
ŚOBHILLU SAPTA SVARA

Glory to the seven svarams

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तं नादं सप्तधा कृत्वा तथा षड्जादिभिः स्वरैः |
नाभी हृद् कण्ठ तालूषु नासादन्तोष्ठयोः क्रमात् ||

षड्जश्चर्षभ गान्धारौ मध्यमः पञ्चमस्तथा |
धैवतश्च निषादश्च स्वराः सप्त प्रकीर्त्तिताः ||

saṅgīta makarandaṁ (11th century)

meaning — that *nādaṁ* (described earlier in this work), passing through the naval, heart, neck, tongue, nose, teeth, and lips, generates the seven *svarams*, *ṣaḍjam*, *iṣabham*, *gāndhāram*, *madhayamam*, *pañcamam*, *dhaivata*, and *niṣādam*, respectively.

The very same theme has been echoed in the following *kṛti* of Saint tyāgarāja

रागं: जगन्मोहिनि — ताळं: रूपकं

पल्लवि

शोभिल्लु सप्तस्वर सुन्दरुल
भजिंपवे मनसा |

अनुपल्लवि

नाभी हृत् कण्ठ रसन
नासादुलयंदु |

चरणं

धर ऋक् सामादुललो
वर गायत्री हृदयमुन
सुरभूसुर मानसमुन
शुभ त्यागराजुनियेड ॥

rāgam: jaganmohini — taḷam: rūpakam

pallavi

*śobhillu sapta svara sundarula
bhajimpavē manasā |*

anupallavi

nābhī hṛt kanṭha rasana nāsādulayarāṇḍu |

caraṇam

*dhara ṛk sāmādulalō
vara gāyatrī hṛdayamuna
sura bhūsura mānasamuna
śubha tyāgarājuniyēda ||*

meaning — GLORY to the SAPTA SVARAMS, the seven most beautiful sounds in the universe!! Worship the beautiful goddess presiding over the seven *svarams*, which shine through naval, heart,throat, tongue, nose (of the human body), and in and through *ṛk*, and *sāma vēdams*, the heart of *gāyatrī mantram*, and the mind of gods and holy men and tyāgarāja.

Thus, reflecting these seven *svarams*, and penetrating them onto such instruments as *vīna*, Saint nārada created the divine *saṅgītam*; further, Lord brahma grasped the *saṅgītam* that emanated from the *sāma vēdam* — as mentioned in the following *śloka*m from *saṅgīta makarandaṁ*.

एवं स्वरान् समाकृष्य वीणादिषु निधाय च |
तेन चाहतनादेन सङ्गीतमकरोत्तदा ॥
सप्त स्वरान् समुद्धृत्य वीणादिषु निधाय च |
सामवेदादिदं गीतं संजग्राह पितामहः ॥

Ādi śaṅkara, in his *śyāmaḷā navaratnamālikā stotraṁ*, uses the same idea, and salutes Goddess *śyāmaḷa*, through these seven *svarams*, in the following verse.

स रि ग म प द निरतां तां
वीणासंक्रान्त कान्तहस्तान्ताम् |
शान्तां मृदुलस्वान्तां कुचभर-
तान्तां नमामि शिवकान्ताम् ॥

ślōkam 5 in śyāmslā navaratnamālikā stōtram

These seven *svarams* have been further glorified in many other compositions of tyāgarāja. No description of tyāgarāja will ever be complete without mentioning his numerous *kṛtis* on the theme of *saṅgīta praśāsa* (praising the Glory of divine music, the *nāda brahman*).

In the *kṛti*, “*mōkṣamu galadā*” (*rāgam sāramati*), he says:

*prāṇānala samyogamu valla
praṇava nādamu saptasvaramulai baraga*

meaning — *prāṇa* (the vital breath), in conjunction with *anala* (fire) within, produces the *praṇava nādam* (the celestial sound ॐ), and from it (ॐ), in turn the *sapta svarams* (the seven notes) are generated.

To realize the nature of *nādam* that originates from *mūlādhāra cakram* is a divine bliss and salvation. A true devotee, who has the deep knowledge of *svaram* and *rāgam* is indeed liberated from this world forthwith. This is the theme of tyāgarāja’s majestic *kṛti*, “*svararāga sudā rasa*” in *rāgam śaṅkarābharaṇam*.

