimizhalai Brothers'. They were excellent in playing ragalapana, pallavi, kalpanaswaras etc. There are many gramophone recordings of these Nagaswara musicians who were famous in both south India and north India.

### **Uraiyur Appavu Sundaram Pillai (1893-1966)**

Appavu Sundaram Pillai learned the art of Nagaswara within a short period and had done many concerts. He was an extraordinary performer in Timiri Nagaswara, incorporated the beauty of viraladi and briga in his renderings without lessening the sound of the instrument. He used to render only one raga a week and played different swaras and varnas in the same raga.

### **Vandikkaratheru Shanmugha Sundaram Pillai (1894-1968)**

Shanmugha Sundaram Pillai was beautifully played Nagaswara with viraladi, in a loud voice. He was also famous in Andhra Pradesh.

### **Elanthurai Brothers**

Nagaswara vidwans Govindaswami Pillai (1895-1962) and Narayana swami Pillai (1897-1957) are popularly known as Elanthurai Brothers. Purity in rendering of ragas is the special feature of these Nagaswara vidwans. Elanthurai Brothers were expert in viraladi and performed the ragas like Bhairavi, Sankarabharanam, Kamboji etc. with extraordinary rendering.

### **Sirupuliyur Kannappa Pillai (1896-1944)**

Kannappa Pillai's style of rendering of raga was rich with imagination. He easily handled the pallavis in complicated talas and kirtanas.

### **Thiruvaidaimaruthur P S Veeruswami Pillai (1896-1973)**

Veeruswami Pillai was a renowned Nagaswara vidwan who was excelled in rendering ragalapana, kirtana, pallavi etc. He had many disciples in Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

### **Kiranoor Chinnathambi Pillai (1897-1942)**

Besides Nagaswara, Chinnathambi Pillai was an expert in playing Taval, Khanjira, and Vocal music. He was famous for performing swaraprasthara after playing pallavi.

### **Sempanarkoil Govindaswami Pillai (1897-1955)**

Govindaswami Pillai was a proficient in playing the rhythmic compositions such as ratthi, pallavi etc. After the detailed ragalapana he had played the pallavi or ratthi in the same raga. Govindaswami Pillai and Dakshinamurthi Pillai used to perform Nagaswara competitively and was a pleasure for the audience.

### **Mannarkudi Manikkam Pillai (1898-1947)**

Mellifluously blended briga and viraladi in ragalapana, Manikkam Pillai would have been brought out the essence of each raga in one or two minutes of rendering. He was also an expert in playing kirtanas and pallavis. Huseni, Atana etc. were his favorite ragas.

### **Mysore S C Thelurayya (1900-1971)**

Thelurayya who was also a vocalist, played instruments such as Nagaswara, Clarinet, Violin, Flute, Harmonium, Vina, Mridangam, Tabla, Gottuvadyam etc. He was careful in pronouncing the sahitya of the kritis and was a proficient in ragalapana.

### **Thirupamburam Somasundaram Pillai (1904-1971)**

Somasundaram Pillai was equally adept in both Nagaswara and vocal music. He was a man of good voice and a gifted performer of extraordinary speed in playing brigas. He is credited with composing the book 'Dikshitar kirtanai prakasikai'.

### **Sempanarkoil Dakshinamurthi Pillai (1904-1976)**

Dakshinamurthi Pillai was excelled in ragalapana and kirtana rendering. The beauty given through viraladi to the swaras s , s , s s n p in the idam 'tanaku' was a remarkable feature of Nagaswara playing of Dakshinamurthi Pillai.

### **Enjikudi E.K Pichaikannu Pillai (1904-1975)**

Pichaikannu Pillai, along with his father Kandaswami had played many concerts from the early days of Chennai All India Radio. He has over fifty years of Nagaswara playing experience and has also performed in Srilanka, Yazhapanam etc. He was honored with the title 'Nagaswara Jyoti' in 1950. He is also the winner of the Kalaimamani Award.

### **Ayyampettai Venugopala Pillai (1904-1965)**

Venugopala Pillai was a traditionalist who played Nagaswara with purity in ragalapana. He played Nagaswara for hours without fatigue or hesitation. Unlike the other Nagaswara vidwans who emphasized on the viraladi and briga, his playing style was given importance to gamakas. He was honored with the title 'Nallisai Nambi'.

