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## Interview of Prominent Music Composer S. V. Venkatraman in South Indian Cinema by Randor Guy

00:00:00

This is Randor guy interviewing Mr. S V Venkatraman. Mr. Venkatraman is one of the senior most music composers who are called music directors in this part of the country. His association with cinema dates back to its earliest days, almost from the early days of the talkie. He has composed music for several films in Tamil including Sakuntalai and Bhaktameera, two of the most famous films featuring the great singer M S Subbulakshmi. This interview, the first one with Mr. Venkatraman takes place at his residence in Gopalapuram, Madras on the 22nd of October 1984. Mr. Venkatraman speaks in Tamil.

**Q:** Greetings Mr. Venkataraman.

**A:** Greetings.

**Q:** Even in this health state of yours, you have graciously accepted my request to interview you. I thank you for sparing this time to share with me your memories and experiences with me. Shall we begin the interview, sir?

**A:** Yes, you may.

00:01:16

**Q:** Can you tell us your full name?

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**A :** My full name is Sozhavanthan Varadharajan Venkatraman

**Q :** That became S V Venkataraman

**A :** Yes

**Q :** Sozhavanthan if I am not wrong, is the village near Madurai. Is that so?

**A :** You are right. It is near Madurai. It is my ancestral place. But I would have been there only for once maybe, in my whole life. My father was assisting his elder brother who was a doctor. So, after the partition of the properties in Sozhavanthan, he had shifted to Madras.

00:01:48

**Q :** How did you enter the field of arts? I've heard you were into theatres before entering Cinema field.

**A :** That's because...When I was just 2 years old, I lost my father. I was blessed by the almighty at an early age of 3. I had knowledge about rare ragas even at such an early age.

**Q :** Did any other members in your family practise music?

**A :** I felt my mother was naturally blessed with knowledge in music. She used to sing. My father was fully into music. The entire family benefited from his knowledge in music. Since I started singing rare ragas at such an early age, they all used to name me Shangmuga priya, lathangi etc, the names of ragas. Since I started singing at the age of 3, I used to go anywhere and everywhere to sing. My family members used to get angry that I was doing so. But that habit improved my knowledge.

**Q :** You mean your knowledge about music?

**A :** Yes my knowledge in music. It came naturally to me. I consider whatever I sang or composed in my life, was a gift from the almighty. That's because, at an early age of 3, I somehow got a feeling that the family responsibility was going to fall on my shoulders.

**Q :** At the age of 3?

**A:** Yes...at the age of 3. I remember clearly. Till age of 5, I was singing on my own.

00:03:20

**Q:** Did you formally learn music under a guru?

**A:** It is all god's grace. But when I was an actor playing dramas, there was a person called Shankararama iyer. I learnt saregama till 'Varnam' under him.

**Q:** You said while acting in drama..

**A:** When I said while acting in Drama...If you take my case, I tried school education till the age of 10 in many places.

**Q:** Which places?

**A:** Manamadurai, Madurai, Chidambaram etc. Even though I tried studying at all these places, I could only pick up music.

**Q:** That much involved you were in music

**A:** Yes..I was not good at studies. My whole focus was on music. I was naturally attracted and drawn to it. It pulled me towards it. While I used to sing, I've seen so many snakes cross my path. They never did anything to me. I don't know why, they would have thought some singer with god's grace is crossing.

**Q:** Snakes have crossed your path..

**A:** Yes so many times..so many other experiences too...If I tell about all of that, no one will believe it in today's times.

**Q:** Why wouldn't one believe if it happened for real?

**A:** That's also true.

**Q:** Oh I see

**A:** When I was 10 years old, the age when I should be studying..I ran away to Madras without informing anybody. I was enchanted by the thing called 'music'

**Q:** Like under a spell..

**A :** Yes like a spell..At that time Krishnaswamy pavalar..

**Q :** Krishnaswami Pavalar, playwright..

**A :** Yes...I went and sang at a sabha in Chintadiripet. They thought 'this boy sings well' and kept me there. 'we shouldn't let him go' they thought. At that time Krishnaswamy bhagavathar was visiting a house opposite to that sabha. He heard my song and came to see me. He immediately took me from there and made me part of his troupe.

**Q :** His drama troupe..

**A :** Yes. Meanwhile, my father's elder brother was worried that I went missing. He was a big doctor at that time, M D Krishnaswamy. He was an eye doctor in Madras. A senior surgeon. He was searching for me everywhere and finally landed up in the drama troupe. The members in the drama troupe thought the pavalar kidnapped the boy from them. They had seen the letter in the trunk. When they saw the address on it, they had gone to the doctor. One Bhagavandana pillai was the commissioner.

**Q :** Police commissioner

**A :** Police commissioner. The doctor had approached him about my case and the Police retrieved me from the Pavalar. They brought me home. My uncle was in Cuddalore at that time. There was a Hadon company at that time. Big company it was. They were printers. There was a Balaranjani sabha owned by Jagannatha iyer. Their drama set had N S Krishnan, Saranga pani, Rajamanikkam all of them. They were in that company at that time. They had approached them asking 'there was a boy who had come here. He used to sing very well...want to know his whereabouts'. They had given my doctor uncle's address. His younger brother Varadraja Iyer, he was also a doctor. Jagannatha Iyer was his friend. He had come to visit. He told my uncle that the boy is mad about music. Better put him in the drama troupe.

**Q :** Jagannada iyer was running a drama troupe at that time..

**A :** Yes. He had come home. When he came...he gave a 100 rupee. The 100 rupee of that time is equivalent to...



**Q:** A lac of today.

**A:** Yes.. worth lacs. He gave a 100 rupee and took me with him. At the age of ten I was..

**Q:** A 100 rupee artist..

**A:** Yes... somebody who earned 100 rupee at the age of 10. I joined the drama. On the very first day, I played the hero of the play and I earned 25 rupees. On the very first day.

**Q:** Do you remember which play was it?

**A:** The play was...

**Q:** You remember where was it?

**A:** Royal theatre, Madras.

**Q:** Where exactly was the Royal theatre, sir? Near Salt cotta?

**A:** It was Salt cotta.

**Q:** Oh! Salt cotta was royal theatre?

**A:** Yes. It was named Salt cotta. It was because the place was close to the canal. The Royal theatre was just next to the canal. It later became a museum or something.

**Q:** The kannayya company was also there I've heard..

**A:** Yes all companies used it. It was there, I first played Rajapart.

**Q:** Rajapart means hero?

**A:** Hero.

**Q:** The role of Raja

**A:** Yes role of Raja. In those times, dialogues used to be 15 pages long. I used to learn it by heart and speak for half an hour at a stretch. The memory power was such. Even today, if I am friends with 10 people, I would never forget their phone numbers.

**Q:** You then have a good memory power. That's a big asset.

**A:** Yes. Very much. Also, after I became an actor...after I went to cinema as an actor...

00:09:10

**Q:** When did you join cinema as an actor?

**A:** In 1935. I acted in a film called Nala Damayanti. For Pioneer films.

**Q:** Do you remember who was the Director and Producer?

**A:** Director was Sethna.

**Q:** Oh Sethna, Parsi. The one who came from Bombay..

**A:** Yes came from Bombay.

**Q:** Producer was Pioneer?

**A:** No no. Producers were Sivamani and Subbaya Chettiyar who was partener in Vinnappa Chettiyar's Pragathi pictures. Tthey were partners.

**Q:** Nala Damayanti?

**A:** Nala Damayanti

**Q:** Which role did you play?

**A:** I was the hero, Nalan.

**Q:** Do you remember who all acted in the film?

**A:** The girl's name was Mangala Rajashree. All debutants of that time.

**Q:** Where was it shot?

**A:** Shot in Calcutta.

**Q:** In East India?

**A:** No no. At Pioneer studio in Calcutta. We also did outdoors there. In the Ramakrishna mutt in Dakshineswar. They made stand in front of the Portico and shot me there.

**Q:** That was used as a location?

**A:** Yes... sorry my pronunciations would be confusing because of my age. Please



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excuse me for that.

**Q:** No problem at all sir. Facts are more important for us.

**A:** When I came back to the village after acting in Cinema, the boys at the company said they were struggling.

**Q:** In the drama company?

**A:** Yes. So I decided to put in money and start a drama company. As they were all struggling so hard for survival.

**Q:** When you say them, do you remember who all?

**A:** I don't remember exactly who all...They all used to be my co-actors. Even M R Radha was my co-actor. He was also a very benevolent man. If somebody complains of struggle, he used to start a company immediately and help them. I consider these our good qualities. When the company was flourishing, they started taking advantage of me. But god's grace is such that, I somehow find someone in times of crisis. Life sends me somebody at tough times.

**Q:** Do you remember them?

**A:** Two people from Madurai, proprietors of the company Mohan Movietone. They wanted to cast me in a film. They were from Pattannur. One was Krishnamoorthy, the other one I don't remember well. I think Radhakrishnan. They had come in search of me.

**Q:** To Madras?

**A:** No not Madras. Kurinjipadi. It's a village. The villages had cinema kottas back then. They were makeshift arrangements in tents to screen films.

**Q:** You used to do plays also there?

**A:** what I meant was, because of the growth of many such tent kottas, we used to do plays there. When we were doing one such play, those people came in search of me.

**Q:** The Mohan Movietone people?

**A :** Yes. The funny part was when they were searching for me, I was walking away. When they were about to leave, they bumped onto me. That's god's grace. They gave me money and asked me to be the hero in their film.

**Q :** Which film was this?

**A :** Chandramohana- Samoogathodu

**Q :** It was a social subject?

**A :** Yes. Social subject. A patriotic film

**Q :** When the freedom movement was on..

**A :** Yes. Freedom movement was on full swing

**Q :** Which year was this?

**A :** 1936. 35 or 36 if I am not wrong. They took me from there to Madurai. So when I went to Madurai, they told me they wanted to know some stories. Then I remembered the story Samoogathodu written by Kothamangalam Subbu. I've seen actor OR Balu perform it.