In another *kṛti*, “*nādasudhā rasāmbilantu*” in *rāgam Ārabhi*, tyagarāja adds:

*svaramulārunnokaṭi ghaṇṭalu, vara rāgamu kōtandamu
duranaya dēśyamu triguṇamu nirata gati śaramurā
sarasa saṅgati sandarbhamu gala giramulurā
dhara bhajana bhāgyamurā*

meaning — *nādam* itself has taken the human form of Lord *rāma*, the seven *svarams* have become the seven bells of his bow; the *rāgams* have become the bow itself; the styles *ghana, naya, dēśya* have become the three strings of the bow; the rhythmic gaits has become the arrow.

Again, in the *kṛti* “*nādatanuṁ aniśam*” in *cittarañjani*, he bows to Lord *śiva*, by declaring

सद्योजातादि पञ्च वक्त्रज
स रि ग म प ध नी वर सप्त स्वर
*sadyōjātādi pañca vaktraja
sa ri ga ma pa dha ni vara saptasvara*

meaning — I salute Lord *śankara*, the embodiment of *nādam*, who is delighted in the art of the seven *svarams*, *sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni*, born of his five faces, namely, *sadyōjātam, agAhōram, tatpuruṣam, īśānam, and vāmadēvyam*.

Lord *rāma* is described by tyāgarāja in the *kṛti* “*sāmaja vara gamana*” (*rāgam hindōḷam*) as

वेदशिरो मातृज सप्तस्वर नादाचल दीप
vēdaśirō mātṛja saptasvara nādācala dīpā

meaning – shining like a beacon of light on the mountain of *nādam* of the seven *svarams* born of the *praṇava* (ॐ) which is the matrix of the *vēdams*.

In the *kalyāṇavasantaṁ* composition “*nādalōludai*”, tyāgarāja asks the mind to attain the bliss of *brahman*, by immersing in *nādam*, with all its *rāgams* composed of the seven beautiful *svarams* bestowing delectable fruits, which the trinity, all the gods and great sages have worshiped.

People have been deceiving the world by claiming that they are proficient in *rāgam* and *layam*, without realizing the subtle significance of *svaram* and *mūrccana*. *nādam*, which emanates from the body is of the form of the almighty *praṇavam*. This is the content of the tyāgarāja composition, “*Vara rāga laya*” in *ceṅju kāmbhōji*.

In the *aṭhāṇā* composition “*śrīpapriya saṅgītōpāsana ceyavē*”, he prays to the mind: Worship the music which is dear to Lord *śrīpati*, who moves among the seven *svarams*, and is sung by tyāgarāja, who knows the glory that every *rāgam* has incarnated as a graceful form and is dancing, with tinkling anklets.

Through the *anupallavi* segment, “*mudumuna śaṅkara kīta sāma nigama vidulaku nādātmaka sapta svara*”, of the *māyamālavagaṅṅa kṛti* “*vidulaku mRokkeda*”, Saint tyāgarāja offers obeisance with joy to those who are well-versed in the divine music of *sāma vēdam* promulgated by Lord *śiva*.

In the *bēgaḍa* piece “*nādōpāsana cē śaṅkara nārāyaṇa*”, he unequivocally asserts that Lord *śaṅkara*, *nārāyaṇa* and *brahmā* have attained their distinctive Glory through *nādōpāsana*, and have become the upholders of the *vēdāms*; they constitute the life of *mantram*, *yantram* and *tantram*, and they are all free souls revelling in *svaram*, *rāgam* and *layam*.

Tyāgarāja firmly believes that to be liberated from this world, to become a *jīvan mukta*, as taught in the *bhagavad gīta* and the *upaniṣads*, one must have the full blessings of Lord *brahmā* with the gift of knowledge of music (*saṅgīta jñānam*). We find this fact clearly portrayed in the song “*sītāvara saṅgīta jñānamu*” in the *rāgam* *dēvagāndhāri*.

In the *śrī rāgam* song, “*nāma kusuma*”, he asks us to place the supreme Lord on the bejewelled pedestal of *nādam*, and *svaram*, and worship his feet.

