



SRI PARTHASARATHY SWAMI SABHA

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**SANGEETHA
SARATHY**

A Musical Voyage with Vidwan Santhanagopalan

Vidwan Sangeetha Kalasarathy Neyveli R. Santhanagopalan, in his lecdem 'Isaikadalil Manithuliga', took the audience on an enjoyable 90-minute swimming expedition across the ocean of music. In the erudite company of Shakespeare and Kamban, Adi Shankara and Yajnavalkya, Tyagaraja and Purandara Dasa, while tapping into the inherent *rasanubhavam* in all of us.

While the mere mention of 'Senthamizh Nadu' made nectar flow into Bharatiyar's ears, Sadasiva Brahmendra extolled our tongues to drink the essence of Rama nama for it will keep us far from sins and fulfill us with many rewards. Saint Tiruvalluvar would go thus far to deem those who are ignorant of the melodic sound of music and literature as unworthy of living, Santhanagopalan exclaimed!

In the kriti 'svara rAga sudhA rasayuta bhakti', Tyagaraja implies that devotion blended with the nectar of svara and raga alone is capable of leading one to salvation. Would a crane and frog sitting on the lotus of supreme bliss have the ability to even comprehend it? தாமரையில் உள்ள தேனின் மகிமை அதன் மேல் அமர்ந்துள்ள தவளைக்கும் கொக்குக்கும் தெரியுமா?

He explained that in the kriti 'nAda tanumanisham' Tyagaraja extols Lord Shankara as the embodiment of 'naada', the primeval sound and the essence of Sama Veda. He defines a happy person



as one who remains unflinching in truth and ceaselessly chants the name of Sri Rama to the accompaniment of the eternal music of sweet seven svaras in the kriti 'Sukhi evvaro'. Immersing oneself in music will lead to 'ekagra chitta', a state of one-pointed concentration. Kanchi Mahaperiyava also extolled the power of music as an instrument of attaining moksha.

In 'vidulaku mrokkEda sanglta kO', Tyagaraja salutes the enlightened souls well-versed in music, which they have



RAJAGOPALAN VENKATRAMAN

used as a vehicle for worshipping and realising the Lord. Poet Kamban describes the musically well versed citizens of Koshala desa as 'parundhodu nizhal sendranna' (பருந்தொடு நிழல் சென்றன்ன இயல் இசைப் பயன் துய்ப்பாரும்).

Sangitam and sahityam both are important in our musical tradition. Each takes prominence over the other in turn and together they nourish our music. Sangitam is not just for this lifetime but for several births – 'எற்றைக்கும் ஏழேழ் பிறவிக்கும்' to borrow this phrase from Tiruppavai, vidwan Santhanagopalan concluded.



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Shri Mohan Kurup
Smt. Vijaya Muthukumar

கர்நாடிகா சகோதரர்களின் மார்கழி இசை அர்ப்பணம்

 சாரதா வெங்கட்

மாலைப்பொழுதின் இசை ஜெய நாதத்துடன் நாட்டை ராகத்தில் துவங்கியது. புரந்தரதாஸரின் ஜெய ஜானகி காந்தனுடன், ரேவகுப்தியில் அமைந்த ஸ்வாதி திருநாளின் 'கோபாலக பாஹிமாம்' பாடப்பெற்றது மிக்க அருமை. அடுத்து தீட்சிதரின் நாயகி ராக 'ரங்கநாயகம் பாவேயேஹம்'.

மார்கழி மாதம் மகாவிஷ்ணுவின் மாதம். எனவே கர்நாடிகா சகோதரர்கள் சசிகிரண் மற்றும் கணேஷ் தங்கள் கச்சேரியை ஸ்ரீவிஷ்ணுவிற்கே சமர்ப்பணம் செய்தனர்.

அடுத்ததாக வாசஸ்பதி ராக ஆலாபனையுடன் தியாகராஜரின் 'பரியாசகமா மாட' பாடப்பெற்றது. அருமையான ஆலாபனை. கணேஷின் நேர்த்தியான விஸ்தரிப்புகள் சுலபமாக உச்சஸ்தாயி ஷட்ஜத்தை தொடுவது ரசிகர்களுக்கு பரவசத்தை ஏற்படுத்தியது. நான்கு முரளிதரனின் வயலின் அவரது நிபுணத்துவத்தை வெளிப்படுத்தியது. 'சகலேஸ்வர ப்ரகஹ்லாதுடு' நிரவலை சகோதரர்கள் உருகிப் பாடினார்கள். முரளிதரன் ப்ரதிபலித்துடன் தனது பாராட்டையும் வெளிப்படுத்தி, தொடர்ந்து பாடக்களை உற்சாகப் படுத்தியது இதமான வெளிப்பாடு. கல்பனா ஸ்வரத்தில் எத்தனை புதுமை புகுத்தமுடியுமோ (permutation and combination) அனைத்தையும் பாடி தங்கள் திறமையை அறியப் படுத்தினர்

அருணாசல கவிராயரின் ராம நாடகக் கீர்த்தனை ஹிந்தோள ராகத்தில் பாடி 'ஸ்ரீராமனுக்கு மன்னன் முடி' சூட்டப் பரிந்துரைத்தனர். 'பட்டம் கட்ட ஏற்றவன்டி' என்று கல்பனா ஸ்வரங்கள் மூலம் உறுதி செய்தனர். முரளிதரன் நிழல்போல் தொடர்ந்து உற்சாகமாக வாசித்தார்.

மாலையில் மேலும் மயக்க வசந்தம் வீசியது, வருடியது, மனதை நெருடியது வசந்தா ராக பல்லவி. கணேஷுக்கு தார ஸ்தாயீ தனி பலம் என்றால் சசிகிரனுக்கு மந்த்ரஸ்தாயீ மஹா



பலம். அருமையாகவும் அழுத்தமாகவும் மந்த்ர ஷட்ஜத்தை பாடியது சிறப்பு.

