

Auspicious Sri Raagam

A raga that is auspicious in name and bhava is Sri. Sri is a *ghana* raga, a heavy and noteworthy one that is melodic as well as regal. Sri is a *janya* of Kharaharapriya raga and is characterised by jagged traversals in the scale, the avarohana having interesting diversions from the usual linear path. The *Arohana-Avarohana* pattern of this raga is *SRMPNS/SNPDNPMRGRS*. In Tyagaraja's works in this raga, the *dhaivata* prayoga ("PDNPM") is not used, while in Dikshitar's kritis, there is a sudden twist in the structure, with the prayoga featuring the *dhaivata*. This raga houses *sadja*, *chatusruti rishabha*, *suddha madhyama*, *pancama*, *kaisiki nishada*, *chatusruti dhaivata* and *sadharana gandhara*.

The raga's highlight is the exaggerated gamaka at the *gandhara*. Because it is a *ghana* raga, it is suitable for *tanam*. Skilled *vainika* (veenaartiste) can demonstrate the stately gait of the *tanam* in Sri.

The classical pieces in Sri include Tyagaraja's fervour-filled 'Endaro Mahanubhavulu', the fifth and famed pancharatna, which features torrential janta swaras and 'Namakusumamula'.

Dikshitar's 'Sri Kamalambike' (the concluding Kamalamba navavarana), 'Sri Varalakshmi' (sung during the Varalakshmi vratha) and 'Sri Abhayamba' (the final kriti of the Abhayamba vibhakti kritis on the presiding goddess at Mayavaram) are most notable. Music lovers may recall M.S. Subbulakshmi's rendition of Annamacharya's 'Vande Vasudevam' in the raga.

The kriti 'Endaro' featured in the Telugu film, *Thyagayya*. The same pancharatna found place in *Shankarabharanam*, where it was sung by S. P. Balasubrahmanyam.

In film music, one of the finest pieces in this raga would be 'Deviyar Iruvar' from *Kalaikovil*, composed by M.S. Viswanathan and T.K. Ramamurthy. Chittibabu's veena prelude is electrifying and P. Suseela's alapana is apt. The lines 'Enadi Thozhi Arivayo, Enakkor Idam Nee Tharuvayo' well establish the raga bhava, with the phrase *RPMPRG,RSS* lending the requisite charm.

In *Kodi Parakkudhu*, the song 'Selai Kattum Pennukkoru' is a clever attempt by music director Hamsalekha to showcase the nuances of Sri raga. In the lines 'Kandadhunda...Sonnadhunda' the prayoga *RGRS, SRSN, RGRS* is amply evident.

A.R. Rahman has composed a sedate piece, 'Theendai Mei Theendai' for *En Swasa Kaatre*. The opening phrase is punctuated with a fitting gamaka at the *gandhara*. The pallavi's concluding line, 'Didukkittadhey', the phrase *PRSN/PDNPMRG*, says it all. This song shows how well Rahman has gleaned the raga's salient features and presented it as an entertaining number.

The song 'Sutti Poove' from *Kaivantha Kalai* in the music direction of Dhina is a brilliant piece in Sri. The opening phrase, *SR R,GRS* establishes the raga's identity. The classical interlude employs the saxophone. A song from an album called *Andhi Maalai* became very popular — 'Andhi Maalai Kovil Vandhen' sung by S. Janaki. It is a filmy version of 'Endaro Mahanubhavulu'. The tune is just the same, with Tamil lyrics!

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