



N P RAMASWAMY

The Scientist turned into a musician

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I. Abstract :-

Sri Nurani Parasurama Iyer Ramaswamy was a versatile musician and great *Vaggeyakara*, with about more than five decades of experience in the field of Carnatic music. His adherence to tradition and classicism and his contributions as a *Vaggeyakara* are to be respected. He had evolved his own style and his mellifluous voice was commendable as it captured the mind of people.

II. Key words:-

Vaggeyakara, Court Musician, Tana varnam, Sangita sabha.

III. Introduction:-

Among the contemporary composers of Carnatic music in Kerala, Sri N P Ramaswamy (1931-2019), the great great grandson of Palghat Parameshwara Bhagvather is an outstanding figure. His musical gift is no accident. He hails from a family of rich musical inheritance. He was born on August 31st in 1931. His father Nurani ParasuramaIyer was a musician and an officer in Pears Lesly Company. His mother was Lakshmi Ammal.

His great great grandfather Sri Palghat Parameshwara Bhagavather was a great *Vaggeyakara* and Chief *AsthanaVidvan* of the court of Maharaja Swathi Thirunal. At the age of sixteen, Parameshwara Bhagavather got an opportunity to perform at Travancore. The ruling King of Travancore, Maharaja Swathi Thirunal who heard his concert and got fascinated by that sweet music, appointed him as one of the *Asthana Vidvans* of his court. Parameshwara Bhagavather acquired profound knowledge in Sanskrit and Telugu, as well as music in his young age itself. Considering his proficiency, he was immediately promoted as the Chief *Asthana vidvan* of the court. He had composed many *varnams* and *krithis*. Many of these compositions were lost because they were not preserved at that time. His son Mahadeva Bhagavather was a famous violinist and composer who wrote Harikathas. His son was Sri Nurani Parameshwara Bhagavather alias Chami Bhagavather. He was an adept in playing Violin, Flute, Veena, Swarabaat and also a prolific artist of Harikathakalakshepam.

FAMILY TREE

Palghat Parameshwara Bhagavather(Chief Asthana vidvan, Court of SwathiThirunal &Vaggeyakara)

▼
Nurani Mahadeva Bhagavather
(Great Violonist and Vaggeyakara)

▼
Nurani Parameshwara Bhagavather (Chami Bhagavather)
(Versatile Musician, Expert in Veena, Violin, Flute, Swarabaat and Harikatha Exponent)

▼
Lakshmi Ammal

▼
N P Ramaswamy
(A top artist AIR Trissur &Vaggeyakara)

IV. **Main Content:-** Born in a musical family, his child hood had gone through an atmosphere enriched with music. While his sister Sitalakshmi was studying Carnatic music, the small boy eagerly attended and tried to listen and understand the lessons. This listening has greatly influenced him in his future. The thought that, his voice was not suitable for vocal music, diverted him to Mridangam. He got training in Mridangam under the tutelage of Narayana Govinda Sharma (Nannu Master) of Kochi for an year. Later on he continued his advanced studies in Mridangam under Changamanad Appu Master of Trissur and started his career as an accompanying artist in music concerts. Simultaneously he took training in vocal music also from his father. His first music concert was staged when he was sixteen years old, during an occasion of Skanda Shashti, at Thekkemadam, Kochi. The encouragement and inspiration he received from that concert later led him to perceive music further and conduct vocal concerts.

Education and Carrier:-Although he was born in Palghat, he grew up in Mattachery since childhood. He had his schooling at Mattanchery T D High School where he performed as a brilliant student. After completing the SSLC and Intermediate, he joined at Maharaja's College, Ernakulum for his Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry. After attaining his Graduation he tried to join for the course of Engineering at Madras. There he met the famous musician and principal of Tamilnadu Music College, Sri. Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer. Fascinated by hearing the youngster's singing, Musiri encouraged him and admitted him to the final year class. But one of his chemistry professors at Maharaja's College, Sri Madhava Menon called him back, he explained about the job opportunities of PG Applied Chemistry and dissuaded him from joining for other courses. Consequently, he joined for MSc Applied Chemistry at Maharaja's College again and completed the course with high marks. As soon as the result came, he worked as a demonstrator for eight months in the department of Chemistry. Then he worked at Spencer and Co. for two years. After that in 1956 he joined at Voltas Rosche Medical Company as Propagandist and continued there till 1991. He had repeatedly turned down the official promotions for the sake of his love for Carnatic Music.