### **Talipatri Pichaihari (1905-1965)**

Known for the titles 'Nagaswara Govitha', 'Nada Chinthamani' etc. Pichaihari was a famous Nagaswara vidwan of Andhra Pradesh.

### **Chidambaram Radhakrishna Pillai (1906-1993)**

Radhakrishna Pillai, a man of admirable personal qualities, played the concerts with immense knowledge of raga and accurate kalapramana. He had no interest in fame and constantly interacted with the audience through his Nagaswara concerts. He rendered mostly the devotional compositions in concerts. He has been honored with the Kalaimamani Award.

### **Thiruvenkadu Subrahmanya Pillai (1906-1986)**

Subrahmanya Pillai was a prominent Nagaswara vidwan in the history of Tamil Nagaswara music. In contrast to the traditional Nagaswara style of playing with the accompaniment to Tavil and Othu, Subrahmanya Pillai played the concerts with the accompaniment to Tamburu, Violin and Mridangam, as followed in the vocal concerts. He performed ragalapana with extraordinary sophistication and played 'surul briga' continuously and with great speed in raga Mohana. It was he who started the practice of playing 'makudi' at the end of concerts.

### **Andankovil Karuppayya Pillai (1909-1958)**

Karuppayya Pillai's talent in rendering raga and pallavi was mesmerized by the audience.

### **Dharmapuram Abhirami Sundaram Pillai (1912-1962)**

Abhirami Sundaram Pillai was an expert in playing lengthy and tough pallavis as well as sahitya pallavis. He used to play

pallavis of a particular tala in different talas in various concerts. This kind of tala change poses many challenges for the accompanying Taval artists. Abhirami Sundaram Pillai, a good vocalist too was also honored by Annamalai University with the title 'Sangitabhushanam'.

### **Kulikkarai Kalidasa Pillai (1913-1973)**

Kalidasa Pillai had a unique talent in playing imaginative ragalapana, kalpanaswara, pallavi etc. He would only be satisfied with rendering a raga at least four hours a day. He played tanam beautifully in between the ragalapana and pallavi.

### **Kulikkarai Pichaiappa Pillai (1913-1979)**

Pichaiappa Pillai had only played kritis in Nagaswara only after he had studied the kritis by singing with emphasis on sahitya. His rendering of ragamalika following the pallavi was greatly appreciated by the audience. He gave importance to viraladi, briga, melkalam etc. in his ragalapana. Lal Bahadur Sastri honored him with the title 'Akhila Bharatha Nagaswara Chakravarthi'. He was also awarded the Kalaimamani Award.

### **Panthainalloor Ratinam Pillai (1916-1956)**

Ratinam Pillai was a famous Nagaswara vidwan, proficient in playing raga, kirtana, pallavi etc. in his concerts.

### **Karaikurichi Arunachalam (1921-1964)**

In terms of place of birth and community of origin, Arunachalam has an exception and had to overcome certain established bias. Despite of his short lived life, Arunachalam had achieved wide acceptance as the musical heir to T N Rajaratnam Pillai. Following his guru, Arunachalam also was noted for elegance of the ragas and composition he portrayed. When music of T N Rajaratnam Pillai stood as Himalaya and created an atmosphere that if a raga was played by him, nothing more to be done by others. Karaikurichi Arunachalam being so intelligent introduced his own specified gamakas and prayogas in certain areas of raga progression and developed a more charming style in ragalapana. The bhava given to each raga was an exceptional feature of Karaikurichi. Other noted qualities of Arunachalam are special tonal quality, sruti sudham, pleasantness of melody, astounding continuity, breath control, and total absence of any kind of apaswara and the pip pip sound produced during the checking of seevali. His genius of playing Nagaswara is evident from some of the recordings of Shanmukhapriya, Kedaragoula, Kamboji, Kharaharapriya etc. During the progression of raga, people would wonder whether it was Nagaswara or human voice.

### **Thirucherai Krishnamurthy Pillai (1921-1985)**

The Nagaswara playing of Krishnamurthy Pillai was in the traditional style with clear sound. Rendering in madhyama kala was his special feature. He was honored with the titles such as

‘Sarakshetran Nadamani’, ‘Nagaswara Kalaratinam’ and ‘Nagaswara Kesari’. He was also awarded a gold medal from the Mysore palace.

