

Idol 7 - Sharath - The Musical Enigma

Impressions of an Amateur Musician

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1. Introduction

Time and again, Indian film music comes across people who break the shackles and monotony of the musical boundaries. They may be composers, singers or arrangers. For example, in singers Mohammed Rafi, Asha, and Janaki brought a revolution in the way the songs had to be sung emphasizing the emotional content. Naushad, the composer, was responsible for envisioning such emotional delivery and proper enunciation, who even the venerable and versatile MSV considers his guru. Until then, the songs were just songs, however after the stellar contribution from defining artists, songs became a part of the hearts of million people irrespective of whether they were musically literate or illiterate. Similarly in the arrangers, many like Louis Banks have left an indelible impact on the music scene.



*Photo courtesy:
Damodar Narayanan*

However there are some artists, who are so innovative that initial appreciation of their work would be extremely difficult. Their work may seem extremely complicated, difficult and may even appear pointless. Mathematics is replete with geniuses like these and to mention two of them - Georg Cantor (who compared infinite sets) and Gregory Galois (who was responsible for some advanced group theory principles). In fact, when Cantor came up with the idea to measure infinite sets, he was categorically discouraged and ridiculed by mathematicians and theologians alike. [Poincare and Weyl](#) dismissed his ideas as grave disease whereas Christians were worried about the non-uniqueness of infinity that Cantor was proposing (which would imply the ultimate infinity (oxymoron) which was 'God').

In western classical music, Debussy was one such innovator. His adherence to non-formal [resolutions](#) of harmonies and chord progressions earned him the wrath of many peers. But now, long after his death, his work is hailed as the transition period.

In Indian film music too, occasionally one comes across a person who embodies the defining qualities of a revolutionary. And it is even rarer to find somebody who dons multiple roles of composer, singer and arranger and excels in each of it. Harder even, to find that he/ she would also possess the ability to create new musical forms which are unheard before and/or can go sit at the traditional desk and come up with creations that reflect the classical purity of the earlier (music) generation. When this artist attempts creations which break the boundaries, he is hardly understood by both the learned and the lay. However, in a sheer fit of obsessive and irrepressible intellectual compulsion, he goes ahead and pursues his art with an unsurpassed vigour. He knows, by such indulgence, he would be inviting criticisms for bringing groundbreaking changes in the musical structures which test the age old conceptions, however, his compelling inspiration for creative output just overpowers his sensitivities. He would be well-versed in the idioms of the classical structures and be extremely comfortable in scoring

using them, but opts for a cavalier disregard for them, since his love for creating unprecedented musical forms supersedes anything else.

Welcome to the world of **Sharath** - the distinguished composer from Kerala, in whose compositions you find the afore-said musical innovations. Mind it, this is not a page providing a biographic or discographic account of Sharath or any other composer but one where I express my admiration for my 7 musical idols and the way I enjoy their music. The reader will also find some non-intrusive references on how I (an amateur composer) allow these masters to influence me in my own compositions as I climb a steep learning curve.

2. Sudha Mantram and the Floating Shadjam (Sa)

My first tryst with Sharath's composition was way back in 1997 when I was still in CECRI in my undergrad days. I had been an active music troupe leader at CECRI and one of my friends Vivek MakaraBooshanam (Kumba!) who played mrudangam and tabla for the troupe informed me one day that he had an invite from one of the movie companies who had come with their crew to shoot a malayalam movie. The movie was Devadasy and Vivek was asked to pretend playing tabla for a song on screen. I had no idea about the song for which he was inducted for, but on return he told me that it was a very difficult hindustani number.

The movie was a disaster at the box office but the songs were aired in television. Since the movie had a sleazy theme (or so we were told) featuring Sethu-fame-Abitha and it was a norm in college to congregate for all midnight masala songs in every channel irrespective of the language (no regionalism!) , I got to see the song. The song was a jawbreaker and the all the guys awaiting some masala show due to the surge of hormones found it extremely displeasing and incompatible with their midnight expectations. There were no vulgar hip moves or any part of feminine body that the guys wanted to feast their eyes upon. Instead, it featured a bald and stone-faced Gopi singing the song for an intolerable classical dance by Abitha, but we cheered for Kumba when he was shown in the song. As expected, the song did not make any impact on the anybody except one.

