

PRĀCĪNA KAUTHUMA TRADITIONS OF SOUTH INDIA: LETTERS FROM L. S. RAJAGOPALAN, 1985–1988

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Prior to the excellent and invaluable research work of Sri L. S. Rajagopalan (L.S.R.), a Tamil Brahmin residing in Trichur and known also to Professor Parpola, only one old (*prācīna*) type of Kauthuma Sāmaveda was known to exist in South India. This “old school” was centered around the village Muḷḷaṅṅiram, in the North Arcot District of Tamil Nadu. I reported on this type of *sāman*-singing in my book *Sāmavedic Chant* (Howard 1977: 133–136) and used as the basis of my analysis a copy of a tape recording made by the late Sri T. K. Rajagopala Aiyar (Madras).¹

My acquaintance with L.S.R. (we have never met personally: I know him only through correspondence) began quite unexpectedly in 1985, when I received a letter, dated July 29, informing me of yet another *prācīna* Kauthuma tradition, this one located in Kerala. From this point on I quote only select passages from his many letters. He does not scientifically transliterate technical terms or geographic names.

You have mentioned there [in *Sāmavedic Chant*] about Pracheena saman singing in North Arcot and Kancheepuram. You may perhaps be aware that in some of the villages in Palghat District a type of Pracheena Sama (Kauthuma) is still extant. Even though you have dealt ... in detail [with the] Jaiminiya Sama of Kotunthirapilly, this pracheena sama found in villages like Puducode [Putukkoṭ], etc., is not found mentioned. I wonder if it is left out because you have not considered it significant enough. Is it likely that this has escaped your rather thorough search?

You are aware that Tamil-speaking Brahmins migrated from Tanjore and other areas, some 400 years ago, to Palghat. There are some amusing and interesting stories about it. The Pracheena (they call it Pazhaya = old) samagas (it won't be plural for long) claim that theirs is the original style of Tanjore and that the Tanjoreans altered their style later and made it more musical. I have not listened to the North Arcot style, but from the conversation I had with [the] late Dr. V. Raghavan, I have gathered this is different even from that style.

¹ See Staal 1961: 66, 97.

I am writing this to find out if you have in fact covered this group in your studies and if so I would be much obliged if you would pass on to me [the] relevant information gathered by you.

With the help of interested parties I am trying to get this style of chanting recorded for preservation. I would be very happy to receive you[r] suggestions and advice as to how to go about it.

I replied (in a letter of August 7, 1985) that I was not aware of the existence of another *prācīna* type of Kauthuma chant and that I assumed that the Kauthuma *sāman* of Palghat was identical to that of Tanjore. I encouraged L.S.R. to tape-record the Palghat chant at the earliest possible moment. I wrote further that the village Puducode had not come to my attention, but that Mr. V. V. Sadogopan, while visiting Banaras, had referred me to a Mr. Pichu Aiyar at Chittur, a complex of ninety-six villages near Palghat. Mr. Sadogopan imparted the information that this gentleman resided at the Thekke Agraharam (South Village), next to the Vedic *pāṭhaśālā*. Unfortunately, I was not able to travel there to make his acquaintance, but I urged L.S.R. to go to Chittur with the prospect of gaining even more information about Kauthuma chant in the area.

I also referred L.S.R. to Matapadi, near Udipi (in Karnataka), where I did in fact record what turned out to be Kauthuma chant, although the Brahmins there insist on being called Jaiminīyas. But with some minor differences, their *sāmans* are definitely of the "new" Tanjore type: in their possession were the books *Agni-ṣṭoma-Paddhati* (Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, nos. 433, 455, 479) and *Yajña-Tattva-Prakāśa*, edited by the well-known Kauthuma paṇḍit Sri A. M. Ramanatha Dikshitar. They follow these books when singing *śrauta* chants. I mentioned this to L.S.R. because I had heard somewhere that the chanting of these South Kannara (Tulu-speaking) Brahmins was related to the Kauthuma *sāman* around Palghat, although I could not guarantee this to be the case.