### **Vedaranyam Vedamurthi Pillai (1924-1962)**

Vedamurthi Pillai played the Nagaswara with the same gentleness or beauty of playing the instrument Vina. He easily played complicated swara patterns in intricate pallavis. Vedamurthi Pillai, a proficient in ragalapana and kirtana rendering, was awarded the gold medal in Mysore palace 27 times. He had many disciples and was given the titles ‘Swaranadamani’ and ‘Layagnana Udayan’. He also served on All India Radio.

### **Namagiripettai K Krishnan (1924-2001)**

Namagiripettai Krishnan had gained name and fame as a renowned practitioner of the traditional art and as a man of worthwhile personal qualities as well. He is the one who stood legendary among great maestros after T N Rajaratnam Pillai and Karaikurichi Arunachalam. Namagiripettai Krishnan evolved a unique style of his own. Smooth melodic flow, judiciously balanced concert menu, sense of proportion etc. are some of the obvious facets of his music. His affection and respect for Kalyani will forever hold a special place in Carnatic music history. Songs of Bharatiyar and Bharatidasan also found place in his recitals. He was honored with Kalaimamani, Isai Perarignar, Sangeet Natak

Akademi Award (1981), Padmasree, Padmabhooshan, Asthana vidwan of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams and so on.

### **Thirumeignanam Nataraja Sundaram Pillai (1926-1981)**

Rendering of varied 'swaraprasthara' in Nagaswara was a noteworthy feature of Nataraja Sundaram Pillai. His rendering of pallavi surprised the audience. He was honored with the titles 'Ezhisai Mukil', 'Nagaswara Kalaimamani', 'Nagaswara Yaman' etc.

### **Thirucherai Sivasubrahmania Pillai (1927-1994)**

Sivasubrahmania Pillai was the master of a pure style of rendering Nagaswara. He has played for many recordings and also played Nagaswara for films. He was also known in the titles such as 'Nagaswara Isaimani', 'Nagaswara Ranjitham' etc.

### **Mannargudi Paramasivam Pillai (1929-1976)**

Paramasivam Pillai spent many hours for ragalapana, giving importance to briga and was keen on playing kirtanas with literary charm. He was honored with the titles 'Nagaswara Vidwanmani', 'Nagaswara Kesari' etc.

### **Sheik Chinna Moulana (1929-1999)**

Style of ragalapana of Chinna Moulana was in a unique way. His raga rendering was accompanied by a number of brigas. He played kritis in Nagaswara only after learning the kritis by singing. He has in his credit the collections of recitals in gramophones and All India Radio recordings. He started a Nagaswara school in 1982 called 'Sarada Nagaswara Sangita Asramam'.

### **Madurai Sripathy Ponnuthayi (1929-2012)**

In the history of Carnatic music, Ponnuthayi was the first lady Nagaswara performer, who belonged to a family of musicians. It was Ponnuthayi's father who took the crucial decision of training her in Nagaswara. Ponnuthayi's first concert was at Madhurai Chitharai festival in Alagarkovil temple, at the age of 13. Art of improvisation and ornamentation of sangatis are the noteworthy features of her style of rendering and progression and proportion of ragalapana made a deep impact on vocalists of those days. Todi was her favorite raga. She was honored with many titles such as 'Nadagana Ratnam', 'Nadaswara Vidwamsini', 'Nadagananidhi' and awarded Kalaimamani.

### **Kottur Rajaratnam Pillai (1932-1987)**

Kottur Rajaratnam Pillai beautifully incorporated briga and viraladi in his rendering of raga, kirtana, sangatis etc. He was

known as the vidwan of the vidwans and was also an expert in playing bhajans.

### **Enjikudi Kandaswami Pillai (1933-1988)**

Ragalapana for hours, rendering of kirtanas filled with essence, lengthy swara patterns etc. were the notable features of Nagaswara recitals of Kandaswami Pillai. He played charmingly the kriti 'Pariyasakama' in raga Vanaspathi in a slow tempo. He was honored with the titles 'Sukhaganajyothi', 'Peruvangiya Perarasu', 'Kalaimamani' etc.

