Recently, I watched the movie ‘Chembaruthi’ on video. One of those unethical, "kuppai" screen printed video cassette, you know, that gives you a vision like that of a "soda-butti" watching TV without his spectacles! Illayaraja has done a fantastic job in that movie. Though I had heard all those songs many times while I was in India, watching that movie created a reminiscent train of thoughts in my mind, about Illayaraja, his music, the dramatic change he brought about in Thamizh cinema. I thought that it would be worthwhile to discuss his music, particularly the CLASSICAL aspect! I am aware that it is not possible to write about all his carnatic oriented songs, about how he has handled those ragas, how he has deviated from the classical style etc. But it would definitely be interesting to pour out our ideas once in a while in a random order of the ragas covered by him.

In "Chembaruthi" there are six songs, out of which 4 are carnatic based. All the songs were "sooper hits". To a guy who knows carnatic music, the ragas are explicit, and to a non-classical rasika, they are just great tunes! This was one of his specialities, to give the raga in almost good shape and also make a good cinema tune out of it. And ofcourse, the rhythm should give scope for good dance movements so that the hero and heroine could share their love by dancing! Maybe, many of his tunes have to be branded as semi-classical or light music (even though the raga form might be pure) only because of this rhythm factor.
"Chalakku Chalakku Selai" is one good number in **chakravaagam**. There is no impurity in the tune (like any anniya swaram). He has confined to classical 16th, Sa Ri1 Ga3 Ma1 Pa Da2 Ni2 Sa. Of course, not to mention, that the lyrics is very bad, fighting to degrade the song from semi-classical to light music. In the charanam the heroine says "kalyaanam aagama paay poda venam, ennala aagaathu aamaam". You know, some good heroines with morality do say such deterrent, anti-pre-marital sex things to the always advancing heroes!

Illyayaraja has only few chakravaagams in his account. In the janya raagas of chakravaagam, he has excellent numbers.

Like, Malayamaarutham.... Sa Ri1 Ga3 Pa Da2 Ni2 Sa, Sa Ni2 Da2 Pa Ga3 Ri1 Sa. His first **malayamarutham** came as a pleasant surprise in Sridhar's movie (for whom he always had a soft corner) "Thenralae enennai thodu". I distinctly remember how the 'Ananda Vikatan' magazine wrote in glowing terms about "kannmani nee vara kathirun- then" song in malayamaarutham. Yesudosss and Uma Ramanan had done a wonderful job in that song. Ga Pa Da Sa Ni Da Pa Da Pa Ga, Ga Pa Ga Sa Sa Ri. What a wonderful start! The sharp rishabam gave a beautiful colour to this song. Maybe Illayaraja's first malayamarutham was "poojakaana neram" in "kaadal ovium. That was a good song too. Dheepan chakravarthi had struggled to keep in pace with that tune (like some violinists get into trouble with Sessa- gopalan's pace!). Then came "Thendral vanthu muthamittathu" in malayamaarutham in "Oru odai nadiyagirathu"(another sridhar's movie). Gosh! That was a fast song too. Krishnachandar and S.P.Shailaja tried their best, but probably spoiled it. Particularly, S.P.Shailaja has sung like the shrill sound you hear when you apply the breaks on a car that you bought for 500 $. There are two other songs in which he has deleted both Ni and Ma in chakravaagam. I don't think that such a raga exists in carnatic music with any known name. Those two songs are "amudhae thamizhazh" (kovil pura), and "nila kuyilae" (magudi). They are simply excellent. One should be an artist and play those songs to know their quality. Amudhae thamizhazh starts like Sa Ri Ga, Sa Ri Ga, Sa Ri Ga Pa Ga Ri Sa, Sa Ri Sa Da Sa...Pulamai Pithan's lyrics glorified that song. In the charanam he says, if you listen to and speak Thamizh, " Oon mezhugai urugum, athil ulagam karainthu pogum", such is the beauty of this language! One cannot write any better, about the greatness of Thamizh language.

I vaguely remember a song "naan irukka bayam etharku" (kuva kuva vathukkal?) At that time, when I had primitive carnatic music knowledge, I had diagnosed that song as **Valaji** (Rishabam deleted in Malayamarutham, Sa Ga Pa Da Ni Sa, Sa Ni Da Pa Ga Sa, you can say that it is a janyam of chakravaagam too, eventhough theorists might say 'janyam of Harikambodi'). Maybe, that song is indeed Valaji. Illayaraja has few songs in **Revathi**, another 16 janyam. Perhaps the best ones are "sangitha jaathi nullai" (kaadal ovium) and "kanavu onru thonruthe" (oru odai nadiyaagirathu). But I personally feel that MSV's melodious use of Revathi is unparalleled in the song "manthira punnagai" (Manal kayiru).

So much about chakravaagam and its janyams and Illayaraja. In chembaruthi, two of the 4 carnatic songs, are in **Sindu Bhairavi** raagam. They are "kadallile ezhumbura alaikalai" and "kaadhalile tholvi". Illayaraja himself has sung the former ( thso, thso rendition ) and Nagoor Hanifa the latter. Both these songs are excellent Sindu Bhairavi's. One in three of all cinema songs are in Sindu Bhairavi scale (one
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of the commonest cinema melodies, like the 20th mela Natabhairavi). Illayaraja has innumerable
songs in Sindhu Bhairavi, a variegated population from valai osai kalakala ena to shenbagame,
shenbagame etc. One cannot list all of them. But, probably MSV's Unnakenna Mele Ninrai (Simla
Special) is the best of Sindhu Bhairavi. In "kadalile ezhumbura" the lyrics is unusually good. Probably,
muthulingam or whoever was the lyricist, had a strong tea before writing that song! That song goes to
tell the pathetic life of fishermen. The lyricist says in pallavi "kadal thaneer karikudu kaaranam
irukkudu, meenavar vidugira viyarvaikal kadalile kalakudu..." (Sea water is saline because of 's
fishermen's sweat). Good idea, ain't it?

Lastly, there is one song in Kaapi ragam in Chembaruthi: chembaruthi poalae (after decades,
Banumathi Ramakrishna sang a tail piece of this song). His other Kaapi are ada maapila (maapilai),
hei paadal onru (priya). As far as I know Illayaraja is the only one who used kaapi in cinema. All of
them are good. He starts 'ada maapila' like, Ma Ga3 Ga3 Ma Pa, Pa Ma Ga3 Ma Ni2 Pa Ga2 Ri Sa
Ni3 Sa Sa. Wonderful start! To start kaapi in madhyamam and use its key phrase 'Ga3 Ma Ni2 Pa Ga2
Ri Sa Ni3' at the very beginning is an excellent approach to the tune. This is one of the instance in
which his classical 'vidwat' was manifest. Even 'chembaruthi poale' he uses the bashangam of kaapi,
in the very beginning, like, 'Pa Ni2 Ma Pa Ni3 Sa'. Why did he choose to score tune in kaapi for both
these above situations in which the bride and the groom are humoured by the 'thozhan' and 'thozhiyar'
on the occasion of their betrothal. Is their any definite pattern that he follows in scoring tunes for
situation? Maybe.

Classical Illayaraja – 2

There are very few instances in which the identity of a rare raga in a cinema song is so well handled
and shown (to the extent that) we could even use these songs as good a reference as keerthanas for
those respective ragas. To quote a few, K.V.Mahadevan's 'paatum naanae' (Thiruvilayaadal) in the
ragam Gowrimanohari, M.K.Thiagaraja Bhagavathar's 'soppana vazhvil magizhndu' in the ragam
Vijayanaagari. These are uncommonly sung ragas. It is true that there are excellent keerthanais like
'gurulekha' (Gowrimanohari) in these ragas. But to a common rasika, it could be gone ahead and
suggested 'paatum naanae' to understand Gowrimanohari, because KVM has handled it in splendid
form. The way T.M.S starts the song in thara sthayi rishabham with his perfect voice and renders it, it
is like eating a 'nila pournami' feast in the banks of kaveri. That song has become an absolute
reference for Gowrimanohari. The question is: Has Illayaraja any such 'reference' songs to his credit?
Yes. Many!

Bhaavani is the 41st melakartha raaga. It is the 2nd raga to the right from Jalavarali! It has the
following arohanam and avarohanam: Sa Ri1 Ga1 Ma2 Pa Da2 Ni3 Sa, and Sa Ni3 Da2 Pa Ma2 Ga1
Ri Sa. I have never heard any keerthanai in this raga. How did Illayaraja get the sudden idea of
scoring a tune in this complex vivaadi raga? Would it be a hit with all its vivaadi swaras? Did he or
Kamalhaasan have any apprehension? If they had had, maybe we would't have got this wonderful
song 'paartha vizhi poothiruka' in Guna. It is a perfect song suitting the situation in which Kamal (a nut
case) sees the heroine in a temple and falls in instant love with her. That heroine, Rosini (or
something) was a delight to see in that movie. The song starts like this Sa Pa Pa Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa Da
Sa Ri GA...Before the song there is a virutham like piece sung by the chorus. He has handled the
beauty of the vivaadhi swaras in that raga very very nicely. When you hear the words 'charanam charanam' set in the swaras, Sa Sa Ga Ri Sa it sends a thrill in your perceptual apparatus. Since the uttaranga swaras of this raga consist of chatusruthi daivatham and kaakali nishadam, it has a quality like that of kalyani (with a pradhi madhyamam). In the interlude of this song the chorus traverse in the melodious regions of the raga (Pa Da Ni Sa). Unfortunately I don't remember the words. Maybe the lyrics is good too. Jesudoss has done a fantastic job. Even though the recording scale of this song is only around 'oru kattai', how is that it sounds as though he is reaching big heights when he sings the same pallavi in the thara sthayi? It sounds so pleasant to hear! This song is a very good good reference for Bhaavani ragam.

Guna has another fantastic 'light' song 'kanmani anbodu'. Maybe, neo-rasikas will go ahead and call this song as Sankarabaranam!. Are there any cinema songs in ragam Hemavathi? It was a good surprise recently when I came to know that Illayaraja has ventured into this raga also for first time (maybe, in thamizh film song history). That song is in the movie 'pudhupatti ponnuthayee' starring radhika. 'manam poala maangalyam' is a good example of Hemavathi. S.Janaki (the best vocal support he ever got) has sung this song. This movie is like some modern thillanam mohanaambaal. Some big shot has given accompaniment in nadhaswaram in this song. He has started the pallavi in thara sthayi gandaaram. Ga Ri Sa Ni Sa Ni Sa Ni Da... That is how the song goes. It is really good and pure!

Considering the sudha madhyamam of Hemavathi, the raga giant 'Karaharapriya', Illayaraja has few pure numbers in it. Of course nothing can beat M.S.Viswanathan's 'madhavi pon mayilaal'. Probably Illayaraja first tried Karahara- priya in pure form in 'poo nadam idum mayilae..' in the movie tick tick tick. The interlude violin pieces and K.J.Yesudoss's swara alapana in that song are fantastic. His other pure karnatic Karaharapriya are 'anandam pongida pongida', 'thana vanda sandanamae' (ooru vittu ooru vandhu). In anandam pongida pongida, the upper sancharas are excellant, like Ga Ga Ri Sa Ri Ga Ma Ga... Again,the song has been sung by Yesudoss. His voice is superb for this kind of songs. 'Thana vanda sandanamae' came as a pleasant surprise in his brother Gangei Amaran directed movie. This song was not a big hit. Probably all the song went to 'sorgamae enrallum' in the same movie in ragam Hamsanadam (but for few slips). In 'thana' (SPB), he has handled some wonderful nuances of Karaharapriya, like Ga Ri Ni Da Ni... There are few more of his semi-classical tries in Karaharapriya, like 'maamanukku' (netrikann) etc. Even his first song, 'machchana parthingala' is in the Karaharapriya scale. He liked this scale a lot. Maybe, neo-rasikas would call all of them as pure Karaharapriya.

Probably the purest of his Karaharapriya came in 'unnaal mudiyum thambi'. The situation is Kamal and Gemini fight over something. The quarrel gets very intense. At this point Gemini's dumb son (Kamal's brother), takes his nadhaswaram and starts playing loudly, to stop his kin from quarreling further. You know what raga Illayaraja selected for this situation? Karahara- priya! That scene was a musical feast in that movie. The raga was appropria- tely used. K.J.Yesudoss gave a charming vocal support to Illayaraja (singing for both Kamal and Gemini). It was like a duet between Yesudoss and the the nadhaswaram! K.Balachander used this situation to show how music was a common enjoyment in Gemini's house and how it could abate the heat of the quarell between the son and the father.
Talking about the panchama varjaya ragam of Karahapriya, that is, Sriranjani, probably Illayaraja was the best music director to use this wonderful raga. His first Sriranjani came as a tail bit in velli chalangaigal (kaadal ovium). It was a very fast bit sang by the chorus 'thannanthanimayil iru vizhi'. Even though 'vellir chalangaigal' was tuned in Chandrakounse ragam, I don't know what made him give the tail bit to Sriranjani (a very strange guy, you know!) The second Sriranjani attempt came in naadavinodhangal in salangai oli. Even in this song he tuned the pallavi alone in Sriranjani, with charanam in Hamsaanandi. This is what I dislike in cinema music directors. Why can't they adhere to a single raga? Why do they have to change from pallavi to charanam? Illayaraja was the one who did best justice to carnatic music among modern music directors. But even he fell a prey to such deviations (from purist point of view) like changing the raga for each line in few songs. His best Sriranjani came in 'nadam ezhundadadi' in Gopura vaasalilae. Again, Yesudoss! It was really fantastic. Karthik had given a comic act in that song. Probably that song toppled M.S.V's best Sriranjani 'nadam enum kovililae..' Dit it? I would say yes.

Classical Illayaraja – 3

**Subhapanthuvarali** is a 'bayangara soga' ragam. If you hear it you will cry; I will cry; 'saraa loag' will cry. Given the conditional event of Rajiv Gandhi or Indira Gandhi's death occuring, Subhapanthuvarali played on the radio or TV by some 'thenga moodi' bhagavathar during the days of mourning will make even those music insensitive Indira congress leaders shed atleast 'crocodile tears'! Can you imagine this ragam being used in the cinema for a sexy scene like that in 'Hot Shots' in which the hero Charlie Sheen fries eggs on the heroine's umbilicus as though it was a bunzen burner?! Yes, there is a song in Subhapanthuvarali for a situation like the above said, in the movie 'Getti melam'. That was the first movie in which director Visu joined Illaya-raja, starring Karthik and Sasikala. Visu had tried some sexploitation in that song sequence by bringing Sasikala in swimsuit for few minutes, Karthik grazing over her all the time! The song is 'dhagamae undanathe, thindaaduthe manamae..' That was pure subhapanthuvarali. Maybe it evoked sexy mood. Maybe not! Neither the movie nor the song was a big hit. Perhaps the failure was only due to the ineptitude of the raga selection.

Illayaraja has used **Subhapanthuvarali** umpteen number of times for sad situations. His first Subhapanthuvarali came in 'vaigarayil vagai karayil' in Payanangal modivathilai. S.P.B had done a wonderful job in that. The song was a big hit as were the other numbers in that movie. Illayaraja and director R.Sundarajan reportedly had a physical fight about who was the main reason for the movie's hit! Childish fellows! After sometime, R.Sundarajan became a pal with Illayaraja once again, reconciling to the fact that Illayaraja was indispensable at that period of time when he was at his peak. Some of his other Subhapanthuvarali are 'madhavan azhakiraan' in Rajni's Ragavendra, one song in valli (enna enna kanavu kandayo). In paadu nilaavae he used subapanthuvarali for one situation in which the hero and heroine enter into some sort of music competetion. That song is 'vaa veliyae intha kootai vittu'. Mano and Chitra. Mano had shown his vocal gymnastic skills in the thara sthayi sancharas in that song.

Subhapanthuvarali is the 45th melagartha ragam. One raga before that,(ie 44th) we have Bavapiya ragam. Illayaraja has composed one song in this scale. That is 'kandupudichen kandupudichen' in Gurusishyan. One of my friend said that some carnatic big shot (Sudha Raghunathan or someone)
told in an interview in MTV that it was a good Bavapriya and that Illayaraja had used this 'soga ragam' in that funny situation in which Prabhu humours Rajini about his new love affair with Gowthami. I would simply say that it was a good song in Bava- priya scale. Thats all! Similarly there is a good song in the suddha madhyama raga scale of Subhapanthuvarali, that is, Dhenuka. It is the song in 'thooral ninnu poachu': en soga kathaya kaellu... Let us simply call this as set in Dhenuka scale (with few slips) and not as Dhenuka ragam.

The sixth raga from Subhapanthuvarali, ie, 51st mela ragam is Panthuvarali. Illayaraja has conspicuously not produced any good number in Panthuvarali. The only one that I know is the re-recording in 'Raja paarvai' in which blind Kamal plays violin with the troupe. I forgot the situation for that in the movie. Sa Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa Sa Ri Ni Sa....That is how the recording goes. Though it is usually quoted as good Panthuvarali, I did not like it very much. He had tried some fusion in that. Nothing can beat MSV's aezhu swarangalukul in Panthuvarali. It is like listening to a katcheri. Vani Jayaram's performance was terrific. Did she get national award for that song? Perhaps, it is because of this song that she always says that MSV is the best music director who gave carnatic music in pure form, forgetting about Illayaraja's 'indraiku en intha' (vaidhegi kathirunthal) and other innumerable etcetras.

Illayaraja was very prolific in the sudha madhyama counterpart of panthuvarli, that is mayamalavagowlai. Since mayamalavagowlai is relatively very flexible, you can distinctly show the colour of the raga just by traversing its notes alone. Not much of gamakam is needed. You can use this for all kinds of situation like sadness, happiness etc. Illayaraja has completely exploited this raga to the point of its fullest use, so that no other music director can bring out any better than him from this raga. His first song in this scale probably came in ponnu ooruku pudhusu (enna paatu paada enna thalam poada!). His other mayamalavagowlai are manjal nilavuku inru (pagalil oru nilavu), anthi varum neram (munthanai mudichu), madhurai mari kozhundu (enga oru paatukaaran), uyirae uyirae urugadhae (oruvar vaazhum aalayam), illam kaadal veenai (vellai pura onru), rama namam oru vedamae (ragavendrar), maasaru ponnae varuga (thevar magan), en thayaenum koyilai (aranmanai killi), kottu kali kottu (chinnavar), poova eduthu vachu (amman koil kizhakaalae) There are so many songs, that quoting all would be cumbersome. Some of them have actually been tuned in tappanguthu situations. In Bharathiraja's ennuyir thozhan, there is a song 'machchi en mannaru'. It is a pukka Mayamalava gowlai (even though it is tappanguthu). That song has the following lyrics:

Machchi en mannaru mansukkula bejaru,
Touch pannaru, takkara poanaru,
Daavu oru daavu naan kaatum naerum...
Sammunu sammunu vaasam sallunu sallunu veesum...

Though I've not seen this movie, from the lyrics I guess that the song situation should be like this: The poor pettai rowdy hero buys a new autorickshaw and shows it to his lady love and sings a song! In the charanam of that song look what the heroine asks the hero to buy for her! Not jewelry! Not house or 'bahuth keemthi property'! Not new silk dresses! Just two tickets for matnee show to a rajini's movie so that they both can go! Thats all! Also, in the charanam the hero says to the heroine 'kaaveri aarath odathaee nee me.. koovam than naamae..' Funny! Isn't it? It is as though these people are just talking in madras language in that song. Good depiction of poor class life. Even though the thamizh
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kaavalargal purists might say that this song is a kuppai, I liked the lyrics very much. How else can you write for a situation in which 'pettai rowdi' sings a song?

