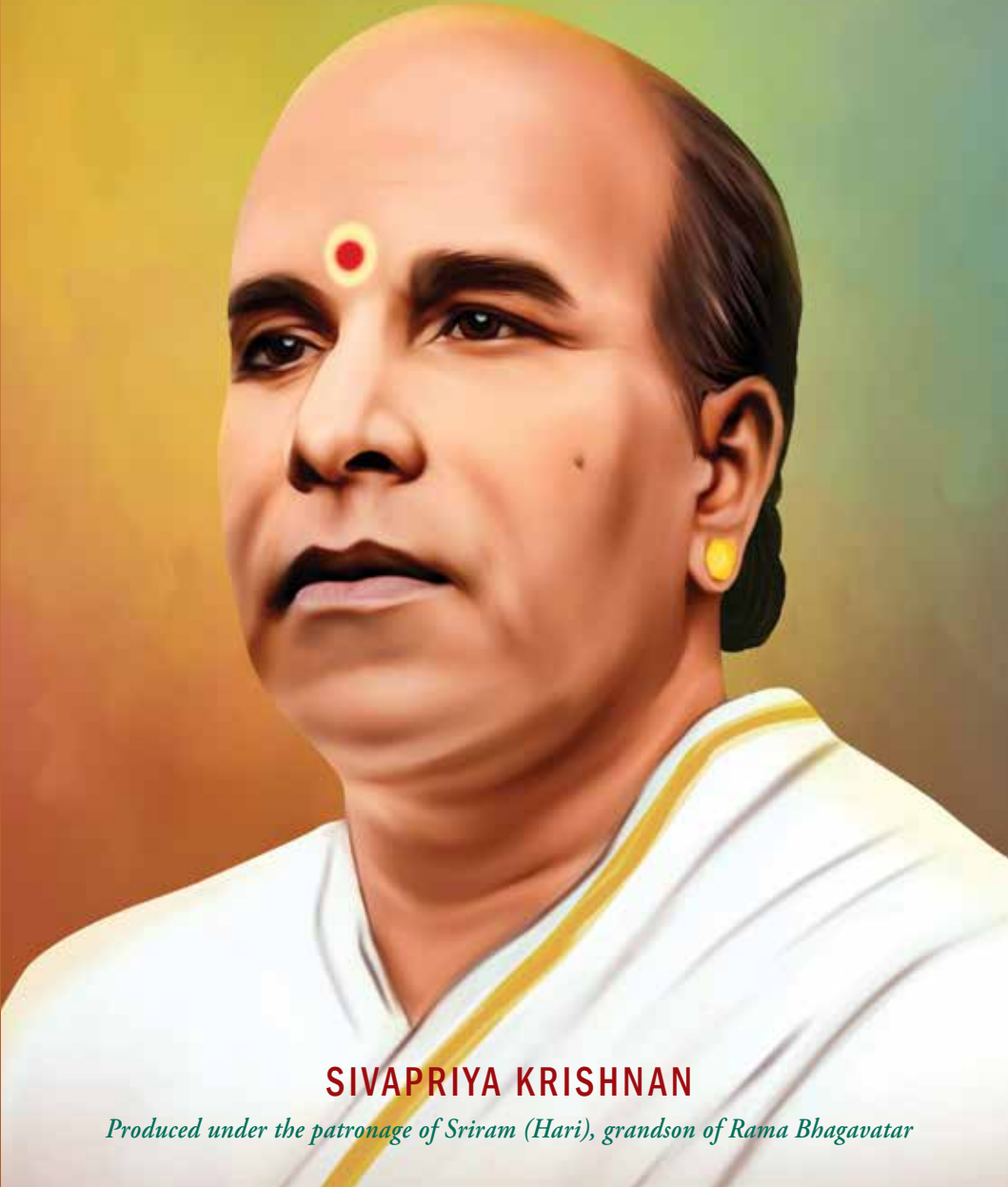


# Kalpathy Tyagabrahmam Palghat Rama Bhagavatar


*Life Sketch of a Nadopasaka*



**SIVAPRIYA KRISHNAN**

*Produced under the patronage of Sriram (Hari), grandson of Rama Bhagavatar*






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Life Sketch of a Nadopasaka

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SIVAPRIYA KRISHNAN

Kalpathy Tyagabrahmam Palghat Rama Bhagavatar  
*Life Sketch of a Nadopasaka*

Author : Sivapriya Krishnan

Edited by Sharmila Dixit

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**SRIRAM (Hari)**

Grandson of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar

Email : kamalco@gmail.com

Trustee, Rama Bhagavatar Charitable Trust, +91 94990 22560

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This book is dedicated to the loving memory of my dear grandfather Palghat Sri Rama Bhagavatar, who lived and breathed Carnatic music, shunning any publicity or fame.

- Sriram (Hari)



**Scan the QR code**



with your phone to

**visit the website:**

<https://www.ramabhagavatar.com/>



# Acknowledgements

To my father, **Sri. Lakshminarayanan**, for instilling in me a deep love for my grandfather, his music, and for Kalpathy.

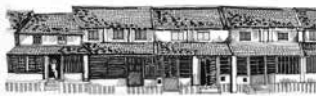
To my mother, **Smt. Kamala Narayanan**, for providing me with unwavering confidence throughout my life.

To my paternal grandmother, **Smt. Rukmini**, her sacrifices, and tireless efforts in raising and protecting the family, allowing Rama Bhagavatar to achieve so much.

To all **my family members**, including **my brother Raghu**, **my paternal uncles**, and **my cousins**, for their unwavering commitment to preserving and continuing the legacy of Rama Bhagavatar.

To the **rasikas and music lovers** like Sri. Ramakrishnan, Sri. Natarajan, and Sri. Sunny Mathew, for helping me recover tapes, songs, and records of Thatha's music.

To **Sri. Mahesh, Sri. Viswanathan, and the people of Kalpathy Agraharam**, for renaming Kalpathy Road in Thatha's memory and for keeping the legacy of this great son alive.



To **Sri. M.R. Ramachandran**, grandson of Rama Bhagavata's elder brother, Sri. Venkitakrishna Bhagavata, and a harmonium 'Vidwan', for sharing valuable insights about 'Thatha'.

To **Smt. Sivapriya Krishnan**, the author, for her invaluable contribution towards writing this life sketch.

To my elder cousin and mentor, **Mr. Sriram Ranganathan**, who diligently helped fact-check this book and whose guidance and clarity I often rely on.

To **Mr. Sarang**, for his beautiful sketches that depict the various anecdotes and happenings.

To **Mr. Diwakar of COMPUPRINT**, for his support in printing this book.

And to my wife, **Soumya**, whose unwavering support has given me the strength to carry on with this momentous task of preserving my grandfather's legacy.

**SRIRAM (Hari) - Grandson of Palghat Rama Bhagavata**







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## Foreword by **Mrs. VIJAYAMBIKA VENKITARAMAN** *Deputy Collector (Retd.), Palakkad*

In earlier times, great geniuses in various fields, driven solely by dedication and hard work, achieved their goals through discipline, sincerity, and with the support of their families. This commitment allowed them to discover and develop their skills, abilities, and accomplishments, which they then shared with the world. Similarly, “Gayaka Kesari” Palakkad (Mundaya) Rama Bhagavatar, a humble genius with profound knowledge in Carnatic music, dedicated his life to divine music and maintained an unwavering, pure devotion to the deities of Kalpathy, including Lakshmi Narayana Perumal, Kasi Viswanatha, and above all, Lord Rama. The Nila river, flowing behind his Agraharam home in Old Kalpathy, was a silent witness to his devotion. His life was one of contentment, spreading unparalleled bliss and joy through his music. However, due to his simplicity and aversion to fame, Rama Bhagavatar’s music did not reach the public, as widely as it deserved.

Sriram, the grandson of this doyen of Carnatic music, was profoundly influenced by his father’s stories of Rama Bhagavatar’s



divine music, struggles, and steadfast devotion. This deep-rooted admiration for his 'Thatha' inspired Sriram's noble intent to bring awareness of his grandfather's remarkable life, achievements, and contributions to Carnatic music. This book serves not only as a tribute to an eminent scholar and great guru but also as a valuable legacy, preserving his 'Thatha's' teachings and values for future generations. Sriram's work is a priceless gift, laying a strong foundation of values for both his family and society. I deeply appreciate his dedication and relentless effort in achieving this noble goal. Sri Rama Jayam.





# Foreword by

## **Sri K.N. LAKSHMINARAYANAN**

*Author – ‘From Cauvery to Neela: A History of the  
Tamil Agraharams of Palakkad’*

**P**alakkad Sri Rama Bhagavatar was a disciple of Thondikulam Anantharama Bhagavatar and served as the Asthana Vidwan at the Mysore Palace. He had the unique privilege of learning under the tutelage of Umayalpuram Swaminathan Bhagavatar. In 1912, Sri Rama Bhagavatar made his debut as a stage performer, with his first performance taking place at the temple grounds of Siri Vishwanatha Swami in Kalpathy. His deep devotion to Lord Rama was evident throughout his life, and some of his favourite kritis included *Rama Nee Samanam Evaru*, *Bhajare re Chitta*, and *Varugalamo*.

As part of his evening prayers at home, Bhagavatar would sing with the accompaniment of a Sruti box, providing a musical feast for the music lovers of the village, who would often gather outside his house to listen. I, too, had the privilege of occasionally hearing his music as a young boy.



Sriram, grandson of Sri Rama Bhagavatar is the son of my namesake, Lakshminarayanan who was my schoolmate.

It is a great blessing for both the music community and the people of Kalpathy that Sri Rama Bhagavatar, along with his colleague Mridangam Subha Iyer, founded the Kalpathy Tyagaraja Aradhana at the Kalpathy Rama Dhyana Matom, bringing the legacy of Saint Tyagaraja closer to the hearts of the people. The centenary celebration of this event was held in January 2024.

I am pleased that Sriram, the grandson of Sri Rama Bhagavatar, has taken on the important task of compiling and presenting a comprehensive account of his grandfather's life and has taken great pains to publish the life sketch.

The author has carefully gathered and organized the material in a chronological manner, which will undoubtedly serve as a valuable resource for future generations of musicians, helping them to honour and emulate the memory and skills of Sri Rama Bhagavatar.





**Foreword by**  
**Mr. A. RAMACHANDRAN**  
( *Son-in-law of Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar* ),  
*Director (Retd.) United India Insurance*

“**L**ives of great men all remind us, we can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us footprints on the sands of  
time”, said the great poet H.W. Longfellow.

The late “Gayaka Kesari” Palakkad Rama Bhagavatar exemplifies this sublime thought through his life and great achievements in Carnatic Music. He was born into a humble family, but that did not inhibit him from striving for greatness. From an early age, he took to Carnatic Music and reached sublime heights. Both during his lifetime and after death, his singing had a quality that only few could acquire. Music is an ocean of great depth and width. Rama Bhagavatar plunged into this ocean and has brought out great gems for all of us to see, enjoy, and experience.

His grandson Sriram Lakshminarayanan (Hari) has sought to collect and put together snippets of his grandfather’s life and achievements by the dint of his effort. I wish him all success and satisfaction in his efforts.





## Foreword by **Sri. SWAMINATHAN**

*Violin Vidwan, Kalpathy, Palakkad*

**A**s someone originally from Kollam, and the youngest of five children of Carnatic musician Sri. K. Rajagopala Iyer, my journey in Carnatic music took a pivotal turn when I joined Chembai Music College as a teacher in 1986. This position brought me to Kalpathy, where I had the privilege of temporary accommodation and, with it, the invaluable opportunity to meet the eminent, C. S. Krishnaiyar. I soon learned that he had once been my father's guru, a revelation that opened doors to an entire legacy of Carnatic music and its maestros. Through many memorable interactions, I came to know about Sri. Rama Bhagavatar, Chathapuram Subba Iyer, the mridangam maestro Sri. Palakkad Mani Iyer, and the rich musical heritage rooted in Palakkad.

Prior to this, my understanding of Palakkad was limited; I knew little of its sanctity or the immense contributions of its artists to the world of Carnatic music. It is, therefore, an immense honour for me to contribute a note to this initiative, which wholeheartedly captures the life and legacy of Palakkad Sri. Rama Bhagavatar. I





extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone involved in bringing this book to fruition, especially Sriram (Hari), the grandson of Sri. Rama Bhagavatar, whose dedication, and efforts were instrumental in realizing this tribute.

One particularly moving discovery during my time in Kalpathy was learning from my father and Sri. C. S. Krishnaiyar about the special bond between my father and Sri. Rama Bhagavatar. My father had been among the first students in the ‘Gayaka’ course at Sri. Swathi Thirunal Sangeet College, Thiruvananthapuram, where Sri. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer was principal. It was there that he met Sri. Rama Bhagavatar and learned ‘Jatiswaras’ in various ragas from him—compositions that later became the foundation of his career and livelihood.

These precious musical gems, which my father passed down to me, have been instrumental in shaping my confidence and artistry in singing ‘Manodharma swaras’. Since ‘Jatiswaras’ are without lyrics, it is all too easy for their origins to be forgotten over time. To honour both Sri. Rama Bhagavatar and my father’s legacy, I always remind my students that Sri. Rama Bhagavatar was, and remains, the master of the ‘Jatiswaram’.





## Publisher's Note

Decades ago, my father planted within me a deep love for my paternal grandfather, Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar. I came to know my 'Thatha' and everything about his mesmerizing music, his struggles, his unwavering devotion to Lord Rama, and the presiding deity of the village, Lakshmi Narayana Perumal in the Agraharam of Old Kalpathy, through the stories narrated by him. Layer upon layer, these memories deepened within me and the love for my grandfather grew with every visit to Kalpathy during my summer holidays.

By the 1980s, my father had become nearly blind, relying on his faithful companion, a Philips radio that helped him stay connected to Carnatic music. Often, he would make me sit beside him while he tuned into stations like Madras – B, Trichy, or Vijayawada, to listen to his favourite musicians. I became his scribe, writing down the lyrics of the songs he loved. Those were precious moments.

One memory remains etched in my mind. Over five unforgettable days, Sangita Kalandhi Nedunuri Krishnamurthy taught Muthuswami Dikshitar's "Akilandeswari" in the soul-stirring raga



Dwijavanti. I, then wondered how my grandfather would have memorized the lyrics of so many songs at a time when printed books were scarce and communication was limited. The strength of his memory and knowledge should have been due to the blessings of his Guru, which is why he named his home “Guru Prasad”, a gift from his Guru.

The matriarch of the family, Smt. Rukmini, my grandmother, was a stoic pillar of the family. One summer, she prepared a special lunch just for me in a stone vessel (Kalchatty), a memory that remains unforgettable. Exploring her old wooden, Malabar-tiled village home was a deeply intoxicating experience for me. The smell of aged teak wood, the raw granite floors contrasting with the smooth red oxide flooring in the ‘Puja’ area, the smells wafting from the wood-fired kitchen, the river running behind the house, the thick wooden doors with heavy latches that opened to the river, are many of the memories I cherish.