Among these pioneers most of them had their musical performance through Timiri Nagaswara. They worked hard to make great contributions to the Nagaswara music by breaking its limitations. But its realization was possible only with T N Rajaratnam Pillai, the emperor of Nagaswara music. The history of music to date convinced T N Rajaratnam Pillai that further expansion of music was possible only through the perfect restructuring of this instrument.

### **T N Rajaratnam Pillai (1898-1956)**

T N Rajaratnam Pillai was born of Kuppuswami Pillai and Govindammal in Tirumarugal on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1898. Soon after his family moved to Thiruvaduthurai and settled there. It was in the cradle of music T N Rajaratnam Pillai was grown up and fed on. Even in his early childhood he showed great interest in singing songs. His uncle Tirumarugal Natesapillai, very famous Nagaswara

Vidwan was an unrivalled master in raga elaboration. When he grew old enough to have rigorous tuition, Natesapillai took him in hand and gave him regular lessons. The young Rajaratnam Pillai acquired intimate knowledge and grasped the ragas and the compositions in respective ragas. He received musical training under Thirukodikaval Krishnayyer, a famous Carnatic violinist and learnt Nagaswara from an eminent musician, Ammachatra Kannuswami Pillai.

On the advice of Acharya of the Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam, T N Rajaratnam Pillai started performing vocal concerts. Soon he moved to Nagaswara concerts. Within a short period he was appointed as Nagaswara player in Thiruvaduthurai temple. His unique style of rendering attracted many devotees to the temple because of his playing Bhupala raga with the dexterity and genuineness of a veteran master. Soon he became a well known and most demanding concert player of the time and he performed large number of live and radio concerts. As an outstanding Nagaswara practitioner, his talent as a vocalist had been ignored.

The major janya ragas like Huseni, Begada, Anandabhairavi, Atana, Purvikalyani, Mukhari etc. are difficult to render effectively in Nagaswara. Rigid nature, profuse vakra prayogas, lack of freedom between the swaras etc. are challenges for an instrumentalist. T N Rajaratnam Pillai's fabulous musical proficiency has been proved here. Ragas like Sahana, Varali, Anandabhairavi, Kanada etc were rendered unprecedentedly with

enriched ragabhava by him. His rendering of the Darbar raga had an actual feel of sitting in the darbar of the royal palaces. Elaboration of prathimadhyama ragas of Rajaratnam Pillai was featured by enormous knowledge, majesty, intense feeling, grandeur etc. Thousands of rasikas still remember with nostalgia, the alapana of ragas such as Panthuvrali, Vachaspathi, Simhendramadhyamam, Subhapanthuvrali, Ramapriya etc. His playing of compositions in Telugu, Sanskrit or Tamil was considered unblemished. His deep knowledge in tala of Indian music is extensively recognized.

T N Rajaratnam Pillai who gave considerable contribution to Nagaswara music overturned the concept of melody. T N Rajaratnam Pillai who popularized Nagaswara music has been considered as the emperor of Carnatic music itself. Inspired by T N Rajaratnam Pillai many musicians entered into the realm of Nagaswara music and proved their proficiency in it. Karaikurichi Arunachalam, prominent among the disciples of T N Rajaratnam Pillai created a distinct style of his own in the world of Nagaswara music.

Vandikkaratheru Mani and mamundiya Brothers, Andankovil A V Selvaratnam, Paruthiyappar Kovil P.K Soundararajar, Muthupet Shanmugham Sundaram Pillai, Sempanarkovil Rajanna (grandson of Ramaswami Pillai), Valangaiman Soundararajan, Uppliappankoil T K Chinnappa Pillai, Sempanarkoil Brothers SRD Muthukumara swami, SRD

Vaidyanathan, Lady Nagaswara player Kali shabi Mehroob, Yazhpanam Balamurugan, Injikudi E M Subramaniam, Injikudi Mariyappan, Chinnamannur Vijay Karthikeyan Ilayaraja, Thirupamburam Brothers, Babukumar, Sheik Mehboob Subhani, Thirumeignanam Ramanathan, Pandamangalam Yuvaraj, Thiruparamkundram Velmurugan, Chinnamannur Karthik, etc. are the Nagaswara players who made substantial and valuable contributions to the realm of contemporary Nagaswara music. Acharyapuram Chinnathambi pillai is now among the few remaining Nagaswara musicians who play the instrument in its traditional style. Some rituals differ in Shaivite and Vaishnavite temples and there are subtle differences between the two traditions. Chinnathambi pillai is one of the only Nagaswara vidwans who knows both.