In kottu kali kottu (chinnavar), he has extracted heavy vocal support from SPB and Chitra, making them go up and down the scale in beautiful array of swaras. You should have listened to it to appreciate it. One of his Mayamalavagowlai closely resembles one of MSV's song. It is 'enge naan kanbaen' in A.S.Prakash's Sadhanai. It is just like 'kallellam maanika kallaguma' (alayamani). He should have definitely got the idea for that song from MSV's above said song. Some MSV fans might call this as blatant plagiarism! Is it? I don't know.

Considering the panchama varjaya ragam of Mayamalavagowlai, he was the only one who ever used it so far! That is the Lalitha ragam. It seems to be a recent attraction to him. The first Lalitha came in unnal mudiyum thambi, when Kamal sings a duet with L.A.K.Malam, as the heroine Seetha calls herself derogatively in that movie! 'Idhazhil kadhai ezhudhum' is a great Lalitha. Illayaraja should have definitely got the idea for this tune from Muthuswamy Dikshitar's heranmayim lakshimim. To me, the movements of both the song and keerthanai seem similar. But Dikshitar ingeniously starts the keerthanai in suddha daivatam. The continuity of the tune that Illayaraja has maintained in 'idhazhil kadhai ezhudhu', the step by step progression from one swara to another, the development of superb sangathis, each and every bit in that tune is simply excellant. This song is like a milestone in Thamizh cine-music. Gangei Amaran's lyrics is unusually wonderful, matching his another brother paavalara Varadarajan's 'mannil intha kadal' (keladi kanmani). He proved himself a poet in this song! Subsequently, following the hit of his first Lalitha, Illayaraja tried another shot of 'half-boiled Lalitha' in illam kuyilae, kuyil tharum isayae (priyanka). The start of this song is like Ma Ma Ma Da Sa Ni Da Ma Ma Da Sa Ni Da Ma. A beautiful start indeed! But the tune gets spoiled in the charanam. Iam told that there is another of his Lalitha trials in 'veera' too. I understand that it is like a small virutham (thirumagal un) sung by Arun Mozhi. I have not heard it so far.

Classical Illayaraja - 4

Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan is a very popular carnatic violinist. He is one of the successful rebels in the field. His katcheris are a mixture of classical and commercial blend. In his classical concert he will play 'kallum mullum kaaluku methai' (Iyyappa song) and in the end say 'samiyae saranam Iyyappa' in his violin. If you go to his house he will say 'vaanga saar vaanga, enna sappida- ringa? Kaapiya, teaya?' in madhyama sthayi in his violin. If you say tea then he will turn inside and signal his wife in the kitchen 'adiyae... saarukku oru cup tea konda' in thara sthayi, ofcourse, in his violin! He doesn't talk much, you know.... Only his violin....!

Kunnakudi produced one family movie. It was a true family movie in the sense that he produced that movie, his son-in-law Mr. Ramakrishnan directed that movie (hope it is correct), and maybe, a couple of his other relatives were employed as the light-boys in the production of that movie. Unfortunately, the movie became an example of a perfect family movie in another sense too, that is, only Kunnakudi's family saw that movie! I was one poor soul who got to see that movie 'thodi ragam' by the quirk of wicked fate! The hero was T.N.Seshagopalan. His lovely heroine was Nalini! Kunnakudi had tried to make some typical cinema story like, Seshagopalan, a famed musician pledging thodi...
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ragam to the villain, and finally redeeming it in the last scene. I forgot if there was any heroic stunt sequences in the last scene, when Seshagopalan redeems his thodi back by befelling a dozen villains in a single punch with his fist! In this materialistic world who can escape 'sabalam'? Seshagopalan probably thought that the movie would be a big hit like 'shakunthala' starring G.N.Balasubramaniam and M.Subulakshmi, and that he could become super hero like Rajini and make lot of money!

Anyway, coming to the point, there was a good song in that movie in the ragam kalyani. It was 'vaa vaa thalaiva vaa'. As I vaguely remember, it was a good kalyani. But, because of the dismal fate of that movie, that song did not become a hit. Even if the film had been a success, I doubt whether the song would have been received favourably by the common rasika. Because, the song is like a mini-katcheri! It is unlikely that a duet in which the hero and heroine exchange their love in a katcheri format will be liked by the common audience of the present day cinema world. So, you have no other go other than cinematizing a raga so that it is appealing. You may have to compromise in loosing some purity of the ragam.

Considering this tight situation that music directors face in handling a ragam in cinema, I really wonder how Illayaraja could give the same kalyani as in Kunnakudi's 'vaa vaa thalaiva' without even an iota of compromise in the purity, and yet be very appealing to the common rasika. Oh God! How many kalyanis he has to his credit! The single most common melakartha ragam that he used was kalyani. He should have scored atleast 25 songs in kalyani. This 65th melakartha ragam, is neither too much gamaka oriented nor very light. It is this quality of kalyani that made him use it left and right! You don't have to employ violent shakes of the swaras to show the colour of kalyani! Simple swara phrases would suffice, to establish the raga identity. Since not much of gamaka is needed, you wouldn't be violating the so called cinema melody.

Probably his first kalyani came in 'uthiri pookal'. It was a fantastic movie, directed by the avant garde director Mahendran. Aswini and Vijayan are husband and wife. Vijayan is hero cum villain. Aswini's younger sister (I forgot who it was) is a jolly type teen female. She is the one who sings that kalyani song 'naan paada varuvaayo'in that movie. She sits in a small sand crest in the middle of a river and sings that song. S.Janaki had done a real good job making all sorts of 'konashtai' in that song! This female is later raped by Vijayan, and that becomes the key knot in that movie. Uthiri pookal was a much talked about movie. After that, how many kalyanis followed like train of programmed events from the recording theatre of Illayaraja!

Janani Janani in the movie 'thai mookaambigai' was a terrific hit song. It was an excellant classical piece sung by Illayaraja, Deepan Chakravarthy & Co. (He had the arrogance to push better singers to the back row, you know!). That song was rich in lyrics too. He has taken extra care to pronounce sanskrit words in that song like 'shakthi peetamum nee, sarva mokshamum nee' as sanskrit sounding. Good job! Look at the 'dhamatthoondu' version of Adi sankarachariyar's advaitha philosophy in that song. 'Janani janani, Jagam nee agam nee'. He said the same thing, right?

Then came his superb kalyani in director Maniratnam's first movie 'pagal nilavu'. That is 'vaidegi raman kai serum neram'. S.Janaki again. Radhika dances for this song. The rhythm in this song is wonderful. A blend of guitar and mridangam. He gave some of his kalyanis in lighter form like those in the songs...
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'thevan thandha veenai' (unnai naan sandhithen) and 'vellai pura onru aengudhu' (some Rajni movie) etc. 'Thevan thandha veenai' has one speciality to it. It was a song written by kaviarasu Kannadasan and it was posthumously used in the cinema. Look at Kannadasan's opening lines in that song: thevan thandha veenai, adhil devi seidha ganam, thedum kaigal thedinal adhil ragam inri pogumo? Yes, anybody could have a veenai, but to get a ragam out of it only some fingers can do it!

In the movie 'sinduhairavi' he tried to do some technical innovation in kalyani ragam. That is, in the song 'kalaivaaniyae', it was widely publicised by K.Balachandar & Co, (who were literally at the mercy of Illayaraja for the success of the movie), that that song was composed in aarohanam alone. Okay, what if a song is set in aarohanam alone, does the rasika get a special kind of melody? It was just an ordinary song. But a good piece of kalyani. The song in 'uyarnda ullam', vandaal mahalakshmiyae was a fantastic kalyani. The situation for that song was funny. Kamalhasan, a derilict, who looses all his money sings that song in praise of Ambika's entry into his house (ofcourse, she sets him right and stands a great support to him). S.P.Balu had made all sorts of 'konashtai' in that song. This is one good example for how to popularize classical music. It is pure 24 carat kalyani. In 'soorasamharam' he has given another form of 24 carat kalyani (naan enbadhu nee allavo). He introduced his troup's flautist Arunmozhi as singer in that song. In the charanam, when they sing 'paadinaen pann padinaen', it is beatiful combination of swaras Ni Ri Ga Ma Pa. It is simply superb.

A similar song is 'malayoram mayilae' in the movie oruvar vazhum aalayam. Almost each of the lines in this song, he renders in two sangathis, like for example 'vilayatai solli thandhadharu' first in Pa Pa Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa Sa Ga Ri GA Sa. Then later, the same line is given in Pa Pa Pa Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Ma Ga Ri SA. Great kalyani! I think his latest kalyani is 'amavendrazhaiikka thayirilayae' (Rajni's mannan). In 'thalapadhi' also there is one good kalyani: yamunai aatriae...Some north indian singer (Mithali) sang that song.

Aamir kalyani is a janyam of kalyani. Though it is amir kalyani, it is 'garib' in its scope. Not much, you see...! The key phrase in it is Ma2 Pa Da Ma1 using both the madhyamams. Viswanathan/Ramamurthy made an indelible mark in this in their 'ennuyir thozhi' in karnan. Then, V.S.Narasimhan established his classical heritage (I heard his father is some carnatic big shot) in the song manasukkul ukkaandhu maniyadithai in kalyana agadhigal. Atlast came Illayaraja's amir kalyani, in 'veenai aendhum vaaniyae' (vietnam colony). I heard that Bombay Jayashree has sung this song. It is a good amir kalyani. Let us see if Bombay Jayashree attains eminance like Unnikrishnan in cinema music. More 'dabbu' in cinema, man!

Saranga is another kalyani janyam. A beautiful, vakra ragam, again with double madhyamam. (Why kalyani has many double madhyama janyams?) MSV has scored an excellant saranga in 'konjum neram ennai maranthen'. TMS voice is honey in this song. Illayaraja gave one pure saranga in 'kanniya peyvai thanai' in the movie 'parvathi ennai paradi'. It is the title song. When the title song was in such pure saranga, I was lead to beleive that the subsequent songs might be in classical ragas too. But, alas, a big disappointment! You can never try to speculate what you will get from Illayaraja at all. He has composed a fantastic song in one of Vijayakanth's latest movie with Kasthuri. That song is 'kukumamum manjalukku indru than nalla naal'. In that song he has used all the swaras in kalyani other than daivatam. I don't know whether any such ragam exists with Sa Ri2 Ga3 Ma2 Pa Ni3 Sa aarohanam and avarohanam. If so what is its nomenclature?

Page 9 of 47 by Lakshminarayanan Srirangam Ramakrishnan
There is one guy who repeatedly proved that he could stand up to the pressure of Illayaraja. He gave new form to cinema songs. After the period of Kannadasan (even though Vaali and the lot were giving some good meaningful songs), on an average, Vairamuthu gave much much better cinema songs. Some of his cinema songs even had splashes of supreme 'kavithuvam'. The song in which he made his debut was a feast both in music and lyrics.

That song came in the movie nizhalgal. The situation is that, hero Rajasekhar (a ganja case in that movie) returns back to his home in an elated mood. It was not shown whether he has a puff of ganja before that song! If you were the music director, what tune (to our discussion, what raga) would you want to score in this situation? The points that director Bharatiraja gives you regarding this situation is: 'evening time/hero/ganja case/very happy/sings.' That's all. Isn't your mind fully blank about what raga to choose? Okay, if you were the lyricist (that too, making your entry into the cine-world in this song), what would you write? Illayaraja chose to use the all time pleasantry of Kedaram in this situation! Vairamuthu decided to write 'pon malai pozhudhu'.

Kedaram is a fantastic raga. It is one of the innumerable janyams of the 29th melagartha Sankarabharanam. It has got a small U turn in its arohanam (vakram!). Sa Ma Ga Ma Pa Ni Sa. Avarohanam is Sa Ni Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa. Though this looks simple, there is a specific phrase in its avarohanam to make the raga identity clear. That is, Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa is not just the same when you sing, you have to sing/play like Pa Ma Ga.... Ri Sa Ga Ri Sa. The temporal duration (kaarvai) of gandaram is more. This is what gives beauty to this raga. Before Illayaraja used, I know of only one song which is in Kedaram. That is, 'ramaswami thoodan naanada' in ?Sampoorna Ramayanam. Lord Anjeneya sings this song to Ravan.

Illayaraja's use of Kedaram is splendid. He uses the key phrase of Kedaram in the opening of that song itself like 'Sa Ni Pa, Pa Ma Ga, Ga Ri Sa, Sa Ni Pa' travelling from madhyama sthayi upper shadjam to manthra sthayi panchamam in a single stretch. At the time when the movie was released, I was amused by the chirping of birds in the prelude. How could they catch many birds and bring it to the recording theatre and make them chirp according to their will and wish and record it? Now that I'm a little older, and know that you can make birds chirp, lions roar, kuyils 'koovufy', just by pressing a single button even in your $ 30 casio, I'm more amused by the use of Kedaram in the song. The use of accordion in the first interlude 'Sa Ni Pa Ni Pa Sa Ni Sa Ni Pa, Ga Ma Pa' is excellant. In the second interlude he suddenly introduces a melancholy with a solo violin piece well within the scope of kedaram. I don't know why he did it. Why that sudden sadness in the tune?

The intellectual, poem writing part of Vairamuthu's neuro-circuitry reached the boundaries of imagination in that song.

He writes:
Idhu oru pon maalai pozhudhu  
vaana magal naanugiraal  
vaeru udai poonugiraal

Oh God! What a 'karpanai'! He personifies the evening sky as a girl and says: she is changing clothes from evening to night, and blouses out of shyness because everybody is seeing her! Can anybody
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refer to redness in sky during dusk any better than this? There might be light scattering and such kind of hi-tech physical events that might cause this phenomenon! But, look, what the poet has to say about this from his point of view! In the charanam, he goes a step further and starts characterising the normal events occurring during dusk in a poetic way.

He says:
Aayiram nirangal jaalamidum
raathiri vaasalil kolamidum
vaanam iravukku paalamidum
paadum paraivaigal thalamidum
poomarangal saamarangal...

Proper translation would be: Birds would sing and clap welcoming the night; evening sky would establish the bridge for the coming of the night; all the trees would sway hither and thither and produce gentle breeze welcoming the night; the appearance of thousands of colourful lights all over the world would be magical; it would be like a 'kolam' in the gates of night!

The second Kedaram from the theatre of Illayaraja came in Kamal's 'michael madana kaamarajan'. Sundari neeyum is a fantastic song. It is not as pure as 'pon maalai', but it is a good Kedaram. Though, it was MSV who discovered Kamal's singing capabilities (gnayiru oli mazhayil thingal kulika vandhan; was it Kamal's first song?), it was Illayaraja who gave him chance to sing repeatedly in his movies. Infact, in one non-Kamal movie he made him sing for some other hero (ponmaalai thedutha, en veenai paadutha: ?movie). Kamal and Janaki have done a wonderful job in sundari neeyum. Illayaraja has given the required weightage to manthra sthayi Pa Ni Sa sancharas in this song too. In the charanam, during 'kannana kannae en sontham allo' he uses, Sa Ga Pa Ga Pa Ni, Pa Ni Sa Pa Ni Ri which is definitely unbecoming of kedaram. But, I guess we have to forgive this, because this is cinema music and not a katcheri! The second interlude flute pieces are exceptionally good.

A.R.Rahman's 'ennavalae ennalvalae' in Kadalan is very frequently alluded by some as Kedaram. Reportedly 'thatha' Suppudu also commented about this song in some interview as 'Kedarathuku sedharam', meaning damage to Kedaram. Personally, I am not able to place this song under any ragam. It starts like Sa Sa Ni Pa Ma Pa Pa Ni Pa Ma Ga, Sa Sa Ga Ma Pa Ga Ma Pa...later it deviates with liberal usage of chatusrathi daivatham, chatusrathi rishabam, with one flash of shtarsruthi rishabam too (kaadalinaal varum avasthai enru kandu kondaen). But it is a very good song, establishing A.R.Rahman's typical marks throughout the song. Unnikrishnan has done a good job. But unfortunately, Vairamuthu has made lot of 'paethals' in that song. Time and again, Thamizh 'pudhu kavignars' have written (to emphasise the dramatic impact of love on the lovers) 'after seeing you, and falling in love, I've even forgotten my name'! Vairamuthu has gone a step ahead and tries to characterize why the hero lost his speech (literally) after seeing the heroine:

Vaai mozhiyum enthan thai mozhiyum
vasappada villayadi.
Vayitturkum thondaikum naduvinil oru
uruvam illatha urundayum uruludhadi.
Poets frequently indulge in abstract thinking trying to define inexplicable ideas. In another song he says, 'pookal pookum osaigal kaadhil ketpadhilai' (engae en jeevanae in Kamal's uyarntha ullam), when he writes about the onset of love. That is, as the sounds of flower blooming cannot be heard, the onset of love is indiscernable! That is a good abstraction. But in the above said song he has grossly failed in his abstraction, trying to explain the effect of love on an individual. In the charanam of this song his 'paethals' continue: Unthan koondalil meen pidipaen, Un viral sodduku edupaen... and so on. Luckily he did not go to say 'Oh, my love, when you shout from the toilet, I will bring the tissue paper'!

Nalinakanthi is another Sankarabaranam janyam. Structurally, it is closely related to Kedaram. It has got a sharper U turn (vakram!) in its arohanam. Sa Ga Ri Ma Pa Ni Sa. The avarohanam is Sa Ni Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa. So kedaram differs from Nalinaganthi in only in the arohanam. Ofcourse, you can sing the avarohanam of Nalinakanthi as it is, while in Kedaram, you have to add some special dealings of the swaras. Illayaraja has one good Nalinakanthi in Kamal's kalaignan. It came as a surprise in that movie because all the other songs were 'kuppai'. Enthan nenjil nee paadum has been sung by Jesudoss and Janaki. Illayaraja captures the essence of the raga in the start of the song: Sa Ga Ri Ma Ga Ri Sa Ni Sa Ga Ri Ma GA...There is no deviation in that song at all. In the second interlude there is a short thara sthayi swara alapana too. He should have avoided that alapana, and that person too, in that song! (I think it is he who has rendered that short piece!). It seems like he has used gottu vadyam in that song.

Classical Illayaraja - 6

In carnatic music, while we have three kinds of rishabham, gandharam, daivatham, and nishadham each, the madhyamams are only two kind. They are the suddha and prathi madhyamam. If only the madhyamams had life, they are certain to demand reservation for the reason that the other more populous swarams like the rishabham are dominating the music scene, not giving enough space for the madhyamams to come up in life! However, any species that is less in population become precious in due course. That is the general law of the nature. That is true for the madhyamams too. They are wonderful precious swarams.

The prathi madhyamam is the second madhyamam. In the perceptual scale the distance between any two adjacent notes in the harmonium is the same, irrespective of whether the notes are in the manthra sthayi, madhyama sthayi or the thara sthayi. (This is in contrast to the physical scale, where the frequency difference between any two adjacent notes in the harmonium keeps on increasing as you go to the right). In other words, the perceived tonal difference between any two swarams is the same. Thus the transition between Sa and Ri1, Ri1 and Ri2, Ri2 and Ri3, Ri3 and Ga3, Ga3 and Ma1, Ma1 and Ma2, Ma2 and Pa, Pa and Da1, Da1 and Da2, Da2 and Da3, Da3 and Ni3, and Ni3 and Sa will all be perceived as the same by our mind. However when you sing with the Sa-Pa-Sa shruthi vibrating from the thamboora, the 'aadhara' swarams for the shruthi, ie., the shadjam and the panchamam will have a pulling effect on their immediate adjacent swarams. It is this phenomenon that gives the beauty to the prathi madhyamam. It is for the same reason that the gap between Ri2 and Ga2 appears wide while that between Ma2 and Pa appears so narrow, giving an illusion that these notes are extremely close to each other.
The beauty of the prathi madhyamam can be well appreciated in ragas like Hamsanadham. There has been quite a good discussion about this ragam for a while in rmic. It will become hackneyed to recapitulate it once again. Just to present the gist of the material: Originally a Neethimathi janyam and hence using Sa Ri2 Ma2 Pa Da3 Ni3 Sa (and the converse as avarohanam), it later became reduced to a pentatonic ragam when singers practically preferred to eschew the usage of shatsruthi daivatham (Da3). Thus, the Hamsanadham that we hear nowadays seem to be a janyam of Kalyani, instead of the 60th melakartha Neethimathi.