சம்பிரதாயமான தானம் தாளத்துடன் பாடியதும் வயலினில் வாசித்ததும் மனதில் நிற்கின்றன. மிருதங்கமும் கஞ்சீராவும் மூன்று வித்வான்களுடன் கை கோர்த்து களித்தனர். ஜண்டை ப்ரயோகங்கள் ப்ரகாசித்தன.

ஸ்ரீபார்த்தஸாரதி பாதமே கதி - ஜகம் புகழும் என்பது பல்லவி வரிகள். நமது பெருமாரும் நமது சபாவும் ஜகம் புகழும் நாயகர்கள்தானே! விஸ்தாரமான பல்லவியை தொடர்ந்து நடைபேதத்துடன் கல்பனா ஸ்வரங்கள் பாடப்பட்டன.

தனி ஆவர்த்தனத்தில் மிருதங்கம் முருக பூபதியும் கஞ்சீரா ராஜகணேஷும் தங்கள் நிபுணத்துவத்தை நிரூபித்தனர்.

தொடர்ந்த 'நரஹரி வேஷ நாராயணனே' இவ்வருடம் கௌரவிக்கப்பட்ட ருக்மணி ரமணி அவர்கள் இயற்றியது. ஜெய ஜெய கோஷத்துடன் துவங்கிய கச்சேரி ஜெய ஜெய பாண்டுரங்க விட்டலாவில் கரோஷத்துடன் முடிவை எட்டியது. நிறைவாக புரந்தர தாஸரின் 'ராகீ தந்தீரா'வுடன் விறுவிறுப்பான கச்சேரி நிறைவுற்றது. மொத்தத்தில் மார்கழியில் மாதவனின் மலரடிகளை மந்தமாருதம் வருடியது.

Abhishek Ravishankar's performance was marked by energy and elegance. He presented an elaborate Bhairavi raga alapana, followed by a serene rendition of Muthuswamy Dikshitar's Balagopala. The brisk Niravadi Sukhada in Ravichandrika was lively presentation. C.S. Chinmayi on the violin, Aduthurai Guruprasadh on the mridangam, and Sai Nath on the ghatam travelled with him seamlessly throughout the concert.



D B Ashvin, hailing from a traditional musical lineage, delivered a concert that beautifully blended melody with the depth of his inherited music. Accompanied by Keerthana Shankar on the violin, Rohan Krishnamurthy on the mridangam, and Nerkunam Shankar on the kanjira, his performance offered the audience a satisfying experience.

Enriching Concert Experience



Adept at presenting lecture demonstrations, Malladi Brothers communicate well with the rasikas by enlightening the audience with vital information relating to the kritis, in both English and Tamil. Telugu being their mother tongue stood them in good stead.

Here they showcased their musical prowess by presenting kritis of a variety of composers, Thyagaraja, Mysore Vasudevachar, Bhadrachala Ramadasu and Annamacharya enthralling rasikas. Ragas of varying hues, Asaveri, Reetigowla, Sankarabharanam, Kalyani, Mayamalavagowla and Rageshri were their choices. They commenced in a thoughtful manner with 'Chandrambaja Manasa' (Dikshitar) in the rare MatyaTala. A sprightly alapana of Reetigowla preceded 'Mama Hrudaye Vihara Dayalo' (Mysore Vasudevachar), not heard often in concerts. Brisk swaras appended to this kriti gave a bright start. They made a good choice by taking up the majestic, 'Vidulaku Mrokkeda' (Thyagaraja) prefixed with a detailed alapana of Mayamalava Gowla and embellishing it with a full complement of niraval and kalpana



swaras. They then presented a rare kriti, 'Vishnu Vahanundigo Vedale Judare', of Thyagaraja in Sankarabharanam, part of the saint's opera, 'Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam'. They also briefly told its context. Contrasting to Sankarabharanam, they presented, 'Nannu Brovamani Cheppave' (Bhadrachala Ramadasu, Kalyani). They did not omit to include Annamacharya, their speciality, and 'Nandakadhara Nandagopa Nandane' came up in Rageshri, popular in both Carnatic and Hindustani traditions.

Skilfully managing time they presented an RTP, their own, in Sri Ragam, in Sankeerna Chapu tala with nine aksharams, sung for the first time here. Kalpana swaras were in Gowla,

Mohanam and Hameer Kalyani, left nothing else to be desired. The tail-end piece was, 'Kumaran Thaal' (Papanasam Sivan, Yadukula Kambodhi).

The violin support by the young Vital Rangan, a disciple of A Kanyakumari added greatly to the beauty and success of the concert. The kalpana swara phrases of Vittal for the RTP, testified to his superb bowing skills.

K V Prasad (mridangam) and Trichy Krishnasawmy (Ghatam) presented a thoroughly enjoyable aural treat showcasing their masterly virtuosity.

The concert was gripping all through and a good number of rasikas stayed till the end.



Sengottai Hari Bhagavathar offered a divine Namasankeerthanam performance, infused with bhakti, during the auspicious month of Margazhi. The event was held at Madras Sanskrit College as part of the Samskriti Utsav organised by our Sabha. It was a truly spiritual experience for all attendees

The Sai Sisters - Kiran & Nivi, a young and dynamic duo, delivered an energetic performance. They were accompanied by C S Chinmayi on the violin and Rohit Prasad on the mridangam. This captivating concert took place at Madras Sanskrit College as part of our sabha's Samskriti Utsav.



