

SamskrtaSangitam School of Music NEWSLETTER

August 2024

From the Editor's Desk

Kathakalakshepam is an ancient art form that existed in our country.. Our rich cultural heritage gives us great joy and bliss as our arts have Bhakti as their core. For centuries, our artistes have practiced and presented various art forms to educate and entertain people that bolstered healthy living in body and mind.

Our temples have been centres of learning where all traditional art forms flourished. Kathakalakshepam is a form of religious preaching coated with music and which is enjoyed by scholars and the laymen alike. Just like how bitter medicines are sugar coated, the scriptural advices are “music- coated” as they are delivered to the audience. We know how morals are sweetly packed inside stories and poems as in ‘Old deccan days”, Aesop’s fables, Kathasaritsagara, Panchatantra etc.

Kathakalakshepams had their origin in vedic times where during the intervals in rituals, stories contained in Upanishads were recited for the benefit of wider audience. Lectures on Srimad Ramayana and Srimad Mahabharata became a regular activity in temples and royal darbars. Jayadeva’s Gitagovindam which is a lyrical poem, made a huge impact in the growth of kalakshepam. Even today we can’t hear a kalakshepam without references from his Ashtapadis, another name for Gitagovindam.

While in northern India kalakshepam had it’s own vicissitudes under the Moghul rule, kalakshepams in western India witnessed a lot of growth under Maratha rule which gradually came down to Tanjavur where it took a stronghold. Pretty soon northern kalakshepams encountered the more beautiful southern scriptures like Tirukkural, Tiruppuhal, Tiruvachakam in addition to Prasthanatraya and other Sanskrit works.



From the Editor's Desk

Contd...

Here we have the foremost artiste, Tanjavur Sri Krishna Bhagavathar who shaped the then current Kathakalakshepa format inculcating a lot of ideas, moods from Marathas. Later Gopala bhagavatar, Panchapakesha Sastri, Lakshmanacharyar, Chidambara Bhagavatar, Anantarama Bhagavathar, Sivaramakrishna Bhagavatar, Saraswathi Bai, Padmasani Bai, Muthaiyya Bhagavathar etc contributed to this form of art.

Purana pathana, Upanyasa, Katai paadal, Kutiyattam, Yakshagana, Tala maddale, Terukkuttu, Bhagavatamela nataka, Chakyar kuttu, Villu pattu, Chitra katha, Tullal are all varied forms of kathakalakshepa. Several talas like seven beat, five beat, three beat and Usi are used for its music. The orchestra in Harikatha, another name for Kalakshepa- consists of a drone instrument Harmonium or Violin, a percussion instrument along with Jalra and Chipla (castanets). The themes mainly revolved around incidents from the two epics, Bhagavata and other Puranas. Some dealt with saints, composers, other heroes of repute. Nirupanas, upakathas, pundarikam and dance found their niches in Harikathas.

The unique contribution of Harikatha to Karnataka sangitam has been in its multifarious musical forms in different languages and from both Hindustani and Karnatic ragas. It was through these exclusive Kathakalakshepa musical forms - Saaki, Dindi, Ovi, Abhang, Pada, Khadga that many of the Hindustani ragas like Jonpuri, Yaman, Behag, Jinjoti, Bimplas became popularly adopted in the South. The Desadi, Madhyadi talas were preserved in Harikatha tradition, The Use of tals in Usi was unique to Harikatha. Along with this musical forms used in Music and Dance concerts such as Kriti, Kirtana, Padam, cJavali, Divyaprabandham, Tevaaram, Cindu, Temmaangu etc have been delicately incorporated into Harikatha.

Many places in India still hold the tradition of organizing Harikathas during Kataka month and during temple utsavas. The art of Kathakalakshepa as an institution could be made use to spread the message of communal and religious harmony thereby educating the world on eternal values of Bharatiya culture.

Sincerely,

Events Extravaganza!!

In Pictures



Azhagar Temple, Tamil Nadu, India. Dedicated to Lord Vishnu, this temple nestled in the Azhagar Mountains holds immense significance.