Career as a Musician:-As he was born in a family with rich musical heritage, he had the opportunity to listen and learn *shuddha Sangeetam* from his father at an early age. Gosri Gana sabha is one of the oldest Sangeetha sabhas of Cochin. It was usual for many artists to stay at NPR's home

at Mattancherry after performing at Gosri Gana sabha. As a child, Ramaswamy could hear concerts of all the famous musicians of that time and interact with them. After getting advanced training in Mridangam, he started his carrier as a mridangist. He accompanied many well-known musicians such as Pudukkodu Krishnamurthy, Vechur Harihara Subrahmanya Iyer, Venkatachala Bhagavather et. He studied vocal music from his father and started singing concerts at the age of 16 . He became a graded artist of AIR Thrissur in 1954. Later on he became an A top artist. He had given concerts in almost all the leading Sabhas and temples. He had already sung at South zone hookup programmes of Doordarshan, National programme of music, Akashvani Sangeet Sammelan and also in other TV programmes. During his official travels, he got the opportunity to visit great musicians like Semmangudi, KV Narayanaswamy, Maharajapuram Santhanam etc. and had discussions with them.

The Master recording company, one of the famous recording companies of South India had released his cassettes containing Malayalam compositions of Swathi Thirunal Maharaja and Pudukkod Krishnamurthy. He had given musical discourses on Ramayana highlighting the *krithis* of Arunachala Kavi. He had given more than 3000 concerts all over the country and had been accompanied by most of the top ranking artists of South India. A list of eminent Violinists and Mridangists who accompanied him in his concerts are given below.

On the Mridangam:- Palakkad Mani Iyer, Umayalpuram Sivaraman, Palakkad Raghu, Karaikudi Mani, Thanjavoor Upendran, Mannargudi Eeswaran, TV Gopalakrishnan, Neyveli Venkatesh etc

On the Violin:- M.S.G, T N Krishnan, M. Chnadraseskharan, Mysore Nagaraj etc.

NPR as a Vaggeyakara:-

A *Vaggeyakara* is one who had proficiency in ‘Vak’(sahitya-literature) and ‘Geya’(Sangeeta-music). Being a *Vaggeyakara*, NPR had composed 22 *varnams*, 29 *krithis* and two *thillanas*.

The musical form *Varnam* is of great importance as *abhyasagana* as well as *sabthagana*. *Varnam* is a musical form which contains all types of *raga sancharas*, *vishesha prayogas*, *raga ranjakaprayogas*, *dhattu prayogas* and whatever that *raga* admits of. It stands as the top most rank among the compositions of technical group (*abhyasa gana* group). Great skill is required to compose *Varnams*. One needs the detailed knowledge of the *lakshana* of a *raga*, *laya jnana*, creative imagination, technical capacity and knowledge of literature to compose *Varnams*. The composers of *Varnams* are a few compared to that of other musical forms. Tana *varnams* are found in *talas* like *Adi*, *Ata*, *Jhampa* etc. and not in short time measures like *Rupaka* and *Eka*. Tana *Varnams* are compositions which represents its *raga* in a nut shell. Practice of *varnams* develops the imaginative power, finger technique, polished rendering of *raga* and also helps as a model for developing *Kalpanaswaras*. It also strengthens the *layajnana* and rendering of various *gamakas* in a smooth manner. The list of his compositions is given below.

