

## SOME MUSICIANS AND THEIR PATRONS ABOUT 1800 A.D. IN MADRAS CITY

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In the Adyar Library there is a Sanskrit work in manuscript which is interesting from two points of view. Firstly it is one of the very few Sanskrit works<sup>1</sup> having a bearing on the City of Madras and in growth, and secondly, it is probably the only literary document in Sanskrit containing authentic, historical allusions to some of our musicians. My edition of the whole manuscript with a full Introduction will appear in the Adyar Library Bulletin, and here I shall briefly deal with the date of the work and the music material in it.

The work is called *Sarvadevavilāsa*, which name is to be understood in two ways: *Sarvadevavilāsa* or the Sport of all Divinities signifies firstly the fact that the work is a series of conversations between two scholars who go round the temples in the City and its suburbs and describe the festivals in these temples, the Dharmakartas of the several temples, and the musicians, scholars and courtezans attached to and patronised by the Dharmakartas. Secondly, the descriptions invariably start with and centre round the Dharmakartas, all of whom are said to be leading aristocrats and merchant magnates of those times in the City of Madras; and as portraying the activities (*vilāsa*) of these aristocrats and patrons whom the two interlocutors believe to be the incarnations of the several Gods (*Sarva-Deva*), the work justifies its title.

The manuscript is unfortunately incomplete, and considering the interesting material in the available portion, the loss of the latter part of the work is to be greatly regretted. The author, who wrote this work for the pleasure of these above-mentioned patrons of Madras (*Cennapurīndatosanadhiyā*), refers to himself as the son of Rāmasūri and grandson of Śaṅkarasūri, but unfortunately, neither while so doing nor elsewhere in the available portion does he disclose his own name.

1 See my article on Notice of Madras in Two Sanskrit Works in the Madras Tercentenary Volume.

The author adopts the Campū style and frequently the two holding the colloquies indulge in humorous exchanges in which several Tamilisms occur. In fact, some proper names are used in their Tamil form. There is some amount of exaggeration caused by the traditional Kāvya style of the author, but many external evidences go to confirm the truth and reliability of the information given by him. The work is thus of historical importance.

We shall take an important temple first, that of *Śrī Pārthasārathi svāmī at Triplicane* (Br̥ndāranya and Kairaviṇī). One *Annāsāmi* is described as the Dharmakartā of this temple.

सखे एतन्महानुभावलयधर्मकर्तारं \* \* अण्णासामिमहीभर्तारं पश्य पश्य ।

This Annāsāmi is Annāsāmi Pillai who figures in a number of records in the Madras Collectorate<sup>2</sup> as the Dharmakartā of the Pārthasārathi Temple in Triplicane. He was the hereditary trustee of the temple; the Collector of Madras exceeded his powers by interfering in the temple affairs upon which he sued the Collector. After temporary success against him, Annāsāmi was removed from his place as *hereditary* trustee and re-appointed trustee to hold office during the pleasure of the Government. The following are the dates of these papers relating to Annāsāmi Pillai and the Pārthasārathi Temple:

31-1-1822; 15-4-1822; 2-5-1822; 1-7-1822; 9-3-1825; 28-2-1828;  
7-9-1831 and 12-1-1832.

The last two dates are those of letters addressed by the widow, Perundevi Ammal, of Annāsāmi Pillai, claiming an amount of about 20,000 Rs. which the late Annāsāmi, as Dharmakartā, had advanced from his own funds towards the expenses of the Temple. Therefore, by 7-9-1831, Annāsāmi mentioned in our Sanskrit work as the Dharmakartā of the Pārthasārathi Temple at Triplicane had expired. The earliest known date when he was holding the office is 31-1-1822. These documents not only show the reliability of the information in our Sanskrit work, but give also an indication of the date of our work.

To take another instance, the Sarvadevavilāsa mentions the Dharmakartā of the *Agatīśvara temple in Nūṅgapurī or Nūṅgambākkam, as Devanāyaka*. Fortunately, of this trustee of the Nūṅgambakkam temple too, we have some corroborative evidence

<sup>2</sup> See Guide to the Records of the Madras District from 1719 to 1835. Govt. Press, Madras, 1936.

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from the Madras District Records. There is a record dated 6-6-1820 in which the Collector recommended that the lands exchanged recently by the Nungambakkam Temple Warden on behalf of the Temple be exempted from quit-rent. In this document, the Warden of the Agatīśvara and Vaikuṅṭha Perumal Pagodas at Nungambakkam signs his name, as *S. Davy Naigum*,<sup>3</sup> i.e. Ś. Deva nāyaka.