Me.

Make no mistake of my intention to be there. I was there solely because I wanted to watch sleazy numbers and NOT to discover musical gems in the midnight (lest I should appear holier than my college-mates, to the blog-reader). However, I was completely stunned to hear such a song in Malayalam. It was only a year back that I had started venturing into Mallu semi-classicals like *Devasabathalam* and others like *sangeethame amara sallapame* and was familiarizing myself with classical nuances. But this song just devastated any little hope that I could sing classical some day. In fact, it made me think if I should ever sing at all since I was clearly a pretender. Unfortunately I could not get any information on the movie and also could not see the movie till I went to USA. In USA, I did manage to get the video cassette of the movie from a dingy shop in New York and realized it was a colossal waste. But the song just kept ringing in my ears (only the first line, coz the other lines were too difficult to remember).

The song was **Divaa swapnam** - the song which Unnikrishnan admitted in one of the interviews to be the most difficult song that he has ever sung. He also alluded that it is probably the toughest ever recorded for Indian films (Well..may be..there is one composition by Raveendra Jain for the shelved film Tansen which

comes close. The movie was never released and Yesudas sings this song in all concerts as a tribute to Raveendra Jain who had a nervous breakdown after composing this song.) . Later I came to know that the same song had another version for lyrics sung by Unni himself : Sudhaa mantram

Listen to [Sudhamantram](#)

Listen to [Divaa swapnam](#)

When the song starts the new listener has only a minimal clue about what is awaiting to hit him. The first line of aalaap seems to make the listener think it is starting with some hindhoLam sound-alike ragam which stands shattered by the end of the first line itself. He senses a complete concoction (or confusion, may be from the listener's perspective) of anya swaras (notes which do not find a regular place in the defined scale or ragam). He is confused. But he is ok with the first line. The second and third line offer similar windings and he seems to be ok. But in the final line of the aalaap he senses that there are some notes which cannot be mapped to the keyboard. This is where his frightening journey begins.

Since Sharath has the unusual knack of leaving the listener in a lurch in the search for Shadjam of the song, for the rest of the article on sudha mantram, I place the "g3" on the word "su" of Sudha Mantram and go ahead with the notations. Just as Newton requires a reference frame for the observer to measure the velocity of other moving objects, I need to place Shadjam (which comes later in the song) somewhere in the song to go ahead with the discussion.

Why did I choose this ? Because in the song, when the swara phrases later come in, Sharath clearly tells us where he has placed the "Sa" (for a change, he was kind to us, unlike "niLaiyude maaril" song from Chaitra GeethangaL which I shall take up later in this article).

Some readers may wonder why I am making such a fuss over "finding" the Shadjam of a song. As an aside, I have had some interesting conversations in this aspect of finding the "sa" of a song, with Sheela (Listen to her Charukeshi [here](#)) and [Sindhuja](#) about this. Once Sheela and I were engaged in an enchanting discussion about the song "Sumam prati sumam sumam" - a telugu movie song sung by SPB Janaki in the Film Maharshi and composed by IR. Sheela insisted that the swarams of the first line were:

su mam prati su mam su mam
g mada mada ga ma ga sa

and declared it was in the ragam

[sallapam \(surya\) - s g3 m1 d1 n2 s](#)

(I shall come back to this ragam in the article that is to follow about IR.) To her annoyance she found me refuting it saying it was in ragam

[shrotasvini - s g2 m p n3 s](#)

where I would notate the song as:

su mam prati su mam su mam
n saga saga ni sa ni pa

We both could not convince each other for a while but finally, we ended up agreeing on it being Shrotasvini after getting convinced partially that the "feel" is more of Shrotasvini.

