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## Time for some 'K'taka Suddha Saveri'

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With nerves frayed in both the principal riparian states - Tamil Nadu and Karnataka - after the Supreme Court's final verdict in the Cauvery appeals case last week, it may be time to tune into the litigating nuances of 'Karnataka Suddha Saveri', at least until both states study the judgment in full.

Sounds like lateral thinking? Well, yes, if one is willing to channelise one's repressed energies into the creative wellsprings of the great tradition of Carnatic Music, in the hope that one day she takes wings with a creative solution!

And then one begins to see the beauty of the context flowing like a plentiful river in gentle spate, of how 'Karnataka Suddha Saveri' happens to be one of 50 'rare ragas' in this musical tradition, South India's most cherished contribution to the realm of culture, alongside 'Bharathanatyam'.

At times, "we are compelled to encounter ragas with two names. And a raga can do nothing to shake off one name, can it! And we are not empowered to pass a law stating that, hereafter,

**NEW ARRIVAL**

**50 RARE RAGAS OF CARNATIC MUSIC**

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**Ragas Down The Memory Lane-, by Vidya Bhavani Suresh, published by Skanda Publications, Mylapore, Chennai, 2018.**

every raga will be known only by name," writes the noted Bharathanatyam exponent and musicologist, Vidya Bhavani Suresh, in her latest book offering, "50 Rare Ragas of Carnatic Music- Ragas Down The Memory lane".

"Karnataka Suddha Saveri' is also called

'Suddhasaveri', though "it is nowhere near the popular 'Suddhasaveri' that we know of," says the author. 'Suddhasaveri' - as symbolizing a "burst of joy and happiness can best be described as a 1000-watts bulb shining brightly" as one of the very popular 'ragas' in Carnatic music.

Though one of the Carnatic music trinitities, Muthuwami Dikshitar has called 'Karnataka Suddha Saveri' as 'Suddhasaveri', the former is all the latter is not. "I am not quite sure as to when and how it acquired the name 'Karnataka Suddha Saveri', but retaining the name can make things simpler for us, contends Vidya Bhavani. While the "glow and radiance" of 'Suddhasaveri' cannot be missed, the author says, "we can remember 'Suddhasaveri' as the 'raga' in which songs like 'Dharini Telusu Konti' and 'Sandhyadevi Savithri' are set." Whereas, 'Karnataka Suddha Saveri' is a "very haunting raga; it creates a mood of stillness and tranquility and can lend a chant-like feel to the listening experience," explains the author.

Just the variant in two notes makes all the differ-

ence, though both 'ragas' are very similar in structure, just as the lack of two wettings makes all the difference to the standing 'samba' paddy crop in the Cauvery delta. Yet, both 'Suddhasaveri' and 'Karnataka Suddha Saveri' co-exist as two finely nuanced 'swaras'. Dikshitar's 'Kriti', 'Ekambres Nayike' is a creation in this rare Carnatic 'raga, Karnataka Suddha Saveri', making it a complete listening experience, she adds.

Compared to her earlier work, "50 Evergreen Ragas of Carnatic Music", which Vidya Bhavani says was much easier to write as it was more a "factual description of ragas", to dwell into the depths of 50 'rare ragas' has been a far more challenging exercise. But it is her passionate commitment to classical music and complemented by her husband, B.A. Suresh, Editor and Publisher, Skanda Publications, that has made this arduous journey possible and lovable, she adds.

Let it may be too technical and boring for the common reader, Vidhya Bhavani, also supported by her three children, has

adopted a refreshingly new methodology in leading the reader into each of the 50 'rare ragas' she has delineated in this book, pegging each of them to an everyday life experience, memory or an anecdote connected with their lives. It is not just a question of knowing popular 'ragas' by name and identifying them. Each is uniquely soulful.

Whether it is 'Alankari', a brilliant rare 'raga' presented by Muthaiah Bhagavathar, with which the author's exposition in this book begins, or Thanjavur Shankar Iyer's "interesting Kriti" with a "spicier and much rarer raga in this garland of Ranjanis - the Megha Ranjani, until she leaves you with another rare Carnatic 'raga', 'Vijaya Saraswati', Vidya Bhavani's basic contention is you comprehend and enrich the tradition only "through a lifelong relationship with a raga". This, in an oral tradition involves constant learning from one's 'Guru' and others, rendering them at every possible opportunity and passing on the musicality to the Nextgen. This is a book all lovers and even plain listeners of Carnatic music would relish.