The work describes also *Veṅkaṭa Kṛṣṇa, son of Muddukṛṣṇa, of Maṇali.*

सखे मणलीपुरपतिवर्णनं कुतो न कृ

× ×

श्रीराजन्मणली

श्री मुदुकृष्णेन्द्रभू-

श्रीमद्वेङ्कटकृष्णभूपमहिमाऽपारोऽस्ति तद्वर्णनं॥

The Maṇali Mudaliars were a well-known family of patrons and Dharmakartās of the Town Temple.

Maṇali Muthukṛṣṇa Mudaliar I, of Maṇali a village near Madras, was the Dubhash of the Madras Governor Pigot (A.D. 1755-63 and 1775-77). After the pulling down by the English of the original Cennakeśava Temple<sup>4</sup> which stood in the Fort area, Maṇali Muthukrishna Mudaliar raised subscriptions amounting to 15,650 pagodas to erect the new Town Temples at the place where they now stand, he himself contributing 5,202 pagodas. This Muthukṛṣṇa I of Maṇali died in 1792 A.D.<sup>5</sup> From the Madras District Records we find that the Maṇali Mudaliar had endowed the temples with lands and funds, that the Company was giving an annual grant of 500 pagodas, and that after Muthukṛṣṇa's demise, his son Chinniah Mudaliar was the trustee of the temple. Chinniah, whose real name was Venkaṭakṛṣṇa, is the person referred to in our work, and, according to a record of the Madras Collectorate, he had expired by 6-1-1817, after which date there were disputes in the trusteeship of the Town Temple.<sup>6</sup> From this,

3 The summary of the document in the published Guide to the Records mentions the warden without his name. Rao Bahadur Dr. B. S. Baliga, Curator of the Madras Records Office, was kind enough to supply me the name from an examination of the document.

4 See H. D. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, p. 1202.

5 and 6 See Guide to the Records of the Madras Dt. 1719-1835, p. 1202.

we may safely assign our Sanskrit work to a date between 1792 and 1817.

Another leading personality described in the work is the chief of the Telugu merchants of the City, named Ravaṇappa, an expert in negotiating the English.

राजश्रीरवणप्पभूपतिरसौ भोजोऽपि नैतत्समो

राजा चान्द्रवणिगजनस्य भगवत्पूजारतस्सर्वदा ।

राजानन्दकरः समस्तविबुधभ्राजत्सभामध्यभू -

राजन् सर्वसितास्यमोहनपट्टः श्रीजानिरेव ध्रुवम् ॥

This is Colla Ravaṇappa Chetti who built the Kotwal Market and the Kanyakāparameśvarī Temple in that place in 1803-4, with his own generous donation and with the help of subscriptions.<sup>7</sup> He was also the Warden of this temple, and as his description in our work is by virtue of his being a Dharmakartā, we may narrow down the limits of the dates of our work from 1792-1817 to 1803-1817.

Having thus assured ourselves of the historical reliability of our work and having had an indication of its date, we may now gather together the musical material in this work. Madras City occupies today a very important and influential place in the field of Carnatic music, a position which had steadily grown during the last one hundred years, and had built itself on the foundation of musical associations whose antiquity can be traced up to the latter part of the 18th century.<sup>8</sup> The discovery of the Sarvadevavilāsa throws more light on the history of these musical associations of Madras and reveals to us the personalities of some hitherto unknown-patrons of our musicians.

#### *Musicians Doraisāmi and Śrīnivāsa.*

In chapter four of the work the two interpreters propose to meet one whom they mention as the biggest of the patrons in Madras, viz. *Vedācala*. His residence within the old fortified town was in a street called in its Sanskritised form *Kṣepaṇa Skanda Vighneśvara Vīthī* but he had his permanent and hereditary house in what is called his headquarters, *Kalaśapurī*. This *Kalaśapurī*, from the evidence of the temple mentioned therein, is no other place except the present part of Madras known as *Choolai*. There is a

<sup>7</sup> See the Madras Tercentenary Volume, p. 364.

<sup>8</sup> For many of these associations, see Prof. P. Sambamoorthy's article on Madras as a Seat of Musical Learning in the Madras Tercentenary Volume, pp. 429-437.

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festival in the Sri Cidambareśvarasvāmī Temple at Kalaśapurī or Choolai and as the Dharmakartā of that Temple, Vedācala one day goes there with all his retināe. The party is said to cross the old fort-wall of the Wall Tax Road to reach Choolai. The large retinue of Vedācala comprises his two brothers Kṛṣṇasvāmī and Subrahmaṇya, his secretaries Rāghava, Vaiddilinga and Aruṇācala. Seated by Vedācala's side are the great expert musician Dorasāmi, the two preceptors Lakṣmīpati and Rāma....; and on a separate horse comes also another musician named Śrīnivāsa.