List of Varnams and Kritis composed:-

Varnams			
SI No	Title	Raga	Thala
1	Sri Mahaganapathim	Vachaspathi	Adi
2	Kamithadayaki	Kamavardhini	Adi
3	Sarasadalanayana	Kamas	Adi
4	Sambho Mahadeva	Dhanyasi	Adi
5	Janaki Kantham Ramam	Keeravani	Adi
6	Balasubramanyam	Bilahari	Adi
7	Padmanabha	Charukesi	Adi
8	Vasantha Bhairavi raga priye	VasanthaBhairavi	Adi
9	Sabarigirinatham	Kanada	Adi
10	Sundaratharavadana	Kharaharapriya	Adi
11	Nagaswaravali ragamudithe	Nagaswaravali	Adi
12	Srirama Chandram Namami	Atana	Adi
13	Sri Parameshwaram	Kamboji	Adi(ThisraGati)
14	Mooladhara Kshetrastitham	Kannada	KhantaChapu
15	Namami Somansundaeswaram	Poorvikalyani	Ata
16	Sri Rajarajeswari	SudhaSaveri	Adi
17	Sita Ramanam Bhavayami	Ravichandrika	Adi
18	Vayukumaram	Hamsanadam	Adi
19	Sri Raja Rajeswari	SudhaSaveri	Adi
20	Seetha Ramanam	Ravichandrika	Adi
21	Kamitadayaki	Reetigaula	Adi
22	Sri Ramam	Saurashtram	Adi

Kritis			
SI No	Title	Raga	Thala
1	Sri Mahaganapathim	Arabhi	KhantaChapu
2	Uma Nandanaya Namaste	Sahana	Adi
3	EkaDanthaya Namaste	Reetigaula	Adi
4	Saraswati bharti	Poorvikalyani	Roopakam
5	Velayudha dharam	Kharaharapriya	Adi
6	KaliyugaPrathyaksham	Begada	Adi
7	SivamParamasivam	Thodi	MisraChapu
8	SaranamSaranamSabarigirisa	Simhendramadhyamam	Adi

9	PahiJagatJanani	Sriranjini	Adi
10	Devi Akhilandeswari	Behang	Adi(2Kalai)
11	MuraleedharaMadhusoodana	Hindolam	Adi
12	Sri Rama Jaya Rama	SindhuBhairavi	Adi
13	AnjaneyaSwaminamnamami	Hemavathi	Adi
14	SrikrishnaSwaminamAsraye	Kedaragaula	Adi
15	Siva SivaSivaEnaNamatai	Saveri	Adi
16	MurukanaiNinaiManame	Kappi	Adi
17	AnjaneyamAnjaneyam	Abheri	Adi
18	Siva SivaEnaNamam	Desh	Adi
19	MurukanaiNinaiManame	Kappi	Adi
20	SarasaDalaNayana	Saranga	MisraChapu
21	Arul Purivaye	Sarasangi	Adi
22	Sidhdhivinayakam	Malayamarutham	Adi
23	Rama Rama	Huseni	Roopakam
24	KarunaSagari	Kharaharapriya	Adi(2 Kalai)
25	Guru PavanaPuradeesam	Kambhoji	Adi
26	YadavaKuladeepa	Suruti	Adi
27	Rama Rama	Yadukulakamboji	MisraJampa
28	KarunaiPuriya	Hamsanadam	Adi
29	AmbujaLochana	HamirKalyani	Chapu

Thillanas

SI No	Title	Raga	Thala
1	DheemThananaDheem	Natta kurinji	Adi
2	DheemJhanuthaDheem	Sindhubhairavi	Misra Jhapu

The Special features including prosodic and technical beauties found in some of his *varnas* are given below.

1. Vachaspathi *Varna*:-

a) Antyaprasam is used in *charanam*.

Eesham

Mahesham

Sriganesham

Vandehamanisham

b) Srotovahayati is found in the last line of last charanaswara

pmm

dpm_mndpm_msndpm_mrsndpm_m

grsndpm

2. Kamavardhini Varna:-

a) Raga *mudra* is used in the *sahitya* of the first line of Pallavi:-kamitadayaki kamavardhini

3. Khamas Varna:-

a) Swarasahitya is found in the *charana*

pmm _d m _m g _m	m p d
pa da ka	ma la

4. Dhanyasi Varna

Swarasahitya is incorporated in the *charana*

sm d _m m pm m	pm g _m m _m m pm m
sa da pa	ri- pa la ya

5. Keeravani Varna

a) *Antyaprasa* can be found in *sahitya* of *pallavi* and *anupallavi*.Janakikantham ramam bhajehamKodanda ramam pattabh iramamAnantha ramam saketha ramamParamapavana ramam kalyana ramamb) The *sahitya* of *charana* is written in the model of *srotovahayati*

Pathim

Ragupathim

Ayodhapathim

Vande sitapathim

6. Vasanthabhairavi varna:-

Ragamudra is incorporated in the first line of *pallavi* itself.Vasanthabhairavi raga priye....

