

RABINDRA BHARATI UNIVERSITY
VOCAL MUSIC DEPARTMENT

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Short life sketch of Karnatic Trinity

There are three eminent music composers as well as performers in the field of Karnatic music, who are unitedly called trinity of Karnatic music, and they are Tyagaraja, Shyama Shastri and Mutthuswami Dikshitar.

1. Tyagaraja.

Tyagaraja was an eminent musical maestro of Karnatic music. He was born in Tiruvarur at Tanjore District of Tamil Nadu on 1767. His father was Rambrahmam and mother was Sitamma Devi. Rambrahmam was a famous scholar of sanskrit language. Tyagaraja's grandfather was a court poet at Tanjore durbar.

Tyagaraja learnt sanskrit and telegu under his father's guidance and learnt music from his mother. Later he learnt music from Purandar Bitthal, who was

his mother's sangeet guru. Then he became disciple of Vijaya Gopal, one of the eminent musician of that time.

Since his childhood days, Tyagaraja was very much devoted Lord Rama, the hero of Ramayana. He had expressed his eager solicitation to Lord Rama through his Kritis –

- i) Nenendu Vedukudura - Karnatic Behag.
- ii) Bhabanuta – Mohonam.

Tyagaraja was a musicologist, a poet, a composer and at the same time he was a great reformer of music. He had composed around 24000 kritis. All his compositions are exclusive and most of them are sung in madhyalaya. Most of his kritis are composed in Aditalam, Mishra chaputala, Rupak tala etc. Tyagaraja had used about 200 ragas in his Kritis.

Tyagaraja was a very famous music teacher, and had earned a great achievement in music teaching. He used to categorise his students on the basis of their vocal ability. His most talented disciple was Shatakala Govinda. Shatakala Govinda not only had taken music training from Tyagaraja, he had also learnt various languages

from him. Tyagaraja had gifted him five excellent Kritis. According to some music critiques, these five Kritis are called Pancharatna Kritis. They are –

1. Endaro Mahanubhabula – Sriraga,
2. Jagadananda Karaka – Nat,
3. Dudukukala – Goulai,
4. Sadhinachchene – Aarabhi
5. Kanakanaruchira – Varali.

There are also some other flawless Kritis by Tyagaraja –

1. Dasaratha Nirunama – Shubhapantu varali,
2. Chintusatu Nandy – Mukhari.

He also composed some kritis on some obsolete ragas –

1. Devamatha Varshini – Bharani
2. Nirunamunamadendu- Nauras Kanada.

Tyagaraja has written a number of musical books, viz. Tyagaraja-Hridaya, Divyanama-sankirtana, Utsava-sampradaya-Kirtana, Prahlad-Bhakta-Vijaya, Nauka-Charitam(Drama) etc.

Some musical critics opine that, Tyagaraja had adopted mendicancy before his death. He died on 1847.

2. Shyama Shastri :-

Shyama Sashtri was a renowned musicologist of Karnatic music. He was born in 1762 at Tiruvarur in Tanjore district of Tamil nadu. He was from “Vadama” community. His real name was Venkata Subramania. His nick name was Shyama Krishna.

At his young age , Shyama Shastri had been given a sound knowledge in Sanskrit and Telegu. He had taken musical training from his maternal uncle. Later he had taken some extra music lessons from a sangeet guru, who was an Andhra Brahmin. After that , Pachimirium Adi Appaya, a renowned singer of that time, had given music training to Shyama Shastri. Pachimirium Adi Appaya had given the title Shastri to Shyama Krishna, and from then he came to be known as Shyama Shastri.

Shyama Shastri was a proficient composer in Karnatic music. He had composed many songs in sanskrit and telegu. He had dedicated nine kritis to Devi Minakshi, the presiding Goddess of Madurai. These Kritis had helped him to achieve name and fame. Todi, dhanyasi, saveri, bhairavi, kamboji, sankarabharanam, kalyani were his favourite ragas. Beside these, he had

composed a lot of Kritis in some obsolete ragas. All of his compositions are in sanskrit, telegu and tamil.

Shyama Shastri had established an achievement of commandable deed in Karnatic music. He was considered as a reformator of “svarajati”, a musical form of karnatic music. Svarajati was mainly a dance based song type. Shyama Shastri had introduced svarajati as a vocal musical form by adding some new context. The important svarajatis composed by him are –

1. Rave Himagiri kumari – Todi - Aditalam.
2. Kamakshi Anudinamu – Bhairavi – Chaputalam.
3. Kamakshi Ni Padayugam – Yadukulakamboji – Chaputalam.

Shyama Shastri had composed more than hundred Kritis. The remarkable ones are –

1. Kanaka Shaila – Punnagavarali.
2. Shankari Shankuru – Saveri.
3. Virana Varali Chi – Kalyani.
4. O jagadamba – Anandavairavi.
5. Brovavamma – Manji.

His renowned disciples are Alasur Krishnaraya, Subbaraya Shastri etc. He died on 1827.

3. Muthuswamy Dikshitar :-

Muthuswamy Dikshitar was an eminent musicologist of Karnatic Music. He was born on 1776 in Tiruvarur of Tanjore district.

In his childhood, he had taken his primary music lessons from his father. His father had trained him both practical and theory of music. Later he had taken his musical training on Dhruvad from Yogi Chidambaranatha of Benaras. Being from a musical family background and intense practice, Muthuswamy had acquired an uncomparable proficiency in music. The company of Shyama Shastri had also helped him to achieve splendid development in music.

Muthuswamy had spent his life in too much poverty. He was not only a proficient singer , but a famous veena player and violin player also. In Karnatic music his unforgettable composition is “Manipravala – Kriti”. It was written in different languages viz. sanskrit, tamil and telegu. “Venkata-Chalapati”, a kriti, composed in

kharaharapriya raga and timed in Aditalam, was the best kriti in Manipravala Kriti group. This kriti was composed in sanskrit, tamil and telegu language. “Nisari saman”, another kriti of Manipravala Kriti group was an excellent kriti.

Some notable kritis of Muthuswami Dikshitar are –

1. AkshayalingoVibho Swayambhu –
Shankarabharanam raga – Chapu talam.
2. Brihaspati – Athana raga
3. Divakar Tanujam – Yadukulakamboji
4. Srinathadi Guruguha Jayati jayati –
Mayamalavgoula raga – Adi talam
5. Anandamrita Karashani – Amritavarshini
6. Borodarajam – Saranga raga – Adi talam.

Muthuswamy Dikshitar died on 1865.