In 1975, my parents built our home in T. Nagar, Chennai and it became the centre for the annual ‘Shraddham’ (death anniversary) of ‘Thatha’. There was only one hand-touched photograph of him at home, a singular image through which I came to know my Pitamaha. After the rituals, my father, uncles, and aunts would come together to sing his favourite songs, none more revered than “*Parama Pavana Rama.*” I always looked forward to this time of the year, captivated by their voices carrying on his legacy. Later, my uncle, Sri. M.R. Venkatramanan, released a booklet on Rama Bhagavatar and his guru, Sri. Anantharama Bhagavatar, offering me a deeper glimpse into their greatness.

I received a cassette of my grandfather’s concerts, though scratched, but lovingly copied from 78 RPM records. I played them endlessly,



and my love for him grew infinitely. The seed planted by my father nurtured by shared stories, photographs, music, and the passion of my family and ‘rasikas’ (music lovers) increased my admiration for my grandfather.

Over time, my uncle ensured that Rama Bhagavatar’s memory was enshrined in the leading music institutions of Chennai, including Music Academy, Krishna Gana Sabha, and Narada Gana Sabha, by unveiling his portrait. At these inaugurations, musical legends like Sri. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Sri. Pudukode Krishnamoorthy, and Sri. K.V. Narayanaswamy offered glowing tributes to my grandfather.

My passion for understanding and preserving my grandfather’s legacy deepened and the arrival of the internet opened new doors. I digitized the recorded videos of the speeches by these stalwart musicians and uploaded them to YouTube for everyone to enjoy. For nearly a decade, I hunted for the 78 RPM recordings, eventually discovered 17 songs, and uploaded them to YouTube. In 2012, having gathered a wealth of information on my ‘Thatha’, I created a website ***ramabhagavatar.com***. My ‘Athimber’ (uncle), Sri. Ramachandran’s article, capturing the memories of the surviving sons and daughters of Rama Bhagavatar, became the homepage.

It seemed like for many years now, destiny was preparing me for a greater purpose ensuring that, almost seven decades after his demise, the village of Kalpathy would remember one of its most glorious sons.

In 2024, our family celebrated the centenary of the Kalpathy Tyagaraja Aradhana, an event founded in Kalpathy by my grandfather in 1924. Over five days, just before the Aradhana

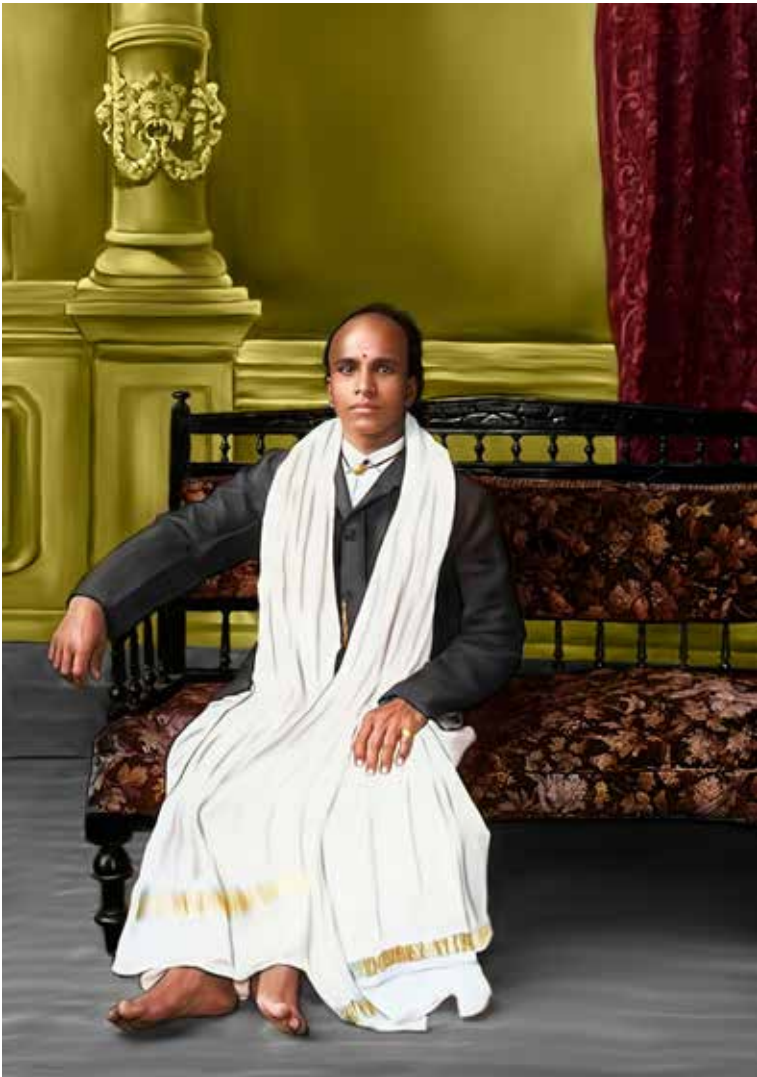


of 2024, the local government honoured the great son of the Agraharam, by naming the main road in his memory. My grandfather's unwavering devotion to his guru and his love for Lakshmi Narayana Perumal, the presiding deity of the village, are his most enduring legacies. By divine grace, my wife, Soumya, and I returned to Kalpathy in 2017 to serve the community, striving to walk in the path my grandfather once walked. Today, his large family continues to uphold his legacy through a Charitable Trust, supporting the cause of Carnatic music and preserving the Vedic traditions that are the heart of the Agraharam.

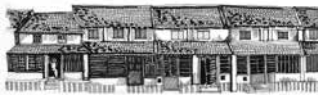
Although my grandfather passed away in 1957, seven years ahead of my birth, I feel that both my father and he are with me, always blessing, always guiding. I regret not learning Carnatic music formally, having been born in this lineage. Publishing this life sketch is perhaps my way of making up for this lapse and re-establishing a connection to the tradition that influenced my grandfather. I hope this book will strengthen my grandfather's legacy and be treasured by the Agraharam community, the Carnatic music community, and the future generations to come

**Sriram (Hari) – Grandson of Palghat Sri Rama Bhagavatar**





*An undated studio photo of a young Rama Bhagavatar*





## Author's Note

**B**iographies and life stories of past masters always fascinate me. What draws me to this genre, is the portrayal of an individual's journey through life, the challenges, triumphs, passions, setbacks, accomplishments, and impact. Each narrative unveils the unique facets of the person, unfolding multiple life events and experiences, providing a wealth of material to envision, assimilate and gain insight from.

When Mr. Sriram, the grandson of Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar, approached me with the request to compile a life sketch about his grandfather, I happily took it up. What I knew about Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar, was that he was a well-known musician of his times, that Palghat Mani Iyer revered him a lot and had accompanied him in many concerts, and that he produced two illustrious musicians like Pudukode Krishnamurthy and Palghat K. V. Narayanaswamy, among many others.

However, I had to write a book about a musician who was born 136 years ago, and on whom very little or not enough published, documented material is available, a slightly daunting task indeed.



Sriram helped with the process of making inputs available to me. He pointed me to the website, that he has assiduously compiled with many things about his grandfather, sourced from several places and people, trying to piece information about his grandfather, by talking to them, interviewing them, collecting photographs and some old documents and articles. He handed me a recorded electronic plug and play box, with all the songs sung by his grandfather. He also shared many other inputs, interesting nuggets, anecdotes, and facts. Thus, began my journey of listening to Bhagavata's music, reading, and researching more from available sources, giving me both the material for expanding the contents of the book and a better insight into what defined Palghat Rama Bhagavata, the man and the musician.

'*Endaro Mahanubhavulu, Andariki Vandanam*' says Tyagaraja in his Sri Raga Pancharatna, and in that spirit, here is a salutation, a '*vandanam*' to a good soul, a great musician, an ardent Rama bhakta, a perfect student, an ideal example of 'guru bhakti,' a genuine 'Nadopasaka', a devotee of Sri. Tyagaraja and one who was referred to as Kalpathy Tyagabrahmam. Perhaps it was a divine call that I write this book, because of my connection to Carnatic music as a vocalist, and to Kalpathy through my maternal grandfather, who hailed from there. This book tries to tell the story of a musician whom many may not have seen, heard, or read about, but one who has made an immense contribution to the Carnatic world by wholeheartedly embracing a life devoted to music, unencumbered by the distractions of the world.

**Sivapriya Krishnan**







## History of Tamil Iyers in Palakkad

There are many different accounts regarding the migration and settlement of Iyers from the Tamil region into Kerala. However, *Malabar Manual*, an exhaustive two-volume book by William Logan, is considered as one of the standard books for any research on this region.

In the 8th century, as per records, there was an early migration of Iyers from Tamil region, who settled near the banks of the Nila river around Palakkad. Due to a major wave of invasions by Malik Kafur in Tamil Nadu, inhabitants of Madurai, Mannargudi, Satyamangalam, Needamangalam, Vaitheeswaran Koil, Kandramanickam and other areas in Thanjavur, moved into Palakkad.

Later, following recurrent droughts in the Cauvery Delta, a significant migration is believed to have happened into the fertile lands of Palakkad. This high concentration could be attributed to their location along the ancient trade route that connected Muziris (near Kodungallur) on the west coast to Arikamedu (near Pondicherry) on the east coast.





*Many Tamil Brahmins fled to Palghat fearing destruction and plunder by Kafur's army*

The landscape and rivers in the region resembled the Cauvery belt and the Tamil Brahmins found these familiar surroundings ideal for establishing new settlements, reminiscent of the homes they had left behind.

The Palakkad kings welcomed the migrant Iyers and granted them land to build their settlements and many of them started to own large tracts of cultivable lands. Later, communities were established in various other areas of North Kerala, including Kozhikode and Malappuram and further south till Trivandrum.

These people are broadly referred to as 'Palakkad Iyers'. Their mother tongue is Tamil, but the dialect spoken by them is heavily accented due to the influence of Malayalam, the regional language spoken in Kerala. Tamil Brahmins use many Sanskrit words, and mix their Tamil with the Malayalam spoken there, to form a unique dialect, popularly referred to as 'Kerala Iyer Tamil' or 'Palakkad Iyer Tamil'.





*Migration of Tamil Brahmins into Kerala through the Palghat Pass*

Many Iyers were adept Vedic scholars and went on to build their temples conducting Vedic rites in them, in contrast to the prevailing Tantric rites. These temples, often dedicated to deities such as Vishnu, Siva, or Lakshmi Narayana, served as the spiritual heart of the community, hosting rituals and festivals central to both religious and social life. The temples were in their places of residence called ‘Agraharams’—a series, or rows of houses, similar in design and appearance, located near temples and rivers, mostly leading to them.

There are over a 100 Agraharams\* scattered across Palakkad district, unique due to their cultural synthesis. Defined by their affinity to Carnatic music, ‘nama sankeertanam’, and a distinct native cuisine offering a fusion of flavours both from the Tamil and Kerala traditions, these Agraharams stand out as cultural hubs, where music, religious devotion, food, and language merge into a distinct identity, preserving a legacy that dates back centuries.





*Palakkad kings welcomed the migrating Brahmins and granted them lands to establish their own settlements*

Kalpathy is one such famous and important Agraharam. Also known as Dakshin Kasi or ‘Varanasi of the South’, it is an early Tamil Brahmin settlement (Agraharam), close to Olavakkot, now called Palghat railway station. It was a confluence of Vedic brahmins, astrologers, musicians, and bhajana sampradaya vidwans who migrated from Thanjavur, Mayavaram, Kumbakonam, and Trichy region. Lakshmi Narayana Perumal and Viswanatha Swamy Temple are the presiding deities of the Kalpathy Agraharam. This Agraharam is famous for the Kalpathy Rathotsavam. Palghat or Palakkad as it is referred to today, was also a fertile breeding ground for several scholars and artists. Many practiced the classical arts and became famous names in their chosen fields.

One such artist is Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar.

\* The 100 Agraharams project is a video documenting over 100 agraharams in Palakkad, which can be found on the website <https://www.100agraharams.com>.





*A representation of the Pallipuram Agraharam where Sri. Rama Bhagavatar's ancestors settled after migrating from Tamil Nadu*

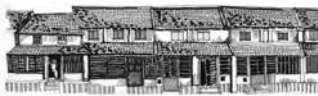


*Kalpathy Kasi Viswanatha swamy temple, Circa 1900*





*Kalpathy Rathotsavam (car festival) 1959*





## Rama — The Early Years

The forefathers of Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar migrated from Nachiyar Koil and settled in Pallipuram Agraharam. Pallipuram Agraharam is the oldest Brahmin settlement, reportedly having its origin in the 1400's. The residents belong to the Vaishnava Sampradaya and they follow the Vishistaadvaita philosophy. The natives of Pallipuram Agraharam pay obeisance to the Acharyas of Ahobila Mutt and adhere to Srirangam Panchangam traditions.

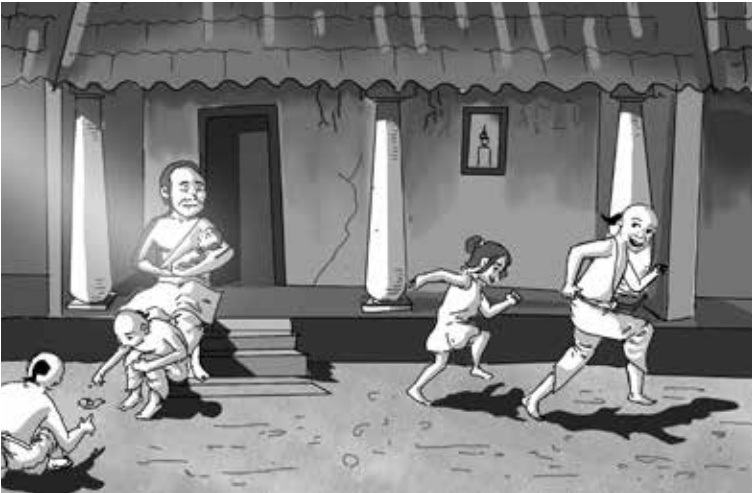
Rama Bhagavatar's father, Kasturi Ranganathan was appointed Adhikari (Revenue Inspector) and had to move to the village Munda Mukha (Mundaya) near Shoranur, into a simple, unpretentious home, called "*Mullakattu Madom*", beautifully nestled by Bharata puzha and the village's presiding deity, Lord Ayyappa.



