



SRI PARTHASARATHY SWAMI SABHA

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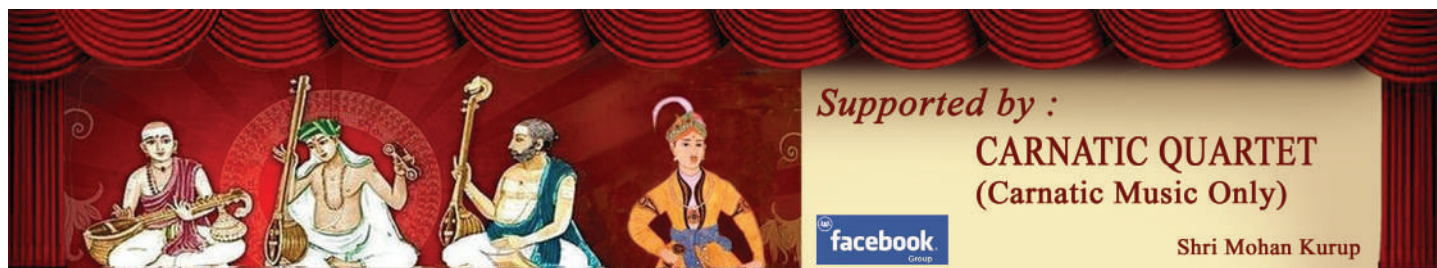
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Shri Mohan Kurup

A CLASS ABOVE

This was a concert which presented music of the most classical form. The artists on stage were so much in form and it was a wonderful experience to listen. Amritha started off with the slokam 'sadguru gajasya vAni' and followed it up with pavanAtmaja of Dikshitar. Next was sadAchalEsvaram of Muthuswami Dikshithar, with a meditative AIAnpanai of bhUpALam and some quick svarams. The next major elaboration was bEgaDa. With phrases built one after another, it was a beautiful elaboration. nIvE rAkuladanamu, a rare Tyagaraja kriti, was taken up and presented neatly, with elaborate neraval and svarams. After an emotive dEvi brova samayamidE (chintamani, Shyama Sastri) and a quick kumaran tAL panindhE thudhi, Amritha presented an expansive and detailed kharaharapiYA and followed it up with a tAnam. The pallavi was set in kaNDa tripuTa and the sAhitya was on Goddess Seetha. "kamalAnanAm janakajAm vandhE kshitijAm khara hara priyAm". The pallavi was rendered well



with detailed neraval, svarams. There were rAgamAlika svarams and change of naDais as well. Amritha concluded her concert with a rAgamAlika sLOkam and 'krishnA kamalAkshA', set in a bouquet of rAgams.

Amritha has already carved out a space for herself and is one of the torchbearers for the most classical kind of music. She always prefers the no-nonsense approach and sings very serious music. This concert was a sample of how deep her music is. RK Shriram Kumar on the violin, is a senior musician with a vast knowledge of sangeetham and sahiyam. He showed his command over music, as he accompanied Amritha. Whenever he played his parts, it was like dripping

honey. Such a melodious and entertaining music it was. Patri Satish Kumar on the mridangam provided apt support. His playing for the kritis was very matching and during the manodharma parts, he played with energy and anticipation. N Guruprasad on the ghatam was also very apt in his accompanying for the kritis and during the manodharma parts. The tani they shared was well structured and suited the pallavi and its grandeur.

This concert was a classic treat to the full house of rasikas who had assembled that day. It was very heartening to see so many connoisseurs for such a heavy and classical kind of sangeetham.

... R BHARATHWAJ

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FROM YOU!**

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Experience has talking power!

At the outset, I begin with a disclaimer and it goes like this. The session about which I am reporting was such a vast and valuable one that it cannot come to you in its entirety, considering the space constraints faced. If anyone feels something essential has been left out, please feel free to mention it. We will be glad to receive it.

The session belonged to Prince Sri Rama Varma and Vidushi Amrutha Venkatesh, with a brief introduction by Vidwan Sashikiran, the topic - "Purposeful Practice Methods".