This happens due to what is called a Shruti Bhedam (Please refer to Appendix B for some interesting and important info on ShruthBhedam provided by Sindhuja) or the shift in the root note (Sa). Unlike Western music, Indian music uses notes which are relative to each other (equivalent to Do Re Me). Hence, when the singer sings an aalaap and not swarams, the listener's mind which yearns for a pattern recognition tries to fit it in a scale or a ragam. For example,

sallapam (surya) - s g3 m1 d1 n2 s
shrotasvini - p n3 s g2 m1

i.e. what I perceived as shadjam of shrotasvini was perceived as madhyamam of sallapam by Sheela. Reason ? Sallapam is indeed shrotasvini when it is played from m1 to M1. This is called Shruthi Bhedam. In fact if one plays the keyboard he can identify some Shruthibhedams pretty easily. Let us start with Mohanam in scale C, i.e. Sa = C:

s r2 g3 p d2 s - Mohanam
C D E G A C

Now play :

D E G A C D = s r2 m1 p n2 s = madhyamavathy with Sa= D
E G A C D E = s g2 m1 d n2 s = hindholam with Sa = E
G A C D E G = s r2 m1 p d2 s = shuddha saaveri with Sa = G
A C D E G A = s g2 m1 p n2 s = shuddha dhanyaasi with Sa = A

Uff ! So, all these ragas are intricately connected to each other through the shift of root note. Thus if you "wrongly" place the Shadjam you will "wrongly" infer the ragam in some songs.

Sindhuja is another person who hears ragams much more differently from the way Sheela or I do. Many times when she is given a new song, either a composition of mine or some other film song that she is unfamiliar with, she would come up with the raga which happens to be the shruthi Bhedam of the ragam the composer has intended. I believe that for monophonic minded persons, who are overly familiar with Indian classical and semi-classical music, it becomes an uncontrollable and natural desire/habit to search for/find the Shadjam of a song. If there is a potential conflict between 2 ragas being probable candidates, people tend to favor that raga's name which they "feel" is more appropriate. (come on..music is not just about notation !). The "feel" part may be argued as being substantially unscientific (one of the most interesting discussions with Sindhuja) , which I have no intention of elaborating here.

Moving on to the first line of the song : The Shadjam of this song coincides with "D" scale on Keyboard. Sudha Mantram would be notated as "g3ma ma;ma". The swaras for the pallavi are given below as I hear it (It may not be exact given my limited decoding ability):

Su dhaa man tram
g ma maa maa

ni ve
g gmd mdn dnn3 nn3dmga mmd mdmgsn da

di tam
ni ri

hrudu man..gala yaam
rm dnSGMSnd maa ri

prapanchamE..

(I am out of steam)

ujwalate jo
sass sa sa (shift1)

nirbhara varade
n3n3n3ri d2d2p m2d2p m2r2s n2 (shift2)

ardhanjali
da2ga3r1r1

sata tam
r2r2 da ma2 (and then comes a winding down aalap which is in a totally different scale which I am not able to decode) (shift3)

Shift1 is actually mohanam in scale G. But I see no pattern or ragam in the shifts 2 and 3. May be there is and I am blind.

Thus in a pallavi, we have got three root-note shifts ! And there are incredible gamakams and clear swarasthanams in it without any note being "averaged out" by the singer - a crystal clear rendition. This can happen only if the composer and the singer are absolutely confident about swarasthaanams. A song like this is impossible to be composed or rendered by somebody who is unfamiliar with the rigors of classical music.