L.S.R. replied, in a letter of August 21, 1985, as follows:

I have not heard the Udipi Tulu Brahmin chanting. We call them Embrandiris. Of course I will be interested in hearing your recordings. Alas I am quite innocent of the staff notation of Western music. So I can only send you tapes of the Puducode chantings. You have not given any suggestions as to how to proceed about the recording. Have you any suggestions about the sequences to be followed? Has any special attention [got] to [be] given to any particular samans to bring out all the swaras that they can chant?

In my follow-up letter, of September 3, 1985, I offered suggestions on what *sāmans* to record. I referred to specific chants with characteristics like *praṇata*, *preṅkha*, *pratyutkrama*, and so on. I also urged L.S.R. to record the Gāyatram and to see if the Puducode priests could chant *stotras* from the *agnīṣṭoma* like *bahiṣ-pavamāna* and the four *ājyas*. In addition to this, I asked him to find out if the

priests know the *dhur*-verses (modifications on the Gāyatra-melody). L.S.R. responded on September 26, 1985:

Thank you for the suggestions about what to record. The priest had come [this was the Samavedī Gopala Vadhyar]. He knows only some of the samans mentioned by you. He is a practicing priest, i.e., doing grihya rituals, and he knows all the samans connected with that well. He does not know anything about srauta, so even items like Bhakāra Sāma of Rathantara is not known to him. I had a long discussion with him, and we decided that we will first record sections of those portions which are used for household rituals. The next plan is to take recording[s] of the mantras and samans connected with each ritual: Jathakarma, Namakarana, Annaprāsana Chowla, Upanayana, Vrata Samavarti, Panigrahana, Pumsuvana Seemanthonnayana, and later death rituals and annual sraddha rituals.

... I took some recordings from the priest on the 24th, but since much time was spent on preliminary discussions, the time available for recording was little (the situation also worsened when my tape recorder started giving some trouble). I recorded Navagraha Mantras.

These are used for doing Namaskarams for propitiating the planets. Formerly most people used to do it daily. Then I recorded Punyaha Mantra – for purifying (ritually) water for sprinkling before the start of any auspicious ritual. This I recorded on one side of a tape. On the other side I copied the recordings I had taken from him some three years ago.

... Now today I have sent you by air mail a recorded cassette of Pracheena Samavedic chanting. [The chanter is] Sri P. R. Gopala Vadhyar, son of Ramachandra Vadhyar, Bharadvaja gotra, Drahyayana Sutra. He is aged 60. He has been doing priest's work from the age of 15. ... I look forward to your comments after hearing and analyzing the chants.

In a letter of October 15, 1985, I wrote that I had listened to the complete tape of Pudukode *sāman* and could confirm what L.S.R. said earlier: that this type of singing was certainly different from the Tanjore variety, and, in fact, was not like any Sāmavedic chant that I had recorded. I proposed that the two of us jointly write an essay on the subject and submit it to an appropriate journal in India. Eventually, we did in fact co-author the article "A Report on the Prācīna Kauthuma Sāmaveda of Palghat" which was published in the *Journal of the Indian Musicological Society* (Rajagopalan & Howard 1989).

In this essay it is shown that the old and new Tanjore scales are the same except for the lowered (*komal* in Indian nomenclature) second degree in the *prācīna* chant. Each scale contains seven tones; but the actual interpretation of the notation is different, even sometimes more elaborate, in the old chant. For example, if the seven tones are represented in descending order by Roman numerals (where IV is SA or the central pitch), if extension by one *mātrā* (time unit) is shown by a dash after the numeral, if the letter *k* designates *komal* alteration, and if two or more tones lasting a total of one *mātrā* are given in parentheses, then two types of *pratyutkrāma* ('ascent') can be symbolized as follows:²

² See Rajagopalan & Howard 1989: 12.