**Q :** The OR Balu who was in Trichy

**A :** Yes the same person.

**Q :** Big actor

**A :** Yes actor. They all were my friends. I went to Subbu for the story. Subbu is also close friend.

**Q :** What was Subbu doing then?

**A :** Subbu was working in Kothamangalam. He used to write songs now and then

**Q :** He was not into films then?

**A :** No he wasn't. but he had done some small role in a film called Pattinathar. He had come back to Kothamangalam after that. I went to him, he is a close friend. I told him 'come to Madurai with me...They are looking for stories.' He told the story to them and they liked it. They said I am the hero and we all went to Madras and rehearsals



began.

00:14:34

**Q:** They used to rehearse then for films. Just like the plays..

**A:** Yes rehearsals just like plays.

**Q:** Not like these days

**A:** Not at all. For example, we would rehearse one song for almost a month.

**Q:** A month?

**A:** Yes, that's why they have become timeless classics.

**Q:** Where was he then?

**A:** They were contemplating casting MK Radha as a villain. I knew MK Radha and took them to meet him

**Q:** In 1936?

**A:** He was in Royapettah. He was acting in Sathi Leelavathi.

**Q:** You offered?

**A:** Yes. I told him about this offer. He said he has started playing hero and it would be difficult for him to play a villain. So I offered to play villain and let him play the hero.

**Q:** Who directed it?

**A:** Yes. The shooting began. It went on in Bombay. At Bombay Film centre. Raja Chandrashekar. Raghunath was the editor.

**Q:** Enters Raghu.. After passing MA

**A:** Yes. He was the editor, Direction assistant everything. All-in-one.

**Q:** Assistant to his brother

**A:** Yes. He was a brilliant guy. Learnt everything. They were doing a stunt scene. Shot

in Goregaon. I was showing my stunt moves. I was playing the villain and had a mask for that sequence. When I was doing it, the mask fell down and covered my eyes. I lost my track and fell down. I fractured my hands.

**Q:** An accident at the set.

**A:** Yes. That was the last shot. All other shots were taken. I was brought to the Bombay government hospital.

**Q:** So it was a major accident in the hand..

**A:** Yes. Everyone asked me to file a case against the company. I told them why should I sue the company for my mistake? I got the treatment done and I came back to Madras.

00:17:05

**Q:** Do you remember the heroine in Samoogathondu? And other actors..

**A:** T N Meenakshi, the heroine. One K R Jayalakshmi. She was from Kancheepuram. She played the villain's wife. P R Mangalam, Clown Sundaram..

**Q:** Who composed the music? You only did?

**A:** I used to sing and compose from my childhood days. So I ended up composing my portions.

**Q:** Your portion alone? For rest of the portions?

**A:** Everyone sings their parts. The harmonium would play along.

**Q:** There was no one like a Music Director?

**A:** Nothing called a Music Director in those days. I did the same way for Nala Damayanti where I played the hero. I used to compose for my parts.

**Q:** Who used to conduct orchestras then?

**A:** When I was 12 or 13 years old, I used to start composing. I somehow got that knack.

**Q:** Inside the set?

**A :** No orchestra as such. One Harmonium, one Tabla.. they would be at a corner, playing.

**Q :** Behind the camera..

**A :** Yes. Out of the frame. They would sit there and play along as we sing.

**Q :** That's it? No Arranger, Conductor?

**A :** Nothing. No background music. No accompaniments.

**Q :** Those were the only instruments?

**A :** A Harmonium, a Tabla. Slowly Violins became a part of it.

**Q :** Before that even Violin was not there?

**A :** No. Then flute became part of it later. There was nothing called a re-recording back then. If one sings, they play and that's it.

**Q :** No notes, notations..

**A :** Nothing

**Q :** Which means there were no playbacks too. As one would sing on sets...What would they do when the camera moves? Won't they be in the frame?

**A :** Yes. But movements were restricted. If the song is a long one, they would at times, place two cameras in two angles and shoot. The song will keep happening. If movements were planned, the actor would turn himself to favour each camera angle and the musicians would be at a corner playing.

**Q :** The number of shots were less

**A :** Yes because it was practically difficult. Some songs were done in one shot. Our positions would be marked and we keep singing.

00:19:55

**Q :** What did you do after Samoogathodu?

**A :** It was during that shoot, I had an accident. I had to undergo an operation in

Bombay. My bones didn't heal well. I came back and met Dr. Sankaran of Ranga nursing home. I knew both Sadasivam and Subbulakshmi from their childhood. They admitted me there. Sadasivam came to the station too.

**Q:** I see. Kalki sadasivam

**A:** Yes. When he saw I wasn't well, he admitted me here. So I was getting treated at the Ranga Nursing home. My bones started healing by then. I met MR Radha one of those days. He asked me to be part of dramas.

**Q:** MR Radha asked you

**A:** Yes. We were good friends. With my still recovering hand, I used to be part of dramas happening around. At places like Vandavasi, Sozhingapuram etc. I acted in all those dramas, as hero. When it was flourishing, a contractor from Kolar took us to play in a theatre there.

**Q:** Kolar, near mysore. Karnataka?

**A:** Yes. Near the gold mine. We did a play there. But we were suffering a loss. So I told them, I am going to Bangalore. I had a faith that I'll meet some Producer and I came to Bangalore. I took a room in a hotel in Bangalore and was sitting at a park one day. I had some faith that somebody I knew would come.

**Q:** You were so sure you would meet somebody..

**A:** Yes. It's a faith. Then Meiyappa Chettiar..

**Q:** AVM

**A:** Yes A V Meiyappa Chettiar was passing in a car and he spotted me. He asked me what I was doing there. He already knew that I was not doing well health-wise. He asked me to get in the car and took me to a hotel. Over there, I met Seman Lal-Nandalal and those people...

**Q:** Distributors?

**A:** Yes. Distributors in Bangalore. They had come to the hotel. When they were there, Keshavrao from Prabhat..



**Q:** Keshavrao Dhaiber. The person who directed Nandakumar

**A:** Yes. The same person. He saw me there. Meiyappa Chettiar was also there. He immediately proposed to him that let us do the Tamil version of Nandakumar. They also cast me in Nandakumar. Meiyappa Chettiyar cast me. I went to Kolar and brought all actors from there. T R Ramachandran and others. We all went to Pune to a studio next to Prabhat studios. I took the whole responsibility of..

**Q:** Like an in charge.

**A:** Yes. Production manager, Casting Director, I took care of all departments.

**Q:** But you didn't act as Nandakumar

**A:** Listen to me. A T Krishnaswamy wrote the story. Also the dialogues. Because of my experience, I was also involved in it. He asked me who is the Music Director?

**Q:** They asked?

**A:** Yes the Marathi crew. Keshavrao asked. Meiyappa Chettiar heard this and immediately said 'they are asking for a Music Director. Why don't you do it? You do it'. He introduced me as 'this is our music director'. From that day my journey began as a music director.

**Q:** From that day you became a Music Composer and Music Director.

**A:** Nandakumar itself was a big success...in those days, when they make a film, they make a comic film along with it.

**Q:** And join with it

**A:** Yes. Will be joint to the main film. I knew a comic story and immediately wrote it.

**Q:** I see...You wrote it

**A:** It is an old story. I modified it. It is called Tahsildar comics.

**Q:** That was added to Nandakumar?

**A:** Yes we added to it. Me, T R Ramachandran, we all acted in it. K T Krishnaswamy was asked to write dialogues.

**Q:** Comedy dialogues?

**A:** Yes. Comedy dialogues.

00:25:02

**Q:** Nobody asked where did Tahsildar come in Nandakumar?

**A:** No. Because it would come separately. Along with Nandakumar but as a separate film.

**Q:** As a separate reel?

**A:** It would be called 'Nandakumarum Tahsildar Comics um' (Nandakumar and Tahsiladar comics)

**Q:** I see, it would be advertised like that?

**A:** Yes the film would be announced and along with it would be announced, for example 'so and so film is releasing and along with it would release NSK's comedy film'

**Q:** Like a side reel

**A:** Yes.

00:25:28

**Q:** In those days, the number of song would be 50 or 60 in a film. Did Nandakumar also have that many?

**A:** Yes a lot. Not so much but 20 or 30, maybe. T R Mahalingam sang them so beautifully. Even M R Krishnamoorthy of that time.

**Q:** Who did the female role?

**A:** T S Rajalakshmi.

**Q:** Do you remember any famous songs from it?

**A:** All songs became popular. There was one.. Kedaragowla Vritham.

**Q:** Do you remember the name?

**A:** No I can't recollect the name.

**Q:** Do you remember any of the hit numbers?

**A:** Among the hit numbers 'Maya Madura...' 'Gokula..' there was a song like that. All were popular.

**Q:** Mahalingam would be a young boy then.

**A:** Yes he was young then. 15 or 16.

00:26:27

**Q:** ATK also spoke to me. I've done a similar interview with him...he frequently spoke about a person named 'onbathu roopa note' (nine rupee note)

**A:** He was talking about Ramayyar.

**Q:** Why was he called Onbathu roopa note?

**A:** When I was in Madurai. Mahalingam was in my drama company. There is no note for 9 rupees. Whatever he spoke had no value. So he was known as Onbathu roopa note. Just to make fun of him.

**Q:** Who was he, Ramayyar?

**A:** He was a Casting agent. Would earn some commission by casting actors.

**Q:** Not an actor?

**A:** No not an actor.

**Q:** I asked you because he didn't remember why Ramayyar was called Onbathu roopa note. That's why.

**A:** Not only him. It was a common practice back then. If somebody has no value we would say 'poda onbathu roopa'. There was no 9 rupee note. 5 rupees, 10 rupees had. There was even a 2.5 rupee note.