A Symphony of Grace and Grandeur: Sudha Ragunathan's concert

 SHARADHA VENKAT

The alluring Amruthavarshini served as the curtain raiser for Sudha Ragunathan's concert of the evening. 'Vani Kalaideivam' was continued by Dikshitar's Vega Vahini raga kriti 'Varaheem Vaishnaveem'. This rarely heard kriti was well presented with kalpana swarams in 'karuna kataksha vikshineem'. What followed was Swati Thirunaals 'Paramapurusham hridaya bhavayatham' in Lalitha panchamam with swift chittaiswarams.

A graceful Kaanada alapanai was established combining well with 'Rangapathe Pahimam' in Roopaka Talam by Margadarshi Seshayyengar. Thanks for bringing out this hidden treasure! Soothing swarams splashed around with Embar Kannan gracefully reproducing and replying on violin.

Another super hit of the evening is Annamacharya's 'Parama purusha nirupamana' in superb Shanmukhapriya. The elaboration of ragam by both Sudha and Kannan kept the audience in rapt

attention. Niraval and kalpana swarams at the phrase 'Chathura moorthy chathura bahu' which fell beautiful on one's ears. We all know that Sudha is well known for her kalpanai. To wind up the kalpana swarams she sang the koraippu of the avarohanam with flooding swarams that was cushioned and elevated by Akshay Anantapadmanabhan on the mridangam and Sowmya Narayanan on the ghatam.

Thani avarthanam was a thundering feat. While Akshay was seriously focussed on his instrument, Sowmya Narayanan was expressive on his playing and enjoying. This was not only during thani but throughout the concert spreading happy vibrations. They both exhibited their mastery complementing each other.



Next in the line was slokam from Sri Suktam - Lakshmi ksheera and few verses from Astalakshmi Stotram 'Sumanasa vandita'. It was followed by 'Vishamakara kannan' and then 'Yadavaraya Brindavanadolu' in a grand ragamalika beginning from 'Venu nadava' as in the tradition of her guru M L Vasanthakumari. Towards the closure was Bharathiar's energising 'Nenjukku neethiyum' resonating with Om Shakthi Om Sakthi Om and G N Balasubramiam's Hamsanandi thillana with Mangalam.

Rasikas must have gone home with a lot of treasures happily.

R P Shravan – Travel on two highways

 S SIVAKUMAR

If one had thought that Raghavan Pratap Shravan (R P Shravan) was more a light musician than belonging to the Carnatic genre, he has proved you wrong yet again. Such a situation was on offer at our Sabha last Wednesday.

Taking Khambodhi as his mainstay he gave a fulsome alapana this epoch-like song, O Rangasayee, warrants. The more number of times one listens to this song, its loveliness increases, getting more burnished all the while. Also, one noted that the alapana itself took its flight at the TOP shadjam. Semi colon, to follow suit, the violinist followed the same method. Can we call this a top-down approach, attitude? The alapana itself had its many rounds at the essential points and his ideas, some of them at least, borrowed from the "other" music field, had perhaps helped him in his planning, voice control,



to be always in top gear, and allocation of time.

In the meanwhile almost unnoticed was the rendering of 'Dhaya Jooda' (Jaganmohini, Syama Sastri). What a song! And one suggestion here! This would acquire an enhancement of its classicism, if it were to begin at the syllable, "Samyamidhe". Still, one was a tad surprised, that the day's Thiruppavai, 'Ongi Ulagalanda', had swaras suffixed to it. Some songs shine on their own. Don't they!

The mind got so transfixed on

Khambodi that Patnam's 'Mariveragathi' only finds a fleeting mention here, though its elaboration was done as much as it would have deserved.

Violinist Keshav Mohan Kumar had his own style when it came to alapanas and answered adequately for the swara sequences and altogether got along together with a lot of verve.

The laya twosome, Vijay Ganesan (mridangam) and Sivaramakrishna (Kanjira) did their jobs to a nicety and their thani had its usual gusto.

R P Shravan has chosen to travel on two highways simultaneously. Which destination he is bound to reach to his satisfaction, only time will tell!

Sriram Parasuram's Creative Musical Exploration of Hindustani and Carnatic Melodies

SIVAPRIYA KRISHNAN

Vidwan Dr. Sriram Parasuram presented an intelligent and delectable Hindustani and Carnatic dual concert. Sriram is adept at morphing from Carnatic to Hindustani and back with an ease, that comes only with years of internalisation and sadhana.

He began with a really brisk varnam 'Intha chalamu' in Behag, Adi Tala, followed by Bihagda in Hindustani, with a chota khayal, 'mandir va mein aaye nahin pritam pyaare sakhi mori'. Next was 'Nekkuru' in Abhogi and the equivalent khayal, 'tum bin more ghar pal nahin aave' was in Hindustani Abhogi. The raga goes by the same name in both systems. Following this was a pithy Kamalamanohari raga alapana, and 'Nee muddu momu joopave', a composition by Tyagaraja.

The grand main piece was an intelligent yet lovely bouquet of Shuddha Dhanyasi and Sumanesa ranjani, a prati madhyama and shuddha madhyama raga combination, encapsulating the Carnatic and Hindustani variations within



the raga renditions. He explained the approach of the raga and announced it as a manipravala rendition, as the songs he rendered were in both Sanskrit and Tamil. He took up 'Sri Parthasarathay na palitosmi', a Dikshitar piece in Rupaka tala and alternated it with 'Parthasarathi tiruvallikeniyil- naan- partha sarathi' in Adi tala, by vidushi Rukmani Ramani. 'ja ja re patit va mora piya ko sandesa, a Hindustani rendition followed this.

This kind of inventive rendition is the perfect example to answer all those who ask what's new about Carnatic music. How to align two composers, ragas, tala and the theme meaningfully and present

it interestingly, both with precision and a poetic appreciation is what newness is all about.

He ended the concert with a brilliant bhajan 'jo hari ko bhaje sadhaa, vo parampad paavega'.

