

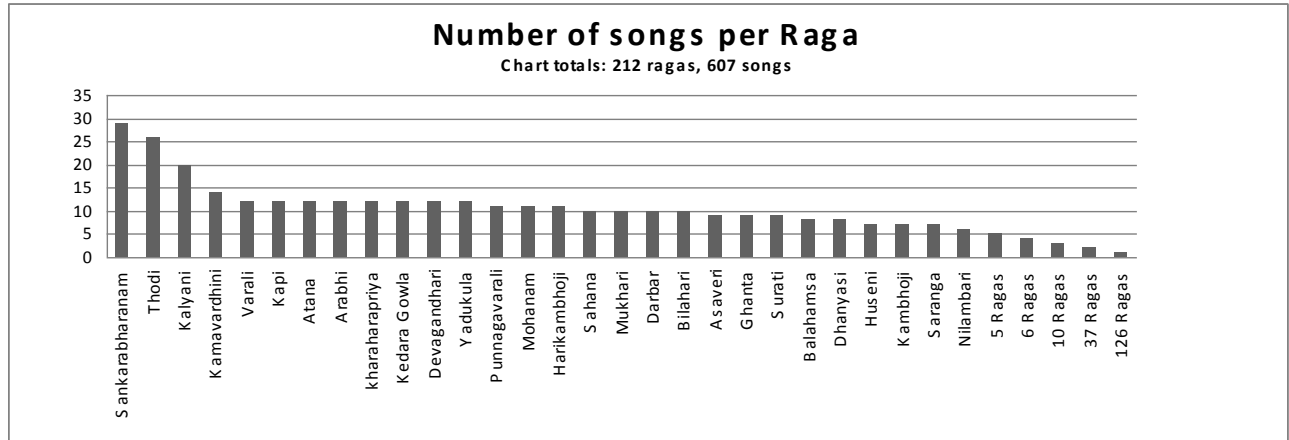
Saint Tyagaraja, the prolific music composer

Saint Tyagaraja, one of the Trinity and a major pillar in the structure of Carnatic Music, was a great spiritualist and a prolific composer. He was also a very creative and methodical person, a rare combination of art and science. He was methodical in the sense that he made sure that his disciples strictly followed the melodic patterns (sangatis) he had formulated for his songs. He invented a lot of ragas and composed based on them. He is credited with giving life to several ragas that had been previously unfamiliar, by composing songs based on them.

We do not have an exact count as to how many songs the Bard composed. Numbers vary between 600 and 1000. This uncertainty is due to the fact that some of his disciples, after his death, used his “mudra” or “trade mark” (signature in the song) in their own compositions.

We will confine our study to approximations in this article; our objective here is to highlight his greatness. He has composed in over 200 ragas.

The following chart illustrates the distribution of songs in particular ragas. He composed numerous songs in some ragas, which he must have liked very much. Also those ragas have obviously a lot of scope for expansions and nuances. Sankarabharanam, Thodi, Kalyani top the list with more than 20 songs in each of them. At the other extreme, he composed only one song in as many as 126 ragas.



Details for the ragas at the lower end of the chart are presented below.

- 5 kritis each in Desya Todi, Gowlipantu, Sri Ranjani, Suddhasaveri and Yamuna Kalyani.
- 4 kritis each in Ahiri, Anandabhairavi, Kannada, Mayamalava Gowla and Narayana Gowla.
- 3 kritis each in Bangala, Devamanohari, Janaranjani, Jayamanohari, Kuntalavarali, Nayaki, Purnachandrika, Purvikalyani, Sri and Suddha Bangala.
- 2 kritis each in Abhogi, Amir Kalyani, Chakravakam, Chandrajyoti, Chayatarangini, Garudadhvani, Gowri Manohari, Hamsadhwani, Hindolam, Isamanohari, Jaganmohani, Kaanada, Kalavati, Kalyana Vasantam, Kannadagowla, Kantamani, Kedara, Khamas, Kiranavali, Kokiladhwani, Latangi, Malavasri, Nadanamakriya, Narayani, Nata, Natakuranji, Navarasa Kannada, Phalamanjari, Ragapanjaram, Ravichandrika, Salaga Bhairavi, Sama, Simhendramadhyamam, Sindhuramakriya, Suddha Desi and Vasanta Bhairavi.

- 1 kriti in each of these ragas: Abheri, Amritavahini, Amritavarshini, Andali, Andolika, Bahudari, Bhavapriya, Bhinna Shadja, Bhouli, Bhupalam, Bhushavali, Bindumalini, Brindavanasaranga, Cenciruti, Charukesi, Chaya Nata, Chenchukambhoji, Chittaranjini, Churnika, Devakriya, Devamritavarshini, Dhenuka, Dipaka, Divyamani, Gambhiravani, Ganamurthy, Ganavaridhi, Gangeyabhushani, Ghurjari, Gopikavasantam, Gowla, Gowri, Gundakriya, Hamsabhramari, Hamsanadam, Hemavathi, Hindola Vasantam, Jaya Narayani, Jayantasena, Jayantasri, Jhankaradhwani, Jingla, Jujahuli, Kaikavasi, Kalakanti, Kalanidhi, Kalgada, Kamala Manohari, Kapinarayani, Kedaram, Kesari, Kiravani, Kokilapriya, Kokilavarali, Kolahalam, Kunjari, Lalita, Maaruva Dhanyasi, Malavi, Malaya Marutam, Manavati, Mandari, Mangalakaisiki, Manirangu, Manjari, Manohari, Manoranjani, Mararanjani, Margahindolam, Naadavaraangini, Nabhomani, Nadavarangini, Naga Gandhari, Naganandini, Nagaswaravali, Nalinakanthi, Nasikabhushani, Navanitham, Pharaju, Pratapavarali, Purna Lalita, Purnashadjam, Rama Manohari, Ramapriya, Ranjani, Rasali, Ratnangi, Revagupti, Rishabhapriya, Rudrapriya, Rupavati, Saramati, Sarasangi, Saraswati, Saraswati Manohari, Shadvidhamargini, Shanmukhapriya, Siddhasena, Simhavahini, Srimani, Sruti Ranjani, Subha Pantuvarali, Suddha Dhanyasi, Suddhasimantini, Sulini, Suposhini, Supradipa, Suryakantam, Swarabhushani, Swaravali, Takka, Tivravahini, Umabharanam, Vagadhiswari, Vakulabharanam, Vanaspati, Vanavali, Vardhani, Vasanta, Vasanta Varali, Vegavahini, Vijaya Sri, Vijayavasantam, Viravasantam and Vivardhani.

The lowest end of the chart attracts one's attention greatly.

There are 126 ragas in which he has composed only one song each. It is amazing that with just one song he has captured and captivated the minds of the rasikas. Brova Bharama, Nagumomu, Enta muddo, Theliyaleru Rama, Ganamuthe, Sarasa sama bheda, Kaligiyunte, Manasa Etulorthune, Kamalapta kula, Maravairi are just a few examples given here to illustrate the point. It will be an interesting exercise for the learners of our great Carnatic Music to identify the other famous songs that correspond to the ragas in that long list.

The great musician Sri G.N.Balasubramaniam said , 'Tyagaraja has composed songs in such a manner as to give ample scope to the singer to bring out the essence in ragas in a pleasing and satisfying manner giving abundant scope for manodharma.' Though he composed 26 songs in Todi, 20 in kalyani, 14 in Kamavardini, 12 in Varali, etc., one does not perceive any repetitious monotony but rather invigorating freshness in each. "Tyagaraja spoke to the simple man and woman without any great learning and embedded his music in easy melody and rhythm".

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