**Q:** I see. You had a 2.5 rupee note.

**A:** Yes even 1 rupee.

**Q:** Can we stop here?

**A:** Yes

00:27:43

**Q:** There was a song called 'Chandrodayam pol' sung by T R Mahalingam in the film Nandakumar. It was very popular. Can you tell about that?

**A:** Yes about that song. They wanted a tune immediately. I immediately got ATK to write the lyrics and I composed the song.

**Q:** ATK wrote the song?

**A:** Yes ATK wrote all the songs in Nandakumar.

**Q:** Also the dialogues?

**A:** Yes both. A very brilliant person. Chandrodayam pol... was a very big hit. A lot of discs were sold.

**Q:** Was this a solo or duet?

**A:** No not a solo. Rajalakshmi sang along with him. Also back then, if a tune has to be composed, it would be made immediately. That fast it used to be. Even today. I am turning 75 but till date, I haven't written a swara note by hand. Everything in memory. Even if it was background score or songs. Even if it was needed somebody else does it, I never used to do it.

**Q:** You would sing it out?

**A:** Yes I either sing it or tell the swaras as it is. How many tunes do you want? I can make all the tunes needed for a film in a day. I have done re-recording in one day in those days. In 8 hours. For 22000 feet films. That fast I was.

**Q:** Do you play any instruments as well?

**A:** I know every instrument but don't play them.

00:29:40



**Q :** What role did you play in Nandakumar? You said the comic role as a separate film.

**A :** I played the Tahsildar in that comic film that came along with it. I did that as a gesture of thanks to Meiyappa Chettiyar.

**Q :** Who played Kamsa in Nandakumar?

**A :** Kamsa was Sandow..I forgot his name now. T R Sandow. From Bombay.

00:30:07

**Q :** When you were composing music in those days, what was the process like? You compose the tune and get the lyrics written or you compose for the lyrics?

**A :** Both methods were there. We used to do both.

00:30:24

**Q :** Mr. Venkataraman. The last time we met...I think we met before your daughter's marriage..

**A :** Yes

**Q :** We were talking about the making of Nandakumar, your experiences with Keshavrao Dhaiber and AVM etc.

**Q :** What did you do after Nandakumar?

**A :** I was continuing my relation with Meiyappa Chettiar. They used to release the records in the name of Columbia.

**Q :** AVM, Columbia and all were names of records? They were all foreign companies?

**A :** Yes. They were foreign companies. One was a German company

**Q :** Odeon? And Columbia? American?

**A :** I think American

**Q:** He had the rights for the songs?

**A:** He had for the songs in South.. they used to record the songs..

**Q:** Where do they record the songs?

**A:** For the songs, the engineers used to come. From Germany.

**Q:** They used to come to Madras?

**A:** They come to Madras. They used to be here as well. There were 3 or 4 big labels at that time. So sometimes, they would come from the head office as well.

**Q:** Where was the head office? Calcutta?

**A:** Calcutta and Delhi as well. The engineers would come from there. And they would record the songs. And also, the people from Master's voice company..

**Q:** HMV

**A:** They started a permanent place here. They set up a place, brought equipment and started recording here.

**Q:** Where was this place?

**A:** Where the Spencer's company was located. Near that there was an Overseas bank.

**Q:** I see. Near the Ambassador hotel

**A:** Yes. It was there. The HMV company. Also, in the South Indian film chamber building

**Q:** The old building

**A:** Yes. I think it came around 1939 if I remember well.

**Q:** Recording used to be done permanently there...

**A:** Yes we used to do recordings there. From 1938-39 onwards, we were doing at HMV.

00:32:41

**Q:** Which means the Cinema company songs would also be recorded there?

**A:** Yes everything. Also, back then, there was no system to take it on film. You have to go there and do it.

**Q:** So there were no studio recording facility like these days?

**A:** That used to be not there then. He immediately started a lab back then.

**Q:** Who, AVM?

**A:** Yes AVM.

**Q:** Lab means Film lab?

**A:** Yes film laboratory.

**Q:** Where was that?

**A:** The one where the Rani and company stands.

**Q:** Yes Patullos road

**A:** Rani Madras company. It used to be there. When you go to Mandaveli, one can see the Vizianagaram raja's palace..

**Q:** Admiralty house.

**A:** Yes. The labs were all shifted there and then the recording...separate RCA recording he had. Biggs was working there.

**Q:** Yes C E Biggs. Sound recordist.

**A:** He was the recordist there, in AVM. He started a film there. In Madras. Thiruvalluvar, Vaayadi...made films like these. I had written some of them. Some ATK wrote. I used to do the acting.

00:34:05

**Q:** So other than Music composing, you used to write story, dialogues..

**A:** Yes. Lyrics too. I used to act also. Since I was an actor before that, it came easy to me. I used to do Music Direction for all the films.

**Q:** All for AVM pictures.

**A:** Yes yes. That used to happen and in 1940...then a small misunderstanding happened..

**Q:** With AVM..

**A:** Yes. And I quit.

**Q:** You left AVM

**A:** Yes. And I used to compose music for films outside. Then I used to get only small films. They used to join 3,4 stories and make a film.

**Q:** Small segments into one film. Like 3 in 1, 4 in 1. You had composed for those also..

**A:** Yes. By then Columbia came up as a separate company. I used to work for them. In Madras. TR and sons were looking after that.

**Q:** They were not making films.

**A:** No not films. They used to work with Pattammal.

**Q:** DK Pattammal..you mean like private records, classical semi classical..

**A:** Yes I have a memory that they made a film called Dasavatharam.

**Q:** Who, TR and sons? Dasvatharam? But you are not sure?

**A:** Yes Dasavatharam. But I am not sure. Rajeshwar Rao did the music

**Q:** Who S Rajeshwar Rao?

**A:** Yes. Sandow came and acted. I somehow have a memory of such a film being made.

**Q:** Did you act in it?

**A:** No, I wasn't involved. When these were happening...in 1940, Kannamba..

**Q:** Pasupuleti Kannamba

**A:** Yes for Raja Rajeswari. They took me there.



**Q:** For Raja Rajeshwari

**A:** Talliprema, a Telugu film. Kannamba's husband Nagabhushanam was in charge of the whole thing. Equal to proprietor you may imagine. He appointed me as the Music Director.

**Q:** You were the composer for Talliprema?

**A:** Yes I was the composer for all Kannamba's films. Up to 1957, I did all their films.

**Q:** Was this Talliprema your first Telugu film?

**A:** With them, yes. But I did one Telugu film before that.

**Q:** Do you remember its name?

**A:** Don't remember it well. Pushpavalli and all had acted in it.

**Q:** Pushpavalli was the heroine. Do you remember the hero?

**Q:** Do you mean the film Choodamani?

**A:** Yes Choodamani, that's the name. I was the composer in that. I did a small role also in it too.

**Q:** You acted in Choodamani?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Was it a social film?

**A:** Yes. Even in Talliprema, I did a small character. In Telugu.

**Q:** So you speak Telugu as well

**A:** It is all experience. I used to speak Telugu, Hindi, English..all gained by general knowledge. I have done a Kannada film also.

**Q:** Which Kannada film did you do?

**A:** When I was doing Talliprema, Jupiter people booked me for Kannagi.

**Q:** Jupiter 'Kannagi'. In Coimbatore?

**A:** It was planned to be in Coimbatore. They used to have a company there. They did some film there and shifted to Madras.

00:37:40

**Q:** Where was Kannagi made?

**A:** Newtowne, in Madras. P U Chinnapa, Kannamba, M S Saroja, N S Krishnan they all acted in it. I did the full music in it. It earned me a great name. The songs in Kannagi were all hit. When I was doing Kannagi, Gubbi Veeranna...

**Q:** The famous dramatist and film actor from Karnataka.

**A:** Yes. He was making a film called Jeevan Nataka, a Kannada film. He booked me for it and asked me to come immediately for it.

**Q:** He was in Bangalore then.

**A:** Yes in Bangalore. There, Shanta Hublikar, the one who acted in Shantaram, Marathi artiste, she acted in it. Jaya, Mrs. Veeranna, Kemparaj Urs, they all acted in it. I composed for that film.

**Q:** Was Jeevan Nataka also social film?

**A:** Yes social film. Songs were all popular back then.

**Q:** Who directed that film?

**A:** Wahab Kashmiri

**Q:** Oh the one who acted as villain later

**A:** yes

**Q:** He did Jupiter Rani, also in the Jayakanthan's film.

**A:** yes.

**Q:** He passed away recently.

**A:** Oh I see, poor guy. Very good man.

**Q:** He was the director, Wahab Kashmiri.

**A :** Yes he made it very well. After finishing it, I came here for Kannagi's re-recording. Also for the film 'Kubera Kuchela'.

**Q:** The one with P U Chinnappa and T R Rajakumari. Where was it made?

**A :** Newtowne studios.

**Q:** That also was Jupiter production

**A :** Yes Jupiter's. After that, I had gone to Kumbakonam. My children were there. Since it was war time, I had sent my family there.

**Q:** The evacuation time.

**A :** My sister was living nearby. The Kannamba company Nagabhushanam sent me a telegram. For the film Harishchandra. They were doing it in partnership with Gemini Films. They asked me to come for it.

**Q:** This was in Telugu?

**A :** No for Tamil. The one in which P U Chinnappa and Kannamba acted. So, I had to come back for it. While that was happening, Mahamaya starring P U Chinnappa...

