

## CONTRIBUTION OF MĀNAMBUCĀVAḌI VEṅKAṬASUBBAYYA AS A VITAL SOURCE OF DISSEMINATION FOR TYĀGARĀJA'S LINEAGE

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Mānambuccāvaḍi Veṅkaṭasubbayya is one of the direct disciples of Saint Tyāgarāja. He can be termed as the missing link between Tyāgarāja and his lineage of other prominent composers namely Paṭṇam Subramaṇya Iyer, Mahā Vaidyanātha Iyer, Lāvani Veṅkaṭa Rao, Susarla Dakṣiṇāmūrti Sāstri, Vēṇugānam Sarabha Sāstri and the likes.

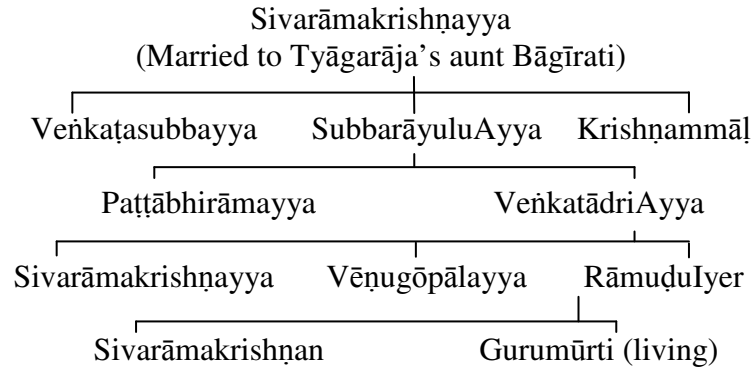
The following works mention about Mānambuccāvaḍi Veṅkaṭasubbayya

- ✧ Gāyakasiddhāṅjanam of Taccūr Siṅgarācārlu, under the section 'A brief account of Hindu Musicians'
- ✧ Karuṇāmrita Sāgaram (First book, First part) of M. Abraham Panditar, under the section 'The names of experts in south Indian music with a few remarks on each'
- ✧ Mulakanāḍu Sabhā Souvenir, an article under the heading 'Profiles of Past Vidwans' by G. Gopalaswami
- ✧ Sri Krti Mani Malai (Part 2) by R. RangaramanujaIyengar gives a short biography of Venkatasubbayya and also the notation to a few of his compositions
- ✧ Adi Saṅgīta Rasārnavam and Adi Saṅgīta Ratnāvaḷi of K V Srinivasa Iyengar also have notations to few of his krti-s
- ✧ Great Musicians & Great Composers by Prof. P. Sambamurthy, under the chapters on Tyāgarāja, MahaVaidyanatha Sivan, PatnamSubramanyaIyer and SarabhaSastrigal
- ✧ Carnatic Music Composers by T.S. Vasudevan, a chapter is dedicated to Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbayya.

### **Early Life**

Maharnōmbuccāvaḍi is an old suburb of Tañjāvūr town. Sivarāmakrishnayya, a *purōhit* who lived in Maharnōmbuccāvaḍi (now corruptly known as Mānambuccāvaḍi) married Rāmabrahmam's younger sister Bhāgīrati(Tyāgarāja's aunt) and the couple had three issues namely Veṅkaṭsubramaṇiam, Subbarāyulu and Krishṇammāl. The exact dates of

Veṅkaṭasubbayya's birth and death are not known. He is said to have lived approximately between 1798 and 1886<sup>1</sup>.



They belonged to the *Mulakanāḍu* sect of Telugu Brahmins and their family name was '*Ākumaḍugala*'. Their family received royal patronage from the then Serfoji kings of Tañjāvūr. Veṅkaṭasubbayya's father once criticized king Serfoji for beginning the works for constructing a dam on an inauspicious day. He remarked that if constructed on that occasion, the dam would burst on a particular day from then. Serfoji turned furious and warned of dire consequences if his predictions turned out to be wrong. But later when the dam collapsed as predicted, he praised Sivarāmakrishṇayya and sent him back with royal honours<sup>2</sup>.

It was customary in those regions to address people with the suffix '*ayyā*' and thus Veṅkaṭasubramaṇiam was addressed as 'Veṅkaṭasubbayya'. He evinced keen interest in music right from a very young age and hence was sent to stay with Saint Tyāgarāja and learn music. He was under the master's tutelage for a period of around seventeen years. He was an acclaimed vocalist besides being a commendable *vaiṇika* and an astrologer too. A descendant of Veṅkaṭasubbayya named Gurumurthy continues the family tradition of conducting religious rituals to date in Mānambuccāvaḍi.