Illyaraja was the only music director who tried Hamsanadham in cinema. His first Hamsanadham came in Sridhar's 'Harry met sally' kind of movie, thenralae ennai thodu. It was a typical 'mills and boons' plot, the heroine first fighting with the hero and later developing love, while the hero first develops love and later fighting with the heroine. 'Moadhal/oodal/kaadhal' sequence finally culminating in love signal from both the sides! Ah Ha! This type of plots seem to be like a never ending amudhasurabhi, giving the cinema directors innumerable situations, song sequences, and help them make lot of money. Rarely, such plots give us songs like 'thenral vandhu ennai thodum' in superb Hamsanadham. Sridhar who was almost dead at that time could make a comeback in the cinema world, because of the richness of the songs in that movie. Also, he introduced Veenai S.Balachandar's sister's grand-daughter Jayashree (who is also a cousin of the actress Sukanya) as the heroine in that movie.

Illyaraja starts his first Hamsanadham like Ma Pa Ma Pa Ri Ma Ri Ni Sa.... An excellant start! An ingenious start considering from the scientific aspect of music, because this is the first and the last song that I have heard with a start in prathi madhyamam. When you are bred in a society wherein there are certain established styles, you would automatically imbibe them and then start manifesting them. Saint Thyagaraja starts the pallavi of his 'pantu reethi kolu' (Hamsanadham) in panchamam. In this ragam, anybody would be tempted to make a start in Pa or Sa. If somebody started in Ma2, then it is an abnormal behaviour. If he doesn't deviate from the classical style even a teeny-weeny bit, and is able to sell it to the public and make a mega hit song, then it only means that he is brilliant! Illyaraja did it! He has shown this kind of non-traditional start of his songs (from the point of view of the trinity's approach to ragas) in many songs. Another example would be the kakali nishadha start in 'janani janani' and 'ammavai ninaikaadha' in kalyani.

The background rhythm in 'thenral vanthu' is a fantastic monotonous tabla beat, not exhibiting change for every line in the song. This is in sharp contrast to the newer Rahman style, wherein there is lot of high tech scien- tific manipulations of the rhythm, with a change for each line of the song. As usual, our cinema kavigner (Vaali?), has made lot of 'paethals' in lyrics in such a wonderful raga based song.

Thendral vandhu ennai thodum
aaha saththam inri mutham idum
pagalae poi vidu; iravae pai kodu
nilavae, panneerai thoovi oaivedu!

Look at the audacity of the poet, asking the 'night' to give a mat, moon to sprinkle scented water, so that the hero and heroine could indulge in carnal love! Literally, he is trying to drive the 'daytime' away
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so that night time could come!

The second Hamsanadham that Illayaraja gave was 'om namaha' in Maniratnam's Geetanjali. It was a good one too. The third number came in his brother Gangei Amaran's 'ooru vittu ooru vanthu'. The song was 'sorgamae enrallum'. Our village hero 'touser payyan' Ramarajan and Gowthami go to some foreign country and become nostalgic about Tamizhnadu and then sing that song. That song was one first-class example of how to popularize carnatic music. From the pallavi 'hei thanthana thanthana thantha' to the very end of the song, it is absolutely classical. In such a short piece, he has brought out the full essence of Hamsanadham. Ofcourse there are few slips, like the usage of Da2 when he sings 'namnaadu poalaguma', and the use of Ma1 when he sings 'paaka oru vazhi illayae' in charanam. He could have avoided these, and rendered a ultra pure Hamsanadham. But, what to say, cinema music directors seem to have all the right in the world to do anthing to any ragam!

He has daringly ventured to test his vocal skills in that song with S.Janaki. There are real fast sancharas covering one entire octave in such short span of time. Somehow he has done a good job! Perhaps, he thought that Ramarajan does not deserve any better voice than his! The lyrics of that song is also funny. I think he himself (or Gangei Amaran) has written that song. It goes on to narrate how village life in Tamizhnadu is much superior to that in other foreign countries.

Maadugalai meika, adhu maeyuradha paarka
mandhaivel angu illayae hei!

In the short story collection of Fredrick Forsyth's 'No come backs' the hero happens to go to Tamizhnadu. He takes note with disgust, how people urinate in public places, defecate in streets, in Tamizhnadu. Illayaraja could have written that in his song.

Avasarama onnuku vandha sattunu
oru oarama onnuku adikka
nalla roadu illayae....

Classical Illayaraja - 7

Kanakangi is the first melakartha ragam. It is also called as kanakaambari (what a wonderful name!). While man's aesthetic sense gave birth to ragas like mohanam, sudha saveri etc, his increasing scientific knowledge about the structure of music over a period of many centuries gave birth to ragas such as kanakangi. In the days of yore, when man began exploring the music world, there was no kanakangi. All he knew were those tunes or ragas that were immediately appealing to his mind. No wonder, simple pentatonic ragas like mohanam made their genesis during that early period of man's irresistible pursuit for melody. Later, as is usual, science took over the aesthetic sense.

The dominance of MOOD, which often served the purpose of being the mighty commander of raga creation, was pulled down by the even mightier science. That the central theorm governing the whole of music was only simple mathematics became evident. The tip of the iceberg eventually lead to the unearthing of the whole of the rest! String instruments like the veenai and gottu vadyam etc., helped the 'music thirsty' thathas of yesteryears apply some good logic and figure out the progenitor ragas of
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the already existing ragas and narrow it down to the 72 melakartha system. It became a relatively simple task like filling in the unknown elements in the periodic table once you knew the general structure of the atom in various elements! The first melakartha became christened as kanakangi.

There are not many keerthanais in kanakangi. There is a Thyagaraja keerthanai on lord Ganesha (who seems to have decided to rock the whole hindu community by resurrecting from his idolhood to drink vitamin D fortified milk!) in kanakangi. Thats all. I know of no other kanakangi keerthanais. There are few short pieces like the one in M.Subulakshmi's cassette in all the melakartha ragas. If you want to listen to pure kanakangi in cinema go to KB’s sindhu bhairavi movie. Illayaraja scored a marvellous kanakangi in that movie. The situation is: Sivakumar (called as JKB in that movie) is a famous vocal musician. His wife Sulakshana is a carnatic music ag-gnani. Hence, to quench his music thirst at home too, Sivakumar falls in love with Suhasini, who is a great gnani in carnatic music! This dual love creates problems in his public performance. He tries to forget Suhasini, but not able to do so. He is haunted by her thoughts all the time. In that situation he sings a song 'mogam ennum theeyil en manam vendhu vendhu urugum'. It is this song that gave the first and last kanakangi to Thamizh cinema music.

Kanakangi is a difficult ragam to handle properly. The reason is that it has got vivadhi swarams at two levels. Sa Ri1 Ga1 and Pa Da1 Ni1. The transition from one note to its immediate adjacent note is discernable by human ear. But when you get such transitions consecutively like in Sa Ri1 Ga1 and Pa Da1 Ni1, it becomes jarring to the mind! Often, to score background music to eerie situations, cine-musicians press immediately adjacent keys in the harmonium in a row, say, Sa Ri1 Ga1 Ga2 Ga3 Ma1; or if the music director doesn't have any knowledge about musical grammer or a taste for melody, he may even press all the above said keys together to startle the audience by his unpleasant music, than by the situation per se! So, that's the only use for ragas like kanakangi in cinema! But, Illayaraja made a fantastic song out of this raga. The tonal quality of that song appropriately suits that situation. He has handled that raga in a very intelligent way. Nowhere in that song does he travels the entire octave. Because if you travel like that, it will be very jarring and unmelodious. He has divided the raga into bits, delivering sancharas around Sa Ri Ga first, and then going over to Pa Da Ni later, carefully avoiding the sancharas of both the vivadhi levels in the same stretch! Only at the very end, while he goes to the climactic thara sthayi panchamam, he travels from madhyama sthayi panchamam in a single stretch, covering all the notes in between. K.J.Yesudoss has sung that in a wonderful manner. Nobody else could have sung that song as he did, because it needs lot of 'akara' practice. One should be a carnatic musician himself and be well versed with such vivadhi sancharas to do justice to the ragam.

Kanakangi is one example that proves the old saying 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'. The concept of a ragam and mood is only in the mind of the beholder! Because, look what happens to kanakangi, when you change the reference shruthi from Sa-Pa-Sa to Ri-Da-Ri. This jarring, inharmonious vivadhi raga becomes Panthuvarali, a superb meloncholy! The same vivadhi swaras exist in panthuvarali too, but because of the change in reference shruthi the quality of the mood changes! Similarly, if you knock off the Ri and Da in kanakangi, you get sudha saveri, a superb melody! These are all wonders in our perceptual system, the beholder's mind!
Illayaraja has got many songs in **sudha saveri**, a very melodious, ‘desiya' ragam (Sa Ri2 Ma1 Pa Da2 Sa). His first sudha saveri probably came in Bharithiraja's 'kizhakae pogum rail'. Kovil mani osai thannai has been sung by Jayachandran and Janaki. His other sudha saveri are maanada thenaada in mudhal vasantham, kadal mayakam (AVMin puthumai penn), radha radha (meendum kokila), manamagalae manamagalae (thevar magan). In manamagalae, he has given a sad quality to sudha saveri. The shanai interlude evokes a gloomy mood. Illayaraja's latest sudha saveri came in Prathap Pothan's recent movie (aathma). That song has been sung by T.N.Seshagopalan. The song is 'nin arul tharum annapurani'. Even this song has wonderful shanai interlude. T.N.Seshagopalan has done a good job in this song (his first song with Illayaraja). However, the best of TNS's voice has not been brought out. Perhaps just ordinary cinema vocalists would have been enough for this song! I am sure Illayaraja has got a lot more numbers in sudha saveri. Only thing is my senescent mememory seems to be failing!

Rasikapriya is the last melakartha ragam. Hence, Sa Ri3 Ga3 Ma2 Pa Da3 Ni3 Sa. I don't know of any keerthanai in rasikapriya. Illayaraja has tried this raga in his early days. It seems like a daring venture at that time. The first and last rasikapriya in cinema came in 'kovil pura'. The three songs in that movie became very famous even before the movie was released. The movie starred 'oru thalai ragam' shankar as the hero and saritha as the heroine. But, alas! Despite the wonderful songs, the movie was a big flop. The rasikapriya song was 'sangithamae en jeevanae'. I vaguely remember the tune of that song. It has been sung by Janaki. It starts like Pa Da Ni Sa; Sa Ri Sa Ni Sa and so on. The tune in the charanam is fantastic. Unlike the first melakartha, the last melakartha sounds melodious to me. Illayaraja himself had told in one of his early interviews that he expected national award for this song. But, he did not get it.

**Classical Illayaraja – 8**

South Indian classical music has got an excellent treasure of superb names. Most of the raga names seem to be sanskrit derivatives. Even though there are some Thamizh equivalent names for ragas such as sankarabharanam, nobody uses them.

Some ragas seem to follow the first, middle and last name system! The only difference is, you don't give a space between the first and last name. For example, kalyani has a first name (which is commonly omitted), and that is, 'mesa'. This mesa helps in identifying the number and position that it occupies in the melakartha scale. While there is no dearth of names, for some unknown reason, there is lot of repetition in naming the ragas. Thus you have mohanakalyani, amirkalyani, yamunakalyani and so on. In this case, the above said ragas are all 'DNA' testified offsprings of kalyani. But there are some other unrelated ragas that have common last names. For example, the ranjani group of ragas. We have ranjani, janaranjani, mararanjani, megaranjani, sivaranjani, karnaranjani and so on.

Of these, **mararanjani** is the 25th mela ragam. Ranjani, janaranjani, sivaranjani, karnaranjani are janyams of the 59th, 29th, 22nd and 22nd melams respectively. See, how unrelated they are! Unlike the ranjani group, some of the bhairavi ragams are indeed genitically related. In this group we have nadabhairavi, bhairavi, sindhu bhairavi, ananda bhairavi, salakabhairavi and so on. Ofcourse, there are other few bhairavis like ahir bhairavi (the hindhusthani equivalent of chakravagam) which are not related to the above said bhairavi group.
Nadabhairavi is the 20th melakartha ragam. While it is such an important raga in the western music (the C minor scale), its importance is completely undermined in our music. The fecundity of nadabhairavi has been fully exploited in carnatic music to get innumerable janya ragams which are commonly sung, while the parent ragam has become totally ignored. There are not very many keerthanais in nadabhairavi. But in cinema music this C minor scale is the supreme king. Probably one third of all the cinema songs are set in nadabhairavi scale. Illayaraja has scored countless songs in this scale. None of them is classical. So, even though one might know thousands of these songs, he might not be able to identify the nadabhairavi ragam when sung in the classical sadas! Some examples for the songs in this scale would be kannae kalaimanae (moonram pirai), kalyana malai (pudhu pudhu arthangal), illam kuyil paadudho (brahma), rakku muthu raaku (yejamaan), ennulai ennulai (valli- what a song!), then paandi seemayilae (nayagan) etc.... A.R.Rahman's chandralekha (thiruda thiruda) is another fantastic example of the C minor scale. In many of these songs, the music directors tend to present a hybrid by incorporating Da2, and Ni3 usages. Illayaraja, who is known for his very minimal deviation from the chosen scale, also seems to enjoy presenting an (expected) vagary of occasional Da2 and Ni3 usage in these songs.

Bhairavi is a major 'gana' ragam. It is a sarwaswara bashangam. Thus the aroganam is that of karaharapriya and the avarohanam - nadabhairavi! Hence you could call it as the janyam of either karaharapriya or nadabhairavi. However, since it is more closely related to karaharapriya (sanchara-wise), it might be appropriate to call it a janyam of karaharapriya, with a reduced daivatham in the avarohanam (from Da2 to Da1). The movements of bhairavi have got a very powerful quality to evoke a gloomy mood. It is much worse than subhapanthuvarali (the raga which is oft used in the cinema for sad situations - a very 'light' one when compared to bhairavi).

For a guy who daringly ventures into the bermuda triangle of classical music, that is, the rare vivadhi ragas such as kanakangi, bhaavani etc, it is a kind of surprise why Illayaraja so far did not bother to touch upon the greatest of all the janya ragas, BHAIRAVI, in atleast one of his songs. Even in his classical music albums like the 'how to name it', I don't remember there is any bhairavi piece. On the contrast, MSV has tried bhairavi twice (as far as I know) in cine-music. Both of them are excellent. They are 'oru puram parthal midhilayin mydhili' (the second charanam in the song 'adhisaya ragam' in the movie aboorva ragam. MSV says that the rest of the song is set in some vague ragam called as mahathi); The second bhairavi that MSV gave was 'thirupaarkadalil pallikondayae' (swamy iyyappan). What a lovely song! What an unbelievable classical presentation of the essence of bhairavi! What a marvelous rendition by K.J.Yesudoss! You have to enjoy this song atom by atom (anu anuvai rasikanum!) There is no doubt that the ultimate classicism in carnatic music lies with few ragas like bhairavi, thodi, sankarabharanam, begada, karaharapriya and kalyani etc. The ascendency in the scale of knowledge and performance of even the classical musicians would be evaluated by the critics according to the mastery and proficiency that they show in handling these ragas. Such is the weightage that a ragam like bhairavi deems from the purely classical people. Illayaraja miserably failed in this aspect.

There was a wonderful opportunity recently for him to handle bhairavi. That is, in the movie 'moga mull'. The author of that book Thi.Janakiraman, writes pages about this great ragam. In the novel, he actually writes few paragraphs of just bhairavi swaras alone, and about the beauty of those swaras.
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This he writes in the context when the hero Babu and his friend Rajam sit in the kumbakonam public park and listen to the bairavi ragam broadcasted in the park radio. Since so much emphasis was given to this ragam in the story, I was lead to believe that the director Gnana might have told Illayaraja and got a superb bairavi song. But, alas! There was just a small piece of re-recording in bairavi alone, that too, bairavi varnam, when Babu's music master Ranganna teaches music to his disciples. Thats all.

Mukhari and husseni are ragas very closely related to bairavi. Though it is generally said that mukhari is the apt ragam for gloomy mood, perhaps bairavi suits more to such a situation than the former. Cinema musicians have preferred to use sivaranjani or subhapanthuvaramali for sad situations than bairavi or mukhari, probably because of the terrific gamakam involved in these ragas. Too much of gamakam and cinema music don't go together! However, MSV has taken a shot at mukhari too, in two songs: vada malarae thamizh thenae (ambikapathy), pogathae en kanava (veera pandia katta bomman). I have not heard both these songs. But have heard people say that they are very good mukharis.

Ananda bairavi is a fantastic ragam. It is a sharp contrast to bairavi. As the name indicates, ananda bairavi does not have a sad quality like bairavi. It brings 'aanandam' to the listener. It is traditionally used in real 'mangalakaramana' situations. During the celebration of marriage occasion, when the bride and the groom sit in a swing and play 'oonjal', there is a kalyana sampradhaya song. That is 'ponnoonjal aadinaalae'! The ragam is ananda bairavi! You should have listened to that song, to appreciate how pleasant it is, particularly when a group of 'maamis' sing this song in an early morning muhoortha schedule! It will even make the father of of the bride who is performing a 'dowri' kalyanam, lacrimate due to aanandam, forgetting all the sufferings he had to go through to perform the marriage.

Illayaraja has given two ananda bairavis so far. The first one came in Rajni's Ragavendrar. The situation is: Manorama sings this song humouring Lakshmi, who develops an affair with the ragavendra (future swampy). That song starts like: parthalae theriyadho naeku, adiyae sarasu....The second ananda bairavi that Illayaraja gave came in sridhar's 'iniya uravu poothadhu'. The situation is: the heroine (Nadhia) or somebody gets pregnant and the 'thozhiyar' crowd sings this song (during valaikapu?). The song starts like 'muthu poalae muthu poalae pillai vara poaran kattil melae..' Both those ananda bairavis were good ones. Look, he has used the ragam to suit happy occasion in both the instances! Mangalakaramana situations!

Ananda bairavi is one unique ragam in carnatic music. It defies the general grammer that regulate the structure of all ragas! We know that there are 12 (normally) definable swaras in an octave (from lower to upper Sa). They are Sa, Ri1, Ri2 (Ga1), Ri3 (Ga2), Ga3, Ma1, Ma2, Pa, Da1, Da2 (Ni1), Da3 (Ni2) and Ni3. If you count in terms of the number of individual swaras considering each of them seperately (like Ri1, Ri2, Ri3, Ga1, Ga2, Ga3 and so on), then you would say that there are 16 swaras in an octave. Of these 12 swaras, we use almost all the swaras in ananda bairavi. The 'namkevastha' arohanam and avarohanam of this ragam is Sa Ga2 Ri2 Ga2 Ma Pa Da2 Pa Sa; Sa Ni2 Da2 Pa Ma1 Ga2 Ri2 Sa. But there is much much more than this arohanam and avarohanam. You have Ga3, Da1 and Ni3 prayogams in this ragam. You can use Pa Ni2 Sa prayogam. With so much of bashangam, it
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looks as if it is very ungrammatical. Yet, it follows perfect grammer of its own, that define its raga-lakshanam. Ga3 and Da1 is mostly used in making Ga3 Ma1 Pa Da1 Pa sancharam. Ni3 is used in making Da2 Ni3 Sa Ga2 Ri2 Ga2 Sa sancharam. In short ananda bhairavi typifies the purely aesthetic hallmark achievement of carnatic music.