### **5.1 Nagaswara Maestros of Kerala**

Though it has long been existed in Kerala, Nagaswara was an instrument played only for ceremonies. It has not been more than 200 years since there were vidwans in this instrument. Many names have gone unrecorded, but below are some of the available ones who are some of the great Nagaswara Vidwans in Kerala who contributed their whole life to the Nagaswara music.

#### **Varkkala Sanku Panicker**

After the death of his father, Sanku Panicker was appointed as a Nagaswara vidwan in the same temple where his father played

Nagaswara and continued as the prime Nagaswara vidwan of the temple till the end of his life. His Nagaswara recital was a compulsory during the ceremonies of the royal families of Travancore, Kochi, Paliyam etc. He received many gifts from the king including golden Nagaswara.

### **Vaikkom Kuttappa Panicker**

After his early childhood education, at the age of 12 Kuttappa Panicker went to Tamil Nadu for learning the art of Nagaswara. After returning back to Kerala as a youth he was appointed as the Nagaswara vidwan of the Ambalappuzha temple. The renowned writer P K Narayana Pillai wrote about this great Nagaswara vidwan in his book 'Smaranamandalam'.

### **Vaikkom Kunju Pillai Panicker (1881-1960)**

At the age of 12, after schooling Kunju Pillai Panicker learned the traditional profession, art of Nagaswara from his father. At the age of 15 he continued advance training under the tutelage of a guru at Kumbakonam for 5 years. In 1901 he was appointed as Nagaswara vidwan of Vaikkom Mahadeva temple. It is said that he played granite Nagaswara many times in the Vaikkom temple.

### **Ettumanoor Velu Panicker**

Velu Panicker was a prominent Nagaswara player in most of the temples of Kerala. He was a great musician who played Nagaswara accompanied with great masters like Vaikkom

Kuttappa Panicker, Kadavur Kuttappa Panicker etc. It is said that he was played the granite Nagaswara of the temple very well. Velu Panicker should have sound knowledge in music. Impressed by his rendering, the king has gifted him a golden Nagaswara.

### **Cherthala Kuttappa Panicker**

Kuttappa Panicker belonged to a traditionally Nagaswara family. His Nagaswara rendering having profound knowledge in music, was an essential element in many temples of Kerala in those days. Kuttappa Panicker, a good vocalist too had established a music school in Cherthala in 1930.

### **Chittoor Sankara Panicker**

After his preliminary lessons in music, in the interests of his father who was a Nagaswara player, Sankara Panicker learned Nagaswara under the great Nagaswara-Clarinet vidwan Chinnakrishna Naidu of Tanjore. Sankara Panicker, popularly known as 'Chittoor Payyan' was very famous in his style of ragalapana. He is the recipient of many awards including Kerala Sangita Nataka Akademy Award.

### **Ettumanoor Chellappa Panicker**

After his preliminary lessons in Nagaswara, Chellappa Panicker had the advanced training from the great maestro Thiruvaidaimaruthur Veeruswami Pillai and gained fame as a good

Nagaswara vidwan. He was the prime Nagaswara vidwan at the Ettumanoor temple.

### **Chalikkavattom Kumaran (1909-1985)**

He practiced Nagaswara under his father Ikkandanasan, Palluruthi Kunjuni and Thiruvenkadu Subrahmanya Pillai. At Kayamkulam Pathiyur temple he recited Nagaswara with Nagaswara Chakravarthi T N Rajaratnam Pillai and presented him with a gold medal.

### **Ambalappuzha Brothers**

Sankara Narayana Panicker (1911-1967) and his brother Gopalakrishna Panicker (1920-1977), popularly known as 'Ambalappuzha Brothers' were the Nagaswara legends who rendered in a systematic way based on pure music. In 1937 they founded the Swathi Thirunal music school at Ambalappuzha.

