श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः

Bhakthi, as expressed by SRI THYAGARAJA and MAHARAJA SWATI TIRUNAL through their compositions.

By **V. Subramanyam**

Gur (Sastras) scriptures have categorised human desires or human goals into four : Dharma, Artha, Karma and Moksha. These are termed चतर्विध पुरुषार्थाः पुरुषै अर्थयन्ते इति पुरुषार्थः That which is desired by human beings is Purushartha. "Dharma" denotes the desire to lead a Dharmie life as stipulated in the vedas and also appropriate desire to do Charity. Artha means the desire to acquire wealth in accordance with the norms laid forth by Dharma. For the maintenance of one's life acquisition of wealth is unavoidable.The desire for pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment comes under the next Purushartha "Kama". The fourth Purushartha is Moksha which means liberation from the cycle of birth and death. मोक्षयेव परमपुरुषार्थः Among the Purusharthas, Moksha occupies the highest order – Prime of place. The option of choosing the Purushartha is to entirely left to the free will of the individual. The wise and emotionally mature would target moksha as the ultimate goal of life pursuiting the other Purusharthas only to the extent necessary for minimum worldly transactions and such persons are a small number. The majority pursue Artha and Kama getting bogged down deeper into the mundane life with the entailing trials and tribulations.

A study of Thyagarajas life clearly reveals that at no point of time he had any inclination for Artha and Kama. Leading an austere life depending on alms he received from his "Unchavritte" his attention was always focussed on "Aradhana" of his Ishtadwata, Srirama and singing His praise paving the way for his ultimate liberation. Maharaja Swati Tirunal as a ruler of Travancore had no desire about Artha and Kama, as he was in the midst of plenty. The Royal Composer was a great Bhaktha of Lord Padmanabha his Kuladevata and as the Travancore Tradition goes he was ruling the kingdom on behalf of Lord padmanabha as his dasa. Even today the head of the Travancore Royal family is known as Padmanabha Dasa. Swati Tirunal was never attracted to the pomp and pleasure of Royal life. Apart from the burden of ruling his kingdom and taking are of his subjects and then welfare his mind was focussd on Padmanabha, involving himself in spiritual pursuits and his ultimate aim pitched on the highest Purushartha "Moksha". Both these compsers were "Mumukhus"– meaning persons with intense desire aimed at the ultimate goal of life – Moksha.

Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada in Viveka Chudamani says "मोक्षकारण सामग्रयां भक्तिरेव गरीयसि (Sloka 32) "Among the recources for attainment of Moksha Bhakthi is the greatest of them". Both the composers being तीव्रमुसुक्षु it is little wonder why they were ardent Bhaktas.

In simple terms Bhakttu denotes 'love' born out of reverence especially when it is directed towards God. In a sloka of Sivananda Lahari Adi Shankara describes Bhakthi:-

अङ्कोलं निजबीजसन्ततिरयस्कानतो पलं सूचिका
साध्वी नैजविभुं लता क्षितिरुहं
सिन्धुः सरिद्वल्लभम् प्राप्नोतीह यथा य पशुपतेः पादारविन्द द्वयं
चेतोवृत्ति रूपेत्या तिष्ठति सदा सा भक्तिरित्युच्यते

In this world as the ripe seeds of the Angola tree fall to the earth and without external aid reach the tree itself, as the iron needles naturally get attracted and attached to the magnet, as the chaste woman – Pathivratha - to her husband as the creeper reaches and holds on to the tree it get attached to as the river to the ocean, the mind of man when it unswervingly gets attached to the Lotus feet of Lord Shiva it is Bhakthi. Bhakthi pervades every human activity. It runs through Karma (action) Upasana and Jnana like a string running through a garland of beads "सूत्रते मणिगणयिव" . It would be interestng to note that our sastras have a mantra or sloka for every human activity from प्रातःस्मरणं when getting up at dawn to a suitable one at bedtime the underlying theme being Bhakthi to the Lord.

The first step of Bhakthi is worship of God almighty. This external worship matures in to inner adoration which is indicative of the sprouting or real Bhakthi which flowers into intense devine love. This leads to the joy of closeness between the devotee - Bhaktha and the devine and the joy of closeness passing into the bless of union.

The development of Bhakthi is based on the belief that God is not an abstraction, a mere impersonality but is manifested in the world and is deeply imbedded in us and thus making possible a personal relationship for the Bhaktha with God. When the Bhaktha approaches God through human emotions, response is received by the true devotee. This aspect can be clearly seen from the kritis of Thyagaraja in some he pleads to God, he intreats, he Cajoles, he surrenders, he praises, he rebuke and so on. Bhakthi aims making divine the human Bhaktha.