However, this is just the tip of the iceberg. The entire song goes through so many variations and two particular swara phrases caught my attention:

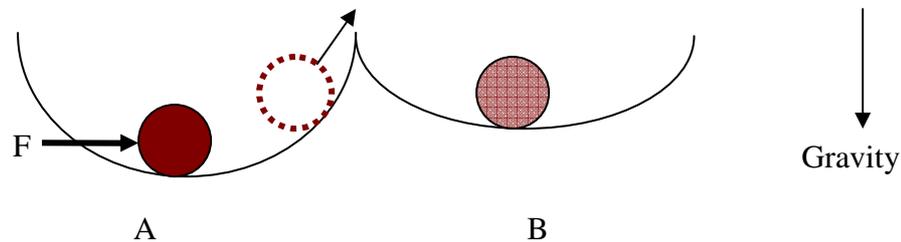
s g m d n
s g m p n

Try saying these two lines in succession fast with a shift in Shadjam. It will be very difficult. Reason "p" and d are only half note away and both form the aarohanams of 2 different ragams the "feel" of which are entirely different.

In other words, the monophonic mind which is comfortably resting on one ragam, that is, a certain musical/psychological plane, finds itself jolted and offers a considerable resistance to be pushed onto another plane. I find this amusing since I always get reminded of a parallel in physics.

Consider the ball in a bowl **A** adjoining which there is another bowl of different dimension **B**. The ball is in stable equilibrium with the A. The force **F** applied on the ball, if small, will cause a small displacement and under damped (frictional) conditions and the ball returns to the same equilibrium point. However if **F** is large, it will push the ball from bowl A into B where the ball is once again in equilibrium, but a different equilibrium. The ball can happily be in equilibrium independently in each bowl but what happens when there n number of bowls of smaller and smaller radii and the force **F** randomly assigned a value. The

situation becomes difficult to predict since chaos sets in and it will be impossible to calculate where the ball is going to be at any given instant of time. (For better examples on chaotic phenomena, the blog reader is urged to read *The Cosmic Blueprint* by Paul Davies).



Sharath does something similar in the songs except that he (and only he) knows exactly where the ball is. While the listener's mind (ball) is comfortably resting on a single ragam (bowl) viewing mild fluctuations (F) as deviations (anya swaras) from Shadjam (the current equilibrium position which is the lowest point of the bowl), he suddenly changes the scale in such a way and in such short times that the ball gets confused as to where it is at a given instant of time. Sharath explains this case of shifting Shadjam [here](#).

I have no idea how many takes did Unnikrishnan go for before finalizing this song. But one must step up and congratulate him for rendering two lyrical versions of the same song !! That is some talent and bravery which certainly deserved a national recognition but did not get any.

Taking to a Sharath's song without training is akin to going to a battle field without armour. One must have courage and skill, or else perish. And you can see how a contestant [Arun gopan](#) struggled to sing this song. (If I were him, I would not even have thought about singing that song and that too in Sharath's presence. And for that sheer courageous effort and reasonably good output Arun – hats off !)

3. Chaithra Geethangal

As if Sharath was not happy with the gargantuan effort and complexity that he subjected Unnikrishnan and listeners to in Sudha mantram, he went on to record some more similar difficult songs for an album called Chaithra Geethangal. This time he chose to discard tongue twisting swara phrases and chose to have all the songs aalaap and sahityam based. (Readers please be advised that I have no information as to whether he did Sudha Mantram first and Chaithra Geethangal next. I just happened to hear them in that order.)

The entire album was rich in melody and Sharath had chosen to tell people that he can create songs that people could understand. The best song of the album, as agreed by my friend Raja Govindarajan (Kansas Raja or rajaG), is "Madhuram gayathi mama hrudhayam" by Chitra. This song starts off in the scale of hindholam and deftly uses the root-note shift concept to have a few phrases in mohanam in charanam. The most baffling link (or its lack of) between the charanam and pallavi is the aalaap which winds down in mohanam but the pallavi starts in hindholam as its ShruthibhEdam. This once gain shows the complexity of thought but does not compromise on the melody due primarily to the beautiful voice of Chitra who goes on a roller coaster ride of swarasthanams and still extracts the nectar of melody.