Right at the beginning Amrutha sang Deva Deva Kalayami and her encounter with it vis a vis pronunciation. Thereby she was able to stress on the importance of proper pronunciation. (இதனை அவர்கள் இருவரும் சொல்லாமல் சொன்னார்கள்) She also demonstrated how the Sriranjani kriti Gaja Vadhana should be sung with the perfect diction (before rendering it "wrongly") just to prove a point to us. Lyrics she said should help a person to immediately write it down as he listens to it. At the same time it should not be presented as a recitation.

Next what was at the top of their minds (I assume) was the question of breath-control. Why work on this? And the answer: "Breath control increases stamina, better adherence to the sahitya, execute exactly what is in our mind and how to conserve our breath to render the next line without a flaw" The chittaswaram associated with the song 'Sobillu Saphaswara' was taken as an example to show how proper oxygen should be taken in, at the gaps judiciously to avoid a kind of breathlessness and accompanying anxiety, as you are about to get to the finishing point.

They observed that most of songs' lines do not go in a linear manner. And next Amurutha sang and demonstrated the exercises that would ease out the voice throw. About the method of practicing varisais they gave a picture of how this was going to help and in the meanwhile stressed the importance of



sustaining on a single note for a long time, simultaneously showing how it should be done and achieved.

Somehow people have the notion that akaram should be done only at speeds and to dispel this myth she took as an apt demonstration from the Kalyani varnam. This made it amply clear that the akaram used here, put to use, in this varnam, was quite different from that which occurs during abhyasam. She here made a shrewd observation that akaram with great speed is used in songs minimally.

They also made a general observation that artistes tend to focus on their strengths and make attempts to reinforce and further enhance it. The same attention is not being paid when it comes to their weaknesses. It is high time musicians of all ages give due attention to this aspect.

What would a person expect in a voice in terms of quality: It should be melodious, and pleasant, making it flexible, not harsh and uniform in all ranges. A question was self-imposed on them. Practising varisais or akaram in say Mamavagowlai of Sankarabharanam, would it be sufficient for other ragas too? It would be advisable for it to be done in ragas that you may

require to sing in the next cutcheris

Prince Rama Varma wondered how violin maestro Sri M S Gopalakrishnan was comfortable with the Hindustani, Carnatic and Western styles, but when he played Thodi for instance, it was as pristine as it could be. He also said the knowledge of an instrument adds an altogether new dimension in the musical life of a vocalist.

Time and again he played some audio clips from our own music and from "other" music as well, to bring to light how these exist in a grand manner, with their own in-built grammar and methodologies, both in learning and practice. One such playing that would have floored even the commonest of common of men, was the rendering of 'RaghuPathi Ragava Raja Ram', the desia namavali, by one colossus who strode among us, Sri S Balachandar.

For Rama Varma, gamakam, in our music was akin to salt in our food. The right amount, nothing less, but nothing more, Full stop!

And the disclaimer stands!

... S SIVAKUMAR



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உற்சாகம், புத்துணர்ச்சி, புதுமை

இந்த மாதம் 22-ம் தேதி வெள்ளிக்கிழமை யன்று, காலை பத்து மணியளவில் நடைபெற்ற வசுதா ரவியின் கச்சேரி, காலை நேரக் கச்சேரிகளுக்கே உரிய உற்சாகத்துடனும், புத்துணர்ச்சியோடும் அமைந்தது.

பெரும்பாலான உருப்படிகள் அதிகம் மேடைகளில் கையாளப்படாதவை. நிகழ்ச்சி, சுவாதித்திருநாள் இயற்றிய கர்நாடக காபி வர்ணத்துடன் விறுவிறுப்பாகத் தொடங்கியது. தொடர்ந்து பாடிய “இனி நமக்குக் கவலையும் இல்லை” என்ற பிலஹரி ராகக்ருதியில் இடம்பெற்ற ஆலாபனையும் கல்பனா ஸ்வரங்களும், வசுதா ஒரு முன்னணி பாடகி என்று கட்டியம் கூறியது. இதில் இடம் பெற்ற தியாகராஜ என்னும் பதம், முத்திரை அல்ல. இதனை இயற்றிய கோடல்வரய்யர், தியாகராஜர் தன்களவில் வந்ததை மனதில் கொண்டு இவ்வாறு குறிப்பிடுகிறார்.