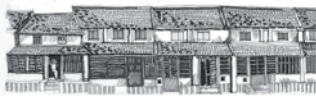


*Kasturi Ranganatha Bhattar moves to Mundaya after his appointment as Adhikari.  
The representation is of the Mundaya Ayyappan Kaavu temple*

Rama Bhagavatar was born here in this Mundaya village home on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1888 as the fifth and last son of Kasturi Ranganathan and Alamelu Mangai. It was a typical Brahmin household, with strong beliefs in orthodoxy and observance of religious rituals.



*Birth of Rama Bhagavatar – Last of five children of Kasturi Ranganathan*

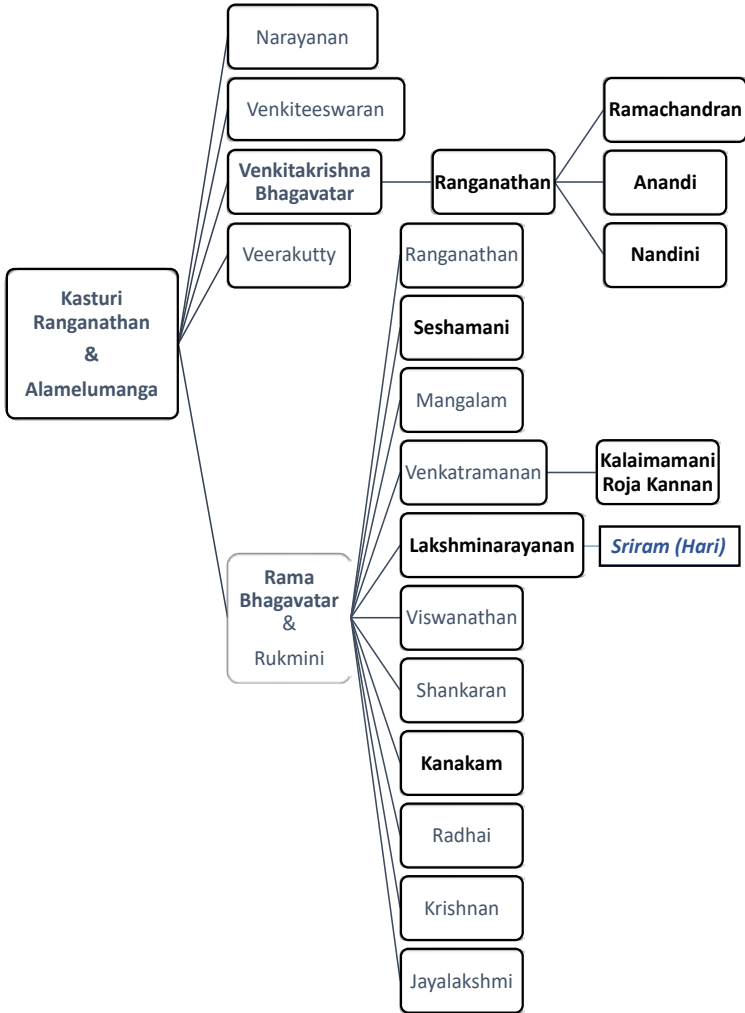




As a young boy, Rama attended the village school and learnt the Vedas and the Sastra texts, as was the practice amongst Brahmin boys of those days. A semi-tonsured head with a small tuft at the back, called '*shikai*' was the norm for every boy in the house those days and Rama sported it too.



# Family Tree - Kasturi Ranganathan Family



(The names in '**Bold**' are members of the family, who have kept up with the singing and performing tradition.)





# Venkitakrishna Bhagavatar — Brother of Rama

**A**mongst the other members in the family, Rama's elder brother Venkitakrishna Bhagavatar, was a major influence who laid the foundations for who Rama would later become. Venkitakrishna Bhagavatar is hailed as the person who redefined Kathakali music and introduced the use of a sruti box in Kathakali music. He insisted that his co-singers too stick to one sruti, instead of the varied sruti adopted over days, as was the practice then.

He initially trained in Kathakali under Moothedath Vasudevan Namboodri. After performing a few female roles, he quit to learn vocal music under the same teacher. Vasudevan Namboodiri taught Kathakali music to many in true Gurukulam style. Prominent among them were Vellinezhi Ramankutty Bhagavatar and Mundaya Venkitakrishna Bhagavatar. At the young age of 20, he was a vocalist singing for a performance. After his tutelage in vocal music, under Vadakkancheri Rama Bhagavatar and his



brother Subbarama Bhagavatar, his hold over Carnatic music became stronger.

Much to the surprise and even slight disapproval of the conservatives, he introduced a host of Carnatic ragas, such as Khamas, Darbar, Kapi, Dwijavanti, Sindhu Bhairavi, Chenchurutti, and Nattakurunji that were new to the vocal tradition of Kathakali. He converted lengthy padams into ragamalika to create a variety and more involved listening from the audience. Venkitakrishna also systematized the rendering of shlokas and dandakams (a poetic prosody in a prose-verse combination used in Kathakali to succinctly narrate several incidents in a play) in the desi ragas such as Paadi, Khandaram, Puraneeru, Kanakkurinji, Gaulipantu and Navarasam. Special care was taken to ensure that the Sahitya or the lyrics had its importance without being drowned in gamakas, brighas, or musical ornamentation.



**Department History**

**In 1930, Kathakali music began to be taught at Kalamandalam.**  
Supporting the Kathakali acting classes. There were initially few students under the tutelage of Kutian Bhagavathar.

**Shri Mundaya Venkita Krishna Bhagavathar who made significant changes to the Kathakali music.**  
To this day, the Kathakali music exponent follows his version of music.

**In 1955, the Kathakali department was formalized to impart a 6 year diploma course and subsequently a 2 year post diploma course in Kathakali music, under the care of Kalamandalam Neelakanthan Nambisan.**  
Karnatic Music was added as a subsidiary subject to Kathakali music.

*From Kerala Kalamandalam, Deemed University, Department History*





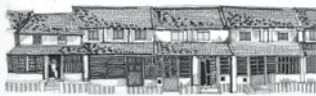
## Rama influenced by his Brother's Music

**E**ven as an eight-year-old, Rama was a keen observer with a flair for singing. Observing this, his elder brother Venkitakrishna taught young Rama to sing along with him.



*Young Rama is initiated into Carnatic music by his father and his brother Venkitakrishna guides him*

This laid the firm foundation for him to absorb the nuances of vocal music and Carnatic grammar. He also had the fortune of



learning under Vadakancheri Rama Bhagavata and his brother Subbarama Bhagavata, along with his elder brother.

Soon Rama was singing for Kathakali performances with his brother. However, these performances demanded long hours of vocalization, stretching late into nights. Rama's health began to suffer due to repeated performances and lack of sleep. Seeing this, his brother advised him to quit Kathakali singing and focus on Carnatic music, as practiced by the Thanjavur and Kumbakonam schools.



*Rama and his elder brother Venkitakrishna, were vocal artists in Kathakali performances*





## Rama's Quest for Music

After he quit singing for Kathakali, Rama Bhagavatar travelled to Thondikulam, another Agraharam in Palghat, where the famous vocalist Anantharama Bhagavatar resided.

Anantharama Bhagavatar was a name to reckon with in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He lived at the same time as Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, Patnam Subramania Iyer, Tiruvottriyur Tyagayyar, Bidaram Krishnappa, Veena Dhannammal, Ramanathapuram (Poochi) Srinivasa Iyengar. He reportedly practiced music by the sea, challenging the roar of the waves to improve his range and pitch. He was tall, with a fierce moustache and an imposing personality, which was quite something for a young Rama.

His compassionate wife took Rama under their wing and taught him household chores, a crucial skill for a student at a Gurukulam. Young Rama did his best to attend to the needs of his teacher, and in the process, listen attentively to imbibe every song that his teacher sang, and practice them assiduously during break hours. The teacher noticed the young boy's diligence and asked him to be his vocal accompanist for his Harikatha discourses.





*Thondikulam Anantharama Bhagavatar takes Rama as his shishya*

Rama also got to accompany him to Kumbakonam to listen to vidwans sing. Anantharama Bhagavatar was trying to seek admission as a student with Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan. It is said that he posed himself as a tantric scholar to enter the teacher's house! However, Sivan would not take disciples, and he had to satisfy himself by being around him, listening to his concerts, and learning by osmosis.

Young Rama benefitted from this, as he was exposed to the music of Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan. With the blessings of Anantharama Bhagavatar, Rama later became a disciple of Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer, a friend of his Guru.

Over the next eight years of Gurukulavasam, he added several songs to his repertoire, as his guru was the direct descendant of the Umayalpuram disciples of Tyagaraja. Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer was also studying there at the same time and the two became guru-bandhus. Rama spent eight long years in Kumbakonam listening to and learning high-quality Carnatic music, which







*Thondikulam (Palghat) Anantharama Bhagavata*



helped him develop his style of singing. Having learned the nuances, singing in the Tyagaraja Aradhana at Thiruvaiyaru became a regular feature, thanks to Ramaswamy Sivan, the elder brother of Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan, who encouraged young Rama to participate every year.



*Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer takes Palghat Rama and Maharajapuram Viswanathan as shishyas*

Kumbakonam and Thanjavur did much good to Rama's knowledge and learning of music. Over time, he had a fund of kritis composed by many vaggeyakaras that included the music trinity and many post-trinity composers. He also learnt a few abhangs thanks to his association with the renowned violinist, Mysore T. Chowdiah.



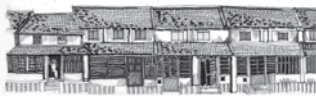


## Rama becomes Rama Bhagavatar

Rama left Kumbakonam and returned to Mundaya in 1908. He went back to become a part of his teacher's troupe. But this happiness did not last long. Anantharama Bhagavatar had to wind down his Harikatha programs due to ailments and soon after that at the young age of 53, he passed away in 1919.



*Thondikulam Anantharama Bhagavatar passes away in Kalpathy on July 27, 1919*



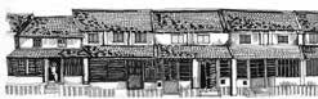
Rama's journey to becoming a Bhagavatar was taking full shape now. He started performing and attracted a good crowd of rasikas. Given his sonorous voice, madhyamakala tempo and repertoire, he was able to attract connoisseurs as well as lay listeners. Initially, he was known as Mundaya Rama Bhagavatar but later, when he shifted residence to Kalpathy, he became well known as Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar.

Bhagavatar performed at a period when microphones were still a rarity. His music was such that he could reach an audience well without losing stamina, for hours together. Four to five hours of continuous singing was child's play for him. All this was possible because of his dedicated practice and sadhana. He received national acclaim and concert opportunities from many parts of India, apart from the south of India, and was a regular in the All India Radio of Calicut and Trichy.

Rama Bhagavatar was known for his masterly ability to render the Ragam Tanam Pallavi and the songs that became his signature. '*Rama nee samanam evaru*' in Karaharapriya by Tyagaraja, '*Bhajare re citta*' in Kalyani by Muthuswami Dikshitar, '*Akshayalinga vibho*' in Sankarabharanam by Muthuswami Dikshitar, '*Harinenedu vedakutura*' in Karnataka Behag, '*O Rangasayee*' in Kamboji by Tyagaraja, '*Varugalamo Ayya*' in Manji by Gopalakrishna Bharati, were some of his favourite compositions that the listeners eagerly anticipated. Bhagavatar is one of the very few who had perfected the song '*Mahima Teliya Tarama*' in Sankarabharanam and sang it in concerts. He sang in 'The Madras Music Academy' in 1927, during the first year of the institution being established. Mysore T Chowdiah, the renowned violinist, agreed to stay in Old Kalpathy for some time, at the behest of Rama Bhagavatar and accompanied



him in many concerts. Rama Bhagavathar recorded songs for the Gramophone India Company in 78 RPM discs, even when the recording techniques were still very rudimentary.





## Awards and Accolades find Rama Bhagavatar

Mysore Jayachamaraja Wodeyar invited him regularly to sing during the Navaratri Dasara music festival at his palace. He was the Asthana Vidwan of the Mysore Palace and the only musician from Kerala to be conferred with that title. He was conferred the title of ‘*Gayaka Kesari*’ by Nobel Laureate Sir C.V. Raman. The Maharani of Travancore would invite him regularly to perform. The Sringeri Mutt and Kanchi Mutt have honoured him. The Madras Music Academy and Krishna Gana Sabha have honoured the legend with portraits in their hall of fame.

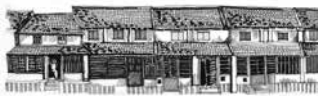
Awards and accolades need not just be titles, citations, or purses. They can be a genuine appreciation and recognition from co-artists and contemporaries. A family member recalled an incident of one such accolade received by Rama Bhagavatar from the famous Maharajapuram Vishwanatha Iyer, his contemporary and Guru Bandhu from the school of Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer, and a popular artist in the concert arena at that time.



A concert was scheduled in one of the villages in Palghat and Rama Bhagavatar was the main artist. He was accompanied on the violin by Papa Venkataramaiah, on the mridangam by Palani Subramania Pillai, and on the ghatam by Thiruvilvamala Vilvadri Iyer. Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer seated in the front row, was listening to the concert. After a few kritis, Rama Bhagavatar began his alapana of Karaharapriya followed by the famous Tyagaraja Kriti “*Rama Nee Samana Evaru*”. Rama Bhagavatar began to sing and sangathis flowed from him. After a while, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer could not contain his ecstasy. He rose from his seat, went to the dais, and hugged Rama Bhagavatar exclaiming, “Rama, Nee Samana Evaru”, metaphorically saying that there is no match to Rama (Bhagavatar) to render kritis like this.



*Rama Bhagavatar regularly performed at the court of Mysore Jayachamaraja Wodeyar who invited him to sing during the Navaratri Dasara music festival*





## Rama Bhagavatar — An Ardent Student, a Genuine Teacher, a True Family Man

**R**ama Bhagavatar was devoted to his teachers Anantharama Bhagavatar and Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer. He served and attended to his guru Anantharama Bhagavatar, both, while he was his student and while the Guru was ailing. He conducted an annual Guru Pooja in memory of his Gurus. In 1910, he rented a house and settled in Kalpathy following the advice of his guru Anantharama Bhagavatar. The same year, he married Rukmini and together they raised a happy, large family with four daughters and seven sons.

Till 1940, he lived in a modest, rented home. As his family grew, the desire to own a house in the Agraharam became stronger. There was an auction for the house that he desired to buy, which came in his favour and Rama Bhagavatar finally secured his first







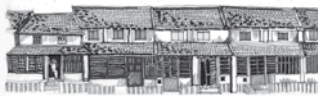
*Rama Bhagavatar marries Rukmini in 1910*

home, leaving behind the days of renting, thus settling into the heart of his beloved Agraharam.

The house was named “*Guru Prasad*”, in obeisance to his Guru. He never left Kalpathy though there were a lot of suggestions for him to move to Madras, citing that his career could blossom further by being close to the powers that be. But he was content in staying where he was and kept traveling for concerts.