Listen to **Madhuram Gayathi**

Although Madhuram is a beautiful song, I got really tired with the synthetic trumpet or saxophone prelude which has a long winding aalaap. In fact, one starts to wonder if it was really necessary in the first place. After getting to know from [Bhavadharini](#) – a professional singer who works with Sharath occasionally – that he pretty much sequences everything in the Keyboard itself and lets other instrumentalists arrive and practice their portions based on the sequenced song later, I hypothesize that the complex and seemingly unfocused aalap in the beginning of the song, has been played by none other than Sharath himself. May be I will confirm this with him someday if I get to meet him. But that prelude is a serious deterrent in an otherwise awesome composition.

Chaithra geethangaL featured both Srinivas and Chitra and Srinivas in his silky voice renders some tough songs. For the sheer melody - bandhura vasandhya sandhye - takes the cake. Milder form of raga hamasadhvani is beautifully captured in this song with a bit of Vatapi Ganapathim poking its nose in the interludes. Of course, the charanams have the characteristic detours to other ragas.

Listen to **Bandhura vasandhya sandhye** :

Another beautiful song is gopike nin maaRil aarO chaarathi chandanangaL. A very nice melody however, sprinkled with interludes that lack any definite structure. I see influences of reethi gowLai in the composition. I don't know how many of us know that Sharath is a walking encyclopaedia of Ilaiyaraaja's (IR) songs (Check this [discussion](#) which talks about Sharath's comments on IR). I have heard about this from two independent sources : *rajaG* and [Murali Ramanathan](#). (*Murali happened to be a contestant in Idea Star Singer and had the good opportunity to interact with Sharath.*) Well, IR never let his interludes go unregistered in mind. For example, when somebody thinks of nilaave vaa, he also remembers along with it, the first flute interlude and the second violin interlude. He or she may not know the beautiful layers that IR overlays, but they certainly remember the lead melody of the interlude in a monophonic fashion. And even when IR employs a root-note shift in a song, it is always a smooth sailing in the interludes where the listener hardly recognizes the transition. An excellent example is [Poonkaatrile](#) from paattu paadava in which the charanam and pallavi are in different scales. Certainly Sharath has not done it successfully in this album.

Listen to this **Gopike nin maaRil**

However, the song that really leaves the listener befuddled is "niLaiyude maaril". The chord progression and the beginning of the song are absolutely disjointed (not saying inharmonious) and borrowing rajaG's words:

"If anybody is to attempt this song live, oru note thappinaalum govindha dhaan from the beginning"

karaNam thappinaal maraNam - this is the what any singer would describe this song as. Sindhuja rightly wondered "Srinivas idhai eppadi paadinaar ?!!!". Well given the recording facilities these days, it is relatively easy to record such complex scale-shifting songs in multiple takes, although conceiving them can be a real gargantuan effort and needs mammoth talent. However, in my opinion, even the most difficult concepts conceived by the author must be explained in as simple terms as possible. Or else, the genius will get buried and may have to wait till somebody, familiar with employing simpler verbatim, digs the work up

from the grave of the genius à la Galois. (<http://dhool.com> is certainly one such digger ☺)

Listen to **NiLaiyude maaril**

Although, Sharath has openly claimed IR is his favourite music director, in my assessment his style borders on Hrudayanath Mangeshkar's who is probably the senior most in the band of tough composers. More about him in a later article.

4. Other Melodies

So, is Sharath all about composing extremely tough songs which are singer's nightmares or is there a composer in him who can also create hummable beautiful melodies which even a layman can appreciate ? This is an important question because all said and done, it is finally the layman who decides the sale of music which promotes the sustainability of the composer. While people are generally aware of *raavil veeNa nadham* from *sindoor rekha* (in which song too he displays some eccentric swara placements like the first rishbham in the last line of pallavi giving a flavour of *kanakana ruchira* - the rest of the song is smooth sailing though), they are less aware of the beautiful "ende *sindhoora rekha*" which is a delightful concoction of Chitra's and Yesudas voices interleaved with voice-overs as the melody strides sonorously.