அடுத்து, ஜி.என்.பி அவர்களின் கண்டுபிடிப்பான சிவசக்தி ராகத்தில் “ஸ்ரீ சக்ரராஜ நிலயே” என்கிற க்ருதியில் அருமையான ராகபாவத்தை வெளிக்கொண்டுவந்தார் பாடகி. தொடர்ந்து ஷண்முகப்ரியா க்ருதி, “வத்தனே வாரு லேரு” எனும் தியாகராஜ கீர்த்தனையும் வசுதாவின் கற்பனை வளத்தைப் பறைசாற்றின.

ராகம் தானம் பல்லவியை, ரேவதி ராகத்தில் மிஸ்ர சாபு



தாளத்தில் சுவைபட அமைத்திருந்தார். “இது நல்ல தருணமே தேவி எனை காக்க” என்பதுதான் பல்லவி. இயல்பாக வந்து விழும் பிருகாக்களும், ஸ்வரப் பிரஸ்தாரங்களும், இவர் எம்.எல்.வி. சிஷ்யப் பரம்பரையில் வந்தவர் என்பதைத் தெளிவுபடுத்திய வண்ணம் இருந்தன.

ஆரம்பத்திலிருந்து இறுதிவரை தொய்வின்றி, இடைவெளியின்றி ரசிகர்களை கட்டிப் போட்டிருந்தார் வசுதா. ராகவேந்திராவின் அனுபவம் நிறைந்த வயலினும், எஸ்.வி.ரமணியின் மிருதங்கமும், பிரசன்னா அவர்களின் கடமும் கச்சேரியைத் தூக்கி நிறுத்தியது.

... Dr. சந்திரிகா ராஜாராம்

Charge of the young brigade

Akshara Samskriti Iyer, disciple of Kiranavali Vidyasankar, started off with a brisk Varnam, Karunimpa in Sahaana. Next followed Nagumomu Gana Leni in Karnataka Devagandhari (attributed as Abheri). The way she rendered the song was reminiscent of yesteryear vidushis. The sangatis came in waves one after the other and filled the hall. Her alapana in Bilahari was replete with brighas and phrases in the upper octaves, as it should be for this raga. ‘Paridana micchite’ was rendered with the right speed and the necessary embellishment that the song demands. Her swara passages were intelligent, crisp and interesting.

‘Muruga Muruga’ in Saveri was a poignant essay after the brisk and springy ‘Paridana’. So many questions asked so many entreaties placed to the Lord in the lyrics. A young girl all of 13 years of age, she could bring out the right emotion of the composition, with perfect diction and poise. ‘Garuda gamana samayamide’ in Nagaswaravali followed this.

An elaborate Hemavati raga with ‘Sri Kantimatim’ was her main song. Hemavati was explored in full scale with all the relevant phrases and accents that the raga demands. The kriti was presented with neraval and swaras. The neraval at ‘Shuka Sownakadi sadaaraaditaam’ was both an exercise in her ability to handle neraval and a listeners’ delight followed by intelligent swara kalpana. Neraval is a difficult subject, as one has to



patiently expand a line imaginatively and give it the full import of the meaning of the line, yet adhering to grammar. Sadly, these days it's neither taught well nor sung well by many youngsters. It was heartening to see that this young singer could handle neraval like a professional, with ease.

Malladi Sindhu Rageswari, on the violin, disciple of Dr. Nishanth Chandran was adept at accompanying. Her strokes were mellifluous and measured. Sai Raghavan on the mridangam, and Achyut Srinivasan on the khanjira, enhanced the concert with their percussion support providing the right metre and energy. Heartening to see youngsters take up the art seriously and do so well. Kudos to them and their teachers.