**Q:** Who was the producer for it? For Mahamaya?

**A :** Jupiter only.

**Q:** Do you remember the story of Mahamaya?

**A :** It was like a Rajaputra story.

**Q:** Was it a story from Hindi?

**A :** No, it was some story that Elangovan had written.

00:40:36

**Q:** I would like to know more about Kannagi. I have seen it only in parts. It had so many songs. How many were there?

**A :** Yes plenty of them.

**Q:** Do you remember any popular one?

**A:** Chandrodayam..., Mounamellam..., Ponapine..., pathiniye..

**Q:** Chandrodayam ithile. That song..

**A:** That one, Vidhi yaareyum vidaathe, Jeevarathinam sang it very well.

**Q:** U R Jeevarathinam. What did she play in that film?

**A:** Gownthiyadigal.

**Q:** Means like the Buddhist nun.

**A:** Yes. Kannamba also acted very well in it.

**Q:** The dialogues in it were also very good.

**A:** Excellent it was.

**Q:** I have heard it is a long duration film

**A:** Yes yes. But people were patient and gracious enough to watch it full.

**Q:** Must be 22000 feet

**A:** Approximately.

**Q:** They recently re-released it. I saw posters in many places but I couldn't watch it.

**A:** The scenes that I have seen, the scene where Kannagi crying with Kovalan on her laps..I have not seen the whole film. This scene I remember. But I remember listening to the songs a lot. P U Chinappa's. Even kannamba had sung a song in it. Yes she also sang in it. 2 or 3 songs maybe. But I don't remember which ones.

**Q:** But people still remember the P U Chinnappa's song

**A:** The Kannamba songs also were popular.

00:41:59

**Q:** Can you tell us something about your experiences with P U Chinnappa?

**A:** He was a great actor. Whatever roles he did, he felt the characters and played

them very well. Very intelligent actor.

**Q:** He came from theatre to films.

**A:** Yes and also he has a good sense of music.

**Q:** Had he formally learnt music?

**A:** Yes he is formally trained in music. For simple tunes and notations, he would ask and understand the motive behind that and sings.

**Q:** He also suggests?

**A:** Yes at times he suggests 'anna can we have it like this or that'. He could do so because of his knowledge in music. One more quality is that he always respects honest people. He won't encourage other type of people.

**Q:** In the sense?

**A:** For example, if the producers are not behaving nice, he would not leave them. But he is a great human being.

**Q:** I've heard he is a rough guy

**A:** Nothing like that. He is very sweet. In those days, if one isn't a bit rough, people would take advantage. But that image is all made up by people.

**Q:** So he is not a difficult man

**A:** Not at all. He minds his own business and does his job perfectly.

**Q:** He was very successful as an artiste in those days. Isn't it? I have heard he used to sing, do all stunts himself.

**A:** Yes. He does everything very well.

00:43:17

**Q:** Who directed Kannagi?

**A:** Initially, it was Boman Irani, the cameraman. They started with him. Then R S Mani, the editor did. Me and Jupiter Somu discussed and decided let us have him do



the direction. Because he had good experience.

**Q:** Had he directed any other film before Kannagi?

**A:** He was an editor before that.

**Q:** This was his debut directorial?

**A:** Yes this was his first film. This itself made him very successful.

**Q:** Why I asked so is because there is a news that T R Raghunath directed it.

**A:** No no. T R Raghunath did those dance based song sequences in the film.

**Q:** Do you remember which ones?

**A:** There were 2 or 3. To take those shots, he had come and directed the dance portions in the songs.

**Q:** Was there a reason why those were done by him and not by Mani?

**A:** No particular reason. It was just that he had more experience in dance songs and all of us wanted a better quality result.

**Q:** But the film was not directed by him?

**A:** Not at all. It was R S Mani's work throughout.

**Q:** Because he has told me himself that he had directed Kannagi and R S Mani took the credit.

**A:** Not at all.

**Q:** Everywhere it is credited as R S Mani. I asked you this specific question because it is history and we need to get the facts right. You are the right person to ask this, that's why.

**A:** Yes you are right.

**Q:** So the portions he directed were the dance sequences. Which means the B S Saroja's dance sequences.

**A:** She acted as Madhavi.

**Q:** Who was the choreographer?

**A:** Vazhuvoor Ramaiah Pillai.

**Q:** Udayanath hadn't come then. The person who married B S Saroja later

**A:** Udayanath was not there. A person called Bolonath was there. But that Saroja wasn't BS Saroja. It was another Saroja.

**Q:** You are sure it wasn't BS?

**A:** Yes because she is the wife of Raghunath

**Q:** Who T R Raghunath?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** This I didn't know. Do you remember the Kannagi cameraman?

**A:** Camera was started by Bomman Irani. Then Jithan Banerjee.

**Q:** Yes I know. He was in Newtone, famous cameraman

**A:** He was one of the partners of Newtone Studios. He also shot the film.

**Q:** It was shot in Newtone studio. Not in Coimbatore central studio?

**A:** No not in Coimbatore. In Madras only.

00:46:08

**Q:** You did films like Mahamaya, Kubera Kuchela, do you remember any famous songs from these films? I am sure there must be many.

**A:** There were. But I don't remember them very well.

**Q:** Would like to know more about the songs of that time. And the composing style.

**A:** In those days, songs were made in classical compositions. Carnatic music. Because audience had a taste in it. Other than that, there was the thing called 'Hindi tune'. They would ask for such things. But in 95% cases, I would never get into copying such things. Only if the producer pressurises so much, I would do one or two

in Hindi tune. From my childhood, I have sung Hindi songs so many times

**Q:** So you know Hindustani music as well

**A:** Yes I know. Never learnt it formally. All by listening to it. And god's grace. For example, the song 'Aanandamen..', famous song. Before that 'Bharatha mathe pranam..' was composed by Thanjavur Sivarao. I had made him compose that song back during my theatre days. So that I could sing in my dramas.

**Q:** Which drama you remember?

**A:** All dramas. It was a nationalistic song. The national movement was high at that time. So we used to sing nationalistic songs in every play, every day. At times, people ask for it, at times we sing without asking. This song earned me a lot of good name in those days. This is like a Hindi tune.

**Q:** But this wasn't taken from any Hindi film

**A:** No. for MS amma to sing it..

**Q:** Subbulakshmi

**A:** I taught her this song. For her to sing in her concerts. She sang the same song in aanandamen...this was composed when I was 16 years old. I used to compose from age of 12 only. Composing the Hindi tunes also came naturally to me.

00:48:42

**Q:** What kind of musical instruments were used in those days?

**A:** The ones that were available were Violin, Harmonium, Tabla, Mridangam. The Gottuvadhyam from our Carnatic music. And also Veena. In 1939, I introduced guitar in songs.

**Q:** You introduced guitars? Who played those then?

**A:** A boy called Patrick. The other boy I forgot.

**Q:** They played them first.

**A:** D'Cruz, the other guy. Both of them started playing. After that many came.

**Q:** Jalatarangam, Piano and all were there then?

**A:** Yes they were there

**Q:** Clarinet? Saxophone

**A:** Yes Clarinet and Saxophone and all were there.

**Q:** Who used to play those?

**A:** Christians used to play them. We used to bring them and make them play. Also Trumpets. From 1939 onwards, all of these started slowly becoming part of our compositions.

**Q:** The western instruments came later

**A:** They were there already. We started using them in films from 1940s.

**Q:** You introduced them

**A:** Not just me. Others also. In North especially.

**Q:** In South, you brought them?

**A:** I can't whole heartedly claim it's my contribution. It was a wave back then.

00:50:00

**Q:** You said you did Mahamaya, Kubera Kuchela etc. You just mentioned Sakuntalai, the very famous film featuring M S Subbulakshmi. Do you remember the process of it? How it started, how they approached you..

**A:** The thing is that they had decided to make this film in the south.

**Q:** Who, M S Subbulakshmi and Sadasivam?

**A:** Yes. Sadasivam. He was the producer.

**Q:** The Chandraprabha cinetone was their company?

**A:** Yes it was theirs. When they approached me, since I had a lot of other films in hand, I didn't go for it. But the tunes I had taught her earlier, they had used it for the film.

**Q:** Which means you were directly not involved in it as Music Director?

**A:** No I wasn't.

**Q:** Then who was the Music Director?

**A:** Not like a music director. But more like an advisor. A person called Rajagopal Sharma.

**Q:** Thuraiyur Rajagopal Sharma?

**A:** Yes himself. He is a classical musician. Has great knowledge about it.

**Q:** Yes. Vidhwan. Then what did Papanasam Sivan do in it?

**A:** Papanasam Sivan also composed a few tunes. His compositions were also used.

**Q:** All worked together..

**A:** Yes. There was an accompaniment band. They had hired that team and made the songs.

**Q:** What kind of instruments were there in it?

**A:** Saxophone, Clarinet, Flute, Harmonium, Tabla, Veena everything.

**Q:** Do you remember your tunes in Sakuntalai? One you said was 'aanandamen'.

**A:** That was one. There was one song I knew earlier called 'Mere Sugiridhara.'

**Q:** But that was in Meera

**A:** Yes it was a popular song. I had taught her that song in her young days. That same song came as 'Engum nirai nadha' in Sakuntalai. Some songs I don't remember now.

**Q:** Was kuthoogali pada.. your tune?

**A:** No it was some original tune.

**Q:** Enthanidam tholum kandu..

**A:** That was Papanasam Sivan. The classical tunes in them were all by Papanasam sivan and Rajagopala Sharma.



**Q:** I have fond memories of watching Sakuntalai as a child and had bought records of it. And have heard it many times. If you remember there was a film called Amar Jyoti by Shantaram. The song was lifted from it I remember 'iraiva naanum'. It was taken from that? Those were their contributions?

**A:** Yes. They did them. At that time, the audience had a thing. They wanted to listen to the hit Hindi songs in tamil. But nobody really minded that.

