

Divine Swells From Common Diction

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IT is an incredible wonder how the honeyed breath of verse and song holds out against the ravages of time while gilded monuments, trophied arches and marbled halls are doomed to decay and yield to dust. It is greater wonder that such magic emanations emerge from common diction as in Thyagaraja's verse.

Such songs express the yearnings of the human mind to comprehend the entire range and depth of God's creation. They are endowed with all the qualities that keep them eternal—truth, beauty, power, love, sacrifice, memory and obedience—lamps that have illumined human life since the dawn of creation. Yet these songs are just composed of words too familiar for us to believe that they can be woven into the texture of sublime melody. Ancient lore and simple themes are brought to new light, life and power, kindling new raptures even as familiar acts are made beautiful through love.

Genius is defined as a mind of extraordinary comprehension and exuberant power directed with intensity towards some particular purpose with lasting effect. Such is the quality of Thyagaraja's mind and music which are directed to the worship of Rama symbolising all that is bright and beautiful in divine creation.

In the entire range of poetry and literature it is hard to find a more effective expression of the enchanting beauty of human form than is enshrined in the kirtana '*Mohana Rama*'.

Shakespeare found the beauty of such human form too rich for use, too dear for earth that he wished to cut it into little stars 'which make the face of heaven so fine that all the world will be in love with night and day no worship to the garish sun'! On the other hand Thyagaraja brought

the angels to earth as birds and bees too watch with wonder and delight the beauteous form of Sri Rama. The raga *Mohana* true to its title steepens our senses as we yield to its soliciting spell.

Beauty of all creation would be meaningless unless there are forces that bind the components and that force in human life is love. In the material universe, it is impossible to create motion without force, in the living world it is impossible to sustain life without love. Thyagaraja's music is just the outpourings of this irrepressible passion—the love of Rama. This takes many forms—worship, wonder, gratitude, anger, disappointment and ultimately surrender.

In such outpourings emotion dominates the mind and heart. All sense of space and time is lost, eternity is compressed into an instant and a minute is stretched into eternity. In that heroic verse '*Kshirasagara Sayana*' set in the raga intended only for the angels—*Devagandari*—the quintessence of ageless epics merges into current history—the redemption of Baktha Ramadas. The frontier between fact and fancy, history and fiction disappears. Gajendra, Droupadi and Ramadas—their plaintive voices are heard by the Lord of Lords as he reclines in sublime grace on Adishesha on the nectarine ocean. He bridged the seas and launched a million soldiers to redeem Sita in defence of whom Anjaneya had burnt the topless towers of Lanka. For such an Omniscient and Omnipotent Lord why should there be any reluctance to save his disciple pleading in plaintive strains, '*Emineramu nanu brova entha bharamu*'. He appeals to the Lord of Lords—*Devadeva*—who is at the same time a *Deenabandhu* for granting him the benediction of his presence.

It is impossible to love without respecting the power and dignity of the object of such love. Such dignity can emerge in sonorous magnificence from Sanskrit diction as in *Merusamana* in *Mayamalava gowla* or from the lyrical lilt of elegant simplicity of *Naradaganalola* in *Atana*.

The measure of love is the degree of disappointment when it goes unheeded or unrequited. Of course such anger and disappointment can only be transient and make the pleasure of realisation keener. In plaintive *Bhairavi* '*Yuktamu gadu*' he confesses that he could not compete with the immediate claimants to Rama's love like Sita, Bharatha or Lakshmana.

Thyagaraja understood human nature in all its aspects. He brought into bold relief the sanctity of noble passions against the most widespread

of human failings—susceptibility to scandal and strange infection of jealous reports. He expressed in the sonorous rythm of *Kambodi* in *Evarimata* the vicious power of slander whose breath rides on the forcing winds sparing no king or queen or state and or even God's incarnation—Sri Rama.

It is not only anger but also self reproach that characterises a disappointed lover. This is also consistent with the true spirit of Hindu philosophy which decrees that the law of karma operates inexorably. Pleasure and pain are just the reactions of earlier actions which can be traced even to previous births. In *Tolijanmamu* in *Bilahari* Thyagaraja confesses his guilt and sins while in *Enatinomu* in *Bhairavi* he attributes happiness to earlier actions of devotion.

It is the special feature of Hindu thought that it does not accept uniformity in creation though it is aware of universality in life. It is just a manifestation of the law of karma. Some are born great, some become so, and others have greatness thrust on them but a knowledge of music is just a gift of Brahma—*Sangeetha Gnanamu datha vraya valenura*. No greater thought can be more powerfully expressed in simpler language.

While self realisation is ultimately the result of the individual effort, the methods for achieving it have to be learnt at the feet of the master. Discipline and obedience are consistent with initiative and individual effort. Can this be better expressed than in the resonant tunes of *Sankarabharanam* in *Buddhiradu* or of *Gouri Manohari* in *Guruleka* or *Mayamalava gowla* in *Vidulaku mrokkeda*.

There is an unkind criticism from those untaught to Hinduism about the multiplicity of Gods and the overpicturing of our deities. The immortal truth is showered on us in the raga *Deva Amrithavarshini* as the song *Evarani* emphasises the unity of the descriptions in terms of Shiva, Madhava, Brahma and Parabrahma.

There is another aspect of Hindu thought which is accepted as normal by its votaries but imperfectly understood by others. The finiteness of human life is inexorable and it is futile to seek endless existence. What man should strive for is freedom from fear of death. This turns out to be the most natural consequence of total surrender to the Almighty. To a man of devotion death holds no terrors, '*Bhajana Parulakela Dandapani Bhayamu*'. That is

why the enlightened human beings seek not wealth or wordly power, the barren sceptre and the fruitless crown but true Bakthi. The soul stirring rythm of *Bakthi Bicchamiyyave* in the raga *Sankarabharanam* conveys the spirit of sacrifice and self denial.

Blessed are the generations born after the creation of Thyagaraja's music and the discovery of the raga *Sankarabharanam*. Even in their fleeting lives they have a chance to have a glimpse of 'Swarga apavarga', the flowered Elysium conceived only in legend and lore. Let the rythm roll on

'Gnanadhamulu guna Ganamu Seyaga' . . .

No sweeter swell can carry the surges of divine power into our too too mortal frames.