Shreelakshmi Bhat on the violin rose to the challenges posed by Sriram and proved her mettle. Shankar on the harmonium was a vital melodic support to the main artist. Shertalai Ananthakrishnan and Aditya created rhythmic fireworks with their fingers, thereby making the whole concert an aural treat.

Shankar Ramani delivered a rich concert that adhered strictly to tradition, showcasing his deep-rooted training. His presentation was steeped in the grand parampara of maestros like T M Thiagarajan, T R Subramanian, and OS Thiagarajan. Accompanied by Anayampatti Venkatasubramaniam on the violin and Vijay Ganesh on the mridangam, the concert was a testament to classical excellence. The event, held at Madras Sanskrit College, was part of the Samskriti Utsav organised by our sabha.



Dr. G Baby Sriram gave a passionate concert, with the flowing Sankarabharanam being the highlight of the evening. He was accompanied by Balu Raghuraman on the violin, B Sivaraman on the mridangam, and Allepey Vishnu V Kammath on the kanjira. The performance, full of emotional depth and technical brilliance, was part of the Samskriti Utsav at Madras Sanskrit College.

Amrutha Venkatesh's Concert: A Showcase of Melodic and Rhythmic Brilliance

 **ANURADHA KANNAN**

Amrutha Venkatesh started her morning concert with the varnam 'Sarasooda' in Saveri composed by Koththavasal Venkatrama Iyer. The crisp varnam was followed by the day's Tirppavai pasuram 'Ongi ulagalandha' as a viruththam, in the ragam Arabhi. This was presented as the prelude for the composition of Maharaja Swati Tirunal's, 'Narasimha Mamava Bhagavan' in Arabhi. This beautiful composition was presented at a wonderful pace.

She then took up the aalapani in the raga Kumudakriya and the song was undoubtedly the masterpiece of Muthuswami Dikshithar, 'Ardhanaareeswaram'. Amrutha presented one of the best swara prastharam for the lines 'Aagamaadhi sannutham'. Her creativity was brilliant and the pace of the swaram was perfect for the emotion of the krithi. And a special mention to the mridangam vidwan Patri Sathish Kumar for presenting such an apt layam for this song and for the swaram prasthaaram in particular.

Next came Thyagarajar's composition 'Niravadi sukhada' in Ravichandrika. A beautiful Bhairavi raga aalapanai followed



as the centre piece of the concert. Rajeev Mukundan's Bhairavi on the violin was brilliant and soothing to the ears. The way he plays the violin needs a special mention. His artistry stands out, making him undeniably one of the most sought-after violinists.

The main kriti of the day was 'Balam gopalam' by Mysore Vasudevachar, which is not sung by many. Both the neraval and the kalpanaswarams were beautifully presented. Patri Sathish Kumar on the Mridangam and S. Karthick on the Ghatam played a wonderful crisp Thani avarthanam. Amrutha concluded the concert with the Madhuvanthi thillana of maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman.

The success of a concert does not depend fully upon the talent or presentation by the main artist, but also on the co-artists and their presentation. This concert was one such kind. Excellent rapport between the artists and the team took the concert to the next level.

Above all there is one more factor which can enhance the concert or even topple the concert from best to worst. That is the acoustics of the hall. Kudos to the person who took care of the sound system at Parthasarathy Swami Sabha. Not even once the sound needed to be adjusted. Neither requested by the artistes nor by the audience from the start till the end. On the whole a lovely Margazhi morning with a soul stirring concert.

A Rasika shares:

Vidushi Amrutha Venkatesh, accompanied by vidwans Rajeev Mukundan, Patri Satishkumar and S. Karthick gave an unforgettable concert to a packed audience who had come braving the inclement weather.

Opening traditionally with Saveri Varnam 'Sarasuda' she sang the Andal Tiruppavai 'Ongi Ulagalanda', in Viruththam form in Arabhi and Maharaja Swathi Thirunal, 'Narasimha Mamava Bhagavan'.

The grand support from the two legendary percussionists gave one the feeling that Lord Sri Narasimha might emerge from one of the pillars on the stage at any moment! The cascade of swarams that followed was a delight! Aesthetic, sophisticated, precise, traditional, innovative, adventurous and playful, with perfect responses from Rajeev on the violin and the percussion duo at every note! Amrutha's detailed exposition of Muthuswami Dikshitar's masterpiece in the

slightly dissonant and challenging raga Kumudakriya, the ease with which she elaborated the raga and the seamless responses by Rajeev revealed a high level of mastery and sophistication as well as perfect teamwork. The swaram session at 'Aagamaadi' with charming Poruththams was a feast to the ears. Amrutha's enunciation of lyrics in any language is extremely commendable.

Tyagaraja's Niravadi Sukhada in Ravichandrika offered a bright contrast to the mood of Kumudakriya. The song, the Chittaswarams and the entire teamwork between the artists felt like a festival. In the main piece in Bhairavi by Mysore Vasudevacharya – 'Balam Gopalam'. the Alapana, neraval and swarams, were all vintage Bhairavi at its best. After a brilliant thaniyavarthanam, Amrutha concluded with Lalgudi Jayaraman's Madhuvanti Thillana, leaving the audience wanting more.

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A Classical Journey with V.K. Manimaran



Belonging to a family of great Nadaswaram artists, V.K. Manimaran has had the privilege of being under the tutelage of vidushi Suguna Purushottaman and vidwan Calcutta Krishnamurthy. Endowed with a strong and fully sruthi aligned voice, he laced his concerts with a feel of freshness, by an appropriate choice of compositions, spread across ragas.