Recently, Thamizh cinema music has got two more ananda bhairavi additions, from the now very famous Deva and Rahman. Deva's one is 'konja naal poaru thalaiva' in the movie aasai. Hariharan has sung this song. It is a great piece. Superb job by Hariharan. Look at the way the gamakam of gandaram is used in this song. Katcheri type of gamakam in a cinema song! Yet, it seems that this song has become a big hit! A welcameble change in Thamizh cinema music! In this song the lyricist (Vaali?) says 'thaenara paalara paanja en kannukula' to indicate what a visual delight the heroine's beauty is! Look how he is crossing the gustatory (taste) and visual sensory modalities! How can honey flowing into the eye give any pleasant sensation? Perhaps we should not look at a poetic usage from the scientific stand point of view! Then he says 'dhesiya kodi poalae poththi vachchaen nenjukkulae'! What an atypical analogy to indicate the preciousness of the heroine to the hero!

Rahman's ananda bhairavi is the song 'mettu poadu' in the movie Duet. Prabhu and Ramesh Aravind sing this in a light music concert. It is a fantastic song. Rahman has used this ragam in a very intelligent manner. The song starts like Sa Sa Sa Ri2, Sa Sa Sa Ri2, Ri2 Ma1 Ga3 Sa, Ri2 Ma1 Ga3 Sa, Sa Sa Ri2 Sa. Look at the way he uses Ga3 in the begining of the song itself! Classically when you sing ananda bhairavi, when you descend like Pa Ma1 Ga3, there is a caveat right at the Ga3 "don't go any further down"! But Rahman goes further down to Sa from Ga3! In this poor grammatically ungrammatical ragam, what can you say about this usage? When you listen to the song it is so illusory and sounds perfectly ananda bhairavish! Intelligent musicians can re-define raga lakshana! Perhaps this is one instance. I don't know if classicists will agree with the way the ragam has been used in this song. Vairamuthu's lyrics is just wonderful in this song. He advises the janatha to achieve success like the tender roots of a germinating seed inside a hard rock (paaarai kul verai poalae vetri kolga)! What a powerful analogy to boost one's confidence to achieve success! Maybe, I could add 'dinosaursai poalae tholvi adayadheer' (don't attain failure like the dinosaurs)! One of the theories for the extinction of the dinosaur family is that the females could not bear the weight of the males during mating! What a stupid reason for such a mammoth species to perish and become extinct! Shame, Shame, Shame!...!

Corrigendum: Few people have pointed out to me that the music director of Swamy Iyyappan was Devarajan (malayalam music director) and not MSV as I have written. I apologize for the error.

Classical Ilayaraja - 9

There was a great furore in the Indian parliament a couple of years ago. Since the daily scene there is pretty much so, does this furore need any special mention? Yes. This furore was a meaningful one! It happened when the Indian government signed the GATT agreement. No wonder, the stupid "swadeshi" oriented parties like the Bharathiya Janata party opposed the selling of India to the "videshi" through GATT. But as an aftermath, signing the GATT agreement had a terrible effect on the interest of India in certain areas. For example, the medical value of neem oil has been well known in
India for centuries. It seems some of the western pharmaceutical companies re-discovered the medical value of neem oil and started proceeding to claim patent for the product! In that case, any Indian company which tries to "manufacture" neem oil and tries to market it has to pay money to these western companies! Is it not funny and outrageous at the same time? Patenting is a powerful tool to protect ownership. It seems that it will be better if we patented both of our meaningful and meaningless traditional techniques to protect our interests. You may not know what will be re-discovered (and patent claimed) in the western hemisphere in days to come! Maybe, some scientist here will discover that giving unboiled rice with its hard covering (husk) to new born babies will result in the immediate death of those babies within few hours and secure patent for this finding! Consider how this will affect the interest of our Indian mothers in the far south, who have been using this traditional technique to "close the chapter" of their unwelcomed, stigmatic female children! Poor mommas!

Saint Thyagaraja was one poor man who totally did not know anything about patenting or copyrighting one's invention or literary work! He probably did not even know that his krithis were worth anything! If he had known that his krithis were going to draw international attention in the subsequent centuries, would he have copyrighted his works? Nay! He was such a naive sadhu, the word meaning in its strictest sense. He was a perfect example of a brahman, getting up early in the morning, much before "sandhya poorna pravarththae", and doing all the routine daily religious chores like the thrakaala sandhyavandhanam regularly. A brahman is supposed to eat only "moonu kavalam choru" (the amount of metabolic fuel necessary to keep the body and mind functioning), and he should not succumb to the pleasure of eating. I can see that Saint Thyagaraja didn't, from the way he looks so thin, like a freshly fleeced goat, in his portraits. A brahman should only indulge in priestly and teaching duties. He should have no malice for others. He should only think of "lokha kshemam". Thyagaraja had all these qualities. Thyagaraja obtained his food by doing "unchivrithi" daily, ie., going around the temple, singing bhajans etc and accepting the rice that people had to offer as a matter of voluntary donation. He was a telugu brought up in Thiruvaiyaru in Thanjavoor jilla. He probably knew tamizh well. But he chose to write his compositions in his mother tongue telugu. Valmiki, the creator of "Rama" character, would not have anticipated that his fictitious "hero" was going to have such a profound influence on people to be born later in the time window, like Thyagaraja . Thyagaraja was literally in love with Rama, like Meera was with Krishna. He had such a powerful theoretical understanding and practical mastery over carnatic music that he could compose in any ragam. He chose to appeal to his Lord Rama through "bhava" margam, ie., tackling the God, through emotional appeals. This was in sharp contrast to his contemporaries like Muthuswamy Dikshitar, who used "bhakthi" margam. His compositions were never a verbal diarrhoea! Just a few lines, thats all. He never tried to project his knowledge in his krithis. He was so simple and such a wonderful vagheyakara, that nature would take another millenium to ordain such a man be born again in this world!

Thyagabrahmam's compositions have often been ridiculed in the cinema arena. Nobody has the right to change anything in another persons belongings, even though the person might be dead. Thyagaraja's compositions are his belong- ings. He used them to reach heavenly abode. He left his compositions for the world to cherish and enjoy, as they were written and sung by him. Nobody can tamper with his treasure, which are ours now. We have to protect them as he had it! K.V. Mahadevan
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opened the gateway to the free musical society where anybody could do anything to anybody's compositions! What kind of arrogance was that, in changing the Thyagaraja form of "Dhorakuna" in the movie sankarabaranam without his consent? Having been shown the way of ridiculing Thyagaraja, Illayaraja too embarked on that task. That was his technically first innovative adventure of presenting a ragam in the light form and then in the classical form. He knowingly insulted the uncopyrighted work of the greatest saint composer the world has ever given birth to.

That song came in the movie sindhu bhairavi. The song is "padariyaen padippariyaen". The heroine Suhasini has terrific interest in carnatic music. She is one of those proponents of the so-called thamizhisai. She feels that one has to sing krithis in local language so that the local mass also understands the krithis. She busts into one of J.K.B's (shivakumar) katcheri and sings this song. She starts the song like an ordinary folk song with a simple rhythm and finally ends the song in a classic Thyagaraja krithi. Throughout the song the grammer of the ragam is maintained, with a light music type of rendition in the beginning and then culminating in carnatic type of ending. She starts the song all alone. Later the accompanists of J.K.B start admiring the tune and then accompany her. The ragam of that song is Saramathi. It is a major janyam of the 20th mela ragam, Nadabhairavi. Its arohanam and avarohanam are Sa Ri2 Ga2 Ma1 Pa Da1 Ni2 Sa and Sa Ni2 Da1 Ma1 Ga2 Sa. Saramathi evokes a gloomy mood. There is a fantastic Thyagaraja keerthani in this ragam. That is "mokshamu galadha". Whenever some VIP puts down his head (may I translate 'mandaya poataan' like this!) B grade and C grade TV artists appear in the screen and play mokshamu galadha with a pretentious sad face (feeling very happy inside regarding the unexpected death of the VIP and hence the sudden TV chance)! Illayaraja's selection of this ragam for that situation is very appropriate. Because a major proportion of cinema songs are set in nadabhairavi scale. What you need to do is to avoid Ga Ri Sa and Da Pa Ma prayogam, thats all! When you end the song in a keerthani, give a little gamaka touch here and there to make it classical (after all, strictly following the swara grammer, using specific prayogams, and appropriate gamaka soaked swaras are the essential ingredients of classicism).

Illayaraja starts that song like: Ri Ri Ri Ri, Ri Ri Ri Ri, Ri Ga Sa Sa, Ri Ri Ri Ri. Then for aedariyaen aezhuthariyaen aezhuthuvagai naanariyaen, he goes a little further like: Ri Ri Ri Ri, Ri Ri Ri Ri, Ri Ga Ma Ga, Sa Sa Sa Sa. Thus he starts following the grammer of Saramathi perfectly right from the start, but with a light music like technical approach initially. There is lot of "thamizhisai" preaching by thiruvaalar Vairamuthu in that song. He says

paadariyaen padippariyaen pallikoodam naanariyaen
aedariyaen aezhuthariyaen aezhuthuvagai naanariyaen
aetula aezhudhavilla aezhudhi vachu pazhakamilla
ellakanam padikavilla thalakanamum ennaku illa

In the charanam he refers to the katcheri rasikas as ignoramus crowd who nodd their heads without understanding anything (thalaya aatum puriyaadha kootam). Then he goes ahead and suggests a remedy to this deplorable state.

chaerikum sera venum adhukum paatu padi
Though the obvious matter of controversy in this is the language, there is much more in the issue. Nobody can deny the fact that the enjoyment of music becomes supreme if we can also understand the sahithyam. But is it not also equally true that music and emotional feelings transcend petty barriers like language etc.. When you see a hidden sadness in the portrait of Mona Lisa, it is that sadness that matters. You have to look at that piece of art as it is! You cannot try to find a replacement to that Leonardo Da Vince's monumental work by having a thamizhan draw an equivalent with a thamizhachchi's face with a sad look! When Thyagaraja's reckless brother Jalpesan throws away his pooja idol (Rama vighram), and when Thyagaraja sings a keerthanai in that situation of utter frustration, mental turmoil and agitation of not finding his favourite idol, what matters there is the emotion that is packed in the sahityam, and not the language of the sahityam!

I heard recently that many people in the Hindhi belt above have actually started listening to A. R. Rahman's original Thamizh version of songs rather than the dubbed Hindhi version. Would not Vairamuthu be extremely happy to see his "mukkaala mukkabula" thamizh version being such a popular song even in northern India? What would his reaction be if all his songs were translated and in due course the original writer of the songs, ie., he, forgotten by the people. I think that the mature way of dealing with this issue is to agree to learn the translated meaning of a krithi and then continue to sing the krithi in the language the composer made it. In this way we can get involved with the emotional framework of a krithi and enjoy it thoroughly. If the slum dwelling population of Thamizhnadu can understand "choli kae peechae kya hai" and enjoy the untranslated version of the song with a "kick", then, they can also understand "Thyagaraja's Telugu krithis kae peechae kya hai". People only have to come out of their narrow minded caccoon that they have built for themselves.

Illayaraja had to end this "padariyaen" song in some classical krithi to boost the character of Suhasini in the movie. He could have ended it in Thayagaraja's "mokshamu galadhaha" or in some other original Saramathi krithi. But instead, look what he did! He chose Thyagaraja's "marimari ninnae" which had been originally composed in Kamboji ragam. He changed the ragam of that krithi to Saramathi and annexed it to his "padariyaen"!

Saramathi is technically called as sampoorna oudhava ragam, ie., sampoornam in the arohanam (having all the seven swaras of its parent ragam, Nadabhair- avi), and oudhavam in the avarohanam (five swaras). There is a ragam that has the same avarohanam as Saramathi, and the same avarohana swaras in arohanam too. That is Hindholam. Sa Ga2 Ma1 Da1 Ni2 Sa; Sa Ni2 Da1 Ma1 Ga2 Sa. It is a great "light" ragam. Illayaraja has used it several times in his music. Subu's raga based database has a good list of the songs in this ragam. As far as I know his first Hindholam came in the movie "illamai kolam". The song is sreedevi en vazhvil sung by K. J. Yesudoss. It is a very slow tempo song. One of his another early Hindolam came in "alaigal oivadhillai". The song is "dharisanam kidaikaadha". He has himself sung that song. Oh, it is terrible! While su-swara rendition of even a simple tune can make the listening experience magical, abha-swara rendition of even a complex tune can give a real harrowing experience! The later has happened in the above song. His unconditioned fledgling vocal cords have worked very hard like a powerful gravitational force pulling his voice down
when he desperately tries to reach the upper shadjam in one instance. But the tune is good though. His other songs are om namachivaaya (salangai oli), naanaga naan illai (thoongadhale thambi thoongadhale), pothi vacha malligai mottu (mann vasanai), unnal mudiyum thambi thambi (unnal mudiyum thambi), naan thedum sevvandhi poovidhu (dharmapathini), kannae unai thedugiraen vaa (unakkagavee vazhgiaraen), o janani en suram nee (pudhiya ragam), villaku vaipom villaku vaipom (aathma). Naan thedum sevvandhi poovidhu is a terrific piece with a wonderful rhythm (very novel at that time). It is a good westernised hindholam. A. R. Rahman has given one very pure classical hindholam too. The song comes in may madham (maargazhi poovae maargazhi poovae). It is very good. I was told that it was sung by some Houston based new singer.

If you changed the Ni in Hindholam from Ni2 to Ni3 then we get Chandrakauns ragam. Illayaraja has got a couple of songs in this ragam too. His first Chandrakauns came in "kaadhal oviyam" (vellichalangaigal). It is a fantastic song. Great job by S. P. B. What a great change does this small alteration in the location of Ni in hindolam makes to the mood quality! The tail piece of this song is in Sriranjani ragam. His second Chandrakauns came in "thai mooaambigai" (isayarasi). My brother tells me that it was called by a different ragam in one TV program in doordarshan. Anyway it should be very close to Chandrakauns. The best of his Chandrakauns is "azhagu malaradha abinayangal soozha" in "vaidehi kaathirundhaal". Oh, what a song! Vaali has done a great job writing the status of an unconsumated young celibate widow. In his short story "siluvai" master writer Jayakanthan daringly writes about the cruelty of being a celibate just in the last line of the story narrating a nun's short bus travel. Vaali has written about the same terrible celibacy from a young widow's point of view. In varusham padhinaaru there is another Chandrakauns "karayaadha manamum undo". Lately we got two more "idhunaal vaumae" in chembaruthi, and "unna ninachu urugum" in rasayya. A. R. Rahman has also tried Chandrakauns in his "Bombay". The Hindhi version goes like "ruk jao, ruk jao". I don't know the Thamizh version.

Classical Illayaraja - 10

The mind is a wondrous subset of the terrific biological entity, the brain. Literally, the heart is often alluded to as the site of thinking. In old Thamizh cinemas, the heroine would invariably say to the villain at some point (like the inevitable rape scene!) "naasakkaara, unaku idhayamae Illayaa?" while the unmindful villain would be busy disrobing her with a terrible "ha ha ha" laughter! Why does the heroine have to say this kind of a scientifically preposterous statement, while it was the villain's brain that decided to rape her, and not the poor "heart"! Does the evil mind of the villain exist in his brain? If so, where is it in the brain? Or, is the mind just the product of the functioning of the brain? A disease process affecting the frontal lobe of the brain might make an individual loose all his social inhibition and pee in the public, or to go to Bourbon street in New Orleans, or to Mardigraz in Galveston! Damaging the visual cortex of a villain might make him blind, but he might still try to follow the heroine with the help of her bangle noise! Damaging his temporal lobe might render him hearing impaired, but he might still try to get to the heroine with the help of "koondal" scent cues (refer: Thiruvilayadal!). As a last effort you may want to damage his parietal lobe, but then he would still see the heroine, even though he might not know what to do to the heroine! So, where the heaven is the so called MIND?!

The intellectual power of the mind is amazing. More than 2000 years ago, Eratosthenes sits in his ill-
built mud house and thinks in the deepest crevice of his neural network "what will be the circumference of the earth". He does a simple calculation and concludes "about 22,000 miles"! Somewhere amidst the tangle of their neural network the Indians think abstractly about the non-existant numeral and make their magnum opus contribution of "nothing" to the field of mathematics! Just give Einstein a pencil and a paper and a chair and a table. He will fire a couple of neurons in his brain and say a radical theory that the matter and energy are one and the same and that they are interchangeable. As though he was the incarnation of the God himself, he would start theorizing the rules and regulations that govern the movement and functioning of various celestial bodies that are millions of light years away from his chair in New Jersey! His brain might be now floating in a jar of formaldehyde in Missouri city, but where the heaven was his MIND?!

Orchestral music is one of the greatest contribution of the minds of the westerners. Indian classical music, be it carnatic or hindustani, has always encouraged the imagination of the mind to pour out extempore, like a spontaneous volcanic eruption on the stage. This is evidenced by the weightage that has been given to originality and spontaneous creativity on stage during alapanai (ragam elaboration), sangadhis (singing the same line in different tunes), niraval (singing the critical line of a krithi in different tunes, with lot of emotional appeal), kalapana swaram and lastly in thani avardhanam for the percussionists.

On the other hand the orchestral music of the westernists is a well planned one. There might be hundreds of musicians in the orchestra. Each of them play the notes that is given to them. Unlike the Indian classical music, it needs a lot of rehearsal and they have several practice sessions before going on the stage. There is creativity involved in western music too, but it is not spontaneous. The composer creates the tune sitting in a serene atmosphere, and it is brought to the public by the orchestra, with a complete suppression of any effort for individual creativity.

One of the greatest achievement of Illayaraja is that he appropriately used the best of the western and eastern classicism. To wield a huge orchestra is no joke. In many of his carnatic songs he has shown an uncanny skill in organising the orchestral music with a classical splendour.

**Vasantha** is a fantastic ragam. It is a popular janyam of the unpopular melam Suryakaantham (17th). Its arohanam and avarohanam are Sa Ma1 Ga3 Ma1 Da2 Ni3 Sa; Sa Ni3 Da2 Ma1 Ga3 Ri1 Sa. While traditionally it is believed that Boopalam is the ragam suitable for the dawn, Vasantha is the ragam suitable for the dusk. So, no wonder Illayaraja used this ragam for a duet which talks about the rain pouring during the dusk! "Andhi mazhai pozhigi- radhu" is a great song in the movie rajapaarvai. Kamalhasan sings this song with Madhavi. It is one of those early songs that showed the full fervency of Illayaraja's mind for creativity. The classical orchestral grandeur of this song was unbelievable at that time. I distinctly remember hearing this song for the first time in "Oliyum Oliyum" in Madras Doordarshan. Those days we were living in the Telephone quarters in Kilpauk, Madras. Since we did not have a TV, we used to go to our neighbour's house. They had a merciless "hundiyal" right at the door, which demanded 25 paise for each program! Well, getting to see songs like "andhi mazhai" for just 25 paise was definitely worth the money!

Illayaraja starts the song with a prelude of "pop pop pop pobopopo" by the chorus. The sudhdha
madhyamam in Vasantha has served as the starting point for many classical krithis. Illayaraja too starts his "pop pop" in the madyamam like "Ma Ma Ma Ma Ga Ma Da". Classically, the transition from Ma to Da is not a straight one. There is a subtle Ni in between. That is, when the musicians say Da they go all the way to Ni and then drop down to the daivatham. Illayaraja starts the pallavi "andhi mazhai" like Ma Ma Ma, Ga Ma Da Ma Ga, Ga Ma Da Ma Ga Ma Ga Ri, Ma Ga Ga Ri Ri Sa. It is a beautiful start. All the hidden melody in the swaras of Vasantha are extracted in the pallavi itself. Even in the charanam his mind seems to be bent upon extracting all the melody in the Ga Ma Da transition. He starts the charanam like Ga Ma Da Ma, Ga Ma Da Ma, and the tune lingers there for a while!