*Rama Bhagavatar is blessed with a home after his Shishya Sri. Panjamu bids successfully during the auction*





*Rama Bhagavata's home in Kalpathy was close to the Lakshmi Narayana temple. He and his family moved in to their new home in 1940*

He shunned publicity and even refused to travel in his old age when he was asked to come and accept an award. He declined the offer of shifting to Thiruvananthapuram, when the then Maharaja offered him a post as the Principal of The Carnatic Music College. He was content staying in Old Kalpathy nestled on either side by the two temples and the river Nila flowing by his house. He enriched the villages around him with his music, taught many students, organized the Tyagaraja Aradhana festival every year and was the most respected person, son of the soil, in and around the villages. The doors of his house were ever open to an ardent and interested student desirous of learning music, from whom he never demanded any tuition fees.

Notable among his students were Palghat K.V. Narayanaswamy, Pudukode Krishnamurthy and Kanjoor Krishnan Namboothiripad. M. V. Ranganathan (original name Kasturi Ranganathan), his brother Venkitakrishnan's son, was a disciple of Rama Bhagavata





*Rama Bhagavatar with son  
Sri. Seshamani*

and was well versed both in Kathakali and Carnatic music. He was like a shadow of Rama Bhagavatar. His second son, M.R. Seshamani accompanied him in his concerts and later became a disciple of G.N. Balasubramaniam. His fifth son, Lakshminarayanan accompanied Bhagavatar for the rest of his musical journey.



*Rama Bhagavatar with son Sri. Lakshminarayanan on the Thambura*





# Rama Bhagavatar - Tyagabrahmam of Kalpathy

Rama Bhagavatar never missed paying tributes to Saint Tyagaraja at Thiruvaiyaru, a ritual that started even when he was a disciple of Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer. Ramaswamy Sivan had then encouraged young Rama to sing in the Aradhana without fail.



*Rama Bhagavatar performed regularly at the Thiruvaiyaru Tyagaraja Aradhana up to 1924*



Mridangam Vidwan Chathapuram Subba Iyer and Rama Bhagavatar used to travel together to Thiruvaiyaru as an annual practice to participate in the Aradhana celebrations. Once, in 1924, they could not attend the Aradhana. There seem to be a couple of anecdotes as to why they could not attend. One account says that there was a dislocation of rail transport while the other one says that they missed the train. The Aradhana was the next day and with a circuitous route to reach Thiruvaiyaru from Palghat, they could not have made it in time.



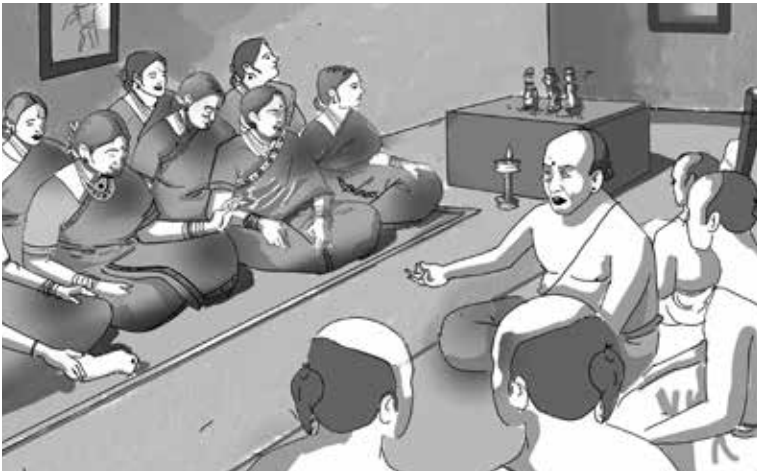
*Sri. Rama Bhagavatar and co-musicians miss the train to Tanjore in 1924 and consequently unable to participate in the Thiruvaiyaru Aradhana*

That night, Rama Bhagavatar slept with a heavy heart, knowing that he would miss the Aradhana. He had a vision of Tyagaraja commanding him to start an Aradhana at Kalpathy itself. This incident immediately prompted him to start an Aradhana celebration for Tyagaraja in Kalpathy at the Rama Dhyana Matom, located at the Hanuman Temple in Kalpathy, founded by Rajaram Swamikal, believed to be a disciple of Tyagaraja. Starting then, till this day the Tyagaraja Aradhana at Kalpathy is an annual



event in January, coinciding with Bahula Panchami Aradhana at Thiruvaiyaru, much sought after by the present-day artists. No wonder the citizens started calling Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, **‘Kalpathy Tyagabrahmam’**.

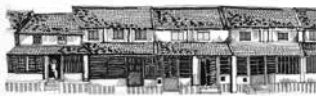
Mridangam Vidwan Chathapuram Subba Iyer (Palghat Mani Iyer’s Guru), Sri. Seshan Bhagavatar (father of Palghat Mani Iyer), Sri. Vichappa (first Guru of Palghat Mani Iyer) were his associates in this event.



*Rama Bhagavatar, Subba Iyer, Seshan Bhagavatar, and Vichappa found the Kalpathy Tyagaraja Aradhana in 1924*

Many an interesting incident finds mention in this festival lore. In 1939, during a concert by Flute Mali, a senior bureaucrat attending the event, was found smoking inside the pandal. When the crowds raised objections, the repercussion was heavy. The next day, orders were passed to stop the program citing public nuisance. With sustained fights and efforts, the event was resumed shortly.

Palghat T.R. Rajamani, son of Mridangam Maestro Palghat Mani Iyer recalls that his father was to have accompanied Madurai Mani



Iyer in a concert. Since he could not arrive on time, his guru Subba Iyer started accompanying and once Mani Iyer arrived, cleared the stage for him. Once, during a group rendition of Pancharatna kritis, Palghat Mani Iyer picked up a Khanjira and started accompanying the group. After the demise of Subba Iyer and three other founder members, the local community and rasikas held this event without fail. Palghat Mani Iyer conducted it admirably for almost three years.



*Unchavritti at the centenary event of the Aradhana in Kalpathy, 2024*

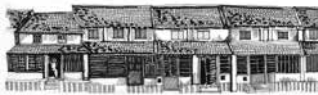
Till date, the Aradhana is conducted with a traditional unchavritti, during the festival. The singers go on a pada yatra singing the saint's compositions. What started as a one-day event, has now become a three-day event.

The main road, Old Kalpathy Double Street, was re-named Sri. Rama Bhagavatar Road on 7th November, 2023, in honour of the great musician, by the local government.





*In memory of Sri. Rama Bhagavatar's contribution to Kalpathy by founding the Tyagaraja Anadhama, the local council renamed the Old Kalpathy Road, where he lived, as Sri Rama Bhagavatar Road, in 2023*







# Rama Bhagavatar - Blessed by Divine Grace Songs of Faith

Commanded by Saint Tyagaraja

Lakshmi Narayana Perumal Temple is situated in the Agraharam of Old Kalpathy, a spiritual haven for the devout. Rama Bhagavatar, a pious man, was fully devoted to his Ishta devata, Lakshmi Narayana, the temple's presiding deity and held an unwavering devotion to the deity of this sacred space.

He lived by the principle of 'saranagati', unquestioning, total surrender to Divine Will. He is merited with a few anecdotes describing the sudden divine grace he received in distressed moments that seemed knotted and like being at crossroads.

When in 1924, Rama Bhagavatar, could not attend the Tyagaraja Aradhana at Thiruvaiyaru, by a quirk of fate (read the earlier story in this life sketch), he slept with a heavy heart having to miss the festival for the first time in many years. That night, he dreamt that Tyagaraja commanded him to start an Aradhana festival in his hometown in Kalpathy. With a burst of confidence



on being blessed, he took the commandment and worked towards holding an Aradhana every year to coincide with the festivals at Thiruvaiyaru. This festival gained so much momentum that stalwarts started participating in it and looked forward to singing in it. The Aradhana is conducted till date at Kalpathy and is a much sought-after event by the music fraternity.



*Rama Bhagavata had a vision of Tyagaraja after which he decided to start the Tyagaraja Aradhana in Kalpathy – year 1924*



## The Miracles of Lord Lakshmi Narayana

Life was often challenging for Bhagavatar and his large family, as the income from temple concerts barely sufficed to sustain them. The family experienced the strains of poverty on several occasions.

Yet, with unwavering faith Rama Bhagavatar would stand before the temple's 'dhwajasthamba' (flagstaff), soulfully singing Tyagaraja compositions, his heart filled with devotion. His voice would resonate with Lord Rama's praises. Like an answer to his staunch belief, a letter or telegram would arrive shortly after, inviting him for a paid concert that would ease the family's financial strain.

To the village folks, this was a huge miracle. The power of his devotion not only moved hearts but also brought timely relief, reaffirming his belief in the compassionate care of his beloved deity, Lord Lakshmi Narayana.



*Rama Bhagavatar was an ardent devotee of Lakshmi Narayana Swamy, Kalpathy*

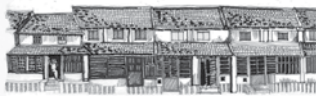


## A Night of Devotion: The Anjaneya Miracle

One night at a mesmerising concert in Malabar, Rama Bhagavatar was singing with utmost involvement and devotion despite the concert extending late into the night. However, after the event the host did not offer the customary 'sambhavana', (fees) for the performance. While the accompanying musicians felt disrespected and were prepared to voice their grievances, Bhagavatar, always composed and steadfast in his faith, quietened them, saying that if the Divine willed it, the payment would reach him. With a prayer on his lips, he retired for the night. As fate would have it, that night the host dreamt of a monkey harassing him. Startled and filled with fear, he woke up and suddenly remembered his failure to honour the great musician. Filled with guilt, he gathered the offering and hurried through the night, to Rama Bhagavatar's quarters. He narrated the dream and begged for forgiveness. Bhagavatar, with his usual grace and humility, smiled, accepted the offering, and offered a prayer to Lord Lakshmi Narayana.



*Rama Bhagavatar vowed to host the Anjaneya Vâhana in Kalpathy after the miracle*



Moved by what he saw as the divine play of Lord Hanuman, Bhagavata returned to Kalpathy and took a vow to host the Anjaneya Vahana during the temple's annual festival. His family continues this sacred tradition to this day with unwavering devotion, honouring the miracle that unfolded that night.



## The power of Devi Mahatmyam

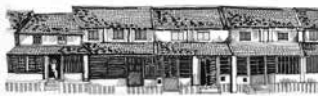
Rama Bhagavata's stature as a renowned musician was growing steadily. His family had grown, with his ten children filling the house with laughter. This attracted the jealousy of people around him. A relative, consumed by envy, turned to black magic, casting a sinister spell over Rama Bhagavata's home.

The joyous household became a place of eerie shadows and unexplained illness. The children, usually playful and full of life, huddled in fear, whispering about the dark figures they glimpsed after sunset. Rama Bhagavata's performances dwindled, invitations ceased. The family's livelihood that entirely depended on his music, began to suffer.

It was then that Rukmini Ammal, the resilient matriarch, sought help from Prabhu Josier, the village's revered astrologer. Known for his wisdom and intuition regarding supernatural forces, Josier visited their home with cowries in hand. With a prayer, he cast them on the ground and read the signs. He immediately sensed malevolent spirits at work and urged Rama Bhagavata to invoke Devi with the powerful Devi Mahatmyam.

As Rama Bhagavata chanted the sacred verses, invoking the fierce and protective energy of Goddess Durga, Prabhu Josier performed another reading. The dark presence was retreating. He instructed Bhagavata to continue until the first chapter was complete. With the final chant, Josier declared the house free of evil.

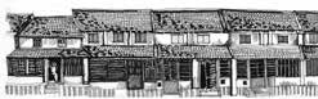
The transformation was swift. Joy returned to the house, laughter of the children resumed and performances came flooding back. Rama Bhagavata's family prospered once again. From that day, the chanting of the Devi Mahatmyam became a family tradition,



continuing through the generations, especially during the nine days of Navaratri, guarding and blessing the household.



*Rama Bhagavatar with his wife, Rukmini and granddaughter Lalitha, reading Devi Mahatmyam*





# Rama Bhagavatar - a true Nadopasaka

**Pallavi :** seetA vara sangeeta jNANamu dhAta vrAya valerA rAma

**Anu Pallavi :** gitAdyAdhyakhilOpanishad sArabhuta Jeevan  
muktuDoTaku

**Charanam :** AkASA Sariramu brahmamanE AtmArAmuni tA  
sari joochuchu

lokAdulu chinmaya manE suswara lOludou Tyagaraja sannuta

In his Kriti, 'seetA vara' in Devagandhari, Tyagaraja expounds that one should be destined, blessed by Parabrahma to get the knowledge of music and that one can achieve emancipation in this life itself (Jeevan Mukti) through 'Nadopasana' (worship through sublime music).

Rama Bhagavatar, an ardent devotee of Rama, truly embodies the essence of this musical composition. Blessed by the Lord, Palghat Rama Bhagavatar was a genuine 'Nadopasaka', known for his simplicity, piety, focus, honesty, and dedication to music and the Carnatic Trinity. Oblivious to the happenings in the music world,





shunning any publicity, he dedicated his energies to learning, singing, serving his Guru, enriching the village community around him with his music, and imparting his knowledge to others.



*Rama Bhagavatar performing at the Shanmukhananda Hall,  
Bombay with his son, Lakshminarayanan (with Tampura)*

The Carnatic world remembers Palghat Rama Bhagavatar as a vocalist with a sonorous deep voice, with a penchant for traditional ragas that were gamaka-laden. He was adept at singing for kathakali, harikatha, and full-fledged Carnatic concerts. His style was filled with just the right amount of flair and musical embellishments, delivered at a smooth and steady pace, called the madhyama-kala. Singing at a time when microphones were still a rarity, Rama Bhagavatar was never found wanting in stamina to execute long performances to eager audiences. He is famous for his rendition of ‘*Rama nee samanam evaru*’ (Karaharapriya), ‘*Bhajare re chitta*’ (Kalyani), ‘*Akshayalinga vibho*’ (Sankarabharanam), ‘*Hari ne nendu vedakutura*’ (Karnataka Behag), ‘*O Rangasayee*’ (Kamboji), and



‘*Parama Paava Rama*’ (Poorvikalyani). He is one of the very few vocalists to sing ‘*Mahima Teliya Tarama*’ in Sankarabharanam, a kriti by Anai Ayya.

Prof. Sambamoorthy, in his tribute written on June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1957, on the death of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar writes that, ‘He was adept at Pallavi renditions, manodharma, and neraval. His concert was laden with more creative aspects and lesser number of kritis. He appealed to the connoisseur and the ‘lay rasika’ equally’.