Two ragas of totally contrasting colours, Karaharapriya and Pantuvarali, were chosen for delineation and the contours of these two majestic ragas were explored fully. The kriti were in Karaharapriya (Papanasam Sivan, Senthil Andavan) made popular by D.K.Pattammal school. Though ideal for embellishment with kalpana swaras, for the sake of time-management, he skipped the swaras. A full complement of niraval and kalpana swaras were included as part of the Pantuvarali suite, 'Sri Sundararajam Bajeham', Kasiramakriya in Dikshitar school, one of matchless beauty. Manimaran chose the line 'Soma Surya Netram' occurring in the madyamakala sahyam following the charanam, for appending niraval and



swaraprastharas.

The two veteran percussionists, Arun Prakash of the Palani Subramaniya Pillai school and Guru Prasad of Vikku Vinayakram school of Ghatam, presented a highly absorbing 'thani'.

Earlier starting the concert with the brisk Nattai kriti, 'Sri Maha Ganapathe Surapathe' (Mayooram Viswanatha Sastri), Manimaran went on to present two enchanting Thyagaraja kritis 'Manasa Etulortune' (Malayamarutham) and 'Ramabhirama Manasu Ranjilla' (Dhanyasi). Brief but attractive alapana and swaraprastharas came for 'Manasa Etulo'. Two other kritis which added colour to the concert were, 'Sri Sankara Guruvaram' of Maha Vaidyanatha Sivan in Nagaswarali, a lilting

janya raga of Harikambodhi and 'Vazhi Maraithirukkude' (Gopala Krishna Bharati, Natta Kurinchi). At the tail end, there were a few attractive pieces, 'Parulanna Mata', (Javali, Kapi), the Tirupavai 'Oruthi Maganai' (Behag) and 'Parvai Onre Podhume' (Oothukadu).

Manimaran had the privilege of being accompanied on the violin by the stalwart R. K. Shriram Kumar, an artist of great erudition. He gave support to the vocalist in generous measure, even as his manodharma found full expression in raga delineations and swara korvais.

Manimaran packed in his concert, a balanced mixture of majestic kritis of major composers and rich manodharma.

V Subashri - music bred in the bones



V Subashri gave a performance that, without an iota of doubt was a creditable one and also bore the stamp of her Guru vidushi S. Sowmya. She was in the company of Vignesh Thiagarajan (violin) and Suriya Nambisan (mridangam).

That she had an inherently musical mind was evident from the spontaneous manner in which she rendered the sangatis for 'Edayya gathi' (Chala Nata, Koteeswara Iyer); in the right sequence along with the ebbs and flows at the right spots, to make the krithi complete. Closely on its heels, we heard 'Purahara Nandana' (Hamir Kalyani, Dikshithar), as emotive as the previous one. These two were preceded by 'Balakanakamaya' (Atana, Thyagaraja) which adds a majestic dimension to any concert.

From the point when the song 'Eti Janmam Ithi' commenced (Varali, Thyagaraja), Surya Nambisan seemed to have assessed the mood of the song to a perfect T, adopting a style of getting along



with soft strokes. Subashri's swara patterns and the spectacular alapana (Varali) that came were done with rare distinction, with zarus, those ineffable glides, punctuated with brigas at the appropriate places a la Sowmya. This should not take anything away from the originality of Subashri, who listens and assimilates other schools to capture their vital elements. The subtleties of Varali and getting a perfect 10 for the top shadjam, which she attained time and again, must have come as a result of consistent practice combined with abundant knowledge and its thorough

application. She concluded with 'Bhajare Yadhunatham' in (Misra peelu, Sadasiva Brahmendrar).

Vignesh, violinist, aimed at providing a healthy balance to the concert and in particular excelled at the various neraval rounds for the varali song, especially giving thrilling 'izhaippu sangatis' the instrument and raga is heir to.

Suriya Nambisan had some mental ideas which he implemented well during the thani and his playing was song-oriented more than anything else.

Thyagaraja & Dikshitar - Traditionalists or Visionaries: A discussion


V MOHAN

An illuminative Panel Discussion on whether the two Trinity composers, Thyagaraja and Dikshitar were 'Traditionalists or Visionaries' that the rasikas had the benefit of hearing three erudite scholars and performers of Carnatic music, Dr R.S Jayalakshmi, Dr S . Ranganatha Sharma and Dr R. Suryaprakash presenting their views on the subject, aided by the exemplary anchoring done by Dr Radha Bhaskar. Over the last few years, Radha Bhaskar has become a household name in the area of lecture demonstrations and panel discussions.

Even without much deliberation, an average rasika of Carnatic music would quickly realize that Thyagaraja and Dikshitar were both traditionalists and visionaries. Carnatic music had already established its roots before their time. If they had not been visionaries, the Carnatic music of today would not exist in its current form. Therefore, they were both Traditionalists and Visionaries.

Thyagaraja (1767–1847) and Dikshitar (1775–1835) were both born in Tiruvarur and lived during the same period, though there is no record of their acquaintance. Both were prolific composers of kritis, a format that marked a significant evolution from the earlier keerthana style, which was primarily devotional music, as

a vehicle to project bhakti. This shift laid the groundwork for Carnatic music to evolve into a performing art, enriching concert repertoire. Along with Syama Sastry, the two composers were visionaries and revolutionaries, shaping the future of Carnatic music and inspiring a plethora of composers who came after them. While they embraced innovation, they remained rooted in the traditions that formed the foundation of their creations.

A study of Thyagaraja and Dikshitar's music reveals significant differences in their approaches. The melakarta raga system originated with Ramamatya's Swaramela Kalanidhi in the 16th century, later expanded by Venkatamakhin in the 17th century with his Chaturdandi Prakasika, introducing 72 Asampoorna Melakarthas. Govindacharya of the 18th century, the author of 'Sangraha Choodamani', perfected the mela scheme to what is now called as the system of Sampoorna Melakarthas. Dikshitar, following Venkatamakhin's tradition, composed in Asampoorna ragas, while Thyagaraja favored Sampoorna ragas. This is a major difference which has a bearing on different aspects of the ragas used by Dikshitar, such as, their names, scales and the parent scales to which the ragas belong.