This song also marked the early classics of Vairamuthu. His lyrics became a controversy too, in this song. He writes:

Andhi mazhai pozhigiradhu
Ovvoru thuliyilum un mugam therigiradhu...
Indhiran thottathu mundhiriyae
Ragasiya rathiri puththagamae....

Look, the hero who sings this song is a blind man in the movie! How can he see the heroine's face in each of those beautiful rain drops?! Perhaps that is what defines a poet's world. Physical defects get nullified in their world of fantasy! But, surely Vairamuthu got into trouble when he called the heroine as "the cashew nut of Lord Indira's garden"! Basically he means to say that the heroine is like a kind of sex bomb to the hero! She is the bible that the hero reads in the night! That is understandable. But what does this cashewnut stuff mean? Lord Indira is not known for romantic deeds like Manmadhan! Just for matching the alliteration of the words he made a senseless statement. (Recently Vaali got into trouble when he said "inji iduppazhaga" in thevar magan. Sure that ginger has got all degrees of sharp bends in its structure, but what has it got to do with the hero's hip!)

In Demolition Man, Sandra Bullock may feel very much disgust-ed about what she calls as "biological transfer of fluids". But look how Vairamuthu characterises the feelings love creates during the youthful period of fantasy. He says "dreams torture", "eyelids weigh heavily", "it is like suturing a thorn inside the eye" and so on....

Illayaraja made T.V.Gopalakrishnan sing in the second interlude of this song. A short piece of Vasantha. (Earlier he had made him sing a short piece of Keeravani in "idhu oru nila kaalam" in Tick Tick Tick). There are few classical people who have tried the orchestral expedition of carnatic music. I remember the recordings of Y.M.Kamasastri often played in the radio long time ago. Invariably he would pick up a rare vivadhi ragam for his explorat-ion and have his orchestra play it. Albeit high technical quality, those recordings were not very much enjoyable. I would dare say that Illayaraja was the first guy who could appropriately use the orchestral music in a very "enjoyable" way. Later he got so much used to composing a tune for his orchestra that he started doing everything in his mind. That is an unbelieviable state of knowledge. When the song goes like Ma Ma Ma Ga Ma Da Ma Ga, the background violin may be going like Da Ni Sa Ga Ri Sa in the upper octave. The chorus might be traversing in the Da Ni of the lower octave. The guitar chords might be vibrating in the F major area! If you could figure out that all these individual musical events would unify in a perfect harmony to give a
superb Vasantha melody, just by imagining in your mind, then is it not a great task?! Where the heaven is this enigmatic MIND?
Illayaraja has given three more Vasantha songs.

Man kandaen man kandaen in Rajarishi is a equally classical song . It has been sung by K.J. Yesudoss and Vani Jayaram. The song goes like Sa Sa Ni Sa Ni Da Ni, Sa Sa Ni Sa Ni Da Ni, Sa Sa Ni Ri...Sa. The second interlude is especially good. Pulamaipuththan has written this song. In the charanam he writes "kaatrauckum ull moochu vaangum"! That is, when the thalaivan and thalaivi embrace each other during love, they would do it so tightly that even the wind that got caught between their bodies would feel breathless! This kind of personifying the pancha boothams and writing poetry like "fire itself would feel very hot" "wind itself would feel breathless" was started by thiruvaalar Vairamuthu! Pulaimaipiththan too, seems to have changed his style to suit the modern trend. There is a short piece of Vasantha in the ragamalika song in unnal mudiyum thambi. Enna samayalo starts with Mohanam. Then it is followed by Vasantha (ragam vasantha, naan rusithu parka rasam thaaa..), Kalyani and lastly Madhyamavathi (ilayai podadi). Recently he has tried Vasantha in a half boiled way in Paatu paadava. The song starts like "nil nil nil". It is a very different tune. But unfortunately, these good songs seem to have got lost before the incredible power of Rahman, like the local "super 501 bar" soap in Thamizhnadu got lost to the "national" washing powder Nirma!

**Hamsanandhi** is one of the popular janyams of the unpopular 53rd melam Gamana- chramam (the prathimadhyamam of Suryakaantham). The other popular janyam of Gamanachramam is Poorvi Kalyani. I don't know if there are any cinema songs in Poorvi Kalyani. But there are a lot of songs in Hamsanandhi. Illayaraja has used this ragam both for happy and sad occasions. Probably his first song in this ragam came in Rajni's Thanga magan. Rathiriyil poothirukum is a great song. The orchestral music is lilting. The song has been sung by the evergreen pair S.P.B and Janaki. Look at the classic "briha" (rapid vocal journey between multiple swaras in a split second) involving Ni Sa Ri Sa Ri when they sing "rathiriyi!" Pulamaipiththan has written this song too. One of his imagination in this song is ultimate! He says in the pallavi "pagalum urangidum rathiriyil.." Is it not a great idea to qualify the night as the time in which "even the day sleeps"! There is one superb Hamsanandhi in salangai oli. Vedam anuvilum oru naadam is the last song in (the climax) of the movie. It is a crucial song because Kamal dies during this song. The recording scale seems to be very high, S.P.B starting in the thara sthayi gandaram. The other Hamsanandhi songs are vanam niram maarum (davani kanavugal), aeradha mayil maalae (?needhiku dhandanai), o poo manae (iniya uravu poothadhu), raga dheebam aetrum neram (payanangal mudivadhilai). Needless to say there is a great masterpiece by an earlier music director (kaalayum neeyae by A.M.Raja).

Hamsanandi is the panchama varjaya ragam of Gamanachramam (ie., having all the swaras except Pa). Cinema music directors tend to use a lot of Ma1 in Hamsanandhi. The introduction of sudden Ma1 gives a great change to the tune. In kaalayum neeyae, A.M.Raja introduces a beautiful Ma1 when he sings 'katrum neeyae'. Illayaraja does the same treatment to the ragam when the charanam goes like "vazhai ilai neerthelithu" in rathiriyil. This kind of use of double madhyamam makes a great change to the tune! Recently he has also given a song in Gamanachramam. That song comes in the movie Vadhiyar veetu pillai (sathyaraj). The song is "hei oru poonjolai". It is a great song. One ragam before the order of Gamanachramam in the melakartha scale (ie., 52nd) is the ragam Ramapriya. Illayaraja
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has given a marvelous Ramapriya in the movie Moga mull. The song is "kamalam paadha kamalam", sung by K.J.Yesudoss. It is like a mini-katcheri in cinema! No wonder he gave such a pure Ramapriya because the hero is a carnatic vocalist in the movie. It is so unfortunate that such kind of "gems" go unnoticed because of the failure of the movie.

Now they say that Illayaraja makes a tune in just a matter of few minutes. He writes the tune not only for the song, but for the entire orchestra in just a matter of few minutes! He doesn't seem to follow the primitive way of playing his tunes in the harmonium and seeing how it sounds. He seems to hear the tune in his "mind". It is amazing how these minds in the creative industry could be used in such an intelligent and time efficient manner. The creation of good tunes by Illayaraja's mind could have been only a secondary act to fulfill its primary intent of aggrandizement by demanding 6 lakhs for each movie. Poor Ramanujam's mind might not have even got a penny for all those giant leaps in mathematics that it made. The reality is that it is the benefaction by these great minds in the intellectual and scientific fronts that keep the society functioning between yugas.

Coming back to the age old question "where the heaven is this MIND"? There are some people who believe that the mind doesn't exist in the brain. Maybe it is an extracranial entity. May be it surrounds the head like an electro magnetic field surrounding a magnet. Perhaps the "once upon a time" unrealistic halo around the head of Lord Buddha in my state board history book only referred to his mind! Then, P.V.Narasimha Rao, T.N.Seshan, Cho. Ramaswamy and their other (bald) kind would have a bigger halo, as more mind is likely radiate through their unprotected head!

Classical Illayaraja - 11

V.G.Pannerdass has got an experimental animal in his V.G.P Golden Beach near Madras! That is his "goorka". He pays that watchman only to stand near the gate with an expressionless face. Whatever the passersby do, he would stand there with the same old expressionless face! Let Kamalhasan do all the "seshtai" that he does in the last scene of moonrampirai, the VGP goorka's mask like face would show neither happiness nor sadness! He'd neither cry nor laugh. The VGP management is so proud of this guy that it is even ready to bet a hefty prize money if that would motivate somebody to make this guy cry or laugh. I cannot help wondering at VGP's morbid taste in having this kind of a person at their gate.

Now, can we consider the usage of ragas to make this person change his emotions? If Illayaraja goes before this person and sings his valli song (enna enna kanavu) or payanangal mudivadhilai song (vaigarayil) in subapan- thuvarali ragam, would it make his affect sad? It perhaps would, because some of the ragas indeed have a powerful negative effect on one's affect, causing him to go to the lows! Let SPB go before this person and sing his mayuri song (idhu oru mananaatiya medai) in the ragam Brindavana Saranga, or L.Vaidyanathan sing his "veenayadi nee enaku" (aezhavadu manidhan) in Kalyani, would it make his affect happy? It perhaps would, because some ragas indeed have a very powerful positive effect on one's affect, causing him to go to the highs! (This is what music therapy basically aims at, right?). Now, the question is, are there any ragas that can really make this person laugh or atleast to open his pursed lips and give a smile ?!
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The human species is very conceited that only it can laugh! It has concluded that the sense of humour is an essential human quality. Maybe, during the innumerable years of evolution, it is the only species that has somehow successfully learnt to expressively manifest its inner humourous feelings. Just because the animals do not widely open their mouth and laugh (as many of us do often, much to the disgust of our neighbours!), the old ancestral members of our species seem to have concluded that the animals do not have any sense of humour. I atleast know of one another species that can express its humour well! Buy a pocket of "kadalamittai" and start ascending the stairs of Trichi malaikotai to have Lord Ganesha's darshan. Those garrulous monkeys 'gumbal' there will stealthly follow you and at one oppurtune moment "rag" you and snatch away your kadalamittai with a swift agile attack! While they recede away from you (or rather you recede away from them) the victims report noticing a kinda derisive laughter by the monkeys! Anyway, if ragas can cause sadness and crying, can it also cause a person to laugh!

Music directors often face this challenge, when directors tell them a comical situation in their movie and ask for a tune. M.S.Viswanathan has done a fantastic job in the movie "balae pandiya". The song is "neeyae enaku enrum". MSV tuned that song in chaste Sudha Danyasi. The situation of that song is a very comical one, Sivaji Ganesan and first class actor M.R.Radha vying with each other in their jest. The lyrics too is quite comical. But, the question is, does the Sudha Danyasi ragam of the song have an element of humour in it! Probably not.

Ilayaraja too has used pure classical ragas to suit humourous situations. In "thambiku endha ooru", Madhavi is a city girl. Hero Rajini is a country brute! Madhavi happens to come to Rajini's village once. And now, even a small "paapa" with a rubber nipple in its mouth will tell the rest of the story: Rajini will sing a song critisizing Madhavi, Madhavi will get irritated, then she will fight with Rajini and vice versa, and when the villain comes, both of them will start loving each other and finally, the extras in police dress will come and arrest the villain....! Can you try to guess what ragam Ilayaraja has used for the comical song! Arabhi!

**Arabhi** is a Sankarabharanam janyam. Its arohanam and avarohanam are Sa Ri2 Ma1 Pa Da2 Sa; Sa Ni3 Da2 Pa Ma Ga3 Ri2 Sa. It is a very pleasant ragam. It is closely related (sanchara-wise) to Devakandhari. There are no cinema songs in Devakandhari. But, in the pre-Illayaraja period we have got one Arabhi song. That is "aerikarai melae". I guess it has been tuned by the then giant K.V.Mahadevan. T.M.S starts the song in his "ganeer" voice in the madhyama shayi dhaivatham. Illayaraja's first Arabhi song is "aasai kiliyae arai kilo puliyae.."

Malaysia Vasudevan has sung this song. He is one of the best singers of our time, who has been appropriately used only by Illayaraja. Malaysia does not seem to have got any proper training in classical music. His voice is like a resume with record of BA (history) from Madras University and 2 months of computer training in NIIT! If you give it to a proper body- shopper it will come to California. Otherwise it will just go to teach 7th standard history text in Madras Corporation school! (Thou shall not take offence, dear resume!) Like Rahman uses the "thagara dappa" voice of Suresh Peters wonderfully and sells it, Illayaraja has used Malaysia's unpolished voice excellently in many of his highly classical songs. Aasai kiliyae is one such instance....The song starts like this Ma Pa Da Sa, Da Sa Da Pa, Pa Pa Da Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa Ri, Ri Ma Pa Da Da Pa Da Sa....It is a fantastic song, giving all
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the raga-lakshanam of Aarabi in a very pure form. Even though the avarohanam of Aarabi just lists all the swaras of Sankarabaranam plainly, there is a specific way by which you got to use those swaras to make it sound Aarabi. The temporal duration (karvai) of Ma is usually protracted while the gandaram is just touched upon very rapidly. Thus Ma Ga Ri Sa is sung like Ma....GaRi Sa. Also, we can practically omit the usage of nishadam and the ragam would still be unblemished. Illayaraja has not used Ni in this song. The lyrics of this song is funny.

Aasai kiliyae arai kilo puliyae
aazhugina thakkaliyae...
Maeyura kozhi ellam aaguradhu kariyae
adiyae en arumai thavakalayae...

If the hero taunts the heroine by calling her as "spoiled tomato" then it is understandable. When the hero calls her as "half kg of tamarind", what does it mean? But, that is how the song goes.... Now, lately Illayaraja has given two more Aarabi songs. One song goes like "mannavanae mannavanae manasukaetha thennavanae". I think it is a Vijayakanth movie song. The song has been sung by SPB and Janaki. It has used Ni in this song. The last Aarabi that he has given comes in the movie pudhupatti ponnuthayee. The song is "madhurai vaazhum meenakshiye". This is also an unbelievably classic song sung by K.J.Yesudoss and Janaki. One can very easily learn Aarabi with the help of these cinema songs! But, does Arabi have an element of humour? Probably not.

Carnatic music is like Choolaimedu 24 hours polyclinic in Madras. You go there with just symptoms of common cold. But the Doctor there (who has not yet cleared the subjects that he failed in final MBBS) has lots of surprises for you. He says that you are very week and almost coerce you to have the supposedly invigorating 5% glucose drip (which hardly has a total of 25 gm of glucose in it!). Carnatic music has got lot more surprises to give you than this Doc! There is a ragam which has got the same arohanam and avaro- hanam as Aarabi (Sa Ri Ma Pa Da Sa; Sa Da Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa; Since we can sing Aarabi without using Ni, we can say so) The ragam is Sama, another janyam of Sankarabaranam. Even though Aarabi and Sama are swara-wise identical, they are totally two different ragas sanchara wise. The differ- ence comes in the way we deal with the gandaram. In Aarabi, the Ga is just touched upon while we go from Ma to Ri. In Sama, we can be little more liberal (time-wise) with Ga. Also, there are certain special prayogams in Sama like Ma Pa Da Ma. So, these minute details make a drastic difference in these ragas.

MSV is the only one who has beautifully used this wonderful ragam, Sama in cinema. He has given two Samas. One is in the movie "Sirai". The story is a revolutionary plot characterizing the pathos of Lakshmi, an innocent rape victim. She is the wife of a Brahmin priest, Prasanna. After the rape the priest finds her repulsive, and she decides to go and live with the rapist (Rajesh)! In the first few scenes there is a song to portray the kind of love the priest and his wife have for each other. The song is "naan paadi kondae irupaen" in the ragam Sama. Oh, boy! What a song! What a classic Sama piece! Vani Jayaram has sung this song. The heroine says:

Sahityam naanaga, Sangeetham neeyaaga
naal thorum isai archanai...
en paadal nee kaetka un kangal enai paarka

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How beautifully the poet (?)Kannadasan) has written about their love. Later, after the rape, the hypocrisy of the hero’s love gets fully exposed. Very rarely, we get to see such classic song, classically acted and classically picturised (director: R.C.Shakthi). The second Sama that MSV has given is "mownathil vilayadum manasakshiyae.." (?)Nool Veli) This song has been sung by Dr. M. Balamurali Krishna. It is a great song. These are all great contributions of MSV to Thamizh cinema music.

Recently, in the movie sathileelavathithere is a very humourous song. The song has been sung by Kamalhasan himself. This "marugo marugayee" is in the ragam Kaanada. Kaanada is a major gana ragam. It is probably now less sung in the katcheris than about a few decades ago (the popularity of a ragam seems to go through a cyclical change through years!) **Kaanada** is a janyam of Karaharapriya. Its arohanam and avarohanam are Sa Ri2 Ga2 Ma1 Pa Ma1 Da2 Ni2 Sa; Sa Ni2 Pa Ma1 Ga2 Ma1 Ri2 Sa. The key prayogam that gives Kaanada its identity is Pa Ma Ga Ma Ri Sa. Illayaraja has followed the grammer of this ragam sincerely in the pallavi and charanam. But the interlude music is not very good. Because, he used this ragam for a humourous situation, does it mean that it has an element of humour in it! Probably not.

Earlier, he used Kaanada in a very majestic way in the movie sindhubhairavi. The song is "poomalai vaangi vandhan". Jesudoss! With the drone of the Thamboora, and the usage of very minimal instruments, it is a fantastic song. Rahman has few Kaanada’s to his credit too. First, "vellai mazhai" in the movie roja. There is another number "kisu kisu nammakul kidayadhu" (manidha manidha). There is a liberal Ni3 in this song. Deva scored a Kaanada song too (thennamara thoppukullae kuyilae...? movie) Earlier, how can we forget the old gem "mullai malar melae" by the music directors of yesteryears. Dharbari Kaanada is closely related to Kaanada. While Kaanada is the janyam of the 22nd melam (Karaharapriya), Dharbari Kaanada is a janyam of the 20th melam (Nadabhairavi). Thus we use sudha daivatham (Da1) instead of Da2 (sathuchrathi daivatham) in **Darbari Kaanada**.

Illayaraja has a few songs in this ragam. The best example is "aagaya vennilavae" in the movie arangaetra velai. Uma Ramanan and Jayachandran (or ?Jesudoss). Uma Ramanan is another unfortunate singer (like Malaysia). Only Illayaraja has exploited her marvellous voice to the maximum capacity. Recently he has used her in paatu paadava (nil nil nil; an half boiled Vasantha) and in pudhupatti ponnutheyee (oor urangum naerathilae; a superb Hindholam). Perhaps his first Darbari Kaanada is "isai medayil" (Illamai kalangal) sung by SPB and Janaki. There is another one in the movie ?mounam sammadham (kalyana thenila) by Jesudoss.

My brother tells me that there is a very good Darbari Kaanada song in that movie. And, it seems Illayaraja has done a very rich re-recording in that movie, mostly in Darbari Kaanada!

There is a song in the movie enga ooru paatukaaran in which (I presume) that our village hero "pasu nesan" Ramarajan milks his cow (the meaning of the song goes like that). I don't know if that scene was supposed to be comic in that movie, but since Ramarajan would have mostly come in his "touser", probably it was a comedy scene! Can you imagine what ragam Illagaraja has used to tune this song "azhagae nee perazhagi"? **Kunthalavarali**! Look at the selection of ragam! Kunthalavarali is
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a Karaharapriya janyam. Sa Ma Pa Da Ni Da Sa; Sa Ni Da Pa Ma Sa. He has used this ragam very beautifully in this song sung by SPB. Particularly the thara sthayi Sa Ma prayogas are very good (veerangalum dheerangalum...) Maatai paal karakaradhuku Kunthala- varali kaekudha! I don't know if there are any more kunthalavarali songs in cinema music.