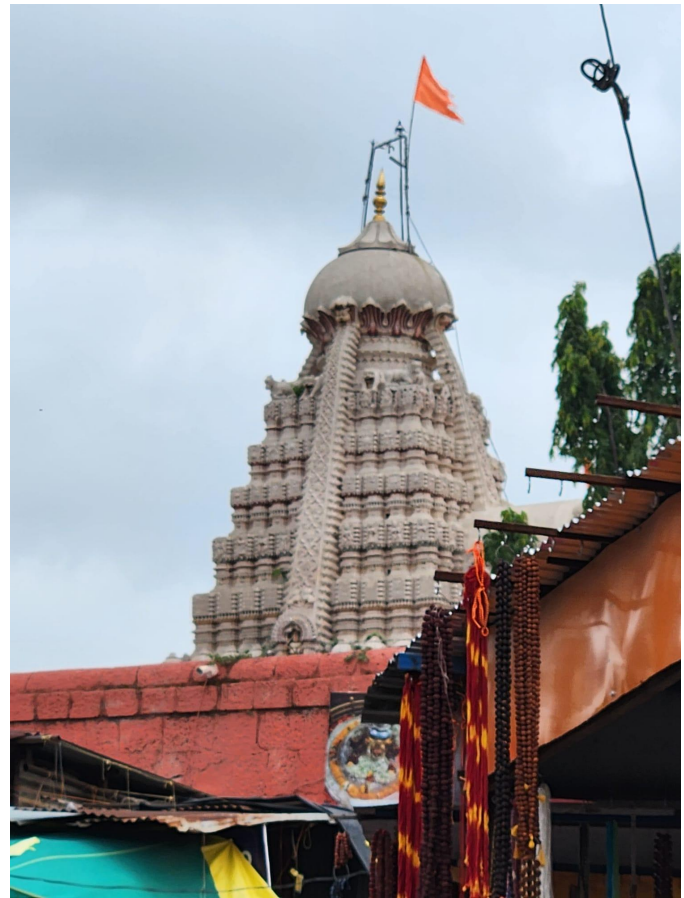
Uttarakosamangai Sivan Temple - This is the place where Shiva transferred the ancient knowledge of the Vedas to Parvati.

Events Extravaganza!!

In Pictures



Rameshwaram
temple, Tamil Nadu



Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga
Temple



Events Extravaganza!!

In Pictures



Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga
Temple



Rameshwaram
temple, Tamil Nadu

My reminiscences of SamskritaSangitam

Shankar Suri, 2024 Graduating Student of SamskritaSangitam School Of Music

As a toddler, I showed interest in music. So my mom asked around for a teacher who taught carnatic music that specifically included tamil songs. She came to know about Guru Sandhya aunty through another friend who's cousin learnt from her. Soon after, I had to sing Hamsadhwani Varnam for Sandhya aunty over the phone and I was able to follow her instructions and understand very clearly. She then brought me into her Ilam Sunday carnatic music class. In that class in March 2020, I got to meet everyone online for the first time and I was so happy. Although there was no in-person class at that time, it was not a limiting factor in making new friends and they all seemed very nice, including Sandhya aunty.

During COVID I had my first annual day and I got to sing with the Sunday Ilam class at a classmate's house. We were singing Sri Nathadi Guruguho. That was the first song I sang with that group and it was based on Lord Muruga. Sandhya Aunty was very glad I got to participate in Annual Day within a few days of joining Samskritasangitam School. In September 2020, I met Sandhya aunty in-person for the first time. Later, in 2022, I was fortunate enough to have my first in-person performance with the Friday 5 pm batch at Shirdi Sai Dham Temple in Monmouth Junction. I was delighted to see everyone at the in-person practice sessions after a long time. 2023 was a remarkable year. I participated in 4 performances. Two of them were at Sri Krishna Vrundavana Temple and Sri Umiya Dham in Edison. Later, came the Sri Bhadrachala Ramadasu and Sri Annamacharya performances in Sri Ranganatha Temple in Pomona, NY. Although it was tough to participate in some of the practice sessions due to distance, I still persisted and continued because of my interest in music and Sandhya aunty's encouragement.