... SIVAPRIYA KRISHNAN

Exploring Thyagaraja & Dikshitar's Raga Vision

On December 23, 2023, Vidushi Amritha Murali and Vidushi Nisha Rajagopal presented a lecture on the "Vision of Ragas in the compositions of Shri Thyagaraja and Shri Muthuswamy Dikshitar." They delved into how these two maestros interpreted the same ragas in distinctive ways, rooted in Thyagaraja's adherence to the Melakartha scheme and Dikshitar's preference for Asampoorna Mela.

Throughout the presentation, the duo singers exemplified these differences by performing sample compositions of both composers, focusing on ragas such as Karaharapriya and Sri Ragam. These ragas, being the 22nd melas in their respective systems, displayed unique flavors due to variations in swara order (Kramam) between Melakartha and Asampoorna paddhati.

The duo also illustrated how Thyagaraja and Dikshitar approached ragas like Hindholam differently, emphasizing distinct swaras. While Thyagaraja gave great emphasis for Daivata, Dikshitar gave more importance to Nishdha.



Despite being aware of both systems, the composers consciously chose their own approaches, respecting each tradition. Other ragas explored included Reethigowlai, Charukesi, Suddha Saveri, Devakriya, Kalavathi, Vagadheeswari, Veeravasantham, Narayani, Salaka Bhaiavi, Gaangeya Bhushani, Manohari, Bhairavi, Sahana, and Gamakakriya. Interestingly, Thyagaraja and Dikshitar treated certain ragas like Thodi, Kamboji, Kalyani, and Kambhoji in a similar fashion.

In closing, Vidwan Shashikiran commended Amritha Murali and Nisha Rajagopalan for their exhaustive and well-researched presentation. The lecture allowed the audience to witness firsthand how the same ragas, when approached by Thyagaraja and Dikshitar, manifest different musical nuances, enriching the understanding of these two distinct musical traditions.

*** SUNDARARAMAN CHINTAMANI

A very talented Spoorthi Rao's concert was well-attended. While she enjoys her music on stage, her soulful renditions excel in creative segments like alapana and kalpanaswarams. In our sabha's concert, she shone from the very first Nattai raga composition 'Swaminatha paripalaya'. With B Ananthkrishnan on the violin and Sai Giridhar on the mridangam, Spoorthi's concert was one of the bright concerts in this slot.



Paddhathi Music Fest from Dec. 24 to 31 & Jan 3 - 7, 2024

Carnatica & Sri Parthasarathy Swami Sabha jointly organise Paddhathi Music Fest at Desika Vidya Bhavanam, 27, Venkatesa Sgraharam Road, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004.

From 9 a.m concerts go on till 8.30 p.m. on all the days of the fest. Admission open to all.

Please visit <https://parthasarathyswamisabha.com/> for the schedule of concerts at this fest.



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An RTP full of devotion

Carnatica brothers were in the enviable company of Sarvasri Sangita Kalasarathy Sri Nagai Muralidharan on the violin, Srimushnam Raja Rao on the mridangam and B S Purushotham on the Khanjira. Guess what? The Brothers presented an RTP in the raga Ganamurthi, with the lyrics as Hare Rama Govinda Murare/ Mukunda



Shoure Murahara, in the conventional Adhi Thalam (2 kalai). These words

were chosen for Vaikunta Ekadasi and sounded like a Namavali.



Ramakrishnan Murthy's concert at our sabha drew huge audience. With Charumathi Raghuram on the violin and N.C. Bharadwaj on the mridangam, he presented a wonderful concert. A melange of well-known and rarely sung kritis, Ramakrishnan Murthy carried merit during the entire concert.

A story well told

Storytelling is an integral part of Indian families. From the grandmothers who would keep the kids occupied with their stories to school teachers and so on, telling a story is always an educative entertainment. Eventually, people have to grow up to become storytellers to the next generation.

Harikatha, thus, as part of bhakti tradition, is one of the prominent art forms that continues the storytelling. Though other forms have taken substantial space in the entertainment world, harikatha still remains one of the forms that imparts bhakti-related aspects to the society.