Listen to **Sindoor Rekha** (Youtube link)

Another melody and probably the best song of Sharath in my opinion, which wonderfully showcases Sharath's ability to create melodies with a teaspoon of "vidwat" sprinkled elegantly over it is "Yamuna nadhi ozugum" from Devadasy. The beauty of this song is that it reveals its ragam only slowly although the melody is wonderfully preserved in those lines which confuse the listener. Now that, I call, is the stamp of a real master. It tells the listener "please sit back and enjoy my melody, but do not get overly zealous about creating one since it is not easy". This kind of teasing is great. It is primarily based on ragam Mohanam but the way it starts gives a tinge of "madhyamavathy" feel. It would not be wrong to say that the first line especially has the ghost of madhyamavathy residing in the body of mohanam. *(This twist inspired me to an alternate idea of supporting one raga's chords with the other and I tried my hand doing this in the song "azagaay poosum manjal". In this song's first interlude, raga hamsadhvani is played by the violin and the backing chords were that of mohanam).*

One may write pages and empty all the adjectives in the thesaurus to describe Chitra's voice, but he would still be left with a feeling of insufficiency. Well this is a song in which the [Singing Angel of South India](#) rules supreme and brings tears to the eyes of a listener.

Listen to **yamuna nadhi ozugum**

5. Tamil

So much for Malayalam. What about Tamil ? The film *June R* had the song "mazhaiye mazhaiye" which saw the confluence of two genius singers - Sharath and Hariharan to produce a song which stands out in every aspect of composing. First the lyrics - they need a mention.

*mazaiye mazaiyE
neerin thiraiyE
vaanam theLikkum*

*kavidhai thuLiye
Megaththin sirippoliye
neela vaaname
oru thaRi illaamal
neerin noolil mazaiyenum sElai neydhadhe*

Oh my.. what beautiful lyrics ! It reminds me of [Udhaya](#)'s style - who in every poem of his brings an unprecedented set of metaphors and I stand awestruck every time ! And after all his complex tunes, Sharath chooses to make this song an unhindered melody but decides to weave an orchestration that only a person with superior musical acumen can construct. The bass line, the thunder and the rain drop sounds all melt in a wonderful musical cocktail which the listener could savor as he admires the acoustic portrait of the natural splendour painted by Hariharan's immaculate voice. In this song, the notes are definitely Sharath's, but "maNNukkum vaasam thondrum" line makes one wonder how seamlessly Hariharan blends a western style of singing momentarily with the gamakams of the east. It is this composition of Sharath which I had no complaints about. A flawless masterpiece !

Listen to [mazaiye mazaiye](#)

6. Classical

After all the talk about being the disciple of Shri. Balamuralikrishna where is the classical composition ? He has given us the song "praNathosmi" which is in the raga reethi gowLai. However, I do not attach much significance to the pallavi of that song because reethi gowLai is a ragam that has been used repetitively by Ilayaraja and others with all the pallavis sounding the same. And invariably the pallavis use the aarohanam of the ragam as it is.

Aarohanam : s g r g m n d m n n s

Songs which employ this aarohanam in their pallavis are :

1. chinnak kaNNan azaikkiRaan
2. raama kanavemira (raman kadhai kELungaL) by SPB from Swati mutyam or chippikkuL muththu
3. praNathosmi Guruvayupureesam
4. maamava maadhava - from the movie five star hospital

In fact, the best reethi gowLai in my opinion also comes from IR - *thalayaik kuniyum thaamaraiye* and to a good extent *azagaana raakshasiye* from Rehman - both savored by SPB as he sang them.

Pranathosmi apart from the pallavi is a beautiful song rendered in the aged voice of Yesudas. I also found a version of Venugopal which I thought did more justice and have included for the readers here.