Mere knowledge of music without *bhakti* (devotion) does not lead us to the right path, says tyāgarāja, in the *dhanyāśī kṛti* “*saṅgīta jñānamu*”.

In the *āndōlikā kṛti*, “*rāgasudhā rasa pānamu*”, tyāgarāja suggests in the *caraṇam* that *nādam*, *svaram*, and *praṇava mantram*, are of the very form of Lord *sadāśiva*.

The list goes on . . .

The following is a partial list of tyāgarāja *kṛtis* devoted to the glorification of divine music.

ānanda sāgara	garuḍadhvani
gītārttamu	surad̥ti
mōkṣamu galadā	sāramati
nādatanumanisam	cittarañjani
nādalōluḍai	kalyāṇavasantam
nādasudhārasam	ārabhi
nādōpāsana cē	bēgaḍa
nāmakusuma	śrī
rāgaratnamālika	rītigaḷa
rāga sudhārasa	āndōlika
saṅgīta śāstra	mukhāri
saṅgīta jñānamu	dhanyāśi
sītāvara	dēvagāndhāri
śōbhillu saptasvara	jaganmōhini
śrīpapriya	aṭhāṇā
sogasogāmṛdaḡa	śrīrañjani
svararāga sudhā	śaṅkarābharaṇam
vararāga laya	ceṅcukāmbhōji
vidulaka	māyamālavagaḷa

In a recent CD (amudam label AAM 005), appropriately entitled “**nādam**”, singer, *viduṣi* S. Sowmya has melodiously sung several of these famous *nādōpāsana kṛtis* of tyāgarāja.

Besides tyāgarāja, many composers have showered praise on the *sapta svarams*, and *nādōpāsana*. For instance, kōṭīśvara iyer, in his 62th *mēla kṛti* in *rāgam ṛṣabhapriya*, in his “*kanda gānāmudam*” series has sung

*ṣaḍja ṛṣabhapriya gāndhāra madhyama
pañcama dhaivata niṣāda vidha
saptasvara saṅgīta . . .*

The treatise *saṅgīta dāmodaram* (author: Damodar Miśra 1653 AD) mentions that in a conversation, Lord *śiva* tells Goddess *pārvati* that the seven *svarams* were born, respectively, on the seven days of the week, starting with *ṣaḍjam* on Sunday, and ending in *niṣādam* on the Saturday.

The animals whose sounds imitate the seven *svarams* have been mentioned in various sanskrit works. There are respectively, peacock (**sa**), cow (**ri**), sheep (**ga**), the *krauñca bird* (**ma**), the *pika bird* (**pa**), horse (**dha**), and elephant (**ni**). We find the *ślōkam*:

*ṣaḍjam mayūrō vadati gāvāstrṛṣabhabhāṣiṇaḥ |
ajō virauti gāndhāram krauñcaḥ kvaṇanti madhyamam ||
puṣpa sādharmaṇē kālē pikaḥ kūjati pañcamam |
dhaivatam hēṣatē vājī niṣadam brhatē gajah ||*

Several musicological treatises (*saṅgīta makarandaṁ*, *saṅgīta dāmōdaram*, *saṅgīta sarvārtha sāra saṅgraham*) gives a detailed description of the many features of these seven notes. These include the *janma nakṣatram* (birth star), *janma dvīpa* (birth places - islands), *rāśi* (constellation), *rāśyadhipati* (the ruler of the constellation), *jāti*, *vaṁśam*, *vaṛṇam*, *ṛṣi*, *dēva*, *abhimāna dēvatā*, *chanddhas* (metre), *gōtram*, color, dress, ornaments, cosmetics, weapons, flowers, food, and *rasa* (expressions). Other aspects of the seven notes that we find are their *vāhanams* (vehicle), wives, span of life, forms, and trees.

These treatises have gone further by specifying the *aṅga nyāsaṁ*, and *dhyāna ślōkam* for each of these seven *svarams*, just like those we chant while invoking a particular prayer such as the *sahasranāmam*, *rudram* and so on. Also given are the geometrical diagrams, “*sapta svara bijākṣara ṣaḍ kōṇam*, arranged in a hexagonal shape formed by two upside down equilateral triangles.

