

## THE INFLUENCE OF BHADRACHALA RAMADAS ON SRI THYAGARAJA



*The life of Bhaktha Ramadas has been the subject-matter for Harikathas and Devotional Dramas. They are the mainstay when we hear songs of Bhadrachala Ramadas. His songs find a place in Bhajans too, “Jaya Janaki Ramana” in the raga Naata is invariably sung in Bhajans as a “Thodaya Mangalam”. Studies two decades ago produced an authoritative edition of “Ramadasu Keerthanalu”, compiled by the great Vainika Manchala Jagannatha Rao.*

### CONTEMPORARIES

*Historical evidences available show that Vaggeyakaras Tallapaka Annamacharya [1424-1502 AD] and Purandaradas[1484-1564 AD] were contemporaries. Then came Kshetrayya[1600-1660] who poured eternal life into “ Pada Sahitya” and Bhadachala Ramadas [1620-1687], a great devotee of Sri Rama and a Vaggeyakara were contemporaries. Ramadasa was the only son of Kancharla Linganna, Mantri of Kondapalli Village, and Kamamba. He was christened Gopanna. But his devotion to Rama from childhood earned him the “Ramadasa”. It is said that Bhaktha Kabirdas preached him the “Ramataraka mantra” and he wrote “ Dasarathi Sathakam”, in which each poem ends with the words, “Dasarathi Karunapayonodhi”.*

*When Ramadasa was an official in the Tehsil of Bhadrachalam, Ramadasa utilized the contents of the Khajana for the construction of a mantapa and*

*gopura for the temple of Sri Rama in Bhadrachalam, and for making ornaments for the deities. In his Keerthana in Kamboji “ Ikshvaku kula thilaka ” he says —*

“Chuttu prakaramulu sompuga eheyisthi  
gopura mantapatukuduruga kattisthi”

*He made Ornaments, emerald padakam for Bharatha, Pearl padakam for Lakshamana, Gold padakam for Seeta. For using the sarkar( government) money he was sentenced to imprisonment and after 12 years of his incarceration, it is stated that Rama-Lakshamana came in the guise of ordinary mortals, paid the amount due to the government and got Ramadasa released. It was on this occasion Ramadasa sang the beautiful composition:*

“ Emayya Rama Brahmendradulaku  
naina nee maya deliya vasamaa”

*It is said that Ramadasa composed most of his soul stirring songs when he was in Jail. After learning that Lord Rama himself had come to clear the debt of Ramadasa, Thanisha begged for forgiveness from Ramadasa.*

### **PLACE AS A VAGGEYAKARA**

*Although songs of Ramadas do not figure much in musical performances as those of Thyagaraja, Dikshitar or Shyama Shastri, Ramadas has a significant place among the composers of the pre Thyagaraja era. His compositions not only found an important place in bhajans, as those of Narayana Theertha, Mahakavi Venkatasubbier, Meera and Kabirdas, but also inspired future composers.*

*There is no doubt that compositions of Ramadasa exerted considerable influence of Thyagaraja. In the opera, Prahallada Bhaktha Vijayamu Thyagaraja pays obeisance to Ramadasa in the Kanda padyam.*

Kaliyugamuna vara Bhadra  
Chalamuna nelakonna Rama-  
Chandrani pada bhakutla  
Kella varudanandagi velasina  
Sree Rama Dasu vinuthintu madin

*The reference to “Ramadasu” in the Thyagaraja krithi “Kavigiyuntekada” in Keeravani might be to Anjaneya or Bhadrachala Ramadas. But it appears that*

*Thyagaraja's mother sang to him in his childhood the songs of Bhadrachala Ramdas, and their influence accounted for the Saint's devotion to Rama (Rama Bhakti), his dislike of mundane pleasures, as well as the nectar-like flow of Bhakti Bhava in his krithis. Ramdas influence on Thyagaraja could broadly be dealt with under the following four headings.*