विवेकी—प्रभोः सन्नीपे गजपृष्ठ...

विभाति कोऽसौ चतुरः सुरूपः ।

अतिविवेकी—जानासि नैनं किमरे विवेकिन्

गानातिदक्षो दोरसामिनामा ॥

वि०—अयं तु ज्ञातः प्रसिद्धश्च ।

वि०—अत्यन्तोन्नतवाजिराजविलसन् राजेव चास्ती सहान्

कोऽसौ उन्नतमुचामरादिकलितोदारोपचारैर्युतः ।

अति०—एषोऽप्यस्य महात्मनो नरपतेः श्रीश्रीनिवासाभिवः

गायी गानकलाविशारदमतिः स्वकृतश्च किं पृच्छसि ॥

Who can this Dorasāmi be? It appears to me that it is *Pallavi Doraisvāmi Iyer*, whose dates are approximately known to be 1782 to 1816 and who is also known to have stayed in Madras with his maternal grandfather Nayam Venkaṭasubba Iyer.<sup>9</sup> Many of the songs composed by Pallavi Doraisvāmi Iyer are on Naṭarāja,<sup>10</sup> which is significant when we consider the fact that Naṭarāja as Lord of Cidambara is the deity in the Cidambareśvara Temple at Choolai belonging to Dorasāmi's patron, Vedācala; it is to have a darśan of the deity there during a festival, that all these persons go there.

Who the musician Srinivāsa, patronised by the same Vedācala, is we are not able to know.

### Two Music Instruments.

There are two music instruments called in Tamil Candraparai and Sūryapparai. The only literary reference to two such instruments I have come across is found in this work. They are

<sup>9</sup> See the Journal of the Music Academy, Madras, Vol. X, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> See the Journal of the Music Academy, Madras, Vols. X, XII, and XIV.

mentioned as being played in the procession in which Vedācala proceeded to Choolai.

भेरीभाङ्कृतिकाहलीकलकलध्वानातिपीनात्मक-  
भ्राजत्सूर्यहिमांशुवाद्यसुततारावाभिभूता दिशः ।

Specimens of these two instruments are preserved in the Madras Museum. They are described as varieties of drum, parchment stretched over sun-shape and moon-shape rings of iron and beat with a stick.<sup>11</sup> Their correct names however seem to be Sūrya-p-parai (☀ p) and Candra-p-parai, Parai meaning a drum, and not Sūrya-p-pirai and Candra-p-pirai, Pirai meaning disc.

*Nārāyaṇī, Maṅgā, and Mīnākṣī*

*Some Courtesan-Artists in Madras*

Vedācala had invited for the festival his friends Kāliṅgarāya, Śrīraṅga and Devanāyaka, patrons of equal status and themselves Dharmakartās of other temples in the City. On the night of the festival, Vedācala holds a *Sadas* in which music and dance by famous courtezans take place. From the description of the two interlocutors in the work we came to know that there were in Madras at that time three courtezans renowned for their music or dance. They were

*Nārāyaṇī* of *Kuntbhakonam*, proficient in singing, attached to *Kāliṅgarāya*;

*Maṅgā* of *Tanjore*, proficient in singing and dancing, attached to *Śrīraṅga*;

and *Mīnākṣī*, an adept in dance and music especially in *Tānālāpa*, attached to *Vedācala*. Another courtesan named *Vīrā* is simply mentioned without any other details.

\* \* \* ताराधिपाकारवीरा-नारायणी-प्रमुख-वारङ्गना-सन्दोहविभ्राजितम्

\* \* \* श्रीरङ्गनायक-देवनायक-कालिगराजप्रभृतयः

\* \* \* पटसदमादिगृहेषु प्रविष्टाः सन्तः \* \* \*

कुम्भकोण नारायणी - तङ्गनगर मङ्गाप्रभृतिभिवारयुवतिभिः

\* \* \* सङ्गीतश्रवणानन्दमनुभवन्तः \* \* \*

× × × ×

तावपि महाराजेन गन्धपुष्पताम्बूलादिभिर्नितरां पूजितौ सङ्गीतश्रवणनाट्यदर्शनाभ्यां परवशीकृतात्मानौ अभूताम् ।

11 See Prof. Sambamoorthy's Catalogue of the Musical Instruments in the Madras Government Museum.

वि०-केय सकलकलासारज्ञा अतिसुन्दरी रम्भेवास्ते?