Sangita Kalanidhi Prof, Dr. S. Ramanathan said in his lecture demonstration, that he was inspired by Bhagavatar’s sangatis of ‘*Mahima Teliya Tarama*’ in Sankarabharanam and tried to sing them like him. Late C.R. Srinivasan, the knowledgeable critic has praised the quality of Bhagavatar’s singing immensely.





## Rama Bhagavatar breathes his last

**R**ama Bhagavatar breathed his last on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1957. His last concert was in the Kalpathy Viswanatha Temple, for the temple Kumbabishekam, where he had his first concert too. A four-hour marathon, this concert was laced with gems like ‘*Akshayalinga vibho*’, ‘*Varugalamo ayya*’, and ‘*Sattre vilagi irum pillai - sannidhanam maraikudhe*’ in Poorvi Kalyani. He was accompanied by Kandadevi Alagirisamy on the violin and Palghat Mani Iyer on the mridangam.

A fortnight later, as was his practice, he went for his bath and the morning Sandhyavandanam in the Nila river that ran beside his house. He shed his mortal remains as he was offering ‘*arghyam*’ on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1957.

Born on 5<sup>th</sup> June 1888, a young Rama became Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, with assiduous learning and practice. With total focus on the art, with no greed, avarice, or ego, shunning publicity, name, fame, or title thereof from his music, gracefully accepting what

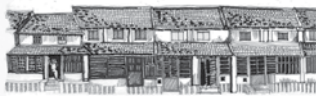




*Rama Bhagavatar with his Son Lakshminarayanan in his last kutchery at the Sri. Viswanatha Swamy temple in Kalpathy*



*Rama Bhagavatar shed his mortal remains at dawn while offering 'arghyam' (offering/worship) on 26th June 1957*



came to him as divine gift from the Lord (as a prasadam), he lived every moment, a Jeevan Mukta, a Nadopasaka, as described by Tyagaraja in his Devagandhari song, '*SeetA vara sangeeta jNanamui*'. **If one were to define what 'Nadopasana' is or what makes a 'Nadopasaka', Palghat Rama Bhagavatar would be the best exemplar in the annals of history.**





# Discography

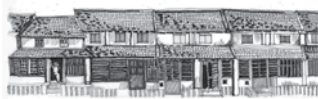
Palghat Rama Bhagavatar recorded music for the Columbia Gramophone Co. Ltd. and other companies in 78 RPM discs.





**Some of the songs that are commercially available :**

1. “Mahima Teliya Tarama”, Sankarabharanam, Rupakam, Anai Ayya
2. “Innamum Oru Daram”, Yadukula Kambhoji, Adi, Gopalakrishna Bharathi
3. “Tirumagal Ulavum”, Tiruppugazh, Kalyana Vasantam
4. “Enta Ninne”, Mukhari, Rupaka, Tyagaraja
5. “Shivaloka Nathanai”, Nadanamakriya, Gopalakrishna Bharati
6. “Bhajare Re Chitta”, Kalyani, Misra Chapu, Muthuswami Dikshitar
7. “Appadurukulu Naithenae”, Javali, Khamas
8. “Varineethey Thingalaley”, Behag
9. “Sinathavar Mudithu”, Hamir Kalyani
10. “Raga Ratna Malika che”, Reetigowla
11. “Maya Theetha Swarupini”, Maya Malavagowla
12. “Vachama Gochara”, Atana



13. “Nijadasa Varada”, Kalyani
14. “Sri. Raghuvara Sugunalaya”, Bhairavi
15. “Kadanuvariki”, Todi
16. “Parama Pavana Rama”, Poorvi Kalyani
17. “Vellimalai”, Kavadi Chindu, Annamalai Kavirayar
18. “Kayil naam pidipathu japamaalai” and ‘Punniyam pol paappam”, Kapi, by Mayuram Samuel Vedanayakam Pillai







# Artists who accompanied Palghat Rama Bhagavatar

## VIOLIN

Malakottai Govindaswamy Pillai

Karur Chinnaswamy Iyer

Mysore Chowdiah

Kumbakonam Rajamanickam Pillai

Papa Venkatramaiah

Kandadevi Alagiriswamy

Erode Viswanatha Iyer

K.N.Viswanatha Iyer

C.R. Mani (his first Son-in-law)

Lalgudi Jayaraman

T.N. Krishnan

M. Chandrasekharan

Gopalakrishna Bhagavatar



## **MRIDANGAM**

Kumbakonam Azhaga Nambia Pillai

Palani Subramania Pillai

Palghat Subba Iyer

Madras Murugabhoopathy

Palghat T.S.Mani Iyer

Dakshinamurthy Pillai

Thanjavur Rama Das

Kalpathy Viswanatha Iyer, who also played on the Kanjira

Palghat Raghu



## **GHATAM**

Thiruvilwamala Vilvadri Iyer

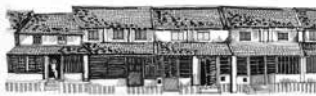
Allangudi Ramachandran

Kothandarama Iyer



## **MOHARSING**

Satchindananda Iyer





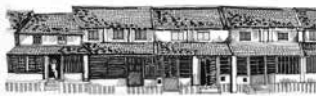
# Seniors/Junior/ Contemporaries of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar

Other artists during Palghat Rama Bhagavatar's lifetime were:

NAME OF THE ARTIST	YEAR
Ramaswamy Sivan	1839 - 1897
Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan	1844 - 1893
Patnam Subramania Iyer	1845 - 1902
Tiruvottiyur Tyagayyer	1845 - 1917
Palghat Anantharama Bhagavatar ( <b>Guru</b> )	1850 - 1920
Poochi Srinivasa Iyengar	1860 - 1919
Mysore Vasudevacharya	1865 - 1961
Bidaram Krishnappa	1866 - 1931
Veena Dhannamal (veena)	1867 - 1938
Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavatar	1877 - 1945
Tiger Varadachariar	1876 - 1950



NAME OF THE ARTIST	YEAR
Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer	1878 – 1921
<b>PALGHAT RAMA BHAGAVATAR</b>	<b>1888 – 1957</b>
Simizhi Sundaram Iyer	1884 – 1927
Kanchipuram Naina Pillai	1887 – 1934
Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar	1890 – 1967
Papanasam Sivan	1890 – 1973
Parur Sundaram Iyer (violin)	1891 – 1974
Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar	1896 – 1974
Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer	1896 – 1970
Mudicondan Venkatrama Iyer	1897 – 1975
Thanjavur Vaidyanatha Iyer (mridangam)	1897 – 1947
Musiri Subramania Iyer	1899 – 1975
Chittoor Subramania Pillai	1898 – 1975
Dandapani Desikar	1908 – 1972
Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer	1908 – 2003
G N Balasubramaniam	1910 – 1965
Alathur Srinivasa Iyer (Alathur Brothers)	1911 – 1980
Madurai Mani Iyer	1912 – 1968
T. Brinda	1912 – 1996
Dr. Pinakapani	1913 – 2013
T. Mukta	1914 – 2007
Vinjamuri Varadaraja Iyengar	1915 – 1991
Alathur Sivasubramania Iyer ( Alathur Brothers)	1916 – 1965
M S Subbulakshmi	1916 – 2004



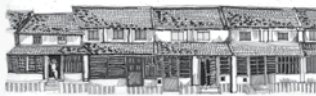
NAME OF THE ARTIST	YEAR
Dr. S. Ramanathan	1917 – 1988
D K Pattammal	1919 – 2009
M L Vasantakumari	1921 – 1990
B Rajam Iyer	1922 – 2009
M D Ramanathan	1923 – 1984
Palghat KV Narayanaswamy (Disciple)	1923 – 2002
Puducode Krishnamurthy (Disciple)	1923 – 1985
Palghat T K Murthy (mridangam)	1924
Voleti Venkateswarulu	1928 – 1989
T K Govinda Rao	1929 – 2011
Dr. Mani Krishnaswamy	1930 – 2002
M S Gopalakrishnan (violin)	1930 – 2013
Manganapalli Balamuralikrishna	1930 – 2016
Tanjore S Kalyanaraman	1930 – 1994
TV Gopalakrishnan (mridangam)	1932
Umayalpuram Sivaraman (mridangam)	1935
R. Vedavalli	1935
Trichur Ramachandran	1940
TV Sankaranarayanan	1945 – 2022
T N Seshagopalan	1948





## Rama Bhagavatar - a founding member of the Thiruvaiyaru Thyagaraja Aradhana - Sri Thyaga Brahma Mahotsava Sabha

Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar's connection with the Thiruvaiyaru Aradhana began when he was in Kumbakonam as a disciple of Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer. Ramaswamy Sivan noted the young Rama's talent and encouraged him to participate in the Aradhana. Ever since, his participation became an unbroken tradition, except for 1924, when he could not attend the same. This prompted him to start off the Kalpathy Tyagaraja Aradhana. He had a divine vision of Tyagaraja commanding him in his sleep to do so. However, Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, seems to have continued his close connections with Thiruvaiyaru celebrations too, as is witnessed from the Memorandum of Association of the Sri. Thyaga Brahma Mahotsava Sabha. Though the Thiruvaiyaru Tyagaraja Aradhana started way back in 1904, it had been registered only after 37 years, with a signed Memorandum of Association on 8th January, 1941 in the Province of Madras. The governing body



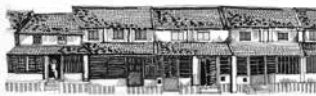
of members include leading musicians of those times and Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar's name features as one of the 38 founding members of the group. This is a clear reflection of how invested he was in the affairs of the Aradhana and its continuance.

## Sri Thyaga Brahma Mahotsava Sabha

MADRAS

### MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION

1. The name of the Association is Sri Thyaga Brahma Mahotsava Sabha, Madras.
2. The Registered office of the Association will be situated in the Province of Madras.
3. The objects for which the Association is established are : -
  - (a) to organise and conduct the celebration of the annual Aradhana and other festivities of Saint Thyagaraja at Tiruvadi;
  - (b) to organise and conduct daily or other worship or celebration at the Samadhi of Saint Thyagaraja at Tiruvadi;
  - (c) to organise and conduct researches in the works of Saint Thyagaraja the great composer;
  - (d) to construct endow and maintain memorials relating to Saint Thyagaraja;
  - (e) to promote and encourage the study of and research in the art and science of music, dancing and allied arts;
  - (f) to establish and conduct schools, colleges or other institutions for imparting instruction in music, dancing and allied arts;
  - (g) to construct, regulate, maintain and administer music halls;
  - (h) to establish and maintain libraries, reading rooms, art galleries, museums and other institutions for the purpose of stimulating and encouraging public interest in music, dancing and allied arts;
  - (i) to organise exhibitions and also conduct music, dramatic dance and other performances;
  - (j) to print, publish, distribute and sell books, pamphlets, notices, pictures and any other literature or matter relating to music, dancing and allied arts;
  - (k) to construct, provide, regulate and maintain suitable buildings, rooms or other structures for the purpose of the Association, and to alter, add to or remove any of them;



- (f) to acquire by purchase, lease or otherwise any property, rights or privileges which the Association for the purposes thereof may from time to time think proper to acquire;
- (m) to sell, improve, manage, develop, mortgage, lease or let, underlease or sublet, dispose of, turn to account or otherwise deal with all or any part of the property of the Association;
- (n) to act as trustees, agents or managers of property endowed by any person for objects similar to those of the Association.
- (o) to make pecuniary grants by way of donation, subscription, allowance, gratuity, guarantee or otherwise to or for the benefit of deserving persons who are worthy of receiving such grants by reason of their skill and proficiency in the science and art of music, dancing or allied arts or their service to the cause of the promotion of learning and research in and the practice of music, dancing or allied arts;
- (p) to draw, make, accept, endorse, execute, negotiate, purchase, lend money upon, discount, hold and dispose of cheques, promissory notes, bills of exchange, drafts and other negotiable documents and contracts, deeds and other instruments and to cancel and vary such instruments;
- (q) to lay out, advance, invest and deal with the Association's money with or to such person and in or upon such investments or securities and generally in such manner as may from time to time be determined;
- (r) to do all such other things as may be necessary, incidental, conducive or convenient to the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

**Explanation :** It is hereby declared that the intention is that none of the objects or powers enumerated above shall be deemed subsidiary or auxiliary merely to the objects mentioned in any one or more of them.

4. The income and property of the Association, whencesoever derived, shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objects of the Association as set forth in this Memorandum of Association.

5. True accounts shall be kept of the sums of money and other articles or things received and expended by the Association and the matter in respect of which such receipt and expenditure takes place and of the property, credits and liabilities of the Association and subject to any reasonable restrictions as to the time and manner of inspecting the same that may be imposed in accordance





with the Rules of the Association for the time being the same shall be open to inspection of the members. Once at least in every year the accounts of the Association shall be examined and the correctness of the accounts certified by one or more auditor or auditors.

6. The names of the members of the Governing Body of the Association are as hereunder :-

**President :**

Rajsh Sir Annamalai Chettiar of Chettinad, Kt., LL.D.

**Trustees :**

1. The Yuvarajah of Pithapuram.
2. Sir R.K. Shanmukham Chetty, K.C.I.E.
3. Sri K. Srinivasan, B.A.,
4. Sri K.S. Jayaram Aiyar, B.A., B.L.,
5. Sri V.S. Thyagaraja Mudaliar.
6. Rao Bahadur Sri C. V. G. T. V. Venkatachalam Chettiar.

**Secretary - Treasurer :**

Sri Musiri Subramania Aiyar.

**Secretary :**

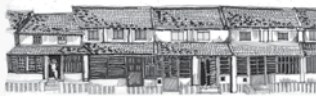
Sri Tiruvizhimizhalai S. Subramania Pillai

**Asst. Secretaries :**

1. Sri C.V. Rajagopalachariar
2. Sri C.S. Ramachandran

**Members of the Governing Body :**

1. Sri T.S. Sabesa Aiyar ✓
2. Sri Tiger K. Varadachariar ✓
3. Sri L.Muthiah Bagavatar ✓
4. Sri A. S. Vaidyanatha Bagavatar ✓
5. Sri T. Vedanta Bagavatar ✓
6. Srimathi Alamelu Jayaram Aiyar ✓
7. Srimathi Bangalore Nagarathnam Ammal ✓
8. Srimathi C Saraswathi Bai ✓
9. Srimathi Balasaraswati ✓
10. Srimathi M.S. Subbalakshmi ✓
11. Sri Palladam Sanjeeva Rao ✓
12. Sri Maharajapuram R. Viswanatha Iyer ✓
13. Sri Ariyakudi T. Ramanuja Iyengar ✓
14. Sri Chembai C.A. Vaidyanatha Bagavatar ✓



15. Sri Chittoor Subramanya Pillai ✓
16. Sri Tiruvadi Annaswami Bagavatai ✓
17. Sri Semmangudi Narayanaswami Iyer ✓
18. Sri Tiruppambaram T.N. Swaminatha Pillai ✓
19. Prof. D. Venkataswami Naidu ✓
20. Sri Parupalli Ramakrishnayya Pantulu ✓
21. Sri T. Chowdiah ✓
22. Sri Rajamanikkam Pillai ✓
23. Sri T.S. Mani Iyer ✓
24. Prof. P. Sambamurthi, B.A., B.L., ✓
25. Sri Muthia Pillai ✓
26. Sri P.S. Veeruswami Pillai ✓
27. Sri N.T. Meenakshisundaram Pillai ✓
28. Sri T.K. Jayarama Aiyar ✓
29. Sri Marungapuri M.G. Gopalakrishna Iyer ✓
30. Sri Rama Bagavatai ✓
31. Sri Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer ✓
32. Sri K. Ponniah Pillai ✓
33. Sri Kunju Iyer ✓
34. Sri Venkatarama Iyer ✓
35. Prof. R. Srinivasan, M.A., ✓
36. Sri C.K. Venkatanarasimhan, M.A., B.L., ✓
37. Sri T.S. Rajagopala Iyengar ✓
38. Sri V. Sami Iyengar ✓

7. We, the several persons whose names and addresses are subscribed hereunder, are desirous of being formed into an Association in pursuance of this Memorandum of Association under Act XXI of 1880.