## Compositions

Veṅkaṭasubbayya flourished to be a composer of fine *varṇa-s*, *kīrtana-s* and *rāgamālika-s*. His compositions number about forty. At present, only eight compositions are available in the form of notations procured from authentic sources.

<sup>1</sup>Family sources

<sup>2</sup> Personal interview with Gurumūrti, a descendant of Veṅkaṭasubbayya

They are,

S. No.	Composition	Rāga (Janya of)	Tāla	Source
1.	Jalajākṣā (Varṇam)	Hamsadhvani (29)	Ādi	GānāmṛtaVarṇamālika, Tānavarṇatarangini
2.	Āvaraku	Kutūhalam (29)	Ādi	ĀdiSaṅgītaRasārṇavam, K V SrinivasaIyengar; Sri Kṛti Mani Mālai, (Part 4) RangarāmānujaIyengar
3.	Parabrahmam	Pravāļajyōthi (28)	Ādi	ĀdiSaṅgītaRasārṇavam, K V SrinivasaIyengar; Sri Kṛti Mani Mālai, (Part 4) RangarāmānujaIyengar
4.	Svāmiki	Dēvagāndhāri (29)	Ādi	Sri Kṛti Mani Mālai, (Part 2) RaṅgarāmānujaIyengar
5.	Dhanyuḍevvaḍō	Malayamārutham (16)	Ādi	from Dr B M Sundaram
6.	Janmamenduku	Malayamārutham (16)	Ādi	from Dr B M Sundaram
7.	Śiva Bhūpatē	ChatuṣṭhayaRāgamāli ka (Pratāpacintāmaṇi, Ābhōgi, Vijayaśri, Pūrṇacandrikā)	Ādi	Audio Recording of Dr M Balamuralikrishna
8.	Girirāja (Maṅgaḷam)	Suraṭi (28)	KhaṇḍaC āpu	from Dr B M Sundaram

Compositions 6 and 7 mentioned in the above table are published as authored by Paṭṇam Subramaṇya Iyer in the book by N.C. Parthasarathy<sup>3</sup>. But these were popular as the compositions of Veṅkaṭasubbayya and were part of the oral tradition of Brinda and Mukta<sup>4</sup>. The hand-written notations from the notebooks of Smt. SugunaVaradachari also stand testimony to this fact.

Another composition, ‘Mariyādagādha’ in the *rāga* Sarasvati and ‘Karūṇīncumu’, a *navaratnarāgamālika* featuring the *rāga-s* Nāṭṭai, Tōḍi, Bhairavi, Kāmbhōji, Kalyāṇi, Athāṇa, Madyamāvati, Nāyaki and Suraṭi could not be traced. A mention about these two compositions is found in Śri kṛti maṇi mālai of RangaramanujaIyengar and Carnatic music composers, a work by T.S. Vasudevan. Prof Sambamurthy in his South Indian Music Book III, mentions the *navaratnarāgamālika*, under the chapter on musical forms.

<sup>3</sup>Parthasarathy, N C, and DwarakaParthasarathy. *Patnam Subramanyagari Rachanalu*. Chennai: Madras Sangita Kalashala, 1972.

<sup>4</sup>Personal interview with Dr Ritha Rajan

Veṅkaṭasubbayya composed with the signature ‘*veṅkatēśa*’, which was also the signature of Paṇṇam Subramaṇya Iyer, one of his prominent disciples. This might be the reason behind of a few of his compositions being ascribed to Paṇṇam Subrahmaṇya Iyer. Dhanyuḍevvaḍo in Malayamārutam is one such example. Prof. Sāmbamūrti mentions in his book *Great Composers Tyāgarāja* that Danyuḍevvaḍo is a composition of Veṅkaṭasubbayya which is often attributed to Paṇṇam Subramaṇya Iyer. Dr R. Vedavalli states that Nijadāsavarada in Kalyāṇi which she learnt from Sriraṅgam Iyeṅgār is also a composition of Veṅkaṭasubbayya, attributed to Paṇṇam Subramaṇya Iyer.