### **Thiruvizha Raghava Panicker (1913-1997)**

From the age of 12, Raghava Panicker began to play Nagaswara for the festival and ritual ceremonies of the temples. He learnt Nagaswara under the tutelage of famous Nagaswara maestros Aranmula Kunju Panicker and Tanjore Raja Naidu and worked in many temples as Nagaswara player and became famous through many concerts. His Nagaswara concert was a must in the ceremonies of the palaces of Thiruvananthapuram, Kilimanur, Attingal, Mavelikkara etc. He was appointed as the Nagaswara

vidwan of the Kottayam Thirunakkara Mahadeva temple since 1938. He was famous for his systematic style of kirtana rendering and ragalapana.

### **Kandiyur Sivasankara Pillai (1925-1999)**

His style of Nagaswara playing was emphasized on the pure classical music. In addition to the Nagaswara, he has also been able to perform instruments like Flute, Violin, Harmonium etc. He was also a good vocalist.

### **Harippad Chellappa Panicker (1925-1991)**

Chellappa Panicker has a unique Nagaswara style which is a combination of enriched melody of raga and deep knowledge in music. He served as the Nagaswara vidwan of the Harippad Subrahmanya swami temple and as the Nagaswara teacher of the Vaikkom temple kalapeedam. He has performed several concerts in and out of Kerala with his elder brother Gopalakrishna Panicker and they were popularly known as 'Harippad Brothers'.

### **Thakazhi Sivan (1926-2002)**

Sivan learnt the art of Nagaswara from his father and received advanced training from great maestros Ambalappuzha Brothers. He was appointed as the prime Nagaswara vidwan of the Ambalappuzha temple.

### **Thrichattukulam Mani**

Thrichattukulam Mani was renowned at the Nagaswara melam in and outside Kerala. In 1958 he recited Nagaswara in front of then Maharaja of Travancore and got many honors. He has many disciples and has composed many kirtanas, mallaris, pallavis, padas etc.

### **Muthukulam Sisters**

T Ambika (1939-2008) and T Sivani (1941-1995), who were popularly known as ‘Muthukulam Sisters’ were the first female Nagaswara players in Kerala.

### **Pazhayannur K G Krishnankutty**

He is the artist who has filled the Nagaswara art venue for more than half a century. His Nagaswara recitals were the rare combination of gnana bhava and raga bhava. He was the recipient of Kerala Sangita Nataka Akademy Award of 2007 and many other awards.

### **Chengannur Sivasankara Panicker**

Sivasankara Panicker and his brother Balakrishnan, popularly known as ‘Chengannur Brothers’ performed many concerts in and outside Kerala and gained fame as good Nagaswara vidwans.

### **Vaikkom Brothers**

Gopalakrishna Panicker and his brother Radhakrishna Panicker, popularly known as Vaikkom Brothers, were the sons of

the famous Nagaswara vidwan Vaikom Kunjupillai Panicker. Their Nagaswara recitals were enriched with both gnanabhava and ragabhava.

Thiruvizha Jayasankar, Pallavur Krishnankutty, Vettikavala K N Sasikumar, Guruvayur Murali, Thuravur Narayana panicker, Nenmara Brothers; N R Kannan and N R Anand, Vadassery T V Sivadasan, Vadassery Sethumadhavan, Orumanayur O K Gopi, Palakkad Reghunadhan, Maruthorvattom Babu, Harippad Murugadas, Ochira Sivadasan, Prasanna, Vaikom Shaji, Harippad Krishnakumar, Muthukulam Suseelan, Aranmula Sreekumar, Venu Chettiyar, Vaikom R Hariharan, Chirayinkeezhu A Narayanankutty, etc. are some of the Nagaswara players who have been endeavoring for the enrichment of Nagaswara music at present.

In the long list of legends, who nurtured and popularized the tradition of Nagaswara perhaps the sole surviving icon is Thiruvizha Jayasankar. Jayasankar had preliminary lessons on Nagaswara from his grandfather Sanku Panicker and later received advanced training under his father, Nagaswara maestro Thiruvizha Raghava Panicker. He became famous as an accomplished Nagaswara player under the tutelage of Ambalappuzha Sankara Narayana Panicker.