One panelist pointed out that the Asampoorna melas should not be called by that name, as these scales are not really Asampoorna and contain all the swaras. It would be more apt to call these ragas as 'Raaganga Ragas'. This aspect was discussed in detail by the panel and several examples of how the two systems of ragas, as used by Thyagaraja and Dikshitar, varied. As an example, it may be pointed that the reason why no kriti was composed by Dikshitar in the well-known raga, Kharaharapriya, could be that, this raga was not found in the Venkatamakhin scheme. Another example is that, both composers used a raga named Kalavathi, though the two versions are entirely distinct. These nuances underscore the contrasting frameworks used by Thyagaraja and Dikshitar. Also, the scales

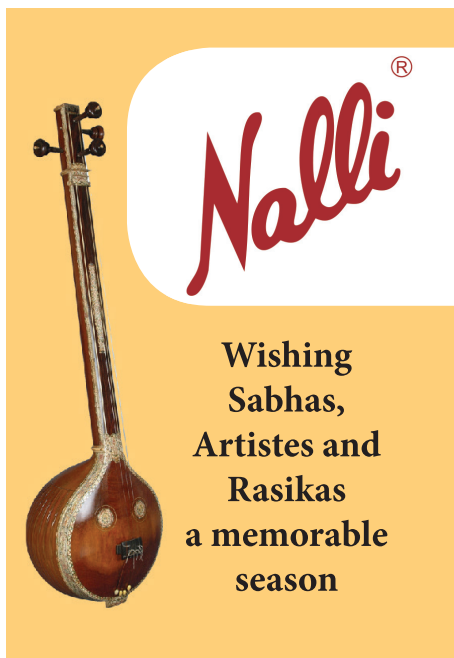


of some ragas like, Reetigowla and Abheri are not the same in the two systems.

Turning to the structure of compositions, again, a number of differences can be observed between the two composers. For example, Dikshitar introduced the concept of "Samashti Charanam", combining the anupallavi and charanam, while Thyagaraja kept them as separate sections. Further, Dikshitar extensively used Madyama Kalam in his kritis, whereas Thyagaraja included Madyama Kala sahityams sparingly.

Many Thyagaraja kritis contain 'sangatis', a technique of repeating the same line, each time with a variation, which can be considered as a precursor to the technique of 'Niraval', a part of the manodharma or innovative side of music. In contrast, Dikshitar's kritis are less rich in sangatis. Many Thyagaraja kritis contain multiple charanams, a feature not seen in Dikshitar kritis. Thyagaraja's kritis are often in the form of dialogues, soaked in emotion, with his favourite deity Rama, or in a few cases, with other deities, or with himself. It can be said that he uses such dialogues to give moral guidance to mankind. On the other hand, Dikshitar kritis contain intricate description of the deities, their nature and qualities and the kshetrams where the temples are located. For example, Dikshitar's well-known Navagraha kritis and Panchalinga Kshetra kritis contain matters relating to philosophy, such as, Advaita or Sri Vidya/Devi Upasana. Further, Dikshitar has used sophisticated poetical and grammatical techniques in his kritis, like yatis, vibaktis, etc .

The quality of discussion in the panel was of a high standard, and the details were presented lucidly and logically. A lot of useful information was passed on to the audience and where necessary, the points were illustrated with singing.



Abhishek Raghuram: A Memorable Evening of Melody and Rhythm

RAJAGOPALAN VENKATRAMAN

Abhishek Raghuram's concert was an interesting blend of melody, rhythm, and emotion. He began with Shyama Sastri's Paras raga kriti 'Nilayatakshi' in tripata tala, setting the pace for the evening. This was followed by a delightful DarbAr alapana leading into Tyagaraja's kriti 'EnduNDi veDalitvO' in misra chapu tala, where brisk swaras showcased the raga's beauty. The laya maestro, Dr. Trichy Sankaran on the mridangam and Chandrasekara Sharma on the ghatam, responded with aplomb.

The concert proceeded with Dikshitar's vaara kriti of the day, 'Budham AshrayAmi' in Nattakurinji raga and misra jhampa tala. It is Margazhi and a concert without Andal pasuram makes it incomplete! 'Azhi mazhai Kanna' in Varali with a delightful volley of swaras befitting the line 'sAngamudaitha saramazhaipol' was enchanting.

Abhishek's exploration of Bilahari raga was marked by characteristic phrases, culminating in Tyagaraja's kriti 'IntakannAnandam Emi' in rupaka tala with such felicity and joy to bring out the emotive bliss the kriti describes. His majestic neraval at 'nl jagamulu vELa nl jagamulu nlvai' was an immersive experience as with the ardent devotees



experiencing the visvarupa form of the Lord while meditating upon His name.

The highlight of the concert was the Mukhari raga alapana, where Abhishek's intricate gamakas and emotive depth captivated the audience. Tyagaraja's kriti 'MuripEmu galigegada' in adi tala was rendered with finesse, featuring a delightful neraval at 'ItulEni malayamArutamuce' evoking the cool breeze.

The tani avartanam that followed was a masterclass in rhythm, with Dr. Trichy Sankaran showing his mastery and virtuosity of laya. The audience

was enthralled by the swara patterns and korvais weaved by him, ably supported by Vidwan Chandrasekara Sharma. The concert concluded with the serene Madhyamavati kriti "KarpagamE kaNpArAi," a worship of the Goddess of Myslapore.

The evening stood out for its rich variety—diverse composers, virtuosity in alapana and swara singing while bringing out the emotive bhavas of the kritis chosen, the veteran accompanists each playing to their strength and coming together as a team, all made it an outstanding concert.