1. Ramabhakthi (devotion to Sree Rama)

2. Krithi rachana (manner of composition)

3. Usage of similar words

4. Portrayal of similar bhava.

## **DEVOTION TO SRI RAMA**

*Bhakti marga, the path of devotion as enunciated in the Bhagavadgita, is the main theme of the compositions of Ramadas as well as Thyagaraja. Although Thyagaraja composed kritis on deities like Vishnu, Siva, Amba, the majority of them were in praise of Rama, his Ishta Devata. It is interesting to note that, in "Prahlada Bhakta Vijayam", Sreemannarayana gives darshan to Prahlada as Sree Seetha Rama.*

*It is a well-known fact that the "Keerthana" form was in vogue much earlier than the "Krithi" composition. And it was perhaps Thyagaraja who gave a definite shape to the "Krithi" form as finely enunciated in his "Sogasuga Mrigdanga Talamu" in Raga Sriranjini. Ramadas compositions were mainly "Keethana"; still he could be deemed as the forerunner of "Krithi" form as illustrated by the following compositions.*

1. Tharaka mantramam korina Dorikenu-Dhanyasai-Adi

2. Rama Na manavini seyakura-Asaveri-Chapu

3. Rama needaya raduga-Sahana-Tripata

4. Emayya Rama-Kambhoji Jhampa

5. Innikalgi Meerooramunna Nenevarivada noudu Rama-Kalyani-Adi

*The above mentioned beautiful compositions give ample scope for Sangathis and also neraval. In his Ustava Sampradaya Keerthanas and Divya Nama Samkeerthanas, Thyagaraja followed the footsteps of his forerunners, Ramadas and Purandaradasa.*

## **SIMILARITY IN USE OF WORDS**

*Both Ramadas and Thyagaraja chose mainly Vyavahrika Telgu in their compositions to make them appealing and easily understandable, although, in some of the compositions of Thyagaraja, we notice a more subtle and refined way of expression of ideas. There is however a striking similarity in the words and expressions used in the compositions by both. Some examples are cited below:*

### **Ramdas-Devagandhari-Adi**

#### **Pallavi:**

Rama Rama Seetha Rama Rama Rama Rama Sita||

#### **Charanam**

**Ch 1.** Thappunencha boku nee goppatanamu chelladu ne neppudu nine nammiti thappaka nanu raksh||nchumu || Rama ||

**Ch 2.** Nammiti gaka na chettemounu nee kripa leka mimmu ne vededendaka mee sommainanu paraka ||

### **Thagaraja – Sankarabharanam –Adi**

#### **Pallavi**

Rama Seetha Rama Rama-Rama Seetha Rama Rama ||  
Rama ||

**Ch.1.** Thappu lenna bothe maaku  
gopathanam raadu, maa  
yappa dayajesi kandla  
gappukoni paalimpave

**Ch.2.** Daapuleka Nenu needu-  
Prapu korukonti gaani

Repu maapanuchu dova-  
Joopaga radayya brova||

Rama ||

## **Ramadas – Poorvikalyani -Tripura**

### **Pallavi**

Ananda mananda mayenu sree janaki  
Rama smaranamu cheyaga needu ||

Ananda ||

**Ch.1.** Parama Sraddha kaligenu durita  
Jalamu lella tholagenu ||

Ananda ||

**Ch.4.** Poorvakrithamu kanabadenu parama  
Pavanamaina sree hari seva galige nedu ||

Ananda ||

**Ch.7.**Ramabhaktula chera kalgitimi itara  
Kamamu lellanu veeda galgitimi ||

Ananda ||

**Ch.8.** Parabhamala paini branti tolagenu memu  
Parula doshamu lenna morulannu neduradumu ||

Ananda ||

## **Thyagaraja – Bhairavi – Adi**

### **Pallavi**

Ananda mananda mayenu Brahma – Ananda ||

**Ch.3.** papamulaku bhaya manditi hrith thapamu

lella jala jesiti rama nee padamu  
luramuna numchi Poojinchitini ||

Ananda ||

**Ch.4.** Kaliki aasalu rosinaramu.  
ee kaliki brathuku nama saramu  
itlu paliki paliki tholagi poye vieharamu ||

Ananda ||

*In the song, “Endu daaginado” in varali, ramadas entreats. “O Rama, where are you hiding you who heard the entreaties of Gajendra, Draupadi and Dharmaraja and not to their rescue?” similarly Thyagaraja in “Endu daaginado” in todi, asks “O Rama where are you hiding you, who is a Bhakta poshaka and went to the succor of prahlada and sugreeva?”*