(Sd.) R.M.V.G. Rama Rao ✓

(Sd.) Alamelu Jayaram ✓

(Sd.) Shanmukam Chetty ✓

(Sd.) K. Srinivasan ✓

(Sd.) P. Sambamoorthy ✓

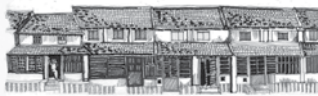
(Sd.) K.S. Jayaram Iyer ✓

(Sd.) C.S. Ramachandran ✓

Dated at Madras this 8th day of January 1941

Witness:

T.S. Ramanuja Iyengar





# Timeline

Dates that define the musical journey of Rama Bhagavatar and how his legacy has been carried forward by the next generation of his family.

1888	Birth
1894 to 1896	Tutelage under his elder brother Venkitakrishna Bhagavatar, Vadakancheri Bhagavatar, Subbarama Bhagavatar
1895 to 1896	Kathakali singing with Venkitakrishna Bhagavatar
1898	Becomes Shishya under Anantharama Bhagavatar, Thondikulam
1900	Becomes disciple of Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer, Kumbakonam
1908	Returns to Mundaya
1910	Settles in Kalpathy and marries Rukmini
1910	onwards - makes several 78 RPM records with Columbia Gramophone Records
1919	Anantharama Bhagavatar passes away in Kalpathy

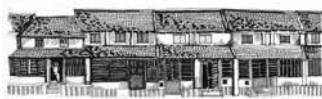


1924	Co-founded the Kalpathy Tyagaraja Aradhana in Kalpathy, Palghat
1927	Sings at The Madras Music Academy during its inaugural year
1938	Sings at The Madras Music Academy, on 29 <sup>th</sup> December, 4.30–7.30 pm accompanied by Prof. Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu – Violin, and Palghat Subbier – Mridangam
1940	Moves into his own home “Guruprasad” in Kalpathy
1957	Rama Bhagavatar passes away
1983	25 <sup>th</sup> December – Rama Bhagavatar’s portrait is inaugurated by Sri. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and Puducode Krishnamurthy at the Sri. Krishna Gana Sabha, Chennai.
1986	December – His portrait is inaugurated by Sri. K. V. Narayanaswamy and Sri. C. S. Krishnan at The Madras Music Academy, Chennai in the presence of Smt. M. L. Vasanthakumari.
1986	Endowment created at The Madras Music Academy, Chennai in the name of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar
2008	December – Day 5 of the morning conference session of The Madras Music Academy was dedicated to the memory of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar. Dr. S. A. K. Durga spoke about him
2014	Part of Rama Dhyana Matom in Kalpathy is renamed in his memory
2023	November 7 <sup>th</sup> – The Old Kalpathy Double Street is renamed Sri. Rama Bhagavatar Road by the local government



2024

January 26th–30th –The Village of Kalpathy celebrates the centenary event of the Kalpathy Tyagaraja Aradhana and the family of Rama Bhagavata sponsors three days of the event.

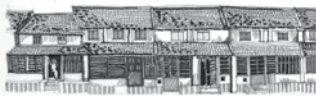




# Reminiscences and Recollections

**M.R. Ramachandran (Grandson of Venkitakrishna Bhagavatar)**

**M**undaya Rama Bhagavatar, later became famous as Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, was a vocalist during his time. Rama Bhagavatar created musicians out of his shishyas. He would bring out the best in every student he taught. Puducode Krishnamoorthy, Palghat K.V. Narayanaswami, Kanjoor Krishnan Namboothiripad are some of the popular disciples of Bhagavatar. He has composed 35 jathiswarams in many ragas. Even as a little boy, when he was his elder brother Venkitakrishna Bhagavatar's protégé on the Kathakali stage, he displayed a great sense of appreciation for melody and knowledge about ragas. Venkitakrishna Bhagavatar introduced many ragas like Dwijavanti, Chenchurutti and so on to the kathakali raga repertoire and many of these were on the suggestion of Rama Bhagavatar. Though the brothers were separated by seven years in age, they collaborated well musically and created a synergy that can come only due to a 'jyeshta-anuja' bandham. Both brothers passed away in the same year.



**K. N. Lakshminarayan (author of *Cauvery to Neela, History of the Tamil Agraharams of Palakkad*)**

Most of the migrants from Tamil Nadu to Kerala were Vedic pundits and astrologers, the rest, roughly about twenty five percent of them were musicians and bhajana sampradaya (nama sankeertanam) singers. These people guarded the art and propagated it quite extensively in Kerala by imparting their knowledge to many young boys and girls. They invested their time and effort in growing the art and reaching out to posterity. Noorani Parameswaran, Thondikulam (Palghat) Anantharama Bhagavatar, are some of the many who passed on the art to others. Palghat Rama Bhagavatar is a very important personality in this list of artists. Much of the music in Kerala is due to his efforts. He was a very affable man, gentle by disposition, caring, and affectionate. Not given to gossip, he was very dignified, not driven by material pursuits. He lived with and for his music. Every evening, he would sing with his tambura in his house after the lamp was lit in the pooja room, and many would throng around his house to listen to a couple of hours of good music. His son, Lakshminarayanan and myself, his namesake, were class mates and friends. I would be in awe of Rama Bhagavatar and his dedication to the art.

**Jayalakshmi – Jayam Athai (last daughter of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar)**

As I was listening to Baby Sreeram sing many of the kritis popularly sung by my father Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, for the centenary celebrations of the Aradhana at Kalpathy, my mind travelled down memory lane, recollecting my father's life and journey as a musician. I recalled his practice, teaching, and singing. We went through tough times at home given the meagre income that was



earned through father's music profession. But my mother and father led very dignified lives and were always helpful and giving to people who were needy. My father taught anybody who wished to learn music with genuine interest. He taught music to a poor ezhava boy named Sadasivam, who approached my father asking to be taught. He would come to learn whenever father was in town. Father taught him many songs, which he would use to earn his living. Sadasivam was inconsolably heartbroken when father expired and paid his tributes with music. This is how he touched so many people's lives around him in the village. Bhagavatar would always pray reciting the sloka,

अनायासेन मरणं विनादैन्येन जीवनं ।  
देहि मे कृपया शम्भो त्वयि भक्तिं अचञ्चलं ॥

(O Lord Siva, Please grant me a peaceful death without pain (anaayasena maranam), a life without trouble or dependence on others for my basic needs (vina dhainyena jeevanam) and a life filled with unwavering, constant bhakti (tvayi bhatim achanchalam) to You, dear Lord.)

He lived a life devoid of unwanted material pursuits and dependency on others and died fifteen days after performing his last concert at the Viswanatha temple in Kalpathy after the Kumbabishekam in 1957. It was as though Lord Shambho blessed him with his requests.

Another very interesting incident about Rama Bhagavatar is worth mentioning. In 1989, many lovers of Carnatic Music in Mumbai decided to celebrate the hundredth birth anniversary of Rama Bhagavatar. Bharatiya Music Sabha in Mumbai organized a special concert by Vidwan Palghat K.V. Narayanaswamy – vocal, C.R.Mani – violin and Balaji – mridangam. There were many





disciples of Rama Bhagavatar present at the concert. One of them, Balan came forward and explained how he learnt music from Rama Bhagavatar. He sang a song in raga Sriranjani – “*Nee Bhakthi Bagya Sudha.*” Balan explained how Bhagavatar had built the swaraprastharas and sahityam. It was much appreciated by the entire audience.

### **A. Ramachandran – (Son-in-law of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar)**

Palghat Rama Bhagavatar shunned publicity and was never touched by greed. He lived for and with his music. A great bhakta of Tyagaraja swamy, he sang his songs with utmost faith and devotion. Rukmini, his wife was a pillar of support to him. Despite the meagre income that came in, she managed with dignity, saved money, and helped the needy, whenever they approached them.

### **Smt. Kanakam (Second daughter of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar)**

Appa was a simple man who lived with the principles of hard work and faith. Even as a young boy of eight, he walked thirty plus miles from Shoranur to Palakkad to reach his guru, Anantharama Bhagavatar’s house. He served him, lived in his house, and learned from him. His guru, later, put him under the tutelage of Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer from whom he had intensive learning for the next eight years. He came back and nursed his Guru Anantharama Bhagavatar through his illness. In those days, the rent to be paid for the house they lived in was fifteen rupees. My mother Rukmini managed the house and finances so well, saved money, and eventually, bought their own house in Kalpathy. Father taught me to sing and I owe my music to him. Appa was devoted to the village, the presiding deities, and his music. He lived a simple life till the very end fully absorbed by his music.



### **Palghat L. V. Krishnan (Son of Vichappa – Kalpathy Viswanatha Iyer)**

Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, along with my father Vichappa (Kalpathy Viswanatha Iyer — (first Guru of Palghat Mani Iyer), Seshan Bhagavatar (father of Palghat Mani Iyer), and mridangam vidwan Chathapuram Subba Iyer (Guru of Palghat Mani Iyer), started the Thayagraja Aradhana in Kalpathy, in 1924, when they could not attend the Thiruvaiyaru function due to train dislocations on account of bad weather. Palghat Rama Bhagavatar was initially called Mundaya Rama Bhagavatar and later became popular as Palghat Rama Bhagavatar. Rama Bhagavatar would put away some money from his income after every concert, as a saving fund for the Aradhana. He would do the Guru pooja during the Aradhana, my father would look after the collections, and the others would take care of the concert schedules and other work. They were all good friends and respected each other and made a great team of musicians. Rama Bhagavatar was invited by the Bharatiya Music and Fine Arts, Bombay to sing in their Annual Festival, in which Palghat Mani Iyer accompanied him on the mridangam. This concert was a highly rated and successful one. There are many unforgettable memories and stories narrated to me by my father, who was a very good friend of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar.

### **Meena Subramaniam (Grand Daughter of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, daughter of his fourth child, Venkataramanan)**

My father Venkataramanan, son of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, would always would tell us what an important role Rukmini paati played in their lives. Thatha would be out on most days for concerts. Paati had to manage a house full of children, their needs, and the rest of the house. Appa has mentioned how stoic



paati was, even in the toughest of times. She lived with dignity and helped the neighbours who were needy. She would buy a big bale of yardage and stitch clothes for all the children from the same cloth, such that they were distinctly identified as Rama Bhagavatar's children! Rama Bhagavatar felt that with changing times, being a musician, and earning a living out of it was not practical. He encouraged all his children to study and be armed with good education. When I wanted to go abroad to study, my Appa was sceptical. He consulted with my paati and she whole heartedly supported my decision to study further, reminding him of what thatha said about education. It was only then that his consent came my way. I am fortunate and happy with the unity among the family members, who get together during the annual shraddham. We eagerly look forward to the singing sessions after that. I listen regularly to '*Chinna nadena*' sung by my father and Seshamani periappa, who fondly recall learning from thatha.

**Subbulakshmi (Student of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, passed away in Kalpathy 2024.)**

My sister Akhilandam was Palghat Rama Bhagavatar's student. I went to class with her and sang with her. She had an asthma problem and I would help her whenever she found it difficult to sing. Despite this, she learnt a lot from Bhagavatar. He taught us '*Ennaganu Rama Bhajana*' in Pantuvarali. Whenever he sang that song, I always felt that Lord Rama came in person before him. Such was the emotion filled bhakti with which he would render the song. He has taught me '*Easane indha ezhaikku iranga thaamadama*' in Chakravakam by Papanasam Sivan, which he would sing beautifully. I have sung for almost all the Aradhana



festivals over the years. He was very fond of my sister and me, who he considered yet another daughter of his. He would call me Subbi and my sister, Akhilandam. I feel blessed to have learnt from him though not for long. We lived happily in the Agraharam with no hierarchy or difference, shared, and helped each other as a large community.

**Roja Kannan, Kalaimamani Awardee, Bharatanatyam dancer (Grand Daughter of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar, daughter of his fourth child, Venkataramanan)**

I recall my mother narrating an incident, when she came into the household as a new bride. She came into Palghat from Vadakara, and was very young girl. She was clueless about how to be in a large household of a Bhagavatar. Rukmini paati asked all the ladies to go to the river, take a bath, wash their clothes, and then come home. My mother was scared and trembled at the thought of having to do this, as she had never done something like this before. Thatha (Palghat Rama Bhagavatar) saw her petrified looks and quickly interjected by saying that she need not venture out and that she can go and take a bath in the backyard of the house. He also told paati not to make her do things she was uncomfortable with. That's the everlasting memory of thatha held by my mother. From that, I realise why so many speak so graciously about him being a compassionate soul and a good friend. I have also heard from the elders, how he put his music above the money it made for him. Even now, when I must deal with programs that bring no money, I think of him, his large-hearted attitude to life, and gain a lot of emotional stamina from it to accept the ways of life and move on with total focus to the art on hand.



**An article written by Gana Kalanidhi, Dr. Vinjamuri Varadaraja Iyengar about Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar in Telugu (translated into English by Sandhya Vinjamuri-Giri)**

Palghat Sri. Rama Bhagavatar's music performances used to be held frequently in Music Sabhas. Many audiences, who were interested in listening to traditional music, used to enjoy his divine music. Rama Bhagavatar would sing according to the old tradition, without singing too many songs, just four or five Kritis from the compositions of the musical trinity—Tyagaraja



Swamy, Muthuswami Dikshitar, and Shyama Sastry. He would give more importance to Neraval and Kalpana Swarams. The concert commenced with a Varnam. After singing the Kritis, he would sing Ragam Tanam Pallavi. For the raga elaboration, he would choose either Bhairavi, Todi, Kalyani, Sankarabharanam, Saveri, or Dhanyasi and elaborate it for a long time. After singing a weighty (Ghanam) Tanam and a Pallavi set either to Adi Talam or Rupaka Talam or Triputa Talam, he would give the Mridangist a chance to show his expertise. After that, he would sing a Slokam, a Padam, a Javali, a Tillana, and a Thiruppugazh, and conclude the concert with Mangalam. By then, it would be more than a four-hour performance.