Listen to Pranathosmi here:

Pranathosmi K. J. Yesudas version
Pranathosmi G. Venugopal version

It is a popular practice in some of the semi-classical songs to include some established classical phrases in the middle. For example, Raveendran's classic "Gopaangane" includes in an interlude the swarams of "Jagada nanda karaka" in the instrumental format. However, Sharath chooses to let K. J. Yesudas deliver

the Karaharapriya swara phrases for the Kirtanam "Pakala" as an interlude for the uncharacteristically sweet melody – Shree Ragamo.

Listen to **Shree Ragamo**

In one of my conversations with rajaG, he remarked that composing a classical or a semi-classical number for film is easy. Once you choose the ragam, and play with it a bit you can come up with a pallavi and charanam. I strongly disagreed. In my opinion, coming up with a trite pallavi and a banal charanam is something anybody with some basic classical knowledge can do. However I believe, when we say composing we also innately imply impressing. If impressing is taken into account, Raveendran, Devarajan and Dhakshinamurthy swamigaL's compositions stand out whereas many other lesser composers' songs pale in comparison. Pramadhavanam and Gopaangane are severely semi-classical but compellingly expressive and deeply endearing. Apart from these stellar numbers, malayalam films are replete with namesake semi-classical numbers rendered by Yesudas and Chitra which hardly impress the listener. But when composers like Sharath attempt classical or semi-classicals, they bring in an energy unseen.

7. To learn and not to learn

So what should an amateur musician like me look to learn from Sharath ? The first thing that Sharath's songs tell me is to "think out of the box". rajaG says:

"This kind of a rebellious attitude is the trademark of BMK. BMK got bored with what was present in carnatic system and came up with innovations himself and Sharath is doing that in film music. It is this out of the box approach that I really adore Sharath for"

I recall a discussion with Murali Rangarajan (an excellent singer and friend) who once quipped that BMK would stick to the grammar of ragas, but would explore those combinations which nobody has attempted before. That is, there are many ragams which have popular "prayogams" (phrases) and most of the carnatic singers resort to the "traditional" delivery (negatively speaking, this would be synonymous with unimaginative renditions) and BMK on the other hand would pretty much venture into that territory and come up unheard prayogams in the same ragams.

I agree with Murali and rajaG in that Sharath, in many songs, uses the same old canvass but employs a combination of colours which are unseen and hence unnerving to people who are used to a particular type of paintings. The result, as I emphasized before, is that it could be incomprehensible and sometimes deemed unpleasant too. For example, "niLaiyude maaRil" is the song I would least appreciate in the Chaithra GeethangaL album for the simple reason that its scale changes do not produce a focused output in my limited perception. SL once said in jest :

"If you meet Sharath, could you please request him not to change the Shadjam in every note ?"

I really wish I could meet Sharath someday which would certainly be a day to cherish for me. But I agree with SL that for a listener it does get difficult when the composer changes too many things too fast. The best parallel that I can think of is shooting with a camcorder. During a shoot, if one keeps moving the camcorder at a speed that is much higher than a "normal" eye can bear or discern, during playback on TV, the viewer ends up with a headache. However, if the motion is captured slowly at a lesser speed, people get the "full picture". But

too slow can be too dull. To me Sharath's songs appear more like well-scripted action movies where things happen too fast for some people to understand the finer details.

When I was discussing this aggressive quality of Sharath in his compositions, [Bhavadharini](#) added:

"This is probably because of the 'asura saadhakam' (rigorous vocal practice) that he does everyday. He sleeps probably for 3 hours rest of the day / night it is all music for him – either practice or composing/arranging".

8. Conclusion

A rigorous practitioner will certainly find new combinations. Add to the rigor, some exceptional talent, the practitioner ideally becomes the father of a range of musical forms that finally becomes christened as his school or style. Sharath is that extraordinary combination who is creating a school of his own. There are three things that I would like to learn from him :

1. Think out of the box
2. Use old elements to create new combinations
3. Practice and work hard

Well, the last one is a common feature of all my idols. It is indeed the most important quality however, to discuss that would be to belabour over the adage : "99% perspiration and 1% inspiration". The first two are Sharath's characteristics which I would certainly like to imbibe. When I composed, [Barse Badariya](#), I certainly tried my hand to think out of the box by employing some raga changes. Many liked it but some did not, dismissing it as a gimmick. Fair enough I believe. In songs like these the composer needs the support of an excellent singer and [Swati Kanitkar](#) went beyond what I could conceive. Thank you Swati.