### **Composing style**

All the available compositions of Veṅkaṭasubbayya are in Telugu language. Except for the *maṅgaḷam*, the others are in *āditāḷa*. The *varṇam* and *kṛti* svāmiki sari in Dēvagāndhāri are in 2 *kaḷādi* whereas the rest are in 1 *kaḷai*, with the melody commencing after six akṣara-s from samam. The *kṛti* janmamenduku in Malayamārutam is given as *atīta eḍuppu* but it suits better to the normal setup of *anāhataeḍuppu* mentioned earlier. The theme of the compositions is devotional. Lord Rāma is his favourite deity like his master Tyāgarāja. Veṅkaṭasubbayya has also composed in praise of Tyāgarāja (Svāmiki sari and Girirāja) and his patron king Pratāpasimha (Śivabhūatē). In the *chatusṭaya rāgamālika*, he incorporates the *rāga mudra* in each stanza and also mentions the name of the patron ruler and his queen. The *sāhitya* is as per the rules of prosody. The structure of the compositions is simple but the melody is rich with *rāgabhāva*. The number of *saṅgati-s* is an average of three or four and the total *āvartana-s* of the compositions is between six and ten.

### **Rāga-s handled by Veṅkaṭasubbayya**

Veṅkaṭasubbayya had a flair for composing in rare *rāga-s*. Even from the very few compositions of his available, one can witness this. Once, he happened to listen to his disciples practice the composition ‘āvarakuta’ and heaved a deep sigh. He remarked how he could ever compose so beautifully like Tyāgarāja who had taken all the juice from the grapes and left others only with the skin!<sup>5</sup> That was the awe he had towards his master. This composition in Kutūhalam is said to have inspired Paṇṇam Subramaṇya Iyer to compose in Kadanakutūhalam.

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<sup>5</sup>Sambamurthy P, Prof. *Great Composers Book II, Tyagaraja*. Third ed. Chennai: The Indian Music Publishing House, 2002.

Rāga	Ārōhaṇa - Avarōhaṇa	Source
Kutūhalaṃ (29)	s r m n d p n s - ś n d p m g r s	Prof. P. Sāmbamūrti's works
	s d p g r m n s - s n d p m g r s	SaṅgītaKaumudī – TiruvaiyāruSubramaṇyaIyer
	s d p r m n ś - ś n d p m g r s	SaṅgītaSvaraprastāraSāgaramu – M. NadamuniPaṇḍitha
Pravāḷajyōti (28)	s r m p d n ś - ś n d n p m g s	SaṅgītaCandrikai – C. MāṇikkaMudaliyār, SaṅgītaSvaraprastāraSāgaramu – M. NādamuniPaṇḍitha, Prof. P. Sāmbamūrti's works
Pratāpacintāmaṇi (28)	s g m p m d n ś - ś n d p m g m r s	SaṅgītaCandrikai – C. MāṇikkaMudaliyār, SaṅgītaSvaraprastāraSāgaramu – M. NādamuniPaṇḍitha

Of the rāga-s created by Veṅkaṭasubbayya, Kutūhalaṃ is a janya of the 29<sup>th</sup> *mēḷakarta*, Dhīraṣaṅkarābharaṇam. It is a *vakra śāḍava ārōhaṇa, karma sampūrṇa avarōhaṇa rāga*. It has different versions. The version given by Prof. P. Sāmbamūrti is handled in the available notations of the *kṛti* āvarakuta.

### Disciples

The Saṅgarha Cūḍāmaṇi of Gōvindācārya was said to be in the possession of Veṅkaṭasubbayya<sup>6</sup>. Thus he mastered the science of music and was a renowned teacher. His line of disciples includes the famous five, or the *pañcaratna-s*, namely Mahā Vaidyanātha Iyer, Paṭṇam Subramaṇya Iyer, Vēṇugānam Sarabha Sāstri, Lāvani Veṅkaṭa Rao and Tyāgarāja<sup>7</sup>. Susarla Dakṣiṇāmūrti Sāstri, another renowned musician from Peddakallēpalli in Andhra Pradesh, was also Veṅkaṭasubbayya's disciple.

### Mānambuccāvaḍi Veṅkaṭasubbayya's Lineage of Disciples

- ✧ Paṭṇam Subrahmaṇya Iyer
  - Pūci Śrīnivāsa Iyeṅgār
    - Kōṭīśvara Iyer
    - Ariyakkuḍi Rāmānuja Iyeṅgār
  - Mysore Vāsudēvācār
    - Tiger Varadāccāriār

<sup>6</sup>Vasudevan, T S. *Carnatic Music Composers*. Chennai: T.V. Sundaravalli, M.A., 2008.