Bhagavatar was very traditional. He would not drink coffee or soda in the middle of the concert. His was a Tri-Sthayee (three octaves) Sareeram (voice). The audiences would sit spellbound listening to him sing Sarvalaghu Swarams. Sri. Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu used to say, “if you want me to accompany someone, put me for Palghat Rama Bhagavatar”.

### **Reminiscences by Palghat Mani Iyer**



In the village of Mundayi, near Shoranur, lived Munsif Kasturi Ranganatha Iyer and Alamelu Ammal, who had five children: Narayanan, Sangameshwaran, Venkata Krishnan, Veeraraghavan, and Raman.

Venkata Krishnan was learning Carnatic music from Vadakkancheri Rama Bhagavatar. When Raman was about eight or nine years old, he too came under the tutelage of Vadakkancheri Rama Bhagavatar, along with his elder brother.

Additionally, he learned Kathakali music from Vasudevan Namboodiri, a renowned Kathakali singer. Over time, Venkata Krishnan dedicated himself entirely to Kathakali music and became known as Venkata Krishna Bhagavatar. He was later accepted into Kerala Kalamandalam, a premier institution for performing arts. Venkata Krishnan took Raman along with him for Kathakali performances. However, after a few days, he told Raman: “Kathakali is performed entirely at night. So do not worry, just focus on singing for concerts.”



## **Raman's Musical Journey**

Following this, Raman became a disciple of Thondikulam Anantharama Bhagavatar, who treated him like his own son. Just as he constantly engaged in chanting the name of Lord Rama, he affectionately addressed Raman as “Rama, Rama”. Anantharama Bhagavatar was not just a music scholar but also a Harikatha exponent (musical storyteller). He took Raman along for all his concerts, not just as a singer but also as an assistant in background vocals.

In addition to Anantharama Bhagavatar, Raman sought guidance from Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer. Under the combined mentorship of all his Gurus, Raman blossomed into a complete musician, eventually gaining fame as Palakkad Rama Bhagavatar.

## **Rise of Palakkad Rama Bhagavatar**

During the time Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar began rising in prominence, Palakkad Rama Bhagavatar was already an established musician. His music was often described by Palakkad Mani Iyer as *“pure and unadulterated Carnatic music.”*

Rama Bhagavatar was a humble and reserved man, preferring solitude. His house in Kalpathy, directly opposite Mani Iyer's residence, was named “Guru Prasad,” reflecting his deep reverence for his Gurus.

Many great musicians, including Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, G.N. Balasubramaniam (GNB), Mysore T. Chowdiah, Papa Venkatramaiah, and Musiri Subramania Iyer, frequently visited Mani Iyer's home. Although Rama Bhagavatar was aware of their presence, he never stepped outside to meet them. At most, he would watch from the verandah or while bathing in the Kalpathy river.



## **An Unforgettable Visit by Rajamanickam Pillai**

One day, Kumbakonam Rajamanickam Pillai came to meet Mani Iyer and after some conversation, he asked, “Where is Rama Bhagavatar’s house?”

Mani Iyer pointed across the street and jokingly said: “It is right there. Walk slowly, or else he might run away!”

Rajamanickam Pillai went to Rama Bhagavatar’s house, knocked on the door, and as soon as it slightly opened, he pushed it wide open and called out, “Anna!”

He declared, “Today, I am having coffee in your house and staying here the entire day!”

With no means of escape, Rama Bhagavatar had to reluctantly sit with him in conversation. He remained mostly silent, listening rather than speaking.

A similar situation arose when GNB visited—Rama Bhagavatar was compelled to host him as well!

## **Turning Down Prestigious Offers**

Once, M.A. Kalyana Krishna Bhagavatar, a distinguished Veena Vidwan and a court musician at the Thiruvananthapuram Navaratri Mandapam, met Rama Bhagavatar by chance. He told him, “Performing at the Navaratri Mandapam is a great honor. I will introduce you to the palace authorities, and then you can perform there.”

Rama Bhagavatar immediately declined, saying: “Oh no! I do not wish to perform in such places. It is too much trouble for me!”

Later, he received a letter offering him the position of Principal





at Swathi Thirunal Music College in Thiruvananthapuram, but he refused, and the position was eventually taken by GNB.

### **Unwavering Devotion to Kalpathy**

One day, Mani Iyer's father advised him:

“You should move to Chennai. Only then will you gain recognition.”

To this, Rama Bhagavatar replied:

“All I need is my Perumal (Lord Vishnu), the Kalpathy river for my daily bath, and my Sandhya Vandana (prayers). Nothing else matters.”

He continued living in Kalpathy, despite having opportunities elsewhere.

### **Final Years and Divine Departure**

In 1924, Rama Bhagavatar had planned to travel to Tiruvaiyaru for Thyagaraja Aradhana, but he missed his train at Olavakkode Junction. Deeply disappointed, he resolved never to leave Kalpathy again and instead began conducting Thyagaraja Aradhana at the Kalpathy Ram Dhyana Madom.

From then on, he invited great musicians like Chembai, Ariyakudi, Musiri, Flute Mali, Madurai Mani Iyer, and Rajamanickam Pillai to perform at Kalpathy.

His favorite composition was “Varugalamo, Aiyya?”—a song that pleads for the Lord's grace.

On June 4, 1957, at the Kalpathy Sivan Temple Kumbabhishekam, Rama Bhagavatar sang “Varugalamo” with profound emotion, bringing tears to the audience. This was his final concert.



A few days later, he followed his daily routine, walking to the Kalpathy river in the morning. After his bath and Sandhya Vandana, he sat down on a rock by the riverbank, chanting the Krishna Ashtakam.

A flower vendor, noticing water splashing, said,  
“Swami, if you sit there, water will splash on you. Please move a little.”

But Rama Bhagavata continued chanting with deep devotion.

As if answering the question in his favorite song, “Varugalamo, Aiyya?” (May I come, O Lord?), the divine Chidambaresan (Lord Shiva) listened—and took him into his eternal embrace.

At that very moment, Rama Bhagavata peacefully passed away, seated on the riverbank, merging into the divine, as if his entire life had been a song of devotion leading to that final note.

*(Published in the book dedicated to Padma Bhushan Awardee Palghat Mani Iyer : “Mridanga Medai- Palghat Mani Iyer” – published by Ananda Vikatan and compiled by Charukesi, a multi-dimensional writer and a columnist for Tamil journals. The details in the book were recalled by Mridangam Sri Rajamani, Son of Padma Bhushan Sri Palghat Mani Iyer.)*



## Reminiscences by Dr. TV Gopalakrishnan

References to Palghat Rama Bhagavatar should include mention of his Guru, Tondikulam Anantharama Bhagavatar, who is also known as Palghat Anantharama Bhagavatar. Anantharama Bhagavatar's son and disciple, Sami Bhagavatar, was a talented singer who eventually settled in Singapore.



Palghat Rama Bhagavatar and my father Tripunithura Viswanatha Bhagavatar were Anantharama Bhagavatar's disciples. My father studied with him for about six to seven years and then around the time he was in seventh class of school, shifted to Irunyaalakuda. Anantharama Bhagavatar took Rama Bhagavatar with him, to Kumbakonam and Thanjavur and facilitated the gurukulavasam of Rama Bhagavatar under Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer.

My grandfather Gopalakrishna Bhagavatar, a violin vidwan was the Asthana vidwan of the Kochi Maharaja Samasthanam. He has accompanied Rama Bhagavatar in many of his concerts as a violinist. Later, CR Mani Iyer accompanied him a lot.

Rama Bhagavatar was a highly respected vidwan in Kerala.

His music can be described as 'sedate, placid music' and he would develop a raga alapana elaborately. As a person, he was a simple man who decided to stay on in Kalpathy and dedicated himself to spreading music around him.

My mentor, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavatar, had the utmost respect for Rama Bhagavatar and his music. On at least three or



four occasions, he formally recommended Rama Bhagavata's name to The Madras Music Academy for the Sangita Kalanidhi title. This honour however, was never conferred upon him.

Apart from others, he taught music to Palghat KV Narayanaswamy and Pudukote Krishnamurthy who developed as fine, eminent vocalists.

*(Padma Bhushan awardee, Sangita Kalanidhi Dr. TV Gopalakrishnan is a senior mridangam maestro, also adept in both Carnatic and Hindustani vocal music and the violin. He hails from Tripunithura and studied with his father Viswantha Bhagavata and Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavata.)*





# Songs on Palghat Rama Bhagavatar

**Composed by Vidwan Sri Puducode Krishnamurthy  
(disciple of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar)**



Puducode Krishnamurthy, the disciple of Palghat Sri Rama Bhagavatar, composed nearly 200 songs on different deities and subjects. Two of the songs, published here are about the role of a Guru in one's life, importance of Guru bhakti and the grace he received from his Guru.



## SONG 1\*

**Raga** - Gowrimanohari

**Tala** - Khanda chapu

### Pallavi

*Guru Kataaksham*

*Naalu Purushaarthavum Arulum*

*(The grace of the Guru (Guru Kataaksham) bestows all four Purushaarthas (Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha)*

### Anupallavi

*Tharunavaaridam Pol*

*Taapaharanamaam Sathguru*

*(Like a young rain-bearing cloud, the Guru's feet remove suffering)*

### Charanam

*Athmabandhuvaayiha*

*Verarum Illa Gathi*

*Athinaal Sathgurupaadam*

*Anisham Smarikka Nee*

*Padmapatra Jalakanam Pole*

*Pattuthaleny vaazhnnidum*

*Vazhikaattum Vaathsalya Nidhiyaam Sathguru*

*(There is no greater companion than the Guru; He is the ultimate refuge. Thus, always meditate upon the divine feet of the Sadguru. Just as a drop of water on a lotus leaf does not remain in one place, human life is fleeting. The Sadguru- a treasure of compassion, alone can show the true path)*



## SONG 2\*

Raga - Sama

Tala - Rupakam

### Pallavi

*Marannidaathe Nee Maname'*

*Sathguru Pada Malaraniye*

*(O mind, never forget the sacred lotus feet of the Sadguru)*

### Anupallavi

*Arivoli Tharum Niramathiyam*

*Acharya Paadam Nee*

*(The Guru's divine feet shine like the full moon,*

*Radiating the light of wisdom and true knowledge)*

### Charanam

*Athmabodha Deepametti*

*Ajnathayam Irulakatti*

*Padmapatra Jalakanamiva Jeevamukthiyekum Paadam*

*(The Guru's feet kindle the lamp of self-realization, Dispersing the darkness of ignorance.*

*Like a drop of water on a lotus leaf, They bestow the state of Jivanmukti (liberation while living)*

\*These songs have been edited / notated by Dr. G. Baby Sreeram along with 100 compositions of Sri Puducode Krishnamurthy and released as a book under the project PKM 100.









**Photos  
and  
Memories**





*The Guruprasad Home, 2006*



*The name "Guruprasad" inscribed on the front door frame*





*Colourful chariots during the annual Rathotsavam (chariot festival) at Viswanatha Swamy Temple at Kalpathy in Palakkad. The temple, dedicated to Lord Viswanatha or Shiva and built over 700 years ago, usually celebrates the festival during November. This event has been celebrated for centuries and devotees crowd the streets in large numbers. As the chariots pass, people can be seen celebrating throughout the route. Veda Parayanam and cultural programmes are held. The final three days bring the gigantic chariots to the roads and revelry reaches its crescendo. It is among the most extraordinary sights that Kalpathy Agraharams have to offer.*





*Old Kalpathy Lakshmi Narayana Swamy temple near the Agraharam of Rama Bhagavata, in 2023*





*Old Kalpathy Lakshmi Narayana swamy – Anjaneya Vahanam*



*The centenary celebrations of Kalpathy Tyagaraja Aradhana in January 2024 – chief guest was Sangita Kalanidhi, Padma Bhushan awardee, Madurai Sri. T. N. Seshagopalan*





*Sangita Kalanidhi, Padma Bhushan awardee, Madurai  
Sri. T. N. Seshagopalan awards the winners of the Rama Bhagavata  
Charitable Trust Carnatic Music Competition, 2024,  
during Tyagaraja Aradhana in Kalpathy.*



*Sri. M. R. Ramachandran*





*Sri. Aravind Choodamani*



*Sangita Kalanidhi, Padma Bhushan awardee, Madurai  
Sri. T. N. Seshagopalan*





*Kalaimamani Roja Kannan and her disciples*



*Smt. Baby Sreeram*





# Photographs and Collections of Palghat Sri Rama Bhagavatar



*Sri. Rama Bhagavatar with his wife Smt. Rukmini*



*Sri. Rama Bhagavatar with a grandchild, daughter, and daughters-in-law*





*Sri. Rama Bhagavata with son Sri. M. R. Venkatramanan,  
a grandchild, daughter, and daughters-in-law*



*Undated, old photo of the Kasi Viswanatha Swamy Temple, Kalpathy*





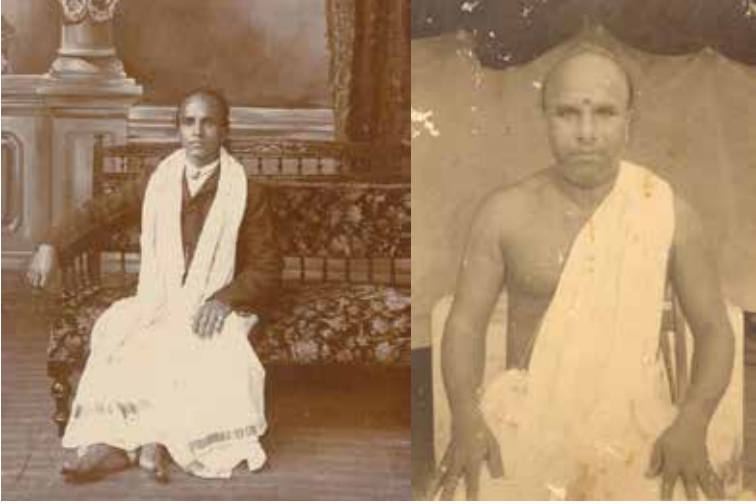


*Sri. Rama Bhagavatar with his wife, Smt. Rukmini,  
and his brother-in-law, Narayanan*