The music compositions of our system are largely emotional outpourings of various forms of Bhakthi of the devotee. Composer towards the Almighty. Thyagaraja in his Dhanyasi piece clearly enumerates that musical insight devoid of devotion is valueless in the attrainment of Salvation. The music, with devotion, practiced by Bhaktas like, Brungi, Natesa, Anjaneya, Agasthya, Matanga and Narada vouch this. Thyagaraja who can distinguish righteous-ness and wrongfulness and who is aware that this world is nothing but maya and who is capable of conquering the six internal enemies kama, krodha etc. is well aware of this.

In the seventh chapter of the Bhagavat Gita Lord Krishna says:-

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जना: सुकृतिनीर्जुना
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानि च भरतर्षभ॥

Ch. VII Sloka - 16.

Oh Arjuna, four types of pious men worship me; the distrissed, the enquirer, wealth seeker and the Knower.

The above classification of Bhakthi is based on the desire of the devotee. Aartha Bhakthi is the devotion directed towards God seeking protection at the time of distress. Artharthi Bhakthi seeks wealth and prosperity from the Lord. A Jijnasus Bhaktha Craves for enlightenment of the ultimate truth - Brahman and Jnani Bhaktha directs his Bhaktha towards himself as he is a person who has understood and realised that he is God. At this level the person would have no desires. स्वसवरूपानुसन्धानं भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते Continuous Contemplation of one selfsessential mature is said to be bhaktha. This stage of bhakthi is designated उत्तम भक्ति Bhakthi of the highest order.

The driving force of most of Thyagaraja's and Swati Tirunals Compositions has been Sartha Bhakthi seeking the Almighty's help and protect ion at all times. When Thyagaraja lost the idol of Srirama which he was worshipping everyday he was in great destress and he appeals to Rama in the Karnatakas behag composition Nenenduvedkudura to help him in recovering the Idol. In the Manjari Raga piece Patti Viduva Radoo Thyagaraja prays to Sri Rama not to let go of his protective hand which has been guiding him from his birth. Swati Tirunal through many of his compositions appeals to the Almighty to save him from the ocean of Samsara.

Artharthi Bhakthi, seeking wealth and prosperity from God, had no relevance for either Thyagaraja or Swati Tirunal. Thiagaraja spurned wealth as evidenced in his famous Kalyani Composition which he sang when the ruler of Tanjore-invited him to his court to sing his grave promising high monetary compensation, Thyagaraja asks in that composition Nidhi Chala Sukhama whether wealth is the giver of true happiness or the presence of Rama, Clearly indicating his mental focus on Rama Bhakthi and not an Artharthi Bhakthi.

That both the great composers were Jijnasu Bhakthas is expressed through many of their Compositions. Mokshamu Galada in Saramathi one in which Thyagaraja's desire for Moksha is clearly evident. In this piece he asks the Lord whether Moksha is possible on this earth for those who are not Jeevanmuktas, to those who have no genuine bhakthi or wisdom. In Seethavara Sangeetha Jnanamg in Devagandhari, Thyagaraja says that one must be blessed by Brahma with Sangeetha Jnanam to be qualified to become a Jnanmukta which is the goal as declared in the Bhagavat Gita and Upanishads. In the Sankarabharana Composition "Bhakta Parayana" Swati Tirunal

addresses Ananthapadmanabha who is reclining of the Coiled serpent as "Muktida" – meaning the given of Mukti and seeking the Lords blessings in this direction.

Thyagarajas Jnani Bhakthi which is indirective of the having reached the blissful stage of Jnana or supreme knowledge is expressed in the Kriti "Paramathmudu" in vagadhishwari wherein he says that Para mathamathe Lord is shining gloriously in everything, in all the species creation made of the five elements fire, air, earth,water and space animals, birds, mountain, trees and in the good and the bad and holy devotees as Thyagaraja.

In the Bhagavatam Nine aspects of expression of Bhakthi are enumerated

श्रवणं कीर्तिनं विष्णो स्मरणं पादसेवनम्।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यं आत्मनिवेदनम् ॥

known as "Navarathnamala Keertanam" Swathi Thirunal has composed nine compostions expressing the Nava Vidha Bhakthi given in this sloka - Even though not as a malika Thyagaraja has expressed the same aspects of Bhakthi through his various compositions.

The following are the nine gems in the Malika created by Swati Tirunal.

1. ***Sravanam*** – Bhavatheeyakathabhinavasudhayam in the Raga Bhairavi - Adi Tala.
2. ***Keerthanam*** – Tavaka Namam Subhadam Prajapani - in Kedaragowla - Jhampa Tala.
3. ***Smaranam*** – Sathatham Samomaraneeha Sarasaksha Bhavantham - Needambari Misra Chapu Tala.
4. ***Padaseranam*** – Pankajaksha Tava Sevam - in Todi Raga Rupaka Tala.
5. ***Archanam*** – Aaradhayami - in Bilahari Ragam Misra Chapu Tala.
6. ***Vandanam*** – Vande Deva Deva - Begada Ragam Rupaka Tala.
7. ***Dasyam*** – Paramapurusha Nanu Karma in Ahiri Ragam - Misra Chapu Tala.
8. ***Sakhyam*** – Bhavathi Viswasomé - in Mukhari Raga, Misra Chapu Tala.
9. ***Athma Nivedanam*** – Deva Deva Kalpayam - in Nadhanamakriya Raga, Rupaka Tala.