1. *Pratyukrama* of the type 2₁ (2 above the text, 1 immediately following within the text):

Palghat: IV - - - - IV - (IIk IIIk) - - (IIk IIIk) (IIk IIIk) -

Tanjore: IV - - - - III(IIk III) IIk - - - (III IIk) III

2. *Pratyukrama* of the type 4₃

Palghat: IV (VI Vk) VI - IV - - - IV

Tanjore: IV Vk - - IV - - - IV - - -

L.S.R. responded in a letter of October 26, 1985:

The story of TAMILIAN BRAHMIN migration to Kerala is this. This is as mentioned in a book called *Aithihya Mala* (a collection of traditional stories). There was a Raja in Palghat. Once, when wandering about in the countryside, he happened to see a Nayadi [Nāyāṭi] woman. Nayadis are forest dwellers and are considered so low that they are not only untouchables but unseeables also. The Raja was struck by her beauty and was infatuated, but he curbed his desire and went away. He continued to be moody. His minister (famous as the father of Malayalam literature) asked him the reason for the moodiness, and after much cajoling the Raja came out with the story. Then the minister said, "Let me go and enquire." Later the minister met the Raja and told him in confidence that he had arranged for an affair with the woman in question, but that there were a couple of conditions. The Raja should not talk to her, and the room arranged would be in total darkness at some forest lodge. He could have his love-making and come back. The Raja willingly agreed and had his affair. Now it was the custom of the Raja to take his bath in the temple tank and to worship inside the temple and to accept the prasadam from the priest. Then only would he have his breakfast and sit on his throne. The next day the Raja had his usual bath and was about to enter the temple when he hesitated and stood at the gate. The minister asked him what was wrong. He said that he felt guilty and not properly purified (ritually) to enter the temple. The minister smiled. The Raja asked him, "Why are you so smug?" The minister said, "You had better ask your consort [wife]." She had come to the temple with the minister. She said, "My Lord, it was I who was with you last night." She described some salient points of the previous night, and the Raja was convinced that she was the person. Yet he said when he had the affair last night in his mind he was firm that she was an unseeable and untouchable. It was not the bodily action that mattered, it was the mental feeling that mattered. Hence he did not feel pure enough to enter the temple, so he said that he would accept the prasadam at the gate and go to the palace. The priest came out and gave him the prasadam. The news that the Raja did not enter the temple spread in the town. His successors to the throne (his brothers and sons of sisters) came to him and asked him why he was breaking the tradition and sitting on the throne without praying at the temple in the normal way. He said that it was purely a personal matter. They would not be satisfied. They called the Nambudiri priests and asked their opinion. They also held the view that the king should not break the tradition of worshipping inside the temple before he attended court. The king would not budge. ... The Nambudiri priests were offended, and they walked out of the place, saying that they would not be priests to such a king (even now there are no Nambudiri families whose ancestral house is in Palghat). When the Nambudiris left the place the Raja felt helpless. His minister intervened and told him that if those people were adamant, then let them go. He said that he would get equal if not better-qualified priests from Tanjore. At the Raja's request, several TAMILIAN BRAHMIN priests came from the Tanjore area and settled in Palghat. The Raja gave them tax-free landed property and built houses for them. He even made one of them his minister. Such is the story of the migration of Tanjore Brahmins to Palghat.

L.S.R. expands on this and other topics in an article published four years later (Rajagopalan 1989). He claims that the present style of Tanjore is an altered style hardly 250 years old and that a Sāmavedī named Rāmanātha Śrauti (endearingly called Rāmaṇṇa) was the originator of this new style.

In a letter of December 14, 1985, I ask L.S.R. if Kauthuma is the original school of these Pudukode paṇḍits, or if it is a relatively new name to them. Some of the Tanjore-style singers recorded by me gave Gautama or even Chāndosāma as their school. The former is a sub-school of the Rāṇāyanīya branch. My suspicion was that these *prācīna* singers were really Rāṇāyanīyas and that they acquired the designation “Kauthuma” only recently. In support of this theory, Gujarat, not Tanjore, appears to be the original home of the Kauthuma school. Then too, the Drāhyāyana Sūtra is a Rāṇāyanīya text.³

In his reply (December 30, 1985), L.S.R. echoed an observation made earlier by me: that the name “Kauthuma” has arisen in Tamil country because of the absence of “Ga” in the Tamil script (Howard 1986: 378, n. 16). In this letter, he goes on to say:

I have already sent to you a tape containing the recordings from two others and also some more chants of Gopala Vadhyar. I am yet to get the tape from my son-in-law in Bombay, who is taking the recordings from one Narayana Vadhyar there – who has studied the entire chanting of Sama Veda (pracheena style). As soon as it comes I shall copy and send it to you.