अति०-(कर्णे) कालिङ्गमहाराजो वर्तते हि, तन्नाटकशालामलङ्कुर्वतीयं खलु । इयं हि—

नारायणी सा

× × × ×

वाराङ्गना गानकलातिवीरा

× × × ×

वि० \* \* अहो सखे इयं का सौन्दर्यादिगुणे रम्भामपि धिक्करोति ।

अति०—श्रीरङ्गनायकमहाराजनाटकशालांकारभूतेयम् ।

इयं च—मङ्गाभिधाना गणिकाग्रगण्या

सङ्गीतशास्त्राभिनयातिपुण्या ।

× × ×

वि०— सखे कस्येयं मानुषीरूपमास्थाय वर्तमाना,

रम्भैवेति भाति ।

अति०—देवनायकमहाराजनाटयशालीया इयमित्यवेहि ।

× ×

इयं मृगाक्षी सकलान् सभास्थान्

महीपतीन् मोहयति स्वगीतैः ॥

× × ×

वि०—एतासु मध्ये इयमतीव राजते नक्षत्रेषु मध्ये चन्द्रमा इव । केयम् ?

एतस्या गानमाधुर्यम्

अति०-इयं च रसिकशिरोमणिवेदाचलमहीपालो वर्तते हि सभामध्ये देदीप्यमानः

तदीया ।

का नाटयेऽस्यास्सरा भूयात् गानाद्ये चास्ति का समा ।

मीनाक्ष्याश्चाङ्गसौभाग्ये तानालापनकर्मणि ॥

In the above group of four artists of the courtesan class the name of one, attached to Devanāyaka, is not given. Of the other three, we may take Mīnākṣī attached to Vedācala as the Salem Mīnākṣī, a celebrated songstress of Madras, to teach music to whose daughters, Patnam Subrahmanya Ayyar is said to have come to Madras from Trivadi.<sup>12</sup>

*Two Compositions on God Cidambareśvara,  
a Sanskrit Varna and a Telugu Kirtana.*

The two interlocutors in the work meet all the patrons in the role of poets and receive presents from them. From Town they

<sup>12</sup> See the Madras Tercentenary Volume, p. 432.

proceed to Choolai along with Vedācala's retinue and make ready two new music compositions, a Varna in Sanskrit and a Kīrtana in Telugu, on God Cidambareśvara, with which they try to see the patron Vedācala. They come to the Sadas held during the night of the festival and express to Raghava, Vedācala's secretary, their intention to present their new Sāhityas to the patrons. Being permitted to do so, they sing the two pieces and are given presents and praised for their equal equipment in scholarship and the musical art.

तदनन्तरमेतत् पण्डितद्वयमपि गीर्वाणभाषया वर्णमेकम्, आन्ध्रभाषया कीर्तनमेकं च परिकल्प्य तत्प्रकटीकरणाय सदःप्रवेशमतनोत् ।

अहो राघवार्थं श्रीचिदम्बरेश्वरविषये साहित्यं परिकल्पितमास्ते । तत् सदसि प्रकट-  
नीयम् \* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \* सोत्साहवाञ्छितौ पण्डितेन्द्रौ वर्णं कीर्तने च गातुमुपचक्रमाते ।

*Two more Songs in Sanskrit and Telugu on Agastyeśvara.*

In the next, the sixth, chapter, the whole party, including the two Pandits, repair to Nungambakkam for darśan at the Agastyeśvara temple there, at the invitation of its Dharmakartā, Devanāyaka. There again, a Sadas is held in the night, in which our two Pandits present two kīrtanas, in Sanskrit and Telugu, composed in praise of Agastyeśvara.

तथा सति भगवद्विषये परिकल्पितस्य संस्कृतकीर्तनस्य च आन्ध्रकीर्तनस्य च प्रकटनं कथं भविष्यति इति ।

तदनन्तरं भगवद्विषये पण्डितेन्द्रपरिकल्पितं संस्कृतान्ध्रसाहित्यं श्रुत्वा ताभ्यां बहुदात् Devanāyaka of Nungambakkam was already referred to, in the description of the Choolai Sadas as the patron of an anonymous courtesan-songstress; in that context, his greater love and knowledge of Sanskrit was mentioned; the description of the activities in Nungambakkam Temple and the Sadas there confirm that information, speaking as it does of many Sanskrit scholars and disputants.