<sup>7</sup>also known as PañcāpakēśaIyer, Saint Tyāgarāja's grandson. Veṅkaṭasubbayya had travelled to various samasthāna-s like Mysore, Baroda and Benares along with PañcāpakēśaIyer and gave performances there.

- M.D. Rāmanāthan
- ✧ Mahā Vaidyanātha Iyer
  - Umayāḷpuram Svāminātha Bhāgavatar
- ✧ Susarla Dakṣiṇāmūrti Sāstri
  - Pārupaḷli Rāmakriṣṇayya Pantulu
    - Margaḷampallī Bālamuraḷikṛṣṇa
    - Annavarappu Rāmaswāmy
- ✧ Vēṇugānam Sarabha Sāstri
  - Pallaḍam Saṅjīva Rāo
- ✧ Taṅjāvūr Lāvani Veṅkaṭa Rāo
- ✧ Fiddle Veṅkōba Rāo
- ✧ Tiruvaiyāru Kṛṣṇa Iyer
- ✧ Pañcāpakēsa Iyer (Saint Tyāgarāja’s grandson)

The work ‘Śri Kṛti Maṇi Mālai’ also mentions *Vīṇa* Danammāḷ as a disciple of Veṅkaṭasubbayya. These stand testimony to the fact that Veṅkaṭasubbaya’s lineage of disciples is arguably the unbroken chain among the *śiṣyaparampara-s* of Saint Tyāgarāja.

It is interesting to note in this lineage that most of the disciples themselves turn out to be composers of repute. Among the direct disciples, Paṭṇam Subrahmaṇya Iyer is noted for his fresh ideas. He created the *rāga-s* Kathanakutūhalam and Sindumandāri. He handled the *dēśādītāḷa-s* with ease and his compositional style was much in the lines of Saint Tyāgarāja. He is also the one who handled various musical forms like *Varṇa-s*, *Kṛti-s*, *Tillāṇa-s* and *Jāvali-s*.

Mahā Vaidyanātha Iyer and Rāmasvāmi Sivan, the famous brothers are said to have composed together. However, the Simhanandana *Tillāna* and the 72 *mēḷarāgamālika* are credited to Vaidyanātha Iyer. The 72 *mēḷarāgamālika* is composed in the model of Lāvani Veṅkaṭ Rao’s *Bahattara mēḷarākarta* in Marāṭhi language. Veṅkaṭ Rao was another direct disciple of Veṅkaṭasubbayya. Veṅkaṭ Rao and Vaidyanātha Iyer met at Mahārāja Serfoji’s palace. Inspired by the former’s work, Vaidyanātha Iyer composed the *mēḷarāgamālika* with *ciṭṭasvara-s* and *sāhityam* in Sanskrit praising Lord Praṇatārtihara, the presiding deity of Tiruvārūr. Rāmasvāmi Sivan added the concluding lines of the *ciṭṭasvara-s*.

Only one *varṇam* ‘Intapādumaite’ in the *rāga* Sahānā is available from the compositions of Susarla Dakṣiṇāmūrti Sāstri<sup>8</sup>. While Dr M Balamuralikriṣṇa, a disciple in his lineage has composed various *Varṇa-s*, *Kṛti-s* and *Tillāṇa-s*. He is also credited with a composition each in all the 72 *mēḷakartarāga-s*. He has also created many *rāga-s* like Gaṇapati, Lavaṅgi, Sarvaśri, Ōmkāri, Mahati, Siddhi, Sumukham to name a few. He also created Trimukhi, Pañcamukhi, Saptamukhi and Navamukhi *tāḷa-s* based on *gatibhēda-s* in *saśabdakṛya-s* of already existing *tāḷa-s*.

On a glimpse of various compositions of Veṅkaṭasubbayya’s disciples it is clear that each had a unique style of his own. The aspect of novelty was present in every composer’s works in one way or the other. It is unfortunate that Veṅkaṭasubbayya is not so well-known like his disciples.

## Conclusion

The real contribution of Veṅkaṭasubbayya lies in his creation of quite a number of disciples of repute. He inspired the whole lot of them to be composers with a stamp of their own. Though we do not have many compositions of Veṅkaṭasubbayya, the works of his line of disciples in the form of new *rāga-s* or compositions are important contributions and are indispensable part of hard core carnatic music.

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<sup>8</sup>Sundaram B.M. *TānaVarṇaTarangiṇi*. Coimbatore: Rajalakshmi Trust.

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