In a letter of January 10, 1986, he returns to the debate over the names Kauthuma and Gautama.

Regarding your query in your letter ... about Kauthuma being the original school Dr. Kasikar of Poona would be a proper authority to solve your doubts. There is no dispute that Vedic studies spread from North to South. That is why the Dravida parties of Tamil Nadu denounce all Brahmins as having come from the North and spoiling Dravidian culture. ... In the ritual for Udakasanti, the Drahyayana pandits here say clearly at the start of the ritual that they will follow the procedure laid down by Ranayana.

L.S.R. changes the subject in letters of February 4 and March 9, 1986:

I am sending herewith one more cassette. The first portion is a recording of pracheena Samaveda from Sri M. V. Narayana Vadhyar, aged 76, son of Venkateswara Vadhyar of Manjapra village in Palghat District. This village is very near Pudukode. Manjapra village is well known for a family of veena players, one of them being M. K. Kalyanakrishna Bhagavathar, who was at Wesleyan [University in Connecticut] for some time. There is his cousin M. K. Kalyanakrishna Bhagavathar, who now resides in my street. He also is a very good veena player. Sri Narayana Vadhyar is staying in Bombay with his son. He actually claims that saman chant spread from his village to Pudukode. Anyway, there were a good number of pandits in Pudukode and hence it came to be

³ This issue is discussed in some detail in Howard 1986: 202–207.

known as the centre for Samaveda. The quality of the recording is poor. There is background noise from some machinery working on a construction site nearby and also a lot of children playing nearby. He has given sample chants from a few sections and also some of the chants used during Pooja as per Samavedic rites (Sama Vidhana Pooja). ... The balance of the tape contains further recordings from Gopala Vadhyar.

... Sri Parameswara Iyer of Trikkur – whose recording I have sent you – celebrated his Sathabhishekam. This is performed after a person has “seen” 1000 full moons. His son is well acquainted with the Senior Acharya of Kanchi. ... He had sent two pandits for the function and had also sent a presentation of Rudrakha Mala and a shawl for Parameswara Iyer. His [i.e., Parameswara Iyer’s] son tells me that the Paramacharya told him (also) that it was one Ramanna who was mainly responsible for altering the Pracheena style to the Naveena style [i.e., the present-day Tanjore style]. The Acharya actually prefers the Pracheena style and jokingly refers to the new style as Ramanna Sama. He also mentioned that only in Pudukode and Shenkottai is the old style preserved. So I have to check at Shenkottai if there are any old type chanters there. Shenkottai is on the railway line from Quilon to Tamil Nadu.

In a letter of August 23, 1986, L.S.R. describes, in a letter of near epic proportions, his search for *prācīna* Sāmaveda chanters in the Shenkottah area. This letter is much too long to quote in its entirety, so a summary will have to suffice.