*Again, “Rama! Naa moralakimpavemaya” in Aarabhi, Ramadas sings in suppliant mood;” why don’t you listen to my prayer, O Rama who earned eternal fame in this world by giving “abhaya” to a stone? Thyagaraja sings in devagandhari belonging to the same melakarta as Aarabhi “Naa moraalakimpavemi sree rama” “O Rama, who blessed sugreeva and vibheeshana, why do you fail to listen to my supplication?”*

## **IMPORT AND MEANING**

*Ramadas and Thyagaraja stand apart from most other famous vaggeyakaras in one important respect. While the other vaggeyakaras sang about the form and characteristics of god in their compositions. Ramadas and Thyagaraja have explained morals, Upanishadic truths, essence of the Gita, etc. Thyagaraja’s compositions teach us the essence of the vedas, Puranas, Upanishads and the Gita, and hence great musicians have hailed them as Thyagopanishad.*

*While Ramadas sings that the sweetness of Rama nama excels that of the sweetest essence of delicious fruits, butter, etc. Thyagaraja sings of the mental peace and happiness (sukham) derived from Rama nama, which is much more than that derived from water by a thirsty man, from immense treasure by persons afflicted by poverty, from panchabhakshya paramananna by a hungry person and from even nectar by those in distress. Thyagaraja goes a step further; he says that the chanting of Rama nama gives more happiness than the manasa pooja or chintaa of Sree Rama!*

## Ramadasa-Poorvi Kalyani-Jhampa

O Rama Neenamamemi ruchira Sree Rama  
neenamamemi ruchira || O Rama ||

**Ch.1.** Kadalee karjoodradi phatamula kathikamou kammani nee nama  
memiruchira || O Rama ||

**Ch.2.** Nava rasamula kannavaneethamulakante nadhikamau nee nama  
memiruchira || O Rama ||

**Ch.3.** Vasu jamboodraksha phala rasamula kante  
Adhikamau nee nama memiruchira || O Rama ||

## Thyagaraja-Saurashtra-Adi

Melu Melu Rama nama sukhamee dharalo manaa I  
phala lochana valmeekadi balanilajadulu saksigha || Melu ||

**Ch.1.** Nindu dahamu konna manujulaku neeru dagina sukhambu kante chanda  
daridrya manujulakudhana bhanda mabbina sukhambu kante || Melu ||

**Ch.2.** Thaapamu Sairinchani janula kamrita Vapi yabbina sukhambu kante dari  
dapu leka bhayamandu velala dhairamy kalgu sukhambu kante || Melu ||

**Ch.3.** Aakali velala panchabhakshya para manna mabbina sukhambu kante sree  
rkarudau sree ramuni manasuna chinthinchu sukhambu kante || Melu ||

## SIMILARITY OF EXPERIENCE

*Thanks to the grace of Sri Seetha rama, Ramadas is freed from bondage and he goes to Bhadrageeri and has darshan of the lord. In ecstasy, he pours out in mechabhouliraga "Kanti maa ramulanu kanugonti nenu" similarly Thyagaraja sang the krithi "kanugontini, sreeramuni nedu in bilahari, when he had darshan of the pooja vigrahas, after they were found in the river bed.*