Abhishek expressed his profound appreciation to Prof. Dr. Trichy Sankaran for being a part of the team and delivering a masterly performance in elevating the concert. The audience responded with a thunderous applause and standing ovation.

A truly memorable Margazhi concert for times to come.



Akshay Padmanabhan, with his solid musical foundation from vidwan PS Narayanaswamy, delivered a vibrant concert. In the main piece in raga Todi, he explored numerous possibilities, presenting the grand "Raju Vedala" from the Srirangam Pancharatnams in all its glory. Accompanied by Chidambaram Badrinath on the violin, Sai Saaranan on the mridangam and Ranganathan on the ghatam, the performance was a display of talents.

Raga Essence and Rhythmic Brilliance in Vishnudev's Concert


SHARADHA VENKAT

Arabhi, one among the Pancha Ghana Ragams, is best known for its vibrant energy and enthusiasm, that sets a perfect tone for an auspicious start. Vishnudev began his morning concert with 'Palimpa Ravadelara' in Tisra Nadai Adi Talam, a composition by Pallavi Sesha Iyer. The brisk chittaswarams and the lively kalpanaswarams instantly elevated the mood of the audience, creating a sense of anticipation for the rest of the performance.

Living up to the expectations, Vishnudev transitioned into 'Sunadha Vinodhini', a raga discovered by Mysore Vasudevacharya. His rendition of the composition 'Devadideva Srivasudeva' was preceded by an extensive and nuanced raga alapana. Vishnudev's mastery and confidence was seen through his interpretation of the song and he enhanced the rendition by elaborate and imaginative kalpanaswarams. As the raga's name suggests, it was a perfect blend of beauty (sunaadam), melody (naadam) and charm (vinodam).

Next came Ananda Bhairavi, with the soul-stirring composition 'Marivere Gati Evaramma' by Shyama Shastri in Chapu Tala. Known for its ability to evoke karuna rasa (compassion), this bhashanga raga was a showcase of Vishnudev's emotional depth and artistry. His meticulous emphasis on swaraksharams brought out the raga's intrinsic beauty, leaving the audience deeply moved.

VVS Murari, accompanying on the violin, complemented Vishnudev's performance with exceptional skill. His raga alapanas and swarams were brilliant, seamlessly matching the vocalist's creativity and expression. The rapport



between the two artists elevated the concert to a memorable experience.

The concert was boosted by the stellar rhythmic accompaniment of K.V. Prasad on the mridangam and K.V. Gopalakrishnan on the kanjira, whose dynamic support added depth and energy to the performance. Their synergy played a vital role in enhancing the overall experience.

The highlight of the concert was undoubtedly the Super Raga of the day – Saveri. Known for its serene and soulful saaram (essence), this Audava-Sampoorna raga was masterfully brought to life through an elaborate raga alapana by Vishnudev. His open-throated singing effortlessly captured the essence of Saveri, resonating with the Nabhi-Hrut-Kanta-Rasana philosophy. Vishnudev's nuanced approach gave the raga a palpable 'jeevam' (life force), allowing it to linger in the hearts of the audience. Supported by Murari's deft and precise strokes, the auditorium echoed with the sumptuous beauty of Saveri, earning resounding praise – SABHASH!

The rendition of Thyagaraja's 'Kannathalli Nivu' was another remarkable moment. Vishnudev chose the third charanam and performed an intricate

niraval at 'Kanakan bhushanamula', followed by an engaging niraval at 'Anudina Monarinchu'. The kalpana swarams, structured around the melodic framework of Saveri, showcased Vishnudev's mastery over this Audava-Sampoorna raga. His exploration of jeevaswaras, particularly Rishabham and Dhaivatam, demonstrated both technical skill and emotional depth. Murari's responsive and versatile playing during the kalpana swarams further amplified the experience, marked by vibrant dhattu prayogams that added a thrilling vigour.

The Tani Avartanam was a tour de force, showcasing the rhythmic brilliance of K.V. Prasad and K.V. Gopalakrishnan. Their seamless exchanges and expertly crafted mohras were nothing short of excellent, keeping the audience spellbound.

Vishnudev concluded the evening with Purandara Dasa's 'Innudaya Bharade' and the composer's signature mudra in the charanam, leaving the audience in awe of their untiring energy and musical finesse.

It was a truly memorable morning, with every element coming together to celebrate the timeless beauty of music.

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Mesmerising music at senior musician Rama Ravi's concert

R BHARATHWAJ

Blessed are those rasikas who came to listen to vidushi Rama Ravi at the Samskruti Utsav on a rather wet Chennai evening at Madras Sanskrit College. She chose to present Sanskrit compositions from various composers.

She started the concert with 'Shri Mahaganapathim', a composition of Jayachamraja Wodeyar in Atana and followed it up with Annaswami Sastri's 'Shri Kanchi Nayike' and appended it up with an elaborate round of swarams for this Asaveri composition.

The two ragams taken up for elaboration were Arabhi and Simhendra madhyamam. Muthiah Bhagavathar's 'Anantha padmanabham ashraye' in Arabhi was on of the two treated to a grandeur.

Presenting a heavy kriti in the middle of a concert without much manodharma always creates a special effect in the concert experience. Dikshithar's kAmbhOji kriti 'Kailasanathena' was the right pick to create this.

Swati Thirunal's 'Rama Rama Gunaseema' (Simhendra madhyamam) was the main course for the evening. Elaborate nerval at 'dheenabandho mamava' was much enjoyable and gave



a different flavour to what is usually heard for this kriti. The swarams in Arabhi, kAmbhOji and Simhendra madhyamam were all wonderful. Many intricate and rare sancharams were used appropriately to elate the overall experience

Dr. Nanditha Ravi, the prime disciple and daughter of Rama Ravi, ably supported in an apt manner and filled in wherever her mother needed support. Violinist RK Shriram Kumar was a closer shadow to the main artist and his playing was very sweet, adding to a serene concert experience. Arun Prakash actually 'played' the kritis in his mridangam. One can call his playing the instrument as 'gayaki' style of percussion. His tani was elegant. Both the accompanying

artistes are the most preferred for many senior artistes and this was evident in this concert.

