

Evolution of Carnatic music- a series

By Smitha K. Prasad

Dear readers, in last month's installment, I discussed how royal patronage influenced Carnatic music. This month, I will continue along those lines but delve more into the details of the contributions of the various kings of Mysore to Carnatic music.

The kingdom of Mysore initially served as a vassal state to the Vijayanagar Empire and later as a subsidiary alliance to the British until Indian independence. The Mysore kings were accomplished exponents of fine arts, be it literature or music and their enthusiastic patronage led to both preservation as well as new developments in various arts. The musicians in these courts received plenty of support from the kings and this enabled them to dedicate their entire life to music.

The Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar IV (1884-1940) was a connoisseur of both Hindusthani and Carnatic music. Many Hindusthani and Carnatic musicians were frequent guests of the maharaja. A number of Carnatic music composers- Veena Sheshanna, Muthiah Bhagavathar, Mysore Vasudevacharya were among those who received patronage in his court.

The last Maharaja of the princely state of Mysore was Jayachamaraja Wodeyar (1919-1974). He was also a connoisseur of Carnatic music as well as western music and had aspired to become a concert pianist. After becoming Maharaja, he was introduced to Carnatic music and learned to play the veena. A number of musicians also received patronage at his court including veteran composer Mysore Vasudevacharya, who was the '*asthana vidwan*' or chief court musician.

Jayachamaraja Wodeyar composed a number of krithis (close to one hundred) in various ragas; perhaps his most popular composition is *Sri Mahaganapathim Bhajeham* in raga Athana. In recent years, there have been attempts made to popularize all of his *krithis* by bringing out music albums, notations for *krithis*, etc.

Till we meet next time, do listen to the composition *Sri Mahaganapathim Bhajeham*. This composition has been rendered by many artists and can easily be found on the Internet.

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