Our puranams are the most preferred topics for harikatha. Sundara kadam is probably the most auspicious part of Ramayana. Suchithra chose this as her topic for harikatha.

Hers was a sampradaya harikatha which was engaging and absorbing. She kept the attention of her audience and did a wonderful job in connecting the story and delivering those present. Picking the apt compositions and phrases from across different sampradayas and composers and presenting them in rakthi ragams while keeping the storyline intact, it was a superb presentation. Ramayana is told by many composers in multiple ways. Suchithra comfortably brought those compositions to the



stage and her emotive presentation for each event of the story with appropriate tonal variations and gestures was much more enjoyable. The audience certainly was taken to the trethAyA yuga and travelled along with Lord Hanuman all the way to Lanka and back.

Another important aspect of harikatha is to connect their story to the present, making suitable mentions and comical inclusion of even current events. This was used in a measured quantity without digressing away from the main storyline.

Those who are able to hear Ramayana are supposed to be blessed people in our sampradaya. Those present for this harikatha were completely blessed.

... R BHARATHWAJ



Musicians Bharat Sundar, Dr. Baby Sreeram and Ramana Balachandhran presented interesting lectures on Chittaswarams and their role in enhancing the beauty of a kriti. They pointed out that many chittaswarams not found in the original compositions, but were composed and added later to become popular. They discussed the laya patterns in the chittaswarams and their beauty. A lecdem attended by many performing musicians as well as music students.



Enjoying the morning slot, J A Jayanth delighted the audience with the soft sound of his flute, playing Parama Paavana Rama in Poorvikalyani as his main, ably assisted by the ever and anon, L Ramakrishnan on the violin. Thala instruments were under the control of Thanjavur Murugaboopathi (mridangam) and Dr. Karthik (ghatam).



Swarathmika - Change of mood

Swarathmika is an artiste full of promise. And she had the opportunity to shine in the company of an equally capable violinist, Keerthana Sankar (violin), and the laya duo of Aduthurai Guruprasadh (mridangam) with Hari Kishore (Khanjira). Nasika Bhoshani (Dikshithar wishes to name this ragam, Nasa Mani) was taken up for alapana, that saw Swarathmika exhibit a comfort level at all registers. One must quickly add something here! What followed was a reply-like enthralling portrayal on the violin by Keerthana. All the same, the song 'Sri Rama Saraswathi' did not call for a swara battery that tended to become more laya-oriented, than anything else. Bhava was not its mainstay. A chittaswaram (her own?) attached to the song was in place and that could have sufficed. Without a breath came the next song, 'Chenthane Sadha' (Kunthalavarali, Tyagaraja). This too was primarily percussion-driven. And this was not the best of afternoons, one was prompted to think. (All of this is mind you, subjective)

But wait! Swarathmika came out with flying colours as she took up the less heard 'Brovu Brovu' (Syama Sastri, Keeravani). The lotus had blossomed and the raga was sketched in an



unhurried manner with an appropriate neraval at 'Syama Krishna Sahodhari Syamale', first at a languid pace, then at the second speed, exercising admirable control with kalpana swaras, all apt and fulfilling. The violinist Keerthana, cashed in on the changed mood and gave full expression to her musical prowess and was again an ideal match to the main singer.

Aduthurai Guruprasadh and Hari Kishore were able to bring in to play myriad tala patterns adhering to laya norms without deviating from the basic tempo during the thani.

Creative Presentation

The creativity and inspiration of an artist are limitless. What matters is how far an artist takes it and where they do this.

In an instrumental music concert, the way an artist expands, explores and presents their music can be much different from vocal music, but it need not be. The sheer difference between gAyaki style music and vAdhya pramANa sangeetham can be seen in instrumental concerts. While there may be a popular and prevalent opinion that gAyaki style is better and much more appealing, the rasikas at instrumental music concerts would certainly show off otherwise.

Ramana Balachandhran's concert was a blend of these styles and showed his musical intellect and his ease with his veenai. For any instrumental artist, the relationship with their instrument is very important. The way a vidwAn and his vAdyam compliment each other changes the flow and outcome of a concert.