7. Atana Varna:-

In this *varna*, the *swara* pattern is composed in a way that conveys the meaning of *sahitya*pm p_sm n r s d_m

Aaja - -nu ba - hum

8. Gourimanohari *Varna*

a) *Raga mudra* is incorporated in the *sahitya* of *anupallavi*

Bhuvaneshwari gourimanohari

b) *Swarasahitya* is incorporated in the *charana*

p m m d m m m p m g r

pada ma srayami

s n d p n d p m

ko mala nirupama

9. Kharaharapriya *Varna*

Atita Graham is found in the *Charana*.

m m p m l l m d m n m r s n d p m g r g m m l p m m m d n . . l l s s n d p m p l l

pa rama kru p a karamur... the sukeerthe

10. Nagaswaravali *Varna*

Pallavi starts with the ragamudra.

Nagaswaravali ragamudithe

The *Charana swaras* of most of the *tana varnas* are composed in the manner of various *jathi* patterns.

Publications and presentations:-Over these years he had authored several articles and papers related to Carnatic music. He had also published four books about various facets of music. He had given many lecture demonstrations on various subjects like allied *ragas* of Carnatic music, the technique of *Sruthi Bheda*, the importance of *sahitya* in rendering a concert etc. He was invited as a resource person for taking classes in refresher courses conducted by ASC, Kerala University. He was a visiting faculty for taking advanced lessons for PG students in University Department, Kerala University. His books were well appreciated and accepted by music teachers and students alike.

The books published are:-

1. *Techniques of Manodharma swara singing made easy.*
2. *Swarasanchara of popular Janya ragas.*
3. *Sangeeta Manjari.*
4. *Sangeeta ratna manjari.*

On two different occasions, he gave demonstrations about the *varnas* composed by Palghat Parameshwara Bhagavather at Music academy, Chennai and got a lot of compliments. **Disciples :-**He was also been included in teaching music and molded many disciples into good performing artists. Many of his disciples are AIR graded artists. He was a good mentor also.

Contribution:-He formed a new *tala* named ‘*dwijati tripata.*’ The *anga laghu* has five *jaathi* varieties. – *tisra, chaturasra, khanda, misra, and sangeerna* with the *akshara kalas* 3,4,5,7 and 9. The *angas* of *tripata tala* are one *laghu* and two *drutas*. In *dwijathi tripata*, in the part of *laghu*, one beat and one finger is counted along with two *drutas*. Thus the total *aksharakala* is $2 + 2 + 2 = 6$. He composed a *Pallavi* in this *tala* in *Nalinakanthi Raga* and presented it in Palakkad fine arts society in his concert.

The Prizes, Titles, Honours and Awards:-He was the recipient of a number of prizes, titles, honours and awards. A list of them is mentioned below.

SI No	Prizes
1	Gold Medal for being the first in the Carnatic Music competition held at Maharaja’s College, Ernakulum in the year of 1947.
2	Achieved first prize many times in various music competitions held in Chennai and other prizes during the period 1950 to 1952