*In the song, "Sree Ramula divya nama smarana," in saveri, Ramadas deploras the futility of a bath in the ganga or japa, thapa etc., whereas what is required is Rama dhyana, without "ahamkara". The same idea is echoed in the Thyagaraja krithi, "Manasu swaadheenamaina ya ghanuniki mari mantra tantramu lela" in sankarabharanam. The same bhava is expounded in another krithi of Thyagaraja in dhanyasi "Dhyaname varamaina ganga snaname*

*manasa rama” in which Thyagaraja asks; how, could one wash off one’s sins of deceivng others by bathing again and again in the ganga?*

*In “Narayana yana raada,” in nadanamakriya ramadasa observes that even living the life of a samasari (family life) one can attain salvation. It is madness to wander away in forests for this purpose. Thyagaraja brings out the samne idea in the krithi in saveri “Samsarulaithe nemayya, sikhpincha vathamsu deduta nundaga”.*

*By reason of their implicit faith in god, both were free from fear of navagrahas.*

### **Ramadas – Yadukulakambhoji**

“Graha gathulaku Veruva bonnu maaku galadu  
Daivanugraha balamu”.

### **Thyagaraja – Revagupti**

“Grahabala memi Sree Ramanugraha Balame Balamu ”

Their views on attaining moksha too were similar. If man believes in man and not god, how ca he free himself from the mortal coils? So goes their kritis:

### **Ramadas – Janjooti**

#### **Pallavi**

Narahari nammaka narulanu nammite  
Narajanma meederuna, O, Manasa | (Narahari)

**Ch.1.** Kallundaga mokallatho nadichite  
Kaisiki Povachchuna,O,Manasa!  
Neellundaga nummi neellanu mringithe  
Nindu dahanamu teeramu  
O,Manasa ! Narahari ||

**Ch.2.** Komma yundaga koyya bommanu kalasithe  
Korika konasaguna O, Manasa  
amma yundaga Peddamma nadigithe  
Arthamu Chekooruna O, Manasa!(Narahari)

**Ch.3.** Annamundaga gulla sunnamu thinte



Aakali vetha teeruna O, Manasa !  
Kannelundaga chitra kannela galasina  
Kamapu Vyatha teeruna O, Manasa ( Narahari)

**Thyagaraja – Madhyamavathi – Chapu**

**Pallavi**

Nalina lochana neevugaka nanyula namma  
narajanma meederuna ||

**Ch.1.** Konga vanti dhyanamu chesthe thana  
Korika konasaguna donga magani  
Bhakthi meera nammite manchi  
Dova joopa nerchina  
Ganga loni odanu nammi bhava  
Sagaramu daala vachchuna  
Nanganachula sarananuta  
Chetaya nangudu  
Jnanopadesamu cheyuna ||

**Ch.2.** Parama vandhyaku palu perugu bosithe chanti  
Palu kaluga nerchuna nera dhanamula dayadula  
Kichchite nenarumala kaluguna eruvu vesi oosara bhoomi  
Vilite emaina phaliyinchuna varamaina peru kalugu hangaraviki  
Vandana monarinchite brovanerchuna || Nalina ||

*In these two songs both Ramadasa and Thyagaraja emphasize their point of  
citing vivid examples:-*

**Ramadas**

- (1) *When you have legs, can you reach kasi by walking with your knees?*
- (2) *When Lakshmi is there, can you obtain riches by praying in Peddamma i.e.  
Jyesthadevi ?*
- (3) *Will your desire be fulfilled by union with a picture of a lady or a doll made  
up of wood?*

## Thyagaraja

- (1) *Can you obtain your wish by doing false japa like a crane?*
- (2) *Can you find the right path by placing your faith in a thief?*
- (3) *Can a barren woman secrete milk even if fed with milk and curds?*
- (4) *If you surrender to women, will kama give you wisdom or gnanopadesam?*

## CONCLUSION

*A careful comparison between the compositions of Bhadrachala Ramadas and Thyagaraja may reveal several more instances of similarities in the use of words and ideas. With my limited knowledge, i have only detailed some instances just to prove the influence of Ramadas on Thyagaraja.*