

Desigar Raga Musical contribution

For the lay music lover, Desigar lives in such wonderful songs as *Jagajjanani* (Ratipatipriya – Ghanam Krishna Iyer) and *Taamarai poota tadaagamadi* (Hindustan Gandhari – Tiruchi G. Tyagarajan). Tuned by him, both these songs are honeyed webs of melody and lyrical beauty. These songs and a few other recordings showcase Desigar’s melodious voice and his facility with ‘ravai sangati-s’ in fast speeds. His ‘Navaratna Keertanaigal’ on Madurai Meenakshi is a group of nine attractive songs, composed by him in various raga-s and tala-s. He took great pains to set to music the lyrics of many composers and poets including Kavikunjara Bharati, Vedanayagam Pillai, Achuthadasar, Tirikoodarasappa Kavirayar (*Kutrala Kuravanji*), Suddhananda Bharati, Bharatidasan, Periasami Thooran, Ku.Sa. Krishnamurthi, and Tiruchi Thyagarajan. Lalgudi Jayaraman, a noted composer himself, has expressed appreciation of Desigar’s tunes. The notated songs were printed in the 17th volume of the Annamalai University series on Tamil Isai. He also set to music 40 hymns from the *Divya Prabandham*, *Tevaram* and *Tiruppugazh* (which were published by the Tamil Isai Sangam). He handled many rare raga-s like Kalyanadayini, Ragavinodini, Vandanaadharini, Kadaram and Kokilam (to name only a few). According to singer Suguna Varadachari, who presented a paper on Desigar at the Music Academy’s morning sessions in 1998, he picked up these raga-s from Nathamuni Panditar’s *Sangeeta Swaraprastaara Saagamam*.

As a performer, Desigar was conscious of the diverse tastes of different sections of the audience and sought to please them all in a balanced way. His guru

Rajamanickam Pillai used to give him violin support. V.L. Vedagiri played often. Balasubbarayulu, who was M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavata’s violinist, would also sometimes accompany Desigar. Lalgudi Jayaraman, in his earlier days, played for him. While Palani Subramania Pillai and Ramanathapuram Murugabhoopathy gave occasional mridanga support, Madras A. Kannan was a sheet-anchor. Kanchipuram Veerusamy played the khanjira for him.

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the devotional content contrasted with the lighter treatment of the latter. In between came songs of advice, like *Sinam adaiyaathe* (curb anger). His ragamalika-s, full of raga and bhakti bhava, cast a spell on audiences.

VAMANAN