**Q:** There was nothing like copyright infringement and all unlike today?

**A:** No no. it was all fine.

00:53:16

**Q:** Who did the orchestration in Sakuntalai?

**A:** A person called Sudarsanam..

**Q:** Oh the one who was a music director in AVM?

**A:** Sundaram and there was a person called Kalyanam. Both of them did the orchestration together.

00:53:30

**Q:** You said you taught songs to M S Subbulakshmi long back. For how long did you know her?

**A:** From 1933.

**Q:** When she was little.

**A:** Yes. When their family knew that I used to sing, they brought me to their home and made me sing.

**Q:** Which place was this?

**A:** Madurai. I know her mother very well.

**Q:** Who? Shanmuga Vadivu? She also was a great singer

**A:** Yes very much. Excellent singer. Extremely god gifted. Divine voice. The result

of her penance is her daughter M S Subbulakshmi. Shanmuga Vadivu used to play veena very well. M S also plays Veena very well.

**Q:** Oh I see.

**A:** When they both play together. Aaha I can listen to it all day.

**Q:** Mother and daughter. You used to sing at their place

**A:** Yes. When I did that, I taught her a few tunes I knew from before.

**Q:** Then she wasn't famous? M S

**A:** No no, she was very famous. From childhood she was popular. One thing we must agree is that she has a great knowledge and talent in music.

**Q:** Yes it is a universally known fact. You knew her from then. But she never acted in drama, right?

**A:** Not at all. She was a Carnatic concert musician.

**Q:** Only after that she acted in Sevasadanam, Sakuntalai, Savithri, Meera etc.

**A:** Yes.

00:54:53

**Q:** Do you remember any films you did before Sakuntalai. You had mentioned Mahamaya and Kubera Kuchela

**A:** Yes I told you earlier. I did Nandakumar. When I used to be in Madras after that, making gramophone records, at times some bit films used to come.

**Q:** Like 3 in 1, 4 in 1.

**A:** When I used to be with Meiyappa Chettiar, films like those used to come. Other than working on some of those, I was back into work when Meiyappa Chettiar began one with Pragathi pictures when he brought it to Vizainagar Raja Palace. Then I did films like Thiruvalluvar etc. After that I went to Talliprema and other films.

00:55:45

**Q:** What did you do after Sakuntalai? It was 1940 I think Sakuntalai

**A:** After that only Kannagi, Mahamaya from 1940s a film called Krishnabhakti

**Q:** Krishnabhakti was Lena Chettiar. That was also by R S Mani

**A:** Yes Lena Chettiar. Yes that was also by R S Mani

**Q:** 1947 it was I think.

**A:** They started it in 1944 I think. A film called Mahatma Uddhankar, a film called Tyagi. In those days, one wouldn't have a 40 film, 50 film filmography. 2 or 3 films in a year maybe. At that time, Gnana Soundari...

**Q:** Citadel Gnana Soundari. The songs were popular.

**A:** Yes. The songs were popular. They made a film called Ithaya Geetham.

**Q:** With Mahalingam and Rajakumari. But it wasn't a hit I think.

**A:** No who said that.

**Q:** Not a big hit like Gnana Soundari

**A:** No not that big a hit. Because in Gnana Soundari there were sequences that attracted common people. The story was such. Ithaya Geetham was a story that was created. Not an existing one. It was still a success but not that big a hit like Gnana Soundari.

00:57:11

**Q:** When you were doing films, there was a practice of singing on the set. And then recording in the studio, then playback, you have seen that in your experience.

**A:** In my experience, there was no playback till 1939. One has to sing on the set.

**Q:** You used to conduct music in the set?

**A:** I used to know but I have forgotten. In 1937-38 only the playback system came to action. Re-recording also started only after 1940s.

**Q:** One couldn't do re-recording before that

**A:** Not possible. So if there is a necessity, the actors would be called again and made to repeat the lines they spoke and would be recorded again with the background music.

**Q:** When?

**A:** When we would be doing background music. When we make films we do background music right. For songs, we anyways do it but for dialogue portions... it wasn't called re-recording. It was called background recording.

**Q:** So the artistes would be called and asked to repeat the lines?

**A:** Yes. When they repeat, we add music then and there and record both together.

**Q:** Which means almost for the whole film?

**A:** No not whole film. The most important portions. rest of the silent portions are not done.

**Q:** Which means the process of re-recording music was there. But not as sophisticated as today

**A:** Exactly.

**Q:** What instruments were used then?

**A:** Same ones, Sarangi, Veena, all after 1939.

**Q:** Sitar and all were not used

**A:** No Sitar wasn't used. A Harmonium, a Violin, a Table, Mridangam,

**Q:** Why I am asking is because we conducted a course for film directors. To train them in films. So we called a famous music director, he must be one of your disciples. We asked him to talk about re-recording. He was telling how devalued re-recording is now. All you need to remember is 4 words. Even though he jokingly said, there is a lot to think about. We asked what 4 words. He said if one laughs Sitar, if one dies Shehnai, this is re-recording. This is what they do now he said.



Back then were Sitar, Shehnai used?

**A :** Everything after 1940. They didn't used it back then. Only now these are used a lot. Till then it was Violin, Clarinet, Flute, etc.

01:00:14

**Q :** Now they give payment to the musicians and instrumentalists on call sheet basis. What was the process like then?

**A :** It was per song back then. But it was too low, poor people. 2.5 rupees for Guitar. But it could serve 2 families for a day. 8 packets of rice used to be for 1 rupee. The bus fare from here to Parrys was 10 paisa.

01:00:53

**Q :** The last time we met we spoke about many things. I wanted to know how was the recording method in those days? The singing etc.

**A :** Only one mic used to be there for everyone. On one side would be the orchestra. The artists would sing on the other side. They would all be in the same hall.

**Q :** There were no booths like these days

**A :** Nothing like that. There would be a 4 to 5 feet distance between the artiste who is singing and the orchestra playing. In some situations, they place 2 mics. Only, if needed. It wasn't a successful technique because controlling 2 mics was not easy and comfortable back then. It used to be single track. After it is recorded, we can't even listen to it immediately like how we can today playing the tape back.

**Q :** It was Optical back then. Only after sound negative, one can hear...

**A :** Yes. It would be taken as sound negative, processed, a positive is made and gets printed. Only then you can listen to it. 5 or 6 days it would take. Till then the Producers, Artistes, Music composers, Engineers all would be anxiously waiting. If it is war time, then processing couldn't be done. You won't get the positives at all, very difficult. That's why each song was rehearsed for almost a month and only when things were perfect, we used go for a take. Not like these days where you go in the morning and record. We used to do recordings in 15 minutes. Because people



used to know the song by heart. They would have rehearsed it so much that the orchestra would play it perfect and the singers knew what to do. Not like today, how you follow it. Back then, they all played exactly like how the singers would sing. These days, a cue is given to the guitar and a song gets made in that groove. But back then it wasn't like that. Every song the musicians play the way it was supposed to be played, the singer sings as supposed to be sung.

01:03:54

**Q:** I wanted to ask this importantly..I recently saw Sakuntalai by M S Subbulakshmi. I observed that the background music was different in the records, different in the film and different elsewhere. How did this happen?

**A:** Only from 1940s and 50s the negatives used to be printed on to the records. Before that it wasn't like that. Till 1946, the artist after the take have to go to HMV and sing the whole thing again for the record. So when they do that, there is a duration limitation while recording for the records. If it is 5 minutes, 7 minutes, it would need 2 records. For that there would be a music director in HMV. He would be there permanently. If the original music director is not available, he would arrange the background artists in a way and record it.

**Q:** Who pays for such music directors?

**A:** They would only do it. The HMV. They would do music accordingly.

**Q:** Do you remember such music directors?

**A:** Sudarsanam, the one who used to work as composer in AVM, even I was there. TR Subbaraman, Chinnayya, he was senior to Subbaraman, TK Ramamurthy

**Q:** Of the Viswanathan-Ramamurthy...

**A:** Yes. T A Kalyanam, Rajagopala Sharma...

**Q:** Thuraiyur...

**A:** Yes. These are some I remember.

**Q:** They were all in HMV

**A :** HMV and Columbia as well. Recording companies...

**Q :** It used to be like that

01:06:13

**Q :** The film 'Bhakta Meera', you had composed right? In Tamil as well as Hindi...The songs came out so well so much so that it still rings in everyone ears.

**A :** Even the songs in Bhakta Meera were done with one mic. Even in that, we couldn't hear the song immediately. Had to wait for 5 days to listen. For Meera, you may notice that the gramophone records would sound similar to the film because I personally had gone there and recorded the artistes and singer in HMV.

**Q :** Especially the Katrinile varum geetham was so popular. Even today it is popular. What was its journey like? What was the inspiration behind this song? who wrote it? Kalki?

**A :** Yes Kalki had written it. The thing is that M S sang some tunes and I elaborated on that and created this song. for Meera alone, 5 or 6 Music Directors were decided. They heard mine and booked me finally. The first song we did was Katrinile Varum Geetham. Kalki had already written it. M S used to sing a tune in her concerts. It is like a Bengali tune.

**Q :** Was it Rabindra Sangeet?

**A :** I don't know about that. I modified that tune and made her sing that song. otherwise, the full song composition I didn't do. When I showed them how the background music would be done and all, they were impressed by my work. They all desired to make that song memorable. Mr. Sadasivam the producer heard this and was very happy. Only because so much effort went behind it, the song still remains memorable.

**Q :** The Chandraprabha cinetone was their own company?

**A :** Yes. You remember the song engu niranthayo? I have a fun fact about it. When I was doing that, there were some artists who had a knowledge on colours. Rajagopal..

**Q:** The art director

**A:** He was a close friend. I just sang the tune to him. Na na na..and I asked him 'what colour do you see when you hear this?' I know this thing that some people can imagine certain colours while listening to music. He said it feels like 'yellow and blue'. The one on the camels passing through the deserts.

**Q:** You sang this and these colours came to his mind..

**A:** Yes. Imagine the situation. They are crossing the deserts. Sand is yellow. Sky is blue. That was the thing. That melody is now coming out in many English records. It would be 40 years since I did this.