Practicing constantly and attending summer camps helped me become more confident in my singing and helped me refine gamakas and add improvisations (kalpana swarams, korvai, etc) to make the song a pleasure to hear. I also participated in Sri Sanjay Subramanyam's Thamizhum Naanum Competition. Sandhya aunty gave me excellent and timely advice on techniques such as singing with an open throat and changing to a more comfortable shruti when G was too high for me. Through all these events, I was able to maintain a great voice and improve my skills.

Now that I graduated from high school, I plan on continuing my music journey. I'm really blessed to have Sandhya aunty as my teacher. She's very talented with outstanding teaching skills. I'm grateful to have made good progress with her guidance and support.

Word Search from Prarambha Gayakas

Carnatic Word Course!

N A K S H R U T I M A U T N A P G I G T A A A I T
N E H T U I S A S K T A W S S M A R A H S K A H A
N A I I A M S A S V L I K H S H A G E S I H U T A
M A Y T I H A S A A T K K I V G W T I A R R A A E
R S N S A N A H T R E E K A A T L W A N E E V J I
N R S A R K M A I R S R T Y M L S N R R Y L G A I
L S A K A K M M H R N M N H S A G T E H I A W R A
A H U G U R U G W S M A N R A V A N G U A R H A A
H T H K S R J T A G J N W S A D M H N P D L A V H
A G E E T H A M S R S R J T V A E H I Y A H T S I
T I T I R K T A T R S A N A H A A E S A T T A A H
S A S T K W H R A V A H S N T M I S R G K R P N A
I M S S A N I T A L A I A W R S A M I G A K M A M
S S A A A A S M A S M G H A I R A E A A H S N A D
L I A K A I W T A H K L A A A A A L K H N A H Y G
R A M G S A A D A E S M A A S R A A E E A L A G A
V A S R A R R N S R P R A V U M M K G A I M M T T
V T M N S A A A H I E I A P M A L A K S A T S I I
A N V T U N M A W U S D N S G A I R A A V R M A Y
I J N Y D E M K N S S A M A R A A T S A R P A M T
S V M A A N A H U S T N T K P G J A A N O G I A A
T A N G S A R A M A R G H M E W N S I N K S T M R
G A V R A A H A A A S A N A H T S A R A W S R R E
M A A T R A S A A R M M A U M R A S N I L O I V S
O T A A R K A I R S I N A W U V R T A A K I A H A

STHAYI
MELAKARTA
GURUGUHA
VARNAMS
JATHISWARAM
RAGA
TALA
KALAM

TANPURA
PRASTAARAM
SAHITYAM
SIMHANANDANA
SHRUTI
KEERTHANAS
GATI
VIOLIN

SINGER
SWARASTHANAS
GAMAKA
JANYA
GEETHAMS
VEENA
AKSHARAMS

MRIDANGAM
TRIMURTIS
SVARAJATHI
KORVAI
DEERGH
KRITI
MAATRAS

It's Playtime

Answers to Last month's word jumble

1. Charukesi
2. Varnam
3. Bilahari
4. Muktayiswaram
5. Ghatam
6. Revati
7. Tripura
8. Hindolam
9. Aahata
10. Darbar
11. Nadaswaram
12. Kanjira
13. Gandharam
14. Kaakapadam
15. Spuritham
16. Bhairavi
17. Anuloma
18. Vasantha
19. Vaggeyakaara
20. Sankeerna

Upcoming Events

Save the date!

Guru Performance

Date	Venue	Township , State
August 28, 29	Raritan Valley Community Center	Branchburg, NJ
September 7	Chinmaya Madhuvan	Morrisville, PA
September 14	Karya Siddhi Hanuman Temple	Burlington, NJ
September 22	Sarva Dharma Centre	Farmingdale, NJ
September 28	Balaji Temple	Bridgewater, NJ

The underlying aim of practice . .is to create certainty through the development of high-quality listening.

Howard Snell