Some of the compositions of Thyagaraja which could be classified under Navavidhabhakthi are:

1. ***Sravanam***	Ramakathasudharasapanamu - in Madhyamavati Raja, Adi Tala.
2. ***Keerthanam***	Elavataramethikontivo - in Mukhari Raga, Adi Tala.
3. ***Smaranam***	Smarane Sukhamu - in Jana Ranjani Raga - Adi Tala.
4. ***Pada Sevanam***	Sri Rama Padama - in Amrutavahini Raga - Adi Tala.
5. ***Archanam***	Rara Sita Manohara in Raga Hindolavasantham Rupaka Tala - Tulasi Bilva Kedaragorila Raga Adi Tala.
6. ***Vandanam***	Vandanamu Raghu Nandana in Sahana - Aditala.
7. ***Dasyam***	Thavadasoham - in Punnagavarali Raga Adi Tala.
8. ***Sakhyam***	Chelimini Jalajakshu - Yadukula Kamuhoji Raga - Adi Tala.
9. ***Atmanevedanam***	Makelara Vicharamu Ragam Ravichandrika Adi Tala.

From the above compositions of both the composers I shall now choose a few for rendition giving their meanings also.

1. In Ramakatha sudharasapanamu the Madhyamavati Kriti coming under ***Sravanam*** Thyagaraja says that the story of Rama who had come to earth with Sita, Lakshmana, Bharatha and others is neetar which when consumed bestows on the listener - consumer - a kingdom. It would bestow on one the four Purusharthas. Being an abode of Courage and bliss it would serve him as a boat to cross the burning ocean of samsara and destroy the evils of Kali.

2. Coming under ***Smaranam*** is the Janararjani piece of Thyagaraja where he says that the very remembrance of Ramas name is joy for those born as human beings. Does not listening to Rama Nama and filling the heart with His form cause love to be born. The pure hearted Thyagaraya is always engaged in recalling His name.

3. In the begada raga krithi of Swati Tirunal "Vande Deva Deva grouped under ***"Vandanam"*** the Composer Says :- I pay obeisance at your Lotus feet of Deva Deva, the rectar and pollen emanating from which the river Mandakini

worships consort of Lakshmi, Padmanabha to the feet that danced on the hood of the great serpant Kalia which feet kept rhythm when you were playing the flute tantalising the world with its divine melody, whih are worshiped by Shiva, Sanaka Brahma, Devendra, which give Moksha and which destroy sorrows of Samsara I pay obeisence.

4. The Prince Composer Padmanabha Dasa in his Mukhari Raja Kriti falling under ***"Sakhyam"*** addressing Padmanabha prays for unwavering deep faith in the Lord who is the reliever of the various tribulations of life, an epitome of happiness, Padmanabha great Bhaktas such as Parikshit, Uddhava, Akrura who crossed the ocean of Samsara through your grace and in you let me have deep unsuspecting faith.

Dhyana Avahanadi Sodasophachara pooja kramas have been included by Thyagaraja in his compositions especially in his Divyanama kritis.

Maharaja Swati Tirunal has composed many Padams and Javalis in almost all of them the Nayika pines over her separation from the Nayaka ***Lord Padmanabha*** again reflecting the aspect of ***Viraha Bhakthi***.

Numerous subtle aspects of Bhakthi have been expressed through their compositions by both the composers and a detailed analysis of these would be time consuming and therefore beyond the preview of this paper.

Being great Bhakthas both the composers through their musice that is "Nadayoga" have been focussing their mind ony on God through out their lives and as Lord Krishna says in the VIII Chapter of the Bhagavat Geta

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्यच

मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्मामेवैष्यस्य संशय:

Remembering Me always one who has dedicated his mind and understanding to me shall reach Me alone undoubtedly.

मनुष्याणां सहस्त्रेणु कश्चिधतति सिद्धये

यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिनमां वेत्ति तत्त्वत: *B.G. Ch VII Sloka 3*

Among thousands of men there will just be one here or there striving for spirital perfection. From among the aspirants so striving one perchance knows Me in truth - thus declares Lord Krishna in the Bhagavat Gita.

यत्करोणि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत्

यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व भदर्पणम् *B.G. Ch IX Sloka 27*

Again Krishna says, Oh! Son of Kunte! Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give as charity, whatever austerity you perform - do that as offering unto Me.

Saint Thyagarja and Maharaja Swati Tirunal were two aspirants of The Truth who loved the words of the Gita and from among the millions have attained sayugyam through their Nada Bhakti Yogam. May Thyagaaja's Lord Sri Rama and Swati Tirunal's Lord Padmanabha Shower their blessings on all.