**Q:** Yes 1945.

**A:** 1943-44 to be precise. Such tunes are coming today. Not that they are imitating my tunes. I mean, my mind was advanced.

**Q:** You were ahead of your times

**A:** Yes. In some songs, there would be a last bit. Karunaye purivayo..the story behind this is also fascinating. I had gone to Tirupati for darshan.

**Q:** Tirupati?

**A:** Yes. They wanted the last song to be memorable. The one where Meera sings and becomes one with the god. Back in those days, more than the money, the feeling that the song should be good, film should be turn out good and should earn a good name. those were the priorities.

**Q:** Quality, and not economics.

**A:** Yes. When I was in Tirupati praying to the god, the temple rang the bell. In a certain tune. I got a melody from that at that very moment. I kept singing this tune in my mind throughout my darshan and singing it I went straight to Kalki office in madras and didn't go home. I sat there and spent the whole night composing and finishing the tune. That is how it was made and that's why it has remained so memorable. The same tune was used as it is for Hindi too. They were all pleasantly

surprised, the Hindi audience.

**Q :** Such an amazing tune it is. Even today, it is beautiful.

**A :** This same song Karunaye purivayi, I asked a person without much musical knowledge. I asked what feeling he got. The person said it felt like some woman becoming one with the god. Just hearing the sound. It was that impactful.

01:12:27

**Q :** In Hindi, she had sung some duets with Nagaiah . I recently saw that film on TV. The duet MS sang with Nagaiah. That tune was also composed by you?

**A :** No I wouldn't have done that. I had done only 5 or 6 major, very important songs in the film. Because I had work in Madras at that time. So the most important ones, the re-recording...almost half of it you may say. I used to go now and then on plane to Bombay, do it and come.

**Q :** Where were those recorded?

**A :** In Bombay

**Q :** The Nandabala song was composed by you?

**A :** Yes. The music was mine. But it was adapted from an existing song. there are some songs that MS sings in her concerts. Those songs would be adapted in a way to suit this film. The songs that I composed entirely by myself were 'hey hare', the last song, 'maraintha..' that one, 'engu niranthaayo', most of the songs were my original compositions. About 75% were my own songs. Others were also done by me. But the songs were already existing ones. Why to spoil those which are already beautiful songs. I would re edit it, and use it for the film.

01:13:56

**Q :** In Krishnabhakti, I had gone to Madurai for a shooting. I got some songs of P U Chinnappa as tapes and I bought them to add to my collections. In that, in Krishnabhakti, 'Sarasam..' that song sung by him. Tell me something about it.

**A :** Hear the fun part. That song was an original composition by me. I shouldn't be



saying 'me, me' a lot.

**Q:** Why shouldn't you, if you have done it.?

**A:** The thing is that I composed and recorded this song in 1945. Sometime in 64 or 65, a Russian ballet had come here. In University hall. At that time Sahasranamam and all were there.

**Q:** S V Sahasranamam

**A:** Yes. In that ballet we saw, there was a situation where a girl was suffering in pain, in longing. In Krishnabhakti too, the man was longing in pain. It was interesting to see a tune similar to Sarasam was being played there in that ballet. A similar melody was used in the Russian ballet. I was fascinated as our minds think alike.

**Q:** In that song, before the orchestration, there is the song as it is. It was very well done. Was it done deliberately?

**A:** Yes it was because of the length of the record.

**Q:** Ok the lyrics was shorter than the tune

**A:** Yes

01:15:34

**Q:** And what about the Harikatha Kalakshepam. It was very well done. It was the highlight.

**A:** Yours truly have done all those. A lot of records were sold just of that. Also songs like 'ellorum nalla...' so many songs.

**Q:** It was 1944-45. The film released late if I am not wrong.

**A:** Yes. It came out in 48.

**Q:** Why was it delayed

**A:** The usual reasons.

And about the song in Kannagi. 'Chandrodayam ithile' the song Chinnappa sings. It is classical. I would have composed it for a month maybe. By rehearsing it for a



month. See this song is classical but it was very popular too back then. People from all strata sang these songs. A film called Ithaya Geetham came.

**Q:** Citadel's

**Q:** Even masses

**A:** Yes. 'vaanulaavum..' a lot of common people used to sing in those songs. When I used to hear that, I was very happy. Also the songs in Gnana Soundari. I composed it like how the Christian tunes would be like. 'arul thaa devamathave'. Many people wrote letters thinking some Christian musician had composed it. Later they were surprised a brahmin had done it. A lot of Christians told me 'we never thought the songs from our community would become so popular. We have started making tunes like this now'.

**Q:** How did you arrive at such a tune?

**A:** It is a gift I would say. Nothing else. I was an actor since child. Because of that I know so many bhavas. When I have to compose a Christian devotional song, I have to feel that devotion in my mind. When I think of that, I can compose like that. There was a film called Kanthan.

**Q:** SV Sahasranamam

**A:** Yes. There is a feel of an old Muslim person singing a song. 'bismillahirrahmanirrahim'. I've sung it like that. I've sung the song exactly like how a Muslim would sing it.

**Q:** You sang it in the film?

**A:** Yes. A well-wisher had written from Chidambaram saying 'I thought you were a Muslim..only later I found you were a Brahmin.' A Dikshithar had written.

**Q:** Music does not know religion.

**A:** The tune, the song was directed by Krishnan-Panju. We were watching a Hindi film with Panju. In that film, I noticed Mohammad Rafi had sung a song which was similar to 'bismillah..'. That was made many years after I composed the tune. So

many instances like this. A film called Manohara. In three languages. I had composed for it.

**Q:** Sivaji Ganesan's...

**A:** Yes. In Hindi, Tamil, Telugu all languages. Lata Mangeshkar sang for me for the first time in that film. Also Asha Bhosle, Sandhya Mukherjee, Hemanta Kumar...

**Q:** Where did you record them all? In Madras?

**A:** Here. In Jupiter. Here in Madras. The records were all great. There was a scene in the film, the climax scene. When the enemies are waiting to attack, the hero escapes and runs, that kind of a sequence. I composed a peculiar tune for it.

**Q:** Re-recording

**A:** Re-recording. A film had released titled 'Becket'.

**Q:** With Peter O'Toole and Richard Burton.

**A:** Yes. I found a similar music in that too. I did in '64. In '62 that film came. The Producer was also astonished. I feel things like this are lying buried, untouched in our country. Unable to come out. Buried in people like us.

**Q:** Ideas are same everywhere, East or West.

01:20:11

**Q:** You've done so many films for Jupiter. Can you tell something about Somu

**A:** Somu is very experienced, a good Producer, he knows what is justified and what is to be done for a film, knows who is the right person to do a job...he knows it all. He is very good to work with.

**Q:** And his partner Mohideen?

**A:** Same with him too. Somu knows more about cinema. Mohideen is more about strategy and business decisions.

**Q:** He doesn't involve in creative aspects

**A:** No Somu takes care of that.

01:20:47

**Q:** Have you done any films for Gemini?

**A:** S S Vasan had called me for a few films.

**Q:** Which films?

**A:** Bala Nagamma. I did only one song in that as I couldn't be there permanently. But they desired to have me for their films. He also called me to sing a song in Chandrlekha.

**Q:** Which song in Chandrlekha?

**A:** The one that comes when they go on horseback.

**Q:** Horseback song. 'aathoda..'

**A:** I don't remember the lines. After that a film called Dasi Aparanji. He called me for that too. Other films I couldn't do. For Bala Nagamma I did a song called Kanchanamala.

**Q:** You composed it?

**A:** Yes I composed it. They were very happy with it.

**Q:** The lullaby?

**A:** Yes. Because of my heavy work load, I couldn't work there permanently. He called me for Vanji kottai Valiban. Also, for the films he and Kannamba jointly made. Them and Raja Rajashri pictures. I've worked on those films.

**Q:** Which ones?

**A:** Harischandra, Navajeevanam,

**Q:** For Navajeevanam, you were the composer?

**A:** Yes fully. 4 or 5 more films, Savitri, Sakkubai, all of them in Telugu. Only Harischandra was Tamil.

**Q:** In Vanji kottai Valiban, it is credited as C Ramachandra.

**A:** It was him only but Vasana wanted me to do some specific portions. The scene where the mother leaves, a song. annai varuvalo...that song, then a big drama,

**Q:** What kind of drama, dance drama?

**A:** No, a sword fight segment, Veera vaal. Like this, he got me to do for some specific important segments. But it came in Ramachandra's name.

**Q:** There is a dance drama segment in it. A duel between Padmini and Vyjayanthimala..

**A:** I didn't compose them.

**Q:** 'Seriyaana potti' A famous line. A very famous set piece it was. The song and the visuals.

01:23:03

**Q:** Irumbu Thirai was your composition?

**A:** Irumbu Thirai was completely my work. Some songs from it were very popular. Also, Mughal-E-Azam was made in Tamil in the name of Akbar.

**Q:** Vasana dubbed the film?

**Q:** It was dubbed. Vasana felt some songs must suit our culture in South and wanted me to work on them.

**A:** It was dubbed in Bombay with somebody and the film was brought here. 2 or 3 songs they got me to do in it.

**Q:** You added? Which songs were those?

**A:** Azhagin nila, sung by Radha Jayalakshmi. Very popular.

**Q:** Oh it was in that? I've heard it in concerts. Your composition? Excellent. How did they add those songs? In the dubbed version?

**A:** A song was there in its original version. Sung by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan. Situation

was that Salim and Anarkali are spending a whole night at a place. He had sung a song there. Very well he had sung. But Vasam felt it would be better if my version was there. There aren't much instruments. Two Tanpuras, one Tabla. That's it, but it would feel as if so many people played in background.