Many of these features have been brilliantly captured in a set of seven beautiful paintings (depicting the seven *svarams*), by the famous musician, musicologist, and painter, *saṅgīta kalā ācārya śrī S. Rajam*, in his superb work, “**Musings on Music**”. One can view these pictures at: <http://www.saigan.com/heritage/music/mus2Htm>

We collect some of these descriptions in the Table that appears in the next page

Hence, it is no wonder that Music is *nādabrahmaṁ*, the seven *svarams* have been elevated to the status of goddesses, and musicians and musicologists have been worshipping them with great reverence and devotion.

The seven stanzas, called “*sapta svara dhyāna ślōkams*”, has been mentioned in the work: “*saṅgīta kalpadrumaṁ*” by Dr. L. Muthiah Bhagavathar (Malayalam Edition, Kerala Bhāṣā Institute, The text of the *sapta svara dhyāna ślōkams* appear in the last page of this article in both *dēvanāgarī*, and English (with diacriticals, and the *svare* names underlined for easy identification).

- Please view the Table giving various features of the seven *svarams* in the next page.
- The *sāhityams* of the *sapta svara dhyāna ślōkams* appear in the last page in both sanskrit, and English (with diacriticals).

<i>svara</i>	birth vāra	birth star	birth place	rāśi adhīpa	rāśi	jāti	vamśa	varṇa	ṛṣi
<i>śadja</i> <i>ṛṣabha</i> <i>gāndhāra</i> <i>madhyama</i> <i>pañcama</i> <i>dhaivata</i> <i>niṣādha</i>	sunday monday tuesday wednesday thursday friday saturday	śatabhiṣag citra śraviṣṭhā makha utra pūrvāśāda aniṣa	jambu śāka kuśa krauñca śālmali śvēta puṣkara	kumbha tulā mīna simha kanyā dhanu vr̥ccika	śani bhṛghu śaśi sūrya budha guru kuja	rākṣasa rākṣasa rākṣasa manuṣya manuṣya dēva	dēva ṛṣi dēva dēva pitṛ ṛṣi asura	brāhmaṇa kṣatriya vaiśya brāhmaṇa śūdra kṣatriya vaiśya	Dakṣa Atri Kapila Vasiṣṭa bhārghava Nārada tumburu
<i>svara</i>	dēva	dēvata	chandas	gōtra	colour	dress	ābharāṇa	vilēpana	āyudha
<i>śadja</i> <i>ṛṣabha</i> <i>gāndhāra</i> <i>madhyama</i> <i>pañcama</i> <i>dhaivata</i> <i>niṣādha</i>	agni Brahmā candra Viṣṇu Nārada Tumburu Tumburu	agni Brahma sarasvati Śiva Viṣṇu Sūrya gaṇapati	anuṣṭub gāyatri tṛṣṭub br̥hati pañkti uṣṇik jagati	jamadagni Ātrēya gautama Vasiṣṭa Srivatsa Parāsara śālan̄kāya	kamala piñjara svaṛṇa kunda asita pīta karbūra	śvēta pīta rakta nila haridrā citra śyāma	muktā indranīla vajra vaidūrya marataka gomētaka puṣyarāga	kuñkuma āgaru kastūri karpūra rocana candana kadamba	khadga kunta gadhā cakra bhiṇḍivāla nārāca an̄kuśa
<i>svara</i>	puṣpa	āhāra	rasa	dhwani	vāhana	bhārya	āyus	ākāra	vr̥kṣa
<i>śadja</i> <i>ṛṣabha</i> <i>gāndhāra</i> <i>madhyama</i> <i>pañcama</i> <i>dhaivata</i> <i>niṣādha</i>	jāti campaka punnāga mallika ketaki karavīra padma	dadhyanna pāyasa bhakṣya citrānna piṣṭa śuddhānna tanḍula	adbutha, vīra raudra śānta hāsya śṛngāra bhībatsa karuṇa	mayūra go aja krauñca pika vāji gaja	hamsa simha bhērunda hariṇa sitasāluva śuka śārika	gāndharvi kinnarī yakṣi kimpuruṣi nāgakanyā surastri rākṣasi	80 70 60 40 30 20 10	sthūla sūkṣma sthūla dṛgha samapuṣṭi dṛgha atisthūla	cūta kharjūra kadaḷi jambirā dāḍimā drākṣa punnāga