How often do you get to hear the 'Sujana Jeevana' (Thyagaraja's KhamAs raga composition) after the main? It was exciting to listen to this kriti. Vasudevachar's 'Gokula Nilaya' in Karnataka devagandhari was presented next, with Mangalam kOsalEndrAya to end the concert.

Vidushi Rama Ravi, a veteran musician with immense knowledge, presented an excellent treat that evening. Supported by an excellent team, the concert was both fulfilling and a testament to why she is regarded as a musician's musician.

An Energetic Concert by Young Talents

RAJAGOPALAN VENKATRAMAN

The young team of Dhanush Anantharaman, Gayatri Vibhavari and A. Rohith delivered a wholesome afternoon concert.

Dhanush began the concert with an energetic rendering of the Purandaradasa kriti 'Jaya jaya' in the raga Natta. Brisk swaras set the right tempo for the concert.

Shifting gears Dhanush took up Harikhambhoji for a crisp and evocative exposition. Gayatri responded admirably internalising the tranquil nature of the raga. Tyagaraja's immortal 'Enduku nirdaya' was the kriti chosen with the rendition in tune with the composer's emotive pleading to Lord Rama. A brisk



neraval and swaras at the charanam 'Dharalo neevai Tyagarajupai' completed the rendering.

The Devagandhari kriti 'vina rAdA nA manavi' of Tyagaraja and Shyama Sastri's 'mAyamma yaninE' followed filling the rasikas with serenity and bhakti.

It was time for Thamizh kriti. 'Nan-maiyum theemaiyum' from Kambarama

yanam followed by the kriti 'Aravinda padamalar' by Ambujam Krishna in Kapi.

The concert beautifully segued into a weighty Bhiravi alapana with characteristic phrases and gamakas. Dhanush brought out the melodic hues of the time-tested raga. Tyagaraja's kriti 'KoluvaivunnAdE' was rendered with a lively

swaraprastara with Rohith rounding off the concert with a brisk tani.

Despite the strain in his voice due to the inclement weather, Dhanush managed to pull off the concert with his dedication and resolve. He was well supported by Gayatri and Rohith.

Importance and relevance of Bhasha/Language in Carnatic Music:

Lec-dem by Dr. Gayatri Girish, Dr. Subhashini Parthasarathy, Nirmala Rajasekhar (Veena)

 **SIVAPRIYA KRISHNAN**

Gayatri started off by saying that the language is the medium of communication of the content of the song and hence it has to be meaningful, not just a jumble of words. It should have an intent, either deliberate or inspired. The musicians, especially vocalists cannot take it lightly. They have to know the intent and the meaning of the composition before they present it to the public. Next is the 'padachedam' or splitting of words to suit the karvais in a sangati. She quoted an example to demonstrate this. In 'Sri Maha Ganaptiravatu mam', in Gowla, there is a tendency to sing it as Sri Mahaganapti – ravatu mam, which is incorrect. It has to be sung with an accent on the letter 'a' and not the letter 'ra', so one can hear avatumam. Similarly with Narasimha- aagachha. The accent has to be on the letter 'aa' and for the meaning to be preserved correctly - that is asking Narasimha to come. If the accent is on 'ga', as in narsimhaa.. gachha, it would mean asking Him to go!

Subhashini Parthasarathy added that though it may be challenging from a breath control perspective, with some rigour and practice it can be achieved. She also specified the importance of



'akaara sadhaka' for this to be made easy. She also talked about how singing padams with extended karvais can be so demanding when it comes to splitting words and said that it provides the requisite practice to do it correctly. She talked about the role of the accompanists too in preserving this meaningfulness and cited an example of how a mridangam vidwan did not play when the line 'sadaa mouna keerte' in Sri Dakshinamurte was sung by the vocalist.

Nirmala Rajasekhar demonstrated as to how to play the gayaki style in the veena. It is but easy for instrumentalist to just play the swaras and get away, but the real music she said is when the instrumentalist knows the sahitya and applies the techniques to produce the nuances of the sahitya through the instrument. In veena playing she

talked about a breath being equal to a pluck of strings. So the artist maneuvers between sustenance and plucking to produce the right emphasis of the sahitya. She very beautifully demonstrated this technique with 'Ramachandra needaya' in Surutti by playing the swaras and the corresponding sahitya for the same. She implored that it is a must for the instrumentalist to vocalise the song and learn it for better reproduction on the instrument.

They discussed the concept of 'kondu kooti padaradhu', Yati prasam, that is building the phrase with words like a pyramid, tail or a waterfall. They demonstrated how primer lessons like geetams and swarajathis lay the foundation for sahitya appreciation.

Gayatri concluded the lecture with a nice verse that explained the importance and relevance of Bhasha and language in music. 'sahitya sangeeta kalaa viheenaha, saakshaat pashuhu pucchavishaaNaheenaha', meaning one who is removed from sahitya in his music, is like a cow walking around without a tail and horns.



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The Swetharanyam Sisters, Dr. Nithya and Dr. Vidhya, delivered a concert that was full of traditional elegance, drawing from their extensive repertoire of compositions. Accompanied by senior vidwans V V Ravi on the violin, J Vaidyanathan on the mridangam, and G Ravichandran on the ghatam, their performance was rooted in a rich musical parampara of their guru vidwan Thiruvengadu Jayaraman. The concert, held at Madras Sanskrit College, was part of the Sanskriti Utsav organized by our sabha.