L.S.R. and some friends crossed the Western Ghats by train. They alighted at Tenkasi. Then L.S.R. left for Sundara Pandya Puram village, where he was told there was a Sāmavedī of the old school. Sri Sankaranarayana Vadhyar met him at the Sringeri Sankara Math. During the conversation L.S.R. learned that, after all the trouble he had taken, the chanter was of the New School of Sāmaveda. He had a long talk with the Vadhyar and took some recordings of the Sāmaveda Upakarma ceremony. Next morning L.S.R. caught a bus. At Tenkasi three Brahmin priests boarded the bus. L.S.R.’s guide told him that one of them was a Sāmavedī. L.S.R. immediately struck up a conversation with him. The Sāmavedī said that he also belonged to the New School but that one paṇḍit of the Old School lived in the village Ayikudi, where he was going for a *homa*. L.S.R. made his way to that village and discovered that the paṇḍit, V. Rāma Śāstrī, did in fact chant in the old style. He was 72 years old and an expert Sanskritist, doing discourse on the *purāṇas* mainly at Madras. He stayed at Ayikudi only for the period when his parents’ death anniversary fell due. Śrī Rāma Śāstrī studied Sāmaveda under his father, Veṅkaṭarāma Śāstrī. He knew the new style of singing also, but in his village he chanted only in the old style. L.S.R. took some recordings from him and sent me a copy for my comments. Before Rāma Śāstrī started his chanting, L.S.R. played for him a tape of Gopala Vadhyar’s singing. The Śāstrī said that it was of the old type and that he followed the same style. As is the usual habit of most priests, he started finding fault here and there with Gopala Vadhyar’s chanting.

The bus journey acquaintance had told L.S.R. that there was another old style chanter in another village, Krishnapuram. He asked the Śāstrī about him. His reply was that this chanter was only a young fellow who had not studied well. He

advised L.S.R. not to go to him saying, “I am the only fellow in this region to [chant] correctly for you.” But his reaction only confirmed in L.S.R.’s mind that there are still some more old style chanters in the villages. One has merely to go and to search hard. There are *pāṭhaśālās*. Teaching usually goes down from father to son, rarely to an outside pupil.

Rāma Śāstrī had in his possession a manuscript of the *Sāmaparibhāṣā*, also called (variously) *Sāmalakṣaṇa*, *Chalākṣara*, or *Chalaprakriya*.⁴ This gives the notation of the chants according to the syllable notation of the Rāṇāyanīya school, which confirmed in my mind that the “old style” chanters really belong to this school, as opposed to the Kauthuma *śākhā*. Rāma Śāstrī offered to give his manuscript to L.S.R., claiming that it had not been published. However, several editions have in fact appeared in print.⁵

L.S.R. then embarked on an equally daunting task: recording and interviewing representatives of entirely different *prācīna* traditions of the North Arcot District of Tamil Nadu. He begins writing about his search in a letter of October 26, 1987.

I first contacted Mayuram Ramanatha Dikshitar, who stays in Madras. ... He admitted that the tradition now followed in Tamilnad is known as Ramanna Padham. That is why some people refer to the present way of chanting as Ramanna Samam. He gave me the names of a couple of people from Anakkavur [Anakkāvūr] village of North Arcot who may be able to chant in the North Arcot style. I then met the Sama Veda instructor at the Sanskrit College, Madras. He also agreed that the present chanting is Ramanna Padham, and he also gave me the addresses of two of the chanters in the North Arcot style. The address was not the exact one but only an indication of the locality. With the help of a couple of friends, I traced the place of one Ekambara Sastri, who stays in West Mambalam. As my son-in-law has a car, he took me to the place. Ekambara Sastri gave me the following information.

He belongs to Anakkavur village in North Arcot. The Samagas from his village used to be the chanters in [the] Ekambareswarar Temple in Kancheepuram, where the chanting was being done in the old Pracheena style of North Arcot. Actually he had regular training only in the new Ramanna style, but he used to chant in the temple with his father and others in the old style. ... I got about half an hour’s recording. He gave me the address of [one] Ekambara Dikshitar, also of Anakkavur. Another day I went to [him]. He corroborated what the Sastri had mentioned. This Dikshitar also has been trained in the Ramanna style. He was instructor in the same at [the] Tirupati pathasala. He also gave me a recording [of] about 15 minutes or so. I did not take more, as he did not impress me regarding the purity of the style (though he is a more erudite Samavedic pandit [than the Sastri]). As he was [an] instructor, he is thorough with all portions of Sama Veda, whereas the Sastri, being a household purohit, requires the help of a book in order to remind him of the proper sequence of the chants.