However, in terms of the progress of the melody I certainly have my reservations following Sharath. Quoting SL about his experience with some of Sharath's songs:

"In 2 songs (Sudha Mantram and niLaiyude maaril) the 'Sa' shift happened too often that before the melody could be savoured, it assumed a different flavour altogether. Raavil veeNa naadham started off in Hamsanadham and kept taking a detour which was not at all aesthetically pleasing to my ears, it was almost at the expense of sounding discordant. Maybe he is trying to break the 'melody conditioning' a lot of us have. But I sincerely feel in these cases the tune has not been allowed to blossom fully...thinna pazham thanthu thinnAthE endru kayyai thatti vittu thittuvathu sariya thappA :)"

SL nailed it. "**Melody conditioning**" – is the new phrase that I learnt from SL and probably the most perfect way to describe the incomprehensibility that we display while hearing a Sharath's composition. Melody conditioning is the apparent disparity between how we expect a song to be and the way Sharath's song is. In my opinion, we certainly need to improve in being able to understand difficult musical forms (See what MSV says about Sharath [here](#)). MSV says:

"Songs like these were composed in olden days. These days, there are few compositions of such class. However such songs must be composed so that the younger generation gets to learn"

When it comes to film music, it would be foolish to sport an opinion different from MSV, but it is my request that Sharath must also keep in mind that he is composing for us – the audience – who sometimes are not expecting to be educated but only entertained. And with the magic wand of melody that he has, he can certainly do it like he did in *Ende sindoora rekha* or *Shree Ragamo*.

With that, I take bow before this great composer who has successfully jolted some of the neurons which are responsible for understanding, appreciating and creating music. Together with Ramesh Narayanan and M. Jayachandran, Sharath has changed the way Malayalees listen to film music.

On a final note as Bhavadhaarini puts it : “It is only by a stroke of luck that such a great composer has come to be with us and we need to learn as much as possible from him. A gem of a person he always says SanthOsham, Samaadhaanam and Sowkyam”.

Dear Sharath, I would say add your “Sangeetham” to it. Thanks - for making contemporary music, a twisted and intelligent transformation of the old.

9. Appendix A : Songs featured in this article

1. Sudhamantram
2. Diva swapnam
3. Madhura gayathi
4. Bandhura vaasandhya
5. Gopike nin maaril
6. niLaiyude maaril
7. ende sindoora rekha
8. Yamuna nadhi
9. Mazaiye Mazaiye
10. Pranathosmi - K. J. Yesudas
11. Pranathosmi - G. Venugopal
12. Shree Ragamo

10. Appendix B : Shruthibhedam and GruhaBhedam

An interesting point is the distinction between SruthiBhedam and GruhaBhedam in the words of Sindhuja :

“I had a discussion about this with Kumaresh (of Ganesh-Kumaresh) about a month back. From him I learnt that what I had been referring to as shruthibhedam was actually 'gruhabhedam'. The latter is a more accurate term he said. All these days I thought the two terms meant the same and could be used interchangeably, but apparently there is a subtle difference. Shruthibhedam is just change (bhedam) of shruthi (for eg- u are not able to reach the highs in a shruthi, u lower it for convenience- that is an instance of shruthibhedam) But the shift of Sa (called 'gruham' as it 'houses' the rest of the swaras) is actually primarily a gruhabhedam, a by-product of which is shruthibhedam since when u shift the gruham, the the shruthi changes automatically. At a glance the distinction may seem redundant but if you think about it there is a subtle difference.”

So while Gruhabhedam implies Shruthibhedam, the reverse is not true and semantically, they are different.

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