Source: SAṄGĪTA MAKARANDAM, SAṄGĪTA DĀMŌDARAM, and SAṄGĪTA SARVĀRTHA SĀRA SAṂGRAHAṂ

We conclude this article with the text of the SAPTA SVARA DHYĀNA ŚLŌKAM, in dēvanāgarī, as well as in English (with diacritical accents) (see next page)

सप्त स्वर ध्यान श्लोकाः

SAPTA SVARA DHYĀNA ŚLOKA

वीणाङ्गणाच्छ्रवण जात कुतूहलेन
देवेन कामरिपुणा परिरभ्यमाणाम् |
पाशाङ्कुशाङ्कित करामरुणावभासां
षाड्जीं समस्तजननीमनिशम् नमामि ॥

निस्सीम वाङ्मनसयोरतिदूरवर्त्ती
यस्या महत्वमवधारयितुं प्रव्रत्ताः |
पद्मासनोऽपि परिहास्य दशां प्रयाति
तामार्षभीं शुकनिभामनिशं नमामि ॥

स्वर्णाभिरामरुचिमुज्ज्वलरूपवेषां
वीणाविनोदकुतुका मृदुमीलिताक्षीम् |
देवीं दयार्द्रं हृदयाम् प्रणतीम् गतेषु
गान्धारमास्थितवतीमनिशं नमामि ॥

मन्दारकुन्दकुमुद प्रतिरूप रूपां
इन्दीवरायतविशाल विलोल नेत्राम् |
चन्द्रावतंस परिचुम्बित पादपद्मां
तां मध्यम स्वरमयीमनिशम् नमामि ॥

वाणी न केवलमहारि यया विजित्य
प्रीतिप्रदा पिककुलात् स च वर्णभेधः |
देवेन्द्र शेखरित पाद सरोज रेणुम्
तां पञ्चम स्वरमयीमनिशं नमामि ॥

यस्या वपुर्नवसुधारस निर्विशेषं
पीतं तदप्यतितरां नयनैर्महेशः |
आपीयमानमहितोऽपि दधाति देवः
तां धैवतीमनुगृह्णन्निशं नमामि ॥

वर्णैरशेष जनता हृदयङ्गमाभां
सर्वैः समस्त गुण निर्भर विभ्रमाङ्गीम् |
गर्वप्रियां शशिकला कलितावतंसाम्
नैषादि देवि भवतीमनिशं नमामि ॥

vīṇā kvaṇacchravaṇa jāta kutūhalēna
dēvena Kāmaripuṇā parirabhyamāṇām |
pāśāṅkuśāṅkita karāmaruṇāva bhāsām
śāḍjīm samasta jananīmaniśam namāmi ॥

nissīma vāṅmanasayātī dūravartī
yasyā mahatva mavadhārayitum pravṛttāḥ |
padmāsanō'pi parihāsya daśam prayāti
tāmārṣabhīm sukanibhāmaniśam namāmi ॥

svaṛṇābhirāmarucimujjvala rūpavēṣām
vīṇāvinōda jutukām mṛdu mīlitākṣīm |
dēvīm dayārdrahṛdayām praṇatīm gatēṣu
gāndhāramāsthītavatīmaniśam namāmi ॥

mandāra kunda kumuda pratirūparūpām
indīvarāyata viśāla vilōla nētrām |
candṛāvatamsa paricumbita pādapadmām
tām madhyama svaramayīmaniśam namāmi ॥

vāṇī na kēvalamahāriyayā vijitya
prītipradā pikakulāt sa ca varṇa bhēdhaḥ |
dēvendra śekhārīta pādasarōja rēṇum
tām pañchama svaramayīmaniśam namāmi ॥

yasyā vapur navasudhā rasa nirviśēṣam
pītam tadapyatitarām nayanair mahēśaḥ |
āpīyamānamahitō'pi dadhāti dēvaḥ
tām dhāivatīmanugṛhṇannaniśam namāmi ॥

varṇairāṣēṣajanatā hṛdayaṅgamābhām
sarvaiḥ samsataguṇanirbhara vibhramāṅkīm |
garvapriyām śaśikalā kalitāvatamsām
naiṣādi dēvi bhavatīmaniśam namāmi ॥