Man is essentially a visual animal. He gets most of the information from the external world as a tremendous fund of visual input. The visual information interacts with his intellect and can cause all different kinds of emotions. Just look at the "heart-wrecking" scene of an old thaatha accidentally walking on a banana skin and falling on the ground! It might be a real humourous scene! Just look at a self-assumed hero (trying to show film in front of a ladies hostel with his 2 stroke Kawasaki Bajaj!) skid and fall on the ground! It might be a real humourous scene. Strangely, just auditory input alone doesn't seem to have the capacity to evoke man's sense of humour! Sure that music can cause sadness and happiness. But, humour?! Recently, Music Television showed Beavis and Butt-head farting in public, with a fantastic "background" score! That music indeed seemed to be very humourous. But, if I had put off the TV and let my room-mates hear that "music" alone, I doubt if they would have at the least made a smile!

Classical Illayaraja - 12

In any religion, Gods seem to make their genesis in a very subtle way. Particularly, in Hinduism, the births of Gods and the appearance of temples in a region are so insidious. The onset invariably starts with a small stone or a rock under a neem tree turning holy (it is heaven's secret, how these stones are selected!). Sandal paste and "kunkum" appear on the stone shortly and a group of people start worshipping the stone. A cascade of events follow and a figurine appears there to replace the stone. The figurine might take any shape in the world, a huge "Phallus" like Lord Shiva, an elephant headed form like Lord Ganesha, a cow headed form like "Thumburu", a fierce looking lady like "Mariatha"...

Soon, a nomenclature comes into vogue to denote this newly born "God". It could be anything, a highly colloquial one like "vedi uppu Beerangisami" or a beautiful Sanskrit word imported from the Indus valley! As an appendage to the name, a story too, comes into vogue, to denote the relationship of this new "God" to the older Gods, like "Lord Shiva's uncle's son". Look at this place after 100 years...! No kidding, a grand temple has come into being there! Loud speakers are in eternal function, broadcasting divine songs by Seergazhi Govindarajan, L.R.Easwari, Veeramani! You may find some of our imbecile brotheren doing "anga pradarshanam" with their tongue bloody and impaled with a holy needle! Oh, mother Nature! When is this alarming increase in the population of Hindu gods going to stop (small "g" intentional)!

Carnatic ragas are like Hindu Gods. Their birth in this world is so subtle. A tune can be born from the harmonium of Illayaraja just in a matter of few minutes. But, ragas? Ragas encompass all the tunes in the world. A tune could be created by Illayaraja. But, ragas? Do ragas have creators? Ragas creep into "being" from amidst the masses. No single person creates a raga. Can any person in this world raise his hand and claim patency to the creation of Lord Shiva or Vishnu? The creation of gods is the result of a community effort! Similarly ragas are the unintentional creative result of the musical community. The creation of a raga is not bound by any time frame. It might take ages for the ragas to take form. The form of a ragam is not static. It keeps on changing with ages, like the present day Lord
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Ganesha sitting before the computer screen with sunglasses and dirty jeans! Remember seeing this form in your neighbour's kolu during Dasara festival? Really?!

**Thodi** is one of the greatest of the ragas. It is the 8th melakartha raga. We know that there are 72 mela ragas in carnatic music. These 72 melakartha ragas are divided into groups of six, according to the numerical order. Each of this group is called as a chakram. Thus we have a total of 12 chakrams. The first 6 chakrams (comprising 36 ragas) use suddha madhyamam and the later 6 chakrams (comprising 36 ragas) use the prathi madhyamam. Within each of the chakrams, all the 6 ragas will have the same poorvaanga swaras (ie., Sa Ri Ga Ma). The difference is only in the utharaanaga swaras (ie., Pa Da Ni Sa). Each chakram has got a name to denote it. The 2nd chakram is called as the Nethra chakram. Thodi is the 2nd raga in the Nethra chakram.

Has Illayaraja ever tried his hands on this great ragam? Yes! Just in one song alone so far. Was he successful? Perhaps not! The challenge that Lakshmi Parvathi poses to Chandra Babu Naidu is nothing when compared to the challenge that Thodi poses to the cinema music directors. If Illayaraja tuned a song in the Thodi scale (Sa Ri1 Ga2 Ma1 Pa Da1 Ni2 Sa), then it will sound like Sindhu Bhairavi! Because, just playing the notes of Thodi in the harmonium will only manifest the ragalakshanam of Sindhu Bhairavi (even though Sindhu Bhairavi has Ri2 in its arohanam, using Ri1 plainly without gamakam in the arohanam will be perfectly Sindhu Bhairavish).

Thodi and Sindhu Bhairavi are so closely related to each other, yet so different. The drastic difference is because of gamakam. But for Sa and Pa, all the other swaras of Thodi have aesthetically beautiful, terrific gamakam. So, to get Thodi raga out of Thodi scale, you've got to shake those swaras (Ri,Ga,Ma,Pa,Ni), like the way a Richter 8.0 earth quake shakes California once in a while! California residents may stay at home despite such shakes, but the cinema rasikas would simply leave the theatre at once, to "drink" beedi or cigarette, if the swaras started shaking in a cinema song!

Illayaraja's attempt came in the movie varusham padhinaaru. The song is "gangai karai mannanadi". It is pure Thodi. Within the constraints of tuning a cinema song, he has tried his best to give a proper Thodi, with all the gamakams. K.J.Jesudoss has sung that song. In the pallavi and charanam the "heavy" Thodi identity is quite clear. But, in the interlude music, the raga degenerates to a "lighter" status, Sindhu Bhairavi. In his Saramathi raga song, padariyaen padippariyaen (sindhu bhairavi movie), when Chitra sings "sonnadhu thappa thappa" he has introduced an unwarranted Thodi sangathi there. Why did he do that? Also, he had erroneously used Da Pa Ma (like Marga Hindolam), in Saramathi. When the movie was released, Ananda Vikatan made a big issue about these gramatical mistakes in that song, and even interviewed vocalist Dr.S.Ramanathan regarding this matter!

One of my friends said that he heard Ceylon Radio identifying the ragam of "akkam pakkam parada" (unnal mudiyum thambi), as Thodi! What a joke! Sindhu Bhairavi raga is like potato curry. My wife can cook it, your wife can cook it, all wives can cook it! Illayaraja has cooked it many times, from mani osai kaetu (payanangal mudivadhillai) to maniyae manikuyilae (nadodi thendral). Akkam pakkam is one such Sindhu Bhairavi cooking! Let us not praise our wife as excellent for this potato curry, which doesn't need any skill to cook!
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Thodi is unique among the 6 Nethra chakra ragas. Even though these ragas share the same Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa, look at the way the gamakam of Ri,Ga, Ma has evolved so specially for Thodi! Denuka is the immediate next ragam to Thodi (the 9th melam). In his Denuka krithi "thelliyaledu rama", Thyagaraja swamy has preferred to use these swaras plainly without much gamakam, like in Sindhu Bhairavi ragam! How did these adjacent ragas evolve so differently from each other? Can we question the Ganesh getting an elephant face, and the Kumeresh getting a beautiful human face, in the differential evolution of the sibling gods?!

I know of a song in which Illayaraja has used the Denuka scale. The song is aen soga kadhaya kaelu (thooral ninnu poachu). He predominantly uses Ni3 in this song (like in Denuka) and occasionally Ni2 (like in Thodi). The next raga to Denuka (the 10th ragam) is natakapriya. Recently I happened to listen to one superb Natakapriya song tuned by Illaya- raja! It came as a pleasant surprise in the movie moga mull. The song is "nenja gurunadhanin"! It is a lovely song! The situation is similar to the one in sindhu bhairavi, where distraught hero Shivakumar, begs for alcohol and sings the song "thanni thotti thedi".

In moga mull, the hero Rajam is a music student. He gets a chance to perform in the house occasion of a local big shot. He refuses that chance. Later, his guru (Nedumudi Venu) falls sick and needs lot of money for hospitalisation. So, the hero becomes a victim of circumstance and is forced to go to that big shot for monitary help. The villain makes the hero sing in his house when there is no occasion. All his friends form a crowd and sit before the hero. While he sings, the insensitive audience talks aloud, giggles, and humiliates the hero in all possible ways. The song is "nenjai gate sadhanin" in the ragam Natakapriya. Arun mozhi has sung this song. Fantastic job! I have heard a classic krithi "geetha vadhya" in this ragam. If I remember correct, the Ri,Ga, Ma had been handled like in Thodi (with gamakam) in that krithi. Illayaraja has used plain swaras in this song. But, even then it is very classical and the raga identity is quite clear. Oh, what a pathetic situation it is, to be in a financially needy state, and to unwillingly sell one's music skill to a shameless crowd that is absolutely deaf to music! That scene only reminded me of the nowadays very popular marriage reception katcheris! Amidst the total chaotic environment of maamis (talking about their jewelry), maamas (talking about their gas trouble) and kids (playing with water gun), the musician has to sing! Often the musicians eyes will be tightly shut up, feigning full engrossment in his music!

To get the prathi madhyama ragam of any sudhdha madhyama ragam, just add 36 to the order of the ragam! The prathi madhyamam of Thodi (8th) is the 44th melakartha ragam. It is Bhavapriya. Illayaraja has tuned a song in this scale too. That is kandhu pudichaen (guru sishyan) song. The upper half of this ragam will be like Shanmukhapriya, and the lower half like Subhapanthuvarali. Reportedly, some big shot (Sudha Raghunathan or some- body) told about this song in the TV (Doordarshan). It seems that they wondered how Illayaraja could use this ragam (normally implying sad mood) to suit a situation in which Prabhu humours Rajni about his new, clandestine love affair with Gowthami! Can we dare call this song as set in the ragam Bhavapriya? I don't know. But, it is definitely an appreciable thing to notice him venturing into unchartered areas in scale selection, say like Bhavapriya. Those mothers living in squalor in the Nungambakam railway station might not have any idea about "naalanaavuku moonu samacharam" and might populate the station with their innumerable
underweight kids! That is bad for India! As a mother, even Thodi doesn't seem to have any idea about family planning! But, that has turned out to be good to the musical heritage of India! Oh boy, how many kids (janya ragas) has it given birth to! Most of the janya ragas of Thodi are hardcore classic ragas. The trinity seem to have enjoyed very much, composing in Thodi and its janya ragas. One of its prime janyam is Dhanyasi. Sa Ga Ma Pa Ni Sa; Sa Ni Da Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa. Probably these ragas can never be made light and presented to the common rasika!

Illayaraja used one of the Thyagaraja krithi in Dhanyasi in the movie moga mull. Again, the situation is similar to sindhu bhairavi, where Shivakumar goes to a katcheri and takes over the singing of the musician on the dais. Illayaraja used the Thyagaraja krithi "lochana" In the ragam Dharbar to indicate the kind of musical talent that Shivakumar has (despite loosing his sobriety). In moga mull, a drunken musician gets on the stage and sings with a lot of abhaswaram. The hero gets on the stage and then sings "sangeetha gnanamu bhakthi vina" in Dhanyasi. K.J.Jesudoss has sung that song in the movie.

Sudha Dhanyasi is another janyam of Thodi ragam. Sa Ga Ma Pa Ni Sa; Sa Ni Pa Ma Ga Sa. You can also (more appropriately) call it as a janyam of Nadabhairavi. Illayaraja has been very generous in using this scale. MSV made an indelible mark in this ragam earlier by presenting "neeyae unaku enrum nigaraanavan" in balae pandiya. That is really fantastic! He has wonderfully used the Ga and Ni with gamakam in the song. Illayaraja's first Sudha Dhanyasi is perhaps siru ponmani in kallukul eeram. Later he gave ragavanae (illamai kaalangal), pudhiya poovidhu (thendralae ennai thodu) poojaikaetha poovidhu (?movie), vizhiyi vzhundhu (alaigal oivadhillai), theem thanana (?enakkul oruvan), manasu mayangum (sippikul muthu), masi maasam (dhamadurai), nanjai undu punjai (unnal mudiyum thambi), kotti kidakudhu (theertha karaiyinilae), kadal vanilae (rasayya), unnai edhir parthaen (vanaja girija). In many of these songs he uses other swaras like Ri2 etc., and hence cannot be called as pure form. In nanjai undu, he has not used any foreign notes. Then is it classical ragam? No! K.Balachandar (a boot licker to Illayaraja at that time, so that he could sell the movie by publicizing Illayaraja's name), made a big argument in the movie that even "nanjai undu punjai" was a pure Sudha Dhanyasi. Dear sir, to call something as classical, you should present it in a real classical form! Just going up and down the scale wouldn't make the raga form appear in that tune! Use the gamakam, use the nuances of the raga, then even Semmangudi will call it as Sudha Dhanyasi!

If one changed the kaisiki nishadham (Ni2) of Sudha Dhanyasi to kaakali nishadham (Ni3), then is there any ragam like that? If so, what is it called as? Illayaraja has given a couple of songs in this type of scale. One of them came in the movie poonthotta kavalkaran. Radhika gets pregnant and then the song goes in the background! I have read in my school biology class (with lot of curiosity!) that a sperm and an ovum "join" to form a baby! Look at the way the poet says about this scientific phenomenon in his poetic language.... Sindhiya vennmani sippiyil muthaachu!! What a nice euphemistic way of saying a vulgar thing! Gangei Amaran proved himself as a poet in that song! Illayaraja's tune is so wonderful in that song. It is so melodious. Vijayakanth specifically said about this song in one of his TV interviews! Another song that I know in this scale is "o vasantha raja" in neengal kaetavai.
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A.R.Rahman is the number one copier in the world. My friend is very much convinced on this matter. He called A.R.Rahman as a mammoth recycling bin that takes its own previously tuned songs and polishes it and presents it in a different form. How dare he copy the great "kowsalya supraja" tune and use it as the interlude music in "margazhi poovae" (may maadham). My friend boils with anger. How dare the freshmen music director of the movie meendum savithri (Ravi Devendran) copy the interlude of margazhi poovae (which is itself a copied bit from kowsalya supraja) and present it in his song. A chain of copying! My friend has lost his peace and is now a terribly agitated individual. His head is hot with anger!

Is it correct to call the flute interlude in "margazhi poovae" as a copy of kausalya supraja? A.R. Rahman has tuned his margazhi poovae in the ragam Hindholam. Subbulakshmi's Kausalya supraja is in the ragam Sudha Saveri. If Rahman indeed copied willfully, how could he present a Sudha Saveri tune in a Hindholam song?

The concept of Sruthi is very illusory. We know that if we sounded a note with any frequency (X) and another note twice its frequency (2X), then there is an entire octave between these two notes. Be X = 1 hertz, and 2X = 2 hertz, or be X = 100,000 hertz and 2X = 200,000 Hz, there is one and only one octave in between these two respective sets of notes. Thus we will have an entire Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Da Ni Sa between these notes. So, you can take any frequency (Sa) and play the 2X frequency of that fundamental frequency (upper Sa) and make a shruthi. Additionally if you played X x 2 * 7/12 (read this as X times 2 to the power 7/12) with X and 2X, then, you are adding the panchamam to the two Sa's and you get panchama shruthi. Instead, if you played X x 2 * 5/12 (X times 2 to the power 5/12), you are adding madhyamam to the two Sa's and it is called as the madhyama shruthi.

Shruthi forms the territorial boundaries in music. Any swara derives its identity only with reference to the shruthi. A single note when played alone is probably meaningless in classical music without the Shruthi. Shruthi by itself is pleasant music. In katcheris you may often see somebody sitting on the stage and playing the thambura. The thambura just gives the Sa Pa Sa notes to the Katcheri. That is the SHRUTHI!! Illayaraja has many times just used the Sa Pa Sa shruthi as the background score in cinemas and lilted the audience by the magical effect of the SHRUTHI!! Rahman also has used the drone of the Shruthi conspicuously in many of his songs and added great melody to the songs (eg: the panthuvarali song in Rangeela sung by Swarana Latha and Udit Narayan. What a classical piece!!)

The swaras of Sudha Saveri are: Sa Ri2 Ma1 Pa Da2 Sa; Sa Da2 Pa Ma1 Ri2 Sa. If we played Kausalya Supraja the tune goes like this: Sa Ri Ri (kausalaya) Sa Ri Ri (supraja), Sa Ri Sa Ri (Rama poorva), Sa Ri Ri Sa Ri Sa Sa (Sandhya pravarthadhae). The above swaras have meanings only within their respective Shruthi. If you viewed these notes from within the boundaries of a different musical territory, then it might have a different meaning. What if you viewed these notes from the reference shruthi of “Ri2-Da2-Ri2”?! The ragam might change totally. It is like Pandiyarajan and S.V.Sekhar travelling overnight and going to Kerala in Kadhanayanak!! Though Thamizhnadu and Kerala are adjacent states, words might have totally opposite meanings there! If a Thamizh doctor prescribed a sleeping pill to a Malayalee and told him "ee guligai ravilae kazhicho!", he will be in trouble. Because, "ravilae" means night in Thamizh and morning in Malayalam! See how different the meanings are?!
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What A.R.Rahman has done is, he has skillfully "copied" the Sudha Saveri swaras and transliterated it into Hindholam as Ga2 Ma1 Ma1, Ga2 Ma1 Ga2 Ma1 and so on. We don't know if he purported to copy or if it was a strange co-incidence. But, the fact is that a Coke can got recycled and came back to us as a Pepsi can! Sometimes, Coke cans can get a new sticker on its face (with no shruthi change and stuff!) and can be sold as Goli soda locally. That has happened in the background rhythm guitar score in "kuluvaliyae" (Muthu) song. The same piece comes in Sister Act. Illayaraja too has got incriminated many times for such blatant similarity of his songs to other popular songs ("en purushan thaan enaku mattum thaan" in Gopurangal Saivadhillai was called as a copy of "dham maerae dham").

**Aandholika** is a pleasant janyam of Harikaambodi ragam. Its arohanam and avarohanam are Sa Ri2 Ma1 Pa Ni2 Sa; Sa Ni2 Da2 Ma1 Ri2 Sa. Thyagaraja swamy has got a terrific krithi in this ragam, which is mostly sung as a thukkada in Katcheris. The krithi is "raga sudha rasa". I have heard a story long ago. That Padma Subramaniam had a song tuned for her dance performance in this Ragam. At that time Illayaraja was in someway connected with Padma's troup to earn his daily bread (probably as a "mike" boy or something!). Then, later he became picked up by "Ms. Luck" after he made his debut in Panchu Arunachalam's film "Annakili". He had lot of chances flowing in his way then. Mullum malarum is a terrific movie. It must be within first 50 films of Illayaraja. He gave a great musical support to the director, Mahendran, tuning few totally unheard kinds of lilting tunes then. But, he also got his name spoiled in that movie because of "copying" Padma's Aandolika ragam tune.

The song is "raaman aandalum raavanan aandalum". That is a very crucial song in the movie. Rajni looses one of his arms in the climax of the song in an accident. The song is actually a tappanguthu. But, in the interlude of the song the chorus sings a bit which goes like "samiyai kumbitta namaku nalladhu thaan varumae". The tune is supposed to be in pure Aandholika (the same tune that Padma used in her Dance performance earlier). Reportedly she complained in some interview about how Illayaraja had "copied" her tune. We know that music directors like Illayaraja and Rahman have got very fertile mind and they have proved it by generation of wonderful tunes. The judgement that these eminent people copied other people's work cannot be passed so easily. It is in the innermost conscience of these personalities that the secret dwells if they are felon or not. Perhaps, it can never be known to the outside world unless they frankly admit like Anand Milind ("yes, we are fans of Illayaraja, we do use his tunes in our songs")!