*Musicians Venkatrāya, Śunthi Venkatramana and  
Courtesan-songstress Nācyār.*

In a subsequent chapter, probably the seventh, a party of the patrons of the city leave for Toyādri having the temple of Raṅganātha, which is the same as Tirunirmalai near Pallavaram. The

leader of the party is Veṅkaṭādri or Venkaṭācala, the Dharmakartā of the Tirunīrmalai Temple, one credited in the work with the rebuilding of the Temple tower and Car. Later he is described as the Dharmakartā of the Kṛṣṇan Kovil in Coral Merchant Street too and as the owner of a big cocoanut tree where he would be holding a Sadaś on Sunday. Quite a large retinue accompanies Veṅkaṭācala, consisting of his friend Raṅganāyaka, his brother Veṅkaṭakṛṣṇa, his secretary Kodaṇḍarāma, two friends Muddukṛṣṇa, and Sabhāpati of Pākāḷ etc. The company includes the scholar Śeṣādri and one Veṅkaṭrāya, a musician, poet and logician. The most important person for us among these is the famous musician Śunṭhi Venkaṭaramaṇa, son of Śunṭhi Subba.

वि०—अयं कः अतिविस्तृतोष्णीषधारी सर्वाभरणभूषितः गजराजमारुह्य गच्छति ?

अति०—अयं हि वैकुण्ठायामिधः श्रीमान् कङ्कणाद्यैरलंकृतः ।

गजराजं समारुह्य ब्रजलदभुतगात्रराट् ॥

भार्गवोऽपि कविताधिकशूरः

तार्किकेन्द्रमुकुटोज्ज्वलहीरः ।

× × ×

सखेऽयं च महानिपुणो गच्छति पश्य गजराजमारुह्य—

श्रीशुण्ठिसुन्वात्मज गायकेन्द्रः

स्वकीयगान्नाडकुंरितास्त (?) वृक्षः ।

गजेन्द्रमारुह्य विभोः समीपे

प्रयाति वैकुण्ठमणाभिधानः ॥

वि०—

अयं तानविद्यात्मसदृश एव न सन्देहः । अयं महाराजोऽपि रसिकप्रेसरः

येन विद्वत्सिंहगायकशार्दूलौ परिगृहीतौ स्तः ।

Of the two musicians described here as enjoying the patronage of the Tirunīrmalai trustee, Veṅkaṭācala, we do not know now anything of the first, Veṅkaṭrāya, praised as a musician, poet and logician. But the other musician eulogised as an undisputed and unequalled master of Tāna and as one whose music would make even barren trees sprout, is the great master mentioned as a Guru of Śrī Tyāgarāja himself (1759-1847), Sunṭhi Veṅkaṭaramaṇayya. Our works shows that sometime between 1803 and 1817, Sunṭhi Veṅkaṭaramaṇayya, probably of advanced age then, was in Madras.

*Another Courtezan-Artist, Nācyār.*

After the darśan at the temple, the two Paṇḍits go to the Sadas of Veṅkaṭācala in the night where they see the courtezan attached to this patron. She is described as proficient in both music and dance, and the patron is complimented for gathering round him such a galaxy of artistic talent.

वि०—गाननाट्यादिषु समर्था नाच्यारिति यस्याः प्रसिद्धिः सेयं वा ?

अति०—इयमेव ।

वि०—तर्ह्ययं प्रभुः सर्वोत्कृष्ट एव । मतः सर्वोत्कृष्ट एव विद्वद्भायकप्रभृतयः गृहीताः ।

The manuscript breaks unfortunately in the middle of the description of what appears to be the most important and biggest *Sadas* forming the subject of the work, viz. the one held in the garden of Kāliṅgarāya which seems to have been in a place near Triplicane. Practically all the important persons connected with the management of most of the City Temples, both Brahmans and merchants, as also a number of scholars, have assembled in this Sadas; and just when the description of the patrons close, and that of the scholars begin, the manuscript ends abruptly; probably, in the further portion there is a great deal of description of the musicians and courtezans gathered here, and, from the magnitude of the gathering, we may legitimately suppose that the *Sadas* included music and dance by some of the musicians and artists already mentioned and others to be mentioned. Among the patrons described here, we find Chinniah Mudaliar of Manali, whose house is well-known in the history of Carnatic music for its patronage of Śrī Dīkshitar's family. In an introductory description of the City of Madras with which our work opens, we have reference to a Sundareśa as an important citizen of Madras, and this may well be, in the light of what we can see from the musical setting of the work, Sundareśa or Sundara Mudaliar of Kōvūr, patron of Vīṇa Kuppier, and the host of Śrī Tyāgarāja during his sojourn in Madras and adjacent places of pilgrimage.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> See Madras Tercentenary Volume, pp. 430-1.