*Sri. Rama Bhagavatar in puja at his son's place in Chennai*





*Two portraits of Sri. Rama Bhagavatar taken nearly 30 years apart*

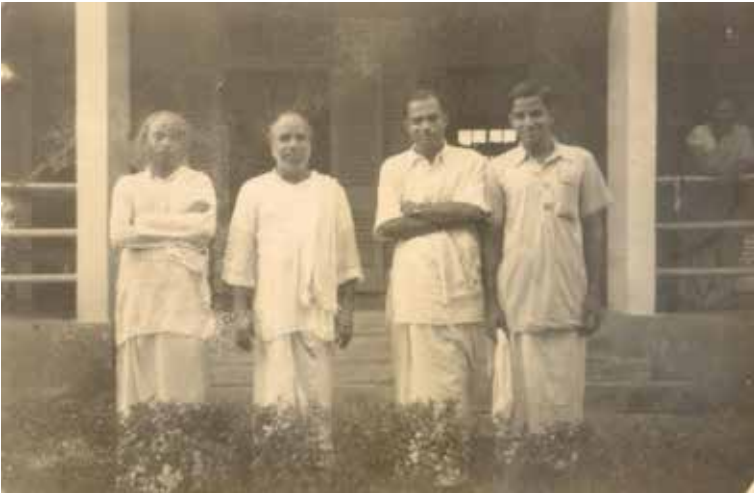


*Sri. Rama Bhagavatar used to read Ramayanam, Srimad Bhagavatam, and Devi Mahathmyam regularly. Seen here with his wife Smt. Rukmini and granddaughter, Lalitha*





*A rare photo Sri. Rama Bhagavatar's last kutchery accompanied by his son, Sri. Lakshminarayanan, Sri. Kandadevi Alagirisamy on the violin, and Sri. Palghat Mani Iyer on the mridangam.*



*Sri. Rama Bhagavatar with Sri. Subba Iyer, Sri. C. R. Mani Iyer, and son Sri. Seshamani*





*Sri. Rama Bhagavata being sent off from Chennai Central station  
by his Rasikas*



Rama Bhagavata was a devout Rama bhakta and would recite the Seetha Kalyanam (Bala Kanda) and Rama Pattabhishekam (Yuddha Kanda) from Srimad Valmiki Ramayana. He wrote down both these parts. By writing them down, he was able to visualise, reinforce in his mind, and interpret the scripture in his own way, to establish a cosmic connection with the Lord. Below are snapshots of the text he wrote, preserved by the family.

① இராம சேவை  
 இராமசேவையென்பது சிவசேவையென்பது  
 1 கிராமம் என்கிறபடியாவது  
 கைகேதவாமநிவயிற்  
 மயசொல்லி நெடுநோக்கி  
 மயமென்றுவருகிறது  
 2 மூலமென்றுகிறபடியாவது  
 மயமென்றுகிறபடியாவது  
 மயமென்றுகிறபடியாவது  
 3 மயமென்றுகிறபடியாவது  
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 மயமென்றுகிறபடியாவது

① இராம சேவை  
 இராமசேவையென்பது சிவசேவையென்பது  
 1 கிராமம் என்கிறபடியாவது  
 கைகேதவாமநிவயிற்  
 மயசொல்லி நெடுநோக்கி  
 மயமென்றுவருகிறது  
 2 மூலமென்றுகிறபடியாவது  
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 மயமென்றுகிறபடியாவது

Hand written notes of Sri. Rama Bhagavata





*Rama Bhagavatar's "Chapala Kattai," which he used for his namasankeertanam, harikatha, and bhajans (Chapala is a traditional percussion instrument)*

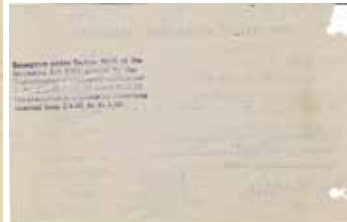


*Rama Bhagavatar's WM Kratt Co. chromatic pitch instrument dating back to 1928. (used to provide a pitch reference for musicians).*





*Palm leaf horoscope of Lakshminarayanan (5<sup>th</sup> child of Rama Bhagavatar) made in 1930. The palm leaves are first dried. Writers use 'ezhutthaani' [an iron stylus] to inscribe letters on it.*



## Pictures of his Home – Year 2007



*A pristine Agraharam street with all the homes preserved traditionally in 2007. Rama Bhagavatar's home is to the right of the picture with the name "Guruprasad" painted on the grills. The Old Kalpathy Lakshminarayana swamy temple is seen at the far end of the street.*



*The home is about 23 feet wide and 200 feet long. The village homes were typically, this size with an entrance on the road and a rear door to the river.*





*The homes in the Agraharam had a “thinnai” - a raised platform running along the entire front of the house, with wooden or stone pillars to support it. During the late 1970’s folks started to wall / grill / cover these welcoming spaces. The thinnai was a space where a casual visitor was received and could rest, elders could hang out in the evening, young could play and the community could be fed during festivals.*



*Folks sat in the thinnai and made small talk across the street with their neighbours. There was great bonding amongst the neighbours. Food, information, and gossip was all shared.*





*The homes had a huge teakwood door with heavy latches. The vestibule from the 'thinai' led to the living spaces inside the home and one could see from the front door to the end of the home that led to the river.*



*The inner hall or Koodam of Rama Bhagavatar's home was split into two for convenience. The hall had two large benches where the elders would sit/sleep. The granite floors on one side and the red oxide floor on the other shone with the incandescent bulbs. The home had photographs of Saint Tyagaraja, Guru Anantharama Bhagavatar, and Rama Bhagavatar.*





*The homes were all made with lime and laterite bricks for masonry and teakwood for structure and supports. The typical home had a Thinnai (welcoming area open to the street) • Rezhi (vestibule) • Arai (storage area for grains) • Thazhvaram ( tapered roof run off rain water) • Macchukul (storage room), a second room for storage again called Arai, a Maadi or Macchu (wooden steps leading to the first floor) • Koodam (hall) • Adukulai + kenaru (kitchen and well - tapered roof that recharges well) • Kottukoodam(storage of clean vessels) • Kolla thazhvaram (space between the kitchen and second courtyard) • Muttham(second courtyard where the Tulasi is placed) • Rendam Kattu (storage area for coconuts, dry leaves, and twigs for fire) • Maatu thozuvam (cattle shed) • Kollai thazhvaram (a variety of vegetables, roots, coconut, etc. are grown here and this space leads to the river). The toilets were at the end of this space before the 1960's.*





*A view of the open courtyard from the 'rendam kattu'*




*A view of the Kollai (backyard) that led to the river*



INDIAN POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS DEPARTMENT

**SEND BY AIR**  
By  
**TELEGRAM**



No. 8

Class \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prefix 1 X cod

Recd. from cm5 Sent at \_\_\_\_\_ H \_\_\_\_\_ M  
 By a To \_\_\_\_\_ Office Stamp \_\_\_\_\_  
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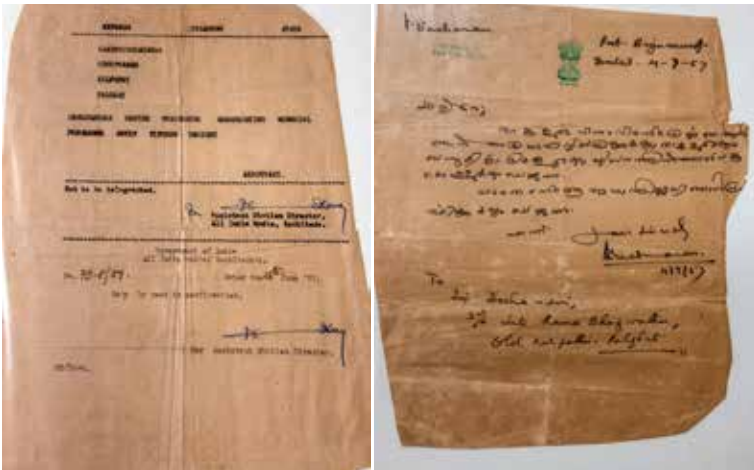
Classified in an Office of Origin		Day	Hour	Minute	Extra Information	Time
Kozhikode		26	10		5:30 p.m.	76

TO

Kozhikode  
 K. K. Srinivasan  
 G. Srinivasan Kalfath Raju  
 Condolences domine bhagavata  
 broadcasting memorial programme  
 8:30 PM Tonight  
 & a flash over

N. B.—The name of the sender, if telegraphed, should be written after, but separated from the text.

The telegram sent by AIR Kozhikode on the news of Rama Bhagavata's passing away. On the same day, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1957 – there was a memorial broadcast at 7.15pm on Kozhikode radio.



Letter of condolence from Sri. Vella Eacharan Iyyani, MP, Palakkad Lok Sabha Constituency







*Rama Bhagavatar's wife, Rukmini in the late 1980's. She was stoic, the matriarch of the home, and her silent sacrifices enabled Sri. Rama Bhagavatar and their large family excel in their respective arts and professions.*

Account No. 78/11

INDIAN BANK, LIMITED  
Date 15 APR 1957

Place PALGHAT

Savings Bank / ~~Current~~ / ~~Fixed Deposit~~ / ~~Cash Certificate~~.

Name M. R. RAMA BHAGAVATHAR  
(IN BLOCK LETTERS)

Address "GURU PRASAD"  
KALPATHI P. O.  
PALGHAT.

Signature Rama Bhagavathar

SPECIMEN SIGNATURE

*Rama Bhagavatar had opened a Bank account just 40 days before his demise.*



# Sri. Rama Bhagavatar's Portraits



*Inauguration of portraits of Sri. Rama Bhagavatar by Pudukode Sri. Krishnamoorthy and Sangita Kalanidhi Sri. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer at Krishna Gana Sabha, 1983*



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7. <https://sites.google.com/view/ktac-ramabhagavatar/home> - [KTAC - tribute to Rama Bhagavatar](https://sites.google.com/view/ktac-ramabhagavatar/home)
8. <https://www.ramabhagavatar.com/venkitakrishna-bhagavathar---the-man-who-redefined-kathakali-vocal-music.html>
9. Sri. Thyaga Brahma Mahotsava Sabha, Memorandum of Association, 1941, copy of the published document
10. [www.100agraharams.com](http://www.100agraharams.com) - The 100 Agraharams project is a video documenting over 100 agraharams in Palakkad.



## Support the Vision of the Rama Bhagavatar Charitable Trust

The Rama Bhagavatar Charitable Trust is dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich traditions of **Carnatic music** and **Vedic heritage**. Each year, the trust identifies and encourages upcoming talent through competitions, awarding deserving musicians to inspire their journey. Additionally, the trust is deeply committed to the promotion of **Sanatana Dharma** and the safeguarding of our **Vedic heritage**.

Your support can help sustain these noble efforts and ensure that the legacy of our culture thrives for generations to come.

If you wish to contribute, your **“YatKinchith”** (humble offering) is most welcome.

### Bank Details:

**Account Name:** Rama Bhagavatar Charitable Trust

**Account Number:** 001001000772553

**IFSC Code:** CIUB0000001

**Bank:** City Union Bank

**Branch:** T. Nagar

### Or via GPay:

+91 94990 22560



We are deeply grateful for your generosity in supporting this cause.



## A Tribute to a Musical Legend



Sriram (Hari), son of Sri Lakshminarayanan and grandson of Sri Rama Bhagavata, runs an IoT business in Chennai with his wife, Soumya. The couple returned to Kalpathy Agraharam to serve the community. He is currently documenting the 100 Agraharams of Palakkad. A passionate traveler, writer, and photographer, Sriram's interests span temple architecture, wildlife, and birds. Through this book, Sriram fulfills his vision of honoring his grandfather's legacy.

Sivapriya Krishnan is a Carnatic Vocalist, a disciple of Sangita Kalanidhi R Vedavalli. She holds a MBA degree from Symbiosis Institute of Business Management and a Masters in Music from the University of Madras.

She has had a long corporate career in senior Brand Marketing positions and till recently was the VP Strategy and Planning at Wunderman Thompson and now consults independently.



She writes on music and features biographical life sketches on senior musicians for Sruti Magazine. Some of the artists featured have been Hariprasad Chaurasia, Lalgudi GJR Krishnan and Lalgudi Viji, Aruna Sairam, Chitravina Ravikiran, Malladi Brothers, Sikkil Mala Chandrasekar, Embar Kannan, to name a few. She writes for the Shanmukha Journal of Shanmukhananda Sabha, Mumbai. Apart from this she runs a website titled [www.chennaidecemberseason.com](http://www.chennaidecemberseason.com), with two other friends, a site that comes alive, during the music season every December.

She takes great interest in travel, musicology, languages, handloom textiles, handicrafts, temples, vedanta, Indian scriptures and texts.

## RAMA BHAGAVATAR- RECOLLECTIONS BY VIDWANS

**Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer:** “His was a ‘vaideekam’ music because, it was pure Carnatic classicism. He enveloped himself with Rama nama, whom he meditated upon relentlessly. His music filled the heart of listeners.”

**Palghat KV Narayanaswamy:** “He was a gentle and kind person. As Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer’s disciple, he comes from the direct lineage of St. Tyagaraja. I’m fortunate to have learnt from him.”

**Puducode Krishnamurthy :** “My Guru Palghat Rama Bhagavatar spread good sangeetam and propagated it to the people of Kerala. He decided to stay back in Kalpathy and developed a taste for good quality music in people in and around him. He would never discuss or talk about other musicians or their music. He was totally absorbed and involved in his music. I had the good fortune of learning from him. Like Tyagaraja says Dasarathe nee runamu deerpa naa tarama, I am eternally indebted to him for what he has given me.”

**Chatapuram Subba Iyer (Palghat Mani Iyers’ Guru)**

“Just listen to the music of Palghat Rama Bhagavatar. That is enough to fill you.”

*‘Full many a gem of purest ray serene, the dark unfathomed caves of the ocean bear’,* said Thomas Gray. Many beautiful things and many a great person go unnoticed, unsung with blank pages in the chapters of history. Palghat Rama Bhagavatar was one such gem in the Carnatic firmament, about whom little has been written or recorded.

This book pays tribute to a music legend who dedicated his life to pure classical Carnatic music, exhibiting absolute surrender to the art without pursuing any publicity. A disciple of Thondikulam Anantharama Bhagavatar and Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer, he was a name to reckon with. As the Asthana Vidwan of the Mysore Samasthanam, he brought great pride to both himself and the art he pursued.

For the first time, 136 years after his demise, a book has been compiled on him, thanks to Sriram (Hari), the grandson, who took on the responsibility of overseeing this task. Sivapriya Krishnan, has authored the book after much research of facts about him, in a manner that makes it a compelling read. The book is not just a biographical sketch, but a cherished preservation of his music, a tribute to the great Nadopasaka that he was and as one who devoted himself to music, unfettered, unencumbered by the distractions of the world. It is hoped that musicians, students, enthusiasts, historians of music, and anyone reading this, would find it an interesting and valuable possession.