**Madhyamaavathi** is a grand janya ragam of Karaharapriya. Perhaps it is the greatest of the pentatonic ragas (oudhuva oudhuva ragam). Its arohanam and avarohanam are: Sa Ri2 Ma1 Pa Ni2 Sa; Sa Ni2 Pa Ma1 Ri2 Sa. Illayaraja liked this ragam so much that he has atleast tuned 40 to 50 songs in this great ragam. Madhyamavathi is distinct among other pentatonic ragas. It is a very much gamaka oriented ragam. It is like the Thodi of janya ragas. You can just play the notes of the 45 melam (subhapanthuvvarali) in the harmonium and make the ragam evident. Similarly you can just play Sa Ri2 Ma2 Pa Ni3 Sa in the harmonium and make Hamsanadham ragam evident, but, you cannot get Madhyamavathi by just playing the notes in a plain "bland" way. You have to make the notes spicy! Gently make the Rishabham and Nishadham oscillate above their baseline frequency, there comes the unparalleled beauty, Ms. Madhyamaavathi!!

Illayaraja has tuned a great Madhyamavathi in Mullum malarum ("adipaennae"). I think the singer is
Jency. Each time I listen to this song it creates an inexplicable feeling in my mind. The song is so romantic, so sexy, so well sung that it directly stimulates some unknown erogenous zones in the psyche. Illayaraja has reasonably used the gamakas well. This was probably his second Madhyamavathi, the first one being "solaikuyilae" in Ponnuooruku pudhusu. Solaikuyilae starts like Pa Pa Ri Sa Ri.... A lofty jump from madhyama sthayi Pa to tharasthayi Rishabham. Maalaikadhirae goes like Sa Sa Ni Sa Ni.....Pa, such a prolonged nishadham. Most of the melody of this ragam resides with the Ri and Ni. The gamakam is absolutely important, period! Look at the beauty of Papanasam Sivan's opening in Madhyamavathi in "karpagamae kadai kann paarai" - Sa Ri Sa Ri.... Actually the gamakam of Ri encompasses the sadharana gandharam too. It is like RiGa, RiGa...!

Illayaraja's use of impeccable gamaka adorned Rishabam at the very opening of the song is too classic. It is like Krishnamachari Srikanth sending the first opening ball to the boundary!

Illayaraja has given few more Madhyamavathi's in quite pure form. En kalyana vaibhogam in the movie "azhagae unnai aradhikkiraen" is one early number. Sridhar's first venture with Illayaraja. Vani Jayaram has sung this song. Then, aagaya gangai in Dharma Uddham, nee thaanae endhan ponvasantham in Ninaivellam Nithiyya, thulli thulli nee padamma (Chiripikul muthu), thalattu pillai ena thaalalatu (?Achchani), thazham poovae vaasam veesu (Kai kodukum kai), kuyilae kuyilae poonguyilae (Aan paavam), anandam then sindhum (Man vasanai), azhagiya thirumagan (Rajarishi), eeramaana rojaavae (Illamai Kaalangal), kavithai paadu kuyilae (Thendralae Ennai Thodu), malargalil aadum illamai (kalayaraman), nee kaeta naan mataen (?movie) etc. A.R. Rahman has used small bits of Madhyamavathi in the interlude of his song "then then thithikkum then" (Thiruda thiruda). Some singer called Jadhiraaja has sung some fast swaras with pungent electric guitar sending shocks of Madhyamavathi vibrations with his voice! (I heard that Mr.Jadhiraaja is none other than Rahman himself!) Madhyamaavathi by earlier music directors include Ponnondru kandaen, Muthukkalo kangal, aagaya pandhalilae, etc. Can we forget the great presentation of Devarajan in Swamy Iyyapan "hariharatmajam viswamasrayae" sung by Jesudoss. It is a divine feast to listen to this slow song.

**Madhyamavathi** is supposed to be a Mangalakaramaana ragam. Traditionally when we end the katcheri, it is customary to end the katcheri in one of the three ragas: Madhyamavathi, Suruti, or Sowrashtram. Illayaraja used Madhyamavathi to end the song in one of his ragamaalika songs! enna samayalo in "Unnal Mudiyum Thambi". The song starts with mohanam and ends with Madhyamaavathi. When SPB sings "illayai podadi", Madhyamavathi starts. Of course, each of the raga change in that ragamalikai is made by the accompanying nadhaswaram.

If we change the kaisiki nishadham (Ni2) of madhyamavathi in the arohanam to kaakali nishadham (Ni3) then the raga form changes drastically. It is Brindhavana Saranga. It is a bhashangam because of double Nishadham. Sa Ri2 Ma1 Pa Ni3 Sa; Sa Ni2 Pa Ma1 Ri2 Sa. Some of Illayaraja's song in this ragam are fantastic. Poongatrae poongatrae (kunkumachimizh), kannukullae anbin eeram enna (unakaaga vazhgiraen) are both enthralling songs. I cannot forget how I used to tune to Coimbatore radio station between 10 to 11, Trichi - 1 to 2 PM, Madras - 4 to 5 in the mid 1980's to listen to these great songs. These Brindhavana Saranga's are as captivating as Subulakshmi's "Sriranga Pura Vihara" or Balamurali's "kamalaptakula". The later songs that he tuned in this raga are Penn onru thai aanadhu (Pudhiya Ragam) and indha jilla muzhuka nalla theriyum (Priyanka). Brindhavana Saranga
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by earlier music directors are Kattithanga rajavukku (?movie), thottillil thodangidum (nilavae malarue). In the latter song MSV has used double Nishadham in the arohanam itself (like Pa Ni2 Ni3 Sa)! It is one of the best songs that he has ever tuned, sung by Vani Jayaram.

Mullum Malarum has another fantastic song. Senthazham poovil is a kinda try in Bowli ragam (with lot of foreign notes in the interlude). Bowli is one of the early morning ragas. Other early morning ragas are Boopaalam, Revagupti, Malayamaarudham etc. When your cousin is getting married, you are very tired during the night of Janavaasam because you went out with your other cousins and had a "thanni" party and came back to the Kalyana chathiram only at 4 AM to sleep. You have hardly slept for 30 mts, and you hear the irritating Nadhaswaram vidhwan playing "pee pee" to wake up everybody. He is playing one of the above ragams! Boopalum is Thodi janyam: Sa Ri1 Ga2 Pa Da1 Sa; Sa Da1 Pa Ga2 Ri1 Sa. Bowli is Mayamalava Gowlai Janyam with Ga3 instead of Ga2 in Boopalum. I have heard of one good Bowli in the movie called as Kuzhandhai Yesu (kanna vaa, kanmani vaa). I don't know who is the music director. Recently I heard Illayaraja's another (probable) Bowli: Kozhikoovum naerathulae... (?)Movie. I don't remember the tune very well. But, the best Bowli came from T.Rajender. Salangai ittaal (Maidhili Ennai Kaadhali) was a tremendous success at that time. It is unfortunate that Rajender, a guy with full potency to challenge big time music directors, got lost in the political imbroglio, loosing his place in the cinema. He gave such a wonderful Kaapi ragam in his very first movie (idhu kuzhandhai paadum thaalaatu in Oru thalai Ragam), superb Gambeera Naatai in Pookkalai Parikaadheergal (kaadhal oorvalam ingae). Those are unforgettable tunes.

Madhyamaavathi is closely related Sriragam (Sa Ri2 Ma1 Pa Ni2 Sa; Sa Ni2 Pa Ma1 Ri2 Ga2 Ri2 Sa) and Manirangu (Sa Ri2 Ma1 Pa Ni2 Sa; Sa Ni2 Pa Ma1 Ga2 Ri2 Sa). There is one film song in Sriragam. Thoda thoda vaa mella has been tuned by Malayalam music director Ravindran. I think the movie is Rasikan oru rasikai. Two years ago, I heard another Sriragam song (andhi maalai) that has been exactly tuned in the tune of Thyagraja krithi Entharo mahaanu bavulu. That song was in a music album. I don't know who realised it. But do know that it was someway connected with Rahman. As far as I know, there is only one Manirangu song in cinema. Music director: Illayaraja! "Isai rajanae un illam veenai naanae" comes in Kanni Rasi (first film directed by Pandiyarajan). Malaysia Vasudevan has sung in two voices (his normal voice for Prabhu, and Chidambaram Jayaraman's voice for Janakaraj), accompanied by VaniJayaram. The fact that Illayaraja used such rare ragas during his carreer is a standing testimony to his classical interests.

Now, coming to the original discussion about shruthi, look what happens to our Madhyamavathi when you start viewing it from different angles. Increase the reference shruthi by two notes, i.e., Ri2-Da2-Ri2, then the raga changes to Hindholam. Increase by 5 notes, i.e., Ma1-Sa-Ma1, then the raga changes to Sudha Saveri, by 7 notes, i.e., Pa-Ri2-Pa, the raga changes to Sudha Dhanyasi, by 10 notes, i.e., Ni2-Ma1-Ni2, then you get Mohanam from the same swaras!! Is it not wonderful! It is like the same man being a son, brother, father, and as uncle to different people by virtue of different relationship.

Mohanam is a nice, melodious ragam. Illayaraja is a real Mohanapriyan. No other music director in India would have given so many Mohanam as him. Among his hundreds of Mohanam hits we have kannan oru kai kuzhandhai (Bhadrakali), geetham sangeetham (Kokkarako), malarue paesu
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(Geethanjali) vaan polae vannam (Salangai oli), kanmaniye kaadhal enbadhu (aaril irundhu arubadhu varai), poovil vandu (Kadhal oviyam), meenkodi theril (Karumbvil), naan oru ponnoviyam kandaen (movie), abc nee vaasi (Oru kaidiyin dairy), naan undhan thayaga vendum (Ullasa paravaigal), oru ragam paadalodu (Ananda ragam), nilavu thoongum naeram (Kunkumachimizh), aathodu kaathaaada (Murattu kaalai), ou thanga radhathil (Dharmayudham), kasthoori manae (Pudhumai penn), ninnukori varnam (Agninakshathiram), kaathirundhaen thaniyae (Rasamagan), idhayam oru kovil (idhayakovil), kukku koo koovum (Valli) etc. Some of the recent music directors seem to be handling Mohanam very well. Manamae thotta chinungi in Thotta chinungi is a great piece of Mohanam. Oh God! what a terrific rendition by Hariharan! He is an asset to Thamizh music industry. In kaadhal kottai, Deva has given two amazing Mohanams (vellarikka pinju vellarikka, I forgot the other one).

In katcheris, the shruthi is constantly vibrated either by the thamboora artist or the electronic shruthi. This reminds us the reference shruthi for that concert and we can identify a ragam with respect to that shruthi. But, in film music, where there is no background reminder of the shruthi, how can we identify the ragam correctly? As discussed above, it could be Madhyamavathi, Mohanam, Sudha Saveri, Hindholam, or Sudha Dhanyasi for the same swaras. And now comes the "nuances" or "ragalakshanam" issue! We can still identify by figuring out the kind of treatment that has been given to the swaras.

While you are singing in one particular shruthi, if you suddenly assume a different shruthi and sing the same swaras implying a different ragam, then it is called as shruthi-bedham. It is a highly scientific game that some musicians like T.N.Seshagopalan relish playing on the dais. He could sing Thodi and do a 1/2 kattai shruthi-bedham and make it sound like Kalyani. The Maestro has ingeniously tuned a song recently in which he suddenly assumes a different shruthi in the middle of the song. This is in vandhaal vandhal rajakumaari (Oru ooril oru rajaumaari). In the Piano prelude he clearly indicates the shruthi initially. He starts the song like Ga3 Ma1 Pa, Pa Pa, Pa Da2 Pa, Pa Da2 Pa, Pa Da2 Pa Da2 Pa Ma1 Ga3 Ri2 Ga3 Ma1 Ga3 Ri.....If you were to call this pallavi as a ragam you can call it as Sankarabharanam. It is pukka! In the interlude he follows the same opening shruthi. But, when the charanam starts, he suddenly raises the shruthi by 4 notes and assumes the previous Ga3 as the Pa and develops a wonderful Charukesi from there on. It is ecstatic to listen to this song again and again. Charukesi is the 26th melam with Sa Ri2 Ga3 Ma1 Pa Da1 Ni2 Sa. His other Charukesi are: amma nee sumandha (annai oru alayam), siriya paravai (Andha oru nimidam), aadal kalayae (Raghavendrar), thodhu selvadhaaradi (Singaravelan), chakkarakattiku chakkarakattiku (Ullea Veliyae), poovaagi kaayagi (movie), and manamaalayum manjalum (Vathiyaar veetu pillai).

Classical Illayaraja – 14

Illayaraja writes in his "nila adhu vaanathu maelae" song, "pasikkudhu pasikkudhu dhinam dhinam thaan, pusicha pasiyadhutha theerndhiduma?" Good question, boss! The hypothalamus in the brain is a "dhammathoondu" structure! You can place it on your nail top and squeeze it, like your grandmother used to squeeze the helpless lice from her hair! But, it is this "thammathoondu" structure that orchestrates the various vital functions of the body. When you have not eaten for a while, and when your blood sugar concentration falls, it is your hypothalamus that feels your hunger.
and instructs you to eat! When you've not drunk water for a while, and when your blood sodium rises (dehydration), it is this hypothalamus that senses it and drives you crazy to drink! But, Illayaraja tries to equate "hunger for food" to "hunger for sex and pleasure"! It is true that TTC bus driver gets free food at those unhygienic hotels in Thindivanam for bringing lots of customers and business for the hotel. Maybe, that is the reason why he eats three days worth of meal when he stops for those 20 minutes during your trip from Chennai to Srirangam! That is an unusual case. Most of us eat because our hypothalamus commands us to eat after sensing our low blood sugar concentrations! But, why does the lorry driver seek courtship in the shady towns of India during his long distance operation? Nothing decreases in his blood, making the hypothalamus "hungry for sex".

Illayaraja showed an abnormal choice of ragam (Reethigowlai) when he tuned "thalayai kuniyum" in Sridhar's oru odai nadhiyagiradhu. He had done that earlier in choosing the same ragam for his "chinnakannan azhaikiraan" in kavikkuyil, and then in tuning "raamanin kadhai kaelungal" in chippikkul muthu. It is a very easily identifiable, very classical janya ragam that was relished by composers like Thyagaraja. But, none in the cinema arena seems to have used it in the pre-Illayaraja period. In mid seventies, here comes the uneducated music director from Madhurai jilla.....! He tunes a couple of "tappanguthu" that marks his initial success! Within 2 to 3 years after his debut, he calls one of the most memorable geniuses of Carnatic music, Shri Balamurali Krishna to sing one cinema song for him. "Alright thambi" says Balamurali, and goes to the recording theatre..... Was Balamurali surprised initially when Illayaraja played the tune for him in his harmonium? If I were him, I would have been! First of all, out of the blue, why Reethigowlai? Why not the hackneyed Hindholam or Mohanam? This absolutely classical raga selection shows his desire to venture into pure, traditional ragas! It is like A.R.Rahman springing a surprise by tuning purely classical Yadhukula Kamboji interludes in kuluvaliyae (muthu)!

Reethigowlai is the janyam of Karaharapriya (22nd melam). It is a vakra ragam and hence with a convoluted arohanam and avarohanam. Sa Ga2 Ri2 Ga2 Ma1 Ni2 Da2 Ma1 Ni2 Sa; Sa Ni2 Da2 Ma1 Ga2 Ma1 Pa Ma1 Ga2 Ri2 Sa. Its raga lakshanam is so unique that it gets imprinted in our mind easily. Beginners in carnatic music identify Reethigowlai rather facilely and this gives great encouragement to venture into learning other ragas. The jubilance of identifying a raga by ourselves initially is unparalled and even a triple 800 score in GRE Pre-Test wouldn't make you that happy! Oh man, what a joy! In that aspect, Reethgowlai could be compared to a steroid shot to Ben Johnson! In all his three Reethigowlai songs Illayaraja presents the ragalakshanam excellently in a very concise 4 minute form.

He starts his kavikkuyil song as Sa Ga Ri Ga (chinnakannan) Ma Ni Ni Sa (azhaikiraan). He has just used the arohanam of Reethigowlai without any extraneous manipulation of the ragam. In his chippikul muthu song he goes like Sa Ga Ri Ga (raamanin) Ma Ma (kadhai) Ni Ni Sa (kaelungal). A very small variation to chinnakannan song. He made lakhs of rupees for the former and lakhs for the latter! That is why he often says in interviews "there are only seven notes in music. Musicians have made infinite number of songs only with those seven notes by cheating!". He is in a way right and in a way wrong. The above two songs are cheating of the first order. He has cheated less in thalayai kuniyum thamarayae where the pallavi goes like Da Ni Sa (thalayai) Ni Da Ma (kuniyum) Pa Ma Ga Ri Sa (thamarayae).
Carnatic Music in Tamil Film Songs

Music is not just the melodic manipulation of different discrete frequencies of the continuum of "energy" commonly called as the sound. It is much more than that. There is another important variable in good music. That is the TIME! If I sing Sa today and sing Ga tomorrow, and Ri day after tomorrow and so forth sing one by one note of Illayaraja's chinnakannan azhaiKiraaN in whatever period it takes to complete the song, will it still be good music? This tells us the importance of MIND in music! There is NO music out there in the physical world! It is all in our MIND! When different swaras are sung, it is the MIND that intelligently concatenates the swaras and sees it as music. It sees a musical quality that is in actuality non-existent in the frequencies of sound, and derives pleasure by listening to it! Following the same concept, the MIND derives "sexual pleasure" from the physical intercourse of two bodies, or "eating pleasure" from eating buttered pecan ice cream, when it is set for those appropriate moods. Behaviourally, the MIND seems to be a big pleasure seeker. Philosophically it seems to be the greatest fool in the world, constantly seeking the ephemeral, mundane pleasures that are never-the-less, virtual!

ReethigowlaI is in no way related to Gowlai, Mayamalavagowlai, Kedaragowlai or Narayanagowlai. It is indeed closely related to Ananda Bhairavi about which we have discussed in our earlier essays.

Other ragas that beginners start recognizing very easily in their journey through the vast empire of carnatic music are Sahana, Kanada, Atana, NataI, Gowlai, Anandha Bhairavi etc. All the above are vakra ragas. We have two popular songs in Sahana that had a tremendous impact on the common rasika. Parthaen sirithaen (mahakavi kaalidaas) and indha veenaik in rayil sneham. The former tuned by K.V.Mahadevan and latter by V.S.Narasimhan. I hear that there is a song "rukku rukku" in Sahana in ovvai shanmukhi. BTW, Sahana is a janyam of HarikaamoNbhiji (28th melam) with Sa Ri2 Ga3 Ma1 Pa Ma1 Da2 Ni2 Sa and Sa Ni2 Da2 Pa Ma1 Ga3 Ma1 Ri2 Ga3 Ri2 Sa. Strangely Illayaraja does not have any Sahana product from his industry! Atana is a janyam of Sankarabharanam (29th melam) with a complex swara sequence. It is a bhashanga ragam as it has a double Nishadham. K.V.Mahadevan gave a superb Atana in yaar tharuvaar indha ariyasanam (?veera abhimanyu). In salangai oli Illayaraja used balakanakamaya (Thaayagaiyer's Atana composition) in the scene when Manjubarghavi dances on the stage and Kamalahasan starts dancing in the kitchen (unable to control his inherent dance flow). Atana is a very brisk and "gambeeramaana ragam"!