[All] this naturally raises one point: how far is the chanting of these [two] people true to the original old style, [or] ... influenced by the new style. Again there is one more point. These pandits would recognise people as proper chanters only those who

⁴ See Howard 1977: 115–120.

⁵ The oldest is the *Sāmaparibhāṣā* of Kṛṣṇaswāmin Śrautin (pp. 17–33), a *grantha* print which I have been unable to locate. Subsequently it has appeared in Simon 1913: 326–344; in Rāmānāth Dīkṣit 1967: 29–35; and (without the texts) in Howard 1988: 11–17.

had some reasonable training – say, to their level. Personally, I feel there may be priests in the villages who had learnt only the old style but only the essential chants for household rituals. Their style would be more true to the original. Yes, one has to comb the villages, but one thing I am convinced of. If one goes in search, one will get all cooperation from the chanters. They are so glad that someone wants to listen to them.

I also enquired about Mullantiram Ramanatha Dikshitar. These two [did not know] the grand old man personally. Mullantiram is a village near Anakkavur! There are two priests from Mullantiram in Madras who seem to be his relatives. They may be able to give more information. I could not contact them.

L.S.R. sent me recordings of the two Anakkavur chanters. In a letter of October 14, 1988, I wrote that they surprised me very much. In my view both of the Sāmavedīs were good, competent singers: they stuck to the basic *grāma* (scale) and did not wander here and there like some chanters I have heard. What surprised me most was the difference in their singing from that of Mullantiram Ramanatha Dikshitar. First of all, the Anakkavur priests apparently do not have one way of singing the Grāmageyagāna and the Āraṇyageyagāna, another for chanting the Ūha and the Ūhya.⁶ Secondly, the Anakkavur style is not identical to either the Hāvik or the Tanjore styles – it seems to be a unique way of rendering the Sāmaveda. But it resembles the Hāvik style more than that of Tanjore, which is interesting considering the fact that both chanters are intimately familiar with the *navīna* type. This would seem to substantiate the view that their singing is genuine and has not been influenced by Sāmaveda from other areas of India. Another point is that there appear to be several *prācīna* styles in North Arcot, not just one. There is a pressing need to visit the other villages mentioned by Dr. V. Raghavan in his essay (Raghavan 1957) in order to ascertain if indeed other ways of singing are found there as well.

In a letter of December 30, 1988, L.S.R. reported extensively on his further contacts with North Arcot chanters.

I had been to Madras in the first week of this month to attend a marriage in the family. I utilised the opportunity to stay there for some days and tried to contact Samavedis who can chant in the old North Arcot style. As quoted by you in your book from the paper of Dr. V. Raghavan,⁷ the villages where Samavedis are seen are Mullandiram, Adayapalam, Anakkavur, Panayur, Paranur, and Perumal Koil (Vaishnavas). Surprisingly, I was able to contact Samavedic chanters from all the first five villages. Only Perumal Koil is left out.

First I contacted Paranur [Pāṇūr] Narasimha Sastry. He has, however, studied only the new Tanjore style. I had the name of another Paranur Samavedi living in a village in North Arcot. Narasimha Sastry informed me that this person has also

⁶ The Muḷlaṅṭiram paṇḍit uses a style like that of the Hāvik Rāṇāyanīyas of North Kannara, Karnataka, in the Prakṛtiḡāna, the Rāmaṅṅa style in the Uttaraḡāna. See Howard 1977: 135–136.

⁷ See Howard 1986: 203–204.

studied only the new style. ... From another priest I learnt that Paranur people did not use gamakas – shakes, nuances, and elongations – in their chants. This type appealed to Nagu Dikshitar and others who started the practice of Samaveda chanting to the accompaniment of the harmonium. The “staccato” nature of their chanting was suitable for the [instrument]. Nagu Dikshitar trained some Paranur chanters like that.

The next person I contacted was Panayur [Panāyūr] Sivarama Sastrigal. He spells it “Pināyūr.” ... He actually [had] studied only the new Tanjore Ramanna style at Bangalore. His father and other elder relatives used to chant in the old North Arcot style – they actually call it Anakkavur padham – and they used to chant it at the Ekambaranathar Temple at Conjeevaram (Kancheepuram). He had also chanted in that old style with his father there for some years and knows the old style and gave me a recording.