**Q:** I see. It was not a lip sync song. That's how they could add it.

**A:** Also, there was a song of them coming to the Darbar. A welcoming song. I did for that too, again without lip sync.

01:24:58

**Q:** You have worked very closely with Vasam. Can you tell a few words about him?

**A:** He is a great man. Whoever is skilful, talented..Whoever is honest and clean with their work, he likes such people a lot. He won't let them go. Would respect them a lot. Also has a great world knowledge. No one can cheat him that easily.

**Q:** How did you get introduced to him?

**A:** I was in theatre, doing plays. He was also in theatres back then. S S Vasam. He was in touch with theatre circle always. He knew about me for a long time. I was also a popular person. When he launched his studio, he called me but I couldn't go.

**Q:** That was when M D Parthasarthy, Rajeshwara Rao and all worked.

**A:** yes

**Q:** The only film you worked with Vasam was this Irumbi thirai. Did you work with him later?

01:26:12

**Q:** Have you worked for K Subramaniam?

**A:** I haven't worked. But their songs you see..When I was in the Odeon gramophone company, I have done music for their recordings. That ways I've worked.

**Q:** Which films do you remember?



**A :** Thyagabhoomi, Kuchela, another film I forgot..the one where Papanasam Sivan acted. The name was Bhaktha Kuchela or Ekanatha or something. I don't remember. Bhaktha Chetha, that one.

**Q :** G Subbulakshmi and him. K Subramaniam and you had good relation?

**A :** Good friends.

**Q :** How was he as a director and producer?

**A :** He has a great knowledge in cinema. Doing what would fetch success, he knew very well. Very good person.

**Q :** Successful Producer and Director..

**A :** Yes.

**Q :** Have you done anything for Modern Theatres?

**A :** I didn't. They called me. Since I had a lot of work here, I couldn't go anywhere.

**Q :** Other than Tamil language, you've worked for Telugu companies too right? What all companies?

**A :** Raja Rajashri Pictures. Kannamba's Raja Rajashri Pictures. And for Raja Sandow's Choodamani. C S Anjaneyalu, Pushpavalli all of them were the actors. I composed it fully. Then in Telugu Bala Nagamma. Did the songs in it. Then I did a Kannada film, Jeevan Nataka by Gubbi Veeranna. For Kemparaj, Jaladurga..in Tamil it was named Karkottai.

**Q :** Adaptation of Count of Monte Christo.

**A :** Both I composed music for.

**Q :** For both Tamil and Kannada.

**A :** Yes. I've sung in them too.

**Q :** Which songs did you sing?

**A :** I don't remember well. It's been a long time. Must be 1952-'53. It released in '54.

**Q:** The response wasn't great from the public.

**A:** Yes. Average it was.

01:28:30

**Q:** What about Hindi films? What else have you done other than Meera?

**A:** Manohara I did for Telugu, Tamil and Hindi.

**Q:** You did Manohara in three languages. Were the tunes different?

**A:** Yes different tunes. For example, Nilaavile Ullaasamaga...in Tamil. Different for Telugu, Rajani hai taro..for Hindi. Everything is different.

**Q:** Usually, when it is done in many languages, only one tune would be adapted for all the languages.

**A:** We asked about the songs to the Producers and all. Hemanta Kumar, Lata and all. They all had the same opinion. That it is exactly like how it would be in Bombay.

**Q:** They did not feel different at all.

**A:** No

01:29:43

**Q:** These are the films you've composed. Have you sung for films other than your compositions?

**A:** For other composers, I've sung in Chandralekha, the one on horseback.

**Q:** The one they would sing on bullock carts. Aathoram..

**A:** Not that one. The one the Raja sings. Raja and Rani travelling. I think it comes towards the end..

**Q:** Vaanamengume nirainthu.. you sang it?

**A:** Yes that one. I sang it

**Q:** It comes at the end. The current version doesn't have it. They removed it. They would have felt people won't sit through so long. They've now released a trimmed

version of the film. That version doesn't have this song. But the records won't credit the singers in those days?

**A :** Nothing. We don't get the royalty also.

01:30:51

**Q :** Have you sung any songs in Telugu?

**A :** Yes I've sung in Talliprema. I've composed the music for the film as well. For Sumathi, I composed the music , did re-recording, Songs everything. Then Shantha Sakkubai. I've not sung in it. But I've done the music and re-recording. A film called Soudamini. In Tamil and Telugu. I've composed and sung in them also. For Nageshwara Rao. For Savitri in Telugu etc.

01:31:26

**Q :** In those days, modern instruments like Synthesiser, Combo Organ, all these were not there.

**A :** No Combo and no Synthesiser. But Guitar was there. I introduced Guitar. Everything Violins, Saxophone, Clarinet, Flute that's it.

01:31:48

**Q :** In today's songs, there are lots of western influences. You may call it a dominance of Western music. So much we have. In those days also, it was there one must say. Like in films like Mangamma Sabatham, Rajeshwara rao had used. In your compositions in those days, were you influenced by western music?

**A :** I' ve done it a lot. You can see Gnana Soundari. The re-recordings especially. There was a film called Kangal. I've done in that also. A film called Kannin Manikal.

**Q :** Kannin Manikal by Janakiraman.

**A :** You can notice in it..other than that, there was a film called Singari.

**Q :** By Raghunath

**A :** A song in it is a western tune. But I didn't compose it hearing anything.

**Q:** Not copied.

**A:** Not copied. I get it naturally by inspiration. Also in Meera, Engu niranthayo..all this is western influence. A touch. It is a western melody. But all of it came naturally to me. Original.

01:33:25

**Q:** What instruments other than Guitar have you introduced?

**A:** Guitar is one. We used Organ at that time.

**Q:** In which films have you used organ?

**A:** Almost all films. Especially Gnana Soundari, in Meera, the background music chords that you hear is all organ. It all has a western influence if you hear it. Then, Oboe. Whatever new we found we used. But Combo, Synthesisers were not there then.

**Q:** Yes the electronic age had not come yet.

01:34:03

**Q:** When you used to compose songs in those days.. these days what they do is they write the lyrics. Reading that some people prefer composing music. That's one style. Other style is composing the tune first and fitting in the words to it is one. What was your style like in your times?

**A:** Writing for the tune was a practise then too. The other practise was also there. Both were there.

**Q:** Which method was regularly used?

**A:** Writing words after composing the tune. In most of the cases. About 75% of cases.

**Q:** 25% cases the other way.

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** So the first is to get the tune ready. Search for inspiration, sing the tune etc.

**A:** Yes

**Q:** The tape recorder hadn't come at that time, right?

**A:** No.

**Q:** How would you then remember the tunes you composed? Would you keep it in the mind?

**A:** Remember it, what else. While travelling in the bus, while travelling in the rickshaw or vehicle or train...I keep singing the tune. I told you about the Tirupati incident right. How I kept singing the tune throughout the journey and came back to compose it. Memory power was good. It is a god's gift for some people. To remember the tune and compose it.

**Q:** Do you write down notations to remember?

**A:** I remember it in the heart. Till date, I haven't written down even one notation or swara. Everything is in my mind. That's a gift I consider. I can't comment about others.

**Q:** Your method was this.

**A:** Yes. Whatever incident or situation that happens in my life, I remember everything in my memory.

01:35:44

**Q:** Approximately how many films you would have composed music for?

**A:** Approximately 200 films you may say.

**Q:** And mostly Tamil it would be.

**A:** Yes Tamil would be more.

01:35:58

**Q:** You are a senior music director. You would have by now trained so many



instrumentalist, singers, musicians. Can you tell about the people who worked with you?

**A :** Among the people who worked with me, one Ramanathan. T R Ramanathan. He used to write down my tunes, like a composing assistant. He would write for everyone to play but I direct it. He used to play veena. Very well in fact. He has now gone to Sivananda ashrama as a sanyasi.

**Q :** He has become a sanyasi. He has given up active life.

**A :** At that time T R Pappa used to play instrument for me.

**Q :** Which instrument?

**A :** Violin. He was a violinist.

**Q :** He became a music director later?

**A :** Yes. T K Ramamoorthy has played a lot for me.

**Q :** What would he play, Violin?

**A :** Violin. Then, G K Venkatesh was with me. He was my main man.

**Q :** What did he do?

**A :** He was my composing assistant. After that, M S Viswanathan.

**Q :** M S Viswanathan worked for you?

**A :** Yes for couple of works. He was there with me for composing. Then, K V Mahadevan. Then Pendyala Nageswara Rao.

**Q :** What did K V Mahadevan do for you?

**A :** They all helped me when I used to compose. As I said, I never used to write music. As I think and tell them, they all will write it and help me. R Sudarsan has worked for me. T A Kalyanam, a lot of them worked like that.

**Q :** Has any fantastic instrumentalists worked for you?

**A :** A lot of them. Among the prominent ones, Chitti Babu had worked for me.

**Q:** Veena. He has worked for you?

**A:** Yes. Even violinist T K Ramamoorthy is also prominent. Even Viswanathan used to play harmonium. Plays piano..

**Q:** Who M S Viswanathan? Used to play piano?

**A:** Yes. M S Viswanathan. Plays piano first class. K V Mahadevan also plays Harmonium and all. T A Kalynam, all of them.

01:38:06

**Q:** Have you introduced any new voices in your career?

**A:** At that time, the artiste was the singer. The actors sing for themselves.

**Q:** There were no playback singers..

**A:** Not many. Singers who sing elsewhere have also come and sung for me.

**Q:** Not anyone whom you have searched, discovered and introduced..

**A:** There were some, but I can't recollect now.

01:38:33

**Q:** Did you make P U Chinnappa sing for the first time in films?

**A:** No no. He was an artiste before that. During the times when Music Directors didn't exist, he had acted and sung in films.