As he played the swarams in Suddha bangALa, for Thyagaraja's rAma bhakti sAmrAjya, Ramana showed how well he was able to blend with his vAdhyam. There was such a build-up and with Patri Satish Kumar and Vazhappally Krishna Kumar also playing their best there was such an atmosphere created.

When rendering kritis, Ramana adopted the gAyaki style. His presentation of gAngEya vasana (hamlr kalyANi, Swathi Thirunal) and EIAvatAra (mukhAri, Thyagaraja) were both gripping. With each sangati and line being rolled out in such a classical manner, it was a treat for the audience.

With rAga elaborations, Ramana was again in a novel style.



His mukhAri was classy and kalyANi was rather expansive and showed his brilliance. The tANam was built well. The pallavi in Kalyani involved multiple nadais. The sahiyam was 'sAgari undan tirupAdamE gati aruL puri sivasankari karuNA'. It was explored in detail. Many different patterns were weaved both in his vINai and in his voice. Ramana chose to sing along for many of the compositions. For the pallavi, he also explained the change of nadais and many combinations that he was presenting and even sang a few rounds while exploring the pallavi. While the intellectual rasika would be able to appreciate the details and enjoy, for the layman rasika, it was a reverberating experience.

Patri Satish Kumar and Vazhappally Krishna Kumar were both at their best and embellished the overall experience with their playing. Their exchanges during the svaram parts and the tani avarthanam were all very enjoyable. The team provided a complete experience to a full house.

... R BHARATHWAJ

Young Kruthi Bhat excelled in her presentation of Thodi raga and the kriti 'Kotinadulu Dhanushkoti'. In the concert for our sabha, she was in the good company of Sindhu Suchethan (Violin) - Rohan Krishnamurthy (Mrudangam) and Nerkunam Sankar (Kanjira)



Vivek Moozhikulam's concert was a bright display of his skill. Beginning with Abhogi varnam, his expansive Reethigowlai and his rendition of 'Janani ninnuvina' stood out. This promising musician was accompanied by Vishaal Sowmyan (Violin) - Arvind Raman (Mrudangam)

Yet another concert that drew a full house at our sabha was that of the Malladi Brothers Sreeramprasad and Ravikumar. Right from the first song 'Umaiyor Bhagane' in Nattai, the brothers enthralled the audience with their erudite renditions. Mysore Srikant (Violin) - Delhi Sairam (Mrudangam) - Vellattanjoor Sreejith (Ghatam) were a great team complimenting the grand concert.



'Jaya Jaya Sri Sudarshana' was a scholarly explanation of Sri Vedantha Desikar's Sudarshanastakam by none other than Sri. U. Ve. Dushyanth Sridhar to a fill house in the morning. Sunaada Krishna provided a complimenting mridangam accompaniment with the resonance of the divine armament of Lord Vishnu

Sparkles at the Brothers' concert

Trichur brothers Ramkumar Mohan & Sreekrishna Mohan presented an enchanting concert at the sabha. The choice of compositions deserves much appreciation. While their Mokshamu galada in Saramathi had the sowkhyam, the next in the line 'Thaaye tripura sundari' in Sudhasaveri was a real sparkler with its bright chittaswarams.

The main raga of the evening, Thodi came in as a grand rendition. Oothukadu

Venkatasubaiyer's 'Thaye Yashoda' was presented with all its emotive expressions intact. The neraval and kalpanaswarans at the line 'Kalinil silambu konja' reminded the seasoned listeners of the maestro Madurai Mani Iyer.

V.S. Gokul on the violin enthusiastically performed alongside the brothers reflecting their mood throughout. Trichur R Mohan (Mrudangam) - Vazhapally Krishnakumar (Ghatam) followed the singers and the violinist with thoughtful rhythmic interludes. Their thani avarthanam garnered applause from the audience during many short and long spells.



session interactive by making the audience too sing some swara phrases and join them in singing some parts. They remarked that there is music in everyone. 'Narayana te namo namo' in Behag was a fitting finale for Vaikunta Ekadasi day.

The brothers made the post-tani

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