ChalanaataI is the last (36th) melam in the suddha madhyama ragas and hence using 3rd Ri, Ga, Da, and Ni. Illayaraja is the only one who ever chose to use this rare ragam in cinema. The song is un paarvai oru varam in the movie ninaiveIIam nithiya. Sridhar directed that movie. Oh boy, Sridhar-Illayaraja combination has given several marvellous songs to Thamizh music! Vairamuthu's lyrics reached wonderful heights in that song. Illayaraja's use of this vivadhi ragam is very intelligent and guarded, avoiding any un melodious use of the vivadhi swaras. This song proved to be a terrific hit when compared to his use of the last (72nd) melam in the prathimadhama ragas, which is Rasikapriya. He used that ragam to tune sangeethamai in kovil pura. He starts his ChalanataI like Ga3 Ma1 Pa (unpaarvai) Ma1 Pa Ma1 Ri3 Sa (oru varam). Then he goes Ga3 Ga3 Ga3 Ri3 Ri3 Ri3 Ri3 (inivarum munivarum) Sa Sa Ri3 Ri3 Sa Sa Sa Sa (thadumarum kanimaram). A beautiful interplay of immediately adjacent vadadhi swaras with an unanticipated melody that is much more than you could bargain from using such ragas. In the charanam he starts using Da3 and Ni3. He starts the charanam like Sa Ni Sa Sa Pa (chelai moodum) Da Da Da Pa (illam cholaI) Sa Ni Sa Sa (maalai choodum) Ri Ri Ri Sa (malar maalai). The tune development is just excellent!
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I was in Srirangam when this movie was released (in early eighties). In the Vadakku uthirai veedhi sandhu, there was a guy called as "paaku cheeni". He was so crazy with this song that the cassette would be playing all the time in his house. While playing kabadi or cricket in the streets I used to get the benefit of listening to this lilting song for free, not knowing what a rare ragam it was! Look what Vairamuthu writes in that song:

Just being seen by you is a great boon;
even an ascetic to come in future would
loose his hold on celibacy on seeing you;
you are a tree bearing beautiful fruits (breasts)

You are a garden that wears sari
you are a flower that is worn by flowers
twenty moons would shine in your finger nails;
youthful dreams would bud in our eye corners
as our fingers play on each other,
as the distance between us decreases,
the glowing light would dim and our
eyes would close (in the ecstasy of love)

Oh man, what a language he has written! An unbelievable choice of words and thought in describing the beauty of a women. In a recent song (telephone manipol in Indhian), look how the poet describes the beauty of a women in modern terms incorporating the latest technological advances in his poetry!

Is she the one who laughs like a telephone bell
is she the one who is like a Melbourne flower
did lord Brahma use a computer to sketch her figure
has her voice been made up of digital signals
is she the latest cellular phone

A wonderful movie by Shankar with great songs by A.R.Rahman. I think the above song is by Vairamuthu. It is amazing how these poets get such novel ideas to describe a simple thing. Grandiosity seems to be an essential quality of a poet's mind.

Naatai is a janyam of Chalanaatai. The arohanam and avarohanam of Naatai are Sa Ri3 Ga3 Ma1 Pa Ni3 Sa and Sa Ni3 Pa Ma1 Ga3 Ma1 Ri3 Sa. Notice the vakram Ga3 Ma1 Ri3 Sa. Often singers sing Naatai like Chalanaatai using all the swaras. Ilayaraja used Muthuswamy Dikshidhar's Naatai krithi "maha- ganapathim" in the movie sindhubhairavi. Apart from that he has tuned one Naatai (peigalai nambadhae - a jolly song in mahanadhi). Only Kamal can make such daring pictures about paedophiles and sexual abuse of children. In the early part of the movie, "peigalai" song has been used to show what a happy family Kamal leads. It has become a common feature in India for the government to crumble to dust once in two years costing crores of tax-payer's rupees for re-election! People have gone immune to all these and they just seem to mind their own business (like finishing B Sc and then studying a crash course in C language programming at NIIT to become a "consultant" to

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come to the USA). Who cares if the government survives or falls! But, a "mahanadhi" viewer is left with tears rolling down the cheek and extreme sympathy for Kamal at the horrendous turn of events in his life (even though it is just a movie). Kudos, to Kamal!

Ilayaraja's use of Naatai for that song is quite a surprise. He has presented a pure Naatai in that song. Ga Ma Pa (peigalai) Pa Pa Pa (namba- dhae) Pa Ni Sa Ni (pinjilae) Pa Pa Pa (vembadhae). The song ends with S.Varalakshmi singing the tail piece. Gambeera Naatai is a pentatonic ragam where there is no vivadhi swaram. So, it is distinctly different from Chalanatai and Naatai. The aarohanam and avarohanam of Gambeera Naatai is Sa Ga3 Ma1 Pa Ni3 Sa and Sa Ni3 Pa Ma1 Ga3 Sa. You could call it as a janyam of Sankarabharanan or Chalanatai. Ilayaraja's innum enni ena seyya pogiraa in singaravelan has been tuned in Gambeera Naatai. He has used the raagam remarkably. S.P.B and Janaki have done wonders in the charanam where most of the tune is set in thara sthayi! Earlier T.Rajendar scored one song in the same ragam (kaadhal oorvalam ingae in pookkalai parikkadheergal). That is also an excellent song.

If we change the 3rd Ni in the avarohanam of Gambeera Naatai to kaisiki Nishadham (2nd Ni) we get Thillang. Ilayaraja has given few Thillangs so far. probably the first one was kothamallee poovae in kallukkul eeram. His other Thillang song is manadhil urudi vendum in sindhu bhairavi (a fantastic Bharathiyaar poem). Look what Bharathiyaar says in that poem: PERIYA Kadavul kaaththal vendum!! Webster's English dictionary gives the meaning for God as "the one supreme being, the creator and ruler of the universe". If so, how can we have a "Periya" Kadavul (big God)? I guess Bharathiyaar compares God to human beings and says "Periya Kadavul". In kaveesamma kaveesu there is one Thillang (anbae thaan thai aanadhu). MSV has given a great Thillang "nalladhor veenai seidhae". That is in K.Bala- chandar directed varumayin niram siappu. Kamal is a big Bharathiyaar fan in that movie. Nalladhor is also a Bharathiyaar song. Ilayaraja has used a ragam that is closely related to Thillang in kavarimaan (Thyaagaiyer's Brovabaarama in Bahudhari ragam).

Because of the unique "vakra" phrases, many of the above mentioned vakra ragas are very easily identifiable. Vakra ragas are a boon to beginners as they help to get a start in carnatic music. If there is a vakram in a ragam, and if that is what gives the important ragalakshanam to the ragam, then that is how it has to be sung! You cannot go like Sa Ri2 Ga2 Ma1 in Reethigowlai or sing like Ma1 Ga3 Ri2 Sa in Sahana. These are absolutely not permissible. Why these strict strictures?

I read in a book recently that there was a Chinese sage called as Li Ling. He would usually be naked in his house. When somebody asked about it to him, he said "I consider the whole world as my house and my house as my cloth. So, why the hell are you entering my trousers?"!! Nature made men to intercourse with women to procreate and sustain life on earth. That is a rule. If man tries to enter into another man's trouser ignoring the ordinance of Nature, AIDS awaits him inside the other man's trouser! If the lorry driver in India defies the present day societal norms and seek polygamous pleasure, then AIDS awaits him at the gates of pleasure! Regulations and rules make our life go smooth. Rules enriched carnatic music and gave rise to an excellent variety of ragas. Till Nature gives her treatment of gradual evolution to things, what be now, let be in future!
Dharmavathi is the 59th melakartha ragam. Sa Ri₂ Ga₂ Ma₂ Pa Da₂ Ni₃ Sa as arohanam and the converse as avarohanam. It is the prathamadhyaamam of Gowrimanohari (23rd melam). About couple of years ago Rahman tuned a superb Dharmavathi song in vandicholai chinnarasu. The song is sugam sugam vendum. I think the singer of the song is Vani Jayaram. It is one of the best songs that Rahman has tuned in his short career so far. It is a very sexy song. He starts the tune in the madhyama sthayi like Sa Ga Sa Ga, with a very very prominent chord sequences in the background. While another song from the same movie became a good hit (senthamizh naatu thamizhacheeyae sung by the late Shahul Ameed), this lovely song based on a pure classical ragam did not become a hit. Earlier, Rahman has tuned one more Dharmavathi in the movie gentleman. The song is ottagathai kattikko, which came as an unbelievable melody in that movie with a fantastic rhythm played in the pukka south Indian instrument "thavil".

Of course, Rahman had exhibited the usual (predictable) "cinema musician's tendency" of deviating from the ragam by using some foreign swaras in both the above songs. Even though there is predominant use of Da₂ in sugam sugam, in the charanam he uses Da₃ Ni₃ prayogam like Neethimathi ragam (60th melam). In ottagathai kattikko, he very liberally uses both Ni₂ and Ni₃, making it difficult to bring it under either Hemavathi (58th melam) or Dharmavathi. For our purposes to discuss Dharmavathi, I called ottagathai kattiko as Dharmavathi in this essay.

Rahman said in one of his early interviews that he avoided listening to contemporary music as did not want to get influenced by that music. He wants his music to be original and new! Alright bro, make music without the influence of your forefathers! Let us see, if you can!

This is an ever changing world. People are born constantly and people are dead similarly. We all have come into the world not like Mr. Jesus Christ without a father. We have our roots strongly based on our immediate previous generation, and less significantly on the innumerable generations in-between from the ages of origin of man to now. Newtonian concept of gravity was put to disuse by the "nascent" Einsteinian concept in the 20th century. The important thing to remember and appreciate is that Newton did prominent work on gravity before, and his ideas pre-existed the period of Einstein. If it were not for Newton to intrigue Einstein, the latter would not have become such a great scientist. If it were not for the stimulus of advaita of Sankara, neither would have Ramanujam come up with his visisht- advaita, nor Madvacharya with his dwaitha philosophy. Nature requires a pre-existent state to progress to the next state. It sends Nagesh first in the time window to do his comedy and then Vadivelu. It sends Chatruhan Sinha first and then later Rajnikanth. We are all a small part of the continuously self-propagating enormous force that originated in the big bang. Nobody can melt the profound ancestral influence to become a "new" creator (in absolute terms).

Ilayaraja too, has tuned wonderful Dharmavathi’s. His first was probably in the movie vikram. The song is meendum meendum vaa. S.P.Balasubramaniam and S.Janaki! He starts his song in madhya sthayi like Sa Sa Sa Sa (meendum meendum) and then all of a sudden jumps one octave to the thara sthayi Sa (vaa). He has used Mridhangam as a wonderful rhythm support in that song. In the charanam the tune is just excellent. Pa Pa Pa Ma₂ Da₂ (thekku marathil) Pa Pa Pa Ma₂ Da₂
Illayaraja's possibly second Dharmavathi is illam cholai poothadha in the movie unakkagavae vazhgiiraen. This was not a big hit like kanna unai thedu- giraen vaa in the same movie. However, illam cholai is one of the mile- stones in his career. I would say that it is one of his top bests. It has been sung by S.P.B. He starts like Ma2 Pa Sa (illam cholai) Sa Ri2 Sa Ni3 (poothadhaa). He prolongs the kaakali nishadham and beautifully gives a gamakam and then travels down to panchamam. Initially he uses tabla for accompaniment and then in the charanam there is wonderful mridhangam, the usage of which is very typical of him. Listening to this song is one of the best musical experience that I have had in my life! In varusham padhinaaru his "aeh, ayyasaami" is a kind of Dharmavathi with lot of mixture of Ma1. In veera, his konjikonji is quite a pure Dharmavathi. Maragadhhamani has given a very pure Dharmavathi in thatthithom in azhagan. He has excellently used keyboard with fantastic gamakams in that song.

Dharmavathi has two very melodious janya ragas. One is Ranjani. Sa Ri2 Ga2 Ma2 Da2 Ni3 Sa; Sa Ni3 Da2 Ma2 Ga2 Sa. The best song in Ranjani in cinema is muthupandhalil rathina onjalil sung by T.N.Seshagopalan in the movie thodhi raagam. Kunnakudi has tuned it in an unparalleled manner. MSV has used Ranjani in few of his cinema raga-malikas (aezhuswarangalukkul has a bit of Ranjani in aboorva ragangal, and also "ranjaniyai azaithaen" in the movie mrudhanga chakravarthi). The other popular janyam of Dharmavathi is Madhuvanthi. There is a subtle Ma1 usage in this ragam. In the movie nandha en nila, obscure music director V.Dhakshinamurthy has tuned one excellent Madhuvanthi song. The song also starts like "nandha en nila". My Houston room-mate Karthik used to repeatedly listen to this song again and again for hours. If you listened to this song, you will know the addictive potential of this song. Like "heroin addict", "ganja addict", we can proudly call ourselves as "nandha en nila addict"! It is one of the best ever recorded Thamizh cinema song!

The 10th chakram (in other words, the 4th chakram of the prathimadhyama melaragas) has probably the more popular ragas among the prathimadhyama melams. The 55th is Shatvidhamargini, 56th - Shanmukhapriya, 57th - Simhendra Madhyamam, 58th - Hemavathi, 59th - Dharmavathi, 60th - Neethimathi.

Illayaraja has given a lot of Shanmukhapriya songs. Thamthanathamthana thalam was his first Shanmukhapriya (in Bharathiraja's pudhiya vaarppukkal). One of his very early classical ventures that proved to the Thamizh cinema world what kind he was! It is a very fast song sung by Jency. In his earlier days he seems to have really liked tuning fast songs (like mazhai varuvadhu in rishi moolam)! In thamthana song, the thabla rhythm, veenai and flute interlude are mesmerising. His other Shanmukhapriya songs are kaadhal kasakkudhaiyaa (aan paavam), thakita thadhimi (salangai oli), ooru vittu ooru vandhu (karagaattakaaran), sollaayoo vaai thirandhu (moga mull). We have to remind ourselves of the earlier music directors contribution in this ragam that includes pazham nee appa (thiruvilayadal), mutthaitharu (arunagiri naadhar), kurangilirundhu (thookuthooki), maraindhirundhu (thillana mohanaambal). Devendran has tuned kannukkul nooru nilava in vedham pudhidhu. One
interesting thing to note is that even Thyagarajaswami has given only one krithi in this important ragam, while cinema fellows have been handling it quite often, the maximum number being by Illayaraja!

Shanmukhapriya uses Ri₂, Ga₂, Ma₂, Da₁ and Ni₂. If we change the Ni₂ to Ni₃ we get Simhendra Madhyamam. Probably, his first number in this ragam came in panneer pushpangal. The song is aanandha raagam. This song has got one of the most abnormal starts! It starts in thaara sthayi Ga! It goes likes this: Ga₂ Ri₂ Sa (aanandha) Sa Ri₂ Ri₂ Sa (raagam). A beautiful start and a wonderful job by Uma Ramanan! His second song in this ragam came in Mukta Sundar's debut film kodai mazhai. The song is kaatrodu kuzhalin naadhamae. The song has been sung by Chitra. A highly classical song. The heroine gives a dance performance on stage for this song. This song also starts in a very high pitched Ga₂ of thaara sthayi! I first listened to this song while watching the movie in the theatre, and the song was just gripping! His next Simhendra Madhyamam came in oruva vaazhum aalayam. The song is nee pournami. He starts this song in middle octave Ri₂! The song goes like this: Ri₂ Ga₂ Ri₂ Ga₂ Sa (nee..) Ga₂ Ma₂ Pa Ma₂ Pa (pournami). The swara structuring of this song is just marvellous. He uses groups of swaras up and down like a thrilling roller-coaster ride, and later in the end of the song he starts presenting alternating swaram-sahityam sequences that are just wonderful! His last Simhendra Madhyamam song is thaaj mahal thevai illai in gopura vaasalilae.

We have discussed Hemavathi ragam in our earlier essays. Nobody has tuned Shatvidhamargini or Neethimathi in cinema! These are extremely rare ragas even in classical sadas. If we just change the Ga₂ to Ga₃ in the ragas discussed above, we get all the important ragas of the next (11th) chakram. 63rd - Lathangi, 64th - Vachaspathi, 65th - Mesakalyani (commonly, called as Kalyani). We know that Illayaraja was the most prolific music director in tuning Kalyani in cinema. Did anybody think that he would use the other important ragams from this chakram in the nineties?!

Once upon a time there was a director called as "P.Vasu"! He used to shoot whatever perversion that came to his mind during the most uninhibited of his dreams as films! He had the extreme fortune of getting "Illayaraja's kadaaksham" in most of his movies, and the films would be jam-packed with superb songs! Just because of Illayaraja, those films would "runno runnunu run" tirelessly in the theatres, with money "fallo fallunu falling" down the roofu! Mmmm...... Did P.Vasu know that he got one of the two great Lathaangi songs ever tuned in one of his junk movies? The first popular Lathaangi is aadadha manamum undo in mannadhi mannan. The song has been sung by T.M.S and M.L.Vasanthakumari. Great song!

The other popular Lathangi came from the harmonium of Illayaraja! The movie is walter vetrivel. The song is raasavae chitterumbu. He has presented an incredibly pure Lathangi in a "tappaanguthu kind of format" in this song. It was a mega-hit song reverberating throughout the Thamizhnadu, from the slums to the elite! Prabhu Deva and Sukhanya dance for this song. It is one of the songs, which, when a common laymen rasika listens, he just feels it as a "great" tune, while a knowledgeable rasika immediately recognizes the intelligent use of a hardcore classical ragam and becomes wonder-struck! Illayaraja has tuned another Lathangi in eeramaana rojavae (adho andha vaanilae). But, that song was not a big hit. He also gave a Vachaspathi in one of his songs, nikkatumaa pogattumaa neelakarunguyilae (?movie). A beautiful song. But, it was not a big hit.
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**Vijayanagari** is a janyam of Hemavathi. Actually, this ragam was "discovered" by Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar in this century. He just omitted Nishadham in Hemavathi and called it as Vijayanagari. There is a famous M.K.T song soppanavazhvil magizhndhu in this ragam. Illayaraja tuned one Vijayanagari in paadaadha thaeneekkal. The song is vanna nilavae vaigai nadhiyae. He has beautifully used the Ma2 of this ragam. But, from puritans point of view, he has done a mistake. He has also used Ga3 to give a very sad appeal to the song. That is not permissible.

**Vijayanagari** is very closely related to Sivaranjani. While Sivaranjani is a janyam of the 22nd melam (Karaharapriya), Vijayanagari is a janyam of the 58th (the prathimadhyamam of the 22nd). Sivaranjani is also a very "soga" ragam. Kadalai urundai is called the poor man's meat, as it has reasonably all the essential amino acids as meat, but at a lesser cost! Like that, we could call Sivaranjani as the "cinema rasika's Mukhari or Bhairavi" as it has the same dose of "sadness", but, in a lighter form. **Sivaranjani**'s arohanam and avarohanam are: Sa Ri2 Ga2 Pa Da2 Sa; Sa Da2 Pa Ga2 Ri2 Sa. Nowadays musicians liberally use Ga3 to add beauty to this ragam.

To list all the Sivaranjani songs of Illayaraja is impossible. To list a few that comes to the mind immediately: adi aathaadi (kadalora kavidhaigal), unnai thaanae (nallavanukku nallavan), poovannam pola nenjam (azhiyaadha kolangal), solai pushpangalae (?movie), kaathirundhu (vaidehi kaathirundhal), pon manae (oru kaidhiyin dairy), vaa vaa anbae (agni nashatiram), valli valli aena (deiva vaaku), adhikaalai nera kanavu (?movie), kuyil paatu (en rassavin manasilaes) etc. Also, Sivaranjani is one of the unique ragas in the sense that, it is probably the only ragam that has been handled by every Tom, Dick and Harry calling himself as a music director. Manoj-Kiyan tuned tholvi nilayaena (oomai vizhigal), S.A.Rajkumar tuned paatu onnu naan paadatuma (pudhu vasantham), Shankar Ganesh tuned aval oru menagai (nakshathiram), lately Rahman has tuned kannum kannum (thiruda thiruda), thannerai kaadhalikkum (Mr.Romeo). In karuthamma, Rahman has scored a fantastic song (poraaalae ponnuthayee). It is also Sivaranjani based, with weightage given to Ga3 (like Mohanam) in the happy version, and to Ga2 in the sad version. This song unquestionably proves that Rahman is one among the most remarkable music directors in Thamizh cinema now.

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