The next person I contacted was Mullandiram Yagnaswami Dikshitar. He sports a beard and has the nickname Dadi Vadhyar (bearded priest). ... Was I surprised when he told me that he was the eldest son of Mullandiram Ramanatha Dikshitar, about whom you have said in your book that the knowledge of the composite style of North Arcot is based on his recording alone.⁸ He first chanted one saman for me. I told him that his voice was just like that of his father, and his surprise was equal to mine (mentioned earlier) when I played him a recording of his father chanting (courtesy your tape).⁹ He is not as learned as his father. He has participated in some yagas but has not performed one himself. He also gave me a recording. He even recorded the utterance for Vapa Homa. He is at times too fast, [and] his voice is pretty loud. He has helped in the formation of a Samaveda Sabha (Association) at Villivalkam village and has assured me all help.

The next person I contacted was Mullandiram V. Venkatasubrahmanyam. He is a nephew of Mullandiram Ramanatha Dikshitar. He told me that his father was a good chanter and that his father’s brother was even a better one. He is employed as the manager of a company, but he utilises his spare time in performing poojas, ceremonies, and in teaching Vedic chanting to householders who are interested in learning at least some portion of chanting useful for daily pooja or various household ceremonies. He teaches both Samam and Yajus. He has given a tape recording – some 5 hours or so – of his Samavedic chanting to the Tirupati temple authorities, who have kept up a library of Vedic chanting from various areas and styles. The recording is done as a sample of the old North Arcot style. He did not claim any purity for his style and says only, “This is the way I learnt from my father; it is for you to assess.” There is, however, no doubt that he is deeply religious, and he does his bit to preserve old traditions. He lent me a copy of his tape recording done at Tirupati, and I copied it and returned his. ... He showed his strong disapproval of the way his cousin, the bearded Yagnaswami Dikshitar, chants. He [remarked], “Does he sing Samavedic chant at all?” [A] family quarrel seems to be very much in evidence there.

I got the name of another Samavedi, Adayapalam Sambamoorthy Dikshitar. I didn’t get his proper address but only the locality where he lives. After going to the area, the first person to whom I enquired about his address happened to be himself (praise be to Hayagreeva)!! We had a long chat. He studied only the new Tanjore style of Ramanna padham. His father, however, had studied only the old [Anakkavur] style. He also was a chanter at the Ekambara temple at Kancheepuram. Sambamoorthy Dikshitar also used to chant with him and remembers the old style. He also gave me a recording.

I now got the address of another Samavedi from Mullandiram who is now teaching Samaveda in the Vidyaranya Veda Peetham at Hospet in Karnataka. ... He got

⁸ See Howard 1977: 133.

⁹ See Howard 1977: 500. A copy of this tape was given to me by Prof. J. F. Staal (Berkeley).

my letter, and he has replied, giving some interesting information. ... He says that he has studied only the new Ramanna style. He says [also] that his elders used to say that the Mullandiram style belongs to the Ranayaniya school.

I have gathered some more information about Mullandiram people. ... Mullandiram Samavedis have descended from the line of the famous saint Arunagiri Nathar – famous for the Tamil songs he composed, which go under the name of Tirupugazh. Mullandiram Ramanatha Dikshitar was the 9th in the line of Arunagiri Nathar (the bearded son the 10th). The famous Sanskrit poet and scholar Appayya Dikshitar had studied under one of the Mullandiram pandits. Mayuram Ramanatha Dikshitar, who passed away recently and who had written many books on Samaveda, is a descendant of Appayya Dikshitar.

Ever since two years [ago], when I first heard the Anakkavur style, ... I was worried about its difference from the Mullandiram chant of Ramanatha Dikshitar. Last year, when I recorded from two Anakkavur chanters, the worry became a suspicion. Now, all the Anakkavur-style chanters confirm that Anakkavur ... is the old North Arcot style. [In further confirmation of this], the Mullandiram pandit from Hospet says [that the] Mullandiram style is a Ranayaniya one.