In the career of Jayasankar, tryst with Taval wizard Valayapetty Subrahmaniam is considered to be a landmark and

they together captivated a vast constituency of listeners in the whole of south India. The deep knowledge in Carnatic vocal music enabled him to infuse emotion and melody in his renderings. Enchanted by the style of Karaikurichi Arunachalam, Jayasankar realigned the relation between the seevali and the lips and redefined the fingering techniques. He embroidered his recitals with tonal subtleties and logical progression. Phrases in ragalapana are suffused with bhava-laden enunciation and chittaswaras and kalpanaswaras would compete with those of a vocalist in terms of clarity and depth. He has many recordings to his credit. He has published a book on Nagaswara titled ‘Nagaswarathinte Atmakadha’.

Recently Nagaswara music has been receiving some negative sign in its continuous growth. It takes a long time to learn Nagaswara music which limits the number of learners to this field. The fact that beautiful musical prayogas can only be brought into this instrument by blowing forcefully, also keeps away the pupils from learning the Nagaswara. Today’s fast living condition does not allow the people to spend long hours practicing this instrument with care. Nagaswara music had once flourished with the help of the kings and temple superiors, but the same situation no longer exists today.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

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Among the series of musical instruments, Nagaswara adorns a unique place and has played an important role in the development of the Carnatic music. Being a wind instrument, it has a history as far back as the Indus valley civilization. Nagaswara is an ancient and still live musical instrument that has undergone many transformations. The transformation of Nagaswara from Timiri to Bari is an important milestone in the history of Carnatic music. This opened up an infinite possibility of the instrument to bring out all the excellence of well flourished Carnatic music. The observations derived from the comparative study of selected ragas of both traditions reveal the influence of Nagaswara playing on vocal tradition and vice versa. Thus it has played a great role in the enrichment of lakshya sangita.

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## **APPENDIX**

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## Appendix 1

**C D containing digitalized recorded audio clips of renderings of great masters on Nagaswara and voice clips of the recitals of great masters and also the mallaris whose detailed notations as given in chapter 3**

<b>Digital Recording No.</b>	<b>Instrument/ Vocal</b>	<b>Artist</b>	<b>Raga</b>	<b>Page No</b>
Audio clip-1	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Kamboji	84
Audio clip-2	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Shanmukhapriya	84
Voice clip-3	vocal	Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer	Kamboji	84
Voice clip-4	vocal	Musiri Subrahmanyayer	Todi	85
Audio clip-5	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Kamboji	85
Voice clip-6	vocal	Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer	Kamboji	85
Audio clip-7	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Kamboji	85
Voice clip-8	vocal	Seerkazhi Govindarajan	Kharaharapriya	86
Audio clip-9	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Todi	86
Audio clip-10	Nagaswara	Karaikurichi Arunachalam	Kharaharapriya	86
Voice clip-11	vocal	Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyenkar	Sahana	86
Voice clip-12	vocal	G N Balasubrahmaniam	Panthuvarali	87
Audio clip-13	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Todi	93
Audio clip-14	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Todi	94
Audio clip-15	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Todi	94
Audio clip-16	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Todi	94
Audio clip-17	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Abheri	96
Audio clip-18	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Abheri	96
Audio clip-19	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Shanmukhapriya	98
Audio clip-20	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Shanmukhapriya	98

Audio clip-21	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Shanmukhapriya	99
Audio clip-22	Nagaswara	Karaikurichi Arunachalam	Kamboji	100
Audio clip-23	Nagaswara	Karaikurichi Arunachalam	Kamboji	100
Audio clip-24	Nagaswara	Karaikurichi Arunachalam	Kamboji	101
Audio clip-25	Nagaswara	Karaikurichi Arunachalam	Kamboji	101
Audio clip-26	Nagaswara	Karaikurichi Arunachalam	Kamboji	101
Audio clip-27	Nagaswara	Karaikurichi Arunachalam	Kamboji	102
Audio clip-28	Nagaswara	Karaikurichi Arunachalam	Kamboji	102
Audio clip-29	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Kalyani	103
Audio clip-30	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Kalyani	103
Audio clip-31	Nagaswara	T N Rajaratnam Pillai	Kalyani	104

## Appendix 2

Photographs showing the main parts of the instrument



Photographs demonstrating the playing technique of the instrument



**SHADJA**

**RISHABHA**

**GANDHARA**



**MADHYAMA**



**PANCHAMA**



**DHAIVATA**



**NISHADA**