SI No	Titles
1	‘ Sangeetha Ratna ’ conferred in Palakkad on 21.01.2003 by Thyagaraja Utsava Committee
2	‘ Sangeetha Poornasree ’ conferred by Jayaprakash SangeethaParishad and Poornathrayeesa KshetraSamithi at Tripunithura on 19.02.2003
3	‘ Gana Nipuna ’ conferred by West Cochin Cultural Society on 30.05.2003
4	‘ Sangeetha Kala Praveena ’ conferred by Charubala Mohan Trust Chennai on 11.12.2003
5	‘ SangeethaThilakam ’ conferred by Sri. Rama Navami Festival Committee Ernakulum on 30.03.2004
6	‘ Sangeetha Shreshta ’ conferred by Arts and Cultural Movement of India (ACMI)at Kottayam on 30.10.2008
7	‘ Sangeetha Thilakam ’ conferred by Thiruvambadi Devaswam Trissur on 06.01.2009.
8	‘ Sangeetha Ratna ’ conferred by Dr. Muthuswamy Trust and Bharatha Sangeetha PracharaSabha Thiruvananthapuram on 07.01.2009
9	‘ Sangeetha Shresta ’ conferred by Aviskar Ernakulum and Edappally Sangeetha Sadas on 13.02.2010
10	‘ Madhura Gayathi ’ by Chera Thirukkivil Trust Kaloore, Ernakulum on 04.04.2010
11	‘ Raga Rishi ’ conferred by Justice V R Krishna Iyer on 28.08.2011 at Saradha Sankara Kalyana Mandapa, Kochi, Mattanchery

12	' Rasika Kala Ratna ' by Rasikapriya, Ernakulum a long- Standing Music Organisation on 25.09.2011
13	' Sarga Ratna ' by Muppathadam Swaralaya Music Organisation on 25.01.2013
14.	' Syama Sastri Sangeetha Ratna ' the first title instituted by Kanchi Kamakodi Peetom in association with Nada Bharathi Hyderabad Award on 26.04.2014 at Kanchipuram. He was the first Malayalee musician to get this title
15	' AsthanaVidvan ' conferred by Kanchi Kamakodi Peetathipathi on 24.10.2014
16	' Sangeetha Kulapathi ' by Sri SathyaSai Baba 19 th Jayanthi Celebration Committee in the Programme called <i>Peace through Music</i> on 02.05.2015.
17	' Sangeetha Ratna Award of Excellence 2017 ' by Sri Ramanujacharya Millennium Jayanthi Celebrations Committee and SSS Bharati Hyderabad at Kanchipuram on 24.05.2017

SI No	Honours And Awards
1	Kerala Sangeetha Nataka AcademyAward for Carnatic Music for 2003 on 23.03.2004 at Tagore Centenary Hall Thiruvananthapuram
2	Honoured by the honourable minister Sr. K V Thomas on 08.01.2004 on behalf of Nadopasana Sabha
3	Honoured by Matha SangeethaVidyalaya Kochi, on 20.10.2010
4	Special note of recognition presented by Arts and Cultural Movement of India (ACMI) at Ernakulum Town Hall at 04.10.2010
5	Honoured by Cochin Singers' Association on 03.12.2011
6	Honoured by Amrita T V at Thiruvananthapuram on the occasion of Raga Ratna Competition on 29.06.2011
7	Special award for the best musician of the year 2011on 23.10.2011
8	Honoured by Amrita Kala Sree, a Music Organisation, Moolankuzhy, Cochin on 27.01.2013
9	Honoured by Moulana Azad Social Cultural Organisation, Kochi on 12.06.2015
10	The first Dakshina Moorthi Sangeetha Award 2015 on 25.12.2015 at Makreri, Kannur
11	Honoured by Gandhi Smrithi Bhavan Trust, Vaikom on 24.12.2015 by Sri. O. Rajagopal, M L A.
12	Honoured by Thapasya Cultural Organisation on 08.01.2016 by Cine

	Actor Madhu.
13	Honoured by Sri Rama Navami Celebrations Committee on 02.04.2017

V. **Conclusion:**-No one becomes famous just because they have good tradition. When hard work is combined with the true genius, charisma shines throughout. NPR was a great personality who had worked hand in hand with tradition, talent and effort. He lived a life devoted to music. He treated everyone equally whether one is a great musician or a student or a music lover. He always spent time for acquiring new knowledge in music, composing *varnas* and *kritis* and teaching it to his disciples. All of his compositions are very scholarly and needs further studies. NPR was a true *nadopasaka*, a great teacher and mentor and also an excellent composer. He passed away on 5th November 2019, leaving behind a rich legacy in the form of his compositions.

VI. Reference:-

1. Conversations with N P Ramaswami sir.
2. Conversations with his son Sri. Subramanyam.
3. Conversations with his disciples.
4. His Published works.