I was sent partial copies of the tape recordings made or given to L.S.R. In a letter of June 29, 1989, I sent him my impressions of the chanting of four of the Sāmavedīs alluded to in his previous letter.

1. *Mullantiram Yajnaswami Dikshitar*

He sings at a rapid pace, and therefore his chanting is a bit compressed (he does not have time to include the *gamakas* that are characteristic of the Tanjore style). Also, he makes a lot of mistakes in chanting. I have compared his singing to that of the Tanjore singers whom I recorded and transcribed, and there is no appreciable difference except for the fact that his singing is less ornate. The general contour of his melodies is the same as that of the Tanjore (i.e., Rāmaṇṇa) singers. Moreover, I do not detect the stylistic dualism that I found in the chants of his father: everything (Grāmageyagāna, Āraṇyakagāna, Ūhagāna, Ūhyagāna) is recited in the Rāmaṇṇa style, and there is not a trace of the Hāvīk style in his chants. I was quite disappointed to notice this fact.

2. *Mullantiram V. Venkatasubrahmanyam*

His chanting is practically the same as that of Mullantiram Yajnaswami Dikshitar. It is clear that he chants in the new Tanjore style. I can find nothing unique about his recital.

3. *Adayapalam Sambamoorthy Srautigal*

His is definitely not the Rāmaṇṇa style. His chanting is confined to a narrower range. He stays on the central pitch and does not go above except for a *gamaka* here or there. He does include some lower tones, and in this respect his is the same as the new Tanjore style (the intervallic relationships to the central pitch are the same).

I should add here that in the chants of Anakkavur Ekambara Sastri the tones below the central pitch are like those of the Hāvīk singers of North Kannara (i.e., the pitch NI – the tone directly below the center pitch – is avoided: they go directly from SA to DHA and from there sometimes to PA). This Adayapalam style is therefore not exactly like the Anakkavur style. The two styles are identical as far as the central pitch and above are concerned: they do not go above except for *gamaka* tones. It is in the tones below the central pitch where there is a difference. L.S.R. had mentioned in a previous letter that this Adayapalam chanter has studied the new Tanjore style but remembers the old Anakkavur style from singing along with his father, who studied only the old style. Is it possible that the two styles had gotten him confused and that he sang the central pitch and above like the Anakkavur chanters and the tones below central pitch like the Rāmaṇṇa singers? We would need more recordings from Adayapalam in order to make a judgement.

4. Panayur Sivarama Sastrigal

This paṇḍit was right in telling L.S.R. that he could chant in the Anakkavur style. But in his chant also the tones below the central pitch are like those of the new Tanjore style. This chanter has studied mainly the Rāmaṇṇa style, so perhaps he has inadvertently mixed up the two styles. In summary, his Anakkavur chant does not appear to be a pure one. It is like that of the Adayapalam singer.

* * *

L.S.R.'s letter of December 30, 1988, was his last to me dealing with *prācīna* Sāmaveda. He had planned to visit the villages in North Arcot, enumerated previously in this essay, in association with the organization Sampradāya (Madras), which is intent on preserving various traditions of South India, especially in Tamil Nadu. Whether or not he eventually followed up on his plan, I cannot say. But he has already secured for himself a firm place among Sāmaveda scholars by bringing to the attention of the world the Pudukode chant of Palghat and by more narrowly defining the old practices of North Arcot. Much of what L.S.R. writes about the Pudukode style is based on what he has heard as part of the oral tradition of Tamil Brahmins. But there is some doubt yet in my mind that, for example, Rāmanātha Śrauti (Rāmaṇṇa) could have singlehandedly “invented” the *navīna* style of chanting in Tanjore. It is quite possible that the new chant already existed in places like Muḷḷaṅṅīram and was simply imported to Tanjore from North Arcot. If such is the case, the “*navīna*” way of singing may be just as old or older than the Pudukode *sāman*.

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