

Write-up on TKG

T K GOVINDA RAO or Tripunithura Krishna Govinda Rao (Born 21 April 1929 - Died 18 September 2011) was born to Sri. Krishna Embrandri and Smt. Kamamma. He was a scholarly Indian Carnatic Classical Music Vocalist. TKG did his initial schooling at a local school in Tirupunitura, Kerala and did 4 years of Kavya Bhushan course from Maharaja College of Sanskrit. In 1949 he joined the then Central College of Carnatic Music, Madras where under the care of great musicians like Sri. Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer, Sri. Tiruppampuram Swaminatha Pillai and Smt. T. Brinda, he completed the course of Sangita Vidwan and secured distinction.

TKG was fortunate to have as his guru, the founder-Principal of Central College of Carnatic Music, Sri Musiri Subrahmanya Iyer. A rigorous gurukula training spread over 15 years followed by many years of close association with his Guru, marks him as a faithful representative of the Musiri style of Bhava-laden renderings.

A career that spanned over five decades brought him assignments such as Lecturer, Govt. of Tamil Nadu Music College, Chennai; Producer-Music, All India Radio, Chennai and finally Chief Producer-Music in All India Radio, New Delhi. In addition, he had been associated with the Music Academy, Chennai, as a member of the Advisory Committee, Central Sangeeth Natak Academy and the ICCR as also with Universities of Benares, Delhi, Madras, Annamalai and Bangalore in various capacities.

Titles like Sangeetha Kalanidhi, Sangeetha Choodamani, Sangita Sastra Ratnakara, Sangita Ratnakara, Ganakala Tilaka, Sangita Samrat besides the Academy Award from the Central Sangeeth Natak Academy and Asthana Vidvan of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham have been conferred on him.

He was a genius in niraval and swaram singing and that it requires understanding to really appreciate the uniqueness of this 'bani.' They always varied according to the mood and style of the song. He never repeated any phrase in either. He had his own, very logical, commas, semicolons and full stops for swara singing. Strict adherence to grammar and any deviation was handled with sophistication.

He strictly followed the Musiri bani of choosing the right line of Sahityam for delineation keeping in mind the meaning, and not once sacrificing the Hrasva/Deerga of the words. TKG was a veteran of the old school who has played a prominent role in the preservation of all that is precious in the truly classical rendition of Carnatic Music.

TKG has compiled and edited the compositions of great composers. The uniqueness of his compilation is that he has written the script both in diacritical Roman (International script) & Devanagari script (Indian script) with meanings in English and SRGM notations that are both simple and descriptive.

The music books compiled and edited by TKG and brought out by Ganamandir Publications include:

- Varnamanjari consisting of 50 Tana and Pada varnams
- Compositions of Thyagaraja consisting of 688 compositions
- Compositions of Mudduswami Dikshitar consisting of 472 compositions
- Composition of Syama Shastri, Subbaraya Shastri and Annaswami Shastri consisting of 71, 12 and 13 compositions respectively of the said composers
- Thyagaraja Aradhana consisting of the Ghana raga pancharatna kritis of Saint Thyagaraja
- Compositions of Swati Thirunal consisting of 391 compositions
- Varnasagam consists of 415 Adi Tala, Ada Tala and other tala varnams, Chauka varnams, Pada varnams, Ragamalika varnams and Daru varnams.

Presented in comprehensive volumes, the common scripts help to bridge the language barrier while preserving the essence and identity of the original that remain characteristically and traditionally Indian. The sahitya is provided in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

Govinda Rao also excelled as a teacher, one who admired and believed in the gurukula system, which, he felt, created an 'emotional integration between the teacher and the taught and provided immense scope for creativeness.'

Last but not the least, TKG is the first playback singer in Malayalam. The 1948 film 'Nirmala' came after a seven-year hiatus. It was the first to introduce playback singing in the language. Govinda Rao had the honour of being the first playback singer. The songs, 'Arabikadallile kochu raniye pole,' a ragamalika in Aarabhi, Bouli, Kalyani, Kedaragowla and Surutti; and the popular romantic duet 'Paaduka poonkuyile ' went on to become huge hits.