**Q:** Was there a time when there were no Music Directors?

**A:** Yes, early times. The one who plays Harmonium...Usually the recording used to be in Bombay, Calcutta. A Harmonium player and a Tabla player would be taken there. The artiste would sing. The Harmonium and Tabla would play accordingly.

**Q:** Then who would compose the songs?

**A:** Tunes would be already existing ones. Old tunes.

**Q:** Nothing like composing, writing and making?

**A:** All that started from 1935.

**Q:** The early talkie era didn't have any

**A:** No. the artiste would sing, the accompaniments play, that's all. That's because they used to sing songs from the dramas. For example, Subhadra would ask Arjuna.. 'beloved, you sing that keertanam of Thyagaraja so well, please sing it for me'. He would sing a famous keertanam. People also loved such things. Their taste was such.

**Q:** Music Director was not a necessity then?

**A:** They were not needed. Only when I started acting. When I composed my own tunes for my roles in Nala Damayanthi. I was the hero.

**Q:** When did this come out?

**A:** 1935.

**Q:** Who made this? AVM?

**A:** No not AVM. Pragathi Pictures Subbaiah Chettiar. Along with a person called Sivamani. They made it.

**Q:** You were Nalan in it

**A:** Yes. Nalan.

**Q:** Who was Damayanthi?

**A:** I don't remember her name.

**Q:** You composed for it?

**A:** Yes. I composed all the tunes for it.

**Q:** Do you remember who directed it?

**A:** Sethna

**Q:** Sethna. The Parsi director.

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Where did you do this? Bombay?

**A:** It was in Calcutta. I started doing my own tunes. From that I gained experience.

**Q:** So you were hero and Music Director

**A:** Yes. Similarly, in the film 'Chandramohana' I did..

**Q:** The one MK radha acted in.

**A:** It was called 'Samoogathodu'. I acted as villain in it. But I also composed music for the film.

**Q:** So actor and music director.

**A:** Yes. I started off like that.

01:40:54

**Q:** Nandakumar came after that?

**A:** Yes when I faced accident while doing Chandramohana, I got Nandakumar. When I had gone to Pune. Meiyappa Chettiar said you must be the music director.

**Q:** Keshavrao Dhaiber called you. That film..

**A:** Yes..

01:41:08

**Q:** So Nala Damayanthi was the first. Which one was the latest?

**A:** Latest was Krishna Leela. A film by A P Nagarajan. In '77, Sivakumar, Jayalalitha, Srividya all acted. T R Mahalingam played Narada.

**Q:** That was the last one you did

**A:** Yes

01:41:32

**Q:** In your experience, you said it must be around 200 films. Then it means you would have made 700-800 songs. Even more.

**A :** I started composing tunes when I was a child, doing theatres. I would have sung so many. A ten thousand maybe. I mean the songs I knew were itself more than five thousand.

**Q :** Is there any song that is your personal favourite among your compositions?

**A :** Naturally, I like them all. It is all god's grace.

**Q :** Is there a most favourite?

**A :** Nothing like that.

**Q :** Everything is favourite.

**A :** Yes. I shouldn't be saying that.

**Q :** What do you hum often?

**A :** If I compose any tune, I would keep humming it. When I compose a new one, I'll forget this. Also, the songs Mahadevan has composes, Viswanathan composes, Ilaiyaraaja composes...if there are any favourite ones among them, I keep humming those.

**Q :** Any good music you appreciate..

**A :** Yes. True.

01:43:06

**Q :** Have you worked on any songs for Newtone Productions?

**A :** Meera is done for Newtone.

**Q :** There are films which Nagoor had produced.

**A :** In Gnana Soundari, Nagoor was there as a partner. They also made Laila Majnu. After that Singari, of Dinshaw.

**Q :** Singari was Dinshaw's? the one Raghunath directed?

**A :** Yes. That's it. For Meera, even Jithan Banerjee was a part of Newtone.



01:43:47

**Q:** Have you worked on any N S Krishnan films?

**A:** I've done some films.

**Q:** The ones he produced himself?

**A:** No I haven't done any.

**Q:** The small films he did before that like Naveena Vikramadithyan...

**A:** No I haven't.

01:44:12

**Q:** When songs get composed, some people don't get tune when they write it. When you write it, it takes a long time to compose the tune. Some get made immediately. It depends on the moods of the writer and the Music Director...In your experience, were there any songs that you struggled for?

**A:** Some get made immediately. In 2 minutes, 3 minutes. They'll tell the situation. For example Kannagi. 'Maanamellam ponapine..'. Since I was an actor, I immediately write and sing right away. I tell it with the lyrics. Later they develop on it. Like the song 'Aaduvome palli paduvome..' I had composed the tune for this. It was sung when Radha and Anadhi were dancing. Before it came in the film. In 1945. I composed this in 3 minutes. Many people said, just for this tune alone, we would attain freedom. Similarly Vella thamarai..these were all made exclusively for M S. Vellathamarai was made in 5 mins.

**Q:** They used it in a film also I think. I think Thaa Ullam, M L Vasantha Kumari's. You didn't do that film..

**A:** No I didn't do it.

**Q:** So there were no songs that bothered you or something you struggled with.

**A:** It would never take time. Only if I am busy with something else, I buy time from them and compose when I am free. Otherwise, it doesn't take time. Sometimes they tell things well in advance. That at the end of the film, a situation like this would

come, sir. Please think about it. I would then be thinking about it. But it never was a struggle.

**Q:** You were a gifted music director.

**A:** Today, when I go to do for T V, I do it in 10 minutes.

**Q:** Yes you've been doing many tunes for Doordarshan.

**A:** Also in All India Radio, I see the artiste and understand his or her capacity and according to his capabilities I compose it immediately. Also back in those times, when I did re-recording, background score for films, we would run the film, I would tell the orchestra and then we would play it immediately without wasting much time.

01:47:07

**Q:** Have you done any songs in G N Balasubramiam's films? He acted in Sakuntalai also..

**A:** No I haven't.

**Q:** A lot of singers used to act as heroes in those days. Musiri Subramania Iyer, Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar, Maharajapuram, V V Sadagopan..a lot of them..

**A:** For V V Sadagopan, I've done some.

**Q:** Which films? For Madanakamarajan? Navathi onnu?

**A:** I don't remember well..

**Q:** You have composed for it.

**A:** Yes a song and couple of tunes. For gramophone records.

**Q:** Have you worked with S V S Yogi?

**A:** Yes I have.

**Q:** He is known in those days as a knowledgeable director, writer isn't it?

**A:** Yes

**Q:** Is he alive?

**A:** No he is no more I think 01:48:03

**Q:** How many films have you acted in? before you became a music director? You said Nala Damayanthi etc.

**A:** I did Chandramohana, Nala Damayanthi as a lead actor. For Meiyappa Chettiar, I did a comic role in the small film alongside Nandakumar.

**Q:** You used to do comic roles as well..?

**A:** Yes. Role of a Tahsildar. I used to play Rama, Hanuman and Dasaratha as well. Even Ravana.

**Q:** In dramas.

**A:** I know to play all the roles.

**Q:** All-purpose actor.

**A:** All these knacks came naturally to me.

01:48:37

**Q:** When you compare with earlier times, do you think the music these days has improved?

**A:** Improvement means.. now we have electronic music. Focus on instruments have reduced. The power is missing from that times.

**Q:** Lacking power in what sense?

**A:** In those days, some instruments were given importance. Today's times, not much. The computer age is coming. When people gain knowledge, music also improves accordingly. Say for example S D Burman, he was doing an excellent job. His son is doing greater than him.

**Q:** R D Burman.

**A:** Some songs we can't even think of. So beautiful they are. Music directors of this times. Here we have Ilaiyaraaja, the boy is doing so many new things. Viswanathan is

doing good, Mahadevan is doing.

**Q:** So you mean it has improved only?

**A:** Absolutely. It will only improve. But whatever you say...whatever technology you bring, the basics are always the same. The foundation laid by early music is undeniable.

**Q:** Like how classical music has helped film music. You mean you won't be able to do this by forgetting that. That is your opinion.

**A:** Absolutely. When you compose something with a classical music knowledge, it has a long life. People who listen to some music, say, an English song and do something inspired by it would only serve the trend, temporarily.

**Q:** And would be forgotten immediately. Like how old classics last for long and forever.

**A:** See. Saint Thyagaraja passed away long back. His songs remain as it is in our hearts. Same with Arunagiri nathar. Similarly the set of Kaavadi chinthu were composed long back. See how they've stood the test of time.

**Q:** Timeless, ageless. Everlasting melodies and everlasting tunes. You are saying there is improvement but one shouldn't forget basics.

**A:** Yes 01:51:02

**Q:** Is there anything you would like to add? For this interview?

**A:** Whatever I knew, I have shared them all.

**Q:** Thanks a lot Mr. Venkatraman. On my behalf, and on the behalf of National Film Archives of India. Despite your health condition, in the middle of other activities...you spared time and spoke to us about the early times and present times.

**A:** I have a request to the Government. I am not saying this out of a pride. I have a certain intelligence and skills. They could use people like me as advisors at places like All India Radio, in TV, in Government related art programmes. They can give some payment and employ people like us. Please convey such things to them if you

can.

**Q :** I will surely convey this sir. We are so thankful to you and grateful to you Mr. Venkataraman. We wish you very good health and many more years of service to music. Thank you very much sir. All the best.

**A :** Thank you

That was the interview with Mr. S V Venkatraman. A senior Music Director or Music Composer of South Indian cinema. Mr Venkatraman who is 75, is not keeping good health. In spite of it, he is quite active even today, composing music for Doordarshan Kendra and All India Radio. He is ever willing to compose music for films and for any other creative activity, requiring music as one of its components. He is still able to sing with the same verve and vivacity, that he showed almost 50 years ago. This interview, with Mr. S V Venkatraman, took place during the months of October, November 1984. And again, in May 1985.