

A treasure of kritis on Lord Anjaneya

Jaya Mami Bhakti Padalgal is a serene offering of three volumes containing nearly 600 compositions, mostly in Tamil, on Lord Anjaneya (Hanuman). This assumes special significance as there is a virtual dearth of kritis on one of the most worshipped deities of our land associated with the epic—*Ramayana*. The *Hanuman Chalisa* is a celebrated household prayer too. Constant requests by close friends and well-wishers and support from her husband, saw the songs coming to print just a few years ago with notations in Tamil. This book is a blessing for musicians in Tamil Nadu, specially Chennai—the hub of Carnatic music—to sing and popularise them.

Jaya Anantharaman, fondly called Jaya Mami—a prolific composer in her late eighties, had learnt music from a young age and had been mostly in north India where her husband was posted. Later, the couple moved to Bengaluru in 1990.

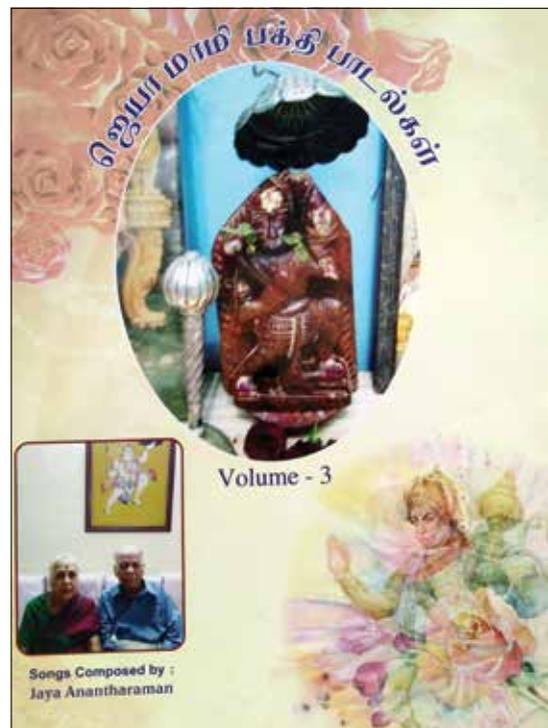
The preface narrates an interesting story—the connect between Jaya Mami and Lord Anjaneya. Some 32 years ago, Mami—a devotee of Lord Rama from childhood, got a plain stone measuring roughly 7 x 4 inches, from a friend in Delhi on return from a visit to Mt. Abu. Mami began worshipping this as an idol as she could recognise a form of Anjaneya on it. In about two years, the contours became clearer, the bond got deeper. One day she found herself highly emotional with tears rolling down and her voice choking, transporting her to the defining moment; she was 54 then, and that moment led her to sing profusely on Anjaneya, her ishta devata.

Her first composition was a ragamalika—sung in five ragas preceded by a viruttam, *Adiyum mudiyum ariyaamudiyathoru arbutha peruru eduthu* beginning with Dhanyasi. *Ananda Anjaneyam* in Kapi, and *Paada darisanam kanden* in Suddhasaveri followed.

Mami's compositions cover all major ragas like Sankarabharanam, Kalyani, in the Carnatic pantheon, including a rich selection of janya ragas offering a delight for Ramanjaneya bhaktas; viruttams are also covered. Songs in ragas like Bheemlas, Durga, Jonpuri, Desh, and Tilang add to variety. Kritis in madhyama sruti ragas, divyanamas add to the vast canvas. Another notable composition is *Anjaneya avataram* in sapta ragamalika. Mami has not composed in any vivadi ragas. Talas too cover a wide range including khanda Triputa, tisra Adi amongst others, permitting an interested singer an imaginative selection.

The vageyakara in Mami poured out numerous songs—impromptu during her routine pooja or visits to temples—mostly in Tamil, her mother tongue. Songs flowed out in Sanskrit too which were declared perfect by a friend well-versed in that language. A virtual torrent of hundreds of kritis so far on Anjaneya or Rama! Songs on Subrahmanya, her kula deviam and Goddess Gauri burst forth during the annual Gauri pooja at her home.

Initially Jaya Anantharaman had her students note down the songs, and she later added the notations with



sangatis. A total of 523 compositions have been compiled, notated in Tamil and published by her disciples and friends led by Mythili Krishnan in 2018, as three volumes. Majority of these kritis (387) are on Anjaneya with several among them in Sanskrit, and the balance covers compositions on other deities. Around a hundred songs have also been recorded by her rasikas and are available on YouTube under *Bhakti Compositions of Jaya Anantharaman*.

A book titled *Musical Gems of Women Maestros*—a collection of materials based on lecdems by Alamelu Ramakrishnan published in 2020 contains a chapter on Jaya Anantharaman.

The pious grand old lady, an epitome of bhakti and affection, continues to compose; the number has exceeded 700 now. She finds divinity in sharing her compositions. The three volumes of *Jaya Mami Bhakti Padalgal* will be a